

ROBERT MUNGER

KICKBACK

SLAM BIDDING AT BRIDGE



SECOND EDITION

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This book is dedicated to Cathi,
my partner in all the important events.

Thanks to Mark C. Friedlander for
his assistance in reviewing the manuscript
and for his many valuable suggestions.

Thanks also to Bill Dalton,
whose probing questions, suggestions,
and constructive criticism
challenged me into completing this second edition.

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Foreword

Kickback has been with us since 1981, but there has been little written about it. I have found brief descriptions of it here and there, and some discussion groups on the Internet, but no complete exposition of all the ramifications. This booklet is my attempt to fill that gap.

Much of the convention is based on “normal” Roman Key Card Blackwood agreements. In other places I have created conventional bids where none exist in the literature, or to simplify what does exist.

Foreword to the Second Edition

Experience and feedback from readers have prompted this revised edition. Highlights include:

- Chapter 4, The Queen Ask, has been expanded and reorganized, including enhanced discussion of “0314” and “1430” responses.
- This edition includes a description of the Grand Slam Non-Force, as Jeff Rubens calls it.
- More examples, especially ones where the trump suit is not spades.
- More discussion and examples of “substitution.”
- Summaries at the end of several chapters.

There only a few changes to the Kickback convention itself.

- When clubs are trumps, after 4♦-4♥, 4♠ (Queen Ask), Teller can bid either 4NT or 5♣ to deny holding the trump queen.
- After 4K-5K, showing two key cards and an unspecified void, the next step up (5K+1) asks for the void, and 5K+2 is the Queen Ask.
- Simplified method of showing kings when either player has a void.

1. Starting Out

The Kickback convention is the brainchild of Jeff Rubens. He introduced it in a series of articles called “The Useful Space Principle” (*The Bridge World*, 1980 - 1981). These articles are now available in a booklet called *The Useful Space Principle and Transfer Advances of Overcalls*.

Rubens described the basic tenets of the convention, but left much of the work to the reader. Now, nearly 40 years later, Kickback has become popular in the expert community, but still isn’t widely played among the rank and file of tournament players.

The purpose of the current book is to bring Kickback to my fellow rank-and-filers, to present a straightforward method of playing the convention effectively, with as few frills as possible. My hope is that two strangers, who have both read this book, can sit down and agree on “Kickback,” and play it without problems. Okay, so I’m a dreamer.

Some partnerships will adopt Kickback exactly as set forth here. Others will put in their own variations and exceptions. For them, this book will provide a solid starting point.

Kickback can be added to any bidding system. It goes especially well with Two-over-One Game Force, because that system keeps the bidding low to search for a suit fit.

Terminology

To present Kickback properly, I’ll have to introduce you to a few new terms and abbreviations.

Asker	the player who asks for key cards
-------	-----------------------------------

K	the Kickback strain (suit or notrump)
Substitution	using a bid in notrump, either 4NT or 5NT, as a substitute for the Kickback suit
T	the trump suit
T-1	the strain ranking just below T (also other shortcuts such as K+1, K+2, etc.)
Teller	Asker's partner
Zoom	a procedure used to save space in relay/asking auctions. When holding the highest possible response, Teller answers the next question <i>before it is asked</i> .

Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKC)

To play Kickback you need a basic understanding of RKC. In Roman Key Card Blackwood, there are five key cards, the four aces and the king of trumps. The queen of trumps also enters into the responses. The idea behind RKC is simple – No matter how many *winners* you have, you won't make slam if you have two trump losers.

Over an RKC 4NT, Teller bids:

5♣	0 or 3 key cards
5♦	1 or 4 key cards
5♥	2 or 5 key cards, no queen of trumps
5♠	2 or 5 key cards, queen of trumps or extra length (our first glimpse of Zoom – Teller answers the Queen Ask before Asker asks it.)
more	void-showing

Note that these are the old-fashioned responses, not the "1430" kind many players use to save space. Kickback saves

plenty of space; in most auctions, we don't need 1430 as well. More on this in Chapter 4, The Queen Ask.

Here's a routine example of Kickback in action:

♠ AJ872	♠ Q643	1♠	3♠
♥ KQ5	♥ 103	4NT	5♦
♦ AQ6	♦ K87	5♠	pass
♣ K3	♣ AJ65		

Missing two key cards, we avoid the anti-percentage slam. Notice that spades are trumps in this example. This is to illustrate that *when spades are trumps, Kickback works exactly like RKC*.

The Theoretical Reason for Kickback

Kickback is a variation on Roman Key Card Blackwood. It saves bidding space compared to RKC, by using a lower bid as the key-card ask. Instead of always using 4NT to ask for key cards, the Kickback bid is 4T+1, *one step above* four in the trump suit:

When clubs are trumps, 4♦ is the key-card ask.

When diamonds are trumps, 4♥ is the ask.

When hearts are trumps, 4♠ is the ask.

When spades are trumps, 4NT is the ask.

The responses are the same as in RKC, but they are expressed in steps, rather than being “hard-wired” to particular strains.

one step	0 or 3 key cards
two steps	1 or 4 key cards
three steps	2 or 5 key cards, no queen of trumps

four steps	2 or 5 key cards, with either the queen of trumps or extra length (enough to know there's a 10-card fit)
more	void-showing (see Chapter 9)

Since we start lower than in RKC, we leave more room for further slam exploration. There are many asking bids available following the first response to Kickback. We have enough room to make these bids, regardless of the trump suit.

Also, Kickback leaves enough room to stop in 5T any time two key cards are missing.

♠ 7	♠ KQJ102	1♣	1♥
♥ KQ95	♥ A107642	3♠	4♠
♦ KQ6	♦ 5	5♥	pass
♣ AQ653	♣ 9		

3♠	splinter raise of hearts
4♠	Kickback
5♥	“two with”

If Responder has to bid 4NT to ask, he'll get to slam off two aces.

That's the theoretical reason for Kickback, to save space.

The Practical Reason for Kickback

In fact, we always have the same amount of room available, no matter which suit is trumps. This makes Kickback easier to play than RKC – the practical reason for Kickback.

By starting one step above four in the trump suit, we avoid the numerous exceptions necessary to make RKC workable

in every situation. There are very few exceptions; the convention (almost) always works the same way.

♠ KQ3	♠ A106	1♣	3♥
♥ 943	♥ 6	4♦	4♥
♦ KQ8	♦ A652	4♠	6♣
♣ A874	♣ KQ952	pass	

East makes a splinter raise, enabling West to appreciate the true value of his 14 points – the Losing Trick Count has dropped from seven to five! 4♦ is Kickback; 4♥ shows (zero or) three key cards. 4♠ asks about the trump queen, and East shows it. This convention really is pretty easy.

The definitive book on RKC is *Roman Keycard Blackwood*, by Edwin B. Kantar. It is a wonderful book, and I highly recommend that you read it. (After you read this one, of course.) To date there are five editions of *Roman Keycard Blackwood*, each one with its own New! Improved! set of rules for using RKC.

In the 2008 edition, subtitled *The Final Word*, the first 76 pages completely describe the convention over major suit openings – when to use 1430, the Queen Ask, various follow-up asks, Six-Ace Blackwood, handling voids and more. The next 108 pages describe the exceptions required when a minor suit is trumps.

This is just too hard for most players. We don't have time to devote endless hours discussing these situations. The relatively small number of rules needed for Kickback will suffice almost all the time. Speaking for myself, I'll come out ahead having a few simple rules to remember, instead of many difficult rules to forget.

Kantar's books provide three important services to Kickback players: They are great sources of example hands and quizzes, they help us appreciate how much easier Kickback is to play, and they can give you ideas for fancier, more sophisticated variations than you'll find here in *Kickback*.

Quiz

1. ♠ 5 1♥ 2NT
 ♥ KQ642 ?
 ♦ AKQ97
 ♣ K9

2NT is Jacoby, a forcing raise in hearts. What do you bid now?

2. ♠ 5 1♥ 2NT
 ♥ KQ642 ?
 ♦ A9743
 ♣ KQ

3. ♠ K865 1♦ 2♦
 ♥ AJ 3NT 4♥
 ♦ QJ53 ?
 ♣ AK7

- a. 2♦ is an inverted raise, invitational or better and forcing one round. 3NT shows a balanced 18 - 19 HCP. What does 4♥ mean, and what do you bid?
- b. What if partner bids 4♦ instead of 4♥? Now what do you bid?

Answers

1. Bid 4♠, Kickback for hearts. You're not likely to hold a better hand than this for Blackwood.
2. Bid 3♠, showing a singleton or void in spades. This will help partner to value his club and diamond honors properly, while leaving room for showing controls below 4♥. A bid of 4♦ would show a 5-card suit, but a better one than this.
3. a. 4♥ is Kickback for diamonds. You have two key cards plus the queen of trumps, so you bid four steps, or 5♦.

Here's a useful tip: When the Kickback bid is 4T+1, as it usually is, Teller's return to the trump suit is always "two with."

- b. Partner's 4♦ is a slam try, leaving room for *you* to use Kickback. Bid 4♥. This hand isn't perfect for Kickback, but given partner's strong bidding, you won't stop short of slam unless there are two key cards missing – highly unlikely.

In some incarnations of RKC, four of the trump suit is used as the key card ask. Kickback gives you a choice – you can take control with 4♥, or give partner control by bidding 4♦. In this example, partner passed control to you because he had two small clubs.

2. What's Trump?

Anyone who has played RKC knows the trouble you can get into when you're not sure what the trump suit is. It only gets worse in Kickback. If you don't know which suit is trumps, you can't know what bid asks for aces.

Those are the topics of this chapter, which suit is trumps and what bid is Kickback?

One Suit Has Been Raised

Often you will start with a direct raise (perhaps an artificial one), and you'll both know the trump suit immediately. Other times you will bid a suit or two before raising. Most of these situations are straightforward as well.

1♣-1♥, 1♠-3♣

Clubs are trumps. 4♦ is Kickback.

1♣-1♥, 1♠-2♦, 2♥

Hearts are trumps. The 2♦ bid is Fourth Suit Forcing to game. Responder could have bid 4♠ earlier to force to game in spades, or 3♠ now as a slam try in spades, so 4♠ isn't needed in its natural sense – it is Kickback. (Responder's *two spade* bid at this point could be a “punt” – 3-card spade support with no diamond stop, suggesting playing in a 4-3 spade or heart fit.)

Here are the hands from the first time I used Kickback. I was East, the Teller.

♠ AK86	♠ QJ5	1♦	1♥
♥ KJ	♥ A1062	1♠	2♣
♦ J96543	♦ KQ7	2♦	3♦
♣ 7	♣ A93	4♥	4♠
		6♦	pass

Two clubs was Fourth Suit Forcing to game. After Responder raised diamonds, Opener figured that notrump was out of the question. 4♥ was obviously Kickback, since he had already passed up two opportunities to raise hearts.

The 4♥ bid looks aggressive, but if Responder / Teller turned up with too few key cards for slam, Asker could always sign off in 5♦. This is another way for the space-saving Kickback convention to gain, reaching a minor-suit game when slam and 3NT are both unmakeable.

West could have made a Queen Ask over 4♠, but we hadn't discussed whether 4NT or 5♣ would be the bid. We will revisit this hand in Chapter 4, The Queen Ask.

♠ KQ984	♠ A65	1♠	2♣
♥ Q94	♥ AK52	2♠	3♠
♦ A73	♦ 8	4♦	4NT
♣ Q4	♣ KJ763	5♠	6♠
		pass	

Responder could bid hearts on the second round and spades later, "bidding around" the singleton diamond, but – even if Opener cooperates – that means the trump suit won't be set until the four-level. Better to let partner know what's trumps, and hope he can make a slam try.

Two Suits Have Been Raised

In the event that *two* suits have been raised, we switch to Six-Ace Kickback. See Chapter 11 for details.

When 4T+1 is Natural

The auction has gone 1♥-2♦, 3♦-4♥. You could play 4♥ as Kickback for diamonds, but it is needed as a “Picture Bid,” showing a minimum game force with all your strength in the bid suits. In this situation we go to the next higher strain, spades, and that is the Kickback suit for diamonds.

♠ Q10852	♠ A	1♠	2♥
♥ KQ7	♥ A106532	3♥	4NT
♦ A5	♦ KQJ86	5♠	6♥
♣ J85	♣ 6	pass	

Here we have to skip over spades, since 4♠ would be a Picture Bid; 4NT is Kickback for hearts.

♠ K10	♠ 952	1♦	1♥
♥ K9	♥ AQJ8652	3♦	4♥
♦ AQJ1074	♦ 6	pass	
♣ A83	♣ 76		

Responder shows a powerful heart suit, but little else. Over 3♦, 4♠ would be Kickback for diamonds.

Switching Suits at the Four Level

A guideline many good players use, whether or not they play Kickback, is this: When a minor suit has been raised, a bid of four in a previously bid major is non-forcing. It is often

necessary to stop in the ten-trick game rather than stretch for 11 tricks in a minor.

♠ KQ1093	♠ 65	1♠	2♦
♥ K76	♥ AQ83	3♦	3♥
♦ A754	♦ KJ82	3♠	4♣
♣ 9	♣ A85	4♥	pass

The auction below is another case where 4♥ is needed as a natural bid. Since 4♥ would be natural, 4♠ is Kickback. Teller shows “two without,” and Opener places the contract.

