

## 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.

## CUE BIDS BY RESPONDER

### On the First Round

A first round cue bid response at the two or three level by an unpassed hand is always very strong, game forcing of course. In response to a minor suit opening, it shows excellent trump support and the lack of a suitable alternative bid, and may well lack first-round control of the opposing suit.:

South	West	North
1♣	1♥	2♥

The 2♥ cue bid might be made with ♠KJ3 ♥65 ♦AKJ ♣Q10875. With ♠KJ3 ♥void ♦AKJ2 ♣Q108752 responder should bid either 2♦ or a 3♥ splinter, but a cue bid (intending to rebid the suit later to show first-round control) is probably best.

We must have an exception of course. When a 1♥ bid is overcalled with 1♠, responder has 2♣ and 2♦ available for a forcing bid, so a 2♠ cue bid is of the classic kind: At least four-card support, first and second-round control of the opposing suit (usually a void), and at least some interest in slam.

South	West	North
1♥	1♠	2♠

A typical hand for the 2♠ bid: ♠ void ♥KJ65 ♦AK76 ♣Q987. It is important that opener bid notrump at this point if he has secondary strength that is probably wasted and he would not have opened without that spade strength. All a notrump bid rebid does is to warn of duplication, it does not indicate a desire to play in notrump. A jump to 3NT shows even more serious duplication, e.g., AK of the opposing suit, and a minimum opening bid. With opening bid values outside of any spade strength, an immediate notrump rebid is not in order.

A three-level cue bid does not promise excellent trump support for opener's suit. It is merely game-forcing with no suitable alternative bid available.

South	West	North
1♠	2♣	3♣

The 3♣ bid might be based on ♠K32 ♥KQ104 ♦AJ6 ♣432. With four-card or better support responder can either bid a new suit, perhaps a three-card minor, before raising to game, or respond with a splinter bid if short. Responder can repeat the cue bid when holding first-round control.

A cue bid response at the four level must show first or second round control of the opposing suit, as there is not enough bidding room for a splinter to do that job below game level (except for 1♦-3♣-5♣, which means that 4♣ would not promise shortness in clubs, but that's hard to remember).

See section 3-7, Splinter Response to a Major Opening; section 3-8, Splinter Response to a Minor Opening; and section 3-13, Preemptive Jump Raise to Game.

## On the Second Round

When a player cue bids on the second round, after failing to respond on the first round, the bid is natural:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♥	Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥ - natural bid, non-forcing	

North has hearts that are good enough to play opposite a singleton, despite West's overcall (and West's bid may have been a psych or based on a four-card suit). He was hoping South would reopen with a double, which of course he would have passed. The 2♥ bid is not particularly strong, and South will generally pass.

The same principle applies if the overcall was doubled. A later bid in that suit by either partner is natural, a necessary counter to psychic overcalls.

Other cue bids by responder are discussed in section 10-10, Slam Try Cue Bids, and section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids. Cue bids in response to an opening notrump bid are covered in section 5-3, those in response to a notrump overcall in section 8-4. Cue bids in response to a reopening 1NT overcall have the same meaning as the bid would have if partner had opened 1NT (i.e., the opening bid is ignored).

### Passed Hand Cue Bid Response

A passed hand's cue bid response is forcing to a limit situation only. It can be based on various sorts of good hand with which responder doesn't want to risk opener's passing of a new suit response.

South	West	North	East
—	—	Pass	Pass
1♣	1♦	2♦	

North has ♠Q9763 ♥K1032 ♦ void ♣AQ65.

Thanks to the cue bid, his spade bid on the next round will be forcing. North could also have something like ♠Q976 ♥K1032 ♦65 ♣AQ6, since a non-forcing heart or spade bid would be dangerous.

## CUE BIDS BY OPENER

### Partner Has Responded in a Suit

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♥	1♠	Pass
2♥ - game forcing			

This cue bid has traditionally shown no losers in the opposing suit and terrific support for responder's suit. Today that is what we would like to have, but the modern meaning of the cue bid is much less precise. All that responder can tell at this point is that opener wants to be in game, at least.

Responder must now make the most helpful bid he can find, which is likely to be notrump if he has the opposing suit stopped. With a double stop and a *poor* hand, he can jump to 3NT. This will warn opener that there may be serious duplication (strength opposite a void), and that responder is weak.

In the auction above, South could have any of the following hands:

- 1) ♠AQ32 ♥ void ♦K1083 ♣AKJ94 (the traditional hand)
- 2) ♠A4 ♥32 ♦KQ ♣AKQJ976 (too good for a 3♣ rebid)
- 3) ♠AJ3 ♥4 ♦AJ4 ♣AKQ874 (ditto)
- 4) ♠A54 ♥87 ♦KQJ ♣AKQJ4

With hand 1) opener will follow up with a leap to 4♠ or a repeat of the cue bid. Bidding in this fashion shows the old-fashioned sort of cue bid. With hand 2) opener will rebid clubs on the next round, implying this sort of hand. With a weaker hand he would prefer a 3♣ jump rebid, so this sequence is very strong. With hand 3) opener will raise spades on the next round, feeling his way to the proper contract. He will do the same with hand 4). There is no need to do any jumping with hands 2), 3), and 4), because the cue bid is forcing to game.

