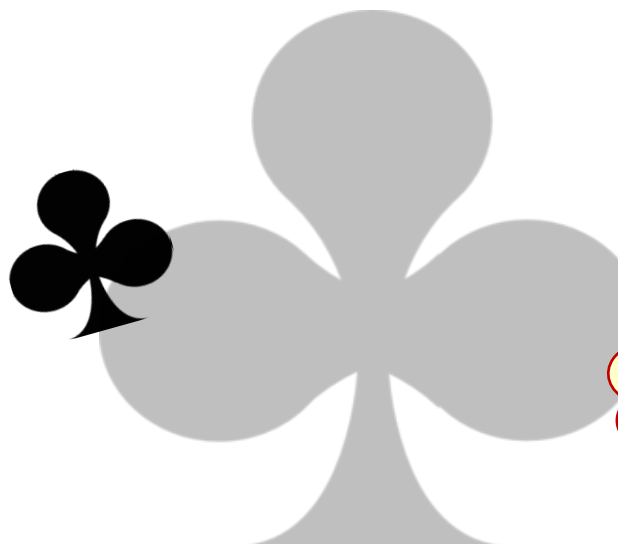


BAZE CONVENTION

You open 1NT (15-17), your partner responds 2♣, Stayman, asking for a 4-card major. You cooperate by bidding 2♠. How does your partner show a strong hand with spade support, strong enough to show slam interest?



W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	?

How to show slam interest in support of Spades?

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	4NT
P	?		

Does this auction look familiar?

How often, playing with a pickup partner, have we seen this 4NT bid? We know it is a *quantitative* raise, but does partner? Is he showing spade support, and asking for keycards? Hopefully not, since the 4NT bid

should not be showing spade support. More likely, partner has four hearts and around 16 HCP's, asking us to bid 6NT with a maximum NT opener. That is what this 4NT bid should show.

How, then, do we show partner that we have a major suit fit (4 or 5 cards) and have serious slam interest? **BAZE!**

When do we use **BAZE**?

BAZE is used after a NoTrump opening, a 2♣ Stayman inquiry, and a positive Stayman response. So, after 1NT - 2♣, and a positive response of either 2♥ or 2♠, if we have a major suit fit (4 or 5 of the trump suit), and we can see the possibility of slam, we use **BAZE** to further describe our hand.

BAZE hand types:

There are three types of hands as responder where—with a major suit fit—**BAZE** can be used.

They are:

1. A flat hand with NO SINGLETON, 4 or 5 trump, and enough HCP's to pursue a possible slam.
2. A shapely hand WITH A SINGLETON (or void), 4 or 5 trump, and serious interest in slam.
3. A hand with a fit, and strong enough to leap into RKCB.

BAZE when responder has no shortage:

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	4♦
P	?		

A typical auction for the first type of hand is shown above.

1NT is 15-17 HCP.

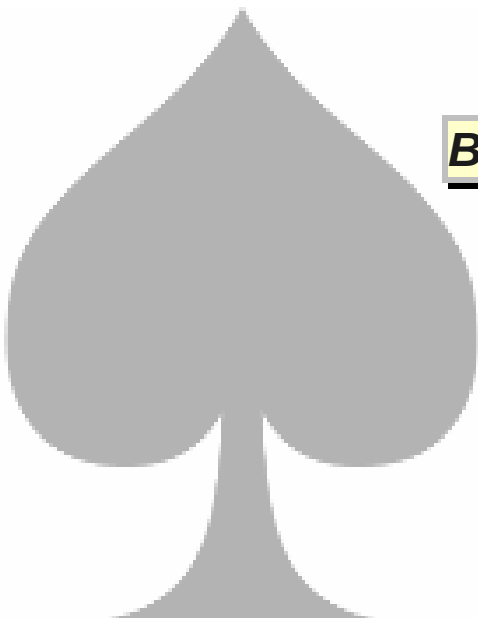
2♣ is Stayman.

2♠ shows four Spades.

The 4♦ bid says the following:

- We have a *FIT* in spades.
- I *DO NOT* have a singleton.
- I have *SLAM INTEREST*.
- It requests the No Trump opener to Q-bid, Bid RKCB, or sign-off.

Keep in mind that with South having a flat hand, slam will not be made on shape. The two hands together will need to be much closer to the HCP total of 33. South needs to bear this in mind when bidding 4♦ and North must also be aware of this. If he is minimum for his No Trump opener it may be best to sign off in game.



BAZE when responder has shortage:

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♥	P	3♠
P	?		

The second hand-type can be shown with the above auction. 1NT is 15-17 HCP. 2♣ is Stayman. 2♥ shows 4 Hearts. The 3♠ bid (*a bid at the 3 level in the other major*) says the following:

- We have a *FIT* in hearts.
- I have a *SINGLETON* . . . SOMEWHERE.
- I have *SLAM INTEREST*.

