

Cue Bids and Q-Bids

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In contract bridge, a **cue bid** (also, **cuebid** or **cue-bid**, pronounced *queue-bid*) is a term that applies to two types of bids:

- 1) A bid of a suit that has already been bid by opponents.
- 2) A slam-investigating bid made during an auction's later rounds that shows control of a suit. This is a traditional use of the term, but in the early 21st century the usage appears to be giving way to *control bid*.

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I use the terms **Q-Bid or Control Bid** for the auctions with slam aspirations in which you wish to show controls (1st or 2nd round controls in specific suits). I use the term **Cue Bid** only for the bid of a suit already bid by the opponents. The latter is the focus of most of this lesson.

Q-Bids

In this context a control is 1st round control: Ace or void *or* 2nd round control: King or singleton.

The most common situation is a forcing auction where we have an agreed suit with adequate trumps. A bid of a new suit shows control in the bid suit and interest in slam or grand slam.

♠ AQJ	W E	♠ 95	West	East	It is unlikely, but possible, that we are off 2 club tricks. We are in the slam zone, but cannot bid Blackwood with 2 small clubs, so Q-Bidding is the answer. 3♠ shows a control and slam interest. Responder has no reason not to show the club control. Once we find out that we don't have 2 fast club losers we can carry on.
♥ AQJ62		♥ KT54	1♥	3♥	
♦ AK2		♦ QJ72	3♠	4♣	
♣ T3		♣ AJ3	4NT		

One major difficulty with **Q-Bids** is your partnership deciding when you can show 2nd round controls. Some partnerships **Q-Bid** 1st and 2nd round controls indiscriminately. Others start with 1st round controls and only show 2nd round controls after 1st round controls have been promised.

Blackwood should never be used with a 2-loser suit or with a void. Those hands are **Q-Bid** hands.

The difficulty is knowing whether a bid is a **Q-Bid** rather than a natural bid:

- ♣ We must have an agreed trump suit (leave Advance **Q-Bids** for the experts).
- ♣ Our trump suit must be at least eight cards. (After opener has bid two suits, a preference by responder may be on a doubleton)

- ♣ When there is no Major suit agreement, bids below 3NT are looking for a 3NT game. e.g. 1♦–3♦–3♠ would show a stopper, looking for 3NT. (If the opener later continues **Q-Bidding past 3NT**, then the 3♠ bid was also a **Q-Bid**.)
- ♣ We must be in a forcing auction. 1♥–2♥–3♣, while forcing to 3♥, is a game-try, not a **Q-Bid**.

Be warned that almost all expert pairs have had **Q-Bid** disasters, so set up simple rules for your partnership. It takes true experts like Marshal Miles and Eddie Kantar to get to 7♣ with AKx opposite void.

Another advanced **Q-Bidding** method is using 3NT as a **Q-Bid** when the fit is in a Major. Some use it as a trump **Q-Bid**. Others use it as either a serious slam try or non-serious slam try, with direct **Q-Bids** having the opposite meanings. Still others use it as a waiting move, indicating a big interest in hearing a **Q-Bid** from responder.

Cue Bids

There are several different situations where you bid a suit that was first bid by the opponents:

- ♦ You are using a convention to give a specific message (e.g. Michaels **Cue Bid**)
- ♦ The opponents bid was artificial and you want to bid the suit naturally (Over opponent's 2♣ strong; 3♣ by you shows clubs. The opponents bid 1NT–2♠ (Minor suit Stayman); A **Cue Bid** of 3♠ by you is natural)
- ♦ You are using the **Cue Bid** as a convention by coincidence (They open 1♦ and partner overcalls 1NT. You now bid 2♦ Jacoby Transfer, just as you would no matter which suit they opened)
- ♦ And most useful, we use the **Cue Bid** of their suit as a space saving weapon in our bidding arsenal.

The Direct Cue Bid

Times have changed and in 2007 Michaels **Cue Bids** have become as near universal as Stayman or Jacoby Transfers. Other choices include Top & Bottom **Cue Bids**, Colorful **Cue Bids** or old fashioned Strong T/O. Some even play a **Cue Bid** of a minor is natural.

