

Roman Key-Card Blackwood is so effective that often you do not require cue-bids. However, for hands containing voids, or where you need to know about a control in a *specific* suit, cue-bidding is invaluable.

**Cue-bidding establishes whether your partnership holds sufficient controls to bid slam**

Before cue-bidding, you will need to know that:

- your side is committed to game - and you think that there may be a slam available
- you have agreed a trump suit

A cue-bid both shows and asks for information. You tell your partner where your aces and (very rarely) voids are located, and you ask him to do the same. Sometimes, you can also show kings, and (rarely) singletons.

*If you have nothing more to show your partner, return to the agreed suit at the lowest available level.*

When partner starts to cue-bid, it does not mean that you have to show your ace or void.

If your hand is minimum for your bidding so far, you can sign off by returning to the agreed trump suit.

Bear in mind that hands which are rich in aces and kings, and short on queens and jacks (other than in the trump suit), are most suitable for slams so, even if you have opened a trifle light, if your hand contains good control cards (aces, kings, voids and singletons) it may still be perfect for slam.

To use RKCB, you must have agreed, or be agreeing a suit, and your hand must contain first or second-round control in every suit, or great expectation of having such.

a) ♠ AQ864 ♥ KQJ3 ♦ 6 ♣ AK7	b) ♠ AQ964 ♥ KQ3 ♦ 64 ♣ AK7	You open 1S and your partner responds 3S (Acol). What should you bid now?
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- a) You hold first or second round control in all four suits. You should use RKCB to find out if partner holds two of the three missing key-cards. If he does, you can bid 6S.
- b) You may have every control in three suits, but not in diamonds. You should not use RKCB here. Instead, bid 4C. This is a cue-bid, showing A♣ and asking partner to cue-bid where his aces lie. If he now bids 4D, showing A♦, you can move onto RKCB. If he bids 4H (showing A♥), you can then bid 4S.

Because you have cue-bid you have shown slam interest. Since diamonds have not been mentioned, when you sign off in 4S, partner will know you are worried about diamonds and, if he holds ♦KQ, or a singleton, he can then try RKCB.

<b>West</b> ♠ AQ864 ♥ KQJ3 ♦ 64 ♣ AK7	<b>East</b> ♠ K975 ♥ A3 ♦ KQ52 ♣ 864	<b>West</b> 1S 4C* 4S 5S	<b>East</b> 3S 4H* 4NT <b>6S</b>	Worried about diamonds, West cue-bids 4C. East cue-bids 4H, and West signs off in 4S, clearly worried about diamonds. East, holding a maximum hand and ♦KQ, takes over bidding RKCB, and the slam is still reached.
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**Cue-bids above and below game** Cue bids which take you past the game level clearly show strong slam intentions. If you have any aces or voids to show, you must do so.

Those which keep the level of bidding below the level of game are more likely to be mild slam tries, consulting you to see whether your hand is suitable or not. If you believe your hand is unsuitable, you are not required to show a control which would take the bidding above the level of game. If, however, you can show your ace or void, and keep the bidding below game, then you must do so. For example:

<b>N</b> - NB NB	<b>E</b> - 3S ?	<b>S</b> - NB	<b>W</b> 1S 4D*	<b>East</b> ♠ 9643 ♥ QJ8 ♦ J2 ♣ AQ72	Your 3S raise was fine but, when partner cue-bids 4D, you should not cue-bid 5C, since you are minimum, you hold no source of tricks, and your queens and jacks are likely to be wasted values. When you sign-off in 4S, if partner makes another cue-bid with, say, 5H, then you should jump to 6S to make up for withholding your A♣ last time.
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## Voids

You can cue-bid a void in your hand if:

- ⚙ Partner hasn't bid that suit.
- ⚙ You have plenty of trumps, so that partner can utilise your void by ruffing losers in your hand.
- ⚙ You have shown your ace(s) first.

## Economy in Cue-bidding

Some players lie to agree that, when cue-bidding, if you miss out a cheaper suit than the one you bid, you do not have the ace there.

We do not play like that because, to show multiple controls requires space, and often the more economical order is the best way forward.

Try to anticipate the likely auction, and then organise your cue-bids in the most economical order.

Assume that partner will show the control you are seeking because, if he does not, you will probably not be proceeding to the slam level anyway. For example:

West	N	E	S	W
♠ AJ	-	-	-	1H
♥ AKJ932	NB	3H	NB	4C*
♦ 73	NB	4D*	NB	4S*
♣ AJ5				

You might be tempted to cue-bid 3S first. But, if partner then cue-bids 4D - as you hope - you would then have to bid 5C. Cue-bidding in this economical order allows you to show both controls, and leaves room for 4NT, if necessary.

Failing to bid 3S the first time does not deny A♠; you merely haven't shown it yet.

**Showing first and second round controls** Generally, you show your aces first. Once a player knows that his side holds all four first round controls, he begins to cue-bid second round controls (kings and, rarely, singletons).

However, if for reasons of economy, it is sensible to show a second-round control early on, you must only do so if you hold an ace in another suit (usually the trump ace or king). This is so that if partner switches to Blackwood after some cue-bidding, you will not lie about the total number of aces in your hand.

West	East	West	East
♠ AQJ1064	♠ K753	2C	2D
♥ AKJ	♥ 86	2S	3S
♦ 64	♦ KQJ2	4C*	4D*
♣ AK	♣ 964	4NT	5D
		<b>6S/6NT</b>	

Opposite a 2C opener, East's hand is very strong, especially when West bids spades. Over the 4C cue-bid, East could sign-off in 4S, but it is safe for her to cue-bid 4D. She doesn't have A♦, but she does have K♠ - which must be huge card - and when West uses RKCB, East shows just one control and the slam is easily reached.

West	East	West	East
♠ AKQ864	♠ J97	2D	2H
♥ AQ3	♥ 86	2S	3S
♦ 62	♦ AKQ5	4C*	4D*
♣ A7	♣ 9652	4H*	5D*
		<b>6S</b>	

Once East shows A♦ and West has shown both A♣ and A♥, East should reason that, with 3 tricks in her hand, slam could easily be on. So, over West's 4H, East cue-bids 5D, showing K♦ and suggesting Q♦ also. This is because, East must believe that she has sufficient tricks to make a 12 trick contract viable.

**Good Trumps** If you hold a slam-going hand with poor trumps, make sure that you leave room to use RKCB to check on your partner's trump holding.

Remember that you can never cue-bid the trump ace or king: returning to the agreed trump suit is always a sign off.