

# Cue Bids and Q-Bids

© 2004-2009 Barry C. Harper

In contract bridge, a **cue bid** (also, **cuebid** or **cue-bid**, pronounced *queue-bid*) is a term that strangely applies to two different 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*.

*From WIKIPEDIA, the free encyclopedia*

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

## Q-Bids

In this context a control is 1<sup>st</sup> round control: Ace or void *or* 2<sup>nd</sup> 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		♠ 95	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>East</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1♥</td> <td>3♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♠</td> <td>4♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4NT</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	West	East	1♥	3♥	3♠	4♣	4NT	
West	East										
1♥	3♥										
3♠	4♣										
4NT											
♥ AQJ62	W E	♥ KT54									
♦ AK2		♦ QJ72									
♣ T3		♣ AJ3									

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.

One major difficulty with **Q-Bids** is your partnership deciding *when* you can show 2<sup>nd</sup> round controls. Some partnerships **Q-Bid** 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> round controls indiscriminately (Italian Style). Others start with 1<sup>st</sup> round controls and only show 2<sup>nd</sup> round controls after 1<sup>st</sup> 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 so-called "**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 or an equally good Q-bidding adventure when Eric Murray & Sami Kehela settled in 6♦ with AK opposite xx.

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. In many partnerships I prefer 3NT as an offer to play 3NT.

## 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

In 2007 the use of Michaels **Cue Bids** has become nearly as 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 opener is natural.

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

## 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. The competition also gives us information and adds new tools. We can double and we can **Cue Bid**. Also, you might double or bid and plan on **Cue Bidding** on the next round of bidding.

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

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. It is necessary since the competitive action may be lighter than an opening bid.

*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 possible situations where the opponents may have 3 or 4 small cards in their bid suit. If the opponents open a minor they may have 432, or when they respond one of a Major they might have 5432.

**The opponents overcall**

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 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 five choices other than **Cue Bidding**: Pass, Raise, Double, Bid a new suit or Jump in 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 (4/5 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.

**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, with some partnerships, feather light. 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).

*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 be more successful if you are aware of the risks and rewards, and can compete intelligently.

**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 or overcaller, 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.

## **EXTRAS:**

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

*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, plus a longer version are available at:*

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