

# Unusual notrump

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In the [card game](#) of [bridge](#), the **unusual notrump** is a [conventional](#) bid showing two lower unbid suits.

When the right-hand opponent opens 1♥ or 1♠, the immediate overcall of 2NT shows at least 5-5 in the [minor suits](#) (that is, at least five clubs plus at least five diamonds) and, presumably, a weakish hand (6 to 11 [points](#)). If the next player passes, the partner is expected to select the minor suit that he/she prefers and bid it at the 3-level. The unusual notrump extends the principle that when the natural meaning of a bid is not generally very useful, it is profitable to agree that it means something somewhat opposite. That is, while natural notrump bids show a strong hand with balanced distribution, the unusual notrump shows a weak hand with very unbalanced distribution.

The unusual notrump is used only after the opponents open the bidding. In addition to succinctly describing the hand to the partner, it also deprives the opponents of a lot of bidding space (that is, it has a [preemptive](#) value).

Many players extend the convention to have it show the "two lowest unbid" suits rather than strictly the minors. Thus, over 1♣, 2NT shows diamonds and hearts; and over 1♦, it shows clubs and hearts.

If the 2 notrump bidder bids again freely, then it shows a *strong* [two suiter](#). To distinguish the weak and strong holdings, many partnerships agree *not* to use the unusual notrump for intermediate hands (about 12 to 14 points); they would simply overcall with one of their suits and show the other later if the bidding offers a chance. However, for two-suiters, many players apply [losing trick count](#) (LTC) instead of point count, as it more accurately depicts the offensive trick-taking potential of the hand. With LTC in effect, the required strength is about 4.5–7 losers, the latter only in favorable vulnerability.

Similarly, a 4NT overcall shows an extreme two suiter (usually at least 6-5, often 6-6 or 7-6) and enough trick-taking potential so that a 5-level contract can be made, or a sacrifice will likely be profitable. It shows the same two suits as 2NT would show. Note that 4NT is "unusual" only when the opponents open the bidding; otherwise, 4NT is normally played as the [Blackwood convention](#) or a quantitative invitation to 6NT.

The [Michaels cuebid](#) is a similar convention which is used to show a two suiter with one or both [major suits](#).

To counteract the unusual notrump, the opening side may employ [unusual vs. unusual](#).

## Modifications

Recently, the Unusual 2NT has been used in opening seat showing a 5-5 minor suited hand and 7-11 HCP. The preemptive value of the two suited hand puts pressure on the opponents to find their fits, games and slams at the three level.

## **Defense to 2NT (showing both minors) as an over call and an opening bid**

By opening or over calling 2NT you are given extra bids as well as the double.

An important principle is that of the corresponding Major - minor.

Spades - Diamonds

Hearts - Clubs

By cue bidding a minor you are showing a good holding in the corresponding Major while a bid of the Major shows a weaker holding.

After a 2NT Over Call of our Major

1H - 2NT - X = looking to penalize, no primary Major fit  
3C = good raise in H (8 losers or better)  
3D = sound values in S at the three level or better  
3H = weak raise in H but stretched (8½ to 9 losers)  
3S = 6S, not forcing  
3N = to play  
4m = splinter in support of H

1S - 2NT - X = looking to penalize, no primary Major fit  
3C = sound values in H at the three level or better  
3D = good raise in S (8 losers or better)  
3H = 6H, not forcing  
3S = weak raise in S but stretched (8½ to 9 losers)  
3N = to play  
4m = splinter in support of S

After a 2NT Opening:

2NT - X = able to penalize one of the minors or 20+ HCP  
3C = Take Out for the Majors, better H  
3D = Take Out for the Majors, better S  
3H = single suited in H, opening hand  
3S = single suited in S, opening hand

## **Drawbacks**

Due to the ease with which it is learned and used, it is among the most abused conventions: the convention is often used by players with insufficient strength or lengths (such as 5-4 in the minors).

This often leads to one of:

1. Opponents double and collect a heavy penalty.
2. Opponents outbid the bidders to obtain a major suit contract.
3. Opponents make a contract that is normally unmakeable due to forewarning of adverse distribution.