♠ K8	♠ 954	1♦	1♥
♥ K7	♥ AQ64	3♦	4♦
♦ AQJ1052	♦ K83	4♠	5♦
♣ A72	♣ KQ4	6♦	pass

That brings us to our next topic, what to do when no suit has been agreed.

No Trump Suit? No Problem!

No matter how hard you try, you can't always set the trump suit at the three level. We need some agreements about what certain jump bids mean when there isn't a trump suit yet.

- First off, 4NT directly over an opening one-bid is Blackwood, straight aces. Responder probably has an independent suit. If you want to use Kickback, make a forcing raise first.
- Other than that, when no suit has been raised, the last-bid suit is trumps, at least for now.

When the Suit above Partner's Has Not Been Bid

This one is easy. A jump to the four-level, in the strain immediately above the one partner just bid, is Kickback for partner's suit.

1♠-2♥, 3♣- <u>4♦</u>	Kickback for clubs
1♦-1♠, 2♦- <u>4♥</u>	Kickback for diamonds
1♣-1♦, 1♠- <u>4NT</u>	Kickback for spades

Here's a slightly modified example from a "Challenge the Champs" hand. (*The Bridge World*, July 1999)

♠ AKQ1092	♠ 5	1♠	2♣
♥ Q	♥ 1064	2♠	3♣
♦ AQJ	♦ K86	4♦	5♣
♣ J65	♣ AKQ1094	6♣	pass

Teller bids 5♣, showing two plus the queen, and there we are.

In these non-agreement auctions, the trump suit is only tentative. Asker is allowed to return to a previously bid suit.

♠ AK984	♠ 6	1♠	2♣
♥ A3	♥ KQ6	2♦	4♥
♦ KQ942	♦ A7	4♠	6♣
♣ 7	♣ KQJ10965	pass	

Be careful when you bid this way. If West had two key cards plus the queen of diamonds, he would respond 5♦; perhaps too high.

When the Suit above Partner's Has Been Bid

You want to use Blackwood / Kickback, but someone (usually yourself) has already bid the suit you want to use. For instance,

1♦-1♥, 3♦-?

1♣-1♦, 2♣-?

1♥-2♦, 3♣-?

1♦-1♥, 2♣-?

1♠-2♦, 2♥-?

In this situation we have to give up something: Kickback, or a natural suit bid, or something. We have chosen to extend the standard rule that most RKC players use, that 4NT is RKC for the last-bid suit. For us Kickback players, this means that the cheapest unbid strain (above four in the suit just bid) is now Kickback, tentatively agreeing the last-bid suit. In the auctions above:

1♦-1♥, 3♦-4♠ is Kickback for diamonds

1♣-1♦, 2♣-4♥ is Kickback for clubs

1♥-2♦, 3♣-4♠ is Kickback for clubs

1♦-1♥, 2♣-4♠ is Kickback for clubs

1♠-2♦, 2♥-4NT is Kickback for hearts.

In all of these auctions Responder has the option of raising to four of Opener's minor (or raising hearts to three), setting the trump suit and leaving room for partner to use Kickback or to make some other slam try.

Chapter 6 is devoted to these auctions, where the Kickback bid is higher than 4T+1.

4NT without a Jump

When no suit has been agreed, a non-jump 4NT is natural and non-forcing.

♠ KQJ83	♠ 7	1♠	2♥
♥ 7	♥ AJ1065	3♣	3♦
♦ 85	♦ AQ1072	4♣	4NT
♣ AQJ73	♣ K5	pass	

If you foresee the need to ask for key cards, jump into Kickback before the bidding reaches the four-level, as in the following auction.

♠ KQJ83	♠ 7	1♠	2♥
♥ 7	♥ AKJ105	3♣	4♦
♦ 85	♦ A7	4NT	6♣
♣ AKJ73	♣ Q10952	pass	

The Last Word on Determining the Trump Suit

Here are the rules. If they read like “pseudo-code” from a computer program spec... well, I can’t help myself.

1. If one suit has been raised, that is the trump suit. This is the preferred state.
2. If two suits have been raised, we switch to Six-Ace Kickback.
3. If no suit has been raised, a jump in the cheapest unbid strain above four in the suit just bid is Kickback. In these

auctions, the trump agreement is tentative, and Asker may return to a previously bid suit.

4. If no trump suit has been found, and we're all the way to the four level, a bid of 4NT is natural and non-forcing.

Quiz

1. 1♣-2♥, 3♦-4♣, 4NT. The auction from hell. What does it mean?
2. 1♠-2♥, 3♣-4♦, 4♠-5♥. What's going on?

Answers

1. 3♦ is a high reverse, a game force in anybody's system. 4♣ is ambiguous, but should be natural – with diamond support, Responder would raise to 4♦ or jump to 4NT, Kickback for diamonds. In the auction above, Opener's 4NT is natural and non-forcing.
2. 1♠-2♥, 3♣-4♦, 4♠-5♥. What's going on?

Asker wants to play 5♥. Though 4♦ was ostensibly Kickback for clubs, Asker's real trump suit was hearts all along. Remember, in non-agreement auctions, Asker can change trump suits.

Asker's hand: ♠ 6 ♥ KQJ10763 ♦ AK3 ♣ K5.

3. Asking for Kings

Following Teller's initial reply to Kickback, Asker has three kinds of follow-up asking bids available.

- The Queen Ask. This one is looking for the queen of trumps, which is often the key to bidding – or avoiding – a close slam. The Queen Ask is explained in Chapter 4.
- The King Ask. Similar to the old-fashioned Blackwood 5NT, asking Teller about kings.
- The Third-Round Control Ask, which is the subject of Chapter 12.

There are also further asking bids after the replies to each of these three. We start with the King Ask because some of the same “further asking bids” also apply after a Queen Ask.

The King Ask and the Specific King Ask

As in regular Blackwood, a King Ask is a grand slam try. The general rule is this: Any asking bid beyond five in the trump suit is a try for seven; with no interest in a grand, sign off in six.

The King Ask promises that all key cards, including the queen of trumps, are in safe hands. The King Ask isn't necessarily 5NT, though. It is always 5T+1, one step above the trump suit. In a normal Kickback auction, this is the same thing as 5K.

Teller doesn't show kings wholesale; instead, he bids them “up the line.” Specific kings are often the key to a grand slam.

For instance, with spades as trumps, after 4NT - any, 5NT, Teller bids:

- 7♠ "I accept." Teller has a source of tricks or substantial extra values, such as a key queen in partner's side suit, a singleton and extra trumps, or all three side kings.
- 6♣ club king
- 6♦ diamond king, no club king
- 6♥ heart king, no minor king
- 6♠ no side kings

Following a 6♣ or 6♦ bid, Asker keeps asking and Teller keeps telling. A new suit asks Teller to bid seven if holding the king in that suit. Asker's new suit is called a Specific King Ask.

This stuff is easier when you look at some examples.

♠ KQ954	♠ A872	1♠	2NT
♥ AK	♥ 953	4NT	5♥
♦ AQ865	♦ K103	5NT	6♣
♣ 7	♣ AK2	6♦	7♠
		pass	
2NT	game forcing raise		
5NT	King Ask		
6♣	club king		
6♦	Specific King Ask		
7♠	got it!		

If Teller happens to hold both the king and queen in the suit of the Specific King Ask, he raises that suit to seven. This might produce a safer contract of 7NT or, at matchpoints, a higher-scoring one.

What If Spades Were Trumps?

In all auctions, Kickback is easiest when spades are trumps. There is no substitution to worry about; good old 4NT is the first ask, and 5NT asks for kings.

When some other suit is trumps, things aren't so straightforward. In these auctions, 4K is the initial ask and a later 5K is the King Ask. Both Asker and Teller often use 5NT as a substitute for the king of the Kickback suit.

Substitution is a vital concept in Kickback, one that you will encounter numerous times in this book.

- In a King Ask auction, either player can bid 5NT to show or ask about K, the Kickback suit. Teller uses 5NT to show the king of K, Asker uses 5NT to ask for it.
- Over a Queen Ask, 5NT is as above, telling or asking about the king of the Kickback suit.

An easy way to remember these substitution auctions is to ask yourself, What if spades were trumps? What would the various bids mean? Bid as you would over a 5NT King Ask, but bid 5NT to show the king in the Kickback suit. Once you get the hang of it, this is a snap.

In the auction below, with hearts as trumps, 5♠ is the King Ask. Teller shows kings up the line, just as he did in the previous example, when 5NT was the ask. Here the cheapest king is spades, which Teller shows by bidding 5NT, a substitute for 5K.

♠ AQ75	♠ K103	1♥	3♥
♥ KQ9865	♥ A732	4♠	5♣
♦ A	♦ KJ6	5♠	5NT
♣ A7	♣ 542	6♣	6♦
		7♥	pass

5♠ King Ask
 5NT king of spades, the Kickback suit
 6♣ Specific King Ask
 6♦ no, but I have this one
 7♥ that works, too

♠ AQ75	♠ K103	1♥	3♥
♥ KQ9865	♥ A732	4♠	5♣
♦ A7	♦ KJ6	5♠	5NT
♣ A	♣ 542	6♣	6♦
		7♥	pass

This is the same hand, except Opener has a small diamond instead a small club. He cleverly asks in clubs, because he can see that either minor suit king will make the grand worth bidding.

Suppose that diamonds are trumps and the auction has gone 4♥-any, 5♥, asking for kings. Teller bids:

7♦ I accept; source of tricks or substantial extras
 5♠ spade king
 5NT heart king (by substitution), no spade king
 6♣ club king, no major suit king
 6♦ no king outside of trumps

Over Teller's 5♠, Asker can bid 5NT to ask for the heart king, as in this example:

♠ A10	♠ K73	1♦	2♦
♥ A6	♥ K82	2♥	3NT
♦ KQ762	♦ A953	4♥	5♣
♣ KQ82	♣ A75	5♥	5♠
		5NT	7♦
		pass	

2♦ is an inverted raise, forcing one round. Opener shows a heart stopper, and is encouraged to have partner force to game. Over the 5♥ King Ask, Teller shows the cheapest king. 5NT asks about the king in the Kickback suit, hearts. Teller has it, so he bids the grand.

♠ A10	♠ K73	1♣	2♣
♥ KQ82	♥ A75	2♦	3NT
♦ A6	♦ K82	4♦	4NT
♣ KQ762	♣ A953	5♦	5♠
		5NT	7♣
		pass	

5NT is a sub for diamonds, the Kickback suit. Teller has the king of diamonds, so he bids the grand.

King Ask Summary

1. After the initial Kickback bid, 5K is the King Ask. Teller shows kings up the line.
2. Asker keeps asking and Teller keeps telling.
3. A bid of 5NT is a substitute for the Kickback suit, by Teller or by Asker.

Quiz

- | | | | |
|----------|------------|----|----|
| 1. ♠ A32 | ♠ K75 | 1♣ | 1♦ |
| ♥ K974 | ♥ A | 1♥ | ? |
| ♦ 54 | ♦ AKQJ1072 | | |
| ♣ AK76 | ♣ Q10 | | |

How should the bidding continue?

- | | | |
|------------|-----|----|
| 2. ♠ AQJ63 | 1♠ | 2♥ |
| ♥ Q4 | 2NT | 3♠ |
| ♦ A105 | 4NT | 5♣ |
| ♣ KQ8 | 5NT | 6♥ |
- a. What does partner's 6♥ mean?
b. What should you bid now?

- | | | |
|------------|-----|----|
| 3. ♠ AQJ63 | 1♠ | 2♥ |
| ♥ Q4 | 2NT | 3♠ |
| ♦ A105 | 4NT | 5♣ |
| ♣ KQ8 | 5NT | 6♦ |
- a. What does partner's 6♦ mean?
b. What should you bid now?

- | | | |
|---------|-----|-----|
| 4. ♠ Q4 | 1♥ | 1♠ |
| ♥ AQJ63 | 2NT | 3♥ |
| ♦ A105 | 4♠ | 4NT |
| ♣ KQ8 | 5♠ | 5NT |
- a. How do you know 4♠ is Kickback?
b. What does partner's 3♥ show?
c. How many key cards does 4NT show?
d. What does partner's 5NT mean?
e. What should you bid now?

Answers

1.	1♣	1♦	
	1♥	1♠	1♠: 4th suit forcing
	1NT	3♦	3♦: setting trumps
	3NT	4♥	4♥: Kickback
	5♣	5♥	5♥: kings?
	5NT	6♣	5NT: ♥ king, no ♠ king
	7♦	7NT	6♣: club king?
	pass		7♦: yes

Note that 6♣ is a Specific King Ask. Once the trump suit is set, we don't switch suits at the last minute – Responder would have bid 3♣, not 3♦, if interested in a club contract.

2.
 - a. 6♥ shows the king of hearts, but no minor-suit king.
 - b. Bid 7♠. You might need to ruff out the hearts, so 7NT is inferior.
3.
 - a. 6♦ shows the diamond king, no club king.
 - b. Bid 6♥, asking for the king of hearts. If partner says no, we can stop in 6♠ or 6NT.
4.
 - a. 4♠ can't be natural; the non-forcing bid of 2NT denies 4-card spade support. A delayed *non-jump* bid of 4♠ might be passed, but not this one.
 - b. You need to discuss this with your partners. In my preferred methods, 3♥ shows a limit raise or better with at least three hearts. With less strength, Responder would have bid 2♥ instead of 1♠.