### Partner Has Failed to Respond

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

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

South cannot be making game forces after only opening one of a suit and not getting a response, but the above cue bids show a very strong hand and are forcing to a limit situation. Opener could have four card support for both unbid suits (♠AK87 ♥ void ♦A1098 ♣AK1097), or a long strong suit with some support for one or both unbid suits (♠AJ3 ♥ void ♦Q107 ♣AKQJ873).

Such cue bids almost guarantee a void. Otherwise it is difficult to give opener a hand that is unsuitable for a takeout double. The implication is that opener would not relish a leave-in of a takeout double, and this implication strongly suggests a void.

Responder must now bid the full value of her hand, for if she makes a minimum bid the "limit situation" has been reached and opener could pass.

Additional cue bids by opener are covered in section 10-9, Cue Bids in Takeout Double Situations; section 10-10, Slam Try Cue Bids; and section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids.

## 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.

## REOPENING CUE BID OVERCALLS

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	Pass	2♣

This is not a top-and-bottom cue bid, which does not apply in a reopening situation. Instead, it is a two-way call showing either a weakish three-suited hand with a singleton or void in clubs, or a normal strong cue bid. For a passed hand, the cue bid can be based on either a two-suited or three-suited hand. See section 8-5, Defensive Bidding by a Passed Hand.

If the cue bid is weak, 5-4-4 is the ideal distribution, but 4-4-4-1 is normal. The maximum is about 10 HCP, since the weak cue bid tends to deny two defensive tricks. With ♠ void ♥QJ32 ♦AJ1054 ♣Q873, after 1♠-P-P bid 2♠ rather than make a takeout double. The danger is that partner might pass a double, expecting a little more defense from you. But with ♠4 ♥AJ32 ♦A875 ♣9842, a double is okay because you have a couple of defensive tricks and a spade to lead through declarer if partner should pass.

### Responses

Partner assumes that the cue bidder has made a weak three-suited takeout, and bids accordingly. He gives partner about 7-8 HCP and bids the limit of his hand immediately. A 2NT response is not invitational; it will always be passed by a weak cue bidder.

A jump response is invitational, asking partner to raise with a maximum weak cue bid (9-10 HCP). With a weak cue bid, partner must raise or pass. If the cue bidder bids a new suit (or bids again when not invited) opposite partner's jump response, she shows a strong cue bid. See section 10-4 for a discussion of strong cue bid overcalls.

The strong type of cue bid may be a little weaker than a direct cue bid overcall, but not much. The minimum for a strong reopening cue bid of 2♠ is something like: ♠ void ♥AK54 ♦Q10876 ♣KQ96. With anything weaker, down to a weak cue bid, just make a takeout double.

A repeat cue bid by an unpassed hand also confirms a strong takeout:

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

The cue bidder has a strong hand, but whether he has spade support or a strong two-suiter in hearts/diamonds is not yet clear. West assumes the latter and shows a preference for one of these two suits, jumping with anything of value. With ♠108763 ♥KJ3 ♦J7 ♣Q83 West should jump to 4♥, since 3♥ could be passed.

A new suit bid by a passed hand cue bidder definitely shows a two-suiter, but not a strong hand:

South	West	North	East
Pass	1♣	Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦ - diamonds and hearts, not forcing			

South has ♠3 ♥Q10874 ♦AQ8732 ♣6. If not a passed hand, South would have to reopen with 1♦ or 1♥.

A hand that passes an opposing bid and then reopens with a cue bid later is normally making a natural bid:

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

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

There is one exception:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass
Pass	2♦ - takeout for the majors		

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1NT	Pass
Pass	2♣ - takeout for the majors		

After a 1NT response to a minor, the opponents will almost always have at least six cards between them in that suit, probably more. The reopening cue bid in this case is therefore more useful as a major suit takeout than as a natural bid. Rather than double, which is primarily for business, you cue bid the minor to ask for a major.

### **Jump Cue Bid Reopening**

Reopening the bidding with a jump cue bid asks partner to bid 3NT if he has the opposing suit stopped.

## TOP-AND-BOTTOM CUE BIDS

There are four ways to make a top-and-bottom cue bid:

1) Directly over a natural opening bid of one in a suit:

North	East
1♠	2♠

A cue bid over a higher level opening may be based on a two-suited hand, but is not a "top-and-bottom" cue bid. A cue bid over an artificial opening is a natural bid.

2) After a single raise by RHO:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♥	3♥

3) Over an opposing Drury response (see section 12-15)

4) After a 1NT response to a major suit opening by RHO:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1NT	2♠

When the opening bid is in a minor suit, however, the cue bid over a 1NT response is a major suit takeout:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1NT	2♦ - shows both majors

But not over a suit response:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	2♦ - is natural

All of the above (except No. 3, by a passed hand) are two-way cue bids, either:

-- A super strong hand, the conventional cue bid meaning (see section 10-4, Direct Cue Bid Overcalls), or

-- A top-and-bottom cue bid, showing a moderate hand with four cards in the top unbid suit and six cards in the lowest unbid suit:

North	East
1♣	2♣ - six diamonds and four spades
1♦	2♦ - six clubs and four spades
1♥	2♥ - six clubs and four spades
1♠	2♠ - six clubs and four hearts

The strength required for a top-and-bottom cue bid varies somewhat with vulnerability and the level at which partner must bid. Two to three defensive tricks are about right, but the cue bidder may play it a little loose if partner has passed. A typical hand for a non-vulnerable 2♦ cue bid over a natural opening bid of 1♦: ♠KQ43 ♥Q4 ♦4 ♣AQ10872. A 2♣ overcall would be more advisable when vulnerable. A takeout double is unwise, because you would have to pass a 2♥ response; the hand is not good enough to double and then bid 3♣, which implies a hand that is too strong for a top-and-bottom cue bid.

