

THE TWO CLUB OPENING

An opening 2♣ bid is artificial, showing a strong two bid sort of hand or a notrump hand of 23 HCP or more.

The 2♣ opening promises at least four defensive tricks. Open 1♠ (or 4♦, if playing NAMYATS) with ♠KQJ98632 ♥AKQ ♦4 ♣3. If you open 2♣ and partner doubles a high level preemptive bid by an opponent, perhaps thinking you have better defense, you won't know whether to pass or bid. Besides, 1♠ is not going to be passed out.

A hand with four losers in quick tricks should not open 2♣ if there is another potential loser and the hand may not play in a major. With ♠QJ1092 ♥KQ ♦AKQ3 ♣A4 open 1♠, even at matchpoints. There are four quick losers, the fourth diamond may be a loser, and if partner insists on a diamond contract you could go down in game even if he has an ace.

When the opening is based on a minor suit, opener should have no more than three losers unless the hand is likely to take nine tricks at notrump. Open 1♣ with ♠A532 ♥ void ♦KJ ♣AKQ9764, a hand that has too many losers for a 2♣ opening and is unlikely to play in notrump. But with ♠42 ♥A5 ♦A4 ♣AKQ7653 there is a good chance that the hand will make 3NT opposite a bust, so a 2♣ opening is okay. Don't open 3NT with that spade weakness and no holding such as Kx in a red suit to protect.

Control Responses

Counting a king as one control, an ace as two controls, we use the following scheme for showing controls.

- 2♦ - 0 or 1 (king) control
- 2♥ - 1 ace or two kings (2 controls)
- 2♠ - AK in the same suit
- 2NT - AK in different suits, or three kings
- 3♣ - 4 controls (2 aces, or 1 ace and 2 kings)
- 3♦ - 5 controls or more
- 3NT - 4 kings (once in a lifetime)

After the initial response, bidding proceeds naturally, except that opener's rebid of 2♥ over 2♦ is the Kokish Relay (see below). The partnership may optionally use a jump rebid in a suit by opener to locate controls (see below).

Higher Responses in a Suit

-- 3♥ or 3♠ shows a seven-card suit headed by the ace or king, or both, with or without the queen, and no ace or king outside. Opener can determine the exact nature of the suit by using Roman Key Card Blackwood.

-- A jump to the four level in any suit shows a solid suit headed by AKQJ, at least six long. AKQ10 is okay with seven cards. It denies an outside ace or king, and requires a balanced hand (i.e., 6-3-2-2 or 7-2-2-2 distribution). A passed hand may make this jump with a semi-solid (KQJ10, AQJ10) six-card suit. KQJ9 or AQJ9 is okay with seven cards (i.e., a fairly guaranteed one-loser suit).

Opener takes charge. A 4NT or other game bid by opener is a natural signoff, since he knows responder's hand exactly. For instance, after a 4♠ response by an unpassed hand he would bid 4NT with ♠3 ♥KQJ ♦AKQJ987 ♣KQ in a matchpoint game. He would have to pass 4♠ if responder is a passed hand, since the spade suit is not solid in that case.

Rebids by Opener

With a suit-based opening, opener rebids in his main suit, bidding the higher ranking suit first when holding two suits of equal length. With a notrump type hand, he rebids the minimum number of notrump with 23-24 HCP. After a 2♦ response, opener bids 2♥ (Kokish Relay) with a 25+ HCP notrump hand. After a 2♠ response, opener bids 2NT. There is no need to jump with 25+, since this rebid is forcing.

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2NT - 23-24 HCP, not forcing	
2♥ - Kokish Relay, 25+ HCP notrump hand or a heart suit	
3NT - a signoff, usually based on a long solid minor	

The 2♥ relay forces responder to bid 2♠ as a mark-time bid. If opener then bids 2NT, showing 25+ HCP, that is forcing. If he bids 3♥, that constitutes a "rebid" of the heart suit, and responder may pass with a completely worthless hand. If he bids three of any other suit (forcing), he is showing a second suit with hearts the primary suit.

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♥	2♠ - forced by the Kokish Convention
3♣/3♦/3♠ - hearts and a second suit	
3♥ - a "rebid" of the heart suit, not quite forcing	

Opener has a balanced hand, no singleton or void, if he would open Marvin 2♥ (strong with hearts or weak with spades) with an unbalanced hand. See section 6-3, Marvin Two Hearts. Similarly:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♠	2NT
3♥	

Opener must have a 5-4-2-2 hand if an unbalanced hand is opened with 2♦ (weak with hearts or strong with spades) when the primary suit is spades. See section 6-2, Marvin Two Diamonds. If a

2♦ opening is being used for some other purpose, however, then opener could have an unbalanced hand in this auction.

If opener rebids 2NT, either immediately or after a 2♥ relay, the bidding proceeds in accordance with section 5-4, Two Notrump Opening, which is completely applicable to this 2NT rebid.

Jump Rebid in a Suit by Opener (Optional)

After a control response at the two level, a jump rebid in a suit by opener is conventional, asking for details about responder's controls (if any). The jump is based on a solid suit headed by AKQ or KQJ, possibly even QJ10. The jump is ambiguous, showing one of two suits. With spades or diamonds (pointed suits), opener jumps in the cheaper suit. With hearts or clubs (rounded suits), opener also jumps in the cheaper suit. Thereafter, when opener bids one of the two possible suits, or notrump, the auction is over.

After the jump, responder starts revealing his high cards. A follow-up bid by opener in a known non-suit is a further "query" concerning responder's hand. Queries can be repeated (space permitting) many times to ask for further information. A bid in the ranking denomination is a negative response to a query. If notrump is not the ranking denomination, a notrump response shows a positive response in the ranking suit. Examples follow.

— After a 2♦ response (0 or 1 control), opener jumps to 3♥ with a heart *or* a club suit. With a spade *or* a diamond suit he jumps to 3♠. Over 3♥, responder bids 3♠ with no king, 3NT with the spade king, or bids a king suit at the four level with a different king. Over 3♠ responder bids 3NT with no king, otherwise bids the suit with the king.

