

More slam tools: Exclusion
Blackwood and poor man's
keycard

What's the problem, for EW?

Dir: North
Vul: None

Optimum
NS 7C*
-500

WEST NORTH EAST
17 SOUTH

11 7 15
7

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	4	-	-	-	-
S	4	-	-	-	-
E	-	6	5	-	-
W	-	6	4	-	-

Bidding might begin 1D by E, 1H by W. Now what? E might bid 4C, showing a singleton/void, and agreeing trumps. West might bid 4D, a cue-bid, showing 1st/2nd round control, and a non-minimum hand. Or E might jump to 3H, and West cue-bids 3S. But whatever happens, East wants to know if West holds A of Spades.

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Board No 17 None Vul Dealer North

	NS	EW	Bid	By	Ld	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
1	Steve Satterthwaite John Plews	10 Chris Bowman Sally Bowman	5♦	E	♣A	12		420	4	4
4	Colin Goodwin Richard Fisher	11 Beryl Ayland Paula Grobbelaar	4♥	W	♣3	12		480	1	7
8	Pat Davey Alan Keenan	5 Gillian Leigh Bruce Leigh	4♥	W	♣J	9	50		8	0
9	Adrian Vines Elaine Gardner	7 Steve Rogerson Mary Stubbs	5♦	E	♣A	11		400	6	2
12	Peter Taylor Grace Martyn	6 Harry Kear David Green	4♥	W	♠A	12		480	1	7

The solution: Exclusion blackwood

After agreeing the trump suit, 4NT is always Blackwood – whatever form you play.

So, a bid at the five level (or 4S, when hearts is agreed as trumps), asks partner how many Aces they hold, **excluding the Ace in that suit**

The responses are easy: 0, 1, 2

An example

N	North
♠	AKQ753
♥	
♦	KQJ53
♣	K2
S	South
♠	J10982
♥	
♦	A742
♣	A543

Suppose N is the dealer. They might begin 1S (possibly 2C, although that's a stretch). South may reply 3S, or a 4H splinter. Either way, N just wants to know about the Aces in diamonds and clubs. So, they bid 5H. When South bids 6C, North bids 7S.

Let's practice

Remember, a bid at the five level (or 4S, when hearts is agreed as trumps), asks partner how many Aces they hold, **excluding the Ace in that suit**

The responses are easy: 0, 1, 2

When Blackwood isn't appropriate

Dir: East
Vul: N/S

Optimum
NS 7S
2210

16
5 9
10

W NORTH E
S 2 S
T SOUTH T

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	3	1	1	7	5
S	3	1	1	7	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

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Board No 2 N/S Vul Dealer East

	NS	EW	Bid	By	Ld	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
1	Peter Taylor Grace Martyn	2 Mike Bradshaw Alan Keenan	6♠	S	♦2	11		100	0	6
3	Steve Rogerson Mary Stubbs	5 Adrian Vines Steve Satterthwaite	4♠	S	♥3	11	650		2	4
7	Chris Bowman Beryl Ayland	6 Richard Fisher Colin Goodwin	3NT	N	♥Q	11	660		4	2
8	Harry Kear Anita Adams	4 Pat Davey Elaine Gardner	4♠	S	♦2	12	680		6	0

South may open 3S? It's a heavy pre-empt, but Vulnerable against not, second position, pre-empts should be sound. North may think slam could be on (ruff diamond in short hand, set up clubs?). But 4NT is quite committal – and some responses are not needed, such as 3 Aces.

The solution: Poor man's keycard

Over a 2 or 3 level pre-empt (apart from 3 clubs).
Responses are (king of trumps counts as an Ace):

- 4D 0 Aces
- 4H 1 Aces
- 4S 1 Ace + Queen of trumps
- 4NT 2 Aces
- 5C 2 Aces + Queen of trumps

The solution II: Poor man's keycard

Over a 3 club pre-empt, 4D is a key card ask. Responses are (king of trumps counts as an Ace):

- 4H 0 Aces
- 4S 1 Aces
- 4NT 1 Ace + Queen of clubs
- 5C 2 Aces
- 5D 2 Aces + Queen of clubs

The general solution: Poor man's keycard

After the ask (usually 4C, but 4D over 3C)...

- Step one 0 Aces
- Step two 1 Aces
- Step three 1 Ace + Queen
- Step four 2 Aces
- Step five 2 Aces + Queen

Let's practice

Hands 1-4

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?n=h679akqd23kqtckq&e=s46th28jdac234789&s=s235ah345td45c6at&w=s789kqjd6789jc5j&b=1&d=n&v=--&a=1hp3hp4sp5cp6hppp>

Plenty of options for 12 tricks, even with bad breaks.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=2&d=e&v=nn=s5jh3jd39kc4568jt&e=s37akqth2akqtc2k&s=s6h469d2457ajc79q&w=s2489h578d68qtc3a&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=2cp2dp2sp3sp5dp5sp7sppp>

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=3&d=s&v=n=s567th23atd39c459&e=s3h89jd57qtc27jta&s=s8akqjh7kqd28akj&w=s249h456d46c368kq&b=1&d=n&v=--&a=2cp2dp2sp3sp5cp5hp7sppp>

Play is interesting. Suppose a club is led. Declarer should ruff high to retain a second entry to dummy. After finding trumps don't break, they can play diamonds, looking to overruff if need be. If W puts in 9 of S, they can rise with 10S, and return to dummy with K of H. The ruff another diamond. This establishes 5th diamond as a winner. If W discards, declarer must ruff low and return to dummy with a H, then play another diamond. If W discards diamonds, they may defeat the contract, preventing declarer from returning to hand with a heart.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?&d=w&b=4&v=bn=s47h79atd35c23467&e=s356th6kqjd89jcqj&s=s89h23458d467kc5a&w=s2akqjd2aqtc89kt&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1sp3sp5hp5sp6sppp>

Many lines of play, depending on lead. Declarer can set up clubs, but can't ruff all diamonds and draw trumps. Options include a ruffing heart finesse and a diamond finesse. If diamond finesse is taken, leading the 9 avoids entry issues. Best to keep a high trump in dummy as a helpful entry.

Boards 5-8

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=5&v=n&d=nn=s7h279kqtd358ac68&e=s356qh6jd4kct4qjt&s=sakh34ad269qc57ak&w=s2489jth58d7jc239&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=2hp4cp5cp6hppp>

Declarer must avoid 2 diamond losers. They should play the textbook line. Cash Ace of diamond, then finesse Queen.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=6&v=e&d=en=s579h46jtd356jc26&e=s268akth35d48tc57&s=s4jh4kd279qc9kjit&w=s3qh279aqdakc348a&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=2sp4cp4np6sppp>

Slam is not cold. Requires finesse in H. For 12th trick must set up long hearts.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=7&v=b&d=sn=s35aqthakdaqjc45a&e=skh2345d2468kct79&s=s79h7td37c238kjt&w=s2468jh689qjd59c6&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=3cp4dp4np6cppp>

West should lead Queen of hearts. Declarer would make on one working finesse in S or D. But they can guarantee the contract by drawing trumps, stripping the heart suit, and then playing a diamond. East in then endplayed.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=8&d=w&v=-&n=s7h28qtd37qjtc78t&e=s23akh67ad2c2akqj&s=s48h59kjd468kc569&w=s569qjth34d59ac34&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=2sp4cp4sp7nppp>

After East shows 1 Ace and Queen of trumps, West can count 13 tricks. 7NT is safer, as it avoids a ruff on the opening lead.