

Quantitative, Normal Blackwood, RKCB, Gerber, Splinter or what?

When is 4♣ asking for aces? When is 4NT asking for aces? When is 4♣ a cue bid or a splinter? When is 4NT quantitative? What is 4♣ after a transfer? and after Stayman?

These are all questions that a regular partnership should be able to answer, but it's less easy for non-familiar pairs. In general my recommendation is that 4♣ is only Gerber if partner's last **natural** bid was NT. Lets look in detail. It is assumed that you play RKCB where applicable and that you do not play Kickback.

West	East	
1♠	2♥	4♣ is a splinter, agreeing ♥'s. It could be either a singleton or void.
4♣	4NT	4NT is RKCB. Some play exclusion RKCB here but I don't really see why.
1♠	1NT	What is 4♣ over the strong 3♥? If East had a weak hand or a limit raise for ♠'s or ♥'s, he would simply bid game. Thus 4♣ can only be a cue bid agreeing ♥'s. Responder has a ♥ suit with insufficient values for an initial two level response. A bid of 4NT here or a subsequent 4NT bid by either is thus RKCB for ♥'s
3♥	4♣	
1♥	4♣	A splinter or Swiss, according to partnership agreement.
1♥	4♦	A splinter or Swiss, according to partnership agreement.
1♥	4NT	<u>Normal</u> Blackwood. This cannot be RKCB for ♥'s as then East would first bid a forcing raise (maybe Jacoby 2NT). It is not quantitative, as East would presumably first bid a suit. It must be a strange hand.
3NT	4NT	3NT is gambling. This 4NT is not Blackwood, opener has exactly 1 ace. Responder has a good hand and simply requests opener to bid 5 of his suit and responder will take it from there.
3NT	4♣	3NT is gambling and 4♣ is pass or correct
3NT	4♦	3NT is gambling and 4♦ is a conventional bid asking about shortage
2♣	2♦	RKCB for ♦'s. With a big hand in support of ♥'s, East would have splintered, cue bid, bid 3♥ or bid RKCB on the previous round.
2♥	2NT	Of course it is unwise to use 4NT as Blackwood when minor suits are trumps and my preference is to use Kickback (so 4♥ would be RKCB for ♦'s here), but that's a totally different topic which is discussed elsewhere.
3♦	4NT	

And let's have a look at the situation after a 1NT opening: -

After a 1NT opening?

Remember what I said about Gerber and partner's last **natural** bid? Here's what I mean:

1NT	4♣	Gerber	1NT	4NT	Quantitative.
1♠	2♦		1♠	2♦	
2NT	4♣	Gerber	2NT	4NT	Quantitative.
1NT	3♠	Assuming that you play that East's 3♠ is a slam try, then West's 4♣ is a cue bid agreeing ♠'s and East's 4NT is RKCB for ♠'s.			
4♣	4NT				

Transfer Sequences

1NT 2♥ Gerber (RKCB?). Partner's last natural bid was 1NT.

2♠ 4♣

1NT 2♥
2♠ 4NT Quantitative (5 ♠'s)

1NT 2♥ This time, 4NT is RKCB for ♠'s. West's super accept of the transfer has set ♠'s as trumps. East re-transfers to get West as declarer and then uses
2NT 3♥
3♠ 4NT RKCB.

1NT 2♦ 4NT is not RKCB for ♥'s here, it must be quantitative. If East had a hand where he can investigate slam in ♥'s with minimal support from partner, he would have started with a slam interest bid of 3♥ over 1NT (if that's what you play 3♥ as). Some players (including me) play 4♣ as RKCB for ♥'s in this sequence rather than Gerber.
2♥ 4NT

Stayman Sequences

1NT 2♣ Ace (key card) ask, so Gerber (RKCB?)

2♠ 4♣

1NT 2♣
2♥ 4NT Quantitative (4 ♠'s)

Note: What do I mean by Gerber(RKCB)? – I play 4♣ as Roman Key Card in these situations and rather than call it RKC Gerber I prefer to say that 4♣ is RKCB.

Note also that in the sequences like 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 4♣ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♣ then 4♣ is normally played as standard ace ask Gerber, I believe that RKCB is to be preferred but you would have to agree that.