

The Bridge Booklet

(BB03)

Popular Conventions



Stayman

Jacoby Transfers

Strong Opening Bids

Slam Bidding

Stayman

This convention is used by Responder after a NoTrump opening bid. The NoTrump opening is so descriptive (15-17 valuation points and a balanced hand) that responder usually knows the answers to the How High and Where questions: does the partnership belong in partscore or game and should the contract be in NoTrump or in a suit.

On occasion however it may be difficult for the partnership to discover a 4-4 major suit fit. Hence the development of the Stayman convention.

The Stayman convention suggests that when partner opens 1NT, a response of **2♣** can be used to ask whether opener holds a 4-card major suit.

The requirements to use Stayman are:

- at least one 4-card major suit
- 8+ points

The **2♣** is totally *conventional* and has nothing to do with a club holding. The 1 NT opener replies to the Stayman inquiry as follows:

- 2♠: a 4-card or longer spade holding
- 2♥: a 4-card or longer heart holding
- 2♦: no 4-card or longer major suit

(note-if opener holds both 4♠ and 4♥ he will usually bid 2♥ going "up the bidding ladder")

Using Stayman With a Game-Going Hand (10-15 points)

Responder (who invoked Stayman) will now know both How High and Where the contract belongs. If the combined holding is 25+points, partnership belongs in game. If a 4-4 major suit fit has been discovered, the game should be played in that suit. If no fit has been discovered, the game belongs in NoTrump.

Using Stayman With an Invitational Hand (8-9 points)

If Opener replied **2♦** showing no 4-card major, Responder will bid 2NT inviting Opener to go to game with a maximum hand.

If Opener replies **2♥**, Responder has uncovered a fit and can invite game by raising to **3♥**. Opener can pass with minimum and raise to game with a maximum.

Similarly if Opener replies **2♠**, Responder will invite game by bidding **3♠**

Stayman Inferences

Responder needs at least one 4-card major and 8+ points to use Stayman. Suppose responder has 9 points and a 4-card heart holding. He uses Stayman by bidding **2♣**

If opener replies **2♠**, he has picked 'the wrong' suit. Responder should now bid NoTrump at the appropriate level (in this case, 2NT). Opener should reason: Partner invoked Stayman. He has a 4-card major. I replied in Spades and partner did not raise spades. Therefore, partner does not hold 4-Spades. But he did use Stayman. He must therefore hold 4-Hearts. At this point the opener corrects by bidding the other major at the appropriate level.

Using Stayman After a 1 NT Overcall

With bidding of:

West	North	East	South
1♦	1NT	Pass	??

North's 1NT overcall shows a balanced hand similar to an opening bid of 1NT. South as Advancer can bid **2♣** making use of Stayman to look for a 4-4 major fit.

If West had opened **1♣**, South's **2♣** response would still be Stayman.

Using Stayman with a weak hand

With fewer than 8 HCP it is not usual to use Stayman. It would risk getting the partnership too high. The best choice is to Pass and let partner play in 1NT.

What if Responder has Clubs?

Consider that partner opens 1NT and you, responder, hold 10+ HCP with the following hand::

♠ - ♥ 754 ♦ KQ2 ♣ AQ108653

Responder should start with a bid of **2♣** which opener will assume to be Stayman. Responder will then rebid **3♣** to openers rebid. This is forcing and shows a real club suit,

When the Opponents Interfere

Following is a popular set of agreements available if Opponents interfere after partner's 1NT opening bid:

- If RHO *doubles*, a response of **2♣** is still Stayman
- If RHO overcalls **2♣**, a *double* is used to ask if partner has a 4-card major
- If RHO overcalls **2♦** or higher, a *cuebid* of opponents suit asks for a 4-card major

Jacoby Transfer Bids

These bids are used by responder after a notrump opening bid. They allow the weaker hand to become dummy while hiding the strength in the stronger hand.

The key is that use of the Jacoby transfer allows partnership to:

- Get to the best game contract when responder knows there is enough combined strength to go for the game bonus
- Invite game when the partnership may have enough combined strength
- Stop in partscore when there is not enough combined strength for game.

Using Transfers When Responder has a Strong Hand of 10-15 Points

With 10-15 points responder knows How High, game. The only question is Where?

With a 6-card or longer suit, responder does know Where. Opener has at least two cards in the major suit so the partnership has an 8-card fit. Responder transfers to the major suit and then takes the partnership to game in the major.

