

## **“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 off 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 if missing the trump king. RKC is used to make sure we never reach a slam if missing too many "key" cards (aces and the trump king).

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 and the King of the agreed-upon trump suit. The King of the trump suit is counted as the “5<sup>th</sup> Ace”, or 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 none 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 **“0314-System”** are as follows: The **“1430-System”** reverses the number of Key-Cards shown with the “5C” and “5D” bids.

“5C” = 0 or 3 Key Cards                      “5D” = 1 or 4 Key Cards  
“5H” = 2 Key Cards **without** the Queen of Trump      “5S” = 2 Key Cards **with** the Queen of Trump

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” are therefore:

“6C” = 0 outside Kings      “6D” = 1 outside King  
“6H” = 2 outside Kings      “6S” = 3 outside Kings

Alternatively, 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.:**

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