

# The Unassuming Cue Bid (UCB) response to partner's overcall

The auction has begun (1♥)-1♠-(P)-? Your partner has overcalled 1♠ and you have a fit. As we have seen, you should bid to the level of your spade fit (on pre-emptive grounds), even with virtually nothing. So the question arises: what do you do when you have a genuinely good hand with spade support?

The answer is to use a redundant bid, that of opener's suit, at the lowest level, to show 10+ points and three+ cards in support: 2♥ in the above auction. Or 2♦ in this auction: (1♦) - 1♠ - (2♣) - ? This is termed an Unassuming Cue Bid (UCB).

What would you bid in response to your partner's 1♥ overcall in this auction:  
(1♣) - 1♥ - (1♠) - ?

| Hand A      | Hand B       | Hand C       |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| ♠ A Q 6 4 2 | ♠ 8 3        | ♠ A Q 10     |
| ♥ Q 4 2     | ♥ Q 9 6 2    | ♥ Q J 10     |
| ♦ Q 4 2     | ♦ 7 4        | ♦ 10 9 7 4 2 |
| ♣ J 6       | ♣ K 10 8 4 2 | ♣ 8 7        |

(A). 2♣. (B). 3♥. (C). 2♣.

- Hand (A) is a perfect UCB: 10+ pts and three+ hearts. Partner can retreat to 2♥ with no game interest, or make another (descriptive) bid to look for game.
- With Hand (B) you should bid 3♥ – to the level of the fit, showing four hearts and 0-9 points.
- Hand (C) may not (quite) have 10 points, but those majors look fabulous, the spade honours sitting over the opposing spade bidder. Upgrade to a UCB. As usual, high card point ranges are guidelines, not fixed rules.

## Overcaller's Response to partner's Unassuming Cue Bid (UCB)

Overcaller knows that partner (the advancer) has 3+ card support and 10+ HCP. From now on, the Losing Trick Count is used to control the level that the auction can safely go to.

Given the wide range of the overcall, a 1 level overcall could (rarely) be made with as many as 9 losers, or with as few as 5 losers (e.g. with a 16 HCP hand and a void). It is reasonable to assume initially that a 2-level overcaller has 8 losers.

If the overcall was made at the 2 level (e.g. the opponents open 1♠ and partner overcalls 2♥), advancer should initially assume that that partner has overcalled with 7 losers.

If overcaller has a better than minimum UCB hand and a second 4 card suit lower ranking than the overcall suit, she can show her extra strength by bidding her second suit at the lowest available level, rather than by jumping to the 3-level in partner's suit. This can prove advantageous where the LTC shows that game is not likely – it may be possible to sign off one level lower.

For example:

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b>West North East South</b></p> <p>                  1♣   1♠</p> <p>Pass   2♣   Pass   ?</p> | <p><b>South</b></p> <p>♠ A Q 9 3 2</p> <p>♥ K J 3 2</p> <p>♦ 2</p> <p>♣ J 7 6</p>  | <p><b>Answer: 2♥</b></p> <p>North might only have 10-12 points for her UCB, but South has a 7 loser hand, and if North also has a 7 loser hand then 4♠ might well make. South could show her extra strength by jumping to 3♠, but can make a more economical bid by bidding her second suit, hearts. This shows extra strength, but keeps the bidding lower. North can show a minimum UCB hand by rebidding 2♠, which South will pass. If instead North jumps to 3♠, South can continue to 4♠.</p> |
| <p><b>West North East South</b></p> <p>                  1♣   1♥</p> <p>Pass   2♣   Pass   ?</p> | <p><b>South</b></p> <p>♠ K 9 7 4</p> <p>♥ K J 8 5 2</p> <p>♦ 10 6</p> <p>♣ K 3</p> | <p><b>Answer: 3♥</b></p> <p>North has made an unassuming cue bid (UCB), showing 8 losers or better. South has a better than minimum overcalling hand (7 losers) and shows this by jumping to 3♥. Note that although South has four spades there is no advantage in bidding 2♠ (as in the previous example) to show a better than minimum hand because it takes the bidding beyond 2♥.</p>  |

Note: The UCB is almost always used in response to partner's overcall **in a MAJOR**. When partner overcalls in a minor and you have 10+ HCP and support, your emphasis is usually on locating stoppers for No Trumps rather than seeking a contract in the minor.

You can test your understanding to the UCB and responses by using the **'Practise your UCB Bids'** exercise located in the NG34Bridge Reference Library:

[https://98df24e2-0a8d-40e9-8b52-336e46edc803.filesusr.com/ugd/15ed9f\\_dbfaf0aad6f54624bd72168b35c7624e.pdf](https://98df24e2-0a8d-40e9-8b52-336e46edc803.filesusr.com/ugd/15ed9f_dbfaf0aad6f54624bd72168b35c7624e.pdf)