

Cue Bids- Communicating in Competition

When we learned the basics of bridge, we learned bidding systems to help describe our hands to our partner. The goal of bidding was to find the correct strain for the contract (a suit when we have a fit, and No Trump when we don't) and the correct level for the contract (part score, game, or slam).

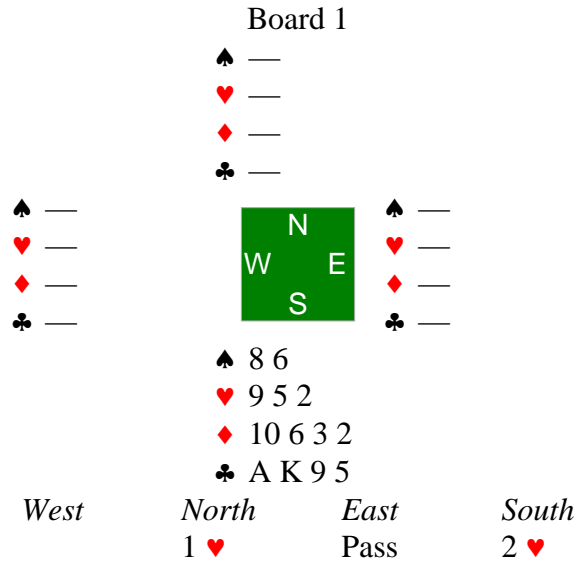
Bidding becomes much more difficult when the opponents interfere with our established systems (and today, most opponents interfere). And that is where the Cue Bid comes in. It helps us describe our hand to our partner.

A Cue Bid is when you bid a suit that the opponents have already bid. The Cue Bid will have special meaning. With very rare exception, it does not mean we want to play in the opponents suit. **A Cue Bid is always forcing- partner may not pass!**

Cue Bids are not the same as Control Bids. Control Bids occur after partnership has bid and agreed on a suit and then bids other suits where they have a control (A or K) to explore for slam. Many players call these control bids Cue Bids, but they are not the same.

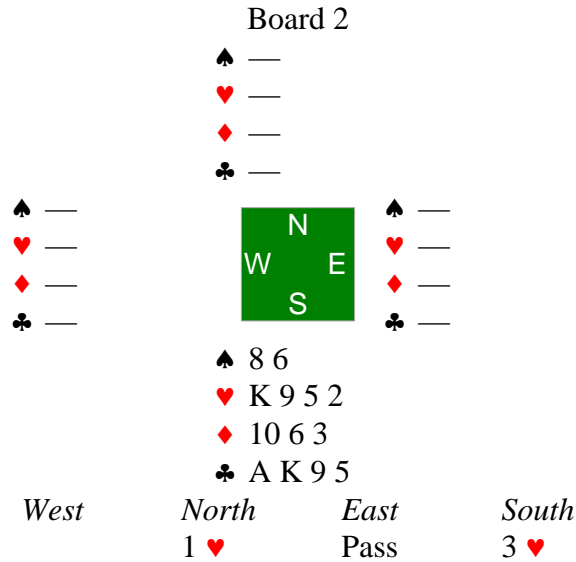
We are going to talk about 5 uses for Cue Bids:

- ♠ For Responder or Advancer to show a limit raise or better
- ♠ For Advancer when partner makes a takeout double
- ♠ After a 1 NT opening bid, a Cue Bid by Responder means Stayman
- ♠ Cue Bids after opponents use a convention (Michaels or Unusual 2 NT)
- ♠ Higher level Cue Bids



North is dealer and opens 1 ♥. East passes. South has 7 HCPs and 3 hearts and makes a normal raise to 2 ♥. The bid says South has 6-9 points and at least 3 heart support.

Now, North opens 1 ♥ and East overcalls 1 ♠. What should South bid? South should bid 2 ♥, sending the same message as before.



