

Cue-Bidding

There are various types of cue-bids. The two main ones are:

1. Bidding a suit bid by the opponents to show a certain type of hand
2. Bidding a new suit at a high level, when a trump suit has been agreed

In this section we are going to be concerned with the latter.

What does a cue-bid show?

A cue shows a 'control' in the suit bid i.e. the ability to win the trick if that suit is led.

You can show first- or second-round controls.

A first-round control is an Ace or a void. A second-round control is a King or a singleton.

Suppose this is the auction:

Partner	You
1♣	3♣
4♦	

The 4♦ bid is a cue-bid and says that partner has either ♦A or a diamond void. It also denies first round control in Clubs which would be a cheaper bid. Since partner did not say 4♣ he has not got first round control in that suit.

How you respond depends on your hand, but you might cue-bid back 4♥, which show first-round heart control (either the Ace or a void).

Some experts show first and second round controls at the same time, but I recommend that you show your first-round controls first and then show your second-round controls.

Why would you use a cue-bid?

Cue-bids can be used alongside and along with Blackwood. Both can be used on the same hand. However some hands are not suitable for Blackwood as we have previously seen, and then cue-bids are the answer.

Typical hands where Blackwood is not suitable are:

1. Weak side suits - a suit of two or more cards without the Ace or King
2. The response would take you too high - usually this happens when a minor suit has been agreed
3. When you hold a void - you do not know which Ace partner holds.

When is a bid a cue-bid?

A bid becomes a cue-bid when BOTH a suit has been agreed, AND ALSO the partnership is committed to at least the game level.

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
1♣	2♣	1♣	2♣
3♦		4♥	

Here you are not committed to game
(you could stop in 3♣) and the 3♦ bid
is some sort of game try.

Here a suit has not been
agreed. The 4♥ bid offers
alternative game contracts

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
1♣	3♣	1♣	2♦
4♦		2♥	3♥

Here you are committed to game
and the 4♦ bid is a cue-bid.

Here a suit has been agreed
and the 4♣ bid is a cue-bid.

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
2NT	3♦	2NT	3♣
4♣		3♠	4♦
Here Hearts are agreed by implication and 4♣ is a cue-bid.		Here Spades are agreed by Implication and 4♦ is a cue-bid.	
Both of these two examples show an advance cue-bid ie a bid at the four level implicitly agreeing a suit.			

Weak side suits – Blackwood not suitable

As a responder to a cue-bid, always try to work out why your partner is cue-bidding (ie why didn't he use Blackwood)

Suppose this is your hand:

♠ K Q J 4 3 2
♥ Q 4 2
♦ K Q 3
♣ A

You open 1♠ and partner responds 3♠. What next? You have a power-house. 17hcp, an excellent 6 card suit and a singleton. Partner has 10-12 and trump support and you should be hopeful of a slam. However if you bid Blackwood and partner shows two Aces, there could still be two top losers in the Heart suit. How would you know? The answer is that you wouldn't. With some hands for partner you would want to be in the slam and with some others you would want to stop at the five level. The problem is that for slam we need some sort of control in every suit and we do not have control of the Heart suit. Blackwood will not tell us if partner has a control there and so we start cue-bidding by bidding 4♣ (showing first-round club control). Partner replies 4♦ showing first-round diamond control (presumably the Ace), but this doesn't answer the question we want answered. So we bid 5♣ (showing second-round club control). But there is an implication that it is the Heart suit that we are worried about.

Let's look at two possible hands for partner:

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
♠ K Q J 4 3 2	♠ A 9 8 5
♥ Q 4 2	♥ 7 6
♦ K Q 3	♦ A J 9 2
♣ A	♣ Q J 7
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
5♣	?

Here partner should know that you are looking for a Heart guard. He hasn't got one so should sign off in 5♣. This contract should make comfortably.

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
♠ K Q J 4 3 2	♠ A 9 8 5
♥ Q 4 2	♥ K 6
♦ K Q 3	♦ A T 9 2
♣ A	♣ 9 8 3
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
5♣	?

This time partner has secondary Heart control and should bid 6♠. This contract is not a certain make (you might not have had the ♥Q), but should always have at least a 50% chance. Notice that partner should not bid 5♥ as this would imply that he had ♥A, an excellent hand and was looking for a grand slam.

The Blackwood response would take you too high

Suppose this is your hand:

♠ K
♥ K Q T 7 2
♦ A 4
♣ A K Q 4 2

This is a good hand with 21hcp and two five card suits. You open 1♥ and, over partner's 1♠ response, jump to 3♣. Partner then supports you to 4♣. If you bid (RKCB) Blackwood now and partner has no Aces, he will respond 5♦ and you will be too high as you want to play in 5♣. Instead you should cue-bid 4♦.

Let's look at some possible hands for partner:

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
♠ K	♠ Q J T 9 5 3
♥ K Q T 7 2	♥ J 5
♦ A 4	♦ Q
♣ A K Q 4 2	♣ J 9 7 3
1♥	1♠
3♣	4♣
4♦	5♣ (a sign-off, missing two Aces)

You

♠ K
♥ K Q T 7 2
♦ A 4
♣ A K Q 4 2

1♥
3♣
4♦
6♣ (♥A missing, the losing ♦ goes on ♠A)

Partner

♠ A J T 8 5
♥ 8 5
♦ K 4
♣ J 9 7 3

1♠
4♣
4♠ (showing ♠A)

You

♠ K
♥ K Q T 7 2
♦ A 4
♣ A K Q 4 2

1♥
3♣
4♦
5♥ (showing ♥K and looking for the Grand)
7♣ (the losing ♦ goes on ♠A)

Partner

♠ A T 8 5 4
♥ A 5
♦ J 4
♣ T 9 7 3

1♠
4♣
4♥ (showing ♥A)
5♠ (showing ♠A)

Hands with a void – NEVER use Blackwood with a void

You should never use Blackwood if holding a void as partner's response may be the Ace of your void or it may not.

