

21 / UPGRADE TO ROMAN KEY-CARD BLACKWOOD

This version of Blackwood is so good, I have taken to teaching it directly to my beginners; when they see old-fashioned Blackwood, they scoff at how primitive it is. The beauty of RKCB is that, as well as Aces, it informs you about the King and Queen of trumps – both vital cards at the Slam level. There are several variations and complex additions, but the simple method outlined below is perfect for Rubber bridge and club Duplicate players. I urge you to replace old-fashioned Blackwood immediately.

Instead of Aces, the 4NT bid asks for 'key-cards'. These are the four Aces, plus the trump King. The responses to the 4NT enquiry are as follows:

5C = I hold 0 or 3 key-cards

5D = I hold 1 or 4 key-cards

5H = I hold 2 key-cards, but not the trump Queen

5S = I hold 2 key-cards, and also the trump Queen

You will not confuse no key-cards with three key-cards (nor one with four) – there is at least 11pts between them. In all the years I have played this convention, I have always known which my partner holds – and that is saying something: I have got everything else wrong at some point!

Both 5H and 5S show two key-cards – the most common number of key-cards held. The lower-ranking bid denies the trump Queen; the higher-ranking bid shows this card.

Once you know that you hold all five key-cards – and only if you are interested in bidding a grand Slam – a bid of 5NT asks partner for Kings but, crucially, not how many, but which one(s). When bidding a grand Slam, you usually need an exact King.

In response to 5NT, you bid the suit in which you hold a King, not including the trump King which has already been shown in response to 4NT: if you hold two Kings, bid 6NT; if you hold no King, go back to the agreed suit at the lowest available level.

<i>West</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
♠ K5	—	—	—	1H
♥ K8643	NB	3H	NB	4NT
♦ AKQ72	NB	5S	NB	7H
♣ A				