

# Module 24 – Slam Bidding – Blackwood and Gerber Asking Conventions

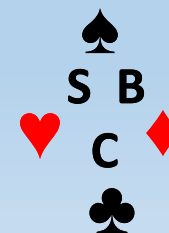
1. Blackwood Slam Convention
2. Examples
3. Gerber Slam Convention and Quantitative 4NT Bids
4. Playing 6 Hands

**K**keep  
**I**t  
**S**imple  
**S**tupid

Bridge Player: "Sorry Partner, I have never played this badly before!"  
Partner: "I didn't realize you have played before"



*This week's Paddy's Pearl*



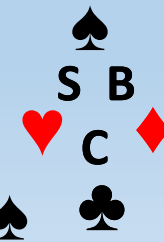


# Cautionary Issues about Slam Conventions

1. Slam Conventions are **NOT** for getting into Slams, they are **TO PREVENT** *you from getting into bad slams*
2. The key to Slam Bidding is *assessing the potential for slam* **BEFORE** you consider using Blackwood or Gerber. With experience eventually you will find **Cue bids** are valuable in this process but these are for later development of your skills.
3. **Blackwood.** This **uses 4NT as a conventional bid** with a special meaning and ASKS PARTNER ***“How many Aces do you have?”***. It should only be used when:
  - o *The partnership* have already agreed the trump suit
  - o You have enough points/distribution for making a small slam

## **Slam Conventions are dangerous as well as helpful**

- o You must be able to “live” with any response from partner  
e.g. It would be too late to go back if you find you are missing 2 Aces





# Blackwood – Ace Asking Slam Convention

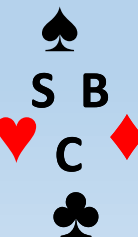
When a suit has been agreed 4NT asks partner “How many Aces do you have?”

Partner responds	5♣ (First step)	Shows no Aces, or all 4
	5♦ (Second step)	Shows ONE Ace
	5♥ (Third step)	Shows TWO Aces
	5♠ (Fourth step)	Shows THREE Aces

A 5♣ response does not cause confusion as the person asking usually has at least 1 Ace. The only exception is when partner has opened 2♣ and is very unlikely to have 0 Ace

If you have all the Aces you can investigate a Grand Slam by asking for Kings using 5NT:

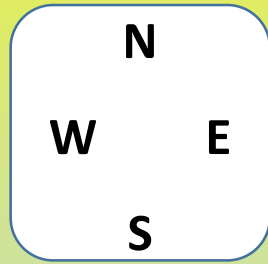
6♣ (First step)	Shows no Kings, or all 4
6♦ (Second step)	Shows ONE King
6♥ (Third step)	Shows TWO Kings
6♠ (Fourth step)	Shows THREE Kings





# Slam Bidding Using Blackwood - 1

♠ K2  
♥ AKQJ963  
♦ AKQ  
♣ 6



♠ AQ1076  
♥ 52  
♦ 1082  
♣ KJ8

2♣  
4NT  
6♥

2♠  
5♦  
Pass

East bids the strongest possible bid of 2♣, 23+HCPs  
West's response of 2♠ shows  $\geq 1.5$  QT, at least  
an Ace and a King

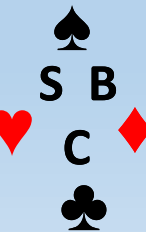
West is in control with such a strong hand and thinks

*“If partner has 2 Aces then I can make 13 tricks  
but if he has only 1 Ace it is probably the ♠A and  
I can make 12 tricks in hearts. Even if it is ♣A his  
King must be the ♣K and since the lead in hearts  
will be from North I will still make 12 tricks”*

