

Slam Bidding: Asking for Aces & Kings

Before bidding a slam, it is common practice to ask how many aces partner holds. Missing only one ace, many partnerships will bid at the 6-level anyway but will not bid at the 7 level. If the partnership holds all the aces, it is common to ask for kings before committing to the 7 level. Asking for kings confirms the partnership holds all the aces.

Why ask? To stay out of slams that do not make, for example when missing 2 aces. The purpose is not to bulldoze ahead. The purpose is to put on the brakes if bad news is discovered.

When to ask: When partnership has 30+ points. You can then expect to be safe at the 5 level, so there is no risk in asking how many aces partner holds. Can sign off at the 5 level if missing two.

Who should ask? The partner who knows about the 30+ points.

- **Example 1:** Partner opens the bidding and you hold 19 points: you should ask.
- **Example 2:** 1D-1H-4H: The 4H bid shows 19+. A 1H bidder holding 11+ should ask.
- **Example 3:** 1D-1S-2NT: The 2NT shows 18-19. A 1S bidder holding 12+ should ask.
- **Example 4:** 2C-2D-2NT: If the 2D bidder holds 8+, the 2D bidder should ask.

When not to ask:

- **With a void and another missing ace.** If partner has 1 ace, you will not know which one.
- **When asking might take you too high:** With club suit: 4NT-5D (1 ace) forces you to 6C.

Blackwood: Used for suit contracts.

- **4NT:** How many aces do you have partner?
 - **5C:** 0 or 4 **5D:** 1 **5H:** 2 **5S:** 3
- **5NT:** How many kings do you have partner?
 - **6C:** 0 or 4 **6D:** 1 **6H:** 2 **6S:** 3

Gerber: Used when opener has a NT hand or pair ended with NT (so we can stop in 4NT or 5NT)

- **4C:** How many aces do you have partner?
 - **4D:** 0 or 4 **4H:** 1 **4S:** 2 **4NT:** 3
- **5C:** How many kings do you have partner?
 - **5D:** 0 or 4 **5H:** 1 **5S:** 2 **5NT:** 3

Advanced: 1430: Similar to Blackwood, but with 5 key cards: 4 aces & king of trump.

- **4NT:** How many key cards do you have partner?
 - **5C:** 1 or 4 **5D:** 3 or 0 **5H:** 2 or 5, no trump Q **5S:** 2 or 5 with trump Q
- **5NT:** How many outside (non trump) kings do you have partner?
 - **6C:** 0 **6D:** 1 **6H:** 2 **6S:** 3

Advanced: Cue Bidding (reason for slow arrival): After trump suit is agreed, bid aces up the line

⑩ Example 1:

<u>N</u>		<u>S</u>	
2C	22+	2D	At least an ace or a king
2S		3S	Support for spades, more than minimum
4C	Ace of clubs	4H	Ace of hearts. No ace of diamonds.
4NT	Blackwood		

⑩ Example 2:

<u>N</u>		<u>S</u>	
2C	22+	2D	At least an ace or a king
2S		3S	Support for spades, more than minimum
4C	Ace of clubs	4S	Neither ace of diamonds nor ace of hearts.
Pass	Too many missing aces.		

Examples:

1. **2C-2S-4NT**: Responder 2S shows 8+ points and 5+ spades with 2 spade face cards. Opener can “see” 30+ points, starts Blackwood sequence to check for missing aces.
2. **2C-2D-2NT-3C-3H-4C-4S-6H**: Opener 2C & 2NT shows a balanced 22-24. Responder 3C is Stayman, asking about 4 card majors. Opener 3H shows 4 hearts. Responder 4C is Gerber (since opener started with NT, showing a 22-24 NT hand.) Opener 4S bid shows 2 aces. Responder did have 4 hearts and bids 6H.
3. **1D-1H-4H-4NT**: Opener shows 19+ points with jump to 4H game. If responder has 11+ points, responder can initiate Blackwood.
4. **1S-2H-4H-4NT**: Opener in a 2 over 1 sequence jumps to 4H (fast arrival) showing a minimum. If responder has about 18 points, responder can initiate Blackwood anyway.
5. **1NT-4C-4H-4NT**: The 1NT opening bid shows 15-17. Responder with 17+ can “see” 32+ in the combined hands and initiates Gerber. Opener 4H bid shows only 1 ace. Responder signs off in 4NT, presumably because the partnership is missing 2 aces. Note that you need a few more points for 6NT because you cannot trump anything.
6. **1C-1H-2NT-4C-4NT-5C-5S-6NT**: Opener 2NT rebid shows 18-19 points. Responder with 12+ initiates Gerber sequence via 4C bid. Opener 4NT shows 3 aces; 5S shows 2 kings. Responder places the contract at 6NT.