When responder has shown a king, a query by opener asks for the number of additional tricks, if any, that responder has in the king suit, assuming opener's ace is played first. For instance, KQx is one additional trick, KQJx is two, etc. Lacking the x, count one trick less because opener is likely to have only Ax in the suit.

Additional tricks are shown by step bidding, first step is zero, second step 1, etc., including both suits and notrump.

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
3♠	4♣ - king of clubs
4♥?	4♠ - no additional trick in clubs
	4NT - one additional trick (KQx)
	5♣ - two additional tricks (KQJx)
	5♦ - three additional tricks (KQJ9x)
	5♥ - four or more additional (KQ10xxx or better)

The 3♠ rebid showed a hand with solid spades or solid clubs. When opener bids one of those suits, or bids notrump, the auction is over. To inquire further, opener must skip over either of those suits.

— After a 2♥ response (two controls, an ace or two kings), opener jumps to 3♠ with spades *or* diamonds, and jumps to 4♣ with clubs *or* hearts. Responder bids the ranking denomination (notrump over 3♠, 4♦ over 4♣) with no ace. Otherwise he bids the suit with the ace, but with an ace in the ranking suit he bids notrump. Ergo, with the diamond ace he bids 4NT over 4♣, since 4♦ would deny an ace..

When responder has shown an ace, opener's query asks how many extra tricks the suit will provide, assuming Kx in opener's hand. The step responses show none (Ax or AQ), one (AQx), two (AQJx), etc.)

When responder has denied an ace, opener's query asks where the two kings are. Responder shows the kings using the CRaSh method, bidding the ranking denomination (i.e., including notrump) with kings of the same Color, next step with kings of the same Rank (major or minor), and the third step with kings of the same SHape (spades-diamonds or hearts-clubs). If opener has a king, the location of responder's kings is instantly known. If he doesn't have a king it will take two queries to find responder's kings, the first asking for the cheaper king, and the second asking for the other king.

— After a 2♠ response (AK in the same suit), responder bids the suit when opener jumps in diamonds (diamonds or hearts) or clubs (hearts or clubs). A query then asks for additional tricks in the suit. The step responses show none (no queen), one (AKQ), two (AKQJ), etc.

— After a 2NT response (ace and king in separate suits, or three kings), opener jumps in diamonds or clubs and responder bids the ranking denomination with no ace, and bids notrump with an ace in the ranking suit. A query then asks for the location of the king. If responder denies an ace, holding three kings, a query asks for the suit lacking a king. Further queries TBD.

— After a 3♣ response (two aces or an ace and two kings), opener jumps in diamonds or hearts and responder bids the ranking suit to deny the kings. With kings, responder bids the suit with the ace, bidding notrump with the ace of the ranking suit. A query then asks for the location of the kings using the CRaSH method. After kings are denied, a query asks for the location of the two aces using the CRaSH method. Further queries TBD.

— After a 3♦ response (two aces and a king or one ace and three kings), responder bids the ranking denomination to signify two aces. With one ace she bids the suit with the ace, bidding notrump to show the ace of the ranking denomination. A query then asks for the suit lacking a king (opener having no king). After two aces are shown by a bid in the ranking denomination, opener's query asks for the location of the two aces (shown with the CRaSH method) and a further query asks for the location of the king.

Responder's Rebids Other Than Kokish

--After a 2♦ response, over opener's 2♠ rebid 2NT is the "second negative." If the rebid is 3♣, 3♦ is the second negative, and if the rebid is 3♦, 3NT is the second negative. The second negatives only deny the ability to bid a new suit or to raise. They are not necessarily based on a

worthless hand, and could include a king. A five-card suit headed by the king is enough for a natural new suit bid, or perhaps a six-card suit headed by the queen.

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♠	2NT - second negative
	3♣/3♦/3♥ - natural

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
3♦	3♥/3♠/4♣ - natural
	3NT - second negative

When opener rebids in a suit, do not raise without adequate trump support, which in this case is Qx, xxx, or better. With trump support and a fair hand, raise a major immediately. Delayed support of opener's major suit tends to imply trump support that is less than "adequate." With trump support for minor, responder may bid a good five-card or longer suit rather than raise.

The Trump Ask (optional)

After the immediate raise of a major, opener's Roman Key Card Blackwood bid of 4NT asks for key cards, as described in Section 6-6, Blackwood. However, the "queen ask" becomes a trump ask, asking for the ace, king, or queen, with five small treated as a queen. The ranking denomination (ie., including notrump) says "none of these." In that case opener's side suit bid asks about trump length, and responder's next higher suit bid says xxx, two higher, xxxx.

In response to the trump ask, responder shows the ace, king, or queen (collectively identified here as "H") by skipping over the ranking denomination to bid the next-higher. Opener's side suit bid then asks length, and responder's bid of the next higher denomination shows Hx, next Hxx, next Hxxx. In the rare case that he has AQ or KQ, the queen is treated as three small, so AQ is treated as Axxx.

Opener's rebid of 5NT is standard, saying that all key cards are held and asking for the cheapest (or most valuable) king in responder's hand.

A minor suit raise shows the same minimum support, but bidding a good five-card or longer major is preferable to raising. After an immediate raise, the trump ask after RKCB is as described above.

In the absence of an immediate raise of opener's suit, the queen ask is standard. If responder then shows a major suit queen, opener will know it's a singleton.

Jump Rebids by Responder

If the response to 2♣ was 2♦, an immediate jump raise shows four or more trumps, no ace or king, no outside void or singleton:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♠	4♠

Responder has ♠Q872 ♥654 ♦98 ♣J873. The immediate jump raise warns opener not to look for anything other than good trumps.

Responder's jump in a new suit shows a one-loser suit headed by the KQ

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
2♠	4♣/4♦/4♥ - KQJ9xxx or better, no spade support.

– When the response shows two or more controls, the bidding proceeds with no jumps by responder..

When the Opponents Intervene

If RHO overcalls a 2♣ bid with a natural bid, a double by responder shows a bust hand with length in the opposing suit. It warns partner not to go on unless he has game in his own hand. A pass is forcing. Natural bidding otherwise, with responder's jump raise to game having the usual meaning.

