

## CUE BIDDING by Maritha

There are three general reasons for cue-bidding:

- 1) Showing controls to look for slam.
- 2) Artificial, showing certain agreed-upon hands (partnership puts on convention card)
- 3) Making a forcing bid to get more information from partner.

### Slam Bidding

Ace-Asking sequences (4C as Gerber—used generally over NT opening bids or rebids—and 4NT as Blackwood) are designed to make sure you do NOT bid a small slam when your side is missing 2 Aces.

When exploring for slam in a suit, it is usually better to try to make a series of cue bids. This enables you to find slams based on a good fit even when you do not have the 33 HCP usually required for a small slam. Particularly when you have a small doubleton (and possibly, two quick losers) it is better to cue-bid than to just ask for Aces. Also, when you have a void, it is better to cue bid.

*Examples:* 1) AKQxxx xx AKQxx ---- : With this hand, you need partner to have the Ace of Hearts. The Ace of Clubs is useless to you if the opponents take the first two Heart tricks. Ace-asking won't help. If partner says 2S, you should say 3C (cue-bidding your void). If partner says 3H, bid 6S. If partner says 3D (showing diamond void, bid 4D, in case partner can still show Heart Ace—or s/he can sign off at 4S). If partner says 3S (nothing to cue-bid), sign off at 4S.

2) KQJx AKQxxx A Kx: With this hand, 4NT (ace-asking) is fine once partner supports hearts. If partner shows one Ace, bid 6H. If partner has 2 Aces, bid 7NT.

3) AKQxx xx x AKQJx: With this hand, if partner bids 2S, bid 3C (cue-bid). If partner bids 3D (showing Ace of diamonds), bid 4 Club (showing King of clubs). If partner bids 4H, bid 6S. If partner bids 4S, pass. If partner bids 3H over 3C (denying ace of diamonds and promising Ace of hearts, bid 6S.

4) AK AKJxxxx x KQJ: With this hand, if partner supports hearts, just bid 4NT (Ace asking) and bid 6H if partner shows one Ace, 7 if partner shows 2 Aces, and sign off at 5H if partner has zero Aces.

**Cue bids are conventionally done by bidding CHEAPEST suit in which you have an ACE** (1<sup>st</sup>-round control). Then partner bids the cheapest suit in which s/he has an Ace, etc. (Some people will cue bid Aces OR Kings. You must agree to do so, and it can get complicated. I recommend starting with Aces only. A return to the trump suit says: "I have nothing to say.")

For cue-bidding to take place, **you MUST have suit agreement**, for example:

1S-P-3S-P: 4C says "I have club Ace"; 4D says: "I have diamond Ace." 4H shows heart Ace.

2C-P-2D-P-2S-P-3S-P: Any suit bid (4C, 4D, 4H) other than 4S is a cue bid.

### Artificial Cue-Bids

Some people play cue bids to show various hands by agreement. This must be established ahead of time with your partner and appear on your convention card. E.g., 1C by opponent and 2C by you can be "Michaels" convention which shows 5-5 in major suits. Or, 1C by opponent and 2C by you can be "Top and Bottom" cue-bid that shows 5 cards in top suit (Spades) and 5 in lowest unbid suit (Diamonds). Or, 1C by opponent and 2C by you can be "Top and Another" that shows 4 Spades (top suit) and 6 cards in an undisclosed, lower suit (hearts OR diamonds). ETC.

**Cue-Bidding to Force Partner to Respond** (most commonly looking for stopper for 3NT).

Sometimes, you don't have a good bid to make. This usually happens when your partner opens a suit, and you cannot support that suit, you don't have a suit of your own, you do not have a stopper in the opponent's suit, but you have enough points to want to bid game. So, you cue-bid the opponents' suit, which tells partner: "Do something." (Partner may rebid his/her suit, show a 2<sup>nd</sup> suit, or bid NT with a stopper in opponent's suit.)

Example: (1) xxx AKxx KQx Kxx. Your partner opens 1C. You say 1H. Partner says 1NT. Right-hand opponent says 2S. You cue-bid 3S. If partner has a real Spade stopper, you want to play 3NT from his/her side. If partner does not have a Spade stopper, you'll have to scramble (perhaps play 4-3 heart fit or game in clubs).

(2) LHO opens 1C, partner overcalls 1S. RHO passes. You have: Q 8754 KQJ10 AKxx. Bid 2 clubs (totally forcing). Partner can now mention a 4-card heart suit, rebid his/her spades, or bid diamonds & you bid NT.