Gerber Convention
(Ace Asking)

Some partnerships use Gerber if the final contract is likely to be in No Trumps.

If partner opens 1NT or 2NT and responder's hand suggests that the final contract should be in No Trumps (i.e. balanced) then a bid of 4NT is quantitative, inviting opener to pass, bid 6NT, or, if a grand slam is possible, bid 5NT.

Some partnerships prefer to use Gerber if the final contract is likely to be in 5NT or 6NT, especially if there is a risk that the opponents may have AK in a suit. One advantage over Blackwood is that there is no risk of confusion over the meaning of a 5NT bid, which might, if using Blackwood, be interpreted as a King asking bid when the bidder wishes to sign off in 5NT.

Note: A 4♣ bid is Gerber ONLY if it is a jump bid. 2NT - 3♣ - 3♥ - 4♣ is natural.

4♣ Responses: 4♦ = 0-4 aces   4♥ = 1 ace   4♠ = 2 aces   4NT = 3 aces.

If all four aces are held, the Gerber bidder can bid 5♣ to ask for Kings.

5♣ Responses: 5♦ = 0-4 kings   5♥ = 1 king   5♠ = 2 kings   5NT = 3 kings.

Note that after partner opens 1NT, a slam enquiring response of 4 (Gerber) should only be made when responder knows that the partnership has sufficient strength for a slam, i.e. at least 31 HCP, and responder just needs to know whether the partnership has sufficient first and second round controls to prevent the loss of two quick tricks. This means that responder needs at least 19 HCP, as opener may have only 12 HCP.

If responder has 17-18 HCP and a distributional hand with a strong long suit, he should make what is known as a slam try by making a 3 level jump bid in his long suit. This alerts partner to the fact that game is pretty certain, in either No Trumps (with a long minor) or in a major. A slam is possible if opener is maximum and has good support (3 + in a major or 4+ in a minor)

Examples:

Opener	Responder
1NT (12-14)	4♣

Responder's hand:

♠ K53
♥ A2
♦ K3
♣ KQJ1073

Adding partner's 12-14 HCP to his own 20 HCP, responder knows that his side has 32-34 HCP. A small slam in no-trumps is possible, but the Gerber 4♣ bid can check if partner holds 2 aces.

Opener	Responder
2NT (20-22)	4♣

Responder's hand:

♠ K3
♥ KQJ1098
♦ KT
♣ Q43

Responder is interested in 6♥ but doesn't want to bid it missing 2 aces. If partner shows all 4 aces, responder can bid 5♣ to ask for the club king, which would make 7 cold.

Opener	Responder
1NT (12-14)	2♣[1]
2♥[2]	4♣

[1] Stayman, asking for a 4-card major.
[2] Shows 4 hearts.

Responder's hand:

♠ KJ32
♥ KQJ2
♦ AJ82
♣ K

Gerber can also be used as a **jump rebid** after a Stayman sequence. Here, responder is interested in 6♥ but is missing 3 aces.

Opener	Responder
2♣[1]	2♦[2]
2NT (23-24)	4♣

[1] Strong, artificial.   [2] Waiting.

If a trump suit hasn't been identified yet, then 4♣ is Gerber after any natural no-trumps rebid.

Opener   Responder
2NT   3♣¹
3♦   4♣

¹ Stayman.   ² Denies a 4-card major.

Responder's hand:

♠ KJ32
♥ K1092
♦ void
♣ A10983

4♣ is NOT Gerber. It is natural because it was not a jump bid.

Opener   Responder
1NT   4♣

Responder's hand:

♠ K Q J
♥ K J 8
♦ Q J 5 2
♣ A Q 2

Responder has a balanced hand. He does not have a 4-card major so knows there is no point in looking for a major suit fit. He has 19 HCPs and therefore the partnership is potentially in the slam zone. (19+14=33 but 19+12=31).

Responder could bid 'stop' 4NT quantitative invitational raise BUT has only one ace. If partner has the other three aces, that's 12 HCPs swallowed up in just 3 tricks. If so he is not going to have the ♣K or ♦K and any slam would be relying on two finesses – very risky! If partner has just one ace, the opposition must have two and you are very unlikely to make a NT small slam of 12 tricks. What you would like is for partner to have two aces and two kings within his 12-14HCPs. (You need to be sure the opposition haven't both the ♦A and ♦K).

If opener responds 4♥, showing just one ace, you can escape to 4NT. If partner responds 4♠, showing two aces, you can bid 5♣, asking for kings. If partner responds 5♥ showing one king then you are missing an ace and a king, and can escape to 5NT. If partner responds 5♠ , showing two kings, you can safely bid 6NT.