

The Michaels cuebid.

Michael Michaels (I'm not making this up) is attributed to be the inventor of the Michaels cuebid. We use Michaels to show two-suited hands with either both majors, OR, the unbid major and an unknown minor suit. The suits should have at least 5 cards each.

If the opponents open 1 ♣, a direct 2 ♣ overcall does not show clubs, it shows hearts and spades.

If the opponents open 1 ♦, a direct 2 ♦ overcall shows hearts and spades.

If the opponents open 1 ♥, a direct 2 ♥ overcall shows spades and EITHER clubs or diamonds.

If the opponents open 1 ♠, a direct 2 ♠ overcall shows hearts and EITHER clubs or diamonds.

When the Michaels cuebid shows a major and a minor, we can respond with 2 NT if we want partner to disclose their minor, usually because we do not have a fit in the major but do have good support for both minors.

1 ♥ - (2 ♥) - P - (2 NT); This 2 NT bid is not an attempt to play in 2 NT, it asks partner to bid their minor suit.

This 2 NT bid should be alerted. The Michaels cuebids should not be alerted.

When using Michaels, you should either have a weak hand (7 - 11 HCP) or a strong hand (16+ HCP). With intermediate hands (12-15 HCP), overcall the higher ranking suit, and then bid the lower suit at your next turn if it is appropriate. When you make a Michaels cuebid, partner will always bid assuming you have a weak hand. If you have a strong hand, you should bid again, to let partner know they can bid a game if they have some values.

If you have a hand in the weak category, your values should be in your suits.

♠ KQxxx ♥ KQxxx ♦ xx ♣ x - use Michaels

♠ KQxxx ♥ Txxxx ♦ Qx ♣ K - overcall 1 ♠

IMPORTANT - When is Michaels, *Michaels*? - Newer players are often confused as to whether a minor suit overcall that is a cuebid is natural or is Michaels. Different pairs have different agreements. What I recommend (this is Ted talking here), is that these bids are ALWAYS Michaels UNLESS they do not promise as many as 2 cards in the suit opened. This includes anytime where the opponents announce "could be short" but not shorter than 2. In lower level games, this is not a problem, as no one, or almost no one, will be playing a system where 1 ♣ or 1 ♦ may be shorter than 2 cards.

This is an important topic to discuss when filling out a card, or having a discussion with a long-term partner, perhaps after an accident. Pairs often get confused with whether or not this overcall cuebid is Michaels when the opponents announce that the opening bid could be short. See my advice above.

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

	♠ A Q	
	♥ J 10	
	♦ K Q J 8 6	
	♣ J 10 9 5	
♠ J 10 7		♠ K 9 8 6 5
♥ K		♥ A 8 7 6 5 4
♦ A 7 4 3		♦ 9
♣ Q 8 7 4 3		♣ 6
	♠ 4 3 2	
	♥ Q 9 3 2	
	♦ 10 5 2	
	♣ A K 2	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦
Pass	Pass	?	


Auction Commentary: East's 2 ♦ is the Michaels cuebid, which promises at least 5-5 in the majors when the opening bid is in a minor. East will have either a strong hand or a weak hand; with an intermediate hand, East will bid the higher ranking suit (spades) and then show (hearts) on the next round if appropriate. West has a preference for spades but not enough to invite opposite a minimum hand. East has no reason continue with minimum values, as West does not promise a fit, only a preference for spades, which could be a doubleton.

South has an awkward hand. A double of East's original 2 ♦ bid would show a desire to penalize the opponents, but they don't have strong enough cards in either major for that. They have to pass the first time. When it is their turn again, what should they do? We think they should double, to show partner they have values but couldn't bid previously. This is not a penalty double; if South wanted to penalize a spade contract, they would also have doubled 2 ♦, to alert partner that they were interested in penalizing the opponents, asking North not to bid when West makes their preference. North will show clubs, and South will go back to diamonds.

Should East give it up, or continue to compete? If East does compete, they should try 3 ♥, to show 5 spades and 6 hearts. West could be 2-2 in the majors, so East and West can still find their best fit.

Play Commentary: Against a diamond contract by North, East will likely lead a spade, and North will make 10 tricks. Against a spade contract by West, North will lead the ♦ K, and West will probably scramble home with 10 tricks on the favorable lie of the spade suit.

