

## Unusual Notrump

Author: Larry Cohen

Date of publish: June 2012 Level: Intermediate

The "Unusual notrump" is used to show a 2-suited hand. It is used after the opponents have opened the bidding. A jump overcall of 2NT shows at least 5-5 in the 2 lowest ranked unbid suits.

Opponent's opening bid	our bid	meaning	Or, if you prefer it in words:
1♣	2 NT	5+♦ and 5+♥	A 2NT jump overcall of a minor shows hearts and the other minor
1♦	2 NT	5+♣ and 5+♥	A 2NT jump overcall of a minor shows hearts and the other minor
1♥	2 NT	5+♣ and 5+♦	The big questions for Unusual notrump are:
1♠	2 NT	5+♣ and 5+♦	1) What strength? 2) What suit quality? 3) When does it apply?

### What Strength?

Usually, the Unusual 2NT is made with a preemptive (weakish hand, such as): ♠8 5♥2♦K J 9 4 3♣Q J 10 5 2. Not vulnerable, after the opponent's 1-of-a-major opening, I would bid 2NT with this hand (planning to accept whatever decision partner makes). If I were vulnerable, I'd like to have a little bit more. However, I could make an Unusual 2NT bid with a super hand such as : ♠5♥4♦A K Q J 2♣A Q J 9 8 2. This time my plan is to bid again after my partner chooses a minor.

There is a school of thought that Unusual notrump bids should be avoided with a medium hand such as: ♠4♥Q 6♦A K J 5 4♣K Q J 10 2. The thinking is that when partner chooses a minor, you won't know whether or not a game is in the picture. For that reason, many players choose to define the Unusual 2NT as "weak/preemptive or very strong--not in-between." There are pros and cons to this philosophy; suffice to say that you should discuss with your partner whether or not he adheres to this practice.

### What Suit Quality?

This depends a bit on your general preemptive philosophy. If you are an aggressive preemptor, your suit quality will obviously have the possibility to be worse than a sound preemptor's. I suggest that the vulnerability is the most important factor. Vulnerable against not, it wouldn't occur to me to commit an Unusual 2NT overcall after their 1♣ with, say: ♠5♥K J 8 7 2♦Q J 9 4 3 2♣2. At favorable vulnerability, I wouldn't mind an Unusual 2NT bid with those poorish suits. When Vulnerable, I like to have much better suits--better meat at the top. In all cases, 5-5 is the minimum distribution (although a former partner of mine would sometimes have 5-4...and I think I even recall 4-4). :)

### When is 2NT Unusual?

The unusual 2NT is NOT on after the opponents open a weak 2-bid. Over a weak 2♦/2♥/2♠, a 2NT overcall shows a balanced 15-18 with their suit stopped. The 2NT overcall is "unusual" after the opponents open any of these bids:

1♣/1♦/1♥/1♠/1NT/2♣. If the opponents bid and raise a major, then 2NT is unusual.

An overcall in notrump at the 3-level is always natural. An overcall on the four-level (see more below) in notrump is unusual, showing a 2-suited hand. (The 2 suits are presumed to be minors, but if the partner of the 4NT bidder chooses clubs and then the 4NT bidder bids diamonds, his 2 suits are diamonds and the other major). Example: 4♣-4NT;P-5♣-P-5♦ = ♦+♥

### Other/Advanced

Just as with any convention, you need to make sure if it is on:

- 1) By a Passed Hand (I recommend YES)
- 2) In balancing seat (I recommend NO -- a jump to 2NT in balancing seat should show 18-20 balanced)
- 3) After opponents bid 1 any--Pass--1 any (I recommend YES)
- 4) After the opponents bid and raise; for example 1♥-Pass-2♥ -- (I recommend YES).

Also, what if the opponents double your Unusual 2NT bid? What does partner's pass mean? His redouble? For example: 1♦ 2NT Double Pass -- (Recommendation: Pass of the double shows equal length in the two shown suits).

### High-Level

In competition, 4NT is usually unusual. For example, in each auction below, 4NT is takeout (assumed to be minors):

West North East South  
4♥ 4NT

West North East South  
1♠ Dbl 4♠ 4NT

In all of these auctions, 4NT is takeout. If the opponents suit was spades, then the "unusual" notrump is always minors. If their suit was spades, this might not be so. The partner assumes minors and bids accordingly, If he picks clubs and partner corrects to diamonds, then the 2-suiter is diamonds and hearts.

West North East South  
1♦ 4♠ Pass Pass  
4NT

Here, opener likely has 6+♦ and a 4-card suit on the side. East assumes it is clubs and if he has enough clubs to prefer clubs to diamonds he bids 5♣. If opener then removes to 5♦ it means 6+♦ and 4♥.

There are numerous other auctions where notrump bids in competition should be played as "unusual."