Michaels Cue Bid:	(1m) – 2m	5 ⁺ – 5 ⁺ in Majors
	(1M) – 2M	5 ⁺ of Other Major + 5 ⁺ of unspecified minor
Top & Bottom:	(1m) – 2m	5 ⁺ ♠ – 5 ⁺ in other minor
	(1M) – 2M	5 ⁺ of Other Major + 5 ⁺ ♣

The Balancing Cue Bid

More people play this as a Strong T/O, than they would with a **Direct Cue Bid**, but most still play Michaels.

A new weapon in our bidding arsenal

The **Cue Bid** arises from competitive auctions. If we open and the opponents interfere they have caused us difficulty. First they have taken bidding room and second they have disrupted the normal flow of our bidding. Here is a partial list of reasons to compete when the opponents have opened the bidding:

- ♥ Finding a suit fit where your side has a partial or a game.
- ♥ Finding a suit fit where your side has an inexpensive save against their partial or a game.
- ♥ Directing a lead for your side, should you defend.
- ♥ Stealing the opponent's room, so their bidding is less accurate.
- ♥ Combining a) and b) you may steal the contract and make something when they can make a contract.
- ♥ Disrupting the normal meaning(s) of the opponents bidding (flow).

Along with advantages, there are always risks, including:

- ♠ Getting in the auction when the opponents have opened has more risk of a penalty than when you open the bidding.
- ♠ You may buy the contract and go down, when the opponents were destined to go set themselves.
- ♠ You may direct a lead for your side that is the wrong lead.
- ♠ Your bid may give the opponents information that helps their bidding accuracy.
- ♠ If the opponents buy the contract, your competition may give them information as to the placement of HCP and distribution that will help them declare.
- ♠ The competition may give them more accurate tools in the bidding

Let us be perfectly clear, I recommend, as do all good players, that you must compete. It is a bidder's game (and to quote Jeff Mekstroth "... and bidders have more fun"). Having said that, you will do better if you are aware of the risks and rewards, and therefore can compete intelligently.

When the opponents compete with a double, you have two new tools. First you may redouble. Second and less commonly thought of, you may pass, and usually get another chance to bid.

When the opponents overcall, you also have two new tools. You may double and you may **Cue Bid** the opponent's suit. Also, you might double or bid and plan on **Cue Bidding** on the next round of bidding.

Another **Cue Bid** situation is when they open and you double or overcall. The **Cue Bid** of their suit is available as a descriptive tool.

Used correctly, cuebids are invaluable. Work them out with your favorite partner. With unfamiliar partners, use them sparingly and only in the obvious situations. With very weak partners, try and avoid cuebids entirely. You may as well play the hand yourself -- and preferably not in the opponents' suit.

Introduction to Competitive Bidding (1984)
By Charles H. Goren and Ronald Von der Porten
p.57

The theory of using the Cue Bid of the opponents suit as an artificial device is grounded in the idea that once the opponents have shown length and strength in a suit, it is very, very unlikely that you should ever want to play in that suit.

The exceptions are situations where the opponents may have 3 small cards or 4 small cards in their bid suit. In other words, if they open a minor, or in the second case when they respond one of a Major.

The opponents overcall

Almost always, the modern interpretation of a **Cue Bid** here is a raise of partner. Most play it a limit raise or better. If we are already at the game level, the **Cue Bid** shows game values. Here are the types of auctions:

1S – (2H) – 3H	Limit raise or better of Spades
1C – (1D) – 2D	Limit raise or better of Clubs
1C – (2S) – 3S	Game forcing raise of Clubs
1H – (3D) – 4D	Game forcing raise of Hearts (3H=6-9; 4H=10-13; 4D=14+)

Opener treats partner's bid as showing a limit raise in their suit and signs-off, places the contract in game or makes some other forward going bid. The last example is somewhat different, and would show a strong raise to 4H.

There are still a few dinosaurs around who **Cue Bid** when the opponents overcall just to announce to the world that they have an opening hand. I call this the **Nebulous Cue Bid**. All they manage to do is waste a round of bidding without helping to find the best contract. When the opponents overcall and you do not have a fit, you have four choices other than **Cue Bidding**: Pass, Raise, Double or Bid a new suit.

