

The Unusual 2NT

Unusual 2NT should be played alongside Michaels Cue Bids to show other types of two-suited hands

The conventional bid of 2NT as an overcall of the opponents 1-of-a-major shows a hand with at least 5/5 in the two minor suits. It is a way of showing a type of two suited hand.

Typically, the bid contains about 8 to 15 points, and ideally these points should be in the two long suits.

With a Michaels overcall you are often looking for a major suit fit and possibly a major suit game. With Unusual No Trump, because you are often looking for a minor suit fit, you tend not to be looking at game so much. This is because it takes 11 tricks in a minor suit. So there is a very slight change of emphasis - with UNT you are, more often, looking for a profitable sacrifice.

Eg

if the opponents open 1♥ or 1♠, then we would overcall 2NT with either of these hands:

♠ 7
♥ 6 3
♦ K Q 7 4 2
♣ A J T 5 3

or

♠ 8 5
♥
♦ K J T 4 3
♣ K Q J 9 7 6

However, the following hand is not a good hand to overcall 2NT:

♠ K
♥ A Q
♦ 9 8 7 4 3
♣ J 8 6 5 2

Here the two suits are poor and your points are located in the short suits. Better to pass with this hand as it has little in Offence, but something in Defence.

Conventional

2NT overcall is a conventional bid and the partner of the 2NT bidder should alert it.

What do we lose?

Playing UNT we lose the chance to overcall 2NT naturally, with about 19-21 points and stop(s) in the opponents' suit. However, these types of hands are very rare, and you can always show them by doubling first and then bidding 2NT.

What should partner respond?

Partner usually bids the suit that he has the most tolerance for. With equal length in both suits, especially with two doubletons, he bids the cheapest suit.

If partner has good trump support for one of the two suits and a reasonable number of points then it is worth bidding the minor suit game. There is no guarantee that this will make, frequently it will fail by a trick or so, but often it means the opponents are not allowed to make their major suit game.

Eg

If the bidding has been:

North	East	South	West (you)
1♥	2NT	Pass	?

and you hold:

♠ 6 5 3 2
♥ 6 3
♦ J 7
♣ A Q T 5 3

it is worth trying 5♣. This contract is unlikely to make (it might on a good day), but if it doesn't it is likely to be a good save against 4♥.

The 2NT bid can be used over 1-of-a-minor as well. Conventionally this again shows a 5/5 distribution (at least) in the *lowest two unbid suits*.

So over 1♠, 2NT shows diamonds and hearts.

Over 1♦, 2NT shows clubs and hearts.

(Be careful. Occasionally you will find partners who play this bid to show the other minor and an unspecified major, so do check what you are playing if you play with a new partner.)

You can also use 2NT when the opponents have bid two suits. In this case it will still show the two lowest unbid suits (which in this case will obviously be the two suits that opponents haven't bid). In this latter case, you could show a similar hand with a double (for takeout), but the 2NT bid tends to be weaker in hcp, but more distributional.

Eg

North	East	South	West (you)
1♦	2NT		

Here, you know that East has at least 5/5 in clubs and hearts (the two lowest unbid suits)

North	East	South	West (you)
1♥	2NT	1♦	Pass

Here, you know that East has at least 5/5 in clubs and spades (the two lowest unbid suits)

What should partner respond? (part 2)

With no particular support for either of partner's suits, and not a particularly good hand, then responder should bid the suit he is longer in, or, if equal in length, the cheaper one.

If responder has a good hand with at least three card support for partner, then he can bid the game with the expectation of making it.

Eg

If the bidding has been:

North	East	South	West (you)
1♥	2NT	Pass	?

and you hold:

♠ J 6 5 3 2
♥ K 6 3
♦ J 7
♣ Q T 5

just bid a simple 3♣.

If the bidding has been:

North	East	South	West (you)
1♦	2NT	Pass	?

and you hold:

♠ A 8 7 5 2
♥ K J 3
♦ A 7
♣ J T 7

then bid 4♥, in the expectation of making it. You have good support for both partner's suits and the two Aces will cover most of partner's short suit losers.

What should partner respond? (part 3)

Partner must not pass! Even if he has nothing he must bid the suit for which he has more tolerance.

If the bidding has been:

North	East	South	West (you)
1♥	2NT	Pass	?

and you hold:

♠ 8 5 3 2
♥ 9 6 3 2
♦ J 7
♣ 8 7 5

just bid a simple 3♣.

However, if the 2NT bid is doubled, you can express no preference between partner's two suits by passing.

If the bidding has been:

North	East	South	West (you)
1♦	2NT	Double	?

and you hold:

♠ 8 5 3 2
♥ T 6 3
♦ K 7 4
♣ J T 5

just pass to show equal tolerance for clubs and hearts.

If by chance responder bids the "fourth suit", i.e. the suit not bid by the opponents or shown by partner, that bid is natural and nonforcing, showing a long suit (usually 6+ cards), a decent hand, and no support for either of the 2NT bidder's suits.

If the bidding has been:

North	East	South	West (you)
1♥	2NT	Pass	?

and you hold:

♠ A Q 7 6 5 3 2
♥ K 6
♦ J 7
♣ 9 5

just bid a simple 3♣.