With a stronger hand, but not super strong, the overcaller must choose from takeout double, simple overcall, and jump overcall.

Suppose RHO opens 1♣ and you hold ♠AQ108 ♥3 ♦AQ10854 ♣K3. This hand is too strong for a top-and-bottom cue bid. A jump overcall of 2♦ is better than a takeout double because of the singleton heart. If the club/heart holding were reversed, a takeout double would be acceptable, since you have enough to bid 3♦ after a 2♥ response.

A club jump overcall (necessarily at the three level) implies solid clubs. It may therefore be necessary to make a hefty 2♣ overcall at times. Suppose you hold ♠AKJ3 ♥8 ♦76 ♣AQJ987 and RHO opens 1♦. This hand is too good for a top-and-bottom cue bid, and is not the sort of hand for a strong jump overcall in clubs. The best course is to bid 2♣, which will probably not be passed out, with the hope of bidding spades later.

The suit requirements for a top-and-bottom cue bid may be stretched on occasion. The top suit can be a weak five carder, and the bottom suit a seven-carder. The top-and-bottom cue bidder can never bid either suit himself, however (unless invited to do so), even if it is longer than standard. He can only hope that partner bids the non-standard suit. When the top suit is a strong five-carder, it is better to start bidding the suits rather than cue bid.

### Responses

How does the cue bidder's partner distinguish between a strong cue bid and a top-and-bottom cue bid? First of all, he assumes that partner has made a top-and-bottom cue bid until he learns otherwise, and makes the appropriate response:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♦	Pass	2♥/2♠/3♣ - weak signoffs 3♥/3♠/4♣ - invitational 2NT - forcing

The heart responses require at least a six-card suit.

After a signoff response, the top-and-bottom cue bidder must pass, even if RHO makes a call. Any other action shows a strong cue bid.

After an invitational response, the top-and-bottom cue bidder can only pass or raise the response one level. Any other action shows a strong cue bid, and is game forcing in view of the invitational response. In the last auction, the invitation in hearts will generally be accepted with a doubleton heart, declined with a singleton.

The 2NT response asks for clarification--"What kind of cue bid is this?" In the auction above, West must bid 3♣ with a top-and-bottom cue bid; any other call shows a strong cue bid and is forcing to game (in view of the 2NT response). If the cue bidder shows a top-and-bottom cue bid, the 2NT bidder's next call will place the contract, except that a raise to 4♣ would of course be invitational.

One reason for limiting the top-and-bottom cue bidder's strength is that she may not reopen the bidding after making a cue bid:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♦	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠ - forcing,	strong cue bid hand	

West must pass 2♥ with a top-and-bottom cue bid, even with ♠108543 ♥6 ♦5 ♣AKJ543, because she has already shown her hand.

After confirming a top-and-bottom cue bid, however, the cue bidder may choose to reopen a dying auction:

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

West, not vulnerable, is willing to chance 3♦ with ♠KQJ10 ♥6 ♦AQJ1098 ♣32. If this goes down one doubled, North-South probably could have made 3♣.

Top-and-Bottom is not used by a passed hand, except over a Drury response. A direct cue bid by a passed hand is a Michaels Cue Bid. See section 8-5, Defensive Bidding by a Passed Hand. Also see section 10-4, Direct Cue Bid Overcalls, and section 10-5, Reopening Cue Bid Overcalls.

## CUE BID ADVANCES OF OVERCALLS

Responses to overcalls are technically known as "advances," and overcaller's partner is the "advancer." Most cue bid advances of overcalls are discussed in section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids. Also see section 8-2, Responding to Simple Overcalls; section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls; and section 10-1, Cue Bids - General.

### Non-Jump Cue Bids

If RHO comes in with a raise over a major suit overcall, a cue bid serves to distinguish a strong jump raise from a weaker jump raise. There is no two-level room to cue bid and then raise the suit to three, so the cue bid must carry the strong raise meaning:

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♥

If West has extra values for the overcall, she can bid game. If South now bids 4♥, West should not be too quick to bid 4♠ unless she thinks she can make it, because the cue bid shows good defensive potential in addition to trump support.

When the opposing raise comes over a minor suit overcall, the cue bid asks for a stopper in the opposing suit:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	2♦	3♦

East has high cards in clubs and a good hand, but no diamond stopper. If West has a normal overcall with diamonds stopped, he bids 3NT. Otherwise he just makes the bid that best serves to further describe his hand. This is a "probing cue bid," discussed in section 10-12.

If RHO comes in with a new suit, the strong raise of a major suit is shown by a cue bid of responder's suit, while a bid of opener's suit is natural and non-forcing, showing the suit:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♥	3♥ - strong spade raise
			2♠ - weak spade raise
			3♠ - too good for 2♠
			3♣ - long club suit

Remember that the "strong raise" cue bid applies only over a new suit bid or a raise, not over a pass or negative double. Further, it applies to major suit overcalls only. After a minor suit overcall, the cue bid asks for a stopper. See section 08-02, Responding to Simple Overcalls; and section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids.

