



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(258) Q-Minorwood

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Level: 6

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General

When we have a minor suit fit, using 4-minor as Keycard in our suit (Minorwood) is an effective tool for exploring slam without getting the auction beyond game (beyond 5-minor). But by adopting Minorwood, we give up the natural slam try of 4-minor, asking partner to do something forward going for slam (usually starting to cuebid) if they like their hand. By making an improvement to our Ace-showing structure in Minorwood, we can combine both Ace-asking and quantitative bidding. This new structure is called Q-Minorwood. Let's see how it works.

Q-Minorwood

The idea when playing Q-Minorwood is to insert a quantitative negative step (Q-) at the start of the answers for Minorwood. Step 1 now says that partner does not like their hand and the next steps (all Q+) starting at Step 2 show 1430 answers and a good hand.

Example 1

1♦ 2♦*
4♦ ___?

- 4♥ Q- (4♠ Relay to force Keycard – more below)
- 4♠ Q+, 1 or 4 Keycards (5♣ relay to ask for the Queen, some use 4NT as Queen Ask)
- 4NT Q+, 3 or 0 Keycards (5♣ relay to ask for the Queen)
- 5♣ Q+, 2 Keycards without the Queen
- 5♦ Q+, 2 Keycards with the Queen

Example 2

1♣ 2♣*
4♣* ___

- 4♦ Q- (4♥ Relay to force Keycard – more below)
- 4♥ Q+, 1 or 4 Keycards (4♠ relay to ask for the Queen)
- 4♠ Q+, 3 or 0 Keycards (4NT relay to ask for the Queen)
- 4NT Q+, 2 Keycards without the Queen
- 5♣ Q+, 2 Keycards with the Queen



Continuations After Partner Shows Q- Response

After partner shows a discouraging hand for slam with the cheapest bid at Step 1, we can ask them to answer their number of Keycards anyway by relaying (making the next cheapest bid). After this, partner responds with traditional 1430 Keycard steps.

Example 3

1♣ 2♣*
4♣ 4♦
4♥ —

- 4♠ 1 or 4 Keycards
- 4NT 3 or 0 Keycards
- 5♣ 2 Keycards without the Queen
- 5♦ 2 Keycards with the Queen

Notice that after partner shows a Q- hand, if we ask for Keycards we will be beyond game if partner has 2 Keycards with the Queen, but that is usually acceptable because that is enough for us to be happy reaching slam.

If we decide that we want to stop the auction after partner shows a Q- (with 4♦ in this case or 4♥ when ♦ are trump) then we can bid 4NT or 5-minor (our suit) to play, or even bid a new suit as a cuebid, making one last try for slam.

Note: If you play 0314 Keycard instead of 1430, then you can continue to play this way with your first 2 steps "switched". Asking for Kings is also not affected by adding the Q-step to Minorwood.

Conclusion

Adding complexity to our bidding system can cause misunderstandings, but improving our bidding tools can make us more accurate bidders. There is a balance between these two approaches, but if you are already playing Minorwood (and have good agreements about when it applies), then upgrading to Q-minorwood is an improvement in methods without adding much complexity. Give it a try with your regular partner and see if you can get some input from partner about the quality of their hand as well as their number of Keycards.