

ROBERT MUNGER

KICKBACK

SLAM BIDDING AT BRIDGE



AN HONORS EBOOK FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

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.

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M5M 1H2
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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.

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, over 30 years later, Kickback is becoming 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 key cards, no queen of trumps
5♠	2 key cards, queen of trumps or extra length (our first glimpse of Zoom – Teller answers the Queen Ask before Asker asks it.)

These are the old-fashioned responses, not the “1430” kind many players use to save space. Kickback saves plenty of space; we don't need 1430 as well. 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 key cards, no queen of trumps
four steps	2 key cards, 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.

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 always 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. 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 bid 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. 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♦.
- 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 lacked a club control.

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. Responder could bid 3♠ now or 4♠ earlier to force to game in spades, so four spades isn't needed in its natural sense – it is Kickback.

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 artificial, 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.

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.

♠ KQ984	♠ A65	1♠	2♣
♥ Q94	♥ AK52	2♠	3♠
♦ 1073	♦ 8	4♣	4NT
♣ AQ	♣ K9763	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.

When *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 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 natural, and 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 that 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 a 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 Kickback Suit 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 an example from a "Challenge the Champs" hand bid successfully by Lair-Passell. (*The Bridge World*, July 1999)

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

Passell, East, showed his void over the Kickback 4♦. I would have bid 5♣, two plus the queen, as shown above – the void in partner's suit probably won't be useful.

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.

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♣-?

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, this means that the cheapest unbid suit (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.

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

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 aces, jump into Kickback before the auction reaches the four-level.

♠ KQJ83	♠ 7	1♠	2♥
♥ 7	♥ AKJ105	3♣	4♦
♦ 85	♦ A7	4♠	6♣
♣ AQJ73	♣ K10952	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 suit above four in the suit just bid (or 4NT if spades have been 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♦. 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

As in regular Blackwood, a King Ask is a try for seven. It promises that all key cards, including the queen of trumps, are in safe hands. The King Ask isn't necessarily 5NT, though. It is usually 5K, the Kickback suit.

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
- 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!

What If Spades Were Trumps?

In all auctions, Kickback is easiest when spades are trumps. Good old 4NT is the first ask, and 5NT asks for kings. When some other suit is trumps, things aren't so straightforward. Both Asker and Teller often use 5NT as a substitute for 5K.

An easy way to remember these 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, 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, a substitute for 5K (= T+1).

♠ 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
 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
 5♠ spade king
 5NT heart king (by substitution), no spade king
 6♣ club king, no major suit king
 6♦ no king outside of trumps

Also by substitution, 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 Kickback 5♥, 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 asks about the king of diamonds, the Kickback suit.

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 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.
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 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 spade king, 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.

After the response to Kickback, Asker bids the cheapest suit. This asks partner if he holds the queen of trumps (or extra length). Now the Teller bids:

- Without the queen, Teller returns to five in the trump suit.
- When holding the trump queen, Teller bids something else. He jumps to six in the trump suit if holding no outside feature.
- Teller can bid 5K, showing the trump queen, no side king, but a feature somewhere – a queen, singleton or doubleton. This leaves room for Asker to locate a vital third-round control.
- Lastly, with the trump queen and one or more kings, Teller bids the kings up the line, just like after a King Ask. (Another example of the Zoom principle, answering the next question before it is asked.) Same as over a King Ask, 5NT shows the king of K, the Kickback suit.

♠ 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.

♠ A10865	♠ Q942	1♠	3♠
♥ 5	♥ AQ7	4NT	5♦
♦ AQJ72	♦ 863	5♥	5NT
♣ AK	♣ QJ3	6♠	pass

Responder has the trump queen and no side king, but one or more third-round controls, so he bids 5K (5NT). Opener isn't interested in a grand. In fact, 6♠ is sub-par; perhaps control bidding would have been a wiser choice than Kickback.

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

Asker was hoping for a grand.

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

Here Teller has the key king, so Asker bids seven.

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

Over 5♣, Teller may ask himself, what if spades were trumps? Over a Queen Ask when spades are agreed, 5NT shows no side kings but at least one third-round control. Since 4♥ was the Kickback bid, 5♥ (= 5K) replaces the 5NT bid. Responder's 5♠ shows (the trump queen and) the spade king; 5NT instead would show the heart king but not spade king; 6♣ the club king and no other.

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

5♣	Queen Ask
5♠	cheapest king beyond 5K
5NT	Specific King Ask for hearts, the Kickback suit

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

Without the queen of trumps, Teller would bid 5♦, 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.