If RHO responds 1NT, advancer would double with a strong raise. A bid of opener's suit is natural:

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	1NT	2♥ - natural, long hearts

East has long solid hearts and not much in high cards: ♠4 ♥QJ108762 ♦A54 ♣62

### Jump Cue Bid Advance

A jump cue bid shows a playable holding in the suit if the opponents have bid the suit only once:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♥	1♠	3♣/3♠

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♥	Pass	3♠

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♥	3♣/3♥

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	Pass	3♠

These jump cue bids are natural and not forcing. There is no other way to show playable strength/length in the opposing suit. Splinter bids are not used in support of an overcall.

A jump cue bid advance when opener has been raised shows excellent support for the overcall and a void:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦/1♥/1♠	2♣	4♣ - club void

## CUE BIDS IN NOTRUMP

### A Cue Bid of 2NT Over a Natural Notrump Overcall

South	West	North	
1♦	1NT	2NT - unusual notrump	

This cue bid shows great length in the lower two unbid suits, and asks partner to take a choice. In the auction above, North might have ♠ void ♥Q107632 ♦J ♣A108432.

### A Cue Bid of 2NT Over a 1NT Response

South	West	North	East	
1♣	Pass	1NT	2NT - unusual notrump	

East is asking West to choose between hearts and diamonds, the lower two unbid suits. Artificial bids do not count as a suit bid, so the 2NT bid above would show both minors if the 1♣ bid is artificial.

The principle applies when partner has doubled, with the addition of a small subtlety:

South	West	North	East	
1♦	Dbl	1NT	2NT	

East has hearts and clubs, all right, but the hearts are weak and only four long: ♠2 ♥9632 ♦65 ♣KQ10873 With good hearts East would just bid that suit, since the double implies heart support.

### When Partner Has Doubled 1NT for Business

South	West	North	East	
1NT	Dbl	Pass	2NT - game forcing	

East has a distributionally strong hand, perhaps a two-suiter, and doesn't pass the double because West might make a bad lead.

South	West	North	East	
1♠	1NT	Dbl	Pass	
2NT - forcing to game, not unusual notrump				

South	West	North	East	
1♣	Pass	1♥	1NT	
Dbl	Pass	2NT - forcing to game		

These 2NT cue bids show game-going hands that do not want to defend 1NT doubled. The 2NT bidder no doubt has a highly distributional hand, but could have any strong hand that fears missing a slam. Perhaps the notrump bid is a psych.

### Over Any Response to a Strong 1NT Opening

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	2NT - unusual notrump

An artificial bid such as this Stayman 2♣ response does not count as a suit bid, so East is asking West to take a choice between the minors.

### Over an Artificial Response to a Weak 1NT Opening

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥	2NT - unusual notrump

North's bid was a Jacoby transfer bid, so the 2NT bid asks for a choice between the minors. If 2♥ had been natural, 2NT would be for takeout. See below.

### Over a Natural Response to a Weak 1NT Opening

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♠	2NT - takeout

When the response to a weak notrump opening is natural, as with the 2♠ bid here, a 2NT bid is for takeout. The reason for this is that a double shows a hand that has a little something in spades and would have doubled 1NT for business if RHO had not bid. See section 12-3, Defense Against Weak Notrump Openings.

The same principle applies when there has been an artificial response to the notrump opening, but only after the 2NT bidder has passed over the artificial response:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	2NT - takeout, not "unusual"
			Dbl - balanced good hand

Since 2♣ is an artificial bid (Stayman), an immediate 2NT bid over 2♣ would be unusual notrump and a double would merely show good clubs.

## When Partner's 1NT Opening Has Been Doubled

South	West	North
1NT	Dbl	2NT

If the double is for business, the 2NT bid shows both minor suits.

If the double is an artificial call showing a one-suited hand, or a two-suited hand but the suits are not specified (e.g., Cansino double showing both majors or both minors) the 2NT bid has the same transfer meaning as over a pass. See Minor Suit Transfer Bids in Section 5-2.

If the artificial double shows a specific two-suiter, (both majors, for instance), the principle of "Unusual over Unusual" applies. See section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions. In this situation the 2NT bid is a natural raise.

## 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"

## SLAM TRY CUE BIDS

The subject of slam try cue bids is too large for this particular writer. Besides, the whole field is well covered in two books:

*How to Win at Duplicate Bridge*, by Marshall Miles

*Blueprint for Bidding*, by Terence Reese and Albert Dormer

Some general principles:

-- When making a first cue bid toward slam, avoid cue bidding a void (except in an opposing suit) or a suit with no losers: singleton ace, doubleton AK, AKQ. Prefer a cue bid in a suit like Axx, where a fit would be welcome. Partner will evaluate his hand on the basis of fit in the first cue bid suit, and you want him to come up with the right answer: a king in the suit is good, xxx is bad.

-- It is not mandatory to cue bid an ace that can be cheaply shown if you have already stretched in the previous bidding:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	?	

North should bid 4♠, signing off, not 4♦, with ♠Q432 ♥KJ ♦A87 ♣7632. With such a miserable limit raise, if South passes the 4♠ signoff there can surely be no slam. If all South needs for slam is the diamond ace, he should be able to make another move. South has ♠AKJ75 ♥983 ♦K9 ♣AK8. If North bids 4♦, South will bid 5♦, and North will have to bid 6♠ because 5♠ would deny heart control. If one of North's small clubs were traded for the queen of clubs, she could cooperate in the slam try by bidding 4♦. This would lead to a reasonable slam.

