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Bridge Bidding: The Next Step · Standard American edition



CHAPTER 8

Control Bids

Showing aces and voids below the level of game

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1. When counting key cards is not enough

Blackwood tells you **how many** aces partner has, but not **which**. If you have two small cards in a suit, you need to know whether partner can stop the opponents taking two quick tricks there. A **control bid** (often called a **cue bid**) answers that question.

2. The rule

> Once a trump suit is agreed and game is certain, a bid of a **new suit at the four level** (or higher) is a **control bid**. It shows the **ace** (or a void) in that suit and interest in slam. It does not show length.

- Show your **cheapest** control first.
- **Skipping** a suit says you have no control in it.
- Going back to the trump suit at the four level says "I have nothing more to show": it is a sign-off.
- When both of you have shown what you have, use Blackwood (or Roman Key Card Blackwood) or bid the slam.

3. An example

Opener	Responder
1♥	3♥
4♣	?

Partner's 3♥ was a limit raise (10–12 points, four hearts). You have a big hand, but three small diamonds:

♠ A K Q 6
♥ A Q J 8 4
♦ 7 5 2
♣ A

20 points. If partner has the ♦A, slam is excellent; if not, the opponents may take two diamonds. So instead of 4NT you bid **4♣**, showing the ♣A and slam interest, and leaving room for partner to show the ♦A.

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

1♥ – 3♥ – 4♣ – **4♦** (the ♦A). Now at most one diamond can be lost: bid **6♥**.

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

1♥ – 3♥ – 4♣ – **4♥**: partner has no ace to show. The ♦A is missing and so is the ♦Q, so you could lose two diamonds: **pass**.

4. Summary

Situation	Meaning
New suit at the four level, trumps agreed	Control bid: ace or void, slam interest
Cheapest control first	So partner can show theirs
A suit skipped	No control there
Back to the trump suit	Nothing more to show: sign-off
Both hands have shown their controls	Blackwood, or bid the slam

5. Test yourself

1. ♠ K 7 4
♥ Q J 6 3
♦ A 8 5
♣ 9 3 2

1♥ – 3♥ (you) – 4♣ – ? What do you bid?

2. ♠ A 7 4
♥ Q 10 6 3
♦ K 8 5
♣ J 3 2

1♥ – 3♥ (you) – 4♣ – ? What do you bid?

3. ♠ Q 7 4
♥ K J 6 3
♦ K 8 5
♣ Q 3 2

1♥ – 3♥ (you) – 4♣ – ? What do you bid?

4. ♠ A K J 7 4
♥ A 6
♦ K Q 5
♣ Q 8 3

You open 1♠ and partner raises to 3♠. What do you bid?

5. ♠ A Q 10 8 3
♥ K Q 5
♦ A 6
♣ A 7 2

You open 1♠ and partner raises to 3♠. What do you bid?

6. ♠ K Q J 8 4
♥ K 7 3
♦ Q 6 4
♣ J 5

You open 1♠ and partner raises to 3♠. What do you bid?

Answers

1. 4♦. You have the ♦A: show it.

2. 4♠. Show the ♠A. By skipping 4♦ you deny the ♦A.

3. 4♥. No aces to show: sign off.

4. 4♥. Slam interest, and your cheapest ace is the ♥A. Skipping clubs and diamonds denies those aces.

5. 4♣. Your cheapest control is the ♣A.

6. 4♠. A minimum with no slam interest: just bid game.

> Next: Chapter 9, Competing Against 1NT. Free lessons and challenge hands to play: **bridgescorer.com/learn**

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