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		

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.

Quiz

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

- | | | | |
|-----------|---------|------------|----------|
| 1. ♠ A972 | ♠ K8653 | 5. ♠ K972 | ♠ A6 |
| ♥ K10 | ♥ A74 | ♥ AQ42 | ♥ K8653 |
| ♦ A83 | ♦ KQ6 | ♦ A10 | ♦ KQ |
| ♣ AQ42 | ♣ K6 | ♣ A83 | ♣ KQ65 |
| 2. ♠ A972 | ♠ K6 | 6. ♠ KQ862 | ♠ 73 |
| ♥ AQ42 | ♥ K8653 | ♥ A7 | ♥ KQ4 |
| ♦ K10 | ♦ A74 | ♦ 96 | ♦ A8 |
| ♣ A83 | ♣ KQ6 | ♣ QJ63 | ♣ AK8752 |
| 3. ♠ A972 | ♠ K6 | 7. ♠ KQ862 | ♠ 73 |
| ♥ AQ42 | ♥ K8653 | ♥ 75 | ♥ KQ4 |
| ♦ QJ4 | ♦ A74 | ♦ KQ | ♦ A8 |
| ♣ A8 | ♣ KQ6 | ♣ QJ63 | ♣ AK8752 |
| 4. ♠ A972 | ♠ K6 | | |
| ♥ AQ42 | ♥ K8653 | | |
| ♦ J94 | ♦ A | | |
| ♣ AQ | ♣ KJ652 | | |

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, 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	

4♠ Kickback

4NT 0 or 3

5♣ Queen Ask

5♦ queen of trumps and the diamond king

- | | | | | |
|----|--------|---------|------|----|
| 3. | ♠ A972 | ♠ K6 | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | ♥ AQ42 | ♥ K8653 | 3♣ | 4♠ |
| | ♦ QJ4 | ♦ 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.
-
- | | | | | |
|----|--------|---------|-----|------|
| 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. In hearts, not notrump, as we can see.

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

4NT Queen Ask
5♠ trump queen and spade king, no lower king

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 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 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	

Opener's hand isn't quite good enough to take charge with a Kickback 4♥, so he control bids instead. 4NT shows the ace of 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 his slam try.

Quiz

How should these hands be bid?

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| 1. ♠ KQJ5 | ♠ A73 |
| ♥ 1065 | ♥ 4 |
| ♦ QJ8 | ♦ A72 |
| ♣ A102 | ♣ KJ8754 |
| 2. ♠ KQ95 | ♠ A73 |
| ♥ 1065 | ♥ 4 |
| ♦ K85 | ♦ A72 |
| ♣ 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 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 response, to get back some of the room lost by using the higher strain for the Kickback bid.
- b. Also when $K > T+1$, we have less room available than usual. 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 **exactly two steps** above trumps, Teller bids as over a Queen Ask:

One step

1 or 4 key cards

Two steps	0 or 3
Three (=5T)	2 key cards, no queen of trumps
Four	2 key cards, queen of trumps, no side king <i>but a third-round control somewhere</i>
More	2 plus the queen, cheapest king (5NT shows the king of T+1, the suit just above the trump suit)
6T	2 plus the queen, no side kings, no third-round control

Let's see a couple 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♠	no side king, some third-round control
5NT	spade king (T+1)
6♣	club king
6♦	diamond 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 king (T+1)
6♣	club 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 **more than two steps** above trumps, we have to lose something more – the “third round control somewhere” bid goes away.

Diamonds are trumps and 4NT is the Kickback bid. Teller has two plus the queen and:

5♠ spade king
 5NT heart king (T+1)
 6♣ club king
 6♦ no side king

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

4NT Kickback for diamonds
 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

When there is room, the Queen Ask works as usual. But when the response is one step below 5T, then 5T becomes a *non-forcing Queen Ask*. Teller passes with 0 or 1 key card, bids on with 3 or 4. Here is an example:

♠ 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♦ signoff if zero, Queen Ask if three
- 6♦ 3 keys, no trump queen

Other responses to this Queen Ask follow the usual lines:

- 5♥ trump queen, no side king but a useful feature
- 5♠ trump queen plus spade king
- 5NT trump queen plus heart king by substitution, no spade king
- 6♣ trump queen plus club king only

The King Ask

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

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

- 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 (sub-minimum?) $3♦$ bid, so he will have to choose between a finesse and a squeeze.

Quiz

How should these hands be bid?

