

The essential tools of bidding a slam vary with each situation. Some hands are easily handled by bidding some sort of Blackwood, Minorwood or other ace asking system and when you have found out that you have a sufficient number of controls bidding a slam. Others require a cue bidding sequence to determine that an open suit is covered by a first or second round control.

The most commonly used tools however are as follows:

1. Roman Key Card Blackwood (either 0314 or 1430)
2. Minorwood (RKC) and preempt minorwood
3. Gerber and/or (RKC Gerber)
4. Cue bidding and/or (Roman cue bids)
5. Jacoby 2NT raises (forcing, balanced hands)
6. Asking bids
7. Splinter bids or other means of showing shortness
8. Quantitative raises

Knowing which you need on each hand and how to employ these tools is the key to good slam bidding. Let's look at some examples:

AKxxx  
 AKQx  
 x  
 Kxx

You opened 1S and partner bid 3S (limit raise) there is not much more you need to know about partner's hand then the number of controls so blackwood seems like the next step. Partner bids 5D over your 4NT showing 1 key card. You know from your hand that it is an Ace.

Now the only issue is the queen of spades and you can ask for it. Bid 5H, this asks for the queen of trump. Do you know how to respond? The answers are in steps and the first step above the 5H ask is 5S which is NO. The next step 5NT is Yes, with nothing more to show. Then 6C is Yes with the king of clubs, 6D is Yes with the king of diamonds and 6H is Yes with the king of hearts. Bidding 6S is reasonable when partner shows the queen.

The opening lead is the King of Diamonds and dummy has:

Q10xx  
 x  
 Axx  
 QJ10xx

This limit raise was a skinny-minny but it is a limit raise and it is enough to make your slam.

Now, let's try this one:

A  
QJ1098xxx  
xx  
Ax

You opened 1H and partner bids 2NT (Jacoby, strong balanced raise). Here, Blackwood is not useful unless partner has all three of the missing keycards. But if partner has only two of the missing keycards you won't know which they are and may still not have a slam. So over 2NT you will bid 3S showing a singleton spade and a good hand. Obviously, you would like to hear 4D from partner. However, partner bids 4H. What do you do next?

Next, let's look at this hand.

AKQJxx  
Kxx  
A  
AKJ

You open 2C and partner bids 2D (positive response), you bid 2S and partner bids 3S. You bid 4C and partner bids 4H, you bid 5C and partner bids 5S and you bid 6S. The King of diamonds is led and the following hand comes down in the dummy. Here, bidding this slam was relatively trivia but making it is not!!

Jxxx  
AJxx  
Jx  
xxx

May I have a volunteer from the audience to play this slam??

Moving on, you hold the following hand and open 1H, partner has the following

10x	AK9xx
A10xxx	KQJx
AQ	xx
Axxx	xx

It seems like a very good idea to bid 2NT showing a forcing, balanced raise but oddly a 2NT response will making getting to a slam very difficult. Over 2NT, you would bid 3H, no singleton but a good hand. Partner bids 3S and you 4C. But what's next? You have no idea where your tricks are going to come from and partner has no idea whether to bid more than just 4H over 4C.

On this deal you'd have a much better chance of getting to a slam if you started with 1S over 1H. The auction might then proceed: 1H-1S-2C-2D\* (4<sup>th</sup> suit, game force) - 2NT (what do you now know? What is opener's shape?) - 3H- 4D - 4S - 4NT -5S- (2 with the queen) - 6H . When you have a long suit outside of trump it is better to show your source of tricks before making a forcing raise.

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Partner opens the bidding 3D (xx, xx, AKxxxxx, xx) and you hold:

AKxxx  
AKxx  
Qxx  
x

Here is a good hand for preempt minorwood so you bid 4C.

4C is keycard over any preemptive opening bid from partner whether a weak 2 bid or a three level preempt. The only time that 4C is not the start of keycard is over partner's 3C opening. Then, 4D starts the keycard.

The responses over 4C are as follows: (remember partner has a preempt so having more than 2 keycards with the queen of trump is simply impossible.)

4D = 0 keycards  
4H= 1 keycard  
4S = 1 keycard with the queen of trump  
4N= 2 keycards  
5C = 2 keycards with the queen of trump.

Partner answers 4NT (2 keycards) and slam is then automatic!

