

DIRECT CUE BID OVERCALLS

A two-level cue bid made directly over a natural opening bid in a suit is a two-way call:

North	East
1♦	2♦

The cue bid is either:

- A powerful hand that cannot be expressed by a jump overcall or takeout double, or
- A moderate hand with 6-4 distribution: six cards in the lowest-ranking unbid suit and four cards in the highest-ranking unbid suit. This is the "Top-and-Bottom" cue bid, fully described in section 10-6.

If not a top-and-bottom cue bid, this cue bid is forcing to a limit situation. It shows a hand that requires little or nothing in partner's hand for game. A takeout double would not be suitable because the cue bidder doesn't have that sort of hand. Perhaps he has a void or a two-suited hand. If it is a strong one-suited hand, the hand is too good for a strong jump overcall--which is not forcing.

The strong sort of cue bid should seldom be made with more than one loser in the opposing suit. Some typical 2♠ overcalls of a 1♠ opening:

- 1) ♠ void ♥AKQJ1087 ♦AK4 ♣Q107 (too good for 3♥)
- 2) ♠8 ♥AKQ6 ♦AJ108 ♣AQJ10 (too good for a takeout double)
- 3) ♠87 ♥AKJ43 ♦AK108743 ♣ void (a double could lead to difficulty)

With hand 3), if partner responds in clubs the cue bidder will repeat the cue bid, asking for a preference between the two unbid suits. With a weaker hand the cue bid with two fast losers would be unwise, because partner might bid a slam on the assumption that the cue bid showed at least second round spade control.

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

West is not only asking for a preference between diamonds and spades, he is asking East if she has anything of value to offer. If East now bids 3♦ or 3♠ she is denying any usable strength and West can pass. With as much as a king in the right place, West should make a jump preference in the preferred suit.

A direct jump cue bid overcall is a natural preemptive bid. With a good hand just pass and bid the suit later:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	3♣/3♠ - natural preempt

South West
 1♣ 3♣ - natural preempt

A cue bid overcall of an opposing new suit response is lately being used as a natural bid, but the wisdom of this approach is doubtful. If an opponent bids your suit, you usually do better to pass and hope they get into trouble. Often you can double a notrump contract for a lead of that suit. Accordingly, cue bids such as the following have a more valuable use:

South West North East
 1♣ Pass 1♠ 2♠

East is showing a two-suited hand with hearts and diamonds, 5-5 or better. A takeout double would tend to show four hearts and longer diamonds (making the top-and-bottom cue bid unnecessary), while a 2NT bid is natural: ♠A3 ♥J87 ♦AKQ1087 ♣K3

A cue bid in opener's suit after a new suit response is natural:

South West North East
 1♦ Pass 1♥ 2♦ - natural overcall
 2♥ - black two-suiter

A cue bid over a 1NT response to a natural opening bid is a top-and-bottom cue bid in a major suit, but a takeout for both majors in a minor:

South West North East
 1♥ Pass 1NT 2♥ - top-bottom cue bid

South West North East
 1♣ Pass 1NT 2♣ - shows both majors
 3♣ - natural, not strong with a double available

A cue bid over a single raise of a natural opening bid of one in a suit is a top-and-bottom cue bid:

South West North East
 1♥ Pass 2♥ 3♥ - top/bottom cue bid

A cue bid overcall of a preemptive opening, including weak two bids, implies a two-suited hand:

South West North East
 2♠ 3♠ Pass 4♣
 Pass 4♦ - asks for a red suit preference

In the last auction West has a heart/diamond two-suiter. Of course such a cue bid must be prepared for any response partner might make. Do not cue bid 4♣ over 3♣ with ♠3 ♥A10875 ♦AQ9763 ♣5, because if partner bids 4♠ you must then bid 5♦ to show a red two-suiter. That is forcing the bidding too high with this hand. The better course is to just bid 3♦ over 3♣ and hope to bid hearts on the next round.

A cue bid overcall of a response to a preemptive opening (including weak two bids) is natural, non-forcing, if the suit is a major:

South	West	North	East
2♥	Pass	2♠	3♠ - natural, not forcing

East is exposing a probable psych by North, while showing values for a three-level bid. With less strength, East should double 2♠, showing values for a two-level spade bid. Similarly, if East has enough strength to bid 4♠, he should do so. To force with a cue bid, East must bid 3♥.

When the response is in a minor, the cue bid is a forcing takeout call:

South	West	North	East
3♣	Pass	3♦	4♦ - asks for a major

Since East could bid either minor without sacrificing bidding space, her choice of 4♦ implies that she has better control of diamonds than of clubs.

Also see section 10-5, Reopening Cue Bid Overcalls.

Direct cue bids by a passed hand are Michaels Cue Bids: cue bid of a minor shows both majors, cue bid of a major shows the other major plus an unknown minor (partner bids 2NT to inquire). See section 8-5, Defensive Bidding by a Passed Hand.