-- A cue bid is not possible in partner's major at the four level, unless the *other* major has been tentatively agreed:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠ - spade raise, not a cue bid	

The 4♠ bid is not quite forcing, although it will seldom be passed (in view of the club fit).

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠ - forcing, may be a cue bid	

North could have ♠A4 ♥KQJ873 ♦AK3 ♣95. The 4♠ is forcing, because North presumably could have passed 4♥ with a minimum 3♥ jump.

## 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.

## PROBING CUE BIDS

Probing Cue Bids (made by "Prober") apply when the opponents have bid only one suit, the cue bid is not a jump, and the logic of the auction suggests that Prober may only be groping for the best contract, which is probably not a slam, and perhaps not even a game. Probing Cue Bids (forcing to a limit situation--see section 10-1) are made at the two or three level only. Here are examples:

-- The partnership has previously made a total of three or more bids:

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

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

-- A non-jump new suit response has been made at a higher level than two of opener's suit (possibly giving opener a rebid problem).

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♠	2♥	Pass
2♠			

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♦	3♣	Pass
3♦			

-- The partnership has raised a suit:

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

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♥	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥	

-- The cue bid is an advance of an overcall after opener's partner has passed:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	Pass	2♣

-- The partnership has overcalled in a minor suit and opener's partner has raised or bid a new suit:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	2♠	3♠

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♣	2♦	3♦

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♥	2♥ - Probing Cue Bid
			2♣ - natural

-- Prober previously made a takeout double, received a response, and is now cue bidding the suit doubled:

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

-- Prober's partner ("Replier") opened the bidding and then passed on the second round (rather than make a free bid):

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

-- Both partners have previously bid, and an opponent has made a jump overcall during the auction:

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♠	3♦	Pass
3♠			

The following are normal strong cue bids, not "Probing Cue Bids":

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

The partnership has bid only twice, and North's response was not higher than two of South's suit (i.e., higher than 2♣). If East had bid 2♠, a jump overcall, then 3♠ would be a Probing Cue Bid.

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

The partnership has bid only twice, and North's response is two of a suit that is lower than South's diamond suit. If North had bid 2♥ instead of 2♣, then 2♠ would be a Probing Cue Bid.

South	West	North
1♣	1♥	2♥

A normal strong cue bid, probably with first round control of hearts.

### Probing Cue Bids at the Two Level

Probing Cue Bids at the two level are not forcing to game, as are three-level probes, although Prober must have at least some interest in game, probably in a major suit or notrump. If it is a notrump game he is looking for, Prober must have one or both of the following:

-- "Solidity": Reason to believe that the combined hands of the partnership have nine fast tricks at notrump if entry can be gained in time (i.e., if the opposing suit is stopped by the partnership)

or:

-- Some sort of strength in the opposing suit--a partial stopper (K, Qx, Jxx, 10xxx) or a full stopper (usually Ax or Axx, wanting Replier to bid the notrump in case she has a holding that is more valuable in the declaring hand than in the dummy hand, e.g., Qx, J10x).

Replies to the Probing Cue Bid:

Replier makes the call that will best describe her hand, remembering that a simple bid of suit bid previously by the partnership may be passed. A 2NT bid may be passed if Prober has no strength in the cue bid suit and is willing to risk the loss of the first five tricks in that suit. Prober will not pass 2NT, however, if Replier has not previously limited her hand in some way (i.e., by a limit bid or a pass).

When a notrump game is the probable goal, there are two situations:

- 1) Prober is "Senior," sitting over the opposing suit.
- 2) Prober is "Junior," sitting under the opposing suit.

1) Senior is the better position:

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

Cue bids are more frequent for a Senior, because any notrump bid should be played from the other side, making the opposing bidder lead away from his strength.

In the above auction, South (Replier) can now bid 2NT with any one of the following:

-- More solidity in the partnership's long suit(s) than Prober might expect. South could bid 2NT with ♠87 ♥AKQ1083 ♦QJ3 ♣92 or ♠642 ♥AQ1083 ♦Q103 ♣KQ

-- A sure stopper in the opposing suit (with solidity too, bid 3NT)

-- A partial stopper in the opposing suit (K, Qx, Jxx, 10xxx)

Replier doesn't *have* to bid notrump with any of these requirements, but she may do so if no other call describes her hand better. The primary aim is to describe the hand in general. Lacking any of the above requirements for a 2NT bid, or not wishing to bid notrump because of the nature of her hand, South makes the call that will best serve to further describe her hand. Any minimum bid in a suit previously bid by either partner may be passed.

Senior continues with one of the following actions:

-- He bids 3NT over 2NT if solidity or a partial stopper in Replier's hand is sufficient for chancing that game.

-- He bids a partnership (i.e., previously bid) suit if he doesn't mind being passed there.

-- He can make any other call that serves to describe his hand, including a (forcing) bid in a new suit.

-- He can repeat the cue bid when Replier has bid 2NT, warning her that she needs a sure stopper (vs a partial stopper or suit solidity) for a game in notrump.

-- He can pass 2NT with perhaps three small cards in the opposing suit, if Replier has previously made a limit bid and he has a hunch that 2NT is better than any other spot.

-- He can repeat the cue bid when Replier has refused to bid notrump, asking that she please do so regardless of her holding in the opposing suit:

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

The 3♥ bid is equivalent to a 3NT bid, wanting South to play the hand. North has ♠A7632 ♥A8 ♦A93 ♣Q63. South has not *denied* holding something like Qx in hearts, despite his failure to bid 2NT. Besides, there is no reason for South to play the hand.

