

Bridge Lesson

Intermediate Slam Bidding Techniques

The Ocala Bridge Club

By Neil H. Timm

In this this lesson you will learn several intermediate slam bidding techniques used to investigate slam in a suit and notrump contracts.

- (1) Exclusion Roman Keycard Blackwood (ERKCB)
- (2) Double Roman Keycard Blackwood (DRKCB)
- (3) The Baron 4NT Convention
- (4) Quantitative Bids
- (5) Scroll Bids
- (6) Roman Keycard Gerber (RKCG)
- (7) Grand Slam Force and Pick a Slam bids
- (8) Cue Bidding Techniques
- (9) Serious 3NT as Baby Blackwood

Advanced bidding techniques like Variable RKCB and Spiral Scan bids will not be discussed.

Exclusion Roman Keycard Blackwood (ERKCB) Convention

The convention is played with a known suit agreement when you want to investigate for slam. For example, after a Jacoby 2NT* bid, a splinter bid, or perhaps an inverted minor bid.

- (1) For a major suit agreement, the convention is initiated by an unusual jump to the five level above game in your void suit.
- (2) For a minor suit agreement, one jumps to the 4-level, one level above a splinter bid in the void suit.

You are asking for keycards for the agreed upon suit (major/minor). Partner does not count the ace in the void suit bid; now there are only four keycards, three aces and a king.

There is no such thing as 1430 or 3014 ERKCB and some play it based up the last suit bid (partnership agreement).

“Standard” Responses to ERKCB (Option 1-Kantar)

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| First Step | 0 keycards |
| Second Step | 1 keycard |
| Third Step | 2 keycards without the queen |
| Fourth Step | 2 keycards with the queen |
| Fifth Step | 3 keycards (very unusual) |

After either 0/1 steps, the next step including the void suit is the Queen ask (again the next step is negative: 5NT shows Queen and no king, 6x= Queen and a king). The bid of 5NT is the SKA. SSA bids are bids that are not the Queen Ask or the SKA.

To show a void and an even number of keycards bids 5NT. With an odd number bid and a void, bid the void suit at the 6-level. If void is above the agreed suit, bid the 6-level of the agree upon suit.

Some do not use void showing sequences with ERKCB – partnership agreement.

Example (1) (2/1 Game Force Bid)

North (Dealer): ♠AQJ1073 ♥void ♦K7654 ♣Q3

South : ♠K9 ♥AKJ53 ♦AQJ9 ♣A8

As North you have 12HCP + 3 length points -1 for the Dubious Queen doubleton = 14 starting points - **Bid 1♠**

South with 22 HCP + 1 length point = 23 Dummy Points - **Makes the 2/1 Bid of 2♥**

North

1♠

2♠

5♥ (ERKCB)

6♠

Pass

South

2♥

3♠

6♣ (3rd step = two keycards w/o Q)

Pass

Example (2) (2♣ Opener – playing 2/1)

North (Dealer): ♠AK5432 ♥AK432 ♦K4 ♣void
South: ♠QJ98 ♥765 ♦A9 ♣K1053

As North you have 17HCP + 3 length points = 20 points - **Bid 2♣**
(4 quick tricks and less than 4 losers with a 5-card suit)

South with 10 Starting Points - **Makes the Bid of 2♦ (A/K)**

| Opener | Responder |
|------------|---|
| 2♣ | 2♦ |
| 2♠ | 3♠ |
| 5♣ (ERKCB) | 5♥ (2nd rd step = one keycard) |
| 6♥ (SSA) | 6♠ (No third round control in hearts) |
| Pass | Pass |

Example (3) (When they interfere)

North (Dealer): ♠AK5432 ♥KQ2 ♦void ♣KQJ2
 South: ♠QJ98 ♥A5 ♦Q5432 ♣73

| North | East | South | West |
|------------|------|---------------------------------|------|
| 1♠ | Pass | 3♣ (Rev Bergen 10-12 Dummy Pts) | Pass |
| 5♦ (ERKCB) | X | Pass* = 1 | Pass |
| 6♠ | Pass | Pass | Pass |

*R0P1 (over a double)

| | | |
|-----------|---|----------|
| Redouble | = | 0 |
| Pass | = | 1 |
| Next Step | = | 2 w/o Q |
| Next Step | = | 2 with Q |
| Next Step | = | 3 |

If instead they bid at the 5-level, use D0P1. Use DEP0 if they bid at the 6-level or if the 5-level bid suit is above the level of your agreed suit.

Example (4) (Inverted Minor Bid)

North: ♠AK54 ♥void ♦KQ9872 ♣KQ2

South: ♠32 ♥KQ7 ♦A6543 ♣A73

| North | South |
|------------|--|
| 1♦ | 2♦ (inverted raise - 13+ playing crisscross) |
| 4♥ (ERKCB) | 5♣ (3 rd step – 2 w/o Q) |
| 5♠ (SSA) | 7♦ (Yes have control) |
| Pass | Pass |

In the example we again used the SSA; if you do not play SSA bids, you may miss the Grand Slam.

Recall the SSA bid is positive with x/xx/Qxx/Axx/Kxx in the bid suit.