If RHO doubles 2♣ to show clubs, responder must pass with no club stopper, even with a good hand. This is in accordance with the general policy for action when an artificial bid gets doubled. See section 1-2-10, General Bidding Principles. Controls are not shown

South	West	North
2♣	Dbl	Pass - probably no club stopper, may be quite strong
		2♦ - single club stopper, at least one control
		2♥/2♠ - natural, single club stopper
		Rdbl - double club stopper

QJx (Qxx, Q10x, etc.) counts as a single stopper only, no matter how many cards in the suit. AJx and KJx count as double stoppers. If holding a club stopper and zero controls (e.g., ♣QJx), pass.

If RHO makes an artificial call that shows two suits, the principles of section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions, apply. In this example the double of 2♣ shows both majors:

South	West	North
2♣	Dbl	Pass - no good call available
		Rdbl - clubs stopped
		2♦/3♣ - positive suit response, natural, good suit
		2♥/2♠ - Unusual Over Unusual, showing a mediocre minor
		2NT - both majors stopped

The 2♥, 2♠, 3♣, and 3♦ bids are in accordance with the principles of section 12-7: A 2♥ bid is a positive response in clubs and a 2♠ bid is a positive response in diamonds. Both responses deny a strong suit (two of the top three honors, five or more cards). With a good suit the right response is a natural 2♦ or 3♣.

A 2♣ opener cannot make a takeout double when balancing::

South	West	North	East
2♣	2♠	Pass	Pass
		Dbl - business	
		2NT - 23-24 HCP notrump hand	
		3♣/3♦/3♥ - forcing	

North's pass does not necessarily deny a good hand, since it is forcing. She could have, for instance: ♠752 ♥AQ3 ♦K84 ♣9832. South's double of 2♠ is probably exposing a psych by West. If South later bids spades, he means it to play. If he wants to make a takeout call, he has to bid 3♠ over 2♠. With a spade game in hand, he can bid 4♠.

If the spade overcall is absolutely known not to be a psych (considering who the bidder is), and both partners know that, then a double can be played as takeout.

MARVIN TWO DIAMONDS

An opening of 2♦ is a three-way bid:

- A notrump hand with 21-22 HCP and a five-card suit, or
- A weak two bid in hearts, or
- A strong two bid in spades, usually unbalanced, game forcing

The strong two bid in spades may be based on a balanced hand if 1) opener wants to be in game for sure; 2) opener has one or more tenaces on the side and wants to make sure he will play the hand; and 3) opener has the sort of hand that doesn't need to know how many controls partner has. If he wants that information, he must open 2♣. With a 21-22 HCP hand that lacks a five-card suit, the opening is 2NT.

Responses

Responder assumes that partner has a weak two bid in hearts, and bids according to section 7-2, Weak Two Bids. If he would have passed a weak two bid opening in hearts, he now *bids* 2♥. One drawback of this convention is that responder cannot raise hearts preemptively, because opener may not have a weak two bid. Other than that, responder makes his normal response to a weak two bid if he has too much to bid 2♥.

If RHO bids or doubles, responder usually assumes the opening was based on a weak two bid and bids, doubles, redoubles, or passes accordingly (but 2♥ over a double is a "positive response" in hearts). Even if RHO bids spades, however, responder cannot raise hearts preemptively. Opener could have a notrump hand, or even a strong two bid in spades if RHO is lying to create confusion.

Rebids by Opener

With a 21-22 HCP notrump hand, opener rebids in notrump. In the unlikely event that responder has made a positive response to a weak two bid type opening (i.e., has bid 2♠, 2NT, 3♣, or 3♦), opener must jump in notrump in order to show the 21-22 HCP notrump type hand. A 3NT rebid over 2NT shows a weak two bid sort of hand with a solid heart suit. A 3NT rebid over a three-level new suit bid shows some support for responder's suit (see section 7-2, Weak Two Bids). Likewise, a 2NT rebid over a 2♠ response shows a weak two bid with some spade support.

With a weak two bid in hearts, opener passes a 2♥ response. After any other response, opener rebids in accordance with section 7-2, Weak Two Bids. He must not otherwise bid again, not even in a competitive way with an extra good weak two bid:

South	West	North	East
2♦	Pass	2♥	3♣
3♥ - strong two bid in spades, heart suit too			
Dbf - optional double, 21-22 HCP notrump hand			
Pass - weak two bid			

With a strong two bid in spades, opener rebids in spades to show a one-suited hand, or (as with 3♥ above) shows a second suit:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♥
3♣	- spades and clubs

Opener has already shown a spade suit, so now shows a second suit.

Rebids by Responder

If opener verifies a weak two bid, responder proceeds in accordance with section 7-2, Weak Two Bids.

If opener shows a 21-22 HCP notrump hand by bidding 2NT, the bidding proceeds in accordance with section 5-4, Two Notrump Opening, except that a major suit response to Stayman shows a five-card suit:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♥
2NT	3♣
3♦	- no five-card major (five-card minor)
3♥/3♠	- five-card major

We can't play that 3♦ shows diamonds and 3NT shows clubs, because we must leave room for responder to show a five-card major.

If opener has had to jump in notrump to show a notrump hand because of partner's positive response, the partnership is committed to slam. A five-level suit bid over 4NT is a Boland response (see section 6-4), showing a biddable suit:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2NT
4NT	5 any - Boland response

If opener shows a strong two bid sort of hand, the bidding proceeds naturally, with a minimum notrump or minor suit rebid by responder showing a "second negative," usually a hand with no king and less than two queens.

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♥
3♣	3♦ - second negative

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♥
2♠	2NT - second negative

A minimum bid in a major suit is natural, however:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♥
3♦	3♥ - natural

Opener has spades and diamonds. Responder could have bid 3NT as a second negative with nothing worth showing.

There is no danger of opener's passing any notrump bid, because all these sequences show an unbalanced hand. Responder may therefore sometimes bid notrump with substantial values when he has no good suit to bid. If so, he must reveal these values later in the bidding (which may not be easy).

Responder must continue bidding until game is reached, no matter how weak his hand. One reason is that opener may have a 6-4 hand in an auction like this:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♥
2♠	2NT - second negative
3♣	

Opener "rebids" spades with game in hand, holding ♠AKQJ84 ♥A7 ♦4 ♣AKQ2, because he wants a chance to show this 6-4 holding. If responder has ♠6 ♥5432 ♦8743 ♣10843 and unilaterally passes 2♠ (or 3♣), she will miss a good club slam.

