



Michaels Cuebid

The Michaels cuebid — brain-child of the late Mike Michaels — allows a player to describe a two-suited hand in one bid in competitive auctions. It is typically reserved for hands with a 5-5 (or longer) pattern.

When a player bids a suit which has originally been called by the opponents, that player has made a cuebid. A Michaels cuebid is almost always used in the direct position, *i.e.*, immediately after an opponent has made her bid. For example if your right-hand opponent opened 1♣ and you bid 2♣, your 2♣ call would be a cuebid. Further, if you and your partner agree to play Michaels cuebids, your 2♣ call would have a specific meaning.

Major two-suiters

Let's say you hold a hand with two five-card majors such as ♠AKQ43 ♥AKJ62 ♦6 ♣J7 or

♠KQ643 ♥J10764 ♦A4 ♣8.

If your RHO opens 1♣, the Michaels cuebid allows you to describe these hands nicely. Bid 2♣ with either to tell your partner you have a major two-suiter. If your opponent had opened 1♦ instead, you would have bid 2♦ to give the same message.

Playing Michaels cuebids, the auctions

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♣	2♣		

and

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	2♦		

show a major two-suiter. Put another way, a direct cuebid of an opponent's opening bid of one-of-a-minor shows the majors, 5-5 or longer.

An important question, however, is how strong a hand does the Michaels cuebid promise? This is a matter of partnership style, but many expert partnerships prefer that Michaels be used to show either a weak hand (say, 6 to 11 points) or a strong hand (a good 16 or more high-card points). Hands with intermediate strength should simply overcall at the one level, with the hope that the second suit can be shown later in the auction. Why do this? It's to give partner some indication of our strength and involve him in the decision process as to how high we compete.

Major-minor two-suiters

Michaels can also be used to show certain major-minor two-suiters after an enemy 1♥ or 1♠ opening. The auctions

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♥	2♥		

and

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♠	2♠		

show five or more cards in the other major and an unspecified five-card minor. The strength requirements are the same as for minor-suit cuebids.

After a 1♥ opening, bid 2♥ with ♠AQ765 ♥8 ♦KJ1073 ♣104.

This tells partner you have five spades and a five-card minor. What if partner doesn't have a fit for spades and wants to know what your minor is? He bids 2NT (conventional) to say, "Bid your minor." You can then bid 3♦.

Important point:

Don't tell your story twice

Your RHO opens 1♦ and you hold ♠KQ643 ♥J10764 ♦A4 ♣8.

You bid 2♦ (Michaels) and LHO passes. Partner bids 2♠ and RHO bids 3♣. What now?

When you bid 2♦, you told partner that your hand was 5-5 in the majors and that you had a limited hand (6 to 11 points) or a very good hand (16-plus points). Since you have the weaker range, and partner has already chosen the suit and level he prefers, you should pass. Partner already knows what you have — don't compete to 3♠! Partner might have been forced to bid 2♠ with a hand such as

♠107 ♥86 ♦Q876 ♣K10932.

He won't like your 3♠ bid (and you won't like the result).

Let's change your hand to this:

♠AKQ43 ♥AKJ62 ♦6 ♣J7.

After a 1♦ opening by RHO, you bid 2♦. LHO passes and partner bids 2♥. RHO bids 3♣. Should you bid again? Yes. This time you have a very good hand and could make game if partner has as little as Q-x-x in hearts. Many players would simply jump to 4♥. Remember, however, that you should only make another bid if your hand has extra values or is very unusual. For example, holding

♠KJ8743 ♥AQ10952 ♦— ♣8,

this hand could easily produce a major-suit game opposite mild support from partner. After this auction

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♣	2♣	Pass	2♠
3♣	?		

bid 4♠. With this 6-6 freak, high-card points are irrelevant. Just bid the game. The opponents may well bid more, but the point is that you should bid again after the Michaels cuebid when your distribution is wild or when you have a very strong hand. □