



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(73) Minorwood

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Level: 4

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General

One of the most valuable tools in slam bidding is Keycard. This allows us to check on important cards (“Keycards”) and stop below slam if we are missing too many of them. But if we use 4NT to ask for Keycards when a minor is our fit, we will frequently be above game (especially in ♣) when we are missing two Aces (or Keycards.) This is a problem! Our solution to this is a convention called *Minorwood* – where we use 4-of-a-minor to ask for Keycards (instead of 4NT.)

Note: 4-minor is generally not otherwise that useful of a bid – it is not at game, but it is above 3NT. So using it for a conventional call does not give up much.

Minorwood Responses

When we bid 4-minor as Minorwood we respond with 1430 steps, just as we did to 4NT. The important thing is to think of these as bids as steps and not attach them to a specific denomination.

4♣ Keycard in ♣

- 4♦ (Step 1) – 1 or 4 Keycards
- 4♥ (Step 2) – 3 or 0 Keycards
- 4♠ (Step 3) – 2 Keycards without the ♣ Queen
- 4NT (Step 4) – 2 Keycards with the ♣ Queen

4♦ Keycard in ♦

- 4♥ (Step 1) – 1 or 4 Keycards
- 4♠ (Step 2) – 3 or 0 Keycards
- 4NT (Step 3) – 2 Keycards without the ♦ Queen
- 5♣ (Step 4) – 2 Keycards with the ♦ Queen



Queen Ask

If our answer is (1 or 4) or (3 or 0), then the Queen of trump is still an unknown card. To find out about this important card by asking partner about it, we do just as we would over a traditional 4NT Keycard auction – we make the cheapest available forcing bid, usually the next step up, to ask partner about the Queen.

Example Queen Ask Auctions

4♣ 4♦
4♥

4♣ 4♥
4♠

4♦ 4♥
4♠

4♦ 4♠
5♣

4NT is not an available as an asking bid because 4NT is always to play in minorwood.

Partner answers just as they would in normal Keycard (after a 4NT Keycard Ask) –

- If partner does not have the Queen, they rebid 5m.
- If partner does have the Queen, then they start showing their specific Kings up the line, and the auction continues just as it would in a 4NT 1430 Keycard auction.

King Ask

Once we have our answer to the number of Keycards, we will either signoff in game (5m or 4NT), bid slam (6m or 6NT), or ask for Kings if we are interested in more information (usually looking for a grand slam.) Though we used 4m to ask for keycards, we cannot use 5m to ask for Kings because we will frequently want to play there in 5m. Instead, we will use 5m +1 to ask for Kings:

- If we Keycard in ♣, then 5♣+1 = 5♦ is our King Ask.
- If we Keycard in ♦, then 5♦+1 = 5♥ is our King Ask.

These bids ask partner to start bidding their specific Kings up the line and the auction continues as expected.

Note: In all of these auctions 4NT is not an asking bid. It is frequently where we want to play – thus, it is natural and will end the auction.



When is 4m Minorwood?

Now for the hard part of Minorwood! Since we are going to use 4m as a slam try convention (Keycard) then it is important that partner knows what is going on, is on the same page as we are, and most importantly, does not pass. We need to have good rules for when 4m is Minorwood and when 4m is natural – these are important situations to discuss and re-discuss with partner.

If there is any question about what is going on or any ambiguity, then 4m is forcing and we should usually treat it as Minorwood. But if we are not sure we can just raise to 5m. The key is that we do not pass. If you pass, you'd better be right!

Rules for when 4m is Minorwood

- We are in a game forcing auction:
 - We have not found a Major suit fit and
 - We have found a minor suit fit;
 - Even if raising to 4m shows that fit for the first time.
 - Even if this is an implied fit.
- When we are not in a game forcing auction:
 - Jumps that are clearly not weak are Minorwood. (Careful!)
 - Raising an invite is Minorwood because we do not re-invite an invite.

4m is not Minorwood

- In non-forcing competitive auctions.
- When we have an 8+ card Major suit fit.

Minorwood Example Auctions

Note: For these examples we are going to assume that we play Inverted Minors.

1♣ 2♣*
4♣ Easy Minorwood Auction

1♣ 2♣*
2NT 4♣ 4♣ is Minorwood not Gerber if ♣ have been bid naturally.
Minorwood overrules Gerber if either player has previously bid ♣ naturally.

1♣ 2♣*
3♣ 4♣ 3♣ was NF. We would pass 3♣ with a minimum. So bidding again is a GF and thus, 4♣ is Minorwood.

1♠ 2♦
3♦ 3♠
4♦ This 4♦ bid is NOT Minorwood since we have a ♠ fit. 4♦ is a cuebid.



1NT 2♠
3♣ 4♣ Minorwood (implied fit – at least 6-2)

1♦ P 2♦ (4♣)
4♦ This is a tough one. We are not in a game forcing auction and we are just competing. Some players might treat this as just competitive while others might treat it as Minorwood. With extra ♦, we could just bid 5♦ and we nothing extra we could pass. So 4m is best used as Minorwood here.
These are the kind of auctions where it is easy to have a mix-up.

Conclusion

Minorwood is an excellent convention that allows us to explore minor suit slams at a low level and stop in 5m or even 4NT if no slam is there to be bid. As long as we can avoid mix-ups about when it is non-forcing and when it is Minorwood, it will be an excellent addition to our slam bidding tools.