

# Slam Bidding I (Control Bids)

When considering bidding a slam, it is often important to bring Partner into the conversation to assess Partner's strength and how the hands fit together. Control Bids uncover this information. A Control Bid (sometimes confusingly called "a cue-bid control") shows a first- or second-round control in a suit, e.g. an Ace (or void) or a King (or singleton). Control Bids are made only after suit agreement and then show slam interest. Here's suggested guidelines (not universal):

- The initial Control Bid (new suit) shows an Ace/King and suggests slam
- An unlimited Partner cooperates by replying with the lowest bid of a new suit, which shows an Ace/King
- If Partner is limited:
  - With a minimum, Partner declines by returning to the lowest level of the trump suit
  - With a maximum, Partner responds as if unlimited
- Skipped suits or returning to the trump suit deny a control
- Subsequent round Control Bids may show a singleton/void

In the examples below, the bidding is 1♠ – 3♠ (Limit Raise); (a) with only 19 HE opposite a max of 12 HE, this hand lacks the strength to investigate slam and simply bids 4♠; (b) has enough for a slam investigation, but two quick ♥ losers make a control bid of 4♣ superior to checking for KeyCards (4 Aces & the trump King) via 1430; (c) a powerful hand but the void makes a 4♣ control bid better than asking for KeyCards because the real question is "which KeyCards does Partner have?" If Partner denies a ♦ honor after the 4♣ control bid, slam should be bid without resorting to 1430.

(a) ♠ A Q 10 7 4  
♥ Q 3  
♦ K Q 7  
♣ A Q 4

(b) ♠ A K Q 10 7 4  
♥ 4 3  
♦ K Q 7  
♣ A 4

(c) ♠ A Q 10 7 4  
♥ A J 4 3  
♦ —  
♣ K Q 7 4

## Example Control Bidding Sequences

After East supports ♠s, West has the values for a slam invitation (22 HE) which the control bid of 4♣ issues. East, with a 12 HE and two KeyCards, cooperates by control bidding 4♦. West can now check for KeyCards and go to slam provided there are not two missing KeyCards.

West		East	
♠ A Q 10 7 4 3		♠ K J 8 5	
♥ Q		♥ J 10 9 8 2	
♦ K Q 7		♦ A 3	
♣ A Q 4		♣ J 10	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♣	Pass	4 ♦	Pass
?			

Exchange East's ♠K for the ♠9; now after the 4♣ control bid, East declines the slam invitation because of minimum values and lack of "prime" values. If East were not limited (by the 3♠ Limit Raise), East would cooperate by control bidding 4♦.

<b>West</b>		<b>East</b>	
♠	A Q 10 7 4 3	♠	J 9 8 5
♥	Q	♥	K 8
♦	K Q 7	♦	A 9 5
♣	A Q 4	♣	7 6 3 2
<i>West</i> <i>North</i> <i>East</i> <i>South</i>			
1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♣	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

Here West is in the slam zone when East supports ♠s; however, with xx in ♥s, West uses control bidding to communicate the issue to East. The 3♣ bid is tantamount to a Game Force. East, although unsure of what West has in mind, cooperates with a 3♦ bid. East "reads" West's 4♦ control bid as slam invitational but with a problem in ♥s. With a maximum plus the h Ace and trump Queen, East can ask for KeyCards and bid slam if not missing two KeyCards.

<b>West</b>		<b>East</b>	
♠	A K 9 5 4	♠	Q 8 7 2
♥	4 3	♥	A 10
♦	A 4 2	♦	K Q J 6 5
♣	K Q J	♣	3 2
<i>West</i> <i>North</i> <i>East</i> <i>South</i>			
1 ♠	Pass	1 ♦	1 ♥
3 ♣	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
		?	

East would return to 4♠ lacking any KeyCards.

West opens 2♣. East shows a Game Force with 2♦ and then shows extras with 3♠. West is interested in slam, but has a heart problem. The solution is to control bid 4♣. Then if East control bids 4♥, as here, West will check for KeyCards and bid 6♠ if not missing two. Alternatively, if East control bids 4♦, West will "sign-off" with 4♠. East may continue on with a control in ♥s.

<b>West</b>		<b>East</b>	
♠	A K Q J 4 3	♠	10 6 5
♥	J 6	♥	A Q 9
♦	K Q	♦	9 7 2
♣	A Q J	♣	K 10 9 4
<i>West</i> <i>North</i> <i>East</i> <i>South</i>			
2 ♣	Pass	Pass	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
?		3 ♠	Pass

Control Bids are the "most significant advance in (slam) bidding theory ever made, and are far more useful ... than Blackwood..."

---- 25 Conventions, p. 114

# Quiz 34: Slam Bidding I (Control Bids)

You are the dealer, except where (You) is specified later, and your bids are given up to the \_\_\_\_\_. Fill in the blank with your next bid. After suit agreement, 4NT by you here is 1430.

	Bids & Responses	Your Hand		Bids & Responses	Your Hand
1a.	1♥ – P – 1NT – 2♠ 4♦ – P – 4♥ – P _____	♠ - ♥ AKQT98 ♦ AKQ65 ♣ 72	2a.	1♠ – P – 3♠ – P _____	♠ AKJ987 ♥ - ♦ 52 ♣ AKQ82
3a.	2♣ – P – 2♦ – P 2NT – P – 3♦ – P 3♥ – P – 4♦ – P _____	♠ AQ7 ♥ KQT9 ♦ Q6 ♣ AKQ5	4a.	1♣ – P – 1♥(You) – P 3♥ – P – _____	♠ A ♥ AQT3 ♦ KQT64 ♣ 42
5a.	1♠ – P – 2♥ – P 3♣ – P – 3♦ – P 3♥ – P – 3♠ – P _____	♠ AKQJ6 ♥ Q2 ♦ A7 ♣ JT98	6a.	1♦ – P – 2♣(You) – P 3♣ – P – _____	♠ 7 ♥ AK9 ♦ KJ4 ♣ AQT985

	Bids & Responses	Your Hand		Bids & Responses	Your Hand
1b.	1♠ – P – 3♠(You) – P 4♣ – P – _____	♠ T987 ♥ QJ42 ♦ Q6 ♣ AQ9	2b.	1♠ – P – 2♦ – P 3♦ – P – 4♣ – P _____	♠ AQT86 ♥ Q2 ♦ KJ95 ♣ 98
3b.	1♠ – P – 2♦(You) – P 3♦ – P – 4♣ – P 4♥ – P – _____	♠ 83 ♥ 98 ♦ AKJT6 ♣ AK65	4b.	1♣ – P – 1♥(You) – P 2♥ – P – _____	♠ QJ74 ♥ AKQ4 ♦ A864 ♣ K
5b.	1♠ – P – _____(You)	♠ KT73 ♥ 9 ♦ AQJ65 ♣ A95	6b.	1♣ – P – 1♥ – P 3♠! – P – 4♣ – P _____	♠ - ♥ Q963 ♦ A8 ♣ AQT9854