# 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 "5th Ace", or the "5th 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