

## 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. 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 (8 losers at most) 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: 11 pts (8 losers having downgrading the two red suits to a combined five losers because both queens are unprotected so are treated as half losers), 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. It has 8 ½ losers (the ♥Qxxx is treated as 2 ½ losers) and should be downgraded to 9 losers because there is no compensating positive feature elsewhere, such as in Hand (A), where two half losers can be regarded as one full loser).
- With Hand (C), only 9 HCP but just 8 losers. Those those majors look fabulous, the spade honours sitting over the opposing spade bidder.

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

Overcaller knows that partner (the advancer) has 3+ card support and 10+ HCP (8 losers at most). 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 1-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:**

<table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>West</b></td> <td><b>North</b></td> <td><b>East</b></td> <td><b>South</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♣</td> <td>1♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♣</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>?</td> </tr> </table>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>			1♣	1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass	?	<p><b>South</b></p> <p>♠ A Q 9 3 2          ♥ K J 3 2          ♦ 2          ♣ 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>
<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>											
		1♣	1♠											
Pass	2♣	Pass	?											
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<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>											
		1♣	1♥											
Pass	2♣	Pass	?											

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.