

CUE BIDS - GENERAL

In the early days of contract bridge, the cue bid was narrowly defined. It had only one meaning: first round control of the suit and a very strong hand. If the partnership had previously agreed on a trump suit, the cue bid was an information giving (and seeking) slam try:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣ - slam interest, ace or void in clubs			

The bid of an opposing suit could implicitly agree on a trump suit, force to game, and suggest a slam:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♥	1♠	Pass
2♥ - agrees spades, suggests a slam			

South	West	North
1♥	1♠	2♠ - suggests a heart slam

In either case, the cue bidder showed first round control of the opposing suit, implied strong four-card support for partner's suit, and invited slam.

The cue bid was also used to force a bid from a partner who had not yet bid:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	Pass	Pass
2♠			

South showed a powerful hand, perhaps with 0-4-4-5 distribution.

South	West
1♦	2♦

This immediate cue bid overcall was forcing to game and showed first round control of the suit. Players came to make the bid with a singleton loser, and to play it as not quite game-forcing.

And that was all there was to cue bids, in the old days.

In going over cue bids as they are used today, we might as well include those non-forcing bids in a denomination first bid by the opponents:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	Pass	2♠ - natural, not forcing

East has ♠QJ9873 ♥AQ ♦Q87 ♣63. While the 2♠ bid is not really a cue bid, we shall have to discuss such hands here anyway, if only to differentiate them from forcing cue bids.

"Forcing to a limit situation" is a phrase that will be used often in connection with cue bids. Some cue bids are forcing to game, while some are only forcing to a limit situation. After a cue bid that is forcing to a limit situation, the partnership must continue bidding until one of the following occurs:

-- Either the cue bidder's partner ("replier") rebids his own suit minimally or the cue bidder rebids his own minor suit minimally:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
Pass	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣ - a limit situation, so North may pass			
3♦ - forcing			

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦ - not forcing (minor suit)	
3♣/3♥ - forcing			

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♥	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♠ - forcing (major suit)	
3♣/3♦ - forcing			

-- Either the cue bidder or replier raises partner's last suit bid:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	1♠
Pass	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣ - a limit situation	
4♦ - forcing			

The cue bidder has raised replier, but has not raised the last suit bid, so 4♦ is forcing.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	1♠
Pass	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥ - not forcing			

South's bid of North's last named suit is a limit situation, and North may pass.

-- The cue bidder bids the same suit twice in a row, after the cue bid:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠ - not quite forcing		

-- Game is reached.

-- A suitable penalty double is imposed on the opponents.

-- Either partner bids notrump, thereby limiting his hand. (Exception: a cue bidder may not pass a 2NT response by a partner who has not previously acted--and a double/redouble is an "act"):

South	West	North	East
1♣	2♣	Pass	2NT - forcing

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	2NT - not forcing		

-- The person who made the force has inferentially given partner a final chance to show any values. For example:

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♥		

The repeat cue bid asks East to pick another suit. South probably has a diamond-spade two-suiter. If West can only bid 3♠ or 4♦ (or 4♣), he denies any useful cards. East can pass any such minimum second bid, even though 2♥ was forcing to a limit situation. Since this *is* a limit situation, East should jump to 4♠ with as little as Kxx in spades and nothing outside.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠

West's cue bid gives East a chance to show a second suit, or some extra strength. The 2♠ bid denies a useful hand, and is a rebid of replier's suit, so a limit situation has been reached. West can pass. A new suit bid by East would have been forcing, a 2NT bid not forcing.

When a Cue Bid Gets Doubled

See section 10-12 for appropriate actions when a "probing cue bid" gets doubled. The following applies to doubles of other cue bids:

-- A pass is the weakest action the next hand can make. It denies a useful hand.

-- A bid made directly over the double is a "free bid," showing a hand that is at least slightly promising.

-- A jump bid is normal, as if the double had not occurred, as is any notrump bid (which tends to warn of duplication).

-- A redouble indicates a good hand for the circumstances, but no good bid that is available. It indicates nothing about the cue bid suit.

Incidentally, when a player opens the bidding and later doubles a cue bid in his own suit, he is showing a strong suit only--not necessarily a strong hand.