

Your partner opens 1♥, you bid 2NT (Game Forcing Raise) and partner bids 4♥. Your call?

(Your hand)

♠ KQJ9
♥ AJ65
♦ K
♣ K875

(Partner's hand)

♠ 72
♥ KQ972
♦ QT9
♣ A92

You might have a slam, you just need two Aces from partner, so you bid 4NT (Keycard)

Partner answers 5♠ (2 Keycards, plus the ♥Q). WHOOPS!

Now you are committed to bidding 6♥ (Note: 5NT would be asking for Kings) and you go one off!

18 out of 136 Pairs in the SWPT this year bid 6♥, going off!

(Note: One player passed the 4NT ask, perhaps realising that he was about to respond 5♠ and though better of that!)

The Solution:

Kickback (using 4♠ as Keycard when Hearts are trumps).

4♠: Asking for Keycards

Responses

4NT: 1 or 4

5♣: 0 or 3

5♦: 2 (no Q)

5♥: 2 (+ Q)

This allows you to stop in 5♥, no matter what answer you get.

Continuations:

After a 4NT or 5♣ response (1/4, 3/0) the next step is Queen Asking.

Bidding 5♠ confirms all Keycards, and asks for Kings (Using your responses to 5NT)

What if bidding 4♠ would have been Natural, or you want to make a Spade Control bid, or Splinter?

Using 4♠ as kickback applies whenever possible, but if bidding 4♠ would be Natural, then you revert to using 4NT as Keycard.

If you want to make a Control bid or Splinter in Spades after agreeing Hearts, then use 4NT as the replacement bid.

Using Minorwood for Slam Bidding.

For the same reasons as above, using 4NT to ask for Keycards after a minor suit can take you beyond 5-of-our-suit and propel you into slam, perhaps off two Aces.

One solution is to use Minorwood, where a bid of 4♣ or 4♦ after agreeing that suit is Asking for Keycards. Many players use Minorwood in all situations, which is a nice simple rule, but can cause problems in auctions like this:

2♣* 2♦*
3♦ 4♦ Minorwood.

The only other Diamond bid that Responder had was 5♦, weak. There is no middle ground here!

Other players only use Minorwood when it is a jump to 4♣/♦, but then when it is not a jump, there is no way to Keycard below 4NT.

1♠ 2♣
3♣ ??

If 4♣ is NOT Minorwood, then neither player can Keycard below 4NT.

A tweak to Minorwood:

4-minor as Natural, suit setting, slam try and 4-minor+1 as Keycard

To resolve the ambiguity about when Minorwood applies. I play that bidding 4-of-our-minor is always Natural, slam going and allows for Control bidding or Keycard next.

A bid one step higher than our minor (4♦ over Clubs and 4♥ over Diamonds) is the Keycard ask. (Where possible, 4NT is the replacement for the lost 'step' bid)

The two examples above.

2♣* 2♦*
3♦ - 4♦ Confirms Diamonds, didn't ask for Keycards but could have.
Over this, 4♥ by the Opener would still be Keycard.
(Again, 4NT would be replacement for the Heart Control Bid)
- 4♥ Asking for Diamond Keycards
- 4NT Heart splinter (or Exclusion Keycard in Hearts)

1♠ 2♣
3♣ - 4♣ Confirms Clubs, didn't ask for Keycards but could have.
Over this, 4♦ by opener would still be Keycard.
(NT would be replacement Diamond Control)
- 4♦ Asking for Club Keycards
- 4NT Diamond splinter (or Exclusion Keycard in Diamonds)

Benefits:

Reduces ambiguities about when Minorwood applies and when it doesn't

All the responses can be used below 5-of-our-suit

Usually either player can Keycard, or use the 4-minor bid and allow the other player to Keycard

There can be inferences about why a player chose to Keycard or not (ie void, double-loser suit, bad hand)

Costs:

Might forget, might pass Keycard (especially 4♥ or 4♠)

Might accidentally bid 4NT as partner interprets it as Diamond Exclusion Keycard.

Some confusion about whether 4♥ or 4♠ *might actually be Natural* but this is not much worse than now:

Here are some auctions that need some discussion, even if you don't play Minorwood & Kickback

Eg.

W	Partner E	You	
	4♥	4♠	??

W	Partner E	You	
	1♥	4♠	??

W	Partner E	You	
	1♦	4♥	??

W	Partner E	You	
	1♠	2♥	
	3♥	3♠	(what does this mean?)
	4♠ ??		

W	Partner E	You	
	1♥	2♦	
	3♦	4♥	??

W	Partner E	You	
	1♥	2♦	
	4♦	4♥	??

W	Partner E	You	
	1♥	2♦	
	4♣ *	4♥	??
	* Splinter		

W	Partner E	You	
(3♦)	X /	4♦	
/	4♥ /	4♠	??

“Georgeout” after Reverses

A version of Blackout that came into my system via George Smolanko

After a 1-over-1 Reverse, which is forcing for one round, bidding the **lowest bid** is Artificial – any hand with up to 8 points and a weak suggestion by responder.

Georgeout applies even if the Georgeout bid is someone's first bid suit.

Both players then scramble to the best contract.

Jumps or fourth-suit by opener are forcing.

Any of the old suits (non-jump) are passable.

After a Reverse, **any other bid (apart from Georgeout)** is Natural(ish) and shows about 8/9+ points and is game forcing.

Eg.

Opener Responder

1♣

1♥

2♦

??

2♥ Georgeout: any weak hand

2NT

3♣

3♦

3♥

2♠: Fourth Suit, Game Forcing, no clear direction, asking for a stopper

} Natural, Game Forcing

} All of these show a clear direction

Ps: Note that if the Responder was very weak with 6♥ they might have bid 2♥ immediately over 1♣.

Benefits:

Simple to remember.

You don't need to “wrong side” No-Trumps by bidding 2NT.

Space efficient (all weak hands can stop as low as possible).

You always have a Natural 2NT available if you wish to play it from your side.

You often have a “fourth-suit” forcing bid (low-level) for hands that don't know where they are going.

You can genuinely support either of partner's suit, showing real support, not just preference

Costs:

You can't stop in the Georgeout bid, which you might be able to do using Blackout or Natural.

You have to call the convention Georgeout, and learn how to spell it on your system card.