- c. 4NT shows three key cards. If Responder holds ♠ KJxx ♥ 10xx ♦ KQJ ♣ Jxx, he should bid 4♥ (Fast Arrival), not 3♥, at his second turn. As I said, *you need to discuss this*.
- d. 5NT shows the king in the Kickback suit, by substitution. Teller may have kings in the minors.
- e. Bid 6♦, asking for the king of diamonds. If partner has it, go for 7NT; otherwise, 7♥.

4. The Queen Ask

The queen of trumps is often the key to a touch-and-go slam, especially in an eight-card fit. Holding two key cards, Teller Zooms to show the queen, so the Queen Ask applies only after a one or two step reply.

The Queen Ask is primarily a way to decide between bidding a small slam and stopping in five. It is also by far the most common follow-up asking bid in Kickback (or RKC). If you get this one down pat, you'll be 80% of the way there.

After the one or two-step reply to Kickback, Asker bids the cheapest suit. This asks partner if he holds the queen of trumps (or enough length to guarantee a 10-card fit).

- Without the queen, Teller returns to five in the trump suit.
- Teller can bid 5K, showing the trump queen, no side king, but a potentially useful feature somewhere – a queen or a short suit (void, singleton or even a doubleton). Using 5K for this hand type leaves room to locate a vital third-round control needed to bid seven.
- With the trump queen and at least one side-suit king, Teller shows kings up the line, starting with 5K+1, *exactly the same as after a King Ask*.

This is another example of the Zoom principle, answering the next question before it is asked.

- When holding the trump queen but no outside feature, Teller jumps to six in the trump suit.

Teller Denies the Queen

♠ A10865	♠ 9432	1♠	3♠
♥ 5	♥ AQ7	4NT	5♦
♦ AQJ72	♦ K86	5♥	5♠
♣ AK	♣ QJ3	pass	

Not an elegant auction, though the final contract is likely to be the winner.

♠ 5	♠ AQ7	1♥	3♥
♥ AK865	♥ J932	4♠	5♣
♦ AQJ72	♦ K86	5♦	5♥
♣ AK	♣ J93	6♥	pass

Asker was hoping for a grand.

In one auction – clubs are trumps and the bidding goes 4♦-4♥, 4♠ – we have some extra space. I propose that Teller has two ways to deny the trump Queen, 4NT and 5♣.

4NT	no queen of trumps, soft / scattered values
5♣	no queen, distributional / suit-oriented

♠ 7	♠ KQ5	1♣	2♣
♥ AJ62	♥ Q73	4♦	4♥
♦ AQ6	♦ K9	4♠	4NT
♣ AK1042	♣ 98653	pass	

♠ 7	♠ KQJ	1♣	2♣
♥ AJ62	♥ K73	4♦	4♥
♦ AQ6	♦ 92	4♠	5♣
♣ AK1042	♣ 98653	pass	

Teller Bids 5K

Teller has the trump queen and something on the side, but no side-suit king. Usually Asker will sign off in 6T, but he has a “Third Round Control Ask” available to try for a grand slam.

♠ 5	♠ AQ72	1♥	3♥
♥ AK8765	♥ Q942	4♠	5♣
♦ AKJ72	♦ 83	5♦	5♠
♣ A	♣ QJ3	6♦	7♥
		pass	

Asker needs third-round diamond control, and Teller provides it. Mission accomplished!

Teller is allowed to use some judgment, based on the previous bidding, about whether a doubleton is “Useful.” Here there is no reason *not* to bid seven.

♠ AKJ72	♠ 83	1♥	3♥
♥ AK8765	♥ Q942	4♠	5♣
♠ 5	♠ AQ72	5♦	5♠
♣ A	♣ QJ3	5NT	7♥
		pass	

Same start, but here Asker needs a spade control. 5NT is a substitute for spades, the Kickback suit.

The Third Round Control Ask is available in several other situations. Those are discussed in Chapter 12.

Teller Shows a King

Teller shows kings up the line, starting with 5K+1.

Substitution also applies here. Teller starts with his cheapest king, but 5NT enters into mix. For instance, when diamonds are trumps,

- 5♠, the cheapest bid, shows the spade king
- 5NT, the next cheapest bid, shows the heart king and denies spades
- 6♣ shows the club king, denies both major kings.

♠ 8	♠ AK2	1♦	2♦
♥ KQ85	♥ A3	2♥	2♠
♦ A9863	♦ KQ54	3♣	3♥
♣ AK2	♣ 10754	3NT	4♦
		4♥	4♠
		5♣	5♠
		7♦	pass

2♦	inverted, one-round force
2♥, 2♠	stoppers
3♣	partial stop (for now)
3♥	help in clubs and hearts
3NT	I'm willing to stop here
4♦	not me!
4♥	Kickback for diamonds
4♠	0 or 3
5♣	Queen Ask (4NT would be to play; see below)

When Teller bids 5♠ to show the spade king (in addition to the trump queen), Asker knows he has a parking place for his club loser.

♠ 5	♠ AJ6	1♥	3♥
♥ AK865	♥ Q932	4♠	5♣
♦ AQJ72	♦ K86	5♦	6♦
♣ AK	♣ J93	7♥	pass

Teller has the key king, so Asker bids seven.

♠ 8	♠ AK2	1♦	2♦
♥ AQ85	♥ K3	4♥	4NT
♦ AK963	♦ Q542	5♣	5♠
♣ AK2	♣ 10754	5NT	7♦
		pass	

5♣
5♠
5NT

Queen Ask
cheapest king beyond 5K
Specific King Ask for hearts, the
Kickback suit, by substitution

♠ 8	♠ A72	1♣	2♣
♥ KQJ5	♥ A3	2♥	3NT
♦ A82	♦ K754	4♦	4♥
♣ A9863	♣ KQ54	4♠	5NT
		7♣	pass

You should have a handle on substitution by now. If you aren't sure what all the bids in this auction mean, go back and match them up with the text.

♠ 5	♠ AKJ	1♥	3♥
♥ AK865	♥ Q932	4♠	5♣
♦ AQJ72	♦ 865	5♦	5NT
♣ AK	♣ J93	6♥	pass

Teller shows the trump queen and spade king. Asker settles for the small slam, trusting that partner would not

have bid 3♥ with the diamond king in addition to the honors already shown. If your partner's limit raises are gold-plated, you can bid 6♦ to ask for the diamond king.

♠ AK86	♠ QJ5	1♦	1♥
♥ KJ	♥ A1062	1♠	2♣
♦ J96543	♦ KQ7	2♦	3♦
♣ 7	♣ A93	4♥	4♠
		5♣	5♥
		6♦	pass

(We saw this hand earlier, on page nine.) Without the queen of trumps, Teller would bid 5♦ over the Queen Ask, and Asker would have to pass.

Since Teller actually has the trump queen, he commits to slam. 6♦ would deny extra values, and the queen-jack of spades look great for a possible grand, so Teller bids 5♥, the Kickback suit. Missing an ace or the king of trumps, Asker settles for six.

Note that 5♣, not 4NT, is the Queen Ask in this example, which bring us to our next topic...

Stopping in Four Notrump

When a minor is trumps, Asker may want to sign off in 4NT after learning that two key cards are missing. He does this by *bidding* 4NT. Ah, science!

♠ K103	♠ QJ6	1♦	2♦
♥ AQ8	♥ K5	4♥	4♠
♦ AK752	♦ Q10843	4NT	pass
♣ K9	♣ Q72		

Asker could bid 5♣ here as a Queen Ask, so 4NT is natural, to play.

When a major is trumps, the asking bid and response always carry the auction to at least 4NT, so this is not an issue.

There is a potential ambiguity when clubs are trumps. Over a 4♠ (1 or 4) response, there isn't enough room for both bids: for instance, 1♣-2♣, 4♦-4♠, ? The Queen Ask takes precedence; there is no contract of 4NT available in this auction. When clubs are trumps and Teller's bid is 4♠, 4NT is the Queen Ask. In other minor-suit auctions, Asker's 4NT is to play.

Kantar uses a return to 5♣ in this auction as a Non-Forcing Queen Ask, a grand slam try. It is my belief that the regular Queen Ask, which is good for both small slam and grand slam investigation, is more important than screeching to a halt in 4NT.

We do use a Non-Forcing Queen Ask when the Kickback bid is more than one step above the trump suit. Details can be found in Chapter 6.

0314 or 1430?

"1430" refers to switching the meanings of the one and two-step replies to the initial key-card ask. The first step is 1 or 4, the second is 3 or 0. This is needed in RKC when hearts are trumps, to leave room for a Queen Ask.

In normal Kickback auctions, it doesn't matter which meaning you assign to your one and two-step replies – you have all the room you need for the Queen Ask or other asking bids. When there is a shortage of bidding space it can make a difference.

This occurs most often when the Kickback strain is more than one step above the trump suit. (See Chapter 6).

Feel free to adopt 1430 as your default response scheme. Make sure you discuss the details with your partners.

- Use 0314 when a “weak” hand asks a “strong” hand.
- When does the Non-Forcing Queen Ask apply?
- What are the replies to a Non-Forcing Queen Ask? Kantar offers two choices and Chapter 6 in *Kickback* has another.
- When is 4NT a signoff?
- Remember that 0314 applies in Exclusion Kickback and Six-Ace Kickback.

Queen Ask Summary

1. Following a one or two-step reply to Kickback, the cheapest bid is the Queen Ask. It usually a try for a small slam, but can also be the start of a grand slam auction.
2. Responses to the Queen Ask are:
 - a. 5T: no trump queen, not enough trumps to guarantee a ten-card fit.
 - b. 5K: Teller has the trump queen or a ten-card fit. He denies holding a side king, but does have something useful (a third-round control) in case that's all partner needs to bid seven.
 - c. 5K+1 through 6T-1: trump queen or ten-card fit, king in bid suit (5NT shows the king in the Kickback suit). The auction continues the same as over a King Ask.

- d. 6T: queen or ten-card fit, no side king, no useful feature in a side suit.
3. When a minor is the trump suit, some special rules apply after the initial reply to Kickback.
 - a. Usually, Asker's bid of 4NT is to play.
 - b. When clubs are trumps and the bidding goes 4♦-4♠, Asker's 4NT is the Queen Ask. This is more important than stopping in 4NT.
 - c. When clubs are trumps and it goes 4♦-4♥, 4♠ (Queen Ask), Teller has two ways to deny holding the trump queen, 4NT and 5♣.

Quiz

An open book test, and you even get to see both hands. How should they be bid?

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. ♠ A972
♥ K10
♦ A83
♣ AQ42 | ♠ K8653
♥ A74
♦ KQ6
♣ K6 | 2. ♠ A972
♥ AQ42
♦ K10
♣ A83 | ♠ K6
♥ K8653
♦ A74
♣ KQ6 |
| 3. ♠ A972
♥ AQ42
♦ QJ5
♣ A8 | ♠ K6
♥ K8653
♦ A74
♣ KQ6 | 4. ♠ A972
♥ AQ42
♦ J94
♣ AQ | ♠ K6
♥ K8653
♦ A
♣ KJ652 |
| 5. ♠ K972
♥ AQ42
♦ A10
♣ A83 | ♠ A6
♥ K8653
♦ KQ
♣ KQ65 | 6. ♠ KQ862
♥ A7
♦ 96
♣ QJ63 | ♠ 7
♥ KQ4
♦ A85
♣ AK8752 |

7. ♠ KQ862 ♠ 7
 ♥ 75 ♥ KQ4
 ♦ KQ ♦ A85
 ♣ QJ63 ♣ AK8752

Answers

1.	♠ A972	♠ K8653	1NT	2♥
	♥ K10	♥ A74	3♥	4NT
	♦ A83	♦ KQ6	5♣	5♦
	♣ AQ42	♣ K6	5♠	6♠
			pass	

2♥ transfer to spades
 3♥ Super Accept; 4 trumps, 17 HCP, doubleton heart

The trump queen (instead of in clubs) would be enough for seven, so Asker bids 5♦ to find out. 5♠ denies the queen, and Asker settles for six.