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

2. ♠ Q10852	♠ A
♥ KQ7	♥ A106532
♦ A5	♦ KQJ86
♣ A85	♣ 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 <i>for hearts</i>
5♦	0 or 3 (1430)
5♥	Queen Ask if 3
6♥	don't have it

2.	♠ Q10852	♠ A	1♠	2♥
	♥ KQ7	♥ A106532	3♥	4NT
	♦ A5	♦ KQJ86	5♦	5♥
	♣ A85	♣ 6	5♠	7♥
			pass	

5♠ three keys, trump queen, no king but 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 spade king
 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. none vul, West deals

♠ AKJ98
♥ J106
♦ 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

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

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. none vul, West deals | d-1. both vul., South deals |
| ♠ Q432 | ♠ A865 |
| ♥ KQ82 | ♥ 8 |
| ♦ AJ3 | ♦ K95 |
| ♣ A8 | ♣ A6542 |
|
 | |
| b. both vul., North deals | e. E-W vul., North deals |
| ♠ QJ6 | ♠ K85 |
| ♥ A | ♥ K8 |
| ♦ AQ10763 | ♦ AQ84 |
| ♣ A54 | ♣ QJ103 |
|
 | |
| c-1. both vul., West deals | f-1. N-S vul., South deals |
| ♠ Q | ♠ AJ |
| ♥ QJ96 | ♥ AQJ54 |
| ♦ KQJ10 | ♦ QJ1083 |
| ♣ Q874 | ♣ 5 |
|
 | |
| c-2. both vul., West deals | g. E-W vul., North deals |
| ♠ 7 | ♠ 98 |
| ♥ AJ96 | ♥ AK106 |
| ♦ KQJ10 | ♦ AJ1065 |
| ♣ Q874 | ♣ Q6 |
|
 | |
| c-3. both vul., West deals | h. N-S vul., South deals |
| ♠ 7 | ♠ AQ2 |
| ♥ AJ96 | ♥ A |
| ♦ AK72 | ♦ AKQ4 |
| ♣ Q874 | ♣ 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

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)

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

2NT Jacoby
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!

- 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.

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

In this auction 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-1. both vul., South deals

(Semi-finals, Board 7)

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

5♦ Queen Ask
 5NT trump queen, no side king, extras

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

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, I suggest that you bid 2♣, then 3♣ or 3♦ to make a slam try with exactly four cards in the minor. 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 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.

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	

2 ♦ semi-positive

West has a difficult decision over partner's 3♥ bid; 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, 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?) It will be harder to get to slam if East has to pass over 2♥. Perhaps 1♦ (2♥) pass (4♥), 4♠ - 5♠, 6♠ - pass.

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.

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.

8. Interference

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

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

Double 0, Pass 1 (DOPI)

When the interference is below five of the trump suit:

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

If Kickback is doubled, play ROPI: Redouble with 0 or 3, pass with 1 or 4, up the line with two.

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.

Void-Showing Responses, No Splinter

Over Asker's Kickback 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)
6T	odd number of key cards, void in T-1, queen of trumps

Continuations include:

- 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 (not trumps!) is the Queen Ask – bid 6T without it, show a king or bid seven if you have it.
- If there is room, Asker can make a King Ask after learning the void. Teller bids seven with the king, or shows a different king, or signs off in 6T.

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

2 ♠	natural, promises five clubs
4 ♣	sets trumps, slam try
4 ♦	Kickback
5NT	1 or 3 key cards, void in diamonds by substitution

Opener takes a slight risk in bidding 7♣. Partner has no diamonds and fewer than four spades, so almost certainly five trumps.

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

5♥ 2 or 4 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. With weaker hearts, 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♥
		5♠	5NT
		6♣	7♦
		pass	

3♣ 4-card support
 4♥ Kickback for diamonds
 5♥ 2 key cards + a void
 5♠ what is your void?
 5NT spade void (substitution)
 6♣ Queen Ask
 7♦ yes

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 already 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	odd number, no trump queen, king in bid suit (or by substitution)
5K+3	ditto
6T	odd number, no trump queen, no side king

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

6♣ odd number with trump queen

Over 6♣, 6♦ would be a Specific King Ask in diamonds, so 6♥ asks in clubs. Holding both the king and queen, Teller “raises” clubs.

The club queen makes this a good contract. If Responder held the spade queen instead, 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

7♣ king and queen

7NT 14 tricks

These “splinter with void” responses also apply when you have pinpointed a singleton 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 heart king

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

Partner has a diamond void, one key card (the ace of spades), no trump queen and the club king by substitution. Bid 6♥, a King Ask in that suit. It's hard to picture a splinter raise without enough stuff to make seven.