So West bids 4NT and asks partner

*“How many Aces do you have?”*

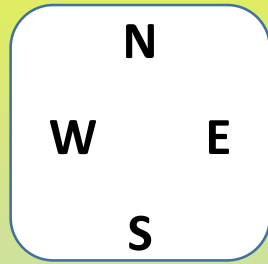
When E shows only 1 ace, West bids 6♥





# Slam Bidding Using Blackwood - 2

♠ A82  
♥ KQJ1064  
♦ AQ3  
♣ 5



♠ KQJ1043  
♥ A2  
♦ 765  
♣ A3

1♥  
4NT  
7NT

2♠  
5♥  
Pass

East's 2♠ response shows a good 6 card spade suit with at least 2 of the top 3 honours and an opening hand. West can count 6 top tricks in spades and if partner has ♥A he can count 6 hearts tricks and if he has the ♣A as well he can count on 13 tricks in NT

*So East asks for aces with 4NT*

West's response shows he has 2 Aces so **East bids 7NT**  
Had East bid 5♦ then West would have bid 6♠  
7NT is a safer contract as there is a chance of South Having a ruff on the lead if the contract had been 7♠ or 7♥

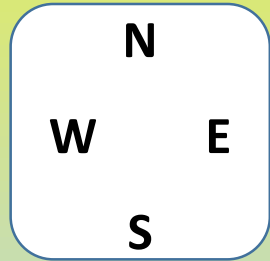




# A Health Warning about Slam Bidding

**Blackwood is the most abused convention in bridge?** Many people wheel out Blackwood as soon as they smell slam. They find out how many Aces they have but don't have a clue how many tricks they can make.

♠ QJ  
♥ A9876  
♦ K3  
♣ AK54



♠ 103  
♥ KQ1054  
♦ A876  
♣ 92

1♥  
4NT  
6♥

4♥  
5♦  
Pass

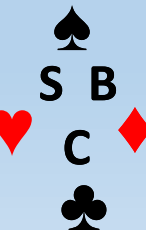
Declarer loses 2 spades to go 1 down.

West said *"I had to look for a slam with 17HCPs  
How could you bid 4♥ with only 9HCPs?"*

East said *"why bid 4NT when you don't know how  
many tricks you have?"*

East has a legitimate 4♥ bid

**West should never ask 4NT when he is missing  
2 top spade losers and he has no guarantee that  
Partner has a top spade.**





# Gerber – Ace Asking Slam Convention

Blackwood is not the only Ace Asking Convention. More common today is Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) but that is for more advanced play. More important *is GERBER which uses 4♣ to ask for Aces.*

I suggest you use **BLACKWOOD** as the normal Ace asking Convention but *GERBER when only NT has been bid* as this allows 4NT to be used for a natural bid e.g. 1NT - 4♣.

The 4♣ bid is Gerber asking for Aces. The responses are

Partner responds	4♦	(First step)	Shows no Aces, or all 4
	4♥	(Second step)	Shows ONE Ace
	4♠	(Third step)	Shows TWO Aces
	4NT	(Fourth step)	Shows THREE Aces

This allows 4NT bid (19/20HCPs and balanced hand) over 1NT to be a quantitative bid asking opener to bid 6NT if they have a maximum opening hand i.e. guaranteed >32HCPs





# How do we know if a bid is Gerber or Blackwood?

Gerber is only used in NT Auctions where no suit has been agreed (not otherwise!!)  
*e.g. 19/20HCPs quantitative bids or strongly distributional strong single suited hands*

			Both of these Gerber 4♣ bids	♠KQJ976532
	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	East will have a hand like that shown,	♥KQ
<b>Ex1</b>	1NT	4♣	where all responder needs to know is	♦6
		<b>OR</b>	how many aces opener has	♣2
<b>Ex2</b>	2NT	4♣	<i>(But these type of hands are not often!!)</i>	

## Gerber. Quantitative 4NT or Blackwood?

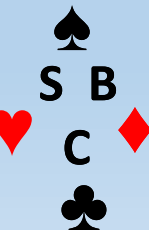
<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
1NT	4♠	1♥	3NT	1♥	2♠	2♠	3♠
		4NT		3♠	4♣	4♦	4♥
				4NT		4NT	

**Gerber**, Asking for Aces  
 East will decide the contract

Not Blackwood, no suit agreed. **Quantitative**  
 Asking for 6NT if opener is maximum