2.	♠ A972	♠ K6	1NT	2♦
	♥ AQ42	♥ K8653	3♦	4♠
	♦ K10	♦ A74	4NT	5♣
	♣ A83	♣ KQ6	5♦	7♥
			pass	

3♦ Super-Accept, doubleton diamond
 4♠ Kickback
 4NT 0 or 3
 5♣ Queen Ask
 5♦ queen of trumps and the diamond king
 7♥ Responder / Asker knows he can ruff the diamond loser

- | | | | | |
|----|--------|---------|------|----|
| 3. | ♠ A972 | ♠ K6 | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | ♥ AQ42 | ♥ K8653 | 3♣ | 4♠ |
| | ♦ QJ5 | ♦ A74 | 4NT | 5♣ |
| | ♣ A8 | ♣ KQ6 | 5♠ | 6♥ |
| | | | Pass | |
- 5♣ Queen Ask
- 5♠ This is 5K, showing the trump queen, no side king but a useful feature somewhere.
- 6♥ Here, Asker can tell there's likely a diamond to lose.
-
- | | | | | |
|----|--------|---------|-----|------|
| 4. | ♠ A972 | ♠ K6 | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | ♥ AQ42 | ♥ K8653 | 3♣ | 4♠ |
| | ♦ J94 | ♦ A | 4NT | 5♣ |
| | ♣ AQ | ♣ KJ652 | 5♠ | 6♣ |
| | | | 7♥ | pass |
- 5♠ trump queen, no side king but something extra
- 6♣ Is it in clubs? (See Chapter 12.)
- 7♥ yes it is
-
- | | | | | |
|----|--------|---------|------|----|
| 5. | ♠ K972 | ♠ A6 | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | ♥ AQ42 | ♥ K8653 | 3♦ | 4♠ |
| | ♦ A10 | ♦ KQ | 4NT | 5♣ |
| | ♣ A83 | ♣ KQ65 | 5NT | 7♥ |
| | | | pass | |

West shows the trump queen and spade king, so East can count 13 tricks. East can see the duplication in diamonds, so he bids the grand in hearts, not notrump.

6.	♠ KQ862	♠ 7	1♠	2♣
	♥ A7	♥ KQ4	3♣	4♦
	♦ 96	♦ A85	4♠	4NT
	♣ QJ63	♣ AK8752	5♠	6♣
			pass	

4NT Queen Ask. Did you remember this exception?

5♠ trump queen and spade king, no heart king. Teller could have the diamond king, though.

7.	♠ KQ862	♠ 7	1♠	2♣
	♥ 75	♥ KQ4	3♣	4♦
	♦ KQ	♦ A85	4♥	4NT
	♣ QJ63	♣ AK8752	pass	

Here 4♠ is available as the Queen Ask, so 4NT is natural.

5. Control Bidding

Some hands do not lend themselves to using Blackwood – hands with a worthless doubleton or a long, broken side suit. On these hands we make control bids (formerly known as cue bids), just like regular Blackwood players.

You can keep your current control bidding methods, whatever they are. You can still play gadgets like Non-Serious Slam Tries and Last Train.

Kickback meshes especially well with the currently popular Italian-style control bidding, in which the partners show first or second round controls up the line. Once that is done, either player can check on key cards to decide whether or not to bid a slam.

There are only two changes to your control bidding methods when playing Kickback:

1. The bid just above four in the trump suit is still Kickback, even if control bids preceded.
2. A non-jump bid of 4NT (as always, when spades aren't trumps) is a substitute for 4K, showing a control in the Kickback suit.

♠ KJ852	♠ 93	1♠	2♦
♥ A5	♥ KQ7	3♦	4♣
♦ Q1065	♦ AK843	4NT	6♦
♣ K9	♣ A53	pass	

3♦ 4-card support
 4♣ control bid

Opener's hand isn't quite good enough to take charge with a Kickback 4♥, so he makes a control bid instead. 4NT shows a control – ace, king, singleton or void – in hearts, the Kickback suit. This does not deny a spade control, since 4♠ instead would show a strong 5-card suit and suggest a contract.

Responder has considerable extra, so he bids the slam. He must assume that partner has a spade control for cooperating in the slam try.

Quiz

How should these hands be bid?

1. ♠ KQJ5 ♠ A73
 ♥ 1065 ♥ 4
 ♦ QJ8 ♦ A72
 ♣ A102 ♣ KJ8754

2. ♠ KQ95 ♠ A73
 ♥ 1065 ♥ 4
 ♦ K85 ♦ AQ2
 ♣ A102 ♣ KJ8754

3. ♠ QJ652 ♠ K4
 ♥ AQ3 ♥ J8
 ♦ K962 ♦ AQ75
 ♣ 6 ♣ AQJ43

Answers

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|----|------|
| 1. ♠ KQJ5 | ♠ A73 | 1♣ | 3♥ |
| ♥ 1065 | ♥ 4 | 3♠ | 4♣ |
| ♦ QJ8 | ♦ A72 | 5♣ | pass |
| ♣ A102 | ♣ KJ8754 | | |

After the splinter raise, West must appreciate the trick-taking value of his spade suit. East temporizes with 4♣, but West has no additional control to show.

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|------|----|
| 2. ♠ KQ95 | ♠ A73 | 1♣ | 3♥ |
| ♥ 1065 | ♥ 4 | 3♠ | 4♣ |
| ♦ K85 | ♦ AQ2 | 4NT | 6♣ |
| ♣ A102 | ♣ KJ8754 | pass | |

Over 4♣, West bids 4NT to show a control in the Kickback suit.

- | | | | |
|------------|---------|------|----|
| 3. ♠ QJ652 | ♠ K4 | 1♠ | 2♣ |
| ♥ AQ3 | ♦ J8 | 2♦ | 3♦ |
| ♦ K962 | ♦ AQ75 | 3NT | 4♣ |
| ♣ 6 | ♣ AQJ43 | 4♦ | 4♠ |
| | | 5♣ | 6♦ |
| | | Pass | |

Over 4♣, West can't bid 4♥ because that would be Kickback. And he can't bid 4NT; that is to play coming immediately after his 3NT bid. So he temporizes with 4♦ and reaches a shaky slam. Responder's 4♠ is non-forcing; passing that might be best.

6. When $K > T+1$

In plain English, the real name of this chapter is “When the Kickback strain is more than one step above the trump suit.” (The “ $>$ ” is the “greater than” symbol.)

As we saw in Chapter 2, this happens in these situations:

- when a bid in a previously-bid major would be natural, a suggestion to stop there, even though a different suit has previous been raised
- when no suit has been agreed, but the suit above the one partner just bid has already been bid, and a jump to four in that suit would be natural.

Now we have less room available, so the Kickback sequences must be modified to take that into account.

Teller's First Response

- a. When the Kickback bid is higher than $4T+1$, we switch to 1430 responses, to get back some of the room lost by using the higher strain for the Kickback bid.
- b. We have less room available than usual for follow up asks. So, with two key cards plus the queen of trumps, Teller Zooms to show more information. (The void-showing responses go away.)

When the Kickback strain is **two steps** above trumps, Teller bids as follows:

- The first three steps are normal 1430: 1 or 4 key cards, 3 or 0, 2 without the queen.
- Holding 2 keys plus the queen, he Zooms to bid as over a Queen Ask:

Four (5T+1)	2 key cards, queen of trumps, no side king <i>but a third-round control somewhere.</i>
Steps 5 to 7	2 plus the queen, cheapest king (5NT is a substitute for T+1, the suit just above the trump suit)
Step 8 (6T)	2 plus the queen, no side kings, no third-round control

Asker must be prepared to be in slam opposite two keys and the trump queen or extra length in trumps.

Let's spell out the possible of cases in detail, starting with step four. Teller has two keys and the trump queen.

Hearts are trumps and 4NT is the Kickback bid:

5♠	this is 5T+1: no side king, some third-round control
5NT	spade king (subbing for the T+1 suit)
6♣	club king, no spade king
6♦	diamond king, no other side king
6♥	no side king, no third-round control

Diamonds are trumps and 4♠ is the Kickback bid:

5♥	no side king, some third-round control
5♠	spade king
5NT	heart (T+1) king, no spade king
6♣	club king, no other side king
6♦	no side king, no third-round control

Clubs are trumps and 4♥ is the Kickback bid:

5♦	no side king, some third-round control
5♥	heart king
5♠	spade king, no heart king
5NT	diamond (T+1) king, no major-suit king
6♣	no side king, no third-round control

♠ Q	♠ 1072	1♥	2♦
♥ AKQ1093	♥ –	2♥	3♦
♦ J75	♦ AKQ1094	4♠	6♣
♣ AQJ	♣ K872	6♦	pass

4♠	Kickback for diamonds
6♣	2 plus the queen, king of clubs (only)

When the Kickback strain is **three steps** above trumps, we have to lose something more – the bid showing “third round control somewhere” goes away.

Now you are committed to slam when Teller has two key cards *without* the queen.

- The first three steps are normal 1430: 1 or 4, 3 or 0, 2 without.

- Holding 2 keys plus the queen, Teller Zooms to bid as over a Queen Ask:

Steps 4 to 6 2 plus the queen, cheapest king (5NT is a sub for T+1, the suit just above the trump suit)

Step 7 (6T) 2 plus the queen, no side kings, might or might not have a third-round control

For example, diamonds are trumps and 4NT is the Kickback bid. Teller has two plus the queen and:

5♠ spade king
 5NT heart king (the T+1 suit), no spade king
 6♣ club king only
 6♦ no side king, says nothing about third-round controls

♠ 9	♠ KQJ54	1♥	1♠
♥ AK874	♥ Q	2♦	3♣
♦ KQ962	♦ A7	3♦	4NT
♣ J5	♣ AKQ98	5NT	6NT
		pass	

4NT Kickback for diamonds; 4♥ or 4♠ would be natural

5NT two with, plus the heart king, no spade king

East has so much strength he can be pretty sure 6NT will have a good play.

The Queen Ask and the Non-Forcing Queen Ask

When there is room, the Queen Ask works as usual. This example shows why 1430 is needed in these space-challenged auctions.

♠ 9	♠ A65	1♥	2♦
♥ AKQ93	♥ 62	3♦	4♠
♦ J1052	♦ A8764	4NT	5♣
♣ KJ5	♣ AQ	5♦	pass

4♠	Kickback for diamonds
4NT	1 or 4 key cards (1430)
5♣	Queen Ask
5♦	sorry

The “one” response is much more frequent than the “zero” response; using 1430 leaves room for a normal Queen Ask.

But when the response is one step below 5T, Asker's bid of 5T becomes a *Non-Forcing Queen Ask*. This is similar to the regular Queen Ask, but Teller's priorities are different:

1. Teller passes with 0 or 1 key card. (When the Kickback strain is three steps above the trump suit, Teller's bid of 5T-1 showed 1 or 4 key cards.)
2. With 3 or 4 key cards, Teller bids on. When not holding the trump queen, he bids 6T.
3. The other responses, besides pass and 6T, are geared toward grand slam bidding. With 3 or 4 keys and the trump queen, but no side kings, Teller makes the cheapest bid, 5T+1. Unlike over a normal Queen Ask, Teller **might or might not have a useful feature**.
4. Holding 3 or 4 keys, the trump queen and at least one side king, Teller shows the cheapest king, starting with 5T+2. 5NT is a substitute for the T+1 suit.

♠ A6	♠ K953	1♦	1♥
♥ A8	♥ KQ76	3♦	4♠
♦ AJ10852	♦ K7	5♣	5♦
♣ QJ4	♣ A73	6♦	pass

- 4♠ Kickback for diamonds
- 5♣ 0 or 3 (1430)
- 5♦ Non-Forcing Queen Ask; signoff if zero, Queen Ask if three
- 6♦ 3 keys, no trump queen

♠ A6	♠ K953	1♦	1♥
♥ A8	♥ K764	3♦	4♠
♦ AQ10852	♦ K7	5♣	5♦

♣ J64

♣ AK3

5♥

5♠

6♦

pass

- 4♠ Kickback for diamonds
- 5♣ zero or three keys (1430)
- 5♦ Non-Forcing Queen Ask
- 5♥ three keys, trump queen, no side king
- 5♠ do you have a spade feature?
- 6♦ sorry, no useful feature at all

Given the early auction, the doubleton spade would not be helpful – ruffing a spade in the long trump hand does not produce an extra trick.

♠ A6

♠ K953

1♦

1♥

♥ A8

♥ K764

3♦

4♠

♦ AQ10852

♦ K7

5♣

5♦

♣ Q64

♣ AK3

5♥

5♠

6♣

7♦

Pass

- 5♦ Non-Forcing Queen Ask
- 5♥ three keys, trump queen, no side king
- 5♠ do you have a spade feature?
- 6♣ no, it's in clubs
- 7♦ that works too!

The King Ask

Now for a King Ask auction where $K > T+1$. When there is room for it, the King Ask is $5T+1$, what would normally be the Kickback suit.

(When there is no room – the reply to Kickback was above the trump suit – then Teller has already Zoomed to show kings.)

♠ A6	♠ K953	1♦	1♥
♥ K8	♥ AQ76	3♦	4♠
♦ AJ10852	♦ KQ	5♦	5♥
♣ QJ4	♣ A73	5NT	6♣
		6♦	7♦
		pass	

- 5♦ two key cards, no trump queen
- 5♥ King Ask (5T+1)
- 5NT no spade king, but does have the ♥K
- 6♣ Specific King Ask for clubs

Responder simply can't stop short of seven. Anything extra in Opener's hand would make the grand icy – a seventh diamond, the heart jack or spade queen; even a third heart would improve the chances considerably. As it is, Opener has a minimum 3♦ bid, so he will have to choose between a finesse and a squeeze.

In the auction above, instead of 5♥, Asker could bid 5♠, 5NT or 6♣. These are Third Round Control Asks, described in Chapter 12.

Chapter Summary

1. When $K > T+1$, switch to 1430.
2. When the Kickback strain is two steps above the trump suit, the void-showing responses go away. Holding "two with," Teller bids as over a normal Queen Ask.