After Prober has made his follow-up call, it is Replier's turn to bid again:

-- If she had solidity plus a partial stopper for 2NT bid, she can bid 3NT even if Prober signs-off:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT

East has ♠873 ♥642 ♦Q7 ♣A10873. She has both a partial stopper and more suit-running ability than West could expect. With two reasons for bidding 2NT, she now bids 3NT. West has ♠AK4 ♥AQ3 ♦J83 ♣KQ94. Without the partial stop in diamonds, West would have bid 3♣ (a strong bid in this situation) instead of 2♦.

-- She can pass a minimum bid in one of the partnership's suits if she sees no game. In the preceding auction, East would have passed 3♣ without the queen of diamonds.

-- She can repeat the cue bid herself to show a good hand that unfortunately has none of the requirements for a 2NT bid. In the preceding auction, East would have bid 3♦ instead of 2NT with ♠Q52 ♥K85 ♦7♣J87532, with the intention of driving to game somewhere.

-- She can make some other appropriate bid.

An implied assumption in all of the foregoing is that one sure stopper plus one partial stopper will provide a double stopper when the opponent must lead away from her suit. This is not always so, but is true often enough to justify the assumption. The other assumption is that two partial stoppers will produce one sure stopper, which is almost always true.

Here is an example from actual play:

South has ♠J53 ♥A1082 ♦A83 ♣A64, North ♠K ♥763 ♦KQJ1092 ♣K85

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT			

North would not have made the cue bid if the spade king and heart seven were exchanged. South knows that responder must have some spade strength, since he can see that her diamonds are not solid. He bids 3NT because he has *two* of the requirements for the 2NT bid: a partial stopper and solidifying strength (in diamonds). Lacking one, he would pass 3♦ with a minimum hand.

2) Junior has the adverse suit sitting over him. This is the worse position:

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

Replier North cannot profitably bid notrump and have the opening lead come through Prober's possible spade strength. The bidding flexibility is considerably reduced by this factor. On the other hand, the person contemplating a cue bid can more readily bid notrump instead, since the lead will be coming up to his hand. Accordingly, with many hands that would call for a cue bid if the suit had been bid on the right, a player will bid notrump when the suit has been bid on the left. Senior tends to cue bid, Junior tends to bid notrump.

The following guidelines apply for a Junior cue bid:

-- Replier *raises* the cue bid instead of bidding notrump, holding one of the features supposedly being sought by Junior (solidity, stopper, partial stopper). With only a partial stopper and a doubtful hand, it may

be better to sign off rather than raise the cue bid. The purpose of raising the cue bid is to get the lead in the right place--making the opponent who bid the suit lead away from it.

-- Junior's repeat cue bid asks for a partial stopper, since he would seldom have any reason to insist that Replier play the notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠	- asks for a partial stopper		

East would not raise the first cue bid with a partial stopper and a weak raise, so South inquires about that possibility. South has ♠J64 ♥A65 ♦A ♣AK9876

Another: West has ♠Q3 ♥A8 ♦K96 ♣QJ9632, East ♠J54 ♥9642 ♦AQ8 ♣AK5:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT		

West did not raise the cue bid even though she has a partial stopper, because her clubs are not very good. With the partial stopper and a normal hand, however, she is able to bid 3NT after the repeat cue bid.

-- Rather than raise the cue bid, Replier can just bid 2NT with a holding that can be safely led up to (e.g., doubleton A10, AJ). Bidding 2NT in this position implies a potential double stopper, and a jump to 3NT implies a double stopper.

-- If the cue bid gets doubled, Replier can redouble to show at least a partial stopper in the opposing suit. This is a weaker action than raising the cue bid.

When a major suit game is the probable goal -- If the partnership has not bid a minor suit before the cue bid, it can be assumed that Prober is pointing toward a major suit game rather than a notrump game. One of the most common cases is the cue bid response to a major suit overcall:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	Pass	2♣

Chances are that East has spade support and is going to try for a spade game (a jump to 3♠ is not particularly invitational). However, he could have something else in mind. Perhaps he has a strong hand with little in spades, but has no readily available bid that would describe the hand adequately (unless the partnership is playing transfer responses to overcalls, a new suit bid, even a jump, is not forcing). He therefore seeks more information about West's hand with a cue bid.

In response to the cue bid, Replier makes the bid that will best serve to further describe her hand. With a minimum overcall and no other suit to show, she will probably just bid 2♠:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♠ - minimum overcall, no second suit		
	2NT - club stopper, likes notrump okay		
	3♣ - good hand, club stopper		
	2♦/2♥ - second suit, forcing		
	3♠ - good suit, good overcall, forcing		
	4♠ - very good suit and hand		

The 2NT bid tends to show a short club holding (e.g., AQ, Kx). With a holding like Qxx, Kxx, or Axx, it is better to raise the cue bid in order to show a stopper and maybe get the lead coming up to Prober's hand (which may include Kx, Qx, or Jxx in clubs).

The 3♣ bid shows a club stopper, but Replier can make this bid with nothing but a partial stopper and solid spades. Prober won't dare bid 3NT with no partial stopper and no high card in spades (as the cue bid tends to imply).

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

Prober East must repeat the cue bid if he wants to force. The 3♥ bid is only a strong invitation to game, since 2♥ would be just mildly invitational. The 3♥ bid shows a hand too good for an original 3♥ advance, while a 2♥ bid would show a hand too good for an original 2♥ advance.