- | | | | |
|----|---------|----|----|
| 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. Without it, you may need the jack of diamonds in his hand. Even in the worst case (– K]xx 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. 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, asking for key cards, *not counting the ace in the bid suit*. Responses:

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

Holding two keys and the trump queen, Teller shows kings up the line. The four step bid denies holding a side king, but leaves room for a Third-Round Control Ask. Both 5NT and a bid in partner's void show the king of a suit that could not be shown naturally.

♠ 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♥ 2 keys outside of spades, no trump queen

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

Asker has to jump for Exclusion Kickback, so 6♣ is the bid. Make sure you can handle any response before committing to this level. With a 10-card fit, Teller shows two plus the queen.

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

5♠ shows two key cards, the trump queen and the king of diamonds. 5NT instead would show the higher side-suit king, hearts.

Because we have adopted Exclusion Kickback, we have no need for the Grand Slam Force. That venerable convention is officially toast.

Quiz

Partner makes the bid shown. How do you respond?

1. ♠ Q952 1♠ 3♠
 ♥ KQ3 5♦ ?
 ♦ A107
 ♣ 843

2. ♠ Q952 1♠ 3♠
 ♥ KQ3 5♥ ?
 ♦ A107
 ♣ 843

3. ♠ A9654 1♣ 1♠
 ♥ KQ87 2♥ 3♥
 ♦ A107 5♦ ?
 ♣ 54

Answers

1. You have none of the cards 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♣, denying any side kings. 6♦ instead would show the lower-ranking side king (clubs), and 6♥ the higher-ranking king, spades.

11. Six-Ace Kickback

This convention is for use when there is a double fit, when two suits have been raised.

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
more	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
two
three
more

no queen in either suit
queen in the lower suit only
queen in the higher suit only
both queens

♠ 3	♠ A97	1♥	2♣
♥ KQ653	♥ A72	3♣	3♥
♦ A5	♦ K8	4♠	4NT
♣ AJ1053	♣ KQ762	5♦	5♠
		7♣	pass

4♠	6-Ace Kickback
4NT	0 or 3
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 of the 6 key cards
6♣	suggesting a contract

Note that a control bid in a suit that partner has previously shown 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

- Immediately after the first response to Kickback, or immediately after a Queen Ask and response of 5K.
- If it isn't a Queen Ask, or a King Ask, or a signoff in trumps, then it must be a 3RC Ask. As always, 5NT acts as a substitute for the Kickback suit.

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 simplified 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

♠ 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 his queen were in diamonds, he would jump to 7♠ instead.

♠ 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♠	King Ask
5NT	3RC Ask in spades, the Kickback suit
6♣	3RC Ask in clubs

Over the 6♣ ask, Teller bids the grand with third-round control.

No Quiz in this chapter. There are some 3RC 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-2 through o are from the 1981 world championships. Hands p and q were created by the author.

West Hands for Partnership Quiz II

d-2. both vul., South deals

♠ KQ97
♥ AQ54
♦ 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-2. both vul., South deals

♠ A865

♥ 8

♦ 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

♠ KQ72

♥ AQ852

♦ 765

♣ 8

q. None vul., East deals

♠ K74

♥ AJ972

♦ AKJ6

♣ 10

Suggested Auctions for Partnership Quiz II

d-2. both vul., South deals

(Semi-finals, Board 7)

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

6♣ club void, 1 or 3 key cards, trump queen

6♥ King Ask

6♠ no heart king. Asker can't be sure about the diamond queen.

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	

4NT is Six-Ace Kickback. Opener shows two key cards with zero trump queens. 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	♠ KQ72	1♥	4♣
♥ K7643	♥ AQ852	4♠	5♣
♦ AK982	♦ 765	5♦	5NT
♣ A9	♣ 8	6♦	6♥
		pass	

5♦ Queen Ask
 5NT trump queen, spade king (5♠ would deny a side king but promise a feature somewhere.)

East chooses a splinter raise to set the trump suit immediately. West's 6♦ is a Third-Round Control Ask. East has no third-round control in diamonds, so he 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.



ROBERT MUNGER (Oldenburg) is a bridge bibliophile, self-taught bidding theoretician and Silver Life Master. Father of four and grandfather of eleven, he plays bridge as much as his schedule allows. He is also the author of *The Roman Two Diamond Opening and Variations*.