

CUE BIDS IN TAKEOUT DOUBLE SITUATIONS

Almost any cue bid can be a slam try, regardless of what the cue bid may sound like when it is made. When the cue bidder follows up the cue bid with some strong bid that shows he was not just seeking a suit or looking for a notrump contract, then the true meaning is revealed:

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| 1♦ | Dbl | Pass | 2♦ |
| Pass | 2♥ | Pass | 4♠ |

Obviously East knew where he was going all along. Why the cue bid, then? To show first round control of diamonds and to invite a slam. Nothing complicated, just a normal slam try control-showing cue bid. With this in mind, then, the following discussion of cue bids in takeout double situations is concerned with the meaning that partner will *assume* the cue bid has, until the cue bidder makes clear that he had something else in mind.

Cue Bid in Response to a Takeout Double

-- When RHO passes or raises:

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| 1♣ | Dbl | Pass | 2♣ |
| South | West | North | East |
| 1♣ | Dbl | 2♣ | 3♣ |

These cue bids are forcing to a limit situation, so East cannot pass a non-game bid by West. A non-game notrump bid is not a "limit situation" if the bidder has not previously bid, so a 2NT bid by West in the first auction is forcing (a double is not a bid).

Since these cue bids are forcing to a limit situation, don't cue bid just because you have both majors. The weakest hand one could have for a two-level cue bid occurs when the suit is clubs, since partner can bid at the two level in any suit. When partner might be (or is) forced to bid at the three level, the cue bidder should have game-going values.

Avoid answering a cue bid with a very weak four-card suit, especially when it is the only unbid major. The double has already implied major suit length, so bidding a suit like 9642 is somewhat redundant. Instead, prefer to show some other feature of the hand. With no good alternative, go ahead and bid the weak suit.

When a passed hand cue bids at the three level, he is allowed to pass the response. If there are two unbid major suits, a passed hand is almost certainly just asking for a choice between them with the three-level cue bid. The takeout doubler must therefore not bid just 3♠ or 3♥ if game is likely.

Since the three-level cue bid by an unpassed hand is forcing to a limit situation, the doubler does not have to jump with just an extra king or so. A jump therefore shows substantial extra values:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1♦ | Dbl | 2♦ | 3♦ |
| Pass | 4♥ | | |

West has ♠A93 ♥AKJ97 ♦4 ♣QJ87. The good suit, extra high cards, and diamond control justify the jump. With one more spade and one less heart, West could cue bid 4♦ to show both a good hand and a probable 4-4 major suit holding.

A repeat cue bid after the doubler has made a minimum answer to the first cue bid shows great support for the doubler's suit and at least second round control of opener's suit:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1♣ | Dbl | Pass | 2♣ |
| Pass | 2♦ | Pass | 3♣ |

East has good diamond support, perhaps the ace of clubs, and is asking for more information. There is no need to make this repeat cue bid with something like 5-5 in the majors, because a 2♠ bid over 2♦ would be forcing.

-- When the opponents have bid two suits before the double:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| 1♥ | Pass | 1♠ | Dbl |
| Pass | 2♥ - natural, not forcing | | |

The 2♥ bid is natural because 2♠ is available as a forcing cue bid. West has long hearts and not much in high cards.

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| 1♦ | Pass | 2♣ | Dbl |
| Pass | 2♦ - natural, not forcing | | |

West is not asking East to choose a major. With 4-4 in the majors and not enough to cue bid 3♣, West must just bid 2♠.

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|--------------|
| 1♦ | Pass | 1♥ | Pass |
| 1♠ | Dbl | Pass | 2♦ - natural |

East can count on diamond support, as implied by West's actions.

-- When RHO redoubles, all responses are weak (pass with strength):

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------------------------|
| 1♣ | Dbl | Rdbl | 2♣ - weak, both majors |

The cue bid in a minor asks for partner's better major. It shows a weak but distributional hand of some sort, perhaps even 5-5 in the majors. It does not promise another bid. With long clubs East can pass the redouble and "rescue" partner's bid by bidding 2♣

The cue bid in a major implies a weak three-suiter:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|---------------------------|
| 1♥ | Dbl | Rdbl | 2♥ - ♠8432 ♥5 ♦Q843 ♣K765 |

Also see section 9-1, Takeout Doubles.

-- When RHO bids a new suit over a double, a cue bid in opener's suit is not to play (as it would be if partner had passed instead of doubling):

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1♦ | Dbl | 2♣ | 2♦ |

The 2♦ bid could be played as natural, but is more valuable as a cue bid in this situation.

When the new suit is a major, there is a good possibility that the bid is a psych. The best policy is to ignore the bid completely, except that a double is for penalty. The double is limited, however, in that it says, "I would willingly have made that bid." With a stronger hand, one that would have called for a jump or cue bid, go ahead and make the bid you would have made if RHO had passed:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|--|
| 1♥ | Dbl | 1♠ | Dbl - "That's <i>my</i> bid!" |
| | | | 2♠ - not forcing, but better than a double |
| | | | 2♥ - normal cue bid |
| | | | 3♠ - forcing, slam interest |
| | | | 4♠ - not much interest in slam |

The 2♠ bid is not forcing, just as a jump response of 2♠ would not have been forcing. Might East be giving up a good penalty by bidding 2♠ with ♠AJ873 ♥43 ♦K85 ♣J32? Don't be naive! It is important to be accurate about one's strength here, in case the bidding goes something like this:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1♥ | Dbl | 1♠ | Dbl |
| Pass | Pass | 4♥! | |

If East had more than a double of 1♠, he is going to have a hard time showing that now unless he is sure of making game in spades.