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	3♥
P	?		



The second hand-type can also be shown with the above auction. 1NT is 15-17 HCP. 2♣ is Stayman. 2♠ shows 4 Spades. The 3♥ bid (*a bid at the 3 level in the other major*) says the following:

- We have a *FIT* in spades.
- I have a *SINGLETON* . . . SOMEWHERE.
- I have *SLAM INTEREST*.

The bid at the 3 level of the other major says nothing about the location of the singleton. We'll get to that in a moment . . .

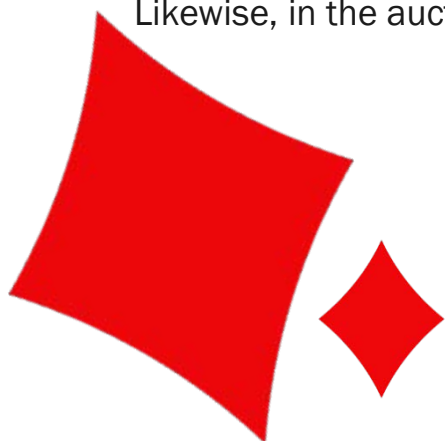
Where is the singleton?

Now, for the No Trump opener to ask responder where the location of the singleton is, he bids the NEXT STEP. So, in the auction below, 3♠ asks, “Partner, where is your singleton?”

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	3♥
P	3♠		



Likewise, in the auction below, 3NT asks, “Partner, where is your singleton?”



W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♥	P	3♠
P	3NT		



Low—Middle—High

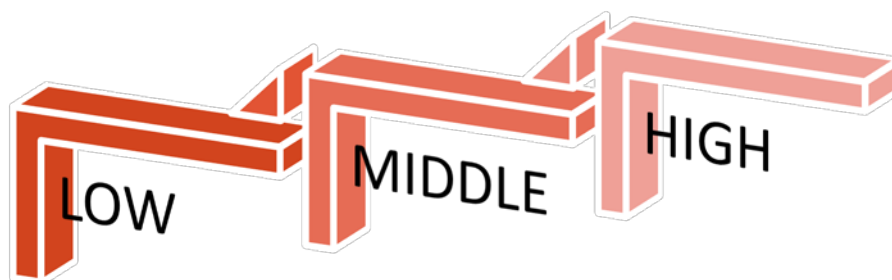
The reason for using the “NEXT STEP” is to save bidding space.

It is now responders turn to tell partner the location of that singleton. How is this done? You might think that to show the location of the singleton that responder would bid that suit. WRONG!

Think about the following auction: 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠ - 3NT . . . where 3♠ shows *Heart support* and slam interest with a singleton, and 3NT asks the location of the singleton. What if the singleton is in spades? If you bid 4♠, you go past game and partner may have wasted values in your short suit. How do you address this? Again, use steps.

Think the following: **LMH** = Low, Middle, High. What the heck is LMH? Quite simply, LMH is this . . .

- To show a singleton in the Lowest suit, use the Lowest step.
- To show a singleton in the Middle suit, use the Middle step.
- To show a singleton in the Highest suit, use the Highest step.



In the auction below, where 3♠ asks the location of the singleton . . .

- 4♣ shows a ♦ singleton.
- Remember, in response to the 3♠ singleton-ask, the next steps are:
 - o 3NT (low - showing a ♣ singleton),
 - o 4♣ (middle - showing a ♦ singleton), and
 - o 4♦ (high - showing a ♥ singleton).

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	3♥
P	3♠	P	4♣



Using LMH you **NEVER** bid past game in your response. Now partner can Q-bid, bid RKCB, or just sign-off in game based on your singleton suit. **Isn't this great!?**

Roman Key Card Blackwood

What about RKCB (Roman Key Card Blackwood) by responder? Can it be bid showing trump support directly over a positive response to a Stayman bid? Yes! But not with 4NT. Remember that 4NT is a quantitative raise.

So, how do we bid it? See the auction below:

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	4♣

4♣ here . . . directly over a positive response to a Stayman bid, shows a Spade FIT and asks for key cards. Simple!

Just use whatever flavor of RKCB you prefer, 1430 or 0314.

** A word about the name of this gadget. Though one would assume that a convention named "Baze" would have some connection to Hall of Famer Grant Baze, there is absolutely no evidence of this. In fact, Baze's good friend, Chris Compton, categorically states that Baze had no connection to the invention of this or any other gadget, indicating Baze, "never had an original idea about bidding."*

MODIFIED BAZE

As with all conventions, someone comes along and thinks of improvements. Sometimes there is a cost that negates any perceived advantage. Not so with *Modified Baze* (sometimes referred to as *Reverse Baze*), which moderately improves the response structure of Baze.

