

Good bidding is the result of clear partnership agreements and bidding according to your agreements. Trust your partner and listen to her.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE BONES OF BIDDING</b> <b>Slam-interest Cue Bids</b> <b>Checking on controls</b></p>
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**YOUR PARTNERSHIP IS ON A QUEST TO FIND A MAJOR SUIT FIT.**

1. The term “cue bid” has two general meanings in bridge. Sometimes it refers to bidding the opponent’s suit, for one purpose or another. At other times it refers to the bidding of controls in side-suits to explore for slams. Controls are Ace’s or voids (1st round control) and King’s or singleton’s (2nd round control). We are discussing controls.
2. Control-showing cue bids can arise anytime the partnership has determined their trump suit and some indication of extra strength has been expressed.

Example 1.

Cue bids often arise after a Jacoby 2NT, where fit and an indication of strength are expressed simultaneously.

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1Heart	2NT
3 Diamonds	3 Spades

The partners have agreed that hearts are trump and that they will bid to game. But responder has not leaped to game to close the auction, but has instead shown a need to say more. What she has said is, I have a control in the spade suit, either 1st or 2nd round.

Example 2.

Cue bids can also arise after a Limit Raise.

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1Heart	3 Hearts
4 clubs	

The partners have agreed that hearts are trump, but this time responder only invited game. Responder was expecting opener either to pass and play 3 Hearts or else to raise and play 4 Hearts. But instead, opener is going slow, thereby expressing unsuspected strength and a curiosity about the possibility of bidding a slam. She has indicated that she has a control in the club suit.

These two examples do not exhaust the types of auction that may generate cue bids. But they show the critical features that begin cue bidding: a trump agreement and a demonstration of power. In fact, the cue bid is a demonstration of power.

3. Cue bidding proceeds in an extremely disciplined up-the-line sequence. The cue bidder will select the lowest possible cue bid available, excluding the trump suit.

In Example 1 above, responder cue bid spades, the cheapest cue bid available. She almost certainly holds a control in clubs or diamonds as well, but she bid spades first because cue bidding occurs in an up-the-line sequence.

4. Since cue bidding ALWAYS occurs up-the-line, skipping over a suit means that no control in that suit was available.

In Example 2 above, the cheapest cue bid over responder's limit raise would have been 3 spades. But opener did not bid 3 spades, but skipped over it to bid 4 clubs. So responder must infer that opener does not possess any spade controls.

5. Cue bidding not only shows a control, it asks partner to cue bid in response. Partner's cue bids are subject to the same up-the-line sequence.
6. The partner of the cue bidder is not required absolutely to cue bid in response to a cue bid, but typically SHE WILL. Only if a strong reason exists NOT to participate will partner decline.

In Example 1 above, opener should almost always cue bid. Her bid of 4 clubs would show a club control. But if she bid 4 diamonds, she would be showing a diamond control AND denying a club control. Either action will be informative to the first cue bidder.

In Example 2 above, opener has shown slam interest, but has denied holding any controls in spades. Clearly slam cannot be bid if spades cannot be controlled. Opener knows this, so she is actually asking responder if he can control spades. If opener cannot control spades, then he would simply bid 4 hearts and be done. Only if he were certain to win the 1st or 2nd round of spades would he participate in cue bidding.

7. Why bother with cue bids? Why not just use Blackwood to ask about controls?

Blackwood can reveal the number of Ace's and perhaps the number of King's, but it cannot identify which particular controls exist. Blackwood is used only when particulars aren't important, and cue bidding is used when particulars are important. This often happens if the initial cue-bidder has a void, so the Ace in his void suit is not important, but some other Ace may be.

Another reason to cue bid is suggested by Example 2. Blackwood will not clarify whether or not SPADES is controlled.

In Example 1 above, opener, by cue bidding clubs, has expressed that slam is possible if responder can control spades. If responder obliges now by cue bidding 4 spades, opener may elect to continue by bidding 4NT to ask for Aces. In this way opener may find out whether the spade control is first or second round.

So Blackwood may still follow after some initial cue bidding.

Consider it a rule of Blackwood that you cannot use Blackwood if you hold an uncontrolled doubleton. Let me repeat. If you hold a doubleton without any control in that suit, you cannot use Blackwood. But if you cue bid first and determine that PARTNER has a control in the suit of your doubleton, then you can proceed with Blackwood.