



# Adventures in Bridge

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## ***This Week in Bridge***

### **(98) Specific Kings**

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Level: 2

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#### **General**

The basics of responding to Roman Keycard 1430 are well understood by most players (or can also be found in many books or with other resources):

#### **Responses to 4NT**

- 5♣ 1 or 4 Keycards
- 5♦ 3 or 0 Keycards
- 5♥ 2 Keycards without the trump Queen
- 5♠ 2 Keycards with the trump Queen

If partner responds 5♣ or 5♦ we can make the next (cheapest, non-trump suit) available bid to “Ask for the Queen” to determine whether to bid slam or stop in 5M.  
*Note: Determining which suit is the Keycard suit can have some complexities and is a good discussion to have with partner.*

A follow-up after 4NT of 5NT is used to ask for Kings and explore for a grand slam (or sometimes for 6NT instead of 6-Major.)

*Note: In most partnership bidding, 5NT guarantees all the Keycards and the trump Q and shows interest in a grand slam (though it may be just a courtesy bid to let partner decide.) If we have a long (unknown or extra) source of tricks (like KQJxxx) on the side, we can jump to grand slam knowing that partner has the Ace in our suit and we will easily have 13 winners in NT.*

The traditional, old fashioned way to respond to 5NT is to show how many Kings we have. But this is a flawed method, because frequently a grand slam can be made if partner has the specific King that we want/need and cannot be made if they have one of the other ones because we will be able to count 13 tricks if they have the one we are looking for. Partner’s giving us the number of their Kings may not be particularly useful information. Instead we would like to devise a method for partner to show exactly which king they have by using “Specific King” responses. This is the modern approach; let’s see how it works.

## Specific Kings

Let's look at this upgraded approach of showing Specific Kings through an example.

*Example*

1♠ 4NT

5♠ 5NT

In this auction, playing Specific Kings, we show our Kings "up the line". The "asker" (4NT bidder) is always asking the "shower" about their Kings and not showing Kings himself. Thus, the asker can find out the information they need (the King they are looking for) to bid a slam. Here are shower's responses:

- 6♣ ♣K
- 6♦ ♦K (not the ♣K)
- 6♥ ♥K (not the ♣K or ♦K)
- 6♠ No outside Kings (not 6♣, 6♦, 6♥)
- 7♠ If "shower" has a source of extra tricks they can just bid a grand slam knowing that 5NT guaranteed all the Keycards and they can now count 13 tricks!

After we have shown one specific King, asker can ask for another King by bidding that suit.

1♠ 4NT

5♠ 5NT

6x \_\_\_?

6♣ Response

- 6♦ Do you have the ♦K? ♣K was not what I was looking for.
- 6♥ Do you have the ♥K? ♣K was not what I was looking for.
- 6♠ Not particularly interested in grand slam, 5NT was just a courtesy bid.

6♦ Response

- 6♥ Do you have the ♥K? That is what I need for grand.
- 6♠ Either needed ♣K or not particularly interested in grand.

6♥ Response

- 6♠ Either needed minor King or not particularly interested in grand.

If we have the King that partner asks for, then we bid the grand slam (or 6NT if that is our special agreement) and if we do not have this King we usually return to the trump suit (6♠ in our example.) If there is room to show another King, we can show that by bidding that suit (below our small slam) – see above details.

As you can see, with this tool partner can determine exactly which Kings we have and thus more effectively bid a grand slam, not guessing if we have the King they are hoping for.

### **5♠ Bid in ♥ Keycard Auctions**

When we are Keycarding in ♥ and subsequently bid 5NT to ask for specific Kings, then showing the ♠K occurs above 6♥ - we would have to bid 6♠ to show it and if it is not what partner needs, we will be too high. We do not go past 6♥ to show the ♠K in response to these 5NT auctions.

Instead, if partner wants to know if we have the ♠K in these auctions (and there is room) then they use 5♠ (instead of 5NT) to start asking after specific Kings, leaving room for the ♠K. Partner usually bids the grand slam if they have the ♠K and bids another King if they do not have the ♠K.

#### *Example*

1♥ 4NT  
5♥ 5♠

*Note: You could also bid 5NT to show the ♠K and not another King over partner's 5♠ specific King ask.*

*Advanced Note: Sometimes there is an ambiguity about whether the 5♠ bid asks for the trump Queen or the ♠K. In this case, 5♠ asks for the trump Q (usually the ♥Q) because it is more important for the grand slam - it is much more often that we will want to know about a trump card than an outside King.*

#### *Example*

1♥ 4NT  
5♦ 5♠

In this auction 5♥ would be to play, thus 5♠ is the "Queen ask" and is looking for the grand slam since we are already past 5♥.

### **Specific Kings with the Queen Ask**

If partner asks for the trump Queen and we do not have it, we generally return to our suit.

#### *Example*

1♠ 4NT  
5♣ 5♦  
5♠

But if we do have the Queen then we need to tell partner more information. In this case, we start showing our specific Kings as cheaply as possible.

1♠ 4NT

5♣ 5♦

\_\_\_?

- 5♥ ♠Q plus ♥K (could have other Kings as well)
- 5NT/6♥ ♠Q and no outside K
- 6♣ ♠Q and ♣K, not ♥K (could still have ♦K)
- 6♦ ♠Q and ♦K only (no other outside Kings)

The bidding then continues as it would over 5NT - with partner being able to ask for other Kings to continue looking for the grand slam.

### Conclusion

Knowing exactly which card and which King partner has is extremely valuable - much more so than knowing they "just have a King". It allows us to better count tricks and to see if 13 tricks seem possible or likely. Give this upgrade a try and see if you can reach a few more grand slams!