

## “Roman Key-Card Blackwood” (RKCB)

The “Roman Key-Card Blackwood” Convention is an alternate “Ace-Asking” Convention used as a means of exploring for a perceived Slam with the built-in feature of avoiding it when it proves not to be feasible. Just as we don't want to bid a Slam when absent 2 Aces, neither do we want to bid a Slam off an Ace and the Trump King. Such a Slam would be at best 50-50--and there is no need to bid it. Also, we would never want to bid a Grand Slam off an Ace, nor would we want to bid seven of the agreed-upon suit if missing the Trump King. **“Roman Key-Card Blackwood” (RKCB)** is used to make sure we never reach a Slam if missing too many **“Key-cards”** (Aces and the King of the Trump suit).

This Blackwood variation differs from the original **Blackwood Convention** in that there are not only 4-Aces counted in the different responses, but 5-Key-Cards which are the 4-Aces plus the King of the Trump suit. The King of the Trump suit is counted as the **“5<sup>th</sup> Ace,”** i.e., the **“5<sup>th</sup> Key-Card.”**

It is of the utmost importance to have the Partners agree upon the Trump suit in the bidding process, before initiating Roman Key-Card Blackwood. Partnership agreements must contain the understanding that the agreed-upon Trump suit will be either,

1. The Trump suit that has been established or implied by the auction.
2. The suit named by the Opener if he/she opened with a strong forcing action.
3. The suit named by the Responder if he/she jump-shifts and then initiates **Roman Key-Card Blackwood**.
4. The last bid suit by any Partner, if no suit has yet been agreed-upon.

The use of **Roman Key-Card Blackwood** facilitates the bidding of Slams without relying upon the traditional thirty-two or thirty-three high-card points normally deemed necessary, in that both Partners can share the descriptive information necessary about the location of certain Key Cards, resulting, often, in a Slam becoming capable of being reached, without just counting and adding the Partnership's high-card points.

The responses to a **“4-NT” Roman Key-Card Blackwood** inquiry, using the **“1430”** system are as follows: The **“0314”** system reverses the number of Key-Cards shown with the **“5C”** and **“5D”** bids.

<b>“5C”</b> = 1 or 4 Key Cards	<b>“5D”</b> = 0 or 3 Key Cards
<b>“5H”</b> = 2 Key Cards <u>without</u> the Queen of Trump	<b>“5S”</b> = 2 Key Cards <u>with</u> the Queen of Trump <u>or without</u> the Queen of Trump if the Partnership holds 10 or more Trump pieces

A subsequent bid of **“5-NT”** asks for the number of outside Kings (**exclusive** of the King of Trumps, already accounted for). Once invoked, it promises Partner that all 5-Key-Cards are held by the Partnership else the bid cannot be made. The responses to **“5-NT”** using the **“1430”** system are therefore:

<b>“6C”</b> = 1 outside King	<b>“6D”</b> = 3 outside Kings
<b>“6H”</b> = 2 outside Kings	

Alternatively, (a variation), some Partnerships agree that a bid of **“5-NT”** asks Partner to bid his/her **cheapest** Non-Trump King, as opposed to the number of outside Kings held.

The “Kickback” Convention is the variant of **RKCB** in accordance with the “Useful Space Principle”. This variation facilitates stopping short of a perceived Slam, should it be found to be unattainable. The Step-Responses are the same as in **RKCB**, but the Asking-Bid is not singularly **“4NT”**. **It is, alternatively, the 4-level bid immediately above the agreed-upon trump suit, i.e.:**

<b>“4D”</b> = <b>RKCB</b> for Clubs	<b>“4H”</b> = <b>RKCB</b> for Diamonds
<b>“4S”</b> = <b>RKCB</b> for Hearts, <b>and</b>	<b>“4-NT”</b> = <b>RKCB</b> for Spades