3. When K is three steps above trumps, we also lose the “5K” reply to a Queen Ask. Teller bids 6T with the trump queen and no side king; this neither confirms nor denies a key third-round control.
4. When the reply to Kickback is 5T-1, Asker’s bid of 5T is a Non-Forcing Queen Ask.
5. When there is room for Asker to bid 5T+1, this is the King Ask, as usual. When there is no room, Teller replies to the initial Kickback bid as shown in items 2 and 3 above.

Quiz

How should these hands be bid?

1.

♠ Q10852	♠ A
♥ K97	♥ A106532
♦ A5	♦ KQJ86
♣ A85	♣ 6
2.

♠ Q10852	♠ A
♥ KQ7	♥ A106532
♦ A	♦ KQJ86
♣ A853	♣ 6
3.

♠ A6	♠ K953
♥ AJ10852	♥ KQ
♦ K8	♦ AQ76
♣ K94	♣ A73

Answers

1.	♠ Q10852	♠ A	1♠	2♥
	♥ K97	♥ A106532	3♥	4NT
	♦ A5	♦ KQJ86	5♦	5♥
	♣ A85	♣ 6	6♥	pass

4NT Kickback *for hearts*

5♦ 0 or 3 (1430)

5♥ Non-Forcing Queen Ask

6♥ 3 keys, but I don't have

2.	♠ Q10852	♠ A	1♠	2♥
	♥ KQ7	♥ A106532	3♥	4NT
	♦ A	♦ KQJ86	5♦	5♥
	♣ A853	♣ 6	5♠	7♥
			pass	

5♠ three keys, trump queen, no king but something extra

7♥ don't even need the something extra

3.	♠ A6	♠ K953	1♥	1♠
	♥ AJ10852	♥ KQ	3♥	4NT
	♦ K8	♦ AQ76	5♥	5♠
	♣ K94	♣ A73	6♣	6♦
			7♥	7NT
			pass	

5♥ 2 without

5♠ King Ask

6♣ club king, no king of spades (T+1)

6♦ Specific King Ask

7. Partnership Quiz I

The first six chapters represent the meat and potatoes of Kickback. This seems like a good time for a quiz on what we have covered so far.

All of these hands are from the 1981 Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup. (The same boards were played in both events.) Bid them with your favorite partner.

1981 was a threshold year. Several of the contestants at the World Championships were using that new-fangled gadget, Roman Key Card Blackwood.

On some hands I have made up variations, changing a few cards in order to test you on certain features of Kickback. The actual hand from the tournament is the first one shown.

After you bid the hands, take a look at the suggested auctions. The recommendations are based on Two over One Game Force, 15 - 17 notrumps, and fourth suit forcing to game.

West Hands for Partnership Quiz I

a-1. none vul, West deals

♠ AKJ98 ♥ J106 ♦ 6 ♣ KJ64

a-2. none vul, West deals

♠ J106 ♥ AKJ98 ♦ 6 ♣ KJ64

b. both vul, North deals

♠ 108543 ♥ KQJ4 ♦ KJ ♣ K3

c-1. both vul, West deals

♠ AKJ104 ♥ K4 ♦ 43 ♣ AK102

c-2. both vul, West deals

♠ AKJ104 ♥ K4 ♦ 43 ♣ AK102

c-3. both vul, West deals

♠ AKJ104 ♥ K4 ♦ 43 ♣ AK102

d-1. both vul, South deals

♠ KQ97 ♥ AQ54 ♦ AQ43 ♣ Q

d-2. both vul, South deals

♠ AQ54 ♥ KQ97 ♦ AQ43 ♣ Q

- e. E-W vul., North deals
♠ Q4 ♥ A43 ♦ K632 ♣ AK74
- f-1. N-S vul., South deals
♠ Q763 ♥ 8 ♦ AK62 ♣ KQ104
- g. E-W vul., North deals
♠ AK63 ♥ 7 ♦ KQ742 ♣ K102
- h. N-S vul., South deals
♠ KJ7 ♥ K64 ♦ J10762 ♣ J5
- i-1. E-W vul., East deals
♠ KJ1042 ♥ 4 ♦ KQ6 ♣ J963
- i-2. E-W vul., East deals
♠ KJ1042 ♥ 4 ♦ A64 ♣ K963
- i-3. E-W vul., East deals
♠ KJ1042 ♥ 4 ♦ A64 ♣ KQJ3
- i-4. E-W vul., East deals
♠ 4 ♥ KJ1042 ♦ KQ6 ♣ J963

i-5. E-W vul., East deals

♠ 4 ♥ KJ1042 ♦ A64 ♣ K963

i-6. E-W vul., East deals

♠ 4 ♥ KJ1042 ♦ A64 ♣ KQJ3

j. E-W vul., South deals

♠ AK ♥ AQ ♦ J9 ♣ AK109642

k. N-S vul., South deals

♠ AK54 ♥ K9 ♦ AQJ104 ♣ QJ

l. E-W vul., West deals

♠ AKQ84 ♥ Q ♦ K9532 ♣ 72

m. none vul., North deals

♠ AQ104 ♥ – ♦ AJ862 ♣ 10842

n-1. E-W vul., West deals. North bids 2♥, South bids 4♥.

♠ AK83 ♥ J ♦ AK10972 ♣ A6

n-2. E-W vul., West deals. North bids 2♥, South bids 4♥.

♠ AK83 ♥ J ♦ AK10972 ♣ A6

East Hands for Partnership Quiz I

a-1. none vul, West deals

♠ Q432 ♥ KQ82 ♦ AJ3 ♣ A8

a-2. none vul, West deals

♠ KQ82 ♥ Q432 ♦ AJ3 ♣ A8

b. both vul., North deals

♠ QJ6 ♥ A ♦ AQ10763 ♣ A54

c-1. both vul., West deals

♠ Q ♥ QJ96 ♦ KQJ10 ♣ Q874

c-2. both vul., West deals

♠ 7 ♥ AJ96 ♦ KQJ10 ♣ Q874

c-3. both vul., West deals

♠ 7 ♥ AJ96 ♦ AK72 ♣ Q874

d-1. both vul., South deals

♠ A865 ♥ 8 ♦ K95 ♣ A6542

d-2. both vul., South deals

♠ 8 ♥ A865 ♦ K95 ♣ A6542

- e. E-W vul., North deals
♠ K85 ♥ K8 ♦ AQ84 ♣ QJ103
- f-1. N-S vul., South deals
♠ AJ ♥ AQJ54 ♦ QJ1083 ♣ 5
- g. E-W vul., North deals
♠ 98 ♥ AK106 ♦ AJ1065 ♣ Q6
- h. N-S vul., South deals
♠ AQ2 ♥ A ♦ AKQ4 ♣ A10862
- i-1. E-W vul., East deals
♠ AQ763 ♥ AJ105 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ7
- i-2. E-W vul., East deals
♠ AQ763 ♥ AJ105 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ7
- i-3. E-W vul., East deals
♠ AQ763 ♥ AJ105 ♦ 2 ♣ A74
- i-4. E-W vul., East deals
♠ AJ105 ♥ AQ763 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ7

i-5. E-W vul., East deals

♠ AJ105 ♥ AQ763 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ7

i-6. E-W vul., East deals

♠ AJ105 ♥ AQ763 ♦ 2 ♣ A74

j. E-W vul., South deals

♠ Q764 ♥ KJ1062 ♦ A105 ♣ 7

k. N-S vul., South deals

♠ 10 ♥ J43 ♦ 6 ♣ AK1096543

l. E-W vul., West deals

♠ J ♥ AKJ10985 ♦ Q864 ♣ A

m. none vul., North deals

♠ – ♥ AKQJ109654 ♦ K ♣ K65

n-1. E-W vul., West deals. North bids 2♥, South bids 4♥.

♠ Q9742 ♥ Q3 ♦ Q865 ♣ 105

n-2. E-W vul., West deals. North bids 2♥, South bids 4♥.

♠ Q9742 ♥ A3 ♦ Q865 ♣ 105

Suggested Auctions for Partnership Quiz I

a. none vul., West deals (Round 12, Board 11)

a-1.	♠ AKJ98	♠ Q432	1♠	2NT
	♥ J106	♥ KQ82	3♦	4NT
	♦ 6	♦ AJ3	5♥	6♠
	♣ KJ64	♣ A8	pass	

2NT Jacoby; game-forcing raise, typically a balanced hand with 4+ trumps
 3♦ singleton or void

This slam looks awfully easy to bid, but in the World Championships only five pairs, out of the ten holding these cards, reached six spades. (Two pairs used RKC to reach slam, and three others guessed well.)

The East hand isn't perfect for Blackwood, but it's close enough. It's not like control bidding would pinpoint the jack-ten of hearts!

a-2.	♠ J106	♠ KQ82	1♥	2NT
	♥ AKJ98	♥ Q432	3♦	4♠
	♦ 6	♦ AJ3	5♦	6♥
	♣ KJ64	♣ A8	pass	

b. both vul., North deals (Round 3, Board 23)

♠ 108543	♠ QJ6	—	1♦
♥ KQJ4	♥ A	1♠	3♦
♦ KJ	♦ AQ10763	3♥	3♠
♣ K3	♣ A54	4♠	pass

West shows good hand evaluation here. Slam in spades is worth bidding if East has AKQ of spades and two side

aces, or AKx and *three* side aces. Either holding is too much for a (standard) 3♦ rebid, so West just bids game. East passes reluctantly.

c. both vul., West deals (Finals, Board 90)

c-1.	♠ AKJ104	♠ Q	1♠	2♣
	♥ K4	♥ QJ96	3♣	3NT
	♦ 43	♦ KQJ10	4♦	4♥
	♣ AK102	♣ Q874	4NT	pass

After the routine 1♠ opening, Responder bids his 4-card suits “up the line,” allowing any 4-4 fit to be discovered early. Opener takes a slight chance with the 4♦ bid, but is certainly too strong to pass 3NT. In this auction 4♠ is available for a Queen Ask, so 4NT is to play.

c-2.	♠ AKJ104	♠ 7	1♠	2♣
	♥ K4	♥ AJ96	3♣	3NT
	♦ 43	♦ KQJ10	4♦	4♠
	♣ AK102	♣ Q874	4NT	5NT
			6♣	pass

Here, 4NT is needed as the Queen Ask, and we reach the odds-on slam. Teller can’t bid 5♦ (=5K); that would show extras but deny a king. 5NT shows the diamond king and denies a major-suit king.

c-3.	♠ AKJ104	♠ 7	1♠	2♣
	♥ K4	♥ AJ96	3♣	3NT
	♦ 43	♦ AK72	4♦	5♣
	♣ AK102	♣ Q874	5♦	5NT
			7♣	pass

East shows two key cards plus the trump queen, so West continues with a King Ask. East shows the diamond king by substitution. This is enough to make seven look worthwhile. It turns out to be under the 67% requirement implied by the scoring table, but still very playable.

d. both vul., South deals (Semi-finals, Board 7)

d-1.	♠ KQ97	♠ A865	1♦	1♠
	♥ AQ54	♥ 8	4♣	4NT
	♦ AQ43	♦ K95	5♣	5♦
	♣ Q	♣ A6542	5NT	6♠
			pass	

5♦ Queen Ask

5NT "5K" shows the trump queen, extras, no side king

Arnold-Levin had this same auction, except Asker bid 7♠, not six. Too much.

d-2.	♠ AQ54	♠ 8	1♦	1♥
	♥ KQ97	♥ A865	4♣	4♠
	♦ AQ43	♦ K95	4NT	5♣
	♣ Q	♣ A6542	5♠	6♥
			pass	

5♣ Queen Ask
 5♠ here, 5♠ is "5K"

e. E-W vul., North deals (Round 12, Board 19)

♠ Q4	♠ K85	—	1NT
♥ A43	♥ K8	2♠	3♣
♦ K632	♦ AQ84	4♣	4♦
♣ AK74	♣ QJ103	4♥	6♣
		pass	

2♠ is Minor-Suit Stayman. Responder confirms clubs as trumps, leaving the next move up to Opener. Here Opener has a good hand for Kickback.

If you play 4-suit transfers instead of MSS, you need another way. I'm experimenting with bidding 4♠ over 1NT to invite slam and ask for four-card suits up the line. Details in my next book; working title *The Right Way to Play Four-Suit Transfers*.

f-1. N-S vul., South deals (Round 10, Board 16)

♠ Q763	♠ AJ	1♦	1♥
♥ 8	♥ AQJ54	1♠	2♣
♦ AK62	♦ QJ1083	3♣	3♦
♣ KQ104	♣ 5	4♦	4♥
		5♣	6♦
		pass	

Opener's 3♣ is natural, therefore 4=1=4=4 or 4=0=5=4 distribution. Over 3♦, Opener bids 4♦ to show a willingness to play slam, and Responder asks for key cards. (Since the 2♣ bid was artificial, 3♣ doesn't count as a raise – so we use regular Kickback, not the Six-Ace variety.)

g. E-W vul., North deals (Round 7, Board 12)

♠ AK63	♠ 98	—	1♦
♥ 7	♥ AK106	1♠	1NT
♦ KQ742	♦ AJ1065	2♣	2♥
♣ K102	♣ Q6	3♦	4♦
		4♥	5♣
		6♦	pass

2♣ is Checkback Stayman; 3♦ is game forcing. 4♦ firmly sets the trump suit, so 4♥ is Kickback for diamonds.

