

Kickback

By Henry Jackson

Method by Jeff Rubens

Which Word Does Not Belong?

KICKOFF TOUCHBACK

QUARTERBACK

HALFBACK TAILBACK

KICKBACK OUTBACK

TAILBACK CORNERBACK

What's Wrong With Blackwood?

- It's simple!
- Partner **almost** always recognizes it!

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- It does not tell you about the K or Q of trumps
- It does not work well for minors unless you hold 3 A's

What About RKC or 1430?

- A great improvement over Blackwood
- You can find out about the K and Q of trumps
- Works very well for Spades and is OK for Hearts.
- **But**, it does not work well for minors unless you hold 4 key cards.
- After agreeing on hearts, has partner ever shown 2 with the Q and that was not enough!

Minorwood?

- Using 1430 for the majors and Minorwood for the minors is much better
- When you use 4C or 4D to ask for key cards you have room to stop at game in a minor
- **But** you give up inviting game in a minor
- **And** partner may not always recognize your 4 level bid as you intend it.

Kickback Is The Answer!

- Kickback uses 4 of the denomination just above the trump suit as the trigger for 1430 type query
- For Spades it is just like 1430! Just use 4NT to trigger the query
- For Hearts use 4 Spades to ask for keycards
- Using 4 Diamonds with Clubs as trumps leaves plenty of room to stop at game

Partner Can Never Bid Past Five!

Using Clubs as an example

4D triggers Kickback

4H shows 1 or 4 key cards

4S shows 0 or 3 key cards

4N shows 2 without the queen

5C shows 2 with the queen

Asker can bid 5C to stop in game, pass 5C to play game, bid slam or even ask for kings!

It's Counting Not Memory!

- Instead of remembering that 5H shows 2 without the trump Q, just count the steps:
 1. One or Four
 2. Zero or Three
 3. Two Without the Queen
 4. Two With the Queen
- The same method works for all four suits!

Another Benefit

- Have you ever asked for specific kings instead of number of kings?
- This method works well with spades as trumps but not so well for other suits
- With Kickback all suits are treated equally for specific king asks
- Just bid the cheapest king first!

Specific King Ask In Clubs

- After finding all key cards in Clubs, use 5D to ask for specific Kings
- The cheapest King is the Heart K followed by the spade King and both are below 6C!
- If you agree to use 5N to show the king of the trigger suit (Diamonds), you never go past 6 of the trump suit.

Specific King Ask In Hearts

- 5 Spades asks for Specific Kings
- 5 NT shows Spade king
- 6 Clubs shows Club King
- 6 Diamonds shows Diamond king
- 6 Hearts shows no king

Queen Ask

- The Kickback Asker relays in the next ranking suit, excluding the trump suit to ask for the Queen
- The partner denies possession of the Queen of the agreed trump suit by bidding the next step, by-passing the agreed trump suit if necessary. The partner confirms the possession of the Queen of the trump suit by bidding two steps above the Queen asking bid.

Special Responses

- With 1430 after partner asks for key cards and you have two key cards and a void, you are told to bid 5NT. You have to remember to bid five of the trigger suit instead!
- Try to maintain a blank expression as partner decides what this is supposed to mean!

Kickback

The origin of this concept is by **Mr. Jeff Rubens** of Scarsdale, New York, United States. The concept is also a result of an application called U.S.P., or *Useful Space Principle*, also conceived by Mr. Jeff Rubens, which is defined as *when allocating bidding space under partnership agreements and understandings, then assign the bidding space where most useful without reference to natural or traditional bridge meanings of calls*. This U.S.P. principle was published by The Bridge World magazine, 1980-1981.

Mr. Jeff Rubens concluded that the *Blackwood* conventional method and most, if not all, of its variations contained within them the disadvantage of actually wasting useful bidding space. This was especially true if the trump suit is not Spades. The concept of Kickback was devised in order to avoid and alleviate this particular drawback by employing some bid other than the usual and traditional 4 No Trump bid as the Keycard Asking Bid.

Basic Principle of the Concept

Therefore, according to Mr. Jeff Rubens, the suit employed to trigger the request for Keycards, or the so-called Kickback suit, is the *suit in rank above the agreed trump suit and the Kickback bid is four of this suit*. This conventional method may be employed for all four suits, for both Minor suits and Major suits.

As long as the agreed trump suit has been clearly implied and/or definitely established, then it is of no importance whether or not this suit has been previously bid by either partner or opponent in the case of any intervening call or overcall or implied suits via any double.

