

# RKCB - Roman Key Card Blackwood:

The system uses Roman Key Card Blackwood, RKCB, as its first and main tool for slam-going purposes. Before or when using RKCB each of the partners will have to do the following tasks in order:

- identify the set of RKCB bids
- assign a suit to each of the RKCB bids in the set
- decide which answering scale is used

## 1. Identify the set of RKCB bids:

The mechanism for identifying the set of RKCB bids depends on two factors:

- the number of possible trump suits
- the level of the auction (significant when we have 3 or 4 possible trump suits)

The number of possible trump suits is defined to be **any 4 card+ suits shown by either hand**.

If there are only 2 possible trump suits the principle is simple; the next two available (non-final) bids are the RKCB bids for the 2 suits.

If there are 3 or 4 possible trump suits the principle is more complicated, and we have to take the level of the auction into consideration in the following way:

Last bid	Principle
3 or lower	The next 3 or 4 (except 3 NT are the RKCB bids. 3 is now a transfer to 3 NT. The RKCB bids are 3 NT, 4 $\heartsuit$ , 3 $\spadesuit$ -3 NT-4 $\clubsuit$ and 4 $\diamondsuit$ . Note that Quick bids (4 $\heartsuit$ ) are ordered before Slow bids (3 $\spadesuit$ -3 NT-4 $\clubsuit$ ).
3 /3 NT/ 4 $\heartsuit$	In an these very common cases we use 4 $\heartsuit$ as a transfer to 4 $\spadesuit$ followed by PASS or the final contract (this is called " <b>last train</b> " for obvious reasons). This means that the RKCB bids are 4 $\heartsuit$ (if available), 4 $\spadesuit$ , 4 $\clubsuit$ , 4 NT and 5 $\heartsuit$ .
4 and higher	We no longer stop on the 4-level. The RKCB bids are 4 $\heartsuit$ , 4 $\spadesuit$ , 4 NT and any non-final bids on the 5-level.

## 2. Assign a suit to each of the RKCB bids in the set:

Once the set of RKCB bids have been identified as described above we have to assign each RKCB-bid to a specific trump suit. We start off by assigning the lowest RKCB bid to a suit and continue upwards, assigning suits to RKCB bids according to the following principle:

RKCB bid	Suit order
3 or lower	Minors before Majors, i.e. $\heartsuit$ - $\spadesuit$ - $\clubsuit$ - $\diamondsuit$
3 /3 NT/4 $\heartsuit$	Majors before Minors, i.e. $\spadesuit$ - $\heartsuit$ - $\clubsuit$ - $\diamondsuit$
4	Spades first, i.e. $\spadesuit$ - $\heartsuit$ - $\clubsuit$ - $\diamondsuit$
4 or higher	Minors before Majors, i.e. $\heartsuit$ - $\spadesuit$ - $\clubsuit$ - $\diamondsuit$

Note that we try to avoid using 4  $\heartsuit$  as RKCB-  $\heartsuit$ .

## 3. Decide which answering scale is used:

We have 4 different scales when responding to a RKCB-bid as follows:

- normal scale, responder has not definitely shown 14/15 hcp+
- strong scale, responder has shown a sound opening
- very strong scale, responder has opened with one of the bids showing 19/20 hcp+
- responder has preempted in a suit

Common for all of them is that the King in the agreed trump-suit counts as an ace, so there are 5 "aces" in total.

### Normal scale, responder has not definitely shown 14/15 hcp+:

This is the most common scale, and is used in the following circumstances:

- in uncontrolled sequences when partner does not know your point range
- when your opening bid was PASS
- when your opening bid was a 2-suited preempt (2  $\heartsuit$  and 2  $\spadesuit$ , also 2 NT in system LOW)
- when your opening bid was 1 NT

when your opening bid was 1  $\heartsuit$  / 1  $\spadesuit$  / 1  $\clubsuit$  and you fail to definitely show 14/15 hcp or more.

### An example of the last point:

You open 1  $\heartsuit$ , 2  $\spadesuit$  from LHO, 2 NT (showing support and at least invitational) from partner, 3  $\heartsuit$  from RHO and 4  $\spadesuit$  from you. If partner now bids 4  $\heartsuit$  RKCB, although you must have some sort of extra values you still use the normal answering scale as you have not definitely shown 14/15 hcp+.

The normal answering scale can be remembered by the 1430 acronym (6  $\heartsuit$  / 6  $\spadesuit$  just making, vulnerable). The scale is as follows:

1st step	1 or 4 out of the 5 aces (but 3 or 0 if this step is the ceiling)
2nd step	3 or 0 out of the 5 aces (but 1 or 4 if the previous step is the ceiling)
3rd step	2 out of the 5 aces, no trump Queen
4th step	2 out of the 5 aces, trump Queen
5th step	2 out of the 5 aces, no trump Queen, void in the longest and lowest shown suit
6th step	2 out of the 5 aces, no trump Queen, void in the second longest and/or second lowest shown suit
7th step	2 out of the 5 aces, no trump Queen, void in the third longest and/or third lowest shown suit
8th step	2 out of the 5 aces, trump Queen, void in the longest and lowest shown suit
...	...

General points that apply to all the different RKCB-scales:

The steps from 5 and upwards must be used with discrimination.

If the responder has shown a side suit (or two) the higher void-showing steps are moved down.

After the immediate response to a RKCB-bid we either set the final contract or start a spiral scan.

### Strong scale, responder has shown a sound opening:

This is the second most common scale, and is used when the responder has opened 1  $\heartsuit$  / 1  $\spadesuit$  / 1  $\clubsuit$  and has since shown extra values that (logically or systematically) must give his hand 14/15 hcp+.

The strong scale is identical to the normal scale, but with the 2 first steps reversed, i.e.:

1st step	3 or 0 out of the 5 aces
2nd step	4 or 1 out of the 5 aces
3rd step	2 out of the 5 aces, no trump Queen
...	...

### Very strong scale, responder has opened with one of the bids showing 19/20 hcp+:

This scale is used when in the situations when the responder opened the bidding by

- 2  $\heartsuit$  (and then showed 20 hcp+ in system HIGH)
- 2  $\spadesuit$ , and then showed one of the strong hands
- 2  $\clubsuit$ , and then showed the strong hand
- 2 NT (LOW), and then showed the strong hand

The very strong scale is the same as the normal scale, but with "one more ace" on every step, i.e.:

1st step	1 or 4 out of the 5 aces
2nd step	2 or 5 out of the 5 aces
3rd step	3 out of the 5 aces, no trump Queen
...	...

### Responder has preempted in a suit:

This scale is used when in the situations when the responder opened the bidding by

- 2  $\heartsuit$  in system HIGH, and then showed a weak 2 in  $\spadesuit$
- 2  $\spadesuit$ , and then showed a weak 2 in  $\heartsuit$  /  $\clubsuit$
- 2 NT (HIGH)
- 3  $\heartsuit$  / 3  $\spadesuit$  / 3  $\clubsuit$

This scale is different in that the number of steps in the answering scale depends on how far we are from the ceiling. Rather than giving a table it is simpler to summarize this scale by giving 3 rules for the answer scale:

The 1st step always shows 1 ace and the trump Queen

The steps from 2 and up to and including the ceiling show just 1 ace / trump Queen / no keycards respectively with any "overflowing" steps merged in the ceiling bid.

The step that is just above the ceiling shows 2 aces without the trump Queen, the next step again shows 2 aces with the trump Queen.