West has a 5-loser hand, so the slam try is clearly right. We can stop in 4NT if that is best, or 5♦ if necessary.

h. N-S vul., South deals (Round 7, Board 31)

♠ KJ7	♠ AQ2	pass	2♣
♥ K64	♥ A	2♦	3♣
♦ J10762	♦ AKQ4	3♦	4♦
♣ J5	♣ A10862	4♥	5♦
		5♥	6♦
		pass	

- 2♦ semi-positive; some values but no 5-card suit with two of the top three honors
- 3♦ natural
- 4♥ Kickback for diamonds
- 5♦ five plus the queen!
- 5♥ King Ask
- 6♦ no side king
- Pass what a bad card-holder you are!

i. E-W vul., East deals (Finals, Board 22)

i-1.	♠ KJ1042	♠ AQ763	—	1 ♠
	♥ 4	♥ AJ105	4 ♥	4NT
	♦ KQ6	♦ 2	5 ♦	6 ♠
	♣ J963	♣ AQ7	pass	

i-2.	♠ KJ1042	♠ AQ763	—	1 ♠
	♥ 4	♥ AJ105	4 ♥	4NT
	♦ A64	♦ 2	5 ♠	5NT
	♣ K963	♣ AQ7	6 ♣	7 ♠
			pass	

Asker can count three heart ruffs in dummy, since Teller has promised the trump queen, which must mean five-card support.

i-3.	♠ KJ1042	♠ AQ763	—	1 ♠
	♥ 4	♥ AJ105	4 ♥	4NT
	♦ A64	♦ 2	5 ♠	5NT
	♣ KQJ3	♣ A74	7 ♠	pass

The KQJ3 of clubs should provide the tricks needed for seven, so Teller bids it.

i-4.	♠ 4	♠ AJ105	—	1 ♥
	♥ KJ1042	♥ AQ763	3 ♠	4 ♠
	♦ KQ6	♦ 2	5 ♣	6 ♥
	♣ J963	♣ AQ7	pass	

i-5.	♠ 4	♠ AJ105	—	1 ♥
	♥ KJ1042	♥ AQ763	3 ♠	4 ♠
	♦ A64	♦ 2	5 ♥	5 ♠
	♣ K963	♣ AQ7	6 ♣	7 ♥
			pass	

Here 6♣ shows the club king and denies the king of spades, the Kickback suit.

i-6.	♠ 4	♠ AJ105	–	1♥
	♥ KJ1042	♥ AQ763	3♠	4♠
	♦ A64	♦ 2	5♥	5♠
	♣ KQJ3	♣ A74	7♥	pass

j. E-W vul., South deals (Finals, Board 12)

♠ AK	♠ Q764	2♣	2♦
♥ AQ	♥ KJ1062	3♣	3♥
♦ J9	♦ A105	4♥	4♠
♣ AK109642	♣ 7	4NT	5♣
		5NT	7♥
		pass	

East's 2♦ bid is semi-positive.

West has a difficult decision over 3♥; the raise to 4♥ certainly works well on this layout. Now it's up to East. The East hand isn't ideal for Blackwood, but the values should be there – partner did open 2♣, after all.

East's 5♣ asks for the queen of trumps. West has it, and shows the cheapest king (spades) on the way to 6♥. 5NT denies the king of diamonds; this implies that West's clubs are strong. That's all East needs.

- k. N-S vul., South deals (Semi-finals, Board 64)

♠ AK54	♠ 10	1♦	2♣
♥ K9	♥ J43	2♠	3♣
♦ AQJ104	♦ 6	4♥	5♣
♣ QJ	♣ AK1096543	6NT	pass

West could raise to 4♣, but this looks like a Blackwood hand. Since no suit has been agreed, a jump in the unbid suit is Kickback. (Though 3♦ here would be forcing, 4♦ is a slam try with a powerful suit.) West bids the slam in notrump to protect the heart king. Also, he expects more in high cards from East.

- l. E-W vul., West deals (Semi-finals, Board 47)

♠ AKQ84	♠ J	1♠	2♥
♥ Q	♥ AKJ10985	3♦	4NT
♦ K9532	♦ Q864	5♥	6♦
♣ 72	♣ A	pass	

East can't ask with 4♥ or 4♠, since those bids are natural, so a jump in the cheapest unbid "suit" – in this case 4NT – is Kickback for diamonds.

- m. none vul., North deals (Round 12, Board 17)

♠ AQ104	♠ –	–	2♣
♥ –	♥ AKQJ109654	2♦	3♥
♦ AJ862	♦ K	3♠	4♣
♣ 10842	♣ K65	4♦	6♥
		pass	

A 2♣ opening followed by a jump sets the trump suit and initiates control bidding. We have had this bid in our system forever; it just has never come up before.

n. E-W vul., West deals (Round 11, Board 31)

n-1.	♠ AK83	♠ Q9742	1♦ (2♥)	2♠ (4♥)
	♥ J	♥ Q3	4NT	5♣
	♦ AK10972	♦ Q865	5♥	5NT
	♣ A6	♣ 105	6♠	pass

Thank heaven for non-forcing free bids! (Did I forget to mention those?)

I realize that non-forcing free bids fell out of favor pretty quickly, but I have played them for 30 years and they have always worked great. Well, almost always.

Note that 5♥ is the Queen Ask. This is a non-agreement auction, so 5♦ would be to play.

It will be harder to get to slam if East has to pass over 2♥. Perhaps 1♦ (2♥) pass (4♥), 4♠ - 5♠, 6♠ - pass.

n-2.	♠ AK83	♠ Q9742	1♦ (2♥)	2♠ (4♥)
	♥ J	♥ A3	4NT	5♦
	♦ AK10972	♦ Q865	5♥	5NT
	♣ A6	♣ 105	6♦	7♠
			pass	

Over the Queen Ask, East shows the trump queen and another useful card. West asks if it's in diamonds and East says it is.

Playing forcing free bids, Responder can show the heart ace over 4♠, and Opener might bid seven:

1♦ (2♥) pass (4♥), 4♠ - 5♥, 7♠? - pass.

8. Interference

If the previous chapters are meat and potatoes, then the rest of the book is gravy. With a few exotic side dishes thrown in.

Teller needs some way to cope when his RHO interferes over partner's Kickback bid.

Here are the vanilla versions of ROPI, DOPI and DEPO. Spice them up if you must.

Redouble 0, Pass 1 (ROPI)

Playing traditional Blackwood, 4NT is rarely doubled. But using Kickback, the asking bid will frequently get doubled for the lead. If the Kickback bid is doubled,

redouble	0 or 3 key cards
pass	1 or 4 key cards
one step	2 without the queen
two steps	2 with the queen

When RHO makes an overcall below five of the trump suit, we use DOPI: Double with 0 or 3, pass with 1 or 4, one step shows two without, two steps shows two with.

Double Even, Pass Odd (DEPO)

Use DEPO when the overcall is *at or above* five in our trump suit.

double	0 or 2 or 4
pass	1 or 3

Quiz

What do various calls mean in these auctions?

1. 1♥ (pass) 3♥ (4♦)
 4♠ (4NT) ?
2. 1♥ (pass) 3♥ (3♠)
 4♠ (dbl) ?
3. 1♥ (pass) 3♥ (4♥)
 4♠ (5♥) ?

Answers

1. Double 0 or 3 key cards
 Pass 1 or 4 key cards
 5♣ 2 without the queen of trumps
 5♦ 2 with the queen
2. Redouble 0 or 3
 Pass 1 or 4
 4NT 2 without
 5♣ 2 with
3. Double 0 or 2 or 4 key cards
 Pass 1 or 3

9. Showing a Useful Void

Partner launches into Kickback and you have a void. What to do? First, mentally review the Reality Check below. Then show your void if it looks to be key.

Reality Check

1. Any of the void-showing responses commits the hand to slam. Think hard about doing this with zero or one key card.
2. If you make a void-showing response, you take away bidding space that Asker might need for a Queen Ask, King Ask or Third-Round Control Ask.
3. How do you know your void is useful?
 - a. If partner has bid the suit, it probably won't be useful.
 - b. If the opponents have bid the suit, the void might not be useful. Partner has Kx or better to launch into Kickback, so fillers in his long suits will be more important than a void in the opponents' suit.
 - c. If no one has bid the suit, partner might be thinking it's a source of tricks, holding KQxxx or some such.

Unless you can be fairly certain your void will help partner's hand, just give your normal Kickback response.

Here's a hand we saw earlier (page 12). In the actual Challenge the Champs hand, East had a void in partner's suit.

♠ AKQ1092	♠ –	1♠	2♣
♥ Q	♥ 1064	2♠	3♣
♦ AQJ	♦ K865	4♦	5♣
♣ J65	♣ AKQ1094	6♣	pass

Teller ignores the void in partner's spade suit, and makes his normal four-step response.

Void-Showing Responses, No Splinter

Over Asker's Kickback bid of 4K, Teller bids:

5K	even number of key cards, void in unspecified suit
more	odd number of key cards, void in bid suit (or another by substitution). A bid of 6T-1 denies holding the trump queen.
6T	odd number of keys cards, void in T-1, queen of trumps

After an "Even" Response

Continuations include:

- A return to the trump suit (6T) is a signoff. Following the general rule, any other bid is a try for seven.
- Over Teller's even-number response, Asker can make the cheapest bid to ask where the void is.

Once Asker knows where partner's void is, the cheapest bid (if there is room below the trump suit) is the Queen Ask. Bid 6T without it, bid seven if you have it.

- Usually, Asker will be able to tell where partner's void is. If so, he can make a Queen Ask immediately over 5K, by bidding two steps (5K+2). Again, this is a try for seven.
- If there is room, Asker can make a Specific King Ask – either immediately over 5K or after learning the void. Teller bids seven with the king or signs off in 6T.

These rules include the phrase “if there is room.” Actually, we are so short on space in these auctions, there is room in only one suit, 6T-1 (also known as 5K+3).

♠ KQ83	♠ A76	1♦	1♥
♥ AK4	♥ Q9863	1♠	3♦
♦ AQ532	♦ K10764	4♥	5♥
♣ 4	♣ –	5♠	6♣
		7♦	pass

5♥	0 or 2 key cards, some void
5♠	asks for the void
6♣	club void (5NT would show a spade void)
7♦	easy

Four hearts is Kickback for diamonds. Opener could bid 3♥ instead, to set up a game force and make Six-Ace Kickback available later.

♠ A853	♠ –	1♦	1♥
♥ 4	♥ AQ852	1♠	2♣
♦ AK74	♦ Q9863	3♣	3♦
♣ KQJ2	♣ A74	4♥	5♥
		5NT	7♦
		pass	

2♣	4 th suit forcing to game
3♣	4-card suit
4♥	Kickback for diamonds
5♥	two key cards + a void
5NT	two steps above 5K: Queen Ask
7♦	yes

Asker knows that partner has the aces of clubs and hearts, so the void must be in spades. This allows Asker to make an immediate Queen Ask.

After an "Odd" Response

- The cheapest bid (not trumps!) is the Queen Ask, trying for a grand slam.
- If there is room, a bid of 6T-1, if not needed for a Queen Ask, is a Specific King Ask.

♠ AQ75	♠ K92	1♣	1♥
♥ AK	♥ Q8654	2♠	4♣
♦ K7	♦ —	4♦	5NT
♣ K8632	♣ A9754	7♣	pass

2♠	natural game force, unbalanced
4♣	sets trumps, slam try
4♦	Kickback
5NT	1 or 3 key cards, void in the Kickback suit. Since this bid is 6T-1, it denies the queen of trumps

Opener takes a slight risk in bidding 7♣. Partner has no diamonds and at most three spades, so almost certainly five trumps.

♠ K985	♠ –	1♦	2♦
♥ AQ	♥ K973	4♥	5♠
♦ KQJ74	♦ A8752	6♣	7♦
♣ AJ	♣ K764	pass	

The 5♠ bid shows 1 or 3 key cards and a spade void. Asker has room now for a Queen Ask (5NT) or a specific King Ask in clubs (6♣). The club king doesn't make seven a laydown, but it is definitely odds-on.

Void-Showing Responses after a Splinter Raise

When partner uses Kickback after a splinter raise, it is much more likely that your void is the key to slam. He liked hearing about your singleton, he might love that it's a void.

Also, since the void suit is known, there is more bidding space to work with.

Over 4K, Teller bids as follows to show a void in the splinter suit:

5K	even number of key cards
5K+1	odd number of keys with the trump queen
5K+2 or 3	odd number, no trump queen, king in a specific side suit
6T	odd number, no trump queen, no side king

After an "Even" Response

The auction has gone 4K-5K, showing (zero or) two key cards with a void in the splinter suit. Asker can now bid:

1 step (5K+1)	Queen Ask
2 or 3 steps (5K+2 or 3)	Specific King Ask
4 steps (6T)	to play

Those bids of 5K+2 and 5K+3 require further explanation. There are two suits in which Asker may want to make a Specific King Ask – *not* the trump suit and *not* Teller's void.

5K+2 asks for the king in the lower of the two side suits. By "lower" we mean C-D-H-S order: clubs are lowest, spades are highest.

5K+3 asks for the king in the higher side suit.

