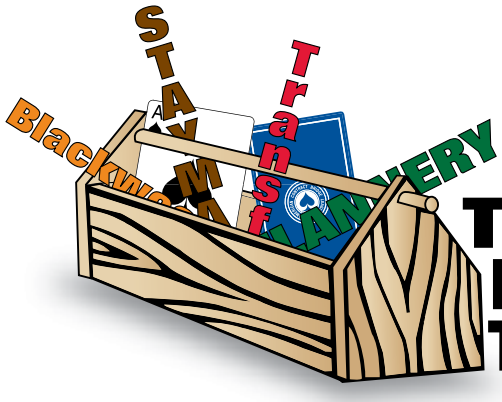

THE BIDDING TOOLKIT

Unusual vs. unusual

When your partner opens one of a major and your right-hand opponent jumps to 2NT, showing the minors, you will often face a tough competitive bidding problem. You need to define your hand before your second opponent continues the preemption. One defense against two-suited overcalls is called unusual vs. unusual.

How does it work?

There are different variations — this is one of them.

1. Bid 3♣ with a limit raise or better in hearts.
2. Bid 3♦ with a limit raise or better in spades.
3. Raise partner's major with 7-10 support points.
4. Bid three of the other major with a hand similar to a good weak-two bid — this is natural and constructive but non-forcing.
5. Double with a hand that is worth a redouble of a takeout double. This says that you can double at least one of their suits for penalty and promises another bid.

What do these bids mean?

When you show a limit raise for partner, you should have at least three-card support. When you show limit-raise values (or better) in the other major, you should have at least a five-card suit.

There is an easy way to remember which cuebid is for which major. The lower cuebid is for the lower major (in this case, cuebid clubs for hearts) and the higher cuebid is for the higher major (cuebid diamonds for spades).

A single raise in opener's suit is equivalent to a normal single raise. Responder needs no extra high-card values, but he should be careful of raising with three low trumps; the 2NT overcall increases the chances that trumps will split badly for your side.

Responder should avoid doubling 2NT unless he seeks to penalize the opponents. Because of the danger of further preemption, if responder has offensive features, he should begin to describe his hand using one of the other calls.

When does it apply?

These methods can be used any time an opponent's bid shows two known suits. Suppose this is the auction:

Partner	*RHO*	*You*
1♣	2♣	?

If the 2♣ is a Michaels cuebid, showing both majors, you can bid as described above. You would cuebid 2♥ to show a limit raise (or better) in clubs and 2♠ to describe a hand with limit-raise values (or better) in diamonds. The lower cuebid shows the lower minor suit and the higher cuebid shows the higher. A 2♦ bid would be constructive, but less than a limit raise, and, therefore, non-forcing.

Now suppose the auction is:

Partner	*RHO*	*You*
1♥	2♥	?

and 2♥ shows spades and a minor. Since you can't be sure which minor RHO has, you cannot use the unusual vs. unusual methods. A 3♣ or 3♦ bid, therefore, would be natural and forcing.

Understanding through examples

Here are some sample hands. In each case, suppose your partner opens 1♠ and your RHO overcalls 2NT for the minors.

What do you call holding:
♠Q 7 4 3 ♥A 10 7 3 ♦J 4 2 ♣9 6?

Answer: Bid 3♠. Yes, your hand is weak and the ♦J is probably worthless. But you have four trumps and your ace is in hearts, a likely second suit for opener. Support partner before the opponents raise the level.

What do you bid holding:
♠A Q 4 3 ♥A 10 7 3 ♦J 4 2 ♣9 6?

Answer: Bid 3♦. This shows a limit raise or better in spades.

What do you bid holding:
♠A 3 ♥K Q J 7 4 2 ♦A 4 2 ♣7 5?

Answer: Bid 3♣. This promises limit-raise values or better in hearts.

What do you bid holding:
♠10 3 ♥K Q 10 7 4 2 ♦8 4 2 ♣K 5?

Answer: Bid 3♥. You have a good six-card suit, and the upper end of a weak-two bid. You have described your hand and partner can decide how to proceed.

What do you bid holding:
♠7 4 ♥Q 4 2 ♦A J 4 3 ♣K J 7 4?

Answer: Double. You have defense against both of their suits and are short in partner's spade suit. You intend to double the minor suit that your LHO bids.

What do you bid holding:
♠J 3 ♣A 8 4 2 ♦K 8 4 ♣9 8 5 3?

Answer: Pass. You have a smattering of high-card points, but you have no bid that describes this hand. ❐