MARVIN TWO HEARTS

An opening bid of 2♥ is a three-way bid:

- A strong two bid in hearts, unbalanced, game forcing, or
- A weak two bid in spades, or
- A 25+ HCP notrump hand

If there is no short suit in a strong 2H hand, open with 2C. The reason is that controls are less important opposite an unbalanced hand because a control may be worthless opposite opener's void or singleton. Since responder can't tell whether a side king is valuable, the strong 2H might as well be game-forcing. The hand must therefore have close to game in hand.

A weak two bid in spades should be "disciplined," a good six-card suit and 1-1/2-2 defensive tricks. If a hand can have anywhere from zero to two defensive tricks partner cannot bid or double accurately.

With a notrump hand of 21-22 HCP, open 2NT. With 23-24 HCP, open 2C and rebid in notrump.

Responses

Responder assumes that partner has a weak two bid in spades, and proceeds accordingly. If she would have passed a weak two bid opening in spades, she now *bids* 2♠. One drawback of this convention is that responder cannot make a preemptive spade raise, because opener may not have a weak two bid hand.

If RHO bids or doubles, responder usually assumes the opening was based on a weak two bid and bids, doubles, redoubles, or passes accordingly (but 2♠ over a double is a "positive response" in spades, showing a good suit). Even if RHO bids hearts, however, responder cannot raise spades preemptively. Opener could have a notrump hand, or even a strong two bid in hearts if RHO is lying to create confusion.

Rebids by Opener

With a 23-24 HCP notrump hand, opener usually makes a minimum rebid in notrump. In the unlikely event that responder has made a positive response to a weak two bid type opening (i.e., has bid 2NT, 3♣, 3♦, or 3♥), opener must jump to 4NT in order to show the 23-24 HCP notrump type hand. A 3NT rebid after a three-level suit response shows a weak two bid with support for responder's suit. A 3NT rebid over a 2NT response shows a weak two bid sort of hand with a solid heart suit (see section 7-2, Weak Two Bids).

With a weak two bid in spades, opener passes a 2♠ response. After any other response, opener rebids in accordance with section 7-2, Weak Two Bids. For example:

Opener	Responder
2♥	3♦
3♠	3NT - offers a choice

The 3♠ rebid confirms a weak two bid in spades, whereupon responder offers opener a choice between a contract of 3NT or 4♠. If opener had diamond support, by the way, he would have bid 3NT instead of 3♠. With a 25+ HCP notrump hand (unlikely, when responder has the good hand that 3♦ indicates), he would jump to 4NT over the 3♦ response. Finally, with a strong two bid in hearts he would have gone to the four-level in hearts or a new suit on the second round (i.e., 4♥, 4♦, 4♣). The 4♦ bid would show a second suit and is not just a diamond raise.

With a strong two bid in hearts, opener rebids in hearts to show a one-suited hand, or shows a second suit:

Opener	Responder
2♥	2♠
3♣	- hearts and clubs

Opener has already shown a heart suit, so now shows a second suit.

Rebids by Responder

If opener shows a 23-24 HCP notrump hand by bidding 2NT, the bidding proceeds in accordance with section 5-4, Two Notrump Opening. If opener has had to rebid 4NT to show such a hand because of partner's positive response, the partnership is committed to slam. A five-level suit bid is a Boland response (see section 5-6):

Opener	Responder
2♥	2NT
4NT	5 any - Boland

If opener shows a strong two bid sort of hand, the bidding proceeds naturally, with a minimum minor suit rebid (or 3NT, whichever is cheaper) by responder showing a "second negative," usually denying a king or more than one queen.

Opener	Responder
2♥	2♠
3♣	3♦ - second negative
	3♠ - natural

Opener	Responder
2♥	2♠
3♦	3NT - second negative

There is no danger of 3NT's being passed, since opener is unbalanced.

GRAND SLAM FORCE

An "out of the blue" jump to 5NT is the Grand Slam Force (GSF), asking partner about his holding in the presumed trump suit. If there is doubt as to which suit that is, use the same rules as for Roman Key Card Blackwood, section 6-6.

Responses

	<u>7♣</u>	<u>6♠</u>	<u>6♥</u>	<u>6♦</u>	<u>6♣</u>
When holding,					
if the suit is spades:	AKQ	worse	AK	AQ,KQ	A or K
hearts:	AK	--	worse	AQ,KQ	A or K
diamonds:	AK	--	--	worse	AQ,KQ
clubs:	AK,KQ,AQ	--	--	--	worse

Lacking the high cards for any other response, make the "worse" bid. Note that AKQ drops out first, then "A or K."

Extra length may be counted as a queen. With two cards more than your nominal length in the suit, respond as if you had the queen. Sometimes one extra card is enough. If you have five to the king and are sure partner has five cards in the suit, you can show a KQ holding if your nominal length is four cards. You have only one extra card, but you can tell that is sufficient. Partner can now bid seven with Axxxx.

After a 6♣ bid showing "A or K," the 5NT bidder can ask for number of cards in the agreed suit by bidding 6♦:

Opener	Responder
1♠	5NT
6♣	6♦
6♥	- minimum length (four, in this case)
6♠	- one extra card (five, in this case)

The 6♣ bid shows ace or king of spades. After the 6♠ bid, showing five spades, responder can bid 7♠ with Kxxxx in trumps. Opener could not bid 6♦ (showing the queen, too) with Axxxx in spades, because responder could have just Kxxx. A 6♦ response without the queen would then require a six-card suit headed by the ace.

GSF can also be played as a non-jump bid in carefully defined circumstances. A non-jump 5NT bid should not always be GSF. When the partnership has bid three suits in a manner not strongly suggestive of slam (i.e., no strong jump takeout, no splinter bid, no opening strong two bid), and with no definite agreement on one of the suits, a non-jump 5NT bid should say merely, "Pick a slam."

