

ROMAN KEY CARD  
BLACKWOOD

# ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD

A bit of history.

The Blackwood convention was invented by Easley Blackwood in 1933 as a means of determining whether you had the requisite number of Aces for a slam.

This has been modified over time for variations such as Roman Blackwood (which determined whether you had 2 aces of the same colour, rank or shape).

However most experts have now settled on Roman Key Card Blackwood (Named after the Italian Blue team of the 70's). This method incorporates the King of Trumps and Queen trumps into the responses to the 4NT asking bid.

# ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD

So how does Roman Key Card Blackwood work?

You have determined that you have the values for a slam and agreed a fit and one of the Partnership has now bid 4NT to ask for Aces – What are the responses?

5♣ = 1 or 4 of the 5 Aces (the 4 real ones and the K of trumps (known as KEY CARDS))

Please note you may also have the Q trumps and outside kings – I will discuss the follow ups later

5♦ = 0 or 3 KEY CARDS

Please note you may also have the Q trumps and outside kings – I will discuss the follow ups later

5♥ = 2 or 5 KEY CARDS without the Trump Queen

5♠ = 2 or 5 KEY CARDS with the Trump Queen

Why am I advocating the 1430 method you ask? Usually in these situations partner will have one or two key cards to justify you asking – so it saves space and also it is easy to remember – what is the score for a vulnerable 6♠'s?

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Here is an example auction

North

♠ KQ1043

♥ AQ2

♦ K64

♣ A10

**Bidding**

1♠

4NT (2)

6♠ (4)

South

♠ AJ98

♥ KJ5

♦ Q8

♣ K432

2NT (1)

5♣ (3)

- 1) 2NT Jacoby (remember Game going values with 4 card support for partner).
- 2) Roman Key Card Blackwood.
- 3) 1 or 4 Key Cards (may have trump Queen).
- 4) Now I could follow up with asking for kings here ( I will show this later) but as I know partner has only one ACE and we are therefore missing one – you have to ask yourself what has partner got to justify her 2NT bid in the first place? I choose 6♠ as I may need to ruff a diamond in dummy or clubs in my hand.

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ASKING FOR THE QUEEN?

So Partner has responded 5♣ or 5♦ and we want to find out about the Trump Queen and/or outside Kings – so what are the follow ups

North

♠ AK3

♥ KJ84

♦ K642

♣ A10

**Bidding**

1♥

4NT (1)

5♦ (3)

6♥

1) Roman Key Card Blackwood.

2) 1 or 4 Key Cards (may have trump Queen).

3) This is the important thing – bid the next suit up (that is not the trump suit) to ask partner whether they have the Trump Queen and/ or outside kings (I do not want to be in slam unless partner has the Queen of Trumps).

4) If you do not have the trump Queen just bid 5 of the trump suit or if that is not available 5NT, If you have the trump Queen but no outside kings bid 6 of the trump suit. If you have the trump queen and an outside king you cue bid the King at the lowest level possible (for example if you had the King of spades here you would bid 5♠)

South

♠ Q98

♥ AQ97

♦ Q8

♣ KJ42

2NT

5♣ (2)

6♣ (4)

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## ASKING FOR KINGS

Not interested in the Queen (either I own it or partner has shown it with a 5♠ response but I am interested to see whether partner has any outside kings as a grand slam might be on?)

North

♠ AK3

♥ K10842

♦ K64

♣ AQ

### Bidding

1♥

4NT (1)

5NT (3)

7♥ (5)

1) Roman Key Card Blackwood

2) 2 or 5 Key Cards with trump Queen

3) This is the important thing – Bid 5NT asking for Kings (ignore the trump King)

4) Now there are two schools of thought either bid your number of kings on the usual scale 6♣=0, 6♦=1, 6♥=2, 6♠=3. Or and better in my opinion cue bid the lowest king you have (ignore K trumps of course) and if you have no kings bid 6 of the trump suit – so here bid 6♣.

5) Looks like a reasonable shot as my Q♣ now looks like an extra trick so I can dispose of a potential ♦ or ♠ loser.

South

♠ 1098

♥ AQ97

♦ A8

♣ KJ42

2NT

5♠ (2)

6♣ (4)

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ASKING FOR KINGS – ADVANCED THINKING

So if I am playing my method? What I do if I have two kings?

North

♠ AQ3

♥ K10842

♦ K64

♣ AQ

**Bidding**

1♥

4NT (1)

5NT (3)

7♥/7NT (5)

1) Roman Key Card Blackwood

2) 2 or 5 Key Cards with trump Queen

3) This is the important thing – Bid 5NT asking for Kings (ignore the trump king)

4) If I have two kings then I bid the one I do not have so the 6♦ response here shows either the K♦ or the other two kings – Partner should be able to work it out!

5) Looks like a reasonable shot as my Q♣ and Q♠ now look like extra tricks and I have no diamond losers

South

♠ K98

♥ AQ97

♦ A8

♣ KJ42

2NT

5♠ (2)

6♦ (4)

**NB - If in the rare event you have three kings (ignoring the trump king) bid 6NT over 5NT.**