

Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) Standard (3014) variant*

NG34Bridge

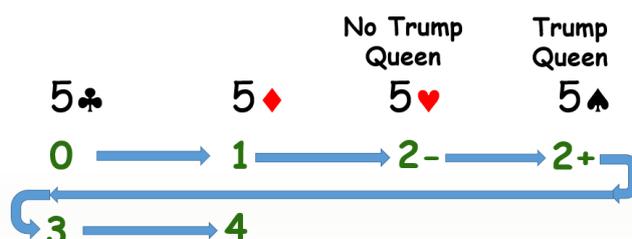
Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) is a refinement of ordinary Blackwood, and is based on **aces**, and the **king of trumps**. In addition, it enables the presence of the **trump queen** to be investigated, especially important when exploring the possibility of a grand slam.

RKCB treats the trump king as a fifth ace (collectively known as the five **Key Cards**), and creates space at the 5 level to either show the trump queen or to ask about its whereabouts.

Responses to 4NT (RKCB)

- 5♣ = 0-3 key cards
- 5♦ = 1-4 key cards
- 5♥ = 2-5 key cards & no trump queen
- 5♠ = 2-5 key cards & trump queen.

You may find it easier to remember the steps by visualising this diagram:



If the partnership is missing two or more key cards, the slam should be avoided. If the partnership is missing one key card and the trump queen, declarer should be very wary of bidding a slam, unless the combined trump holding is 10 cards or more, in which case it is very likely that the queen will drop (78% probability).

If the response to RKCB 4NT is 5♥ (2-5 key cards & no trump queen) or 5♠ (2-5 key cards & trump queen) then the RKCB bidder knows the whereabouts of the trump queen.

King Ask (Grand Slam Try)

Sometimes the 4NT bidder possesses the trump queen and knows that the partnership holds all five key cards including the trump king, so can bid 5NT to ask about partner's holding in side suit kings. This may help determine whether the grand slam should be in a suit or in the higher scoring 7NT contract.

There are two alternative methods of showing side suit kings:

1: Traditional Method: asking how many side suit kings are held:

6♣ = 0; 6♦ = 1; 6♥ = 2; 6♠ = 3

2: Modern (recommended) Method: the specific side suit king held (with more than one, bid the cheapest)

Think before you bid RKCB

Don't use Blackwood if a negative response may take you above the safety level.

For example:

- if hearts are agreed as trumps, and you have one key card (so you need three key cards from partner for slam), then a 5♠ reply showing two key cards is a disaster. You are forced to bid 6♥.
- if clubs are agreed as trumps, and you need two key cards from partner for slam, then a 5♦ reply showing only one key card is a disaster. You are forced to bid 6♣.
- if diamonds are agreed as trumps, and you need three key cards from partner for slam, then after a 5♥ reply showing only two key cards you are forced to bid 6♦.

Trump Queen Asking bid (advanced topic)

If after the response to RKCB the whereabouts of the trump queen is unknown (responder has bid 5♣ or 5♦), then sometimes there is bidding space available for the RKCB bidder to make a conventional bid asking whether partner holds the trump queen (called the Trump Queen Asking Bid), and to then bid or stay out of the slam depending on partner's response. If the trump queen is missing as well as one of the five key cards then the RKCB bidder should sign off at the 5 level.

[Click here for information on the Trump Queen Asking Bid.](#)

** There is an alternative version of RKCB where the meanings of the 5♣ and 5♦ responses are reversed. To distinguish between them the version shown here was originally known as the 0314 version, now more commonly known as the 'Thirty Forty One' version because it is easier to say in conversation. The alternative version is now known as the '1430' version, spoken as "Fourteen Thirty".*