

Cardiff Bridge Tutors

How to use Gerber.

Exploring Slams in No Trumps.

What is Gerber?

Gerber is a convention to ask for Partner's Ace and King holdings when exploring the possibility of a Slam.

It is widely misused and so is not a well respected convention. Bernard McGee is violently opposed to its use but if played as it was originally intended then it has a place in your bidding repertoire.

It operates in a similar way to Blackwood but uses an artificial 4♣ bid to ask for Aces and a 5♣ bid to ask for Kings.

Gerber, Blackwood and Cue Bids – which should I use?

The answer is all of them when the conditions are right.

Blackwood should be used to explore **Slams in trump suits** where there are **no voids** in the hand.

The reason that you don't use Blackwood to explore No Trump slams is that if you find out that there are insufficient Kings you are committed to playing in 6NT when 5NT might be the contract that you want to be in.

Gerber allows you to escape from the bidding sequence at 5NT.

Cue Bids are used where there **are voids**.

Gerber is used to explore **Slams in No Trump contracts**.

Gerber is used by some people as an alternative to Blackwood but this gives rise to confusion as the 4♣ bid may be interpreted as natural, a Splinter bid or a Cue Bid whereas 4NT should not be confused with anything else. 4NT can be bid after a 1NT opening as a Quantitative Raise but as we are clearly not exploring a suit contract then it cannot be Blackwood.

So keep the use of Gerber to asking for Aces and Kings when a NT contract has been agreed.

Conventions that may be used in bidding Slams in No Trumps.

Quantitative Raise.

After a 1NT opening if Responder has 19 points they should bid 4NT. This isn't Blackwood!

If opener has maximum points (14) then they bid 6NT otherwise they pass and they play in 4NT rather than 3NT.

Gerber.

Let's look at the Gerber bids and responses.

| Bid | Response |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 4♣ asking for Aces | 4♦ 0 or 4 Aces |
| | 4♥ 1 Aces |
| | 4♠ 2 Aces |
| | 4NT 3 Aces |
| 5♣ asking for Kings | 5♦ 0 or 4 Kings |
| | 5♥ 1 Kings |
| | 5♠ 2 Kings |
| | 5NT 3 Kings |

Now have a look at these hands and bidding sequence.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>♠ KQ85 ♥ AK1092 ♦ K4 ♣ A5</p> <p>♠ 10976 ♠ 42 ♥ 865 ♥ J743 ♦ 52 ♦ J8763 ♣ KJ107 ♣ 32</p> <p>♠ AJ3 ♥ Q ♦ AQ109 ♣ Q9864</p> | <p>Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>Points: West(4) North(19) East(2) South(15)</p> |
|---|---|

1.
Gerber
Asking for
Aces

3.
Gerber
Asking for
Kinas

| West | North | East | South |
|----------|-------|------|-------|
| | 1♥ | Pass | 2♠ |
| Pass | 3NT | Pass | 4♣ |
| Pass | ○4♥ | Pass | 5♣ |
| Pass | 5♣ | Pass | 6NT |
| All Pass | | | |

2.
4♥ shows
2 Aces

4.
5♠ shows
3 Kings

After North's rebid of 3NT South knows that the partnership holds 34 HCP, enough for a small slam.

With a bare Q♥ south feels nervous about bidding 6NT immediately and so initiates Gerber with a 4♣ bid.

North's reply shows 2 Aces and so the partnership must have first round control in ♥s and ♣s.

With no Aces missing South asks for Kings with the 5♣ bid.

The reply shows 3 Kings and with one King missing South signs off at 6NT.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>♠ KQ85 ♥ AK1092 ♦ K4 ♣ A5</p> <p>♠ 10976 ♠ 42 ♥ 865 ♥ J743 ♦ 52 ♦ J8763 ♣ KJ107 ♣ 32</p> <p>♠ AJ3 ♥ Q ♦ AQ109 ♣ Q9864</p> | <p>Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>Points: West(4) North(19) East(2) South(15)</p> |
|---|---|

This example shows the benefit of Gerber

| <p>♠ KQ8 ♥ AK109 ♦ QJ64 ♣ A5</p> <p>♠ 10976 ♠ 542 ♥ 865 ♥ J743 ♦ 52 ♦ K873 ♣ K1097 ♣ 32</p> <p>♠ AJ3 ♥ Q2 ♦ A109 ♣ QJ864</p> | <p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"></th> <th style="text-align: left;">West(3)</th> <th style="text-align: left;">North(19)</th> <th style="text-align: left;">East(4)</th> <th style="text-align: left;">South(14)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>5♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>5♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>5NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | West(3) | North(19) | East(4) | South(14) | | | 1♥ | Pass | 2♣ | | Pass | 3NT | Pass | 4♣ | | Pass | 4♥ | Pass | 5♣ | | Pass | 5♥ | Pass | 5NT | | All Pass | | | |
|---|---|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|--|--|----|------|----|--|------|-----|------|----|--|------|----|------|----|--|------|----|------|-----|--|----------|--|--|--|
| | West(3) | North(19) | East(4) | South(14) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | 1♥ | Pass | 2♣ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Pass | 3NT | Pass | 4♣ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Pass | 4♥ | Pass | 5♣ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Pass | 5♥ | Pass | 5NT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | All Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Q. How does North know that South's 4♣ bid isn't just a raise of their opening bid?

A. Because they play Gerber and 4♣ after a NT contract must be asking for Aces.

North's 3NT shows 19 points and with 14 held by South then the combined 33 is an indicator of a small slam in NT.

When North replies 4♥ then South knows that they hold all 4 Aces and asks for Kings.

North's 5♥ shows 2 Kings and with 2 Kings missing then they stop at 5NT.

Why? The points indicate enough for 6NT but the results of Gerber show that a finesse would be needed for this to make. Against the best defence this might not be possible.

Bidding this hand with Blackwood would result in 6NT and not give you the option.