Note: Some partnerships have the understanding that the Kickback conventional method is typically, normally, and generally employed when the trump suit is a Minor suit. Therefore, the Ace-Asking or Keycard-Asking bid in Kickback is four of the suit above the agreed / established trump suit, i.e. 4♥ for Diamonds and 4♦ for Clubs. Compare: *Redwood* conventional method.

Response Method 0314

The responses to the Kickback Asking bids are accomplished by steps and the meanings are identical to the responses to the 4 No Trump Keycard Asking bid employed in the Roman Keycard Blackwood convention.

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 ♥	3 ♥	Limit Raise or Forcing Raise is a matter of partnership agreement. The trump suit is established.
4 ♠		Kickback Keycard Asking Bid.
	First Step:	Promises 0 or 3 Keycards.
	Second Step:	Promises 1 or 4 Keycards.
	Third Step:	Promises 2 or 5 Keycards without the Queen of Trump.
	Fourth Step:	Promises 2 or 5 Keycards with the Queen of Trump.

Response Method 1430

For those bridge players, who would rather agree using the Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430 method, then the responses are practically identical. Only the first and second step are reversed:

Opener	Responder	Meaning
1 ♥	3 ♥	Limit Raise or Forcing Raise is a matter of partnership agreement. The trump suit is established.
4 ♠		Kickback Keycard Asking Bid.
	First Step:	Promises 1 or 4 Keycards.
	Second Step:	Promises 0 or 3 Keycards.
	Third Step:	Promises 2 or 5 Keycards without the Queen of Trump.
	Fourth Step:	Promises 2 or 5 Keycards with the Queen of Trump.

Queen Ask

In both cases the *first and second steps* do not contain any information about the Queen of the trump suit. If the Kickback asker does not hold the Queen of the trump suit and it is essential to discover whether partner holds this particular card before establishing the final contract, then the Kickback conventional method offers the following possibility.

Note: The Kickback Asker relays in the next ranking suit, excluding the trump suit to ask for the Queen.

The partner **denies** possession of the Queen of the agreed trump suit by bidding the next step, by-passing the agreed trump suit if necessary. The partner **confirms** the possession of the Queen of the trump suit by bidding two steps above the Queen asking bid.

Bidding Example Using Kickback

The following illustration shows how this method can prevent the partnership from bidding a disastrous contract:

♠ 7	♠ AK83
♥ AK4	♥ 95
♦ AQ6	♦ K94
♣ QJ10642	♣ 9853

North

South

1 ♣

1 ♠

3 ♣

4 ♣

North jumps in Clubs showing strong values and extra length in Clubs. By supporting Clubs South establishes the trump suit. By attempting a slam the partnership by-passes a game contract in No Trump, which in this example would be the preferable contract in hindsight. However, the possibility of a slam contract is more attractive even if the partnership is forced to stop in a Minor suit game contract.

4 ♦

Kickback is triggered by bidding the suit in rank above the agreed trump suit.

4 ♠

Promises 1 or 4 Keycards. Roman Keycard

- 3014. Second Step.
- 4 ♥ Promises 1 or 4 Keycards. Roman Keycard 1430. First Step.
- 5 ♣ Establishes the final contract since North realizes that there are two Keycards missing.

By employing regular Roman Keycard Blackwood 3014, the response to the Keycard Ask of 4 No Trump would be 5♦, which would have resulted in a fatal contract for the partnership. Only those partnerships employing Roman Keycard 1430 would have responded 5♣, showing only one Keycard, which North would have then passed establishing the final contract.

This conventional method, developed by Mr. Jeff Rubens, is an excellent example of his concept *Useful Space Principle*, which provides the partnership with more possible bidding space to exchange information.

Note and **Source**: The reader is also strongly encouraged to read the article written by Marilyn Hemenway, written March 2006. This article has only been preserved and archived on this site in [.pdf file](#) format for future reference.

If you wish to include this feature, or any other feature, of the game of bridge in your partnership agreement, then please make certain that the concept is understood by both partners. Be aware whether or not the feature is alertable or not and whether an announcement should or must be made. Check with the governing body and/or the bridge district and/or the bridge unit prior to the game to establish the guidelines applied. Please include the particular feature on your convention card in order that your opponents are also aware of this feature during the bidding process, since this information must be made known to them according to the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge. We do not always include the procedure regarding Alerts and/or Announcements, since these regulations are changed and revised during time by the governing body. It is our intention only to present the information as concisely and as accurately as possible.