

Bidding the Opponent's Suit The Meaning of Cue-Bids

It is imperative for any Partnership to understand the significance of a bid of a suit previously bid by an Opponent. Bidding the Opponent's suit, under most circumstances, is ***not*** natural. Rather, it is a "***cue-bid***" which means one of two things.

- a. In lower levels of bidding, when it is a bid of a suit previously bid by the Opponents, it is a ***forcing bid***, with specific conventional meaning, depending upon the bidding environment in which it is presented; i.e., a bid showing an interest in contesting the contract and forcing Partner to bid. (Examples 1-5)
- b. In higher levels of bidding, it usually represents the presence or absence of control of a suit, and is more commonly referred to as a "***control***" bid, seeking either a game-level or a slam-level contract. (Examples 6-7).

1. **Michaels Cue-Bid by an Overcaller:** An overcall using the same suit bid by an Opponent. It shows a very weak (5-10 HCP's), preemptive, or a very strong (16 + HCP's), holding with two specifically-referenced suits as follows: Michaels cue-bids are ***forcing*** but are ***not alertable***.

- (a) 1C ("**2C**") = 5-5 or better in both Major suits
- (b) 1D ("**2D**") = 5-5 or better in both Major suits
- (c) 1H ("**2H**") = 5 or more Spades + an unspecified 5-card or longer Minor suit
- (d) 1S ("**2S**") = 5 or more Hearts + an unspecified 5-card or longer Minor suit

2. **A Cue-Bid in Competition:** Shows a limit raise or better, held by a Responder, in support of Partner's suit, Partner having bid either as an opening bidder or as an overcaller. Examples:

- (a) 1H (2D) "**3D**" = a forcing limit raise or better in support of Partner's opening Heart suit
- (b) 1H (1S) 2C ("**2H**") = a forcing limit raise or better in support of Partner's Spade suit
- (c) 1C (1H) 1S ("**2S**") = a forcing limit raise or better in support of Partner's Heart suit

Note:

1C (1H) 1S ("**2C**") is not a cue-bid, but a natural 6-card or better Club suit. Here, a cue-bid of "**2S**" would have shown Heart support for Partner's overcall of **1H**.

3. **A Cue-Bid in Response to Partner's Opening 1-NT Following an Opponent's Overall:** Not natural, but most likely a forcing "Stayman" call seeking a 4-4 Major suit fit (See "Lebensohl")
 - (a) 1-NT (2H) "3H" = game-forcing, seeking a 4-4 Spade suit fit
 - (b) 1-NT (2D) "3D" = game-forcing, seeking either a 4-4 Heart or Spade suit fit, or both

4. **A Cue-Bid in Response to Partner's Take-Out Double:** A forcing bid usually to No-Trump or to a suit agreement
 - (a) 1C (Double) Pass ("2C") = equal support in both Majors with at least invitational or game-level values

5. **A "Western" Cue-Bid:** In a forcing auction, bids of the Opponent's suit below the level of 3-NT are not natural but rather ask for a stopper in the Opponent's bid suit, seeking a 3-NT contract
 - (a) 1D (1H) 1S (2H)
3D (Pass) "3H" = seeking Heart stopper for a 3-NT final contract

6. **A "Splinter" Bid:** A double-jump shift, "control," game-forcing bid by either an Opening bidder or a Responder to an opening bid.
 - (a) 1H (P) "4C" = Heart support, game (opening count or better) values, and either a singleton (not an Ace), or a void in the "Splinter" suit, Clubs, in this instance
 - (b) 1C (P) 1S (P)
"4D" = Spade support, game (20 HCP's or more) values, and either a singleton (not an Ace) or a void in the "Splinter" suit, Diamonds, in this instance

Note: Since it is game-forcing, a Responder (as in example a) must hold at least opening count, and an Opener, must hold at least 20 HCP's or its equivalent.

7. **A Bid of a New Suit, Any Suit Other than the Presumed Trump Suit, Above Game-Level, after a Golden Fit Has Already Been Agreed-Upon:**
 - (a) 1D (P) 1S (P)
4S (P) "5H" = Shows first-round "control," either an Ace or a void in Hearts, in this instance, seeking a possible slam-level contract in Spades. Such bids are forcing asking Partner to show his/her first round control of any other suit at the cheapest level, if such a control is present, else to go back to the agree-upon suit. (These bids are usually used when seeking the feasibility of a suspected slam in lieu of an Ace-Asking convention when the bidder, testing for a Slam, holds either a void or a worthless doubleton, or both)