

BIDDING SLAMS IN MINOR SUITS

Minor suit slams can be tricky to bid. Using 4NT (Roman Key Card Blackwood) will sometimes get you too high, so people have come up with various alternatives:

- 1) If you can establish suit agreement early and get **cue-bidding** started, you can usually find out at a low enough level if slam is a good bet or not.
- 2) Some people play that **any time you bid past 3NT (with 4 of a minor), it is automatically a slam try**. Partner is obligated to cue-bid. (After cue-bidding, 4NT is a sign-off, giving up on slam.)
- 3) Some people play a variation of Roman Key Card where—when partner opens a minor suit—a **jump to 4 in that minor is used as Roman Key Card** (to save room)—called **Minorwood**.
- 4) Other people play that **a jump to 4 in the other minor is used as Roman Key Card** (again, to save room).
- 5) Many times, the best approach is to simply forget about scientific bidding and **“blast” into slam**. This has the advantage of giving less information to the opponents and they may not find the killing lead. If you cannot afford to ask because you cannot sign off in NT with the wrong answer, you are best off just “blasting” or giving up and only bidding 5 of your minor.
- 6) With matchpoint scoring, some people have the attitude that they will never play 5 of a minor when they could have played 3NT. Once they pass 3NT, they are going to play 6 of their minor!

Remember, if you use the system Kantar recommends, after a Quantitative Raise (e.g., 1NT-P-4NT), with 16 HCP and NOT the death distribution, the opening NT bidder bids a minor at the 5 level, looking for a minor slam.

Also, after a NT opening, a raise to 5NT can be “Minor Suit Stayman” asking partner to bid a 4-card minor if s/he has one. If a 4-4 minor fit is found, you play the minor slam (and it will usually make). If a 4-4 minor fit is NOT found, you will play six no trump (and it will sometimes—but not always—make).

After a limit raise of a minor (e.g., 1C-P-3C OR 1D-P-3D), bidding new suits is assumed to be showing stoppers in a quest for 3NT. If, however, partner proceeds to bid **past** 3NT, you then know that partner’s previous bids were cue-bids, NOT showing stoppers.

When you are playing **Inverted Minors**, you can start showing stoppers for NT at a lower level. With Inverted Minors, 1D-P-2D is either one-round force or game force (depending on partnership agreement). Ditto 1C-P-2C. (One version, known as Criss Cross, is that one of a minor followed by two of a minor by Responder is game-forcing while a jump shift in the other minor by Responder shows the limit raise, e.g., 1C-P-2D is a limit raise in clubs and 1D-P-3C is a limit raise in diamonds.) With Inverted Minors, your first priority is to show stoppers looking for 3NT. If either partner goes past 3NT, then you are looking for slam. Earlier bids that showed stoppers may be reinterpreted as cue-bids, showing controls.

Remember, it is OK to sometimes cue-bid a “concentration of values” (such as KQx) to encourage partner about a suit where s/he could have two or three small cards. If you hold: Kxx Ax KQxxx KQx and partner opens 1D, you can say 2D (playing Inverted Minors). If partner now says 2NT (showing stoppers in other suits), you should bid 3C (a concentration of values OR stopper) and a **slam try** (showing extra values) because you did not simply sign off in 3NT.