

Cue Bids for Slam

When your partner forces to game and you have agreed a suit, a bid of another suit can be taken as a cue bid to show first-round control (Ace or Void) and looking for slam. The force to game can be at the beginning, or after a round or 2 of bidding until a suit has been agreed or can be inferred. If Responder does not have a cue bid to make, they sign off in game, or with a very strong hand for the bidding, ask for Key Cards with 4NT.

It is a good idea to make your cue bids in order of the suits, thus if Hearts are agreed and you cue bid 4C (by-passing 3S), you are denying first-round control in Spades. (remember that what you do not show is just as important as what you show!) A repeat cue bid in the same suit shows first and second-round control (AK or Void).

A variation played by many is that the cue bid shows first OR second-round control, that is: K or Singleton, or A or Void. This is much more descriptive, but also prone to memory lapse, so get used to 1st-round controls first.

You hold: AKQxxx, A,xx,AKxx and open 1S to which partner responds 3S, invitational.

Obviously you are going to game, but you have a very powerful hand and 12 or 13 tricks may be possible, but the opponents could be cashing the first 2 diamonds, so Cue Bid 4C to see if partner can bid 4D to show the DA. Even if they do not have the DA, they might have the DK so slam could still be on. Venturing to the 5-level with an unsuitable hand may be 1 too high, but show second-round Club control with 5C and see if partner can show second-round diamond control by bidding 5D, and hope for the best. However, if you are playing first or second-round cue bids, then partner has already denied the DK as well so you can safely play in game.

Another opportunity with a similar hand such as: AKQxx, KQxx, Ax, xx; could come if partner responded 2C or 2D (at least a 4-card suit and 10+HCPs) to your 1S opening bid and over your 2H rebid, partner rebid 3S (forcing to game after the jump raise and stronger than 4S). They are interested in you cue bidding with 4C, 4D or 4H, and remember when you bid 4D you are denying the CA.

If you had a 6-card Spade suit and only 3 Hearts, you could jump to 3S over 2C or 2D (forcing to game after the 2-level response) and then if partner rebids 4C or 4D they are denying Spade support, but a 4H rebid would definitely be a cue bid agreeing Spades.

Cue Bids for Game

When the opponents have bid a suit, either as an opening bid or an overcall, bidding their suit is called a cue-bid, and can have a variety of meanings, depending on the bidding circumstances.

Michael's Cue-Bid – If your RHO opens and you bid 2 of their suit, this is not normally an attempt to play in their suit, even if it is short, but is generally describing a 2-suiter, at least 5-5, excluding the opened suit. The strength of the hand should be either weak or strong, but not intermediate, as intermediate hands are best shown by bidding both of your suits, highest rank first, unless one of the suits is 6 or more in length.

After a Minor suit opening on your right, 2 of the same minor generally shows both majors, and 2NT shows the other minor and one major suit.

After a major suit opening on your right, 2 of the same major shows the other major and one minor suit, and 2NT shows both minors.

Notrump Probe – If you or your partner, or both have been bidding, and an opponent is also in the bidding, a bid of the opponent's suit by you asks your partner to bid 2NT/3NT with a stopper in their suit. A jump to 3NT shows extra values.

Support Cue – If your partner overcalls a **major** suit and you bid the opponent's suit at the lowest level, you are showing support for your partner's suit, with at least the strength of a limit raise. If you jump to the 3-level in the opponent's suit, you are asking partner to bid 3NT with a stopper.

Support Cue – If your partner overcalls a **minor** suit, game in the minor is a long way off and you still use a cue-bid to show support for the minor, but it may be more productive to use it to also ask the overcaller to bid NT with a stopper. If available, 2NT shows a minimum overcall, and 3NT with more than minimum. If the overcaller does not have a stopper they simply rebid their minor, at the lowest level with a minimum, or jump with extra values.

2 Suits Unbid – If you and your partner are both bidding and 2 suits remain unbid, if you have already bypassed a suit, a bid now shows a stopper in that suit AND denies a stopper in the other suit. If the partner has a stopper in this suit they are encouraged to bid NTs.

Fourth Suit Forcing

This convention applies when the opponents are not involved in the bidding, and either opener or responder wants to play in Notrumps, but next to bid does not have a stopper in an unbid suit. If the partnership has bid the other three suits, then a bid of Notrumps shows a stopper in the fourth suit, and a bid of the fourth suit asks their partner to bid Notrumps with a stopper. After fourth suit, if the player does not have a stopper, they make the most descriptive rebid based on the bidding up to that point. Fourth suit is forcing to game if a stopper is held, but by partnership agreement may stop below game without a stopper. Even the auction that bids all 4 suits at the 1-level (1C 1D 1H 1S) is often recognized as fourth suit forcing, but some do not play it as game forcing. The fourth suit, especially when bid by responder, may be natural, thus a raise of the fourth suit, as in 1C 1D 1H 1S 2S, shows a 4-card spade holding. Also 1H 1S 2C 2D 3D shows a 4-card diamond holding, and likely 0544 hand.

Splinters

A splinter is a singleton or void in an unbid suit that confirms the suit partner has shown as trumps. It is normally a double jump, thus after a 1H opening bid, 3S, 4C and 4D are all splinters agreeing Hearts and showing at most a singleton in the suit and enough for game. Likewise, after a 1S opening, 4C, 4D and 4H are splinters. Of course if you are playing that a jump to 4H after a 1S opening is to play, then only 4C and 4D are splinters. If you are playing 2/1, then a 4H splinter can still apply as you can bid a forcing 2H over 1S, followed by 4H.

The reason splinters are important is that they can help identify wasted HCs for slam purposes, as a suit such as QJT is not much use in a slam opposite a splinter, whereas Axxx or even 4 small can be perfect.

Splinters are normally used by the side that opens the bidding, but if partner overcalls 1C or 1D with 1H or 1S, then a cue bid of the suit opened shows support and investigates game in the major, whereas a jump cue bid of the suit opened is a splinter agreeing the major and forcing to game, or higher. If partner overcalls a 1H or 1S opening with 2C or 2D, a cue bid is generally showing good support and asks you to rebid NT with a stopper in the suit opened.

The basic principle of splinters is that if a simple bid of a new suit is forcing, a jump bid of a new suit is a splinter agreeing partner's suit. The exception is a 2H or 2S response to partner's 1C/1D opening, which is a weak 6-card suit.