

GERBER

A 4♣ bid is sometimes used to inquire about aces and kings:

1) A 4♣ bid in response to any notrump opening or notrump overcall:

Opener	Responder
3NT	4♣ - Gerber

2) A 4♣ bid immediately following a 2♦ response to Stayman:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	4♣ - Gerber

3) A 4♣ bid immediately following a 3♦ rebid by a Stayman bidder, when opener has shown a major suit (or both majors):

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2NT/3♣	3♦ - artificial, forcing
Any	4♣ - Gerber

The 2NT and 3♣ responses show both majors. See section 5-2, Strong One Notrump Opening, for an explanation of the 3♦ bid. An immediate 4♣ bid over 2♥ or 2♠ would be a splinter bid, so responder must get to Gerber in this manner.

4) A jump to 4♣ over any 2NT rebid or response (including Omnibus, section 3-10), even if clubs have been bid.

Except for 1) and 3) above, a non-jump 4♣ bid is not Gerber. The reason is that a natural 4♣ bid is too valuable to give up, even when clubs have not been bid previously. When 4♣ is not Gerber, it is still possible to ask for aces by using Super Gerber. See section 6-10.

Gerber is not used opposite a 1NT rebid or response:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT
4♣ is a splinter bid (see section 4-4)	

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	4♣ - splinter (see section 4-5)

Gerber is not used after a jump takeout of a 1NT opening, because responder's later bid of 4NT is Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB):

Opener	Responder
1NT	3 ♣
3NT	4 ♣ - natural
4NT	- RKCB

Replies to Gerber

Opener	Responder
1NT	4 ♣ - Gerber
4♦	- 0 or 3 aces
4♥	- 1 or 4 aces
4♠	- 2 aces, 0-2 kings
4NT	- 2 aces, 3-4 kings

If an opponent interferes by bidding over 4♣, the DOPI principle applies: Double shows 0 or 3 aces, pass shows 1 or 4 aces, next rank up 2 aces and 0-2 kings, and next rank with 2 aces and 3-4 kings.

If an opponent doubles the 4♣ bid, a pass shows 0 or 3 aces, redouble shows 1 or 4 aces, 4♦ shows 2 aces with 0-2 kings, 4♥ shows two aces with 3-4 kings.

If an opponent doubles a reply Gerber, a pass implies no first or second round control of the suit, while a redouble confirms control. If he knows where he is going, the asker is free to ignore the double and continue the auction, whether or not he has control of the doubled suit:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	4 ♣	Pass
4♥	Dbl	Pass - no heart control	
		Rdbl - 1st or 2nd round control	
		5 ♣ - asking about kings	

North's pass of the double might be based on a hand such as ♠A3 ♥987 ♦KQJ10876 ♣A, with West possibly holding ♥AK or even ♥AKQ. South should bid 4NT with the king of hearts, redouble with the ace. If South bids 4NT, North can bid 6NT. If she redoubles, North will probably bid a safer 6♦. With no first or second round heart control herself, South bids the next higher ranking suit, after which North will place the contract.

To Sign Off

The Gerber bidder signs off by bidding notrump or a previously bid suit (excluding artificial bids, of course).

To Ask for Kings

The 4♣ bidder bids five of the lowest ranking unbid suit to ask for kings. A suit that has been bid artificially is considered "unbid."

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
2NT	4♣
4♠	4NT/5♣/5♦ are all signoffs
5♥	asks about kings

The king request does *not* guarantee that all aces are held by the partnership.

King Replies

Kings are shown as follows if the Gerber reply did not show the number of kings.

Opener	Responder
1NT	4♣
4♦	5♣ - asking about kings
5♦	- 0 or 4 kings
5♥	- king of hearts, or the other three
5♠	- king of spades, or the other three
5NT	- king of diamonds, or the other three
6♣	- king of clubs, or the other three

Note that a notrump reply shows the king above the asking suit or the other three kings.

If the ace reply showed 0-2 kings, replier clarifies as follows:

- 6♦ - no kings
- 6♥ - two kings, same color
- 6♠ - two kings, same rank (major or minor)
- 6NT - two kings, pointed or rounded suits

Mnemonic aid: CRASH (Color, RAnk, SHape). The pointed suits are spades-diamonds, rounded are hearts-clubs.

If the ace reply showed 3-4 kings, replier clarifies as follows:

- 6♦ - four kings
- 6♥ - three kings, not the king of hearts
- 6♠ - three kings, not the king of spades
- 6NT - three kings, not the king of diamonds
- 7♣ - three kings, not the king of clubs

If the questioner cannot risk the high contracts that the king replies may lead to, then she must not ask about kings.

Quick Trick Replies

If there is no suit that has been bid naturally, kings are not shown. Instead, the replier tells how many quick tricks can be run from his hand, excluding aces. In doing this he assumes that the ace of a suit will be played *first*, and that the partnership has all the aces (a prerequisite for the trick-asking bid). With a doubleton KQ replier counts just one playing trick (ace played first). The reason for this is that partner may have a doubleton ace. With KQx he counts two playing tricks, AKQJ as three, etc. The reason that aces are not counted is that the questioner already has this information.

Opener	Responder
1NT	4♣
4♥	5♣
5♦ - ♠AQJ10 ♥QJ9 ♦QJ10 ♣QJ10	
6♣ - ♠KQJ10 ♥AJ3 ♦K54 ♣QJ8	

The 5♦ bid shows no quick tricks, 6♣ shows four.

The reason for showing tricks instead of kings when no suit has been bid naturally is that the Gerber bid in such a case is usually based on a long solid or semi-solid suit: ♠32 ♥AK108763 ♦A6 ♣A6 or ♠A4 ♥KQ96542 ♦65 ♣A4. When a Gerber reply shows that the partnership has all the aces, these hands want to know how many tricks can be run off the top. That makes a KQJx holding just as good as three kings. The "quick trick" reply provides this information.

When the semi-solid suit is headed by AQ, it is better to find a bidding sequence that shows the suit prior to using RKCB, enabling the asker to find out about the king of that suit.

The Jump to 5NT

If the Gerber bidder jumps to 5NT after partner's reply, that is the Grand Slam Force (see section 6-4). If two or more suits have been named, the last naturally-bid suit is assumed to be the key suit:

Opener	Responder
1♦	2♣
2NT	4♣
4♠	5NT - Grand Slam Force

Responder is asking if opener has two of the top three honors in clubs, with which opener must bid 7♣.

A non-jump 5NT bid is a signoff.