

NOTRUMPER CUE BIDS

The problem: A player who has bid notrump strongly does not give valuable information when he cue bids an ace to show implied support for partner's suit. For instance, you open 2NT with ♠Q107 ♥KJ76 ♦AK7 ♣AKJ. Partner bids 3♣, Stayman, you say 3♥, and partner says 3♠. You have a good hand in support of spades, so you cue bid 4♦ or 4♣. This presumably shows an ace, agrees spades as trump, and suggests a good hand for slam. The bidding:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♥	3♠
4♣/4♦	

Such a cue bid is not very helpful. Partner knows you have aces, but not if the hands fit. Try this:.

Bid the suit in which it would be least desirable for partner to have a singleton or void (hearts, in the hand show above). A KJx holding is best for a notrumper cue bid, but KQx is also good. Lacking either of these, bid any other holding that includes secondary strength. The approximate order of preference for a notrumper cue bid: KJx, KQx, AKx, AKJ, AKQ, AQx, AQJ, QJx.

Opposite the 2NT bid above, responder would sign off in 4♠ after a 4♥ cue bid when he has ♠AKJ54 ♥3 ♦J642 ♣Q96. The singleton is in the worst place, hearts, so slam is unlikely. With a better mesh (♠AKJ54 ♥Q96 ♦J642 ♣3) he could go on. Note that a 4♣ or 4♦ ace-showing cue bid would be of no help.

A secondary benefit of the notrumper cue bid comes when the hand opposite has an unbalanced hand that looks questionable for notrump. If partner opens a strong 1NT and you make a slam try in clubs with ♠Q87 ♥KJ8 ♦3 ♣AQJ753, you can bid 3NT in comfort if she makes a notrumper cue bid in diamonds. First, you know the hands do not fit well, so slam is improbable. Second, you know the opponents won't run five quick diamond tricks, since partner has secondary strength in diamonds. She might have ♠AJ62 ♥A106 ♦KJ4 ♣K105. The usual ace-showing cue bid of 3♥ or 3♠ would be useless. With notrumper cue bids, a 3♠ cue bid shows something like ♠KJ42 ♥A106 ♦AJ6 ♣K105. Now you can bid the slam with some confidence, knowing that the hands fit.

Only the first cue bid by a notrump bidder is a notrumper cue bid. Subsequent cue bids show controls, as usual:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♠
4♣	4♦
4♥	- heart ace

Notrumper cue bids do not apply when the cue bid is in a suit bid by the opponents. The cue bid of an opposing suit has the standard meaning: first round control.