

REGULAR BLACKWOOD

Standard Blackwood allows you to ask partner about the number of aces s/he holds. Blackwood was designed to keep you out of bad slams as well as get you into good slams. People have a tendency to over use Blackwood. If you want to ask for aces, all the following conditions should be met:

- 1) You have agreed upon a trump suit (or have a self-sufficient trump suit) and will bid slam if partner's responses show that only one Ace is missing.
- 2) You do NOT have a void. (Blackwood shows number of Aces—not specific Aces. If partner has an Ace in the suit in which you are void, it will not help you.)
- 3) You have first or second-round control (Ace/King/singleton) in all the suits. In other words, you do NOT have a suit in which you might lose two tricks off the top (e.g., two small cards; Qx; Jx; three small, etc.) In those situations, you need to cue-bid to show controls. Do NOT use Blackwood.
- 4) You know that the two hands are in slam range (33 HCP for small slam in NT; 33 in HCP **and** distribution for small slam in suits). You are willing to bid slam if only one Ace is missing and believe you can safely play at the 5 level if 2 Aces are missing. (Easley Blackwood originally invented the convention so that people would AVOID going to the six level when they were missing two Aces.)
- 5) You have at least one Ace if diamonds are your trump suit and at least two Aces if clubs are your trump suit. That way, if partner has zero Aces, you will not pass the 5 level of your trump suit.

If you do pass the 5 level of your trump suit, do NOT bid 5NT as a sign-off!! After using 4NT to inquire for Aces, 5NT asks for Kings. To stop in 5NT, you must bid 5 of an unbid major. That asks partner to bid 5NT and you can pass!

Standard Blackwood is asked with a bid of 4NT. The responses are as follows:

- 5C shows zero Aces OR all 4 Aces
- 5D shows 1 Ace
- 5H shows 2 Aces
- 5S shows 3 Aces

If you ask for Aces and discover that you and your partner have ALL the Aces, then **5NT asks for Kings.** The responses are as follows:

- 6C shows zero OR all 4 Kings
- 6D shows 1 King
- 6H shows 2 Kings
- 6S shows 3 Kings

Some people play that 6C shows only zero Kings and that 6NT shows all 4 Kings.

Once you master regular Blackwood, you may want to learn **Roman Key Card Blackwood** which allows you to find out about the King of your trump suit—and sometimes about the queen of your trump suit—as well as about the 4 Aces.

If the opponents interfere, there are different approaches used to tell your partner about your Aces. The most common is called DOPI (Double with zero Aces; Pass with one Ace; bid next-cheapest suit with 2 Aces...)