Suppose this is your hand:

♠ (void)
♥ A K 9 8 7 2
♦ K Q J 5
♣ K 8 3

After opening 1♥ partner jumps to 3♥. Partner will hold (at least) four card Heart support and it is not unreasonable to assume no losers there. It is not unreasonable to think that slam might be on if partner has a minor suit Ace. If you bid Blackwood and partner shows one Ace you will not know if it is in a minor suit or Spades. Bid 3♠ (showing first-round control) and see what partner replies.

Here are some possible hands:

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
♠ (void)	♠ K 8 6 3
♥ A K 9 8 7 2	♥ Q 6 5 3
♦ K Q J 5	♦ A 3
♣ K 8 3	♣ Q 9 7
1♥	3♥
3♠ (first-round control)	4♦ (first-round control, probably ♦A)
6♥	

Partner's clubs will go on your diamonds and the only loser is ♣A.

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
♠ (void)	♠ A K 8
♥ A K 9 8 7 2	♥ Q 6 5 3
♦ K Q J 5	♦ 7 6
♣ K 8 3	♣ Q 9 7 6

1♥	3♥
3♠ (first-round control)	4♥

Pass

Partner should not be happy when he hears your cue-bid – there is a clash of values with his top cards opposite your void. With no Ace to show outside Spades he should therefore sign off in 4♥ which you should quietly pass.

Cue-Bidding before using Blackwood

It is possible to both cue-bid and use Blackwood on the same bidding sequence. There are normally two possible cases:

1. When cue-bidding has allowed you to keep the bidding low (below 4NT)
2. When your weak suit has been cue-bid.

When Cue-Bidding keeps the bidding below 4NT

Suppose this is your hand:

♠ A K 8 7 6
♥ K Q 3
♦ 3
♣ A K 8 2

Over your 1♠ opening partner raises to 3♠. Game is on, but try bidding 4♣ (showing first-round control) and see what happens. Here are some possible hands for partner:

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
♠ A K 8 7 6	♠ Q J T 4
♥ K Q 3	♥ J 7 4 2
♦ 3	♦ K Q J
♣ A K 8 2	♣ Q 6
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♠

Pass

Here you could use Blackwood on the second round, but by cue-bidding we learn that partner does not have first-round control in either red suit so we can rest in 4♠. A contract of 5♠ might go off with a Heart ruff.

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
♠ A K 8 7 6	♠ Q J T 4
♥ K Q 3	♥ 9 2
♦ 3	♦ A J 7 4
♣ A K 8 2	♣ Q J 6
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
4NT	5♣ (one key card)
6♠	

This time partner can show ♦A in a cue-bid and you can then use RKCB to go on to slam.

Using Blackwood when your weak suit has been cue bid

Suppose this is your hand:

♠ A K 8 7 6
♥ 2
♦ 3 2
♣ A K Q J 3

You open 1♠ and partner raises to 3♠. You cannot use Blackwood as, if partner has only one Ace, you cannot know which one it is. So you cue-bid 4♣.

Here are some possible hands for partner:

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
♠ A K 8 7 6	♠ Q J T 4
♥ 2	♥ K 8 3
♦ 3 2	♦ A 9 7 4
♣ A K Q J 3	♣ 9 8
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
4NT	5♣ (one key card)
6♠	

You cannot use Blackwood because of your weakness in diamonds, so you start with a 4♣ cue-bid. However, when you hear partner bid 4♦ you know your weakness is covered, so you can use RKCB and then bid on to the excellent slam.

You

♠ A K 8 7 6

♥ 2

♦ 3 2

♣ A K Q J 3

1♣

4♣

5♣

5♣

Partner

♠ Q J T 4

♥ A K 8

♦ T 9 7 4

♣ 9 8

3♣

4♥

5♥

Without the diamond cue-bid, you would continue cue-bidding to try to find out whether partner had second-round control of diamonds. When partner can only cue-bid hearts (showing first- and second-round control, and denying a diamond control) you can be sure that there are two diamond losers and that the slam is not on.

Do not mistake a cue-bid for a game try

Partner You

1♣ 2♣

3♦

This is a game-try. You can still stop in 3♣.

Partner You

1♣ 2♣

4♦

This is a cue-bid. You are committed to playing in at least 4♣.

However, there can be a little confusion when bidding the minors (e.g. 1♣ - 3♣). You should start by assuming that partner is trying for no-trumps; then if he does not bid 3NT but a suit at the four level, you know he is cue-bidding and trying for a slam, and you proceed accordingly.

Eg

Partner You

1♣ 3♣

3♥

Here it looks as though partner is headed towards 3NT and that the 3♥ bid is a game-try. You will probably bid 3♣, 3NT or 4♣ accordingly. However if, over 3♣ or 3NT, partner bids a suit at the four level, it means he was cue-bidding and 3♥ shows first-round Heart control.