With only a 5-card major suit, responder cannot be sure that there is an 8-card major fit. Opener might have only two cards in the major. So, opener transfers to the major suit and then jumps to 3NT to offer opener a choice of contracts. With a doubleton in responders major, opener passes and the partnership will play game in notrump. With 3- card or longer support for the major suit shown by responder, opener puts the partnership in game in the major.

Using Transfers When Responder has an Invitational Hand of 8-9 points

With 8 or 9 points, responder is unsure How High the partnership belongs. If opener has 17 points, the partnership belongs in game. If not, the partnership likely belongs in partscore.

With a 6-card or longer major suit, responder knows where. Opener has at least two cards in the major suit so the partnership has an 8-card fit. Responder transfers to the major suit and then invites opener to game by raising the suit to the 3-level. Opener

can now continue to game in the major with a maximum; or, settle for partscore with a minimum.

With 8 or 9 points and a 5-card major, responder is unsure of both How High and Where. Responder transfers to the major suit and then bids 2NT. Opener can choose notrump with only two cards in the major or can choose to play in the major with 3-card or longer support. That solves the problem of Where. By rebidding 2NT, responder shows invitational strength. Opener can stop in partscore with a minimum or continue to game with a maximum. That solves the question of How High.

Using Transfers When Responder has a Weak Hand of 0-7 Points

With a 6-card or longer major suit, responder transfers and passes! On balance, with a 5-card major suit, responder also probably transfer and pass. Opener may have 3-card or longer support and even with only 2-card support, playing in the major may work out best.

As a guideline, responder should use Stayman when holding a 4-card major; even with another 5-card or longer major, but use a transfer when holding a 5-card or longer major but no 4-card major.

Signing off in a Minor Suit

After an opening bid of 1NT, a response of 2♠ asks opener to bid 3♣. Responder then:

- Passes to sign off in a partscore in clubs
- Bids 3+ to sign off in a partscore in diamonds (which opener will pass)

Other Considerations for Jacoby Transfers

Transfers can be used after any natural notrump overcall. Transfers are used together with Stayman after a 2NT opening

- 3♥: Jacoby transfer to Spades
- 3♦: Jacoby transfer to Hearts
- 3♣: Stayman

A responders jump to 3♥ or 3♠ shows a good 6-card+ suit and an interest in reaching slam

Responding to 1NT with 5-5 Major

Partner opens 1NT with a 15-17 HCP balanced hand.

Your hand is ♠KQ10xx ♥A10xxx ♦x ♣xx

You are holding 9 HCP plus 2 length for 11 total points.

With game going values (10+ points) and 5-5 in the majors, you as responder should transfer to Spades; the higher ranking major, first. After the opener accepts the transfer you will next rebid 3♥. This is a forcing bid asking partner to bid his preferred major suit game.

Partner opens 1NT with a 15-17 HCP balanced hand.

Your hand is ♠QJ10xx ♥A10xxx ♦x ♣xx

You are holding 7 HCP plus 2 length for 9 total points.

With invitational values (8 or 9 points) and 5-5 in the majors, you as responder should transfer to Hearts (the lower ranking major) first. After the opener accepts the transfer you will next rebid 2♠. The opener can now choose to pass 2♠ or correct to 3♥ with a hand that doesn't want game, or he can bid game in his preferred major.

Partner opens 1NT and you are holding a weak hand with 5-5 in the majors.

Your hand is ♠QJ10xx ♥xxxxx ♦x ♣xx

Your hand is too weak to search for the best fit so you should just transfer to your stronger 5-card suit (in this case spades) and then you will pass.

Stayman or Transfer?

Number of cards in the Major Suit	Responders Point Range		
	0-7	8-9	10-15
6+	Transfer and Pass	Transfer and raise the major	Transfer and bid game in the major
5	Transfer and Pass	Transfer and bid 2NT	Transfer and bid 3NT
4	Pass	2♣ (Stayman)	2♣ (Stayman)
< 4	Pass	2NT	3NT

Strong Opening Bids

All strong hands of 22+ points are opened 2♣

The 2♣ bid is artificial and has nothing to do with clubs. It is simply a forcing hand telling partner that you have a very strong hand.

Responding to a 2♣ Opening Bid

The 2♦ Waiting Bid

This is artificial. It says nothing about responders strength or distribution. It is simply waiting to hear a further description of openers hand.