**Blackwood**, spades have been agreed, 4♣ is a **Cue Bid** showing ♣A

Blackwood, spades agreed  
 So west asking for Aces after Cue bids have shown  
 ♦A and ♥A respectively





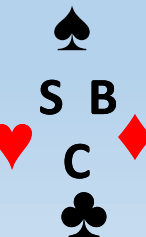
# Playing Hands for Module 24

Bridge Player: "Sorry Partner, I have never played this badly before!"  
Partner: "I didn't realize you have played before"



**K**keep  
**I**t  
**S**imple  
**S**tupid

*This week's Paddy's Pearl*





Dealer: North

Vulnerability:

♠ K98652

♥ AK

♦ KQJ3 16pts

♣ 9

♠ J4

♥ Q1097

♦ A732

♣ J76

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ -

♥ J6432 5pts

♦ 10964

♣ A852

♠ AQ1073

♥ 85

♦ 8 11pts

♣ KQ1043

**Bidding:** After partner's 4 spade bid N only needs two aces to expect a small slam in spades. His partner's 5♦, showing only 1 Ace is a big disappointment and he can still bid 5♠ knowing he only has 2 losing tricks (Aces)

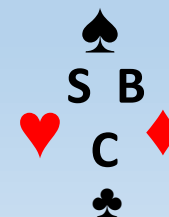
**Lead:** ♦10 (top of an internal sequence)

**Play:** 11 tricks easily made losing only ♦A and ♣A

Bidding

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
1♠	p	4♠	p
4NT	p	5♦	p
5♠	All Pass		

Deal 24.1





Dealer: East

Vulnerability:

♠ 4  
♥ 532 **6pts**

♦ KQ108

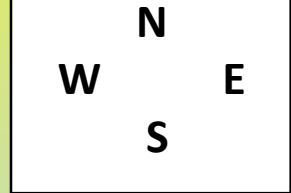
♣ J8643

♠ K86

♥ KQJ98

♦ A964

♣ 7



♠ AQ1053

♥ A1074

♦ 53 **16pts**

♣ AQ

♠ J972

♥ 6

♦ J72 **5pts**

♣ K10952

**Bidding:** After Opening and jump supporting responder's hearts

West with spade support and a singleton club considers a small slam in hearts may be on, so bids Blackwood and although 5♠ shows that they have all the Aces west realises that they must have Kings missing or East would have had a stronger opener than 1♠, so bids 6♥

**Lead:** ♦K (top of a sequence)

**Play:** There is an inevitable diamond loser BUT declarer must immediately remove trump and ruff a spade in West in order to establish that suit in East.

12 tricks should make with 4♠, 3♥, 1♦, 1♣ and 2 ruffs in West( a club and a spade) and 1 in East (a diamond)

Bidding

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
	1♠	p	2♥
p	4♥	p	4NT
p	5♠	p	6♥

Deal 24.2





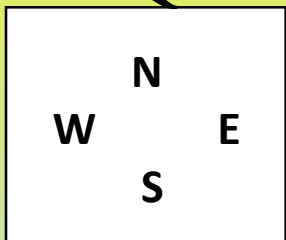
Dealer: South  
Vulnerability:

♠ KQ3  
♥ A1052  
♦ Q93  
♣ AKQ

20pts

1pts

♠ 852  
♥ 876  
♦ J872  
♣ 543



♠ 10974  
♥ J94  
♦ A64  
♣ 962

5pts

♠ AJ6  
♥ KQ3  
♦ K106  
♣ J1087

14pts

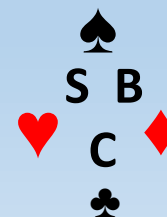
<u>Bidding</u>			
<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
4NT	p	1NT 6NT	p All Pass

**Bidding:** 4NT is not Blackwood *as no suit has been agreed.*

It is a Quantitative 4NT showing 19/20HCPs and a balanced hand, asking opener to bid 6NT if she has a maximum 1NT, *which she has so bid small slam*

**Lead:** ♦2, 4<sup>th</sup> highest but against 6NT it is only a “safe” lead hoping to find something in partner’s hand. Had East been in the lead she should lead ♦A in the hope that partner may have the ♦K. West would indicate that she had it by playing a high diamond which is a signal saying: *“continue the suit please”*

**Play:** 12 tricks makes easily losing only ♦A, though you must keep an entry in South such that you can get the ♣J after taking the AKQ in North.





