

**CONVENTIONS COURSE**  
***Lesson Two: Roman Key Card Blackwood***

One of the most useful conventions of all, Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) enables a partnership to bid a slam knowing that they can check whether they have the King or Queen of Trumps, along with the traditional four Aces.

A bid of 4 No Trumps, preceded by a suit bid, asks partner to show any of their FIVE Aces (Key Cards) with the 5<sup>th</sup> Ace (Key Card) being the King of Trumps. The responses are as follows:

- 5♣ 0 or 3 (of the 5 Aces)
- 5♦ 1 or 4 (of the 5 Aces)
- 5♥ 2 (of the 5 Aces) without the Queen of Trumps
- 5♠ 2 (of the 5 Aces) with the Queen of Trumps

For example:

Opener	Responder
♠ AQ432	♠ K986
♥ 4	♥ KQ765
♦ AKQ98	♦ 102
♣ A2	♣ 84

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	4 ♠
4NT	5 ♦
6 ♠	Pass

4NT was RKCB and the 5♦ response showed one or four of the five Key Cards, so opener could bid 6♠ with some confidence, knowing responder had either K♠ or A♥.

HINT: a useful way of remembering these responses is think “clover” for clubs i.e. 3 leaves (0 or 3) and think 4 “corners” of diamonds (1 or 4).

**Bidding Blip Alert**

Remember that if 4NT is PRECEDED by a No Trump bid than it is NOT Blackwood or RKCB, but “Quantative” ie 1NT – 4NT (see Improver course)

Another example:

Opener	Responder
♠ K10963	♠ AQ85
♥ AK	♥ Q864
♦ 9	♦ A2
♣ AKQ84	♣ J53

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	4 ♠
4NT	5 ♠
7 ♠	Pass

4NT was RKCB and the 5♠ response showed two Key Cards **AND** the Queen of Trumps (Q♠), so opener bids 7♠ with some confidence.

NB. If no suit is agreed, then always assume RKCB for the last suit bid.  
(ie 1♥ - 4NT = assume RKCB for hearts).

## Asking for the Queen of Trumps

Say that partner has responded 5♣ or 5♦ to your 4NT RKCB. This tells you about the 5 Key Cards but it doesn't tell partner about the trump Queen. So bid the NEXT suit (NOT TRUMPS) over the 5♣ or 5♦ response to ask about the Trump Queen (this really only works for the MAJORS because with minors there is no safety net of staying at the 5 level). The responses are:

5 of the Trump Suit "I don't have the Trump Queen"  
6 of a Side suit "I have the Trump Queen AND this side suit King"  
6 of the Trump Suit "I have the Trump Queen but **NO** side suit King"

Let's have a look at some examples:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ AK9652	♠ Q873	1♠	4♠
♥ 3	♥ AQ94	4NT	5♦
♦ A	♦ Q98	5♥	6♣
♣ AQ842	♣ KJ	7♠	Pass

The 5♦ response shows 1 or 4 Key Cards and 5♥ asks about the Q♠. Responder's 6♣ shows Q♠ AND the K♣, so opener can bid 7♠ with confidence.

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K9843	♠ 7652	1♠	4♠
♥ AK87	♥ 42	4NT	5♦
♦ A	♦ K96432	5♥	5♠
♣ KQ7	♣ A	Pass	

5♦ showed 1 or 4 Key Cards and opener bids 5♥, the suit over 5♦, to ask about the Trump Queen, Q♠. Responder denies Q♠ and signs off in 5♠ so the poor slam is avoided.

## 5NT Asking for Kings

A bid of 5NT (after an initial 4NT bid), asks for Kings but EXCLUDING the King of Trumps as that has already been spoken for with 4NT. One would only use 5NT if we had all 5 Key Cards as we are already committed to a small slam and are looking for a grand slam.

The responses are:

6♣ 0 side kings  
6♦ 1 side king  
6♥ 2 side kings  
6♠ 3 side kings

## Minor Suits

Err on the side of caution when using RKCB with the minors as a response will often commit you to the 6 level (unlike the majors you can't stop at the 5 level if partner bids 5♥ or 5♠). Make sure that if you use 4NT, you have enough key cards to warrant 6♣ or 6♦.