4NT - Blackwood

The Blackwood Convention

In its simplest form, a bid of 4NT asks partner how many aces they hold.
Partner responds on the simple scale:-

5♣ = 0 or 4
5♦ = 1
5♥ = 2
5♠ = 3

The purpose of the bid

Is to ensure that there are not 2 or more immediate losers when bidding a slam.

Note in particular that you should be all but certain that you have 12 or 13 prospective winners before using this convention to check on immediate losers.

5NT

Again, in its simplest form, a bid of 5NT following a Blackwood 4NT and its response asks for Kings on a similar scale

The health warnings

1. Do not ask for aces if one of the possible answers might take you too high.
   With this thought in mind, it is frequently wrong to ask for aces if holding fewer than 2 aces yourself,
   and
   it is almost always wrong to ask for aces when the prospective trump suit is clubs.
2. It is wrong to use this convention if the particular ace matters – not just how many.
   Typically, this will be when you hold a void.
3. 5NT is always wrong unless you have thought of all 13 tricks – the 5NT bid already commits you to the 6-level, so just bid it.

The Blackwood convention is **not** the best way of looking for a slam on 2 **balanced** hands, although some occasional partners might insist on it.

Some partners might insist on using 4♣ rather than 4NT to keep the bidding low, but you do not have to ask how many aces to bid a slam and there will be far better uses for this bid in due course, so play it with these partners by all means, but if you are setting up a system with a regular partner then avoid it and wait for the other uses to appear.

So when do you use it?

When you have either agreed a suit or jumped to 4NT following a suit bid, you do not hold a side-suit void, and you are all but certain that there are 12 or 13 tricks available between the two hands.