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

Going to the three level with 3♣ implies a little extra, either in distribution (5-5) or high cards. If West has weak spades, he no doubt has extra high cards to justify the overcall. With a minimum overcall (no doubt with good spades), he should just bid 2♠, not 3♣, with 5=4.

### Probing Cue Bids at the Three Level

If both opponents have bid the same suit, a Probing Cue Bid at the three level requests a notrump bid from Replier if she has a sure stopper:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	2♠	3♠

East is suggesting that West bid 3NT with a sure spade stopper, but not with a partial stopper. The reasoning: Two partial stoppers, one in each hand, do not occur very often when both opponents have bid the same suit. It therefore makes more sense for a cue bid in this case to ask for a full stopper.

If only one opponent has bid the suit, however, the cue bid suggests that Replier bid 3NT with a partial stopper (K, Qx, Jxx, 10xxx) or better. There are occasions when Replier can bid 3NT opposite such a cue

bid when he has no strength whatsoever in the cue bid suit--when he is sure that Prober must have a stopper herself. For instance, when holding the ace of a suit in which Prober has shown good length--and she could not suppose that you have that ace--then you can bid 3NT without the partial stopper. Prober won't dare pass 3NT without a stopper, because she will suppose the partnership needs to have the opposing suit stopped twice.

Suppose South has ♠A4 ♥AJ ♦KQJ853 ♣Q107 and the bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	2♠
3♠	Pass	?	

North has ♠106 ♥96432 ♦A976 ♣A8. Unless South has great heart support, she is probably looking for a notrump game with just such a hand as the one shown above. Holding the ace of diamonds, North can bid 3NT without a partial stopper. He knows that South, lacking that ace, will not dare pass without a sure spade stop. In actual play North missed this implication and bid 4♣ instead of 3NT. The final contract was 5♦, down one (I was North).

If the cue bid gets doubled, and both opponents have bid the suit, a redouble by either partner shows a partial stopper (bid 3NT with a sure stopper). If only one opponent has bid the suit, go ahead and bid 3NT with a partial stopper, as requested. A redouble in that case shows a "partial-partial" stopper (e.g., Q, Jx, 10xx). A redouble by Prober shows a sure stopper and asks partner to bid 3NT if he has the key card(s) that will provide solidity to the partnership's suit(s):

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

Rdbl - sure stopper, asking for solidity

Other examples of Probing Cue Bids at the three level:

South	West	North	East
1♣	2♠	3♦	Pass

3♠ - asks for a partial spade stop

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♦	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♠	- asks for a sure spade stop

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	2♠	Pass

3♣ - asks for a partial club stop

Take the last auction: North is not *required* to bid 3NT with something in clubs if he thinks some other bid is more appropriate. In this case responder has ♠K10762 ♥AK3 ♦965 ♣Q5, so 3NT is the best bid. Opener has ♠A4 ♥Q7 ♦AKQJ87 ♣J42.

The following is *not* a Probing Cue Bid:

South	West	North
1♣	2♠	3♠

A jump overcall has been made, but both partners have not bid before the cue bid. This is a standard strong cue bid. Of course South will bid 3NT to show spade strength and a minimum hand.

A cue bid that sounds like a Probing Cue Bid may turn out to be a slam try cue bid. The logic of the auction usually reveals this fact plainly. Example:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♠	2♦
3♦	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠			

North, assuming 3♦ was a Probing Cue Bid, bid 3NT with a diamond stopper. South's 4♠ bid makes it obvious he was going to raise spades, so 3♦ becomes a slam try cue bid, probably based on a void. Also see section 8-2, Responding to Simple Overcalls, and section 10-7, Cue Bid Responses to Overcalls.

## MICHAELS CUE BID

A direct cue bid over a one-level natural opening bid by a passed hand (only) is a Michaels cue bid. If in a minor, it shows both majors. If in a major, it shows the other major and an unspecified minor. Partner can bid notrump to ask which minor.

At least 5-5, please, but if 5-4, the four-carder has to be the higher ranking. As usual when showing two suits artificially, partner prefers the lower-ranking when given a choice.

A balancing cue bid is not Michaels, even by a passed hand. See section 8-7, Reopening the Bidding.

Michaels can be used over a raised opening.

## MISCELLANEOUS CUE BIDS

### Cue Bids in Partner's Suit

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	Dbl *	3♣

\* Business double

When partner's suit has been doubled for business at a low level, his suit has really become the opponents' suit. A bid in this suit is therefore a cue bid, asking partner to take a choice between the unbid suits. In the auction above, East has a monstrous two-suiter in hearts and diamonds, perhaps 6-6. He also has a fair hand, since he would have to pass (or perhaps run to one of the red suits) with a bad hand. West can make a jump preference with the right cards: ♠9432 ♥AQ3 ♦K ♣QJ1097. Of course the 3♣ bid is a normal weak raise if the double is of the negative variety.

At higher levels it is entirely possible to make a natural bid in partner's suit, even when it has been doubled:

South	West	North	East
1♣	4♦	Dbl	5♦

Even if the double is for business, East may have a logical 5♦ bid. He figures that South is going to bid a major and wants to preempt with 5♦. He might have: ♠542 ♥873 ♦Q1084 ♣A65. There is no way that partner will buy the hand for 4♦ doubled, and 5♦ must be a good save.