♠ AQ95	♠ K64	1♥	4♣
♥ AQ872	♥ K10953	4♠	5♠
♦ K4	♦ A9765	6♦	7♥
♣ Q8	♣ –	pass	

- 5♠ even number with a void in the splinter suit
- 6♦ this is 5K+3, a Specific King Ask in the higher side suit, spades. 6♣ instead would ask in the lower side suit, diamonds.
- 7♥ I have the king

♠ KQ95	♠ A82	1♦	4♣
♥ A3	♥ K76	4♥	5♥
♦ AJ54	♦ K1097632	5NT	7♦
♣ A96	♣ –	pass	

- 4♣ the splinter bid in clubs shows at least six trumps
- 5♥ 0 or 2 keys, club void

5NT Specific King Ask in hearts, the lower of the two “other” suits. 6♣ instead would ask in spades.

After an “Odd” Response

With 1 or 3 key cards and a void in the splinter suit, Teller bids:

5K+1	with the trump queen
5K+2	no trump queen, king in the lower of the two side suits
5K+3	no trump queen, king in the higher of the two side suits
6T	no trump queen, no side king

♠ K9854	♠ A10632	1♠	4♥
♥ 965	♥ —	4NT	6♣
♦ AKJ4	♦ 8732	6♦	7♣
♣ A	♣ KQ84	7♠	pass

6♣ heart void, odd number with the trump queen or a ten-card fit

Over 6♣, 6♦ is a Specific King Ask in clubs, the lower side suit. Holding both the king and queen, Teller “raises” clubs.

The club queen makes this a good contract. If Responder held the spade queen instead (to provide enough points for the splinter bid), Opener would have to bring in the diamonds.

♠ A7	♠ –	1♥	3♠
♥ K9854	♥ A10632	4♠	5NT
♦ AKQJ10	♦ 8732	6♣	7♣
♣ A	♣ KQ84	7NT	pass

5NT odd number with queen

6♣ King Ask in clubs, the lower non-trump, non-void suit

7♣ king and queen

7NT 14 tricks

♠ A9	♠ K762	1♥	4♦
♥ KQ8752	♥ A1063	4♠	6♦
♦ 975	♦ –	7♥	pass
♣ AK	♣ Q8652		

Teller's 6♦ is 5K+3, showing a void in the splinter suit, 1 or 3 key cards, no trump queen, and the king of spades, the higher side suit.

♠ 974	♠ –	1♣	3♠
♥ AJ7	♥ KQ2	4♦	5♠
♦ AQ3	♦ K965	5NT	6♥
♣ AK96	♣ J107542	7♣	pass

In this auction, 5♠ is "5K+2", showing the king in the lower side suit. 5NT (5K+3) would show the king in the higher but not the lower.

Over Teller's 5♠, Asker bids 5NT to ask about the king in hearts, the higher side suit. Teller bids 6♥ to show both the king and queen.

Showing Shortness the Old-Fashioned Way

These “splinter with void” responses also apply when you have pinpointed your short suit naturally, by bidding two suits and jumping in a third.

♠ Q87	♠ AKJ62	1♥	1♠
♥ AK963	♥ 5	2♣	2♦
♦ –	♦ K1083	3♠	4NT
♣ AQ1075	♣ K64	5NT	6♣
		6♥	7♠
		pass	

5NT 2 keys, diamond void

6♣ Queen Ask

6♥ yes, plus the king of hearts, the higher side

suit

Void-Showing Summary

1. Show your void only if it will be useful to partner.
2. When you have not made a splinter bid (nor shown your shortness naturally), reply to Kickback as follows:
 - A. 5K: even number of key cards, void in unspecified suit. Now Asker bids:
 - 1) One step: asks for the void
 - 2) Two steps: Queen Ask; I can tell where the void is
 - 3) Three steps: Specific King Ask
 - 4) 6T: signoff
 - B. More than 5K: odd number, void in bid suit (5NT substitutes for the Kickback suit). A jump to 6T-1

denies holding the trump queen. A jump to 6T shows a void in T-1 *with* the trump queen.

3. When you *have* made a splinter raise (or shown your shortness naturally), reply to Kickback like this:
 - A. 5K: even number of key cards
 - B. 5K+1: odd number with the trump queen
 - C. 5K+2: odd number, no trump queen, king in the lower of the two side suits
 - D. 5K+3: odd number, no trump queen, king in the higher of the two side suits
 - E. 6T: odd number, no trump queen, no side king

Over 3B and 3C, Asker can make a Specific King Ask in the lower or higher side suit by bidding 5K+2 or 5K+3.

Quiz

1.

♠ K8652	1♠	2♣
♥ 7	2♦	3♠
♦ AKQ63	4NT	6♦
♣ KQ	?	

The 3♠ bid shows primary support, and is a slam try. What does partner have? What do you bid now?

2.

♠ AJ3	1♥	4♦
♥ KQ8652	4♠	6♣
♦ 983	?	
♣ A		

What does partner have? What do you bid now?

- | | | |
|------------|----|----|
| 3. ♠ 10853 | 1♥ | 3♠ |
| ♥ AQ972 | 4♠ | 5♠ |
| ♦ KQ | ? | |
| ♣ AQ | | |

What does partner have? What do you bid now?

- | | | |
|----------|----|----|
| 4. ♠ A93 | 1♦ | 3♠ |
| ♥ KQ52 | 4♥ | 6♦ |
| ♦ A8654 | ? | |
| ♣ K | | |

What does partner have? What do you bid now?

Answers

- | | | |
|------------|-----|----|
| 1. ♠ K8652 | 1♠ | 2♣ |
| ♥ 7 | 2♦ | 3♠ |
| ♦ AKQ63 | 4NT | 6♦ |
| ♣ KQ | ? | |

Partner has a diamond void and (one or) three key cards. With one key and a void in Asker's suit, Teller would not show the void. All you need for seven is the queen of trumps; bid 6♥ to ask for it.

- | | | |
|----------|----|----|
| 2. ♠ AJ3 | 1♥ | 4♦ |
| ♥ KQ8652 | 4♠ | 6♣ |
| ♦ 983 | ? | |
| ♣ A | | |

Partner's bid of 5K+2 shows a diamond void, one key card (the ace of hearts), no trump queen and the club king. Bid 6♦ (=5K+3), a Specific King Ask in spades.

It's possible to picture a splinter raise without enough stuff to make seven, say Qxxx AJxx – Kxxxx.

- | | | |
|------------|----|----|
| 3. ♠ 10853 | 1♥ | 3♠ |
| ♥ AQ972 | 4♠ | 5♠ |
| ♦ KQ | ? | |
| ♣ AQ | | |

Partner has a spade void and two key cards (diamond ace, heart king). If he has the club king, seven should be fairly icy.

You could bid 6♣ to ask for the club king, but you don't need to. If partner doesn't have it, you may need the jack of diamonds in his hand. Even in the worst case (– KJxx Axxx Jxxxx), the grand will have decent chances. This looks like a clear 7♥ bid.

- | | | |
|----------|----|----|
| 4. ♠ A93 | 1♦ | 3♠ |
| ♥ KQ52 | 4♥ | 6♦ |
| ♦ A8654 | ? | |
| ♣ K | | |

Partner has three key cards (we hope!), a spade void but no trump queen or side king. Responder needs five trumps for this auction – with 0=3=4=6 he would have responded 2♣, not 3♠. Bid the grand.

10. Exclusion Kickback

You have found a fit, and slam chances look promising. But you have a void suit, so Blackwood / Kickback isn't appropriate. What to do?

The traditional solution on these hands is to control bid, and that route is always open to you. Beware, though, that control bidding a void is risky; partner might think highly of the king or queen in the suit, when he should actually devalue them.

If asking for key cards looks right, Exclusion Kickback is the answer. After trump agreement, a jump beyond 4K is Exclusion Kickback. Asker jumps in his void suit or, when void in the suit one step above trumps, jumps in notrump. Teller shows key cards, *not counting the ace in Asker's void suit*.

one step	0 or 3 key cards
two steps	1 key card
three steps	2 key cards, no queen of trumps
four steps	two with, king in the lower side suit
five steps	two with, king in the higher side suit
6T	2 key cards, queen of trumps, no side king

Steps four and five follow the same scheme as in Chapter 9. There are two kings of interest: *not* the trump suit, *not* Asker's void suit.

Following a one or two-step reply, Asker can continue asking.

- The cheapest bid (not trumps) is a Queen Ask. If higher than 5T, it's a grand slam try. Teller jumps in

trumps with the queen or extra length, bids trumps at the minimum level without.

- Higher non-trump bids are Specific King Asks for the lower and higher side suits. As always, these are tries for seven.

When the reply to Exclusion Kickback is three steps or more, there is no Queen Ask – Teller has already shown or denied holding the queen.

♠ KQ964	♠ A832	1♠	3♠
♥ –	♥ AQ5	5♥	5NT
♦ AKQJ4	♦ 763	6♠	pass
♣ K32	♣ J85		

5♥ Exclusion Kickback
5NT 1 key outside of hearts

♠ –	♠ K95	1♥	3♥
♥ KQ964	♥ A832	4NT	5♥
♦ AKQJ4	♦ 763	7♥	pass
♣ K32	♣ A85		

4NT Exclusion Kickback, void in spades
5♥ this is step three, showing two keys outside of
spades, no trump queen

♠ –	♠ Q72	1♣	2♣
♥ KQ85	♥ A9	4♠	5♥
♦ AQ7	♦ K93	7♣	pass
♣ AJ10872	♣ KQ653		

5♥ (four steps) shows two key cards, the trump queen and the king of diamonds. 5♠ instead would show the higher side-suit king, hearts.

♠ –	♠ Q72	1♣	2♣
♥ AK85	♥ 96	4♠	5♣
♦ AQ7	♦ K93	5♥	7♣
♣ KJ10872	♣ AQ653	pass	

5♣ one key card outside of spades

5♥ Specific King Ask in the lower side suit, diamonds. A bid of 5♦ instead would be a Queen Ask – a grand slam try, since it commits to slam.

♠ A109	♠ –	1♦	1♥
♥ Q6	♥ AK943	2♦	4NT
♦ AK8763	♦ Q974	5♥	7♦
♣ J7	♣ AK43	pass	

At Responder's second turn, 4♥ would be natural and 4♠ would be Kickback for diamonds, so 4NT is Exclusion Kickback with a spade void.

Opener, having already promised six diamonds, shows two without. Responder gambles slightly in bidding the grand.

♠ AQ83	♠ K107	1♦	2♦
♥ –	♥ Q97	4NT	5♠
♦ AJ962	♦ KQ75	6♣	7♦
♣ KQ84	♣ A65	pass	

2♦ inverted raise. Please don't bid 3NT on a hand like this one – there might be a slam.

- 4NT Exclusion Kickback, void in hearts, since 4♥ would be regular Kickback
- 5♠ Step 4: two key cards outside of hearts, trump queen, king in the lower side suit
- 6♣ How about the king in the higher side suit, spades?
- 7♦ I have that, too

When the Exclusion Ask Is above 5T

If the Exclusion ask is above five in the trump suit, that must be a grand slam try, of course. Teller bids by steps, up to and including 6T. If he has more than whatever 6T shows, he bids seven. (Step one shows zero key cards, not three.)

♠ K87	♠ AJ3	1♥	4♦
♥ AQ842	♥ K9763	6♣	7♥
♦ AKQJ5	♦ 8	pass	
♣ –	♣ K873		

Asker has to jump for Exclusion Kickback, so 6♣ is the bid. (A bid of 5♣ over 4♦ would be a control bid, showing a club control but denying one in spades.) Make sure you can handle any response before committing to this level. Teller hold two key cards, so he jumps to seven.

The Grand Slam Non-Force

Playing Kickback and Exclusion Kickback, we rarely have need for the Grand Slam Non-Force (Jeff Rubens's name for it). With a freak hand, the GSNF can be just what the doctor ordered.

♠ 5	♠ AKQ862	1♥	5♠
♥ AJ10853	♥ K762	6♥	7♥
♦ KJ5	♦ –	pass	
♣ Q96	♣ A74		

Five spades (5T+1) is the Grand Slam Non-Force. I like Edgar Kaplan's scheme of responses, adjusted to use steps:

one step	no top honor (A, K or Q)
two steps	one top honor, the queen
three	one top honor, the ace or king
four	one top honor, the ace or king, plus extra length
more	two top honors

Here Opener / Teller shows the ace or king with an extra heart, so Responder / Asker bids the grand.

Quiz

Partner makes the bid shown. How do you respond?

- | | | |
|--------|----|----|
| ♠ Q952 | 1♠ | 3♠ |
| ♥ KQ3 | 5♦ | ? |
| ♦ A107 | | |
| ♣ 843 | | |
- | | | |
|--------|----|----|
| ♠ Q952 | 1♠ | 3♠ |
| ♥ KQ3 | 5♥ | ? |
| ♦ A107 | | |
| ♣ 843 | | |
- | | | |
|---------|----|----|
| ♠ A9654 | 1♣ | 1♠ |
| ♥ KQ87 | 2♥ | 3♥ |
| ♦ A10 | 5♦ | ? |
| ♣ 54 | | |

4. ♠ KQJ865	1 ♠	2 ♦
♥ A103	3 ♦	3 ♥
♦ K954	5 ♣	6 ♦
♣ —	?	