Double Agreement Roman Keycard Blackwood (DRKCB)

With a double agreement, there are now six keycards (four aces and two kings), NOT FIVE (and two Queens), so we have what is called Double 1430 Roman Keycard Blackwood (DRKCB).

We consider DRKCB responses for the common major-major agreement, **there are no void-showing responses and the ASKER MUST HAVE 2 Keycards!**

The first two responses ($5\clubsuit=1/4$ and $5\diamonds=0/3$) of DRKCB are the same as 1430 RKCB; however, there are now three queens showing responses:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| $5\heartsuit$ | 2 with neither queen |
| $5\spadesuit$ | 2 with lower ranking queen |
| 5NT | 2 with higher ranking queen |
| $6\clubsuit$ | 2 with both queens |

The Queen asks bids are made over 5♣/5♦: 5♦ and 5♥ (the next step). Steps are used to show neither, lower, higher, or both queens.

Over 5♣ then 5♦ = Ask

| | |
|-----|---|
| 5♥ | neither queen – 1 st step |
| 5♠ | lower ranking queen – 2 nd step |
| 5NT | higher ranking queen – 3 rd step |
| 6♣ | both queens – 4 th step |

Over 5♦ then 5♥ = Ask

| | |
|-----|---|
| 5♠ | neither queen – 1 st step |
| 5NT | lower ranking queen – 2 nd step |
| 6♣ | higher ranking queen – 3 rd step |
| 6♦ | both queens – 4 th step |

Note: 5NT, if available, may be used for the SKA bid when using the DRKCB Convention

We now consider a **major-major** example.

| Opener | Responder | Comments |
|--------|-----------|--|
| ♠A8732 | ♠KJ5 | |
| ♥AQ95 | ♥KJ632 | |
| ♦A2 | ♦K94 | |
| ♣A5 | ♣Q7 | |
| 1♠ | 2♥ | (1) Double Agreement |
| 3♥ | 3♠ (1) | (2) DRKCB |
| 4♥ | 4NT (2) | (3) 1/4 keycards |
| 5♣ (3) | 5♦ (4) | (4) Queen ask (next step) |
| 5♠ (5) | 6♥ (6) | (5) Q♥ (2 nd step, lower-ranking queen) |
| | | (6) Q♠ missing |

Note that if the response in our example was 5♦ (0/3) instead of 5♣, then 5♥ would ask for the missing queen! And with neither you would pass.

Remember when you ask using DRKCB you must have at least two keycards so the partnership has at least 5 keycards after the 0/3 response.

The five-level bids are sign-offs.

One may also use the DRKCB approach with minor-minor and major-minor agreements or over the strong 15-17 notrump.

We next consider a **Notrump** example* using DRKCB

| Opener | Responder | Comments |
|-------------|---------------|---|
| ♠KQ84 | ♠AJ652 | |
| ♥KQ3 | ♥A9862 | |
| ♦K82 | ♦10 | |
| ♣K95 | ♣A7 | |
| 1NT (15-17) | 2♥ (transfer) | (1) Double Agreement |
| 3♥ | 3♠ | (2) DRKCB |
| 4♠ (1) | 4NT (2) | (3) 1/4 keycards |
| 5♣ (3) | 5♦ (4) | (4) Queen ask (next step) |
| 6♣ (5) | 6NT (6) | (5) Both Q's – 4 th step (6) missing an Ace |

*From the book by Allan DeSerpa (2014) “SIXPACK – Adventures with Keycards and Queecards” (Page 21).

DeSerpa (2014) uses his SIXPACK Queecard Convention.

After the double agreement bids of 3♥/3♠, he uses telling bids and does not ask using 4NT. His telling bids: (see references)

| | |
|-----|------------------------------------|
| 3NT | 2 keycards with 0-2 Queens |
| 4♣ | 3 keycards with 1-2 Queens |
| 4♦ | 3 keycards with 0 Queens |
| 4♥ | 4 keycards trump preference hearts |
| 4♠ | 4 keycards trump preference spades |
| 4NT | 2 Queens and no kings |

The queen ask is again the next step ask over 3NT/4♣

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| First step | 0 |
| Second step | 1 with preference for hearts |
| Third step | 1 with preference for spades |
| Fourth step | 2 |

With all the 8 keycards (4Aces-2Kings-2Queens), 4NT is the SKA.

Quantitative Bids

When one opens 1NT (15-17) or 2NT (20-21), a jump bid to 4NT is quantitative (NOT ASKING for ACES); it is asking partner if he is at the top of his bid. If he is, he should bid 6NT, otherwise, pass. While it is most often played when opening notrump, it may also be used with other bidding sequences.

Examples:

1NT – 2♦/2♥ (Announced as a Transfer)

2♥/2♠ - 4NT (Quantitative)

2♣ - 2♦ (positive A/K)

3NT – 4NT (Quantitative)

1NT - 2♣

2♥/2♠ - 4NT (Quantitative)

1x- 1y

1NT - 4NT (Quantitative)

1M-2m

2NT – 4NT (Quantitative)

1NT - 2♣ (Stayman/Smolen/Forcing Stayman)

2♥/2♠ - 4NT (Quantitative)

1NT - 3♣ (Puppet/Muppet)

3♦ - 4NT (Quantitative)

Grand Slam Force after 1NT – Is the bid of 5NT. It is used after a notrump opening or after one has agreed upon a suit.