### Telling Cue Bids

When the opponents have shown two suits naturally, and both partners have previously bid or made a business (not a takeout) double, a cue bid in one of the opposing suits shows a stopper in that suit. It suggests that partner bid notrump if she has the other suit stopped:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♦	2♥
2♠ - Telling Cue Bid, spades stopped			

South has spades stopped and values for 2NT, but lacks enough in diamonds for a 2NT bid. North can now bid 2NT with diamonds stopped, regardless of his spade holding. With a good hand, he should bid 3NT, because South will pass 2NT with a minimum hand. Raising a Telling Cue Bid shows a stopper in the *other* opposing suit. The raise is indicated when holding a non-vulnerable stopper in the other suit, as partner's stopper may be vulnerable (e.g., Kx, Qxx).

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	2♣	2♥ - transfer to spades
2♠/3♦ - telling cue bid, showing a stopper			

This principle is applied differently in takeout double situations. See Section 10-9, Cue Bids in Takeout Double Situations. It does not apply when the cue bidder has not previously acted:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♥	2♥ - strong diamond raise
			2♣ - natural
			3♦ - normal diamond raise

See section 10-7, Cue Bid Responses to Overcalls.

### Non-Forcing Cue Bids

When an opponent has made an artificial bid, a bid in that suit is natural, not forcing, in the absence of some conventional understanding.

A delayed cue bid, i.e., a bid in an enemy suit after that suit has been passed, is in general a non-forcing natural bid:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
Pass	2♥ - natural,		not forcing

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

In a minor suit, however, after a 1NT response:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1NT	Pass
Pass	2♣ - takeout for the majors		

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1NT	2♦ - takeout for majors

The opponents will usually have at least six cards in the minor between them, so the cue bid is more useful as a major suit takeout than as a natural bid. In the first auction, West has a hand that is not suitable for a (business) double of 1NT: ♠Q1043 ♥K10875 ♦A ♣873. As is usual for responding to an artificial takeout bid,, East will prefer the lower ranking suit (hearts) with equal length. Also see section 10-5, Reopening Cue Bid Overcalls.

A bid in opener's suit is not forcing when RHO has made a new suit response:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	2♣ - natural
			2♥ - spades/diamonds
			Dbl - spades/diamonds
			2NT - natural

The 2♥ bid shows at least 5-5 in spades/diamonds, while the takeout double implies only four spades. The 2NT bid is no doubt based on a solid diamond suit plus stoppers.

When partner has overcalled and RHO bids a new suit or notrump, a bid of opener's suit is natural:

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	1NT/2♣	2♥ - natural

The following is a forcing cue bid, not a natural bid:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♠ - cue bid, forcing		

The partnership has not been "previously silent," so this is a cue bid. See section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids.

Also see section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls; section 10-7, Cue Bid Responses to Overcalls; and section 10-9, Cue Bids in Takeout Double Situations.

## MISCELLANEOUS CUE BID BIDDING SEQUENCES

1♥ P 1♠ P  
1NT 2♥ A natural bid. Must have a good hand, since this is not a reopening situation.

1♥ P 1NT 2♥ Top-and-bottom cue bid; Michaels by a passed hand

1♥ P 1♠ P  
1NT P P 2♥/2♠ are both natural, may not be strong.

1♣ 1♦ 1♥ 2♣ Natural bid, good club suit

1♣ 1♦ 1♥ 2♥ Probing cue bid, may have spades and diamonds

1♠ P P 2♣  
P 2♠ Probing cue bid (see section 10-12) The spade bid must be repeated to be natural.

1♥ Dbl P 3♦  
P 3♥ Asks for a partial heart stopper, a probing cue bid. With a solid diamond suit the diamond bidder can chance a 3NT bid without the partial heart stopper--partner won't dare pass without a sure heart stopper himself. Of course the cue bidder may have a heart void and no interest in notrump. If so, he will make this clear on the next round.

1♥ Dbl P 1♠  
P 2♣ P 2♥ Probing cue bid

1♥ Dbl 1♠ 2♥ Natural bid, long hearts

1♥ Dbl P 1♠  
2♠ Probably 0-5-4-4, may not have a lot in highcards. With a good hand, or 4-4-4-1 distribution, a takeout double would be usual. Might have a huge two-suited hand.

1♥ Dbl Rdbl 1♠  
P P 2♠ Normal slam try cue bid, not a probing cue bid. Opener bids notrump if his spade strength was needed for the opening bid, to warn of possible duplication.

1♠ 2♦ P 3♠ Demands that partner bid 3NT if with a spade stopper, unless she has a most unusual hand. This is a very strong call, showing something like ♠65 ♥AK7 ♦Q8432 ♣AK2.

1♣ 1♠ P 3♣ Splinter bid in support of spades, strong because the overcall was in a major suit).

1♠ 2♥ 3♥ P  
 3NT Implies that opener would not have opened if it were not for her heart strength.  
 Warns of duplication, in case the cue bidder has a void. Opener may even have an unbalanced hand with five or six spades. With an opening bid outside the heart suit, opener should not bid 3NT, even with KQJ of hearts.

1♠ 3♣ P 3♠ Asks for a partial spade stopper, in accordance with the principles of probing cue bids at the three level (only one opponent has bid the suit). A strong jump overcall in a minor tends to show a solid suit or equivalent, so the 3♣ bidder needs a potential double stopper (e.g., A10x, K10x) to bid 3NT if his suit is not solid.