Answers

1. You have none of the cards partner is asking for, so bid one step, 5♥.
2. Even though the hand looks worse opposite a heart void, you have to answer partner's question. Bid two steps, or 5NT.
3. You have two key cards plus the trump queen, so must bid more than three steps – more than 5NT. Your bid is 6♥, the trump suit, denying any side kings.

6♣ instead would show the lower-ranking side king (clubs), and 6♦ the higher-ranking king (spades).
4. Bid 7♦. Partner has two key cards and the queen of trumps. No side king, but the spades will provide the tricks and pitches you need.

11. Six-Ace Kickback

This convention is for use when there is a double fit, when two suits have been raised. You may also use Six-Ace Kickback when one partner has shown 5-5 or better.

The purpose of Six-Ace Kickback is to avoid slams with two losers in the key suits. And, of course, to reach slams when the suits are solid.

The Kickback suit is the cheapest bid above four in the higher of the two suits.

- When spades are one of the suits, 4NT is the ask.
- When hearts but not spades have been raised, 4♠ is the ask.
- When both suits are minors, 4♥ is the ask.

Because the responses take up so much room, you normally need at least two of the six key cards to use Six-Ace Kickback, more if partner has shown a weak hand.

In response to Six-Ace Kickback, the kings in both raised suits count as key cards. The first response:

one step	0 or 3 key cards
two steps	1 or 4
three	2 key cards, no queen in either suit
four	2 key cards, queen in the lower suit
five	2 key cards, queen in the higher suit
six	2 key cards, both queens

After a one or two-step response, the cheapest bid that can't be trumps is a Queen Ask. Teller bids much as above:

one step	no queen in either suit
two	queen in the lower suit only
three	queen in the higher suit only
four	both queens

♠ K	♠ A97	1♥	2♣
♥ KQ653	♥ A72	3♣	3♥
♦ A5	♦ Q8	4♠	4NT
♣ AJ1053	♣ KQ762	5♦	5♠
		7♣	pass

4♠	6-Ace Kickback
4NT	0 or 3 of the 6 key cards
5♦	Queen Ask
5♠	2 steps, lower queen only
7♣	that's what we need!

♠ AJ83	♠ Q9752	1♣	1♠
♥ K42	♥ A95	3♠	4♣
♦ A2	♦ 6	4♦	4NT
♣ AQ94	♣ KJ83	5♣	6♣
		Pass	

4♣, 4♦	control bids
4NT	6-Ace Kickback
5♣	0 or 3
6♣	suggesting a contract

Note that a control bid in a suit where partner has previously shown length triggers Six-Ace Kickback. After the control bid, either player's bid of one step above the higher suit is Six-Ace Kickback. The king and queen of the control bid suit may be vital, even if Asker has no intention of making that suit trumps.

In the example above, give West a 4=3=3=3 shape and he will correct to 6♠.

Quiz

	Partner	You
♠ 65	1♣	1♦
♥ AQ	2♦	4♣
♦ AQJ62	4♥	?
♣ K843		

1. What do you bid now?
2. Over that, what do partner's continuations mean?
3. How would you respond to each of those bids?

Answers

1. Bid 4♠, showing 0 or 3 key cards, counting the kings of clubs and diamonds as key cards.
2. 4NT Queen Ask. Same as when clubs are trumps, the Queen Ask is more important than stopping in 4NT.
5♣ to play
5♦ to play
5♥ King Ask
5♠ Third-Round Control Ask in spades (these are described in Chapter 12)
5NT Third-Round Control Ask in hearts, the Kickback suit

3. Over 4NT, bid 5♥. You have the higher queen (diamonds) only.

Over 5♣ or 5♦, raise to six. Surely partner wants to be in slam opposite this hand. Yes, it might go down.

Over 5♥, bid 6♣, the cheapest trump suit, to show no side king.

Over 5♠, bid 7♣ to show third-round control in spades.

Over 5NT, bid 7♣ to show third-round control in hearts. Partner already knows about your first-round control.

12. Third-Round Control Asks

You have learned that your side has all the aces, the king of trumps and the queen of trumps (or a ten-card fit). Now you're thinking of a grand slam. You have two ways to search for it:

- The King Ask, which is 5K, five in the Kickback strain. This is your bid when a key king would let you count 13 tricks. It is also the choice when you want partner to participate in the decision-making process – you have plenty of control cards, but hope partner has a little extra something or an undisclosed source of tricks.
- The Third-Round Control (3RC) Ask. Use this when you need 3rd round control – either a high card or shortness – in a particular suit to make bidding the grand worthwhile.

How to Tell It's a Third-Round Control Ask

- A. Immediately after the first response to Kickback, if it isn't a Queen Ask or King Ask, or a return to the trump suit, it must be a 3RC Ask.
- B. Immediately after a Queen Ask and response of 5K (denying a side king), a bid below 6T is 3RC. This 3RC Ask was introduced in Chapter 4.
- C. After a Queen Ask and a reply showing the queen plus a specific king, *if 5K is still available as a King Ask*, then a new suit (or 5NT) is 3RC. You will be happy to learn, there is an example below.

- D. After a Queen Ask and a reply that denies a certain king, an ask in that suit is 3RC.

Teller's Action over a 3RC Ask

There are only two responses to a 3RC Ask:

Minimum bid in the trump suit	Jxx or worse in the suit partner asked in
Jump bid in the trump suit	Queen of asked suit, or a doubleton (or shorter)

This is actually a simplified version of Kantar's responses. See his fifth edition for the complete scoop on 3RC. I can't remember the full-blown responses – my brain is full.

Some Examples

A. Immediately After the Reply to Kickback

♠ A83	♠ 7	1♣	1♥
♥ AK96	♥ QJ542	2♥	3♦
♦ J102	♦ A8	4♥	4♠
♣ Q52	♣ AKJ73	4NT	6♣
		7♥	pass

Let's see. In my preferred methods, 3♣ would be non-forcing, so Responder can't bid that. 3♦ is a game try that turns out to be a slam try; Opener accepts happily. 4♠ is Kickback, and 4NT shows zero or three key cards.

Here are Asker's continuations at this point:

5♣	Queen Ask
5♦	3RC Ask in diamonds
5♥	signoff
5♠ (=5K)	King Ask
5NT	3RC Ask in spades, the Kickback suit
6♣	3RC Ask in clubs
6♥	signoff

In the example, Teller bids the grand with third-round control in clubs.

B. Teller Bids 5K over the Queen Ask

♠ AK865	♠ Q972	2♣	2♦
♥ 5	♥ A87	2♠	3♠
♦ AKJ72	♦ 863	4NT	5♦
♣ AK	♣ Q53	5♥	5NT
		6♦	6♠
		Pass	

5♥ is the Queen Ask. Responder has a potentially useful queen, so he bids 5NT, not 6♥ – leaving room for Asker to make a 3RC Ask. Three small diamonds make the grand anti-percentage, so Responder signs off. If he held the queen of diamonds or a doubleton diamond, he would jump to 7♠ instead.

C. There's Still Room for a King Ask

♠ KQ8	♠ A754	1♥	4♣
♥ A7654	♥ KQ93	4♠	4NT
♦ AJ7	♦ K1062	5♣	5♦
♣ 96	♣ A	6♦	6♥
		pass	

5♣ is the Queen Ask; Teller shows the diamond king and trump queen below five in the trump suit. This means that 5♠ is available as the King Ask.

At this point 5NT would be 3RC in spades, and 6♦ is 3RC in diamonds.

Lacking the diamond queen, Teller signs off.

D. Teller Denies a Certain King

Replying to a Queen Ask, Teller shows the queen plus a king, but bypasses showing a different king on the way. (Note: There are very few auctions where this is possible.) Anyway, if Asker bids the bypassed suit, that is 3RC.

♠ A4	♠ K1072	2♣	2♦
♥ AKJ65	♥ Q83	2♥	3♥
♦ AKJ107	♦ 62	4♠	4NT
♣ A	♣ 9863	5♣	5NT
		6♦	7♥
		pass	

5NT shows the trump queen and the king of the Kickback suit, but denies the king of diamonds – so Asker's 6♦ is 3RC in diamonds, and we reach the ambitious grand slam.

No Quiz in this chapter. There are some Third Round Control Asks in the Partnership Quiz, though.

13. Partnership Quiz II

These hands cover the “gravy” portion of Kickback.

The lettering used is a continuation of Partnership Quiz I. Hands d-3 through o are from the 1981 world championships. Hands p and q were created by the author.

West Hands for Partnership Quiz II

d-3. both vul., South deals

♠ KQ97 ♥ AQ54 ♦ AQ643 ♣ –

d-4. both vul., South deals

♠ AQ54 ♥ KQ97 ♦ AQ643 ♣ –

f-2. N-S vul., South deals

♠ K763 ♥ 8 ♦ A642 ♣ KQ104

o. N-S vul., North deals

♠ 6 ♥ – ♦ AQ87653 ♣ AK975

p. None vul., West deals

♠ A ♥ K7643 ♦ AK982 ♣ A9

q. None vul., East deals

♠ A853 ♥ KQ65 ♦ Q7 ♣ A62

East Hands for Partnership Quiz II

d-3. both vul., South deals

♠ A865 ♥ 8 ♦ K95 ♣ A6542

d-4. both vul., South deals

♠ 8 ♥ A865 ♦ K95 ♣ A6542

f-2. N-S vul., South deals

♠ AJ854 ♥ AQ ♦ QJ1083 ♣ 5

o. N-S vul., North deals

♠ 872 ♥ AKQ862 ♦ 109 ♣ Q10

p. None vul., West deals

♠ QJ42 ♥ AQJ82 ♦ J65 ♣ 8

q. None vul., East deals

♠ K74 ♥ AJ972 ♦ AKJ6 ♣ 10

Suggested Auctions for Partnership Quiz II

d. both vul., South deals

(Semi-finals, Board 7)

d-3.	♠ KQ97	♠ A865	1♦	1♠
	♥ AQ54	♥ 8	4♣	4NT
	♦ AQ643	♦ K95	6♣	6♥
	♣ –	♣ A6542	6♠	pass

6♣ 5K+1 shows a void in the splinter suit, 1 or 3 key cards, trump queen

6♥ Specific King Ask in hearts, the higher of the two non-trump, non-void suits. The heart king would provide a useful diamond discard.

6♠ no heart king

Pass Asker can't be sure about the diamond queen.

d-4.	♠ AQ54	♠ 8	1♦	1♥
	♥ KQ97	♥ A865	4♣	4♠
	♦ AQ643	♦ K95	5NT	6♦
	♣ –	♣ A6542	6♥	pass

5NT 5K+1, as above

6♦ Specific King Ask in spades. (6♣ would ask in diamonds.)

f-2. N-S vul., South deals

(Round 10, Board 16)

♠ K763	♠ AJ854	1♦	1♠
♥ 8	♥ AQ	2♠	4♦
♦ A642	♦ QJ1083	4♥	4NT
♣ KQ104	♣ 5	5♥	5♠
		pass	

4♦ natural, slam try

- 4♥ control bid; Opener has a very good hand for the single raise
- 4NT Six-Ace Kickback
- 5♥ two of the six key cards with zero trump queens
- 5♠ missing two key cards and the spade queen, Responder signs off in 5♠

o. N-S vul., North deals (Final, Board 53)

♠ 6	♠ 872	—	1♥
♥ —	♥ AKQ862	2♦	2♥
♦ AQ87653	♦ 109	3♣	3♦
♣ AK975	♣ Q10	5♥	5♠
		6♦	pass

Exclusion Kickback gets us to an undistinguished slam. Tough hand.

p. None vul., West deals

♠ A	♠ QJ42	1♥	4♣
♥ K7643	♥ AQJ82	4♠	5♣
♦ AK982	♦ J65	5♦	5♠
♣ A9	♣ 8	6♦	6♥
		Pass	

- 5♦ Queen Ask
- 5♠ This is “5K,” showing the trump queen, denying a side king but promising a feature somewhere.

After the “5K” bid, Asker’s 6♦ is a Third-Round Control Ask. Lacking a diamond control, East signs off in 6♥.

q. None vul., East deals

♠ A853	♠ K74	–	1♥
♥ KQ65	♥ AJ972	2NT	3♣
♦ Q7	♦ AKJ6	3♠	4♠
♣ A62	♣ 10	4NT	5♣
		5♠	6♦
		7♥	pass

- 3♣ singleton or void
- 3♠ control bid
- 4♠ Kickback
- 4NT 0 or 3 key cards
- 5♣ Queen Ask
- 5♠ 5K; trump queen, no side king but a useful feature
- 6♦ diamond control?
- 7♥ yes!

EXPERT SLAM BIDDING FOR EVERYONE

Until now, the Kickback convention has been the purview of the expert community. This book makes Kickback accessible to all tournament players for the first time. The author starts by explaining why Kickback is easier to use and more efficient than Roman Keycard Blackwood. The book addresses such vital issues as setting the trump suit, which strain to use to ask for key cards, the King Ask, the Queen Ask and Control Bidding.

Also included are advanced topics such as showing a useful void, Six-Ace Kickback and Exclusion Kickback. A final chapter gives a simple version of the Third-Round Control Ask, vital for top-flight grand slam bidding.

With many examples and twelve quizzes — two of them for partners to practice Kickback together — *Kickback* gives the reader the experience and confidence to use the convention effectively at the table.



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