

Control Bidding (Cue Bid)

Introduction

If you have a suit in which your side could be off the first two tricks (such as Qxx, or Jx), you shouldn't use Blackwood.

For example, Opener holds:

♠ AKJ7642 ♥ AKQ ♦ 32 ♣ 3.

You open 1♠ and partner makes a limit raise to 3♠. You expect to be in the slam zone. This is not a Blackwood hand. Let's suppose you use Blackwood and partner shows 1 ace. Now what? If you jump to 6♠, you could be facing:

♠ Q1093 ♥ J32 ♦ Q54 ♣ AQ5.

You are in a slam off the ace-king of diamonds--no good. But, what if partner's "one-ace" hand were:

♠ Q1093 ♥ Q32 ♦ AK64 ♣ 42?

Now, slam is laydown. So, Blackwood should not be used when you have a suit off two quick losers. The solution for these non-Blackwood hands lies in cue-bidding.

Rules for Cue-Bidding Controls

1). The first cue-bid cannot take place until the trump suit has been agreed, either actually as in the sequence 1♥-P-3♥... or implied as in the sequence 1♥-P-3♦!... where, by partnership agreement, a

jump shift agrees the first-bid suit as trumps.

2). Controls are Aces and voids (first-round controls) or Kings and singletons (second-round controls).

3). Only first-round control can be shown by the first cue-bid (i.e. a bid in a suit other than the agreed trump suit shows either an Ace

or a void).

4). First-round control is all that is shown until all first-round controls in the hand have been bid or, by implication, denied. The sequence 1♥-P-3♥-P; 3♠... cue-bids first-round control in spades, but says nothing about either clubs or diamonds. On the other hand, the sequence 1♥-P-3♥-P; 4♦... cue-bids first-round control in diamonds and, by implication, denies first-round control in either

spades and clubs since these suits have been bypassed.

5). Cue-bids, whether showing first or second-round controls, are always made at the lowest available level, except when the next level of the trump suit has been bypassed (see Rule 7).

After the sequence 1♥-P-3♥-P; holding both the Ace of spades and the Ace of clubs you would bid 3♠ and not 4♣, which would deny first- round control of the spade suit.

6). Second-round control (a King or a singleton) can only be shown after all the first-round controls in the hand have been bid or, by implication, denied.

7). If a cue-bid is made that by-passes both the trump suit and one or more of the outside suits then all the missing controls are being promised. The sequence 1♥-P-3♥-P, 3♠-P-4♣- P; 4♠... not only shows second-round control in the spade suit, but also guarantees first-round control of diamonds. Sometimes it is possible to apply a more sophisticated version of this, which can save valuable space. The sequence 1♥-P-3♥-P; 3♠-P-4♦-P; 4♠... not only cue- bids second-round control in spades but strongly indicates that the club suit is not a problem. Either the 4♠ bidder holds the Ace of clubs or he has no more than one loser in clubs and therefore wishes to continue exploring the possibilities of bidding the slam. This is because the responder's 4♦ cue-bid specifically denies first-round control in clubs.

8). The first cue-bid made by both partners also promises one of the top two honours in the trump suit. This rule is in place because it can be very annoying to be playing in a slam missing both of the top two trumps. Without one of the top two trumps you must be disciplined and simply rebid the trump suit. If partner now cue- bids, he is promising both of the top two honours and you can continue your cue-bidding sequence in comfort.

Examples

1. Not using CueBids

West (21)	East
♠ A K Q	
♥ K Q J 10 9 2	
♦ K Q J 10	
♣ --	

West	North	East	South
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4NT?	Pass	5♦	Pass
??			

1 using Cue Bids

West (21)	East
♠ A K Q	
♥ K Q J 10 9 2	
♦ K Q J 10	
♣ --	

West	North	East	South
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

2.

As previously mentioned you should also not bid Blackwood or 1430 if you have two losers in a suit.

OPENER

RESPONDER

♠ A K J 7 6 4 2

♠ Q T 9 3

♥ A J 5

♥ K Q 2

♦ 3 2

♦ Q 5 4

♣ A

♣ A Q 5

Using 1430 alone the auction would go:

1♠ 3♠

4NT (1430) 5♣ (one keycard)

??? (which one???)

Using control bids the auction would go:

1♠ 3♠

4♣ (control in clubs-singleton) 4♠ (no control in diamonds or hearts)

Opener knows there are two losers in diamonds and slam is not possible

3.

Now let's give responder this hand:

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ A K J 7 6 4 2	♠ Q T 9 3
♥ <u>AJ5</u>	♥ K Q 2
♦ 3 2	♦ A K 6 4
♣ A	♣ 4 2

Using 1430 alone the auction would go the same way and opener still would not know which ace his partner held.

Using control bids the auction will go:

1♠ 2NT
4♣ 4♦
4NT 4♣ (1430 to check if partner has 1 Keycard)
5♦ (Do you have the trump Queen) 6♦ (yes I do plus the ♦K)
6♠

This second auction is even better because it locates the trump Queen and the second control in the diamond suit. Note that when Blackwood comes into auction control bids are "turned off".

After bidding 4NT opener's 5♦ bid is not showing second round control; it is asking for the trump queen as part of the 1430 convention.

Summary

- Once a suit has been agreed, a non-jump bid of a new suit shows interest in a slam and first-round control of that suit (an ace or sometimes a void).
- Start with the cheapest available suit – and partner should bid their cheapest suit in response.
- With nothing to cue-bid, return to the trump suit.
- You cannot cuebid the ace of trump.
- Mainly useful if you have a void, or 2 quick losers in a suit
- You can still use 4NT (Blackwood) after cuebidding
- A cuebid is above the 3 level of the agreed major, or above NT if the agreed suit is a minor