ASKING BIDS

The following bids, and no others, are asking bids:

-- A new suit rebid by a 2♣ opener after he has jumped to set the trump suit:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
3♠	3NT
4♣/4♦/4♥ - asking bid	

-- A four-level minor suit response to an opening weak two or three bid in a major:

Opener	Responder
3♥	3♠ - natural, forcing
4♣/4♦ - asking bids	

-- A 5♦ response to a 5♣ opening:

Opener	Responder
5♣	5♦ - asking bid
5♥/5♠ - natural, signoff	

-- A takeout of an opening 4♥ or 4♠ to five of a new suit:

Opener	Responder
4♥	4♠ - natural
5♣/5♦ - asking bids	

Opener	Responder
4♠	5♣/5♦/5♥ - asking bids

-- A *rebid* by opener or responder that is one level higher than a splinter rebid:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
3♠ - splinter bid	
4♠ - asking bid	

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♥	Pass
3♦ - splinter bid			
4♦ - asking bid			

This principle applies to rebids only, not original responses:

Opener	Responder
1♠	4♣ - splinter bid 5♣ - natural preemptive bid

It does not apply after a notrump opening:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♦
2♥	3♠ - splinter bid 4♠ - Mild notrump raise (poor hearts) 4NT - stronger notrump raise

-- A jump rebid in a new suit at the five level:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♠
5♣/5♦/5♥	- asking bid

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♥
2♠	5♣/5♦/5♥ - asking bid 4♣/4♦/4♥ - splinter bid

Opener	Responder
1♥	5♣/5♦ - natural preemptive bid (not a rebid)

Opener	Responder
1NT	5♣ - Miller (see section 5-7) 5♦ - natural, signoff

-- A "new suit" bid by a NAMYATS opener, after responder has shown two or more key cards (see section 7-4).

Responses to Asking Bids

Responses to asking bids are as follows: (x) means "or more"

Response (Steps are suits only)	Holding in the Asked Suit
Minimum bid in notrump	Kx(x), KQ(x) (guarded king)
First step	Qx(x), xx(x) (no control)
Second step	x (singleton)
Third step	Ax(x) (first round only)
Fourth step (raise asking bid)	A, AK(x) (two-round control)
Fifth step	void

Generally you do not indicate a singleton or void with fewer than two cards in the probable trump suit. If you have discards for partner in a side suit, you can indicate a singleton or void when holding only a singleton trump.

Memory aid: Steps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 show no control, second round, first round, first *and* second, and void, respectively: 0, 2, 1, 1 and 2, void.

A repeat asking bid in the same suit asks for clarification of the first response. Rather than make a table of detailed responses based on the original response, let's just say that the first step shows a poor holding for the first response (e.g., xxx for no control, Axx(x) for first round only, short trumps to go with a short suit, etc.), second step better, third step better yet, etc.

BLACKWOOD

When no suit has been shown by either partner, (as with an opening bid of 4NT), standard Blackwood is used (5♣ no aces, 5♦ one, etc.), and a "new suit" bid by the Blackwood bidder is a signoff:

Opener	Responder
4NT	5♣
5♥ - signoff	

A 5NT continuation by the Blackwood bidder asks for kings (6♣ none, 6♦ two, etc.).

Note that an opening bid of 4NT is Blackwood, not a natural bid. To bid 4NT naturally, open 2♣ and then bid 4NT. See section 6-1, The Two Club Opening. Also see section 6-8, DOPI and DEPO, for appropriate action when LHO overcalls a Blackwood bid.

Roman Key Card Blackwood

Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) is an improvement on plain Blackwood. When a suit is agreed, either directly or by implication, the king of trumps is counted as an ace when responding to 4NT--it is a "key card." The responses to 4NT are:

5♣ - 1 or 4 key cards

5♦ - 0 or 3 key cards (note reversal of usual practice)

5♥ - 2 or 5 key cards, no queen of trumps

5♠ - 2 or 5 key cards, with trump queen

5NT - 2 key cards plus an important king
(i.e., king of partnership's second suit)
but lacking the trump queen

6 of agreed suit - useful void above key suit
(and normal response is five of agreed suit)

6 of lower suit - useful void in suit named
(and normal response is five of agreed suit)

Holding more cards in trump length than partner could assume, you can usually bid as if you have the queen. Whether you need one extra card or two depends upon the auction. If you know partner has at least five cards in the suit, for instance, then Jxxxx is just about as good as Qxxx if you have promised only four cards in the suit. Partner, going for seven with AKxxx or for six with Kxxxx, won't be too disappointed in either case.

With a useful void and a normal response that is not five of the agreed suit, make the normal response and then cue bid the void later or keep on bidding when partner shows signs of stopping. If the normal response would cause you to bid five of the agreed suit, and the useful void is lower in rank, bid six of the void suit. If it is higher in rank, jump to six of the agreed suit. Partner will understand how many key cards you have, knowing that your normal response would have been in the agreed suit.

If in doubt as to what the "agreed" suit is, the rule is that the last suit raised is the agreed suit, otherwise the last suit bid.

Opener	Responder
1♦	2♥
3♦	3♥
4NT - RKCB, hearts "agreed"	

Looking only at the suits bid by opener and responder on the first and second round, hearts is the last suit bid, so the agreed suit is hearts for purposes of (RKCB).

However, a secondary suit bid (usually a cue bid) on the third round doesn't count, even if it has been raised:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♥	3♠
4♣	4NT - RKCB, spades "agreed"

Opener	Responder
1♣	2♦
3♣	3♦
3♠	4♠
4NT - RKCB, diamonds "agreed"	

With RKCB, a 5NT bid following 4NT does not ask for kings. It asks partner if he has any important feature to show--usually a king lower in rank than the agreed suit, but perhaps a singleton with lots of trumps. With more than one such feature to show, choose the one that is most likely to help partner evaluate grand slam chances. If in doubt, bid the lower ranking feature:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♠
4♦	4♠
4NT	5♣ - 1 or 4 key cards
5NT	?

Responder bids 6♣ with the club king (denying the diamond king), 6♦ with the diamond king. With both, she bids 6♦, the suit opener has cue bid. Opener can now bid 7♠ with ♠K87432 ♥A ♦AQ932 ♣A.

