

EXCLUSION KEYCARD BLACKWOOD AFTER MAJOR SUIT AGREEMENT

(There may be a few minor suit auctions where you may want to add it, but you should only do so with a very regular partner after you have played it for awhile.)

Slam hands with void suits are often hard to handle. Using Blackwood is wrong in most cases. If you use RKCB holding two Key Cards plus a void suit and partner shows one, you now have to guess which it is.

There are several ways to go with void suits. The most common is cue bidding which may lead to a Blackwood sequence. However, it is dangerous to cue bid a void early, because partner may think that the king or king-queen of your void suit is golden and go ballistic.

A better way to resolve this dilemma is to use EXCLUSION KEYCARD BLACKWOOD (EKB) whereby you ask partner for keycards OUTSIDE of the void suit. EKB is a jump over game in an unbid suit or in a suit bid by the opponents, usually after trump suit agreement. Partner does NOT count the ace of the jump suit in the response. Most people play 0314 responses:

- 1st step 0 or 3
- 2nd step 1 or 4 (though 4 would be rare, meaning you asked with none!)
- 3rd step 2 without the trump queen
- 4th step 2 with the trump queen

After the key card response, the cheapest bid other than five of the trump suit asks for the trump queen. Then the next the cheapest bid other than trump suit seeks specific kings.

Some people play RKCB 1430 and use those responses to EKB but that will often but you too high. Say your trump suit is spades and you jump to 5♥ (EKB). A 1430 response of 5NT with zero key cards puts you past five of your major. The idea here is that the most troublesome response is likely to be zero so make that the first step. The problems get worse when hearts is your trump suit. Of course playing different responses might cause a memory accident.

A simple example before we get to some sticky stuff: The bidding might go:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
2♣	2♦ (1)
2♠	4♣ (2)
5♥ (3)	5NT (4)
7♠ (5)	Pass

♠ A K Q x x x	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;"> </td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">N</td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">W</td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;"> </td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;"> </td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">S</td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ x x x x
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ --		♥ K x x x									
♦ K x		♦ A x x x									
♣ A K Q x x		♣ x									

- (1) Waiting
- (2) Splinter
- (3) Exclusion
- (4) 1 Keycard outside of hearts (must be the Diamond Ace)
- (5) Bingo!

Another example, this one taken from the 6th World Junior Bridge Team Championship:

♠	A K 10 7									
♥	J 3									
♦	J 9 6 5									
♣	J 3 2									
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	N									
W		E								
	S									
♠	J 6 5 3									
♥	A K Q 9 7 6 4									
♦	--									
♣	A 9									

The bidding went this way.

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>
	1♥
1♠	5♦
5NT	6♠
Pass	

South's jump beyond game accepted spades as trump suit and asked the number of key cards, excluding the ♦A. North showed two keycards without trump queen:

Is It EKB, or Is It Not?

Each partnership must decide for itself which bids are EKB. However, if your partnership hasn't specifically agreed on an instance when Exclusion might apply, presume it's not Exclusion until discussed, as a misunderstanding could be catastrophic.

The simplest rule is to play certain jumps to 4♠ as well as all jumps to the five level, once you have agreed upon a major. You and partner must know how EKB works with the other conventions you play.

JACOBY and EXCLUSION - Most pairs would play jumps beyond the trump suit starting with 4♠ over hearts.

TEXAS and EXCLUSION.- Some partnerships use a new suit as Exclusion . Unless agreed otherwise, assume it's a cue bid.

Blackwood bidders learn early that they must be prepared for any response. You can't use Blackwood if partner's bid will put you past five of your suit missing more a key card and the trump queen or two key cards. This is particularly true for EKB, especially if you use it for minors.

The simple definition above as to what bids are EKB assumed the trump suit is known. RKCB users know that sometimes the jump to 4NT confirms the last bid suit as the key card suit. This works just as well for exclusion. Here is how the bidding might go for this hand. North's

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>
1♠	2♥
5♦	5♥
Pass	

leap to 5♦ confirms hearts as trumps and asks for key cards. South shows none and North reluctantly settles in 5♥.

♠	A K x x x x									
♥	A J x x									
♦	--									
♣	K Q x									
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	N									
W		E								
	S									
♠	--									
♥	Q x x x x									
♦	A K Q x x									
♣	J x x									

When An Exclusion Ask Is Doubled

When an EKB ask is doubled, you now have TWO extra bids available, pass and redouble. There are at least three ways to proceed.

- You could use the principles of DOPI/ROPI. Redouble is the 1st step, Pass the 2nd, the first bid up is the 3rd, etc.)
- Since there are only 4 key cards and two extra bids, you might show each. It works like this: Pass = 0. Redouble = 1. The next bid up = 2, and so forth. In the example sequence redouble to show "1" and opener bids 6♠. If had you "0", you would have passed and opener would sign off at 5♠.
- The one I prefer is to just ignore the double and make the same responses you would have had RHO kept quiet. One less thing to remember.

Examples

♠	A
♥	K x x x x x
♦	K Q J x x
♣	--

!	<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
	1♦	1♥
	2♦	5♣

You bid 5♣, showing a void in clubs and asking for aces. Partner will not count the ace of clubs in his reply. He will bid 5♦ with no key cards and you will pass. If partner bids 5♥ showing one key card (♥A or ♦A)

you'll bid 6♦. A 5♠ response would show both two working aces (without the queen but that's not an issue here) and you'll bid the grand.

♠	A K x
♥	A x x x x
♦	K Q J x x
♣	--

<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
1♦	1♥
2♥	5♣

As above you'll play 5♥ if partner shows none, 6♥ if one and 7♥ if two.

♠	K x
♥	K Q x x x x
♦	K Q J x x
♣	--

<u>You</u>	<u>Pard</u>
1♥	1♠
2♦	3♥
5♣	

Note that 5♣ here is only a single jump but it nevertheless EKB. While EKB is usually launched with a double jump, that is not a requirement. A jump to the five level (or to 4♠) is the key.

One final idea. For many partnerships, if a player splinters and receives no encouragement, he may continue with 4NT as exclusion Blackwood, indicating the splinter was based on a void and that is the excluded suit. I like this and it has won several hands for me.

♠	K Q J x
♥	A Q x x x x x
♦	--
♣	K x

<u>You</u>	<u>Pard</u>
1♥	2♥
??	

You open 1♥ and partner raises to 2♥. You can't bid 5♦ because if partner has only one key card, the 5♠ response will get you too high. Better to bid 4♦ and then when partner bids 4♥, you can bid 4NT. Now you

can handle any response.

Or this hand. After 1S - 4D; 4S - 4NT shows a heart void and asking for EKB responses.

♠	K x x x
♥	K Q x
♦	--
♣	A K Q J x x

<u>Pard</u>	<u>You</u>
1♠	4♦
4♠	4N

You could bid a direct 5♦ for EKB but this saves steps. You can find out about the aces as well as the ♠Q, all below 5♠.

Note that it makes no sense to splinter with a singleton and then bid RKCB. If you plan to ask anyway, partner can't use the information as Teller and you only give the opponents information (and a chance for a lead directing double in another suit, a common treatment among better players).