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Try this one. You open 1NT (15-17)

Axx  
Kx  
KQxxx  
K10x

and partner bids 4NT (quantitative raise). Well, you have good cards (albeit a minimum with only 15 points) and a long suit so slam may be a reasonable proposition. But you do not have to make a unilateral decision and leap to 6NT. Just bid your suit (5D). This is not an answer to Blackwood because Blackwood was not the question asked. You are suggesting to your partner that this suit might be an alternative place to play or that if this suit will run a slam in NT may be reasonable. Partner held the following: KJ, AJxx, A10xx, QJx. As you can see there are 11 solid tricks in NT but 12 solid tricks in diamonds.

## ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD (0314 or 1430)

**ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD (0314 or 1430)** is used when a fit is established and it's time to ask for the five keycards (the four aces and the king of trump). Let us assume for purposes of this discussion that **Hearts** are trump.

4NT = Roman Keycard Blackwood is answered as follows:

5C = 0 or 3 keycards (If you are playing 1430 then reverse the first two responses)

5D = 1 or 4 keycards

5H = 2 or 5 keycards without the Queen or trump

5S = 2 or 5 keycards with the Queen of trump

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With a **useful void** you may do the following:

With **1 keycard and a useful void** jump to the void suit at the 6 level. If your void is in a suit that is higher ranking than the trump suit jump to the trump suit at the 6 level.

Example: with hearts as trump on the hand below you would bid 6D on the first example hand and 6H on the next one.

- |    |               |    |               |
|----|---------------|----|---------------|
| 1. | <u>A</u> xxxx | 2. | <b>Void</b>   |
|    | J10xxxx       |    | J10xxxx       |
|    | <b>void</b>   |    | <u>A</u> xxxx |
|    | Kx            |    | Kx            |

With **2 keycards and a useful void** bid 5NT over 4NT.

Axxxx  
KJ10xxx  
**void**  
Kx

If partner is interested in getting to a grand slam over this sequence they will **bid 6 clubs** to say if your void is in a **black suit** bid a grand slam or **6 Diamonds** to say if your void is in a **red suit** bid a grand slam. If you do not have the void they request, then sign off in 6H.

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### *Asking for the Queen of Trump and the Answers*

When partner responds 5H or 5S to 4NT they have already told you about their possession or lack of possession of the Queen of trump. The ambiguous circumstance is when they respond either 5C or 5D to the keycard ask. Nonetheless, the 4NT bidder can easily find out whether partner also has the Queen of trump in the following manner:

RKC

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4NT - 5C (0 or 3) - **5D (Do you have the Queen of Trump?)** This 5D bid is completely artificial and is used only to ask for the trump queen it is not a cue-bid of any kind.

To answer:

The **next step up** (no matter what it is) = **NO**, I do not have the Queen of trump

The **next step after that** = YES, I have the Queen of trump with nothing more to tell you about.

All **other steps thereafter** = YES, with the King of the Suit I have just bid at the 6 level.

Example: Again, with Hearts as trump

4NT - 5C - **5D** to ask for the Queen of trump

5H = I do not have the Queen of Hearts

5S = I have the Queen of Hearts but no extra king(s) to show

6C = I have the Queen of Hearts and the King of Clubs

6D = I have the Queen of Hearts and the King of Diamonds

6H = I have the Queen of Hearts and the King of Spades (I cannot show this king any other way because to do so might get us too high)

Lastly, 5NT = I have the Queen of Hearts and 2 extra Kings.

Now if the sequence goes 4NT- 5D (1 or 4 keycards) to ask for the Queen of trump you must bid **5S**. (A bid of 5H here is a sign-off indicating that the number of keycards is inadequate to get to slam). So the answers to this Queen of trump ask are as follows:

5NT = **No**, I do not have the Queen of Hearts

6C = Yes, with nothing more to tell you about

6D = Yes, with a king lower ranking than the trump suit (i.e., clubs or diamonds)

6H = Yes, with a king higher ranking than the trump suit (i.e., spades)

## Minorwood

Minorwood is used when the partnership has found a minor suit fit and is looking for slam. It is essential to be able to start the ace asking sequence below the 4NT level so that you can find out if you have an adequate number of keycards before you reach the 5 of a minor level.

The most obvious circumstances of Minorwood would be 1C-2C (inverted) - 4C  
This bid is now keycard for clubs. The answers are done in the same pattern as normal RKC.