What are the improvements? In *Modified Baze*, the shortness showing rebid by responder of 3 OM (other major) remains the same, but the four-level bids of 4♣ and 4♦ are inverted. Think about it, by inverting the 4♣ and 4♦ bids, you create *extra bidding space* for opener to show a control.

4♣ now shows the flat hand requesting control bids.

4♦ becomes RKCB.

Examples below:

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	4♣

Agrees Spades – No Shortage

Here, 4♣ agrees trumps, shows a hand without shortness, and demands control bids in search of slam. Note that **the extra room allows more space** to show controls.

Here, 4♦ agrees trumps, shows a hand without shortness, and is now RKCB asking for key cards. Remember, 4NT is a quantitative raise.

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	4♦

RKCB – Spades

This is a minor modification to **Baze**. It is an improvement.

BAZE after 2NT?

What about hands that open 2NT?

You don't have enough room to show (or not show) singletons, so to show strong trump support after a Stayman sequence and slam interest, bid the other major at the cheapest level. That's it—nothing fancy.

The No Trump bidder can then Q-bid, bid RKCB, or sign off in game.

W	N	E	S
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♥	P	3♠

Sets Hearts. Slam interest

W	N	E	S
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♠	P	4♥

Sets Spades. Slam interest

The method outlined above is standard. Sitting opposite a random expert you can expect to bid this way and it would be understood.

Note that when hearts are trump, the three-spade bid allows room for control bids. Unfortunately, when spades are trump the four-heart “suit-agreement” bid does not leave any room to show controls.

A possible solution:

W	N	E	S
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♠	P	4♣

Sets Spades. Slam interest

Switch the meaning of 4♣ and 4♥. The 4♣ bid now becomes the suit agreement for spades while 4♥ shows clubs. Not standard, but clearly superior.

PRECURSORS TO BAZE

Goldman Slam Tries after Stayman

A similar gadget known variously as Goldman, Goldman Slam Tries after Stayman, and Goldway was a product of the Bobby Goldman—Paul Soloway and Goldman—Mike Lawrence partnerships in the 1970's. Though likely a collaborative effort, Goldman receives top billing since he was acknowledged as the primary theoretician of the Dallas Aces. Additionally, it was Goldman who published this method in his *Aces Scientific* book published in 1978.

After a positive Stayman response, the bid of **three of the other major** had the same meaning: slam interest with unspecified shortage. The same LMH method was used to identify where the shortness was. Four diamonds was the balanced slam try. However, four clubs was straight Gerber, asking for aces. After suit agreement via either 3 of the other major or 4 diamonds, the Ace ask was 4NT. However, this was before Roman Keycard Blackwood. Instead, the response structure was a modified version of Roman Blackwood.

FITS: FITS After Stayman

FITS after Stayman is a conventional means by which responder to partner's notrump opening bid or overcall shows slam interest in the major shown by opener's response to Stayman. This method is from the Walsh Notrump Notes, part of the Two-Over-One system devised by Rhoda Walsh, Paul Soloway, John Swanson, and Richard Walsh in the late 1960s and into the 70s.

After a positive Stayman response, the bid of **three of the other major** had the same meaning: slam interest with unspecified shortage. A similar LMH method was used to identify where the shortness was. One difference was that when two spades was the Stayman answer, and three hearts was bid by responder to agree trump and show shortness, opener would "ask where" by bidding 3NT rather than three spades. Four diamonds was the balanced slam try. However, four clubs was RKC Gerber, asking for key cards.

ADD-ONS and VARIATIONS:



Another modification that is available due to the extra space is to identify a void when spades are trump:

3♥ = agrees spades w/shortness somewhere.

3♠ = asks where is the shortness?

3NT = says my shortness is a void.

4♣ = Asks where?

4♦ and 4♥ shows voids in that suit;

4♠ shows a club void.

W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	3♥
P	3♠	P	3NT
P	4♣	P	??

You could also science the heck out of this and create a way to show a void when hearts are agreed. To accomplish this *switch* 3♦ and 3♠ so that 3♦ is now the unbalanced raise and 3♠ shows four spades and longer diamonds. The response structure would parallel the above. The drawback is that both void showing methods create additional memory load.

COMMENTS:

Some players dislike the current definition for the jumps to 4♣ and 4♦ thinking the need for a key card ask under 4NT to be unnecessary. Michael Rosenberg, for example, believes that 4♣ as “solid slam try” and 4♦ as a “mild slam try” would be a better use for those bids. That certainly dials in on a very slim difference! Others suggest making a single raise of opener’s major forcing, giving up on the invite. This frees up the 4m bids for another use. Regardless of your preference, some variation of the methods described above seem to be current “expert standard.”



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