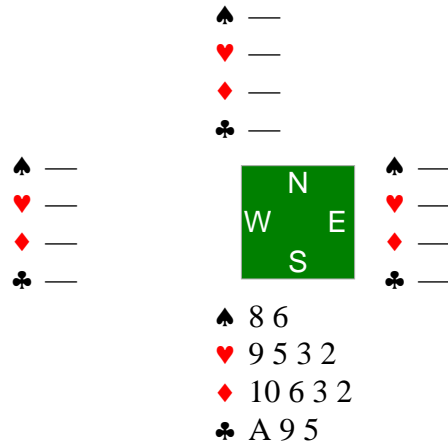
North is dealer and opens 1 ♥. East passes. South has 10 HCPs and 4 hearts and makes a standard jump raise to 3 ♥. The bid says South has 10-11 points and promises at least 4 heart support. Note that with only 3 hearts, South would have to bid 1 NT first and then jump to 3 ♥.

Now, North opens 1 ♥ and East overcalls 1 ♠. What should South bid? South should bid 2 ♠, a Cue Bid. The message in that bid says that South has a limit raise or better in support of hearts. South would also Cue Bid 2 ♠ with 10-11 points and only 3 hearts. The Cue Bid can't distinguish between a 3 card and a 4 card limit raise.

The other advantage of South making a Cue Bid of 2 ♠ is that West as Advancer can no longer bid 2 ♠ to support East's overcall.

If South had a game going hand (add in a Q), they would Cue Bid first and then jump to game.

Board 3



♠ 8 6
 ♥ 9 5 3 2
 ♦ 10 6 3 2
 ♣ A 9 5

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♥	Pass	Pass

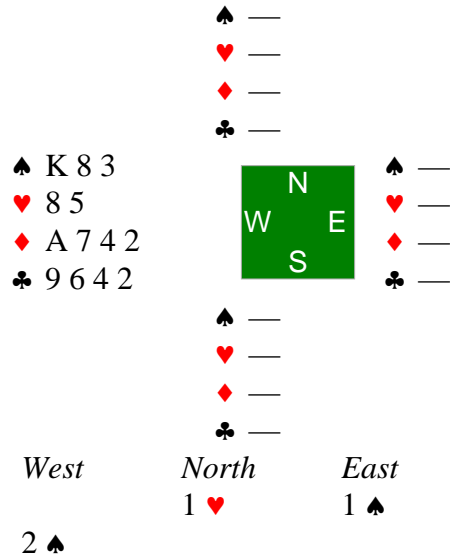
North opens the bidding 1 ♥ and East passes. With a poor hand, South will also pass.

Now, North opens 1 ♥ and East bids 1 ♠. With this interference, South can now show his weak hand and heart support. South should bid 3 ♥. With 5 hearts and a singleton, South could bid 4 ♥. These bids show a weak hand with length in hearts. After East's interference, the Cue Bid is the only strong bid South can make.

1 ♥ - P - ?

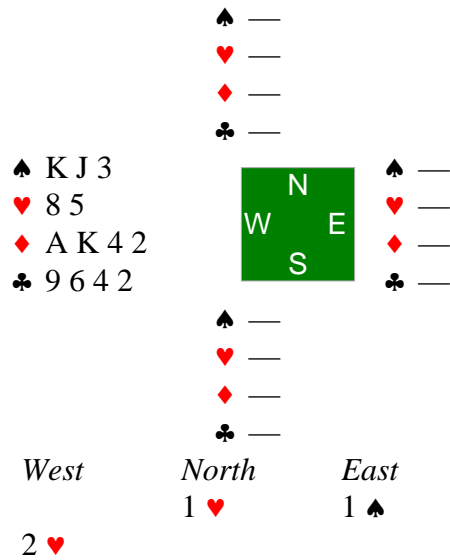
- 2 ♥- shows 6-9 points and 3+ hearts
- 2 ♠- shows 10 or more points and 3+ hearts
- 3 ♥/4 ♥- shows <6 points and 4/5 hearts

