

Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB)

with Chris Turner

Even when sufficient values are present it is prudent to ensure that two top tricks are not missing before bidding slam.

Ordinary Blackwood checks on aces but disregards the king of trump

RKCB treats the **king of trumps** as a ‘**fifth**’ ace or keycard

The standard replies are: **0314** 5C = 0 or 3 keycards, 5D = 1 or 4, 5H = 2 **without** the Q of trumps, 5S = 2 **with** the Q of trumps.

(It is quite common to reverse the meanings of the first two steps ie: **1430** 5C = 1 or 4 keycards, 5D = 3 or 0 keycards)

What suit is trumps?

- If a suit has been supported, treat that suit as trumps
- If no suit has been raised or otherwise agreed then it is assumed the **last naturally bid suit** is trumps

When is 4NT not Blackwood of any sort?

- **Quantitative**: Opener 1NT, Responder 4NT. The 4NT is a **quantitative raise** to slam asking opener to bid slam if maximum. A raise of a natural 1NT or 2NT or even 3NT rebid to 4NT is also quantitative. After a 2D response to stayman 4NT is also quantitative.
- After an opposition pre-empt 4NT is commonly used as **Unusual No-trump** asking partner to pick a minor

The Queen of trumps

The responses of hearts and spades reveal its presence or/absence immediately

- If the response is 5C or 5D the 4NT bidder can enquire about the queen of trumps by bidding the next step (unless this would be a signoff in the agreed trump suit, in which case the next suit would be used)
- Reply with step 1 to deny the queen while any higher bid promises the queen plus extras

Asking for Kings

- If the 4NT bidder subsequently bids 5NT it is asking partner for kings (excluding the trump king which has already been shown)
- Two options:
 - Standard: 6C = no kings, 6D = 1, 6H = 2, 6S = 3
 - Specific King Ask (SKA): Asks partner to bid the cheapest king but if this takes you past the trump suit that may push you too high so it is then not compulsory to show that king (if, for example, it is unlikely to be useful because it is in a suit where partner is known to be short)

Slams

with Chris Turner

It's one of the most exciting areas of bridge but how should you go about bidding slam, and how do you stay out of unmakeable slams?

When to bid slams

- **Small slam** (a bid of 6NT or 6 in a suit): **33 total points**
- **Grand slam** (a bid of 7NT or 7 in a suit): **37 total points**

Quantitative 4NT (and 5NT)

- A raise of a **no trump** bid to **4NT** is not Blackwood. It asks partner to bid to 6NT with maximum or to pass with minimum. Likewise a **raise of a NT bid to 5NT** is an invitation to grand slam.
- It is recommended that you use a jump to 4NT as an invitation to 6NT over **any natural 1NT, 2NT or 3NT** bid by partner. Likewise for a jump to 5NT inviting to grand slam.
- After a 2D response to stayman 4NT is also quantitative.
- After an opposition pre-empt, however, 4NT is commonly used as **Unusual No-trump** asking partner to pick a minor

First explore

- Most auctions call for a gradual approach. The fit must be found and a better idea gained of partner's strength. There is no need to rush **as long as you make a forcing bid** so partner cannot dump you.

Blackwood

- Blackwood does not tell us we should be in slam, nor does it help us locate our fit – all that should have been decided in the earlier stages of bidding. It is used, rather, to avoid finishing in a slam missing two aces (or to avoid grand slam missing one ace).
- 4NT Blackwood asks how many aces partner has. 5C = 0 or 4, 5D = 1, 5H = 2, 5S = 3
- After asking for aces, if you are interested in grand slam you may bid 5NT to ask for kings: 6C = 0 kings, 6D = 1 king, 6H = 2 kings, 6S = 3 kings, 6NT = 4 kings.
- If you wish to use 5NT to ask for kings you must first use 4NT to ask for aces – even if you have all the aces in your hand.
- After using 4NT to ask for aces, a bid of 5NT asks for kings but sometimes you might want to play in 5NT. eg you find your side is missing 2 aces and the fit is in a minor suit. Here, make an 'impossible' bid expecting partner to realise you could not want to play there and therefore asking partner to bid 5NT so you can pass.

Controls in particular suits

- Sometimes you need to know if partner has control of a particular suit, When a trump suit has been agreed upon and you are both committed to game, bidding a different suit shows first round control there (ace or void).