

## Blackwood

The two basic elements for bidding and making a slam are:

- **Strength:** The two hands must be strong enough to take twelve (small slam) or thirteen (grand slam) tricks. Slam strength is: **small slam = 31-33 HCP; grand slam = 35-37 HCP.**

These ranges are approximate and depend on distribution. In NT, you usually need to be near the top of that HCP range if both hands are balanced. With a long running suit, you might make 6NT with fewer HCP. For suit slams, you could get by with fewer than 31 HCP if you have lots of "shape" (voids, singletons, long suits).

Strength can be determined during the bidding.

- **Controls:** HCPs are meaningless, however, if the defense can cash two tricks. A partnership interested in slam must also know how many controls (Aces and Kings) they have. Controls can be determined by using Blackwood.

Blackwood is a convention in which a bid of 4NT asks partner to describe how many Aces (s)he has. In response to 4NT, partner bids

- 5♣ with 0 or 4 Aces
- 5♦ with 1 Ace
- 5♥ with 2 Aces
- 5♠ with 3 Aces

*Note: Making a small slam in a suit contract typically requires a minimum of three Aces (assuming no voids), and a grand slam requires all four Aces.*

The Blackwood bidder is the captain. (S)he sets the contract. Rebids made by the Blackwood bidder are to play, **except**

- a bid of a previously unbid suit asks partner to sign off in 5NT.
- a bid of 5NT asks partner to describe how many Kings (s)he has. (The 5NT bid should only be used if the partnership has all 4 Aces.)

In response to 5NT, partner bids

- 5♣ with 0 or 4 Kings
- 5♦ with 1 King
- 5♥ with 2 Kings
- 5♠ with 3 Kings

You use Blackwood when

- You've agreed on a trump suit.
- You've determined through the bidding that the **strength** of the two hands is in slam range.
- You have no useless doubletons or voids.
- Partner's last bid was in a suit, not NT.

The Blackwood convention gets its name from its inventor Easley Blackwood, the late American bridge player and writer.

## Quick Quiz

N		S		N		S	
♠ J83		♠ Q109		♠ AKQ953		♠ J876	
♥ AKQ106		♥ J982		♥ 8		♥ AJ2	
♦ AJ		♦ Q108		♦ AJ7		♦ K108	
♣ KQ8		♣ AJ10		♣ KQ8		♣ J72	

N		S		W		N		S		W
1♥	Pass	3♥		Pass		1♠	Pass	3♠		Pass
?	Pass	?		Pass		?	Pass	?		Pass
?						?				

N		S		N		S	
♠ AK6		♠ Q5		♠ AKQ		♠ J10732	
♥ J1096		♥ AKQ1084		♥ J72		♥ K543	
♦ AJ7		♦ Q108		♦ KQ10		♦ A6	
♣ KQ8		♣ A10		♣ K875		♣ QJ	

N		S		W		N		S		W
1♠	Pass	1♥		Pass		1♠	Pass	1♠		Pass
3♥	Pass	4NT		Pass		2NT	Pass	3♠		Pass
5♥	Pass	5NT		Pass		4NT	Pass	5♦		Pass
?	Pass	?				?				