Board 4



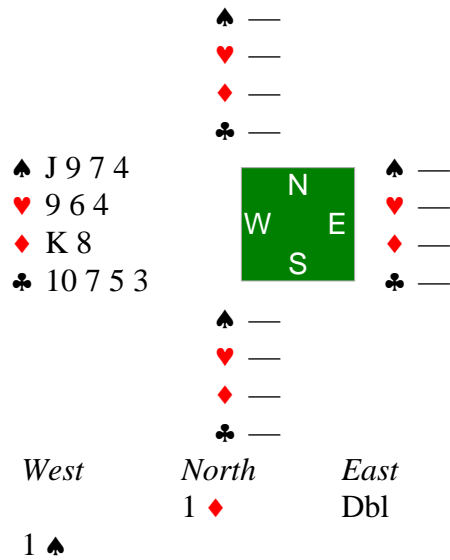
North opens the bidding 1 ♥. East overcalls 1 ♠ and South passes. West is the Advancer and should bid 2 ♠. Why should West bid 2 ♠? Game is unlikely, but it is possible. Also, it is important to tell partner you have some points and a fit for her suit so she knows whether or not to compete if NS continue bidding.

Board 5



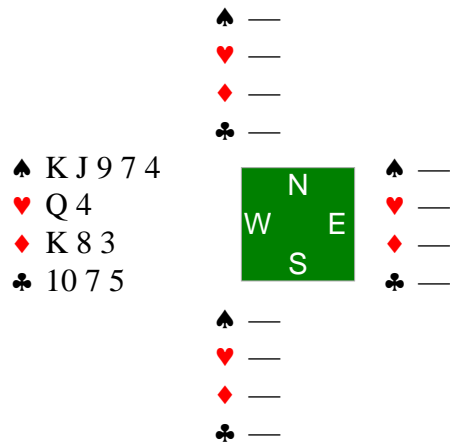
North opens 1 ♥ and East overcalls 1 ♠ and South passes. Now, West has a limit raise in support of spades. West should bid 2 ♥, a Cue Bid. The Cue Bid is even more important for the Advancer to make since East, as Overcaller, may only have 7 HCPs. This lets the partnership stop in 2 ♠ if East has a weak overcall, and it allows East to go to game with a strong overcall. Also, it keeps North or South from bidding 2 ♥ if they intended to do that.

Board 6



North opens 1 ♦ and East bids a takeout double. South passes, so West must come up with a bid. Even with a poor hand, West must bid something since the hand is not strong enough to pass and convert the takeout double to penalty. West's best bid is 1S since East should have at least 3 spades to make a takeout double. The rule is with 0-8 HCPs, advance a takeout double with the cheapest bid in a long suit.

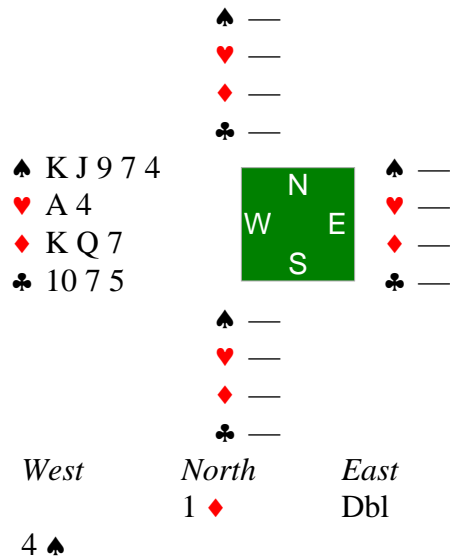
Board 7



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Dbl	Pass
2 ♠			

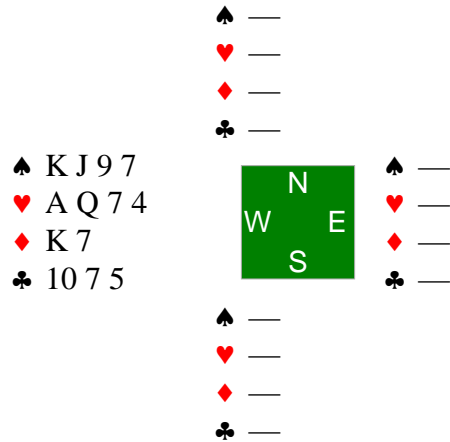
Same bidding as board 6, but this time West has 9 HCPs and a nice spade suit. A jump to 2 ♠ says Advancer has 9-11 HCPs and a good suit.