To use the bid after a 1NT opening requires 20+ HCP. If opener is at the top of his bid, 17 HCP, he bids 7NT; otherwise he bids 6NT.

Baron Bids after 4NT

After an invitational quantitative 4NT bid, opener need not bid 6NT since finding 12 tricks may be difficult in notrump. It is often better to play slam in a suit which allows you to ruff losers. If you have four losers you may not want to play in notrump, but a suit.

Let's look at an example:

| West | East |
|-------|---------|
| ♠54 | ♠AK7 |
| ♥K67 | ♥QJ9 |
| ♦KQJ2 | ♦A10985 |
| ♣AK54 | ♣J2 |

1NT 4NT

?

In this example, West has 4 losers and the bidding goes 1NT – 4NT; since East has 15HCP and a 5-card suit, he invites slam.

With four losers, East accepts by bidding 5♣, the cheapest 4-card suit. East does not like clubs, but is happy to bid 4♦.

West likes his quality diamond suit and his two small spades are only an asset in a suit contract. Hence, he bids 6♦.

In six diamonds, west can ruff a spade for the 12th trick; if the contract was in 6NT, only 11 tricks can be made.

The convention is very useful when you open 1NT with a worthless major suit doubleton as in the example!

Let's consider a second example.

| West | East |
|---------|-------|
| ♠AKJ | ♠Q72 |
| ♥AQ67 | ♥K9 |
| ♦A | ♦K752 |
| ♣KJ1097 | ♣Q842 |

In this case, the bidding goes:

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| 2♣ | 2♦ (ace or king) |
| 2NT | 4NT |
| 5♣ (Baron) | 6♣ |
| Pass | Pass |

With 5 losers and a singleton, again you may not want to be in No Trump, but a suit contract.

Scroll Bids

When playing Bergen Raises, some use concealed/ambiguous splinter bids. Recall that when opening a major, a jump into the other major indicates a singleton somewhere and 4 support with 13+Dummy Points.

For example, if one opens one heart, then three spades indicates 13+Dummy Points with four hearts and a singleton somewhere; if one opens one spade, then a response of three hearts shows four spades, 13+Dummy Points and a singleton somewhere.

Some use the splinter bid with only 3-card support and 13+Dummy Points – partnership agreement.

To locate the singleton, the opener uses scroll asking bids. Thus, the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♠*, 3NT* or 1♠ - 3♥*, 3♠*. The responses after the 3NT* scroll asks are: 4♣*, 4♦*, 4♠* which shows singletons in either clubs, diamonds, or spades (some may use the bid of 4♥), respectively; the corresponding responses after bidding 3♠* are: 3NT*=♣, 4♣*=♦, and 4♦*=♥, the suit below the singleton. However, how do you indicate not a singleton, but a VOID when using the concealed/ambiguous splinter bids? *=alert

To show either a singleton or a void, one continues with a scroll bid. Then up-the-line bids are used to show a singleton or VOID and simultaneously provides one with information about keycards for the agreed upon suit. After hearing the response to the asking scroll bids (3NT* or 3♠*), one uses the next sequential up-the-line bid to determine the nature of the shortage. *=alert

Step 1 (the next cheapest bid) says it is a singleton, and Steps 2-5, the next four bids, indicate one has a void and simultaneously shows keycards.

To illustrate, suppose we are playing 1430 RKCB. And the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♠*, 3NT* and one hears the response 4♣*. To ask about the nature of the shortage (singleton or void), one uses the next sequential up-the-line bid to ask, bids 4♦ (no alert required). The responses for showing a singleton and/or associated keycards for the major suit (hearts) with a void are (*=alert):

- 4♥ club singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4♠ club void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2)
- 4NT club void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3)
- 5♣ club void with 2 keycards w/o the queen (step 4)
- 5♦ club void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

If you play 0314 RKC, you merely interchange steps 2 and 3 .

In a similar situation, after hearing 4♦, one would use the up-the-line bid of 4♥ (no alert required) to ask about the nature of the shortage. Now, 4♠ shows a singleton diamond and the keycard steps 2-5 are: 4NT, 5♣, 5♦, and 5♥. After hearing the response 4♠, the up-the-line asking bid is 4NT. Then, 5♣=singleton in spades and the keycard steps (2-5) are: 5♦, 5♥, 5♠, 5NT.

Opening one spade, to show a singleton somewhere with 13+HCP and four-card support is 3♥*. After hearing the bid of 3♠*, one indicates a singleton with the bids 3NT*=♣, 4♣*=♦, and 4♥*=♠. To ask about the nature of the shortage, one again uses the up-the-line bids: 4♣, 4♦, and 4♠ (no alert required). Again, the next cheapest up-the-line bid indicates a singleton and steps 2-5 are used to show a void and simultaneously keycards for the major suit spades. To illustrate, following the bid of 4♣, the shortage bid is 4♦. The responses follow.

To illustrate, following the bid of 4♣, the shortage bid is 4♦. The responses follow.

