



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(405) Minorwood**

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Level: 7 of 10 (4 of 6)

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#### **General**

One of the most valuable tools in slam bidding is Keycard. This allows us to check on important cards (Aces and trump honors) and stop below slam if we are missing too many of them. But if we use 4NT to ask for Keycards when a minor is our fit, then there is a good chance partner's answer will take us past game, 5-minor, even when we do not want to bid slam. (This is especially true when ♣ is the trump suit.) That is a major problem. Our solution is a convention called *Minorwood* – where we use 4-of-a-minor to ask for Keycards instead of 4NT. Using 4-minor as a convention bid does not negatively affect or bidding because 4-minor is generally not that common of a bid – it is not at game, but it is above our most common contract when we have a minor suit fit, 3NT. Using 4-minor for a conventional call does not give up much. Let's see how Minorwood works.

#### **Minorwood Responses**

Let's start out by seeing how we respond to a 4-minor Minorwood Keycard ask. When we bid 4-minor as Minorwood, partner responds with 1430 steps, just as they did to 4NT. The important thing is to think of these bids as *steps* and not attach a meaning to a specific suit strain.

##### 4♣ Keycard in ♣

- 4♦ (Step 1) – 1 or 4 Keycards
- 4♥ (Step 2) – 3 or 0 Keycards
- 4♠ (Step 3) – 2 Keycards without the ♣ Queen
- 4NT (Step 4) – 2 Keycards with the ♣ Queen

##### 4♦ Keycard in ♦

- 4♥ (Step 1) – 1 or 4 Keycards
- 4♠ (Step 2) – 3 or 0 Keycards
- 4NT (Step 3) – 2 Keycards without the ♦ Queen
- 5♣ (Step 4) – 2 Keycards with the ♦ Queen



## Queen Ask

If our answer to the Minorwood ask is 1/4 or 3/0, then the Queen of trump is still an unknown card. To ask partner about this important card we do just as we would over a traditional 4NT Keycard auction – make the cheapest available forcing bid (usually the next step up). Let's look at some examples of Minorwood Queen asks.

### *Example 1*

1♣    2♣  
4♣    4♦  
4♥

### *Example 2*

1♣    2♣  
4♣    4♥  
4♠

### *Example 3*

1♦    2♦  
4♦    4♥  
4♠

### *Example 4*

1♦    2♦  
4♦    4♠  
5♣

We don't use 4NT as a Queen-asking bid in this auction - 4NT is a reasonable place to play here. Instead, we use 5♣ as our asking bid. If possible, when exploring slam in a minor (using Minorwood) we want to keep 4NT as a possible final contract.

After the Queen ask, partner answers just as they would in normal Keycard (after a 4NT Keycard Ask) –

- If partner does NOT have the Queen, they rebid 5m.
- If partner does have the Queen, then they start showing their specific Kings up the line, and the auction continues just as it would in a 1430 Keycard auction.



## King Ask in Minorwood

Once we have our answer to the number of Keycards, we may sign off in game (5m or 4NT), bid slam (6m or 6NT), or ask for Kings if we are interested in more information (usually looking for a grand slam). Although we used 4m to ask for Keycards, we cannot use 5m to ask for Kings because we will frequently want to play there in 5m. Instead, we will use 5m+1 (the bid just above game in our suit) to ask for Kings:

- If we Keycard in ♣, then 5♣+1 = 5♦ is our King Ask.
- If we Keycard in ♦, then 5♦+1 = 5♥ is our King Ask.

These bids ask partner to start bidding their specific Kings up the line and the auction continues as expected.

## When is 4m Minorwood?

Now for the hard part of Minorwood... Since we are going to use 4m as a slam try convention (Keycard in our minor) then it is important that partner knows what is going on, knows that our 4m bid is Minorwood, and does not pass. We need to have good rules for when 4m is Minorwood and when it is not – these are important situations to discuss and re-discuss with partner.

If there is any question about what is going on or any ambiguity, then 4m is forcing and we should usually treat it as Minorwood – we don't pass in a partscore when our partner is trying for slam. If we are not sure of the meaning of 4m then we just raise to 5m. If we pass, we'd better be right!

## Rules for when 4m is Minorwood

It is important for us to have good rules so that we can agree with partner when 4-minor is Minorwood. 4-minor is Minorwood in these conditions.

- We are in a game forcing auction:
  - We have NOT found a Major suit fit and
  - We have found a minor suit fit;
    - Even if raising to 4m shows that fit for the first time.
    - Even if this is an implied fit.
- When we are not in a game forcing auction:
  - Jumps that are clearly not weak are Minorwood (Be Careful!)
  - Raising an invite is Minorwood because we do not re-invite an invite.

## Rules for when 4m is Not Minorwood

- In non-forcing competitive auctions.
- When we have an 8+ card Major suit fit.



*Example 5*

1♣    2♣\*  
4♣

Easy Minorwood Auction

*Example 6*

1♣    2♣\*  
2NT    4♣

4♣ is Minorwood, not Gerber, if ♣ have been bid naturally. Minorwood overrules Gerber if either player has previously bid ♣ naturally.

*Example 7*

1♣    2♣\*  
3♣    4♣

3♣ was NF. We would pass 3♣ with a minimum. So bidding again is a GF and thus, 4♣ is Minorwood.

*Example 8*

1♠    2♦  
3♦    3♠  
4♦

This 4♦ bid is NOT Minorwood since we have a ♠ fit. 4♦ is a cuebid.

*Example 9*

1NT    2♠\*  
3♣    4♣

Minorwood (implied fit – at least 6-2)

*Example 10*

1♦    P    2♦\*    4♣  
4♦

This is a tough one. We could play this as competitive, or we could play this as Minorwood. Discuss with partner!

## Conclusion

Exploring a slam in a minor suit is much more difficult than in a Major suit. Minorwood is an excellent convention that allows us to communicate about a minor suit slam at a low level and stop in 5m or even 4NT if no slam is possible. As long as you can avoid a mix-up with partner about when a bid is non-forcing and when it is Minorwood, it will be an excellent addition to your slam bidding tools.