

## Western Cue Bids

We often find ourselves in the situation where we have no eight-card major suit fit, the values to want to be in game, and no stopper in a suit bid by the opponents. We would like to be in 3NT when partner has a stopper and in some other contract when they don't have a stopper. We can use the "Western" Cue-Bid to ask partner whether they have that stopper or not.

North	East	South	West
1♦	2♣	2♥	P
3♣			

North's 3♣ bid is a "Western" cue-bid. It does NOT show a fit for hearts. North is telling South that they have the values to be in a game contract but they don't have a club stopper. South should bid 3NT with a club stopper or describe their own hand (rebid hearts, show a fit for partner's minor) without one. South should not worry about other suits. South should not say later "I didn't want to bid 3NT because I did not have a spade stopper." North asked about clubs, South should be focused on clubs.

Remember that not all cue-bids are "Western:"

North	East	South	West
1♥	2♣	3♣	

When we open a suit and the opponents overcall, our cue-bid shows a limit-raise or better (and a fit) for partner's major suit. It is not a request that partner bid 3NT with a club stopper. They should rebid 3♥ with a minimum hand or bid more with more than a minimum hand.

Western cue-bids occur at the 3-level. They are not "jump" cue-bids. And if you've agreed on a major suit fit, this bid means something completely different, according to your partnership agreements. (It could be cue-bidding a control in the suit, with slam interest. Be sure you and partner have agreements on all cue-bids, because what they mean is going to depend on where in the auction they occur!)

**Board 1**

North Deals  
None Vul

♠ 10 9 2	♠ K Q J 8 5	♠ A 7 6
♥ 10 8 2	♥ K Q 7	♥ 5 4 3
♦ 5 4 3 2	♦ A K 9	♦ J
♣ K 8 2	♣ 5 4	♣ Q J 10 9 7 6
	♠ 4 3	
	♥ A J 9 6	
	♦ Q 10 8 7 6	
	♣ A 3	



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♠	2 ♣	Dbl
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

**Auction Commentary:** You would find a lot of votes for 3 ♣ at East's first turn. South makes a negative double in the actual auction. North doesn't have 4 hearts, but they do have a good hand. They would like to bid 3 NT, but they don't have a stopper. How do they find out if partner has one? 3 ♣ here by North is call a "Western" cue-bid. It specifically asks South to bid 3 NT if they have a club stopper. South, dutifully, does as asked.

**Opening Lead:** West should lead the ♣ 2, showing 3 or more. It does NOT promise an honor in this situation because they did not raise clubs during the auction.

**Play Commentary:** There is nothing complicated here. South need only take their top tricks without making the mistake of trying to set up their spade suit.

**What if?:** It is always nice when we have the stopper that partner is looking for and know what to do. What if we don't have it? If we switch South's black suit holdings so that they have ♠ A3 and ♣ 43, how should they respond to partner's 3 ♣? South should bid 4 ♠. North will know that this is made on a doubleton honor. If South started with three spades, they would have raised immediately. South could be weaker than they are; all the have done so far is make a negative double. If they bid only 3 ♠, North might decide they don't have enough strength to bid a game.

**Board 5**

North Deals  
N-S Vul

	♠ A Q J 9 7 5	
	♥ 6 2	
	♦ 10	
	♣ J 5 4 3	
♠ 4 2		♠ K 10 6
♥ A 8 7 4		♥ K J
♦ A K 3		♦ Q J 7 6 5 4 2
♣ 10 9 7 6		♣ A
	♠ 8 3	
	♥ Q 10 9 5 3	
	♦ 9 8	
	♣ K Q 8 2	



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	2 ♠	3 ♦	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	3 NT	All pass

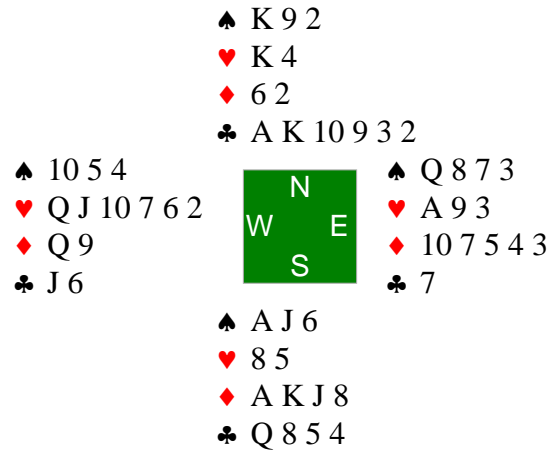
**Auction Commentary:** West has a decent hand with support for partner. What they don't have is a clear idea of what the final contract should be. They can tell their partner that they have such a hand by bidding 3 ♠ here, another "Western" cue-bid. In this case, it shows a fit for partner's diamond suit and asks partner to bid 3 NT if they have spades (the opponent's suit) stopped. East does have the stopper and should bid 3 NT. East should not be worried about their somewhat precarious holdings in clubs and hearts; West didn't ask East to worry about those suits, only spades.

**Opening Lead:** North showed a good spade suit; there is no particular reason to think they have help in hearts. South should lead the ♠ 8. North knows the ♠ 8 is not from 3 or more spades, so they probably have a doubleton. If North wins the ♠ A, they can set up the suit, but they will never have an entry to cash more of them. They need to execute a "hold-up" play (anyone remember those?). North can play the ♠ J. If East now wins the ♠ K, South will still have one spade left to play when they get in, and North can take multiple spade tricks. Can East do anything about that? (Exercise left for the reader; HINT - Does East know where the ♠ A is?).

**Takeaway:** When East overcalls at the 3-level over a weak 2-bid, they will have better than a minimum opening hand. East cannot simply overcall at the 3-level because they have a nice suit; these are not weak bids. Advancer (partner of the overcaller) should be looking for a game when they have an opening hand and should usually be looking for 3 NT when partner has overcalled in a minor.

**Board 9**

North Deals  
E-W Vul



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦
2 ♥	Pass	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

**Auction Commentary:** South could bid 3 NT immediately, showing 13-15 HCP with a balanced hand and denying a 4-card major, but it leaves the partnership exposed if North is also weak in hearts. Better is 1 ♦, giving North a chance to respond. We want to try and "right-side" the contract. If North has a stopper like Kx, we want for East to be on lead, not West.

When West bids 2 ♥, North has a choice. Here North passed, judging their hand to be too weak to bid at the 3-level opposite what might be a minimum partner. We have some sympathy for Norths who would take an optimistic view and bid 3 ♣.

South knows they want to be in game, but they don't want to be in 3 NT unless partner has a heart stopper. They can use the "Western" cue-bid to find out. North does have a heart stopper and bids 3 NT.

**Opening Lead:** East leads the ♥ 3. We would not underlead our Ace against a suit contract, but it is usually correct against a notrump contract.

**Takeaway:** If South had bid 3 NT at their first turn, the defense would have taken the first six tricks. Here, on a small heart lead, the defense might not take any tricks at all. Remember the concept of "right-siding" the contract (this refers to high cards held in weak suits, not stealing the hand from our partner), and the use of the "Western" cue-bid to do that (and also to make sure we actually have a stopper in their suit).