Board 8



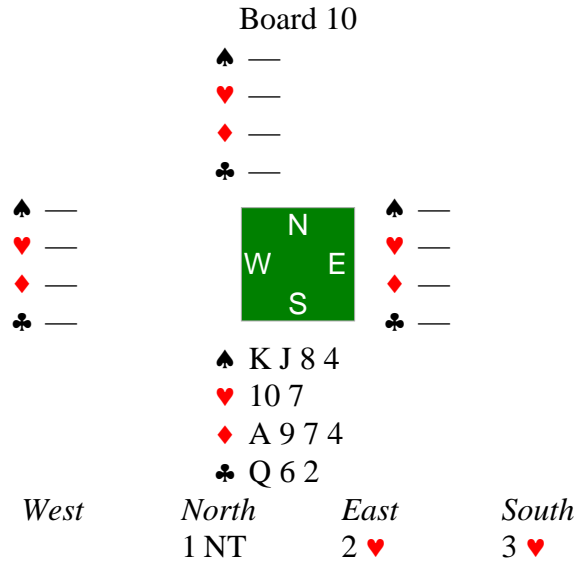
East's takeout double shows and opening hand and at least 3 cards in the other unbid suits. Since West has 13 HCPs and five spades, she should bid game directly.

Board 9

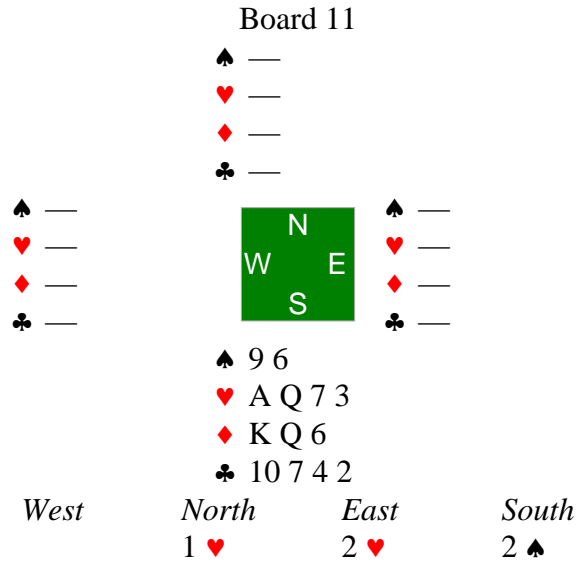


<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Dbl	Pass
2 ♦			

Similar to the last auction, West has points for game but is not certain where to play. She could guess game in one of the majors, but she might find herself in a 4-3 fit at the four level. The correct bid is a Cue Bid of 2 ♦. This bid tells East that the side has points for game, but West is not sure of the best strain. East will choose.



North opens a strong No Trump (15-17 HCPs) and East bids 2 ♥ (natural). South's Cue Bid of 3 ♥ is Stayman, asking if North has 4 spades. This Cue Bid in Standard American is Stayman. Note that South should have at least 9 HCPs, since North will bid to game, either 4 ♠ or 3 NT. Also, it does not say if either North or South have a heart stopper, so this bid is someone risky. More advanced partnerships play Lebensohl over interference.



North opens the bidding 1 ♥. South plans on bidding 3 ♥ to show a limit raise with 4 trumps. East, however, bids 2 ♥, a Michaels Cue Bid showing spades and a minor. How can South show a limit raise?

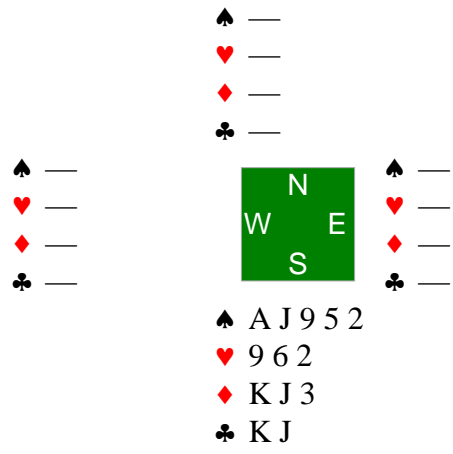
South should Cue Bid East's suit (spades), not the convention he bid. South's bid of 2 ♠ shows a limit raise or better (either 3 or 4 card support- can't specify with this bid). A bid of 3 ♥ or 4 ♥ by South would be preemptive, showing a weak hand with 4 or 5 trump support.