A Positive Response With 8+ Points

- 2♥, 2♠, 3♣, or 3♦ show a good 5-card suit with 2 of the top 3 honours; or, a 6-card+ suit and 8+ points.
- 2NT shows a balanced hand with 8+ points

After a positive bid by responder the partnership is committed to at least a game contract and is looking to reach a slam contract if a suitable fit can be found. Opener will make a descriptive rebid.

Openers Rebid

Showing an Unbalanced Hand: a rebid in a suit shows an unbalanced hand and is forcing to at least game. With an unbalanced hand, opener bids the longest suit or the higher ranking of two 5-card or 6-card suits.

Showing a Balanced Hand: a rebid of notrump shows a balanced hand and is not forcing. With a balanced hand, opener rebids as follows:

- 2NT: 22-24 points
- 3NT: 25-27 points
- 4NT: 28-30 points

When opener shows an unbalanced hand by opening 2♣ and then rebidding a suit, responder cannot pass until game is reached

Responders Rebid

When responder has a very weak hand of 0-3 points, he bids:

- 3NT if opener bids 3♦
- 3♦ if opener bids 3♣
- 3♣ if opener bids 2♥ or 2♠

If opener rebids the same suit after responder has shown a very weak hand, responder can then pass.

Responder can pass with a weak balanced hand when opener rebids notrump

Responder can use Stayman and Jacoby after a 2NT rebid by opener. With no interest in a major suit responder can pass with about 0-2 points or raise to game with 3-5 points.

The partnership can also use Stayman and transfers after a 3NT rebid by opener.

The 2NT Opening Bid

This shows 20-21 points and a balanced hand. The bid is not forcing and responder can pass with 0-4 points. With 5+ points responder should get partnership to game. Responder can use both Stayman and Jacoby transfers after this opening.

Slam Bidding

There are large bonuses for bidding and making slam contracts. To consider going after these bonuses the partnership needs:

- 33+ combined points for a small slam (12 tricks)
- 37+ combined points for a grand slam (13 tricks)

Since there is no difference in the number of tricks required for a slam in any suit, partnership should consider playing in any 8-card or longer fit or in notrump if there is no known fit.

The Blackwood Convention

If a suitable fit exists with enough strength the final consideration should be to make sure the defense cannot take the first two tricks against a small slam (or the first trick against a grand slam). ***If a trump suit has been agreed on, the Blackwood convention is used*** to check for Aces (and perhaps Kings held by the partnership

Blackwood is initiated by one of the partners making a bid of 4NT. Once this bid is made, partner responds as follows:

Replies to Blackwood 4NT

5♠: 3 Aces
5♥: 2 Aces
5♦: 1 Ace
5♣: 0 or 4 Aces

Replies to Blackwood 5NT

6NT: 4 Kings
6♠: 3 Kings
6♥: 2 Kings
6♦: 1 King
6♣: 0 Kings

The **Blackwood Convention is designed to keep the partnership out of poor slams**. The partnership must first determine that it has a suitable trump fit and enough combined strength to play for a slam. Even then ***Blackwood is only useful for determining the number of Aces (and/or Kings) the partnership holds-not which Aces (and/ or Kings)***

In addition, Blackwood cannot be used after a natural notrump bid. After a natural notrump bid, a bid of 4NT is a quantitative invitational bid. NoTrump has been agreed upon as the playing suit.

The Gerber Convention

The Gerber convention can be used to check for Aces when the last bid was a natural 1NT or 2NT. Again, Gerber **is used when NoTrump is the agreed upon playing suit**.

Gerber is initiated by one of the partners bidding **4♣** after NoTrump has been agreed upon as the playing suit. Once the bid is made, partner responds as follows:

Replies to Gerber 4♣	Replies to Gerber 5♣
	6♣: 4 Kings
4NT: 3 Aces	5NT: 3 Kings
4♠: 2 Aces	5♠: 2 Kings
4♥: 1 Ace	5♥: 1 King
4♦: 0 or 4 Aces	5♦.: 0 Kings

Addendum: Opening Balanced Hands

- 12-14 points: Open one-of-a-suit planning to rebid notrump at the cheapest level
- 15-17 points: Open 1NT
- 18-19 points: Open one-of-a-suit planning to jump in notrump at the next opportunity
- 20-21 points: Open 2NT
- 22-24 points: Open **2♣** planning to rebid 2NT
- 25-27 points: Open **2♣** planning to rebid 3NT