-- When RHO bids 1NT:

If the suit doubled is a minor, the cue bid shows a weak hand with both majors.

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1♣ | Dbl | 1NT | 2♣ |

When the suit doubled is a major, however:

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| 1♥ | Dbl | 1NT | 2♥ |

This cue bid is forcing to a limit situation, based on a good but distributional hand that is not suitable for a double of 1NT.

A cue bid of 2NT over 1NT in either auction would be unusual notrump, showing the lower two or higher two unbid suits..

Cue Bid by the Takeout Doubler

-- When the doubler's partner has responded minimally and the doubler cue bids opener's suit:

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

This cue bid, forcing to a limit situation, can be based on almost any sort of strong hand. The doubler may be trying to find out if East has a spade stopper, or another suit, or a good club suit, or whatever. See chapter 10-12, Probing Cue Bids. If the doubler's next bid is something like a jump to 4♥ or 5♣, then the cue bid will be revealed as a normal slam try cue bid. If West repeats the cue bid, she shows *spades*--not forcing. After a major suit response, the sequence of cue bid, then raise, implies three-card support.

In the auction above, West can pass a minimum club rebid or a 2NT bid by East. If East bids a new suit or jumps to 4♣, West will not pass. Responder should avoid bidding beyond the level of his original response suit unless he has undisclosed strength, even if it means rebidding a four-card suit. With a five-card suit and undisclosed strength, he should jump in response to the cue bid.

-- A cue bid in response to a *jump* response definitely shows support for responder's suit:

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| 1♠ | 2♣ | Pass | Pass |
| Dbl | Pass | 3♦ | Pass |
| 4♣ | | | |

4♣ - cue bid in support of diamonds

South is not asking for a major suit preference, but is showing a great hand for diamonds and first round club control: ♠AK832 ♥A432 ♦KJ87 ♣ void While not big enough to bid 3♣ over 2♣, this hand is so good in support of diamonds that South has good reason to try for slam. North can bid 6♦ with ♠Q2 ♥65 ♦A109642 ♣654.

-- When doubler bids LHO's suit after hearing a suit response:

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| 1♣ | Dbl | 1♥ | 1♠ |
| Pass | 2♥ | | |

2♥ - not forcing

West is exposing a probable psych. This bid cannot be based on mere suspicion, so West must have quite good hearts. In order to force, West must bid opener's suit first.

-- After a cue bid response to the takeout double:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|-------------------|-------|------|
| 1♦ | Dbl | Pass | 2♦ |
| Pass | 3♦ - game forcing | | |

This bid does not just say, "I have both majors," but also "I have a good hand." With a modest hand and 4-4 in the majors, West should just bid 2♠. This will not be passed, as East's cue bid is forcing to a limit situation.

-- When the doubler's partner has passed over an intervening bid:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1♦ | Dbl | 2♣ | Pass |
| Pass | 2♦ | | |

A 3♣ cue bid would be forcing to a limit situation, so the 2♦ bid is used when West doesn't want to sell out, has no good five-card or longer major to bid, and is not particularly interested in playing 2♣ doubled (as might well happen if he doubled again and East decided to pass with a little something in clubs). West might have: ♠AJ109 ♥KQJ10 ♦A2 ♣432.

We can make a rule out of this situation: When the doubler bids opener's suit, he is merely competing. When he cue bids responder's suit, he is forcing to a limit situation if the suit is a minor, but is making a natural bid when it is a major:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|-------------------------------|-------|------|
| 1♣ | Dbl | 1♥ | Pass |
| Pass | 2♣ - just competing, probably | | |
| | 2♥ - not forcing | | |

West's 2♣ bid implies a dislike for defending 2♥ doubled, for otherwise she might repeat the takeout double. Probably her hearts are questionable: ♠AQJ8 ♥987 ♦AKJ7 ♣32. A 2♥ bid by West exposes a probable psych. If North had bid 1♦, however, a 2♦ bid would be forcing (again, implying that a leave-in of a repeat double would not be welcome).

Cue Bid as Responder's Second Bid

-- If the original response was a minimum response over a pass (i.e., not a free bid), a second round cue bid by responder is natural:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|--------------------------|
| 1♣ | Dbl | Pass | 1♦ |
| Pass | 1NT | Pass | 2♣ - long in both minors |

East could hardly be making a strong move after responding just 1♦. The clubs were not good enough for a pass of the double.

-- If the original response was a free bid or jump, a second round cue bid is a probing cue bid. See section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids.

-- If the original response was a cue bid, a second round cue bid asks for more information from the doubler:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|---------------------|
| 1♥ | Dbl | Pass | 2♥ |
| Pass | 2♠ | Pass | 3♥ - "tell me more" |