- 4♥ diamond singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4♠ diamond void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2)
- 4NT diamond void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3)
- 5♣ diamond void with 2 keycards w/o the queen (step 4)
- 5♦ diamond void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

We next consider a few EXAMPLES – If this is too complicated, another option is to use concealed splinters to show a singleton and a **DOUBLE JUMP BID IN THE SUIT TO SHOW A VOID!**

To illustrate how the bids may be used, we consider two examples using Scroll Bids.

Example

Opener

♠AQJ762

♥3

♦9872

♣KQ

Opener

1♠

3♠* (shortage asking bid)

4♦ (modified scroll ask)

5NT (SKA)

7♠

Responder

♠K984

♥AQ92

♦void

♣A7632

Responder

3♥*(shortness somewhere)

4♣* (singleton/void in diamonds)

4NT (void in diamonds with 0 or 3 keycards)

6♠ (None)

Pass

Variations of Scroll Bids by Partnership Agreement

(1) If you do not like the submarine-like bids (when spades is the agreed suit), one may employ bids that are similar to the heart opening. Then after $1\spadesuit - 3\heartsuit^*$, $3\spadesuit^*$ (ask) the responses are $4\clubsuit^* = \clubsuit$, and $4\diamondsuit^* = \diamondsuit$, and $4\heartsuit^* = \heartsuit$, or one may use 3NT to show singleton/void in hearts.

Partnership agreement.

(2) In addition, one may substitute the bid of $4\heartsuit^*$ to show a spade singleton/void (with opening $1\heartsuit$ instead of bidding $4\spadesuit^*$) after the 3NT asking bid when one has no slam interest. This allows opener to pass or use $4\spadesuit$ as the 1430 Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) with kickback.

After Jacoby 2NT*

When playing Jacoby 2NT* after a major suit opening, the three-level bid by responder is alerted and says that one has a singleton or void in the suit bid. **The bid of 2NT* in response to partner's opening bid of one of a major shows at least four trump and 13+ points in support of the major suit. And, in response to the bid of 2NT*, opener's bid at the three levels shows a singleton or a void.**

What does responder do next?

With a minimum and no interest based on opener's response, responder usually jumps to game in the agreed suit. All other bids show at least some slam interest. Responder's new suit bids are often cuebids looking for slam.

Are there other options?

Yes, one may use Modified 4-level Scroll bids!

Let's look at two bidding sequences:

(A) 1♠ - 2NT* - 3♣*/3♦*/3♥* which shows a singleton or a void in the suit bid.

(B) 1♥ - 2NT* - 3♣*/3♦*/3♠* which shows a singleton or a void in the suit bid.

To determine whether or not partner has a singleton or a void, one bids as follows.

For sequence (A), one bids: 4♣/4♦/4♥

For sequence (B), one bids: 4♣/4♦/4♠

Modified 4-level Scroll bids are 4-level sequential step-up bids.

Do you have a singleton or a void?

Responses to the scroll bids using 1430 become:

Next cheapest bid shows a singleton

(Step 2) shows 1 or 4 keycards with a void

(Step 3) shows 0 or 3 keycards with a void

(Step 4) shows 2 keycards without and a void

(Step 5) shows 2 keycards with the queen and a void

Thus, one is easily able to determine singleton and void with
Keycard Blackwood.

Example

Opening one 1♠ and responding 2NT*, suppose partner hears the bid 3♥* that shows a singleton/void in hearts. After hearing the bid of 3♥*, one next bids 4♥* to ask whether it is a singleton heart or a void (**note, the bid of 4♠ is a sign-off**).

The responses follow.

- 4♠ heart singleton (next cheapest step)
- 4NT heart void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2)
- 5♣ heart void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3)
- 5♦ heart void with 2 keycards without the queen (step 4)
- 5♥ heart void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

Similarly, opening one 1♥, the responses after hearing for example 3♠* (a spade singleton/void), and one would bid 4♠.

- 4NT spade singleton (next cheapest step)
- 5♣ spade void with 1 or 4 keycards (step 2)
- 5♦ spade void with 0 or 3 keycards (step 3)
- 5♥ spade void with 2 keycards without the queen (step 4)
- 5NT spade void with 2 keycards with the queen (step 5)

Observe that the asking bids and responses provide all the information required to bid slam or to sign off at the five-level.

Note: Playing Scroll asking bids, the bid of 4♠ is not 1430 kickback for hearts!

Scroll Bids after Jacoby – Example 1

Opener

♠AQ875

♥7

♦K765

♣K43

Opener

1♠

3♥* (shortage in hearts)

4♠ (first step=singleton)

5♣ (1/4)

Pass

Responder

♠K10642

♥10632

♦AQ

♣A2

Responder

2NT* (Jacoby)

4♥* (singleton/void - Ask)

4NT (1430 RKCB)

6♠ (Missing an ace)

Pass

Scroll Bids after Jacoby – Example 2

Opener

♠KJ832

♥A92

♦Void

♣K10843

Responder

♠A10764

♥KQ5

♦872

♣A2

Opener

1♠

3♦* (shortage in diamonds)

5♦ (4th step = 2 keycards with void)7♠

Pass

Responder

2NT* (Jacoby)

4♦* (singleton/void))

Pass

Instead of using scroll bids, some partnerships after showing a singleton/void will make a second cue bid of the suit to show a void.