The use of this **Cue Bid** frees up another bid. The jump raise may now have a new meaning. Two sensible uses are to play it as a pre-emptive raise (4/5 trumps and ~ 0-7 HCP) or to play it as a mixed raise (4 trumps and single raise strength: ~ 7-9 HCP). You may even choose to play the jump raise as a limit raise and the **Cue Bid** as a game forcing raise.

Cue Bids also occur when the opponent's have implied suits as with Michaels, Cappelletti, Landy and the Unusual NT.

1H – (2H*) – 2S	* Michaels; 2S Cue-bid = limit raise or better in hearts
1S – (2NT*) – 3C	* Unusual NT; 3C Cue-bid = forcing heart bid (3H=9-11)
1S – (2NT*) – 3D	* Unusual NT; 3D Cue-bid = limit raise or better in S (3S=6-9)
1C – (2C*) – 2H	* Michaels; 2H Cue-bid ; different possible meanings
1C – (2C*) – 2S	* Michaels; 2S Cue-bid ; different possible meanings
1NT – (2D*) – 2H	* Cappelletti for Majors; 2H Cue-bid ; different possible meanings
1NT – (2D*) – 2S	* Cappelletti for Majors; 2S Cue-bid ; different possible meanings

They open and you overcall

The problem arises because although you have most of the same bids available to respond to the overcall as you would have to respond to partner's opening bid, the situation is different. The overcall may be lighter than an opening bid. Therefore you may have to tread gently; invite rather than blast; inquire rather than leap. Additionally, there is sometimes less room than with an opening bid (1S-2H overcall).

NEW TERM: The partner of the overcaller or doubler is called the Advancer. So the four people in a competitive auction are opener, overcaller, responder and advancer **or** opener, doubler, responder and advancer.

Here the exact meaning of the **Cue Bid** by advancer is dependent on another agreement.

How do we play a new suit response to an overcall? Is it non-forcing, non-forcing constructive (my choice) or forcing?

If we play a new suit is forcing, then a **Cue Bid** by advancer guarantees a fit for the overcaller. If we play a new suit is constructive but non-forcing, a **Cue Bid** is either a fit or a good hand that you can't risk overcaller passing a new suit. If we play a new suit is non-forcing, a **Cue Bid** is any good hand, with or without a fit.

When advancer **Cue-Bids**, the first obligation of the overcaller is to define the range of their hand. Holding any minimum overcall they must rebid their suit, even with no extra length. With extra values (i.e. approximately an opening bid or better) they make any other bid, hopefully their most natural bid.

Responding to a takeout double needs some extra bids. Unlike responding to an opener, advancer here might have no HCP. A suit bid is 0-7 HCP, a jump is about 8-11 HCP and a **Cue-Bid** is 12+ HCP.

In many other situations, when you **Cue Bid**, you promise another bid. In many sequences, a **Cue Bid** creates a game force. In some sequences a **Cue Bid** just shows a particular type of hand.

What exceptions are there to the promise to bid again after Cue bidding?

1H – (2C) – 3C This only promises at least a limit raise, so responder may well pass a 3H rebid.

(1C) – 1S – (P) – 2C This shows some values, but may be limited and might pass overcaller's minimum rebid.

(3D) – Dbl – (P) – 4D Here there is no promise to bid again, not even really a promise of strength, just probably both Majors, although it might be a slam try with any suit.

When is a Cue Bid a game force?

1C – (1H) – Dbl – (Pass)
1S – (Pass) – 2H

1C – (1D) – 1S – (Pass)
2C – (Pass) – 2D

**PRINCIPLE: A CUE BID BY RESPONDER AFTER
THE FIRST RESPONSE IS GAME FORCING**

(1D) – Dbl – (Pass) – 1H
(Pass) – 2D

A new suit would be strong; A jump in a new suit would be natural and forcing, so life is easier if the **Cue Bid** is game forcing, as if the doubler opened 2C

(1H) – Dbl – (Pass) – 2H

This is nearly Game Forcing. It shows 12+ HCP, but since the doubler may be light with perfect distribution, some sequences can end short of game.

