

Kickback _____

All of this works well when spades is the agreed trump suit. There is ample bidding space for all necessary information to be exchanged and for the **Blackwood** bidder to sign off at the five level. When another trump suit is agreed, there may not be enough space in which to investigate and still sign off at the five level.

Assume that hearts has been agreed. The **Blackwood** bidder holds one **Key Card** and bids four notrump. Responder bids five spades to show two **Key Cards** and the queen of hearts. Whoops!! We belong in five hearts but cannot get there. We simply need more bidding space in which to operate. There must be four steps for responder to use without bypassing the agreed trump suit at the five level. How can we manage that?

The answer is another Marty Bergen suggestion. Start **Blackwood** one or more calls lower than four notrump, depending on the trump suit that has been agreed. Bergen calls this treatment **Kickback**. If **Kickback** has been agreed, the suit ranking directly above the agreed trump suit is used at the four level to ask for **Key Cards**.

When the agreed suit is hearts, if four spades becomes **Blackwood** responder has four steps and still will not exceed five hearts. When the agreed suit is diamonds, if four hearts becomes **Blackwood** responder has four steps and still will not exceed five diamonds. When the agreed suit is clubs, if four diamonds becomes **Blackwood** responder has four steps and still will not exceed five clubs.

Using Four of the Agreed Minor as RKC _____

Most expert partnerships have carried this idea one step further. When no major suit fit is found and a minor suit fit exists, if the bidding side has the values to reach game, the first game sought will be three notrump.

When one suit is unstopped, with a shortness control in that suit and good values in all other suits, the bidding side will try to reach slam in the agreed minor. Once three notrump is bypassed, the bidding side will reach either

five or six in the minor. The auction will rarely stop at the four level when a fit exists and game values are held.

For this reason, in such auctions a bid of four in the agreed minor suit is forcing. Many expert pairs have the agreement that four of the agreed minor suit is a **Roman Key Card** ask. For this agreement to be firm, one of two things must be true:

1. Agreement on the minor suit has been established before the auction reaches the four level.
2. Agreement on the minor suit is established by a jump to the four level in that suit which becomes **RKC**.

In each of the following auctions, four diamonds is **RKC**:

1. 1♦ – pass – 1♠ – pass, 2♣ – pass – 3♦ – pass, 4♦
2. 1♦ – pass – 1♠ – pass, 2♦ – pass – 4♦
3. 1♠ – pass – 2♦ – pass, 3♦ – pass – 4♦

In 1 and 3 agreement was established before the four level was reached. In 2 the jump to four diamonds established suit agreement as it asked.

When agreement is made at the four level without a jump, it establishes the minor and is not **RKC**. In such auctions the bidder next to speak can ask for **Key Cards** by using **Kickback**.

In the auction: 1♦ – pass – 1♠ – pass, 3♦ – pass – 4♦ – pass, a continuation to four hearts would be **RKC**. However, in the auction: 1♦ – pass – 1♥ – pass, 3♦ – pass – 4♦ – pass, a continuation of four hearts is an offer to play in partner's suit. Opener holds a heart fit which could not be shown earlier. Because four hearts is a delayed natural call, **Kickback** must be to the next higher suit. In this auction a bid of four spades would be **Kickback**.

To summarize the calls that are used as **Roman Key Card**, when spades is the agreed suit, four notrump asks. When hearts is the agreed suit, four spades asks. When a minor suit is agreed, four of the minor suit asks whenever suit agreement has been established before the four level is reached, or when

agreement is established by a jump to four of the minor suit. When agreement is established at the four level, **Kickback** is used.

Showing Voids in Response to RKC _____

Question—can a void be shown when partner uses **RKC**? Answer—yes, but it should be shown only when it is a “working” void. A void in a suit that partner has bid naturally is not an asset. When partner’s high cards face shortness they lose value. Such a void is not a “working” void and should not be shown. If the void is an unbid suit, it is a “working” void and may reasonably be shown.

Voids are shown by use of steps beyond the first four. The fifth step shows two **Key Cards** and a working void, the sixth step shows one **Key Card** and a working void, and the seventh step shows three **Key Cards** and a working void. This order is based on practicality. Two **Key Cards** is the most likely holding, one **Key Card** will usually be enough for a small slam, and showing three **Key Cards** may facilitate reaching a grand slam.

Example 128)

a)	♠ AJ65	b)	♠ AJ65
	♥ —		♥ Q93
	♦ Q93		♦ —
	♣ AQJ1042		♣ AQJ1042

With both Example 128) hands you have responded to an opening bid of one heart by bidding two clubs. Partner rebids two spades and you raise to three spades. Partner then bids four notrump, Roman Key Card Blackwood.

With Example 128a) bid five hearts to show two Key Cards without the queen of spades. Do not show a void in partner’s first bid suit.

With Example 128b) bid five notrump to show two Key Cards and a working void. Partner will know that you would not show a heart void because that void would not be “working.” Since you have bid clubs and spades, partner will know that your void is in diamonds.