Board 12

♠ —		♠ —
♥ —		♥ —
♦ —		♦ —
♣ —		♣ —
♠ —	<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ —
♥ —		♥ —
♦ —		♦ —
♣ —		♣ —
	♠ 9 6	
	♥ A Q 7 3	
	♦ K Q 6	
	♣ 10 7 4 2	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
	1 ♥	2 NT
		3 ♣

This time, East interferes with North's 1 ♥ opener with 2 NT, the Unusual NT convention, that shows the two lowest unbid suits (♣ and ♦). (South should ask what 2 NT means, because some partnerships may play it differently). To show a limit raise or better in support of hearts, South Cue Bids 3 ♣, one of East's suits). This is called "Unusual over Unusual". The 3 ♣ Cue Bid shows a limit raise in hearts. A 3 ♦ Cue Bid shows a limit raise for spades.

Board 13



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	1 ♥	1 ♠
2 ♥	3 ♦	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	?		

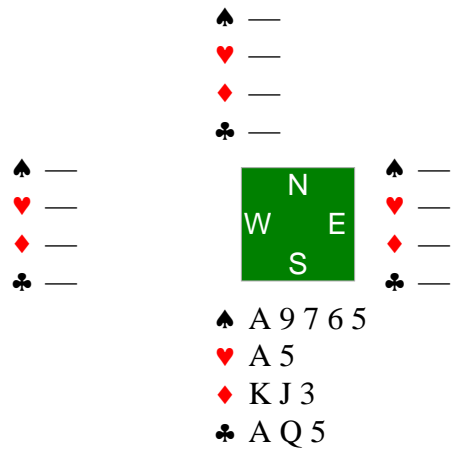
Higher Level Cue Bids

Sometimes it is useful to use a higher level Cue Bid. These are **Forcing Bids** and asks partner to tell us more about their hand.

North opens the bidding 1 ♦ and East overcalls 1 ♥. South has an opening hand and responds 1 ♠ (a forcing bid). West supports partner with a bid of 2 ♥. North now shows a long diamond suit (probably at least 6 cards). South knows their side has points for game, but is not sure where. 3 NT might work if North has a heart stopper, and 5 ♦ might work. To find out, South Cue Bids 3 ♥ to find out what North has. This bid is forcing, and North will bid 3 NT showing a heart stopper and 4 ♦ without.

This is sometimes referred to as a Western Cue Bid ("western" indicating bigger than normal).

Board 14



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	1 ♥	1 ♠
2 ♥	3 ♦	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	?		

Same auction as board 13. South does have a heart stopper, so she could bid 3 NT herself. But, her hand is too big to sign off in game. The partnership could have a slam in diamonds or No Trump. The 3 ♥ Cue Bid is a forcing bid and asks for more information. South can decide what to do after hearing North's reply.

While some may refer to this as a Western Cue Bid, it is not. South is looking for more information, not just a heart stopper. It is a high level forcing bid.

Board 15

♠ —		♠ —
♥ —		♥ —
♦ —		♦ —
♣ —		♣ —
♠ 9 5	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> N W E S </div>	♠ —
♥ 3 2		♥ —
♦ 9 8 4		♦ —
♣ Q J 9 7 4 2		♣ —
		♠ —
		♥ —
		♦ —
		♣ —
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
	1 ♣	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	Dbl
3 ♣		<i>South</i>
		1 ♥
		Pass

Can a Cue Bid ever be natural? Rarely, and only when it is obvious what it means. In this auction, North opens 1 ♣. East doubles for takeout, and South bids 1H. West is no longer obligated to bid, and she passes. North raises partner's suit to 2 ♥ and East doubles again. East should have a big hand to double twice. Now, West must bid even with this very weak hand. West bids 3 ♣ to say, "Partner, you made me bid, and this is the best I can do." It should be clear to East that West wants to play in 3 ♣. West had a chance to bid the first time around and did make a bid or a Responsive Double, so 3 ♣ cannot be a Cue Bid to say she has a strong hand.