(1H) – Dbl – (Pass) – 2H
(Pass) – 2S – (Pass) – 2NT

non-forcing

(1H) – Dbl – (Pass) – 2H
(Pass) – 2S – (Pass) – 3C

FORCING

(1H) – Dbl – (Pass) – 2H
(Pass) – 2S – (Pass) – 3C
(Pass) – 3S – (Pass) – 4C

non-forcing

(1H) – Dbl – (Pass) – 2H
(Pass) – 2S – (Pass) – 3S

FORCING

When is a Cue Bid natural?

(1C) – Pass – (1H) – 2C

With the unbid suits I can dbl or bid 2NT.
Opener may have C 854.

On the SAYC yellow card it states that: “A cuebid overcall when the opponents have bid two suits is natural in either suit.”

(1C) – Pass – (1H) – 2H

With the unbid suits I can dbl or bid 2NT.
Responder may have H 9873.

Pass

(1C) – Pass – (1H) – 2C

With the unbid suits I can dbl, bid 1NT or 2NT.

1C – (1S) – Pass – (Pass)
Dbl – (Pass) – Pass – (2D)
Pass – (Pass) – 2S

I showed good spades when I converted partner’s reopening takeout double to penalty; 3D is available as a forcing **Cue Bid**. Some would play 2S natural, but also forcing.

(1S) – Dbl – (Pass) – Pass
(2C) – Pass – (pass) – 2S

I showed good spades when I passed the double; 3C is available as a forcing **Cue Bid**.

(1C) – 3C

Most people play this as Natural and pre-emptive. If the suit was a Major, most people play this jump **Cue Bid** is asking for a stopper for 3NT.

CUE BIDS---Whenever we are stuck for a bid, bidding opponents suit is always forcing for 1 round. When we bid opponents suit we are telling partner that we have an interest in moving towards game or maybe slam. Partner is responsible for telling us more about his hand, whether it is a good hand or a minimum hand. **Cue Bids** tend to show a limit raise hand or better, only 1 round force, but generally are unlimited. **CUE BIDS** will have a different meaning on different occasions.

There are many different meanings for **CUE BIDS**. For now we will use **Cue Bids** to show at least a limit raise or better hand. It is always forcing for a least 1 round.

Partner	You	Pard	RHO	You	LHO
♠KQ92	♠A8764	pass	1♦	1♠	2♣
♥A542	♥86	2♦*	pass	?	
♦87	♦K54				
♣964	♣AQJ				

Partner's 2♦* is a **Cue Bid** in support of your Spades. Partner has exactly a limit raise since he is a passed hand. By **Cue Bidding** their suit instead of jumping to 3♠ to show a limit raise allows us to stay at the 2 level if the overcall is light. You can either return to 2♣ or investigate for a game at a lower level. Now we can make a game try with our good hand.

Partner	You	Pard	RHO	You	LHO
♠732	♠65	pass	pass	1♥	1♠
♥KJ65	♥AQ1098	2♠*	pass	2NT*	pass
♦987	♦6	3♣*	pass	4♥	pass
♣AQ2	♣KJ987	pass	pass		

2♠*- partner I have a limit raise in ♠, at least 3 card support.

2NT* - Help suit game try

3♣* - Partner I have help in ♣

4♥- Just what the doctor ordered

By being able to **Cue Bid** to show our limit raise at the 2 level, it allows us to pinpoint our values to determine whether there is game or not. This method allows us to investigate for a game while leaving us room to stop at the 3 level.

A **Cue Bid** of opponent's suit tends to show a limit raise or better. A **Cue Bid** is a very useful tool. When we have a good hand and want to make a forcing bid, a **Cue Bid** is the easiest way to start. You can use **Cue Bids** to try for game or slam.

Sometimes a Cue Bid may even be a Q-Bid!

Remember the A.S.B.A.F principle. All Strange Bids Are Forcing.

These notes are available at:

<http://www.reginabridge.com/index.php?topic=handouts&title=Bridge%20Handouts>