When holding an "inconvenient" king in a suit higher than the agreed suit, it is sometimes possible to show it by bidding six of a suit that was used for a splinter bid. That is more useful than showing a king in the splinter suit. Similarly, Asker can bid a splinter suit at the six level to ask if responder has such a king.

When the bidding shows that it is impossible for responder to have a king not shown by RKCB, the 5NT requests asks for a significant queen. E.g., responder showed zero or one control in response to a 2♣ opening, then showed a key card (a trump king, necessarily) in response to RKCB, Then 5NT asks for the lowest-ranking queen (or a very significant queen).

The 5NT bid guarantees that all the aces and the king of trumps are held by the partnership. If the partner of the 5NT bidder can see that a grand slam is okay on the basis of this knowledge, he can just bid the grand slam instead of showing some feature. A player should bid 5NT to tell partner that all key cards are held, even with no intention of bidding seven himself. Then partner may have the stuff to bid seven.

When an opponent overcalls the 4NT bid, use DOPI or DEPO to show key cards (see section 6-8). If 4NT gets doubled, a pass shows no key cards and a redouble is to play. Otherwise the double is ignored.

If the RKCB bidder bids a new suit at the five level after partner shows key cards, and the bid could not possibly be meant as a final contract:

-- If the new suit is lower in rank than the agreed suit, he is asking about the queen of trumps:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♠
4NT	5♦ - 0 or 3 key cards
5♥	

The 5♥ bid asks, "Do you have the queen of trumps?" Without the queen, responder signs off in 5♠. With it, she bids the next higher ranking bid other than a signoff, in this case 5NT. Extra length can count as a queen, as said before.

When there is enough bidding space below six of the agreed suit, it is possible to show one extra card when lacking the queen or "queen equivalent" by bidding one rank higher than the queen-showing bid:

Opener	Responder
1♣	3♣
4NT	5♣ - 1 or 4 key cards
5♦?	5♥ - queen or six clubs
	5♠ - five clubs, no queen
	6♣ - four clubs, no queen

The 3♣ bid does not guarantee five cards, which therefore represent "an extra card."

-- If the new suit is higher in rank than the agreed suit, he is demanding that you bid 5NT. Probably the partnership lacks two key cards and he sees that 5NT is the safest contract.

It sometimes happens that the 4NT bidder cannot ask about the queen of trumps without going to the six level. If he needs that information for a grand slam bid, he can bid six of a suit that could not possibly become the trump suit:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♥
3♠	4NT
5♥	6♣ - asks for the queen of spades
6♦	- spade queen or extra length (seven spades in this case)
6♥	- no spade queen, six spades
6♠	- no spade queen, five spades

Exclusion Blackwood

To use this simple version of Exclusion Blackwood, a player first makes a splinter bid in a void suit, then immediately bids 4NT:

Opener	Responder
1♠	4♣ - splinter bid
4♠	4NT - Exclusion Blackwood

The responses are the same as for regular RKCB, except that the ace of the void suit is not counted as a key card. This means you cannot use regular RKCB on the next round after splintering with a singleton, but you can do so if you have made an intervening bid:

Opener	Responder
1♠	4♣ - splinter bid
4♦	4♥ - cue bid
4♠	4NT - regular RKCB

Another case of Exclusion Blackwood is an immediate 4NT bid after cue bidding an opposing suit:

South	West	North	East
2♠	3♣	4♣	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	- Exclusion Blackwood

South ignores the ace of clubs when responding. A 4NT bid made by a cue bidder's partner is regular RKCB, not Exclusion Blackwood.

FOUR NOTRUMP - BLACKWOOD OR NATURAL?

An opening bid of 4NT is regular (not RKCB) Blackwood. With a sure ten-trick notrump hand, start with an artificial 2♣ and then bid 4NT. This policy lessens the chance that the opponents will get into the act when all you want to know about is aces. For Ace-asking and key-card asking bids following a notrump opening, see the sections 5-2 and 5-4.

Opener Responder

1♥ 2NT
3♣ 3♥/3♠
4NT

Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB), with last bid suit considered the trump suit for RKCB purposes.

1♠ 2NT
3♣ 3NT
4NT

Natural notrump raise. Opener still doesn't know whether responder is minimum or not--only that he has 13-15 HCP, no spade support, no heart suit. If opener wanted to ask for aces he could have bid 4♣ instead of 3♣ (which is an artificial response to the 2NT Omnibus bid. See section 6-9, Omnibus).

1♥ 3♥
4♣ 4♥
4♠ 4NT

A natural bid, showing ♦K. Limit raisers don't have a Blackwood sort of hand.

1♠ 2♣
2♥ 4♣
4NT

Natural, showing diamond strength, club shortness

1♠ 2♣
4♣ 4NT

Natural, showing minimum values for a two-over-one response:
♠2 ♥QJ93 ♦K1087 ♣AJ62

1♠ 2♥
4♥ 4NT

RKCB. The preceding applies to minors only.

1♠ 3♣
3NT 4NT

RKCB, clubs agreed. A player who makes a strong jump takeout cannot make a natural 4NT bid (and cannot use Gerber).

2♣ 2♦
4NT A sure ten-trick notrump hand. With 28-30 HCP and no assurance of winning ten tricks, bid 3NT. For Blackwood, open 4NT.

1♠ 3♣
3♠ 3NT
4NT Natural. *Opener* can raise to 4NT, even after a jump takeout response. A 4♦ bid here would be Super Gerber (section 6-10).

1♠ 3♣
3♠ 4♣
4NT RKCB. When a jump takeout responder rebids his suit, that is considered the "agreed" suit. Opener can only bid 4♠ or 5♣ to sign off.