0 or 3 = 4♦  
1 or 4 = 4♥  
2 or 5 without the queen of trump = 4♠  
2 or 5 with the queen of trump = 4NT

At this point you will know whether you belong in a slam or should sign off in 4NT or 5 clubs.

The sequences to ask for the queen of trump when it is unknown are as follows:

0 or 3 = 4♦ and partner now bids 4♥ to ask if you have the queen of trump  
1 or 4 = 4♥ and partner now bids 4♠ to ask if you have the queen of trump

The answer begins with the next step up - which would be NO. The step after that would be YES with no extra king to show. After that all answers would be YES with the extra king of whatever suit you bid.

EXAMPLE: 4♠ (starting minorwood for clubs) - 4♦ (0-3) - 4♥ (do you have the queen of clubs?) - 4♠ (no) or 4NT (yes, with nothing extra to show) or 5C (yes, I have the queen of clubs and even better trump than you might anticipate), 5D (yes, with the King of diamonds) 5H (yes, with the King of Hearts) 5S (yes, with the king of spades) 5NT (yes, with two extra kings).

Other bidding circumstances where 4 of a minor should be Minorwood are:

EXAMPLE: 1C - 2H (strong jump shift) - 3C - 4C  
1D - 1S - 2H - 3C (4<sup>th</sup> suit force) - 3D - 4D  
1C - 2D (jump shift) - 2NT - 4D (absolutely clear)  
2C - 2D (waiting) - 4C or 4D

Basically when you have shown an unlimited strong hand and bid passed 3NT to 4 of a minor it is Minorwood. It is generally not likely that the "weak hand" is starting minorwood. For example, this auction. 1S - X (by partner) - P - 2H (you have limited your hand to fairly weak) - P - 3C (partner, a big hand) - P - 4C (you, just a raise to show you have clubs with partner, not minorwood)

## Namyats & Asking Bids

We should agree that any bid past game in a major is asking not telling. All asking bids are in the suit you have bid. They are not inferential. A five level bid in trump asks for 2 of the top 3 honors to bid a slam. If you have better trump then cue bid something else or bid 5 NT to indicate all three trump honors.

If hearts are trump then returning to trump is always the negative, no help response.

4S, 5C, 5D, & 5H are asking bids. The responses are as follows:

4S = describe spade holding

answer: 4NT = guarded king  
5C = singleton  
5D = void  
5H = no help  
5S = Ace of Spades

5C = describe club holding

answer: 5D = singleton  
5H = no help two or three small  
5S = void  
5NT = the guarded King  
6C = Ace of Clubs

5D = describe diamond holding

answer: 5H = no help  
5S = singleton  
5NT = guarded king  
6C = void  
6D = Ace of Diamonds

5H = trump ask (bid a slam with two of the top three or better)

Some people only play Namyats in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> seat. Therefore, a 3NT opening bid in first or second chair is a broken minor suit pre-empt. The old 4 club or 4 diamond bid. When you take it out to 4C (pass or correct). When you take it out to 4D this is a slam try and forcing to game in either clubs or diamonds.

In 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> chairs the 3NT opening bid should be any hand you wish with a solid suit and may have quit a lot outside. Partner is a passed hand and slam is therefore much less likely. Partner will strain to leave this 3NT in with some values but will escape to 4C if necessary.

## Namyats

4C = hearts

4D = spades

When we open 4C or 4D in first and second chair it is Namyats. About 8.5 tricks in the appropriate major with a suit that will play for not worse than one loser opposite a void. The responses are as follows:

### 4C showing hearts

If you are interested in slam and hold exactly 1 or 3 key cards in support of partner's major then bid 4D. If the Namyats bidder is interested in slam opposite the news that you may have only 1 key card they can make an asking bid or bid roman key card blackwood. If they do not wish to get higher than 4H if you have only one key card than they will end the auction. If you have three key cards obviously over 4H you will either bid RKC or make an asking bid depending on the structure of your hand.

If you hold exactly 2 key cards you may make a direct asking bid or bid RKC.

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1D - 2D inverted - 4D = RKC

1D - 2D inverted - 4C = asking bid

responses: 4D = no help in clubs

4H = singleton

4S = void

4NT = guarded king

5C = Ace of Clubs

Obviously this pattern and the responses are the same for an asking bid of 4H or 4S as well.

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