

Conventional Wisdom

Filling out the convention card — part 15

The 24-part *Conventional Wisdom* series is available online at www.acbl.org/play/conventionwisdom.html.



Natural

This is undoubtedly the least popular option among experienced players. When an opponent opens with a natural one-level bid, it's rare to hold a hand where you would want to bid two of the same suit as an offer to play in that strain, especially if the suit is a major.

A 1♣ or 1♦ opening may be made with three cards in the suit, so you might occasionally run into the situation where your RHO opens one of a minor and you have an opening hand with five or more cards in that minor with opening values. Using a 2♣ or a 2♦ cuebid of a 1♣ or a 1♦ opening, respectively, to show exactly that type of hand, however, isn't very productive, since (a) it doesn't happen very often and (b) there are other hand types that occur with greater frequency that you'd like to be able to describe.

If you do play that a direct cuebid is natural, however, you must Alert the opponents, since this is an unusual action. Check the appropriate **RED** box.

ALERT

DIRECT CUEBID

Left-hand opponent opens one of a suit, and your partner bids two of the same suit. This is a direct cuebid — but what does it mean? Does the meaning change depending on whether the suit is a minor or a major? This section of the convention card allows your partnership to describe your agreements for these direct cuebids.

There are three commonly used interpretations that you can apply to your direct cuebids: natural, strong takeout or two-suited takeout (Michaels).

DIRECT CUEBID		
OVER:	Minor	Major
Natural	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong T/O	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michaels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Michaels

By far, the most popular use for the direct cuebid in duplicate bridge is the two-suited takeout. Specifically, the conven-

tion known as Michaels (after its inventor, the late Mike Michaels) is the treatment of choice. Michaels works like this: a direct cuebid of a minor-suit opening shows a major two-suiter, 5-5 or longer. So the auction 1♣-(2♣) or 1♦-(2♦) shows a hand with five (or more) hearts and five (or more) spades. The strength requirements vary depending on partnership preferences.

After a major-suit opening, a direct cuebid shows five of the other major and a five-card minor. The sequence 1♠-(2♠), therefore, shows five hearts and an undisclosed five-card minor. If the partner of the cuebidder wants to know which minor, he bids 2NT and the Michaels bidder bids his minor suit.

No Alert is required. It's important to discuss continuations with your partner.

Strong T/O (Takeout)

In the early days of contract bridge, a direct cuebid was used to show a very powerful hand, something resembling a strong two-bid. Some players still prefer to use the direct cuebid to show a strong one-, two- or three-suiter. If you play this way, check the appropriate box. No Alert is required.

Note that this treatment is also rarely encountered in club and tournament play.



Note that if the opponents use a system where a one-of-a-minor opening is artificial (such as a Precision 1♣ opening), using a direct 2♣ bid in the natural sense is completely reasonable. So if RHO opens with a strong, artificial 1♣, and your partnership has agreed that a 2♣ call in this case actually shows clubs, no Alert is required.