

Stayman: What Momma Did Not Tell You



Basic Stayman

- We all know how basic Stayman works, but here's a quick review. Opening Bidder bids 1nt.
- The responder, holding at least 1 four-card major suit, bids 2 ♣. The opening bidder can respond:
 - 2 ♦ I have no 4-card major suit
 - 2 ♥ I have 4 hearts and I may have 4 spades.
 - 2 ♠ I have 4 spades and I do not have 4 hearts.
- Responder then invites or sets the appropriate contract.

All the Following
Assume 1 No Trump =
15-17 Points

Modern Thinking in Bridge

- Most bridge experts say, today:
- If you have 4-3-3-3 distribution don't bother with Stayman at all, when you have a game or invitational hand.

4-3-3-3 Example 1

♠ J 10 9 4

♥ K J 6

♦ A Q 2

♣ 7 3 2

Modern bridge thinking suggests you should simply bid 3 no trump.

4-3-3-3 Example 2

♠ 10 9 7

♥ K Q J 6

♦ K 9 2

♣ 7 3 2

Modern bridge thinking suggests you should simply bid 2 no trump, to invite.

How to Handle A No Trump Opening Bid With 5-4 in the Majors

- Three levels of hands
 - Weak ... game most likely not possible
 - Invitational...game may be possible.
 - Strong...game very likely.

Weak Hand 0-7 Points

- Partscore with 5-4 in the major suits.
- Bid 2 clubs – Partner assumes it is regular Stayman.
 - Partner bids either major - you will pass.
 - Partner bids 2 diamonds - you bid two of your 5 card major suit.
 - Partner recognizes that as a “drop dead” bid and passes.

5-4 Weak Hand Ex. 1

South

♠ J 10 9 4

♥ K J 6 4 2

♦ 4

♣ 7 3 2

North

1 nt

2 ♥ / 2 ♠

East

pass

pass

South

2 ♣

pass

West

pass

pass

5-4 Weak Hand Ex. 2

South

♠ J 10 9 4

♥ K J 6 4 2

♦ 4

♣ 7 3 2

North

1 nt

2 ♦

East

pass

pass

South

2 ♣

2 ♥

West

pass


all pass

Moderate Hand 8 or 9 Points

- Inviting game with 5-4 in the major suits.
- Transfer to the 5-card suit.
- Then bid the 4-card suit.
- Partner will know you have 5-4 in the major suits with an invitational hand.

5-4 Invitational Hand Ex.1

South

 A 10 9 4

 K J 6 4 2

 4 2

 7 3

North

1 nt

2 

East

pass

pass

South

2 

2 


West

pass

pass

5-4 Invitational Hand Ex.2

South

 A J 10 9 4

 K 6 4 2

 4 2

 7 3

North

1 nt

2 

East

pass

pass

South

2 



3 

West

pass

pass

Game Forcing Hand 10+ Points

- Forcing to game with 5-4 in the majors
- Bid 2  regