

Blackwood and Gerber

Asking for Aces

Point Count and Bidding Levels

To bid game.....	26 points
To bid minor suit game.....	29 points
To bid small slam.....	33 points
To bid grand slam.....	37 points

“Asking for aces” means that we ask partner how many aces she has in her hand. You usually “ask for aces” when you think you want to bid a slam. So you ask for aces whenever you think your combined point count is about 33 points.

The most common slam is a small slam, when you plan to take 12 of the 13 tricks. To bid a small slam, your side needs to possess at least 3 of the 4 aces. So when you want to bid a small slam, you ask for aces to make sure that your side has at least 3 aces.

Bidding a grand slam is not at all as common as a small slam. But if you think your side has about 37 points, you may want to try it. In this case you will need all 4 aces, so when you ask for aces you are checking to make sure that your side does in fact have all 4 aces.

To bid a small slam, ask for aces to make sure your side has at least 3 of the 4 aces. If you have 3 aces, bid the slam.

To bid a grand slam, ask for aces to make sure your side has all 4 aces. Don't bid a grand slam unless you have all 4.

How to Ask for Aces?

There are two different bids that are used to ask for aces.

The Blackwood Convention is used to ask for aces when you are bidding for a suit contract.

**The Gerber Convention is used to ask for aces when you are bidding a notrump contract
OR
when the opening bid has been a notrump bid.**

BLACKWOOD

When you and partner are bidding suits, as opposed to bidding notrump, you use the Blackwood Convention to ask for aces.

The bid of 4NT asks partner “How many aces do you have?”

Responses

5 clubs.....	no aces
5 diamonds.....	1 ace
5 hearts.....	2 aces
5 spades.....	3 aces

Notice that clubs is the cheapest bid available and shows the least number of aces. After that, each higher bid steps up by one the number of aces being shown.

The player who bid 4NT can ask for kings by bidding 5NT next. Bidding 5NT promises that your side has all 4 aces.

Responses to 5NT follow the same pattern as the responses to 4NT. 6 clubs shows no kings, 6 diamonds shows 1, 6 hearts shows 2, and 6 spades shows three.

**Use Blackwood in auctions like these
(bidding in suits)**

you	opp	pard	opp
1♠	P	3♠	P
4NT			

you	opp	pard	opp
1♦	P	1♥	P
3♥	P	4NT	

you	opp	pard	opp
1♠	P	2♦	P
2♥	P	4♥	P
4NT			

GERBER

When you and partner are bidding notrump, as opposed to bidding suits, you use the Gerber Convention to ask for aces. You also use Gerber when the opening bid has been a notrump bid.

**The bid of 4 Clubs asks partner
“How many aces do you have?”**

Responses

- 4 diamonds..... no aces
- 4 hearts..... 1 ace
- 4 spades..... 2 aces
- 4 notrump..... 3 aces

Notice that diamonds is the cheapest bid available and shows the least number of aces. After that, each higher bid steps up by one the number of aces being shown.

The player who bid 4 Clubs can ask for kings by bidding 5 Clubs next. Bidding 5 Clubs promises that your side has all 4 aces.

Responses to 5 Clubs follow the same pattern as the responses to 4 Clubs. 5 diamonds shows no kings, 5 hearts shows 1, 5 spades shows 2, and 5 notrump shows three.

**Use Gerber in auctions like these
(bidding in notrump)**

you	opp	pard	opp
1NT	P	4♣	

you	opp	pard	opp
1♦	P	3NT	P
4♣			

you	opp	pard	opp
1♠	P	2♥	P
3♣	P	3NT	P
4♣			

It doesn't matter that you have previously bid 3 clubs. The bid of 4 clubs still asks for aces. (You may find some players who elect to do this differently, but we will play that all calls of 4 clubs over 3NT is Gerber, asking for aces.)

**Also use Gerber in auctions like these
(after an opening bid in notrump)**

you	opp	pard	opp
1NT	P	2♣	P
2♠	P	4♣	

After Stayman, 4 Clubs is Gerber.

you	opp	pard	opp
1NT	P	2♦	P
2♥	P	4♣	

you	opp	pard	opp
2NT	P	3♦	P
3♥	P	4♣	

you	opp	pard	opp
2♣	P	2♦	P
2NT	P	4♣	

you	opp	pard	opp
2♣	P	2♦	P
2♥	P	3♣	P
3NT	P	4♣	