Dealer: West

Vulnerability:

♠ 1093

♥ Q65

♦ K982

♣ Q92

7pts

♠ J75

♥ AJ84

♦ AQ5

♣ 1086

12pts

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ AKQ642

♥ K3

♦ 6

♣ AK73

19pts

♠ 8

♥ 10972

♦ J10743

♣ J54

2pts

Bidding

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
p	4♣	p	1NT
p	6♠	All Pass	4♠

Deal 24.4

**Bidding:** 4♣ is Gerber over 1NT, asking for Aces, as no suit has been agreed.

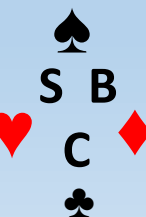
3 Steps (4♠) shows 2 Aces

East now bids 6♠ his suit to play knowing that West has only 4-6HCPs outside the Aces and there is likely to be a club loser and there is no way of finding out if partner has ♣Q which may allow 7♠ to be made **6♠ is safer than 6NT** as it guards against the very unlikely chance that South could have a ruff on the lead

**Lead:** ♣2. Small card indicates a probable minor honour i.e. Q or J as one is unlikely to lead from an Ace or a King

**Play:** After winning with the ♣A and taking out trump, 12 tricks makes only losing a club

**NB** If W bid 4♦ E would bid 4♠ and if 4♥ bid then E would bid 6♠ knowing a heart lead would be towards his K in case the ♥A had been missing.



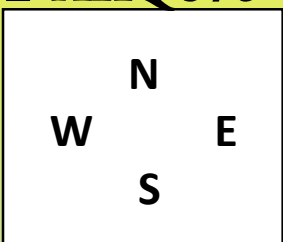


Dealer: North

Vulnerability:

♠ 86  
♥ 95  
♦ AK3 **11pts**  
♣ AKQ876

♠ Q10742  
♥ 83  
♦ QJ1052 **7pts**  
♣ 10



♠ KJ953  
♥ Q1064  
♦ 764  
♣ 9 **8pts**

♠ A  
♥ AKJ72  
♦ 98 **14pts**  
♣ J5432

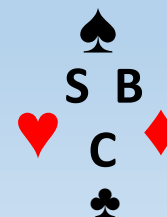
<u>Bidding</u>			
<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
1♣	p	1♥	p
3♣	p	4NT	p
5♥	p	5NT	p
6♥	p	7♣	All Pass

Deal 24.5

**Bidding:** After openers jump bid of 3♣ shows a very good solid club suit and >16HCPs South bids Blackwood (4NT) is also agreeing clubs as trump and knowing that they have only 1 King missing knows that he doesn't have a losing ♦ as if N has ♠K the second diamond can be discarded.

**Lead:** ♠5 (low from an honour)

**Play:** 13 tricks easily made.





Dealer: East

Vulnerability:

♠ 8642

♥ KQ54

♦ J86 7pts

♣ 105

♠ K3

♥ A10986

♦ A3

♣ J832

12pts

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A75

♥ 7

♦ KQ2 18pts

♣ AKQ964

♠ QJ109

♥ J32

♦ 109754 6pts

♣ 7

**Bidding:** With West having agreed clubs with her 4♣ bid and having opened East is interested in a small slam as she has only 4/5 losing tricks. Finding that they have All the Aces she is comfortable in bidding 6♣

**Lead:** ♥K top of a sequence.

**Play:** E/W can make 13 tricks after immediately taking out clubs after taking the ♥A.

Bidding

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
			1♥
p	3♣	p	4♣
p	4NT	p	5♥
p	6♣	All Pass	

Deal 24.6