1♥ 1♠
3♣ 3NT/4♣
4♠ 4NT RKCB, not a signoff

1♠ 2♣
2♠ 3♦
3NT 4♥/4♠ (4♥ promises a singleton heart, 4♠ denies it)
4NT RKCB, not a signoff (spades "agreed")

Responding in Competition

South	West	North	
1♣/1♦	1♥/1♠	4NT	RKCB--Use Omnibus with a 19-20 HCP hand

1♣/1♦	2♥/3♥ /4♥	4NT	Natural, 18-19 HCP, too good for 3NT (Omnibus 2NT must be a jump)
-------	--------------	-----	--

1♠	any	4NT	RKCB
----	-----	-----	------

1♥	3 any	4NT	RKCB
----	-------	-----	------

1♥	4♣/4♦	4NT	RKCB
----	-------	-----	------

1♣/1♦	4♠	4NT	Takeout, two or three-suiter /1♥
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When the opposing jump is to 4♠, the takeout can be a two or three-suiter, so RKCB loses out. Consider this auction:

South	West	North
1♣	4♠	4NT

North could have ♠3♥AJ1087♦AK8742♣5 or ♠5♥KQ843♦AJ74♣K85. The 4NT bid asks South to bid another suit if he has one, otherwise to bid 5♣. North will correct 5♣ to 5♦ with the first hand, showing a red two-suiter. With the second hand North will pass 5♣. South must not jump to 6♣ unless his suit is self-sufficient. If he wants to be in slam but does not know what to bid, he can bid 5NT to show interest in both minors, or 5♠ to show interest in hearts as well as clubs.

Rebids in Competition

Unless it follows a minor suit raise, a jump rebid of 4NT is always RKCB, with the last named suit as the agreed suit. Non-jumps of 4NT by either partner are for takeout after a one-over-one response. RKCB after a stronger suit response or a major suit raise.

South	West	North	East
-------	------	-------	------

1♦	Pass	1♥	4♠
----	------	----	----

4NT - Takeout: ♠6♥KQ6♦AKJ872♣A76 or ♠6♥Q2♦AKQ87♣AKJ74

(With the first hand, opener will correct a 5♣ bid to 5♦, thereby implying three-card heart support.)

1♦ Pass 2♣ 4♠ - Now 4NT by either partner is RKCB.

1♥	3♠	4♣/4♦	Pass
----	----	-------	------

4NT - RKCB

1♥	Pass	2♥/3♥	4♠
----	------	-------	----

4NT - RKCB

After a minor suit raise, however (even a jump), a 4NT bid (even a jump) is natural.

Four Notrump Overcalls

East	South
------	-------

1♥/1♠	4NT
-------	-----

2♥/2♠	4NT
-------	-----

3♥/3♠	4NT	These are all unusual notrump, asking for a minor suit preference.
-------	-----	--

- 1♣/1♦ 4NT
 2♣/2♦ 4NT
 3♣/3♦ 4NT
 4♣/4♦ 4NT All natural, not Blackwood or unusual notrump, over a minor suit opening
- 4♥ 4NT Unusual notrump, stressing the minors, but could have a little something in spades
- 4♠ 4NT Hearts and a minor, which will happen much more often than both minors. With both minors just bid the better, or bid 5NT if strong enough. Lacking support for hearts, partner usually bids 5♣ unless his clubs are even shorter than his hearts. With weak three-card support for hearts, it is a good idea to bid a good minor suit in case that is partner's second suit.

Advancing an Overcall

Double or triple jumps to 4NT are RKCB. A single jump is RKCB if partner overcalls in a major, natural otherwise:

South	West	North	East	
1♣	1♠	Pass	4NT	RKCB (triple jump)
2♦	2♠	Pass	4NT	RKCB (double jump)
3♥	3♠	Pass	4NT	RKCB (single jump over a major suit)
2♥	3♦	Pass	4NT	Natural (single jump over a minor suit)

The last 4NT bid shows a hand that is too good for a 3NT bid.

If both opponents have bid a suit (i.e., North bids 3♥ in the last auction), then a jump to 4NT is RKCB even when partner has bid a minor. Natural will not be missed, since a stopper becomes much less likely.

Non-jump 4NT bids are for takeout in general, but there is an exception at matchpoints: A 4NT response to a simple overcall of 4♣ or 4♦ is natural if the opposing suit has not been raised:

South	West	North	East	
3♥	4♣/4♦	Pass	4NT	Natural at matchpoints, RKCB at IMPs
3♠	4♣/4♦	4♠	4NT	RKCB always, because of the raise.
1♠	2♦	4♠	4NT	Takeout: ♠2 ♥AJ1092 ♦Q1032 ♣A98 or: ♠2 ♥KQ873 ♦K5 ♣AQJ83 (implies hearts plus a minor)

4NT responses to a strong jump overcall are always RKCB.

Responding to a Takeout Double

The same principles apply as those applicable to partner's over-call. When 4NT asks for aces, it is regular Blackwood since the partnership has not bid a suit.

South	West	North	East	
1♠	Dbl	4♠	4NT	Takeout (over a major). West should avoid bidding a four-card heart suit unless it is very strong. Even if East has four hearts, which he might have bid, the suit may split 4-1 or 5-0 in view of the auction.
1♥	Dbl	4♥	4NT	Takeout, emphasis on the minors
3♣	Dbl	Pass	4NT	Natural (single jump over a minor)
1♣	Dbl	3♣/4♣	4NT	Blackwood (in view of the raise)
3♠	Dbl	Pass	4NT	Blackwood (jump to 4NT over a major)
4♣/4♦	Dbl	Pass	4NT	Natural at matchpoints, Blackwood at IMP scoring
4♠	Dbl	Pass	4NT	Any two-suited hand, doubler assumes minors for the moment

Four Notrump Bids by the Takeout Doubler

If partner has bid a suit, 4NT is always RKCB.

South	West	North	East
3♠	Dbl	Pass	4♣/4♦/4♥
4♠	4NT - RKCB:	♠3 ♥KQJ4 ♦KQ10 ♣AKQJ2	

If partner has bid notrump, 4NT is always a notrump raise, even if an opposing suit has been raised.

South	West	North	East
2♠	Dbl	3♠	3NT
4♠	4NT		Notrump raise, not takeout

If partner has not bid, 4NT over 4♠ is for takeout, emphasizing the minors, probably with three cards in the unbid major:

South	West	North	East
2♠	Dbl	4♠	Pass
Pass	4NT		Perhaps 1-3-4-5 distribution, big hand
	Dbl		Repeats the takeout, promises hearts

Some General Principles

A player who has made a limit bid cannot use Blackwood. This holds for most natural notrump bidders, since notrump bids are limit bids. Any exceptions are clear-cut:

Opener	Responder	but:	Opener	Responder
1NT	3♠		1♣	3NT
4NT is obviously RKCB			4♥	4NT - signoff

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
4♠	4NT is natural, showing ♥K and a maximum.