The use of “Scroll Bids” should enhance the convention card for those who use Bergen Raises (Reverse Bergen Raises or Combined Bergen Raises) playing 2/1, Standard American, or Precision.

However, when using any convention, always evaluate your hand before proceeding.

We look at an example to make the point.

You open 1♠ with the following hand

♠ KQ762 ♥ Q742 ♦KQ4 ♣A

Partner next shows you 10-12 dummy points.

Are you interested in Slam?

You have 16 HCP plus one point for length, you have only 17 starting points. However, with a fit you may add two points for the singleton and one more for the good side suit. You have 20 Bergen Points. Adding 20 to 12 yields only 32 total points; short of the required 33 points required for slam.

Hence do not investigate slam! The complete deal follows.

Dealer South N-S Vulnerable

| | | |
|----------|-----------------|---------|
| | ♠ 9543 | |
| | ♥ A3 | |
| | ♦ A1065 | |
| | ♣ K75 | |
| ♠ A108 | N W E S | ♠ J |
| ♥ J86 | | ♥ K1095 |
| ♦ 83 | | ♦ J972 |
| ♣ QJ1032 | | ♣ 9864 |
| | ♠ KQ762 | |
| | ♥ Q742 | |
| | ♦ KQ4 | |
| | ♣ A | |

If you were to bid slam, West would lead the ♣Q and 6♠ is down two. Declarer loses two spades and one heart.

Think before investigating slam, an overbid usually leads to a bad result.

Roman Keycard Gerber (RKCG)

When is 4♣ asking for aces (Gerber)? When is 4NT asking for aces (1430 RKCB)? When is 4♣ a cuebid or a splinter? When is 4NT quantitative? What is 4♣ after a transfer or after Stayman?

These are all questions partnerships must discuss. In general, most partners tend to play Gerber over first and last No Trump bids. That means if one opens 1NT or 2NT or if in the bidding sequence one bids 2NT or 3NT, the bid of 4♣ is Gerber.

However, when is 4♣ 1430 Roman Keycard Gerber (RKCG)?

In general, it is played when one has agreed upon a major suit and follows the bid of 2NT or 3NT.

Partnerships that do not play Modified 4-level Scroll bids after Jacoby 2NT* may use 4♣ as 1430 RKCB.

Some may use the bid after the ambiguous splinter bids of 3♥*/3♠*.

It is often used after the opening bid of 1NT (15-17) when one has agreed upon a major suit after, for example, a Jacoby transfer bid. Or after a 2NT Jacoby major transfer bid.

You should always discuss the use of the bid with your partner and some play 3014 or RKC Gerber.

The responses to the bid **4♣ 1430 RKCG Convention** are:

Responses to 4♣ RKCG

- 4♦ 1/4 keycards
- 4♥ 0/3 keycards
- 4♠ 2/5 keycards without the queen
- 4NT 2/5 keycards with the queen

To show a void with two or four keycards, bid 5NT; with an odd number of keycards, bid the void at the six-level. Over voids next step is progressive king/queen ask.

Queen ask -- 4♥/4♠ - Next step over 4♦/4♥

- 4♠ = SSA
- 4NT = to play
- 5♣ = Number of Kings

To illustrate 1430 RKCG, we return to the two prior examples where we used Scroll bids – we use Keycard Gerber instead.

Example 1

Opener

♠AQJ762

♥3

♦9872

♣KQ

Responder

♠K984

♥AQ92

♦void

♣A7632

Opener

1♠

4♣* (1430 RKCG)

6♥ (King Ask)

7♠

Responder

3♥*(shortness somewhere)

6♦ (1/3 with diamond void)

6♠ (None)

Pass

Example 2

Opener

♠AQ875

♥7

♦K765

♣K43

Opener

1♠

4♣ (1430 RKCG)

5♠ (0 or 3?)

Pass

Responder

♠K10642

♥10632

♦AQ

♣A2

Responder

2NT* (Jacoby)

4♥ (0/3)

6♠ (three)

Pass

1430 RKCB Over Preempts (Weak RKCB)

When your partner preempts, there are ways to investigate the hand further. For two-level preempts, one may bid 2NT to ask your partner for a feature or you may use the Ogust Convention (for, example)

How about RCKB? Using 4♣ as RKCB over 2 or 3 level preemptive bids! The responses are:

- 4♦ first step 0 keycards in the agreed suit
- 4♥ second step, 1 keycard without the Queen
- 4♠ third step, 1 keycard with the Queen
- 4NT fourth step, 2 keycards without the Queen
- 5♣ fifth step, 2 keycards with the Queen

After the pre-emptive bid of 3♣, the bid of 4♣ is natural and advances the preempt; a jump to 4♦ is RKCB for clubs.

Let's look at an example.

Opener

♠ A7

♥ K1098765

♦ 7

♣ 345

Responder

♠ K2

♥ AQ2

♦ AQ652

♣ A7

Opener

3♥

4NT (2 w/o Queen)

6♥ (singleton ♦)*

Responder

4♣ (1430 RKCB for hearts)

5♦ (**SSA for diamond-Skip Queen ASK**)

7♥

*Without the control in the diamond suit opener would bid 5♥ and responder would only bid a small slam, 6♥. The Queen Ask step over 4NT would have been the next step 5♣. The SKA bid is again 5NT.