Board 3
 South Deals
 E-W Vul

<p>♠ K 8 7 6 5 ♥ A 9 8 7 6 ♦ 5 4 ♣ 3</p>		<p>♠ 4 3 2 ♥ J 2 ♦ Q 3 2 ♣ J 10 9 8 7</p>	<p>♠ A 9 ♥ K Q 10 5 ♦ 9 8 7 6 ♣ A K 5</p>
	<p>♠ Q J 10 ♥ 4 3 ♦ A K J 10 ♣ Q 6 4 2</p>		
<p><i>West</i></p>	<p><i>North</i></p>	<p><i>East</i></p>	<p><i>South</i></p>
<p>2 ♦ Pass</p>	<p>Pass Pass</p>	<p>4 ♥</p>	<p>1 ♦ Pass</p>

Auction Commentary: West's 2 ♦ bid is a Michael's cuebid, showing at least 5 cards in each major. This is truly the weakest hand West should have for this bid. East has a powerful hand with a large heart fit; they should not invite, as West with a minimum such as the one he holds will pass, but game will be nearly certain.

West is known to hold 10 cards in the majors and at most 3 cards in the minors. Since East has ♣ AK, they will have only 2 minor suit losers unless West is unlucky enough to be void in clubs. In hearts, there will only be a loser if West is missing the A♥, and in spades, there will only be 1 loser if West is missing the ♠ K. While either of these things is possible, both of them together are not. West should not be using Michaels with a hand such as ♠ QJxxx ♥ Jxxxx ♦ QJ ♣ Q.

Since game is certain, East should bid it, and not leave the decision up to their partner who does not know how strong East is.

After South cashes the ♦ AK to begin the hand, East will take the rest of the tricks by drawing trumps and ruffing the spades good.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

	♠ K Q J 10 9 6 2										
	♥ Q										
	♦ 9 6 3										
	♣ K Q										
♠ 7 4 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 8 6 3		♥ A J 10 5 4									
♦ A J 8		♦ K Q 10 5 4									
♣ 8 5 4		♣ J 9 3									
	♠ A 8 5										
	♥ 9 7 2										
	♦ 7 2										
	♣ A 10 7 6 2										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
	1 ♠	2 ♠	3 ♠								
4 ♥	4 ♠	5 ♥	5 ♠								
All pass											

Auction Commentary: East's 2 ♠ is the Michaels cue bid, which, over a major suit opening, shows 5+ of the other major and 5+ of a minor. South has a fit and some values and raises. West doesn't have good shape, but they do have good heart support, and if East's other suit is diamonds, the hands will fit very well together. So, West bids 4 ♥. North is a minimum in high cards, but has a seven-card suit, so the compete to 4 ♠. East, with one eye on the vulnerability and the other on his spade void, competes to 5 ♥. South has probably gone overboard; they showed their hand when they bid 3 ♠ originally and have nothing extra. No one doubles, and 5 ♠ becomes the final contract.

Opening Lead: ♥ A. We can lead an unsupported Ace here because partner has supported our suit. On a bad day, if we don't lead it, we won't get to take it. You should only do this when the contract is at least the five-level. West should discourage here, because they know that North has at most one heart. West wants East to shift. East shifts to the ♦ K, and they score a one trick set.

If South had passed, West would have been the declarer in 5 ♥.

Opening Lead, part two: ♣ K. At first glance, the ♠ K looks like the obvious choice. However, North knows, because South raised, that North-South can take at most 1 spade trick. There is some danger that East will be void in spades; they did bid on to the 5-level. Clubs are good for at least one trick, and maybe more.

Defensive Commentary (5 ♥): South encourages at trick 1, and North continues with the ♣ Q. The moment of truth. Count the clubs. If North has a third club, West will be out, and there is no hope of a third club trick. If North doesn't have a third club, how will we score our ♣ A? It's a trick question! We overtake the ♣ Q on the second round and play a third round. If West shows out, it is unlikely to cost anything. However, if West has the last club, North can ruff, and they beat the contract by one trick. If South lets the ♣ Q hold, declarer will have no trouble taking the rest of the tricks.