



# Adventures in Bridge, Inc.

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PO Box 14915 ♠ Tallahassee, FL 32317

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## (38) Competitive Bidding: Double, Michaels, and Unusual NT

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Level: Intermediate

Robert S. Todd

[robert@advinbridge.com](mailto:robert@advinbridge.com)

### General

There are many ways to compete in the bidding. With one primary suit we know how to compete in the bidding: we make an overcall – simple or jump based on the length of our suit and strength of our hand. In this lesson we will consider how we should compete in the bidding with other types of hands. Specifically, we will consider 3-Suited and 2-Suited hands.

- 3-suited hands usually have three 4-card suits. But we will consider treating some hands that are 4432 or 5431 as 3-suited hands.
- 2-suited hands have at least 5-4 distribution, but we will generally be discussing the more distributional hands of at least 5-5.

### 3-Suited Hands – *Takeout Double*

When we have a 3-suited hand that has length in the opponent's suit, we usually have a lot of defense and we are happy to pass and see what happens - "*Be patient when you have lots of defense.*" When we have a 3-suited hand with shortness in the opponent's suit then we want to compete in the bidding if we have a good hand (approximately opening values.) With one long suit we can overcall with less than opening values because the long suit will produce tricks. When we have a 3-suited hand, we usually don't have a long suit and thus we will need HCP in order to help produce tricks. The way we show this 3-suited hand that is short in the opponent's suit is with a double – called a "Takeout Double."

A *Takeout Double* says a lot about our hand:

- About 12+ HCP (approximately opening bid values,)
- Shortness in the opponent's suit,
- At least 3+ cards in all the unbid suits.

We make this Takeout Double after the opponents have opened the bidding:

Example: 1♠ (X) ...



## 2-Suited Hands

When we have an unbalanced 2-suited hand that has at least 5-5 distribution we will strive to compete in the bidding. With a minimum hand (about 5-11 HCP) we will want to do this ASAP – “*Get into and out of the auction as quickly as possible.*” That means we want to find a way to show both of our 5-card suits as quickly as possible. We will use some gadgets to help us show these weak and shapely hands immediately (before the auction gets too high.)

### 2-Suited Gadgets

We will discuss two useful conventions - *Michaels* and *Unusual Notrump*. Think of these bids as preempts with two suits (at least 5-5) instead of just one long suit.

### Michaels - Both Majors OR Major & Minor 2-Suiter, 5-11 HCP

- (1♣) 2♣      5+/5+ in the Majors
- (1♦) 2♦      5+/5+ in the Majors
- (1♥) 2♥      5+♠ and a 5+ card minor
- (1♠) 2♠      5+♥ and a 5+ card minor

What if we have Michaels shape, but stronger hands?

- With 12-15 HCP we overcall our suits naturally. We start by bidding our higher ranking suit first and bid our lower ranking suit later (if we get a chance.)
- With 16+ HCP we can use Michaels as well. This treatment is called “Max-Michaels” and is far less common. When we bid Michaels, partner will always assume we have a “Min-Michaels” (5-11 HCP) unless we do something to demonstrate we have this rare Max-hand. This approach is called Min-Max Michaels.

#### Examples

- 1♥    2♥    P    2♠      16-19 HCP, 6+♠, 5+minor  
       P    3♠
- 1♥    2♥    P    2♠      16-19 HCP, 5♠, 5+♣  
       P    3♣

### Advancer Asks for the Unknown Minor

If the Advancer does not know both of partner’s suits,

- (1♥) 2♥ - or
- (1♠) 2♠ -,

then they can use 2N to ask the Michaels bidder for the minor suit.

#### Example

1♥    2♥    P    2N  
 P    3♣    ...

This shows a 2-suited hand with 5+♠ and 5+♣.



### ***Meckstroth Advances (Advanced)***

Some players play that they have two ways to ask partner for the “other suit” – minor. If you play this special agreement then you use both 2N and 3♣ to determine partner’s other suit.

- 3♣ is “Pass or Correct.” The Michaels bidder passes with ♣ or corrects to 3♦ if they have ♦.
- 2N is an invitational asking bid. 2N shows a very good hand and asks the Michaels bidder to make a strong bid with a good hand (8+ to 11 HCP) or show their side suit with a bad hand (5 to 8- HCP.)

### ***Unusual NT – The Two Lowest Unbid Suits***

We have Michaels available to preempt the bidding with high ranking suits (Majors or Major-minor).

Now we want to have a way to preempt the bidding with low ranking suits (Minors or minor-♥). This is done with a gadget called the *Unusual Notrump*. This is a direct seat jump to 2N:

- (1♠) 2N - 5+/5+ minors, 5-11 HCP,
- (1♥) 2N – 5+/5+ minors, 5-11 HCP,
- (1♦) 2N – 5+♣/5+♥, 5-11 HCP,
- (1♣) 2N – 5+♦/5+♥, 5-11 HCP.

We are free to define this jump to 2N as a preempt since we do not need it for a natural call. We overcall 1N with 15-18 HCP and double and then bid notrump with 19+ HCP.

*Note: We do not use the Unusual NT with strong hands because if we play in game then we are likely to play in 3N (since we have minors.) In this case we will likely want partner, the player that is long in the opponent’s suit, to be the declarer. But if we bid 2N we will have wrong-sided the contract. Thus, with these hands we just overcall our suits naturally.*