There is just no type of hand that responder, who has made a limit bid of 3♠, could have that would warrant RKCB.

A passed hand is a "limit bidder" for this purpose:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	3♥	Dbl
Pass	4NT		

West has a good hand with two long minors. She could not have enough for Blackwood, considering her initial pass.

A player who has pulled partner's 3NT bid to four of a suit cannot change his mind and bid 4NT naturally. It has to be RKCB:

Opener	Responder
1♦	2♣
2♠	3NT
4♣	4♥
4NT - RKCB, clubs agreed	

Blackwood can seldom be used by either partner after Fourth Suit Artificial. After FSA, a 4NT by either partner is usually natural, a notrump slam try. See section 4-10, Fourth Suit Artificial.

Blackwood is not used after a forcing club raise--no exceptions!

Opener	Responder
1♣	3♦ - forcing club raise
4NT - natural, too much for a 3NT bid	

See chapter 5, Notrump Bidding, for the meaning of 4NT in bidding sequences following a notrump opening. Also see section 8-6, Getting a Preference at the Five Level.

DOPI AND DEPO

When an opponent interferes with Blackwood or Gerber by sticking in a suit bid after the ace-asking call, use the following procedures:

- When the overcall is against Gerber, use DOPI: Responder doubles with zero, passes with one, bids 2♦ with three, etc.
- .
- When the overcall is below five of the agreed suit against Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB), use DOPI to show key cards, including the king of trumps.
- When the overcall is five of the agreed suit or higher against RKCB, double with an even number of key cards, pass with an odd number (Double Even, Pass Odd--DEPO) of key cards.
- When the overcall is at the five level against regular Blackwood, use DOPI at the five level (there is no agreed suit); at the six level or higher use DEPO. The reasoning is that a higher level overcall makes DOPI rather risky.

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

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♥/2♠/2NT/3♣	4♣ - Splinter bid

The 2NT and 3♣ responses show both majors. See section 5-2, Strong One Notrump Opening,.

3) 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 2) 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 any
3NT	4♣ - natural
4NT - RKCB	

Replies to Gerber

Opener	Responder
1NT	4♣
4♦	- no aces or 4 aces
4♥	- 1 aces
4♠	- 2 aces
4NT	- 3 Aces

If an opponent interferes by bidding over 4♣, the DOPI principle applies: Double shows 0, pass shows 1, next rank up 2, etc.

If an opponent doubles the 4♣ bid, a pass shows 0, 4♦ shows 1, 4♥ shows 2, etc.

If an opponent doubles a reply to 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 a suit has been bid naturally during the auction:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
4♣	5♦ - 0 kings or 4 kings
	5♥ - 1 kings
	5♠ - 2 kings
	5NT - 3 kings

Quick Trick Replies

If 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	5♣
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.

SUPER GERBER

Because a 4♣ bid over 3NT is often needed in the natural sense, and a raise of 3NT to 4NT is usually natural, we need to devise an ace-asking convention for this awkward situation:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣/2♦/2♥
3NT	4♣ is natural, not Gerber
	4NT is natural, not Blackwood

How to ask for aces? Solution: Use the lowest unbid suit other than clubs, a variation of the convention known as Super Gerber:

Opener	Responder
1♦	3NT
4♣/4♦	- natural
4♥	- Super Gerber
4♠	- notrump raise, implying weakish diamonds
4NT	- notrump raise, implying good diamonds

The 4♣ rebid is too valuable as a natural bid to be used as Gerber. The 4♠ bid says that opener's diamond suit needs a good fit to be useful in a notrump slam (e.g., five cards to only one of the top three honors).

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♦
3NT	4♣ - natural
	4♠ - Super Gerber

Another sequence that needs comment:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3NT	4♣ - natural
	4♦ - Super Gerber

It is true that in this sequence 4♣ is no more valuable than 4♦ as a natural bid, but for the sake of a general rule we let 4♣ retain its natural meaning and use 4♦ to ask for aces.

Unfortunately, we must have one exception to the general rule of what bid to use for Super Gerber:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
3NT	4♥ - natural, not Super Gerber
	4♣ - Gerber

The 4♥ bid in this particular sequence is too valuable as a natural bid, so we revert to 4♣ as Gerber.

Responses

Responses are the same as for regular Gerber, except for the necessarily higher ranking of the step responses:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
3NT	4♦ - Super Gerber
4♥	- 0 or 3 aces
4♠	- 1 or 4 aces
4NT	- 2 aces, 0-2 kings
5♣	- 2 aces, 3-4 kings

To inquire about kings, the lowest unbid suit (which is often the Super Gerber suit) is bid at the five level:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
3NT	4♦ - Super Gerber
5♣	5♦ - asks about kings

The king-showing responses are similar to regular Gerber, except for the higher level:

Opener	Responder
1♣	3NT
4♦	4♥ - 0 or 3 aces
5♦	5♥ - 0 or 4 kings
	5♠ - ♠ king or the other three
	5NT - ♥ king or the other three
	6♣ - ♣ king or the other three
	6♦ - ♦ king or the other three
	6♥ - two kings, same color
	6♠ - two kings, same rank
	6NT - two kings, nothing in common

If the Gerber bidder returns to a suit previously bid naturally, that is a signoff, as is a notrump bid. Remember that the lowest unbid suit is used to ask for kings, sometimes saving bidding space:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3NT	4♦ - Super Gerber
4♠	4NT/5♥ - signoffs
	5♣ - asks about kings
	5♦ - forgot this agreement, asks about kings

When a strong jump takeout responder rebids 3NT, opener must use Gerber to ask for aces--since 4NT would be a raise:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♣
3♠	3NT
4♦	is Super Gerber
4♣/4NT	- natural raise

The strong jump takeout responder cannot use Gerber, however; as his 4NT bids are always RKCB, and other bids are natural:

Opener	Responder
1NT	3♦
3NT	4NT - RKCB
	4♣/4♦/4♥ - natural, forcing