

Slam Bidding

To be most effective, pursuit toward a potential, Slam-level contract is most appropriate when either the Partnership has agreed upon a final contract's denomination (Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, Spades, or No-Trump), or if one of the Partners holds a strong, self-sufficient suit of his/her own, with either scenario holding a sufficient, perceived, high-card point (HCP) strength, robust enough to envision a possible Slam. At times any one of the Ace-asking conventions, ("**Blackwood**," "**Roman Key-Card Blackwood**," "**Exclusion Blackwood**," "**Redwood**" ("**Minor-wood**"), or even "**Gerber**," becomes the convention of choice. Each of the aforementioned holds a specific advantage under certain bidding scenarios, and their use is dependent upon both Partnership agreement and need. Such conventions, however, are not used to *reach a Slam*, rather, they are used to *avoid a perceived Slam* that is, in reality, not possible.

There are multiple bidding scenarios when a **4-NT** call is not the initiation of the "**Blackwood**" Convention. On these instances, the bid is "quantitative," seeking a Slam-level contract should Partner hold the top of his/her high-card point (HCP) count. These include the following bidding scenarios:

- a. When no suit fit has been established and **4-NT** is bid over **3-NT**.
- b. When **4-NT** is bid over an opening bid of either **1-NT** or **2-NT**, when both, by Partnership agreement, evidence a three-point spread of high-card points (HCP's).
- c. After a **1-NT** opening bid, followed by a Major suit "**Texas**" Transfer ("**4D**," or "**4H**"), and then, afterwards, a **4-NT** call. Such a bidding sequence seeks a Slam-level contract in the suit in which the transfer was directed if Opener holds a maximum of his/her high-card points, previously shown.

Most of the better Bridge Players, today, now use of "**Roman Key-Card Blackwood**" ("**RKCB**") in place of the "**Standard Blackwood**," Convention. The big advantage of "**RKCB**" is that, one can attempt to find the presence, or absence, of both the **King** and **Queen** of the Trump suit, in addition to the number of Aces held. In order to effectively use "**RKCB**," however, one of the suits bid during the auction must designate the trump suit, else it is presumed that the last suit bid, just prior to the initiation of a "**4-NT**" ace-asking call, becomes the relevant suit for reply. (See Lesson: "Topics - Roman Key-Card Blackwood {RKCB}")

Cue-Bidding

Ace-asking conventions, as listed above, are not indicated when the invoking Partner holds a worthless doubleton, a void, or both. Under any one of these three conditions, "**Cue-Bidding**" becomes the method of choice instead of any of the Ace-asking Conventions. This is because if using the latter, the answer one gets upon inquiry, when holding one or more of the just-listed, disqualifying distributions, might not be useful, for in any one of these three circumstances, the asking Partner needs to know which Ace or Aces the Responder holds, not how many.

In Slam context, "**Cue-Bidding**" is used when seeking a "*control*," unless otherwise specified; i.e., seeking first or second round control of a particular suit or suits. If the first cue-bid is beyond game-level, it is assumed to be first-round control; i.e., either an Ace in that suit, else a void. Any suit skipped, "**Up-the-Ladder**," in the cue-bidding process denies the presence of first-round control.

The Strategy For Bidding Small Slams

(With the presumption that Small Slam-level, contract values are present)

- a. If two (2) key-cards are missing, avoid Slam
- b. If one (1) key-card is missing, but the **Queen** of the Trump suit is present, bid a Small Slam.
- c. If one (1) key-card and the **Queen** of the Trump suit are both missing, bid six of the trump suit if the Partnership holds 10 (+) trump pieces, or if holding 9 trump pieces with the Trump Jack.

The Strategy For Bidding Grand Slams

(With the presumption that Grand Slam-level, contract values are present)

- a. If holding 10 (+) Trump pieces, all five (5) key cards need by present, but the Trump **Queen** need not be present.
- b. With 9-Trump pieces or fewer, one needs all five key cards plus the **Queen** of the Trump suit.
- c. With 13 winners in top cards, bid **7-NT**.
- d. With a good Trump fit and no losers in the first three rounds of any suit, bid seven.

Slam Bidding in the Presence of Interference by an Opponent

If the Opponents bid a suit in order to interfere over one's **4-NT**, Ace-asking, initiating, call, thereby eliminating the bidding room for the Responder's normal response, the Responder may use substitute responses as seen in one of three possible conventions in order to show the number of Aces or Controls asked for by the initiating Partner. They are as follows:

1. ("**D**ouble" (0 Aces or Controls) – "**P**ass" (1 Ace or Control), and - "**U**p-the Ladder," numerically, thereafter) = The "**D0P1**" Convention.

When interference has taken place after a **4-NT** call at the 5-level, this Convention allows Opener, should the Responder have shown no Aces, to "**P**ass," thereby converting Partner's "**D**ouble" to a penalty scenario when no Slam seems plausible and the vulnerability remains favorable to do so.

2. ("**D**ouble" = an **E**ven number of Aces or Controls – "**P**ass" = an **O**dd number of Aces or Controls) = The "**DEPO**" Convention.
3. ("**D**ouble" = an **O**dd number of Aces or Controls) – "**P**ass" = an **E**ven number of Aces or Controls = The "**DOPE**" Convention.

In the case of these two latter Conventions, their use is better served at the 6-level when interference is introduced after the number of **Kings** is requested.