

**bid72's bidding tip***by Rosalind Hengeveld*

You are East in a teams match and you hold:

♠ K Q J 10 6 ♥ 6 4 ♦ K 2 ♣ A K Q 7

West dealer, both sides vulnerable, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	?	

Your first response was a no-brainer. At this point, however, you have to give the situation a deep thought. Opposite an opening hand with six or seven hearts slam is looming. Therefore it makes sense to establish hearts as trumps and ask for key cards. But how? 3♥ (non-forcing) or 4♥ (sign-off) are out of the question. For that very reason some expert pairs designated the rebid of a 2NT as a game forcing relay.

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	?	

Partner's 3♦ shows a diamond suit and denies three-card spade support. (Partner could have rebid 2♦ first, but apparently they gave preference to showing their six-card heart suit.)

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♦	Pass	?	

Time to show your modest but adequate support, setting hearts as the trump suit and suggesting cue bidding. Partner duly complies: 4♦ shows first or second round control. Now what?

Please think for yourself what you would have done before reading on.

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	?	

Oops! Whoever deemed it time to ask for aces, would get this 5♠ response, showing two aces plus the ♥Q, counting the ♥K as an 'ace'. Now they are off two aces with no makeable place to go (5NT would not be to play). The hands were:

West	East
♠ 4	♠ K Q J 10 6
♥ K Q J 8 7 5	♥ 6 4
♦ A Q J 6	♦ K 2
♣ 10 8	♣ A K Q 7

A better idea:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♦	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

A better idea would be to cue bid, showing first round control above game level. Thus the slam off two aces can be avoided, if both West and East can muster sufficient restraint.

An even better and more fundamental idea, however, would be to ask for aces, hearts being trumps, with 4♠ instead of 4NT. Responses are in steps, like those to 4NT Roman Key Card Blackwood, but now the fourth and highest step, the one for two aces plus the trump queen, is five of the trump suit, which can be passed if it is not enough for slam:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

If you play this for all trump suits, four of the denomination directly above the trump suit asking for aces, it is dubbed *Kickback*. It is usually played with simple 'the more you bid the more you have' step responses: 0 or 3 aces, 1 or 4 aces, 2 or 5 aces, 2 or 5 aces plus trump queen. (For an instance of *five* aces see our bidding tip [Just Respond](#).)

To avoid misunderstandings – is 4♠ ace asking or to play? – it is important that the trump suit be previously established for ace asking to be on. But that makes sense with always asking aces with 4NT, too.

Unbelievably, when our sample hand was played in a teams competition at a fair level (Dutch Second Division), at *all eight tables* a slam off two cashable aces was reached and defeated. And the same has even been known to happen at world top level.

### Tip

*Do not ask for aces if you cannot stand a high response. Or switch to Kickback.*

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