Following the 1430 Preemptive Roman Keycard Convention, another Option for Exclusion Roman Keycard Blackwood follows.

Responses to ERKCB (Option 2 – Used with Jacoby 2NT)

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| First Step | 0 keycards |
| Second Step | 1 keycard without the queen |
| Third Step | 1 keycards with the queen |
| Fourth Step | 2 keycards without the queen |
| Fifth Step | 2 keycards with the queen |
| Sixth Step | 3 keycards without the queen |
| Seventh Step | 3 keycards with the queen |

Now the Queen ask is only needed after the zero response and 5NT is again the SKA. Voids are shown as before: 2/4 bid 5NT, 1/3 bid the 6-level of the suit, if void is above the agreed upon suit return to the 6-level of the agreed upon trump suit.

Again these are NOT 1430 responses.

If one were to construct a RKC Option for Exclusion, it would go:

Responses to ERKCB (Option 3)

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| First Step | 0/3 keycards |
| Second Step | 1/4 keycards |
| Third Step | 2 keycards without the queen |
| Fourth Step | 2 keycards with the queen |
| Fifth Step | 3 without the queen |
| Sixth Step | 3 with the queen |

Now the Queen ask is needed after the first two steps and 5NT is again the SKA.

Again these are NOT 1430 responses, but 3014 responses.

ERKCB is a useful convention, but please discuss the responses with your partner. There is NO STANDARD approach!

Grand Slam Force (GSF) after Suit Agreement (TRUMP ASKING BIDS) also called Josephine.

A jump bid of **5NT** is used to enquire about partner's top three trump honors.

SIMPLE METHOD

Step

1st 6♣

2nd 6♦

3rd 6♥

4th 6♠

Meaning

No Trump Honors

One Trump Honor

Two Trump Honors

Three Trump Honors

1♠ - 3♠; 5NT - ?

4♥ - 5NT - ?

1♠ - 2♦; 3♠ - 5NT-?;

Let's look at an example.

Opener

♠ QJ956

♥ AKJ97

♦ AK6

♣ Void

Responder

♠ AK785

♥ Q8

♦ 543

♣ J62

Opener

1♠

5NT (GSF)

7♠

Responder

4♠ (no slam interest)

6♥ (2 trump honors- 3rd Step)

Pass

If you did not use 5NT (GSF), you might bid 5♣ as ERKCB and show 2 without the Queen; again reaching the Grand Slam.

Pick A Slam (Grand Slam Force after NO Suit Agreement)

Without a known fit or when opponents' interfere with the auction, a jump bid of **5 NT** may be used to ask partner to pick the best slam suit.

1♣ - 1♠;

2♦ - 5NT;

(2♦) - 3♠ - (4♦) - 5NT;

1♦ - 2♣;

2NT – 5NT:

A jump to 5NT is never a contract you want to Play!

1NT/2NT-5NT bid 7NT with a Maximum.

Let's look at an example.

Opener

♠ Void

♥ KJ972

♦ 1096

♣ AQJ74

Responder

♠ K94

♥ A103

♦ AQ

♣ K10762

Opener

1♦

2♥

4♥

6♣

Responder

2♣ (2/1)

4♣ (good hand)

5NT (Pick a Slam)

All Pass

Cue – Bidding Overview

Cue bids are used in slam bidding to show first or second round controls. The bids are made after one agrees upon the trump suit. **And the bids are made up-the-line; if a suit is skipped it means one does not have a control in the suit skipped, the denial cue bid!**

Cue bids are used:

1. When one has a singleton or a void.
2. When one has controls in all but one suit.
3. When one needs to know whether partner holds a specific king or ace.
4. When you plan on using the 5NT trump ask bid, it is usually preceded by cue bids.
5. When you have both a void and a singleton.

When using cue bidding, the bid of 4NT is usually Blackwood and after the 4NT ask, 5NT asks for the number of kings.

If 4NT is not used then 5NT = Trump Asking Bid with Cue Bidding

The SIMPLE responses to the bid of 5NT (following the Grand Slam Force Bidding scheme) are:

- 6♣ No Top Trump Honors A/K/Q
- 6♦ 1 top Honor
- 6♥ 2 top Honors
- 6♠ 3 Top Honors

These responses are again a partnership agreement.

If you have agreed upon a suit, some use 1430 with suit agreement; then, 5NT is the SKA and the Trump Asking Bid. **Discuss this with your partner.**

Another option for the Trump Asking Bid:

Returning to the trump suit shows NONE

Cheapest OTHER Bid shows ONE

Next step up over cheapest other bid shows 2

WITH all 3 bid 7 of the trump suit

Six Level CUE BIDS are used to invite a Grand Slam!

Cue bidding helps to show

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| First-round control | Ace/Void |
| Second-round control | King/Singleton |
| Third-round control | Queen/Doubleton |
| No controls | Suit not bid |
| Trump Suit Controls | Bidding 5NT |

Cue bids allows one to stay out of slam when one discovers there are no controls in a given suit.

Example 1 (Cue Bidding – without ERKCB/Bergen)

Opener

♠ AQ9864

♥ A7

♦ KQ1032

♣ Void

Responder

♠ K732

♥ K42

♦ A6

♣ 8752

1♠

4♣ (Cue bid)

4♥ (Cue bid)

5NT(Trump Asking Bid)

7♠

3♠ (limit raise - NO BERGEN)

4♦ (Cue bid)

5♥ (second-round cue bid)

6♦ (1 Top Honor)

PASS

Example 2 (Cue Bidding)

Opener

♠ AQJ64

♥ AK

♦ 32

♣ AQ65

Responder

♠ K732

♥ 42

♦ AKQ7

♣ K87

1♠

3♣ (Cue bid)

4♥ (Cue bid)

5NT (Trump Asking Bid)

6♥ (Invite Grand Slam)

2NT*

4♣ (Cue bid)

5♦ (Cue bid)

6♦ (1 Top Honor)

7♠

Example 3 (Just Pass)

♠ AKJ10743

♥ A75

♦ 73

♣ 7

♠ Q92

♥ K63

♦ QJ2

♣ AK65

Opener

1♠

3♣ (Cue Bid)

4♥ (Cue Bid)

Pass

Responder

2NT*

3♥ (Cue bid)

5♠

Pass

With No Diamond control slam is avoided

Problem 4 (Using 1430 and Cue Bids)

Opener

♠ AQ9753

♥ VOID

♦ KQ76

♣ K85

Responder

♠ K642

♥ AK6

♦ A5

♣ 7642

Opener

1♠

3♣ (Cue bid)

3♥ (Cue Bid)

4NT (1430 – Agreed suit)

5♠ (with Zero Pass)

Pass

Responder

2NT*

3♦(Cue Bid)

4♥ (Cue Bid)

5♦ (0/3)

6♠

Pass

Problem 4 (Using Blackwood and Cue Bids)

Opener

♠ AQ9753

♥ VOID

♦ KQ76

♣ K85

Responder

♠ K642

♥ AK6

♦ A5

♣ 7642

Opener

1♠

3♣ (Cue bid)

3♥ (Cue Bid)

4NT (Blackwood)

5NT

6♠

Pass

Responder

2NT*

3♦(Cue Bid)

4♥ (Cue Bid)

5♥ (Two Aces)

6♥ (Two Kings)

Pass

Problem 5 (Scroll Bids)

Opener

♠ AQ9753

♥ VOID

♦ KQ76

♣ K85

Responder

♠ K642

♥ AK6

♦ A5

♣ 7642

Opener

1♠

3♥* (singleton/void)

4NT (One with Void)

Pass

Responder

2NT* (Jacoby)

4♥ (Modified 4-level Scroll Bid)

6♠

Pass

Problem 6

Opener

♠ AK10643

♥ 7

♦ A

♣ AK854

Responder

♠ QJ7

♥ AQ6543

♦ 1098

♣ J

Opener

2♣

2♠

4♣ (Cue Bid)

4NT (1430)

5♦ (Queen Ask)

7♠

Responder

2NT (hearts)

3♠ (agreed suit)

4♥ (Cue Bid)

5♣ 1/4 Keycard)

5NT (Yes but no side King)

Pass

Makes 7 since responder does not have three small clubs; however, only make 6♠ if the 98 of diamonds were in clubs.

Problem 7

Opener

♠ 643

♥ AKJ10987

♦ A

♣ 94

Responder

♠ AKJ

♥ 543

♦ K54

♣ AKQ2

Opener

1♣

2♥

4♦ (Cue Bid)

5♠ (2/5 with Q Equiv*)

Pass

Responder

2♣ (2/1 Bid)

3♥ (agreed suit)

4NT (1430 for Hearts)

7NT

Pass

If you only bid 5♥ (2/5 without the Queen), you would miss the grand slam since partner would bid only 6NT.

Problem 8

Opener

♠ 7
♥ AJ1087
♦ AJ97
♣ AJ4

Responder

♠ A54
♥ KQ
♦ K10854
♣ K32

Opener

1♥
3♠* (Splinter)
4♠ (0/3 Keycards)
6♦
Pass

Responder

2♦ (2/1 Bid)
4♦ (Minorwood)
5♦ (If you have 3 bid slam)
Pass

Problem 9

Opener

♠ AKQ107

♥ K1087

♦ A7

♣ K4

Responder

♠ J

♥ AQ642

♦ Q1085

♣ A32

Opener

1♠

4NT (Blackwood)

7♥

Responder

2♥ (2/1 Bid)

5♥ (2 Aces No agreed Suit)

All Pass

Opener

1♠

3♥

5♦ (0/3)

6♣ (Yes and Club King)

Responder

2♥ (2/1 Bid)

4NT (1430)

5NT (SKA)*

7♥

* If you did not ask you may miss grand slam and # of Kings of no help!

Baby Blackwood in Serious 3NT

The bid of 3NT may be used in a variety of artificial ways in possible slam auctions when playing 2/1.

Take the auctions of the following type:

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| West | East | West | East |
| 1♠ | 2♥ | 1♠ | 2♣ |
| 3♥ | 3NT | 2♥ | 3♠ |
| | | 3NT | |

What does the bid of 3NT mean?

Clearly not to play! The problem is that neither player has limited their hand. At this point both east and west could have near maximum hands with reasonable controls or could have substantial extra values. In both bidding sequences we have agreed upon a major, hearts and spades respectively at the three levels.

At his point I play the bid of 3NT* as Baby Blackwood. It begins the keycard sequence at a low level and allows one to bail at the 5-level of the major.

This can be a part of the ‘Serious’ 3NT convention proposed by Eric Rodwell. If one does not bid 3NT*, one begins a ‘cue bidding sequence’! With less than 15+ HCP or the equivalent, one uses a cue bid to show a minimum hand. It is a courtesy cue-bid in case partner has substantial extra values. The cue bidder usually has a near minimum. If he has substantial extras, he bids 3NT*, saying that he is ‘serious’ – ‘baby’ Blackwood with slam interest. Hence with a minimum, the bidding might be:

- (1) A cue bid in partner's 2/1 suit shows one of the top three honors (A/K/Q).
- (2) A cue-bid in your own 2/1 suit shows two of the top three honors.
- (3) A cue bid in an un-bid suit shows any first or second round control (A/K/singleton/ void). Cue bidding is always done up the line. By skipping a step, you deny an appropriate "control" in the step that you skipped. 4NT is always RKCB (usually 1430).

- When using this convention or others, it's important to remember the three things that make slams:
- Power. For a slam purely on HCP, you need 33 for the six level, 37 for seven. Playing tricks can make up for some of the power, of course; provided the other criteria are met.
- Controls. If the opponents can take the first (in seven) or first two (in six) tricks in any suit, you will go down. So you need to be sure that you have the necessary first- and second-round controls.
- Trumps. Obviously, not important for NT slams, but in a suit, the trump suit must be both long enough to generate tricks and solid enough to not lose two.

Baby Blackwood (BB-RKCB) Convention – 1430

When using the 1430 BB-RKCB Convention, there are now five keycards, the four aces, and the king of trump. Another keycard is the queen of trump.

4♣ 1/4 keycards (the 14 step)

4♦ 3/0 keycards (the 30 step)

4♥ 2/5 keycards without the queen of trump in the agreed upon suit

4♠ 2/5 keycards with the queen of trump in the agreed upon suit

Observe that the sequence of bids involve 4 steps! The 5th step (4NT) is again the SKA!

The Queen is the first step after either clubs or diamonds. The SSA bids are now 5-level bids.

EXAMPLE 1:

♠KJxxx

♠AQx

♥Axx

♥x

♦Qx

♦AKJ10xx

♣Qxx

♣Axx

1♠

2♦

2♠

3♠

4♦

4NT (1430)

5♥ (2 Keycards) 7NT

Opener's 4♦ denies serious slam interest (else 3NT) and denies first or second round club control (else 4♣), but shows one of the top three honors in diamonds. Responder can count 13 tricks.

EXAMPLE 2:

♠AQJxx

♠Kxxx

♥Ax

♥KQ

♦Kxxx

♦AQJxx

♣Qx

♣Jx

1♠

2♦

3♦

3♠

3NT*

4♥ (2/5 keycards without the queen)

4♠

Pass

Opener's 3NT (Baby Blackwood) shows serious slam interest.

Opener's 4♠ is an absolute sign-off. Responder, despite holding extra values, must pass. Note: If you did not use “Baby 3NT” you may have over bid!

Final Example

Opener

♠ J
♥ Q1087
♦ AKQJ2
♣ Q42

Responder

♠ KQ54
♥ KJ654
♦ 7
♣ KJ3

Opener

1♦
3♥
4♣ (1/4)
Pass

Responder

1♥
3NT* (1430 Baby Blackwood)
4♥
Pass

Note that in this example 4♠ as kickback for hearts and 4NT both gets you too high. So, always use the cheapest 1430 Keycard bid available when asking for keycards once you have agreed upon a suit.

If there is one thing that you should have learned from this lesson: **there is considerably more to effective bidding than just writing down the name of a convention or a system on your convention card.**

Good partnership agreements are much more important than the system that you play. If you and your partner decide to play a complex non-standard system, put in the time and do it right.

Discuss your auctions and make sure you understand why you make bids and what they mean!. When you truly understand your system, you will start to see the benefits in your results.

Much of the material presented in this lesson is in my book:

Neil H. Timm (2014) “2/1 Game Force a Modern Approach - For Beginning and Intermediate Players”, Fourth Edition. Trafford Publishing. Several references on Slam Bidding follow.

(1) Irwin S. Landow (2009) “Win Bridge Tournaments with Innovative Slam Bidding”

(2) Eddie Kantar (2008) “Roman Keycard Blackwood – The Final Word”

(3) Ron Klinger (2001) “Cue-Bidding to Slams”

(4) Ken Rexford (2006) “Cuebidding at Bridge”

(5) Patty Tucker (2014) “Slam Bidding Conventions”

**(6) Krzysztof Martens (2014) “Professional Slam Bidding”
Part 1 and Part 2**

(7) Allan DeSerpa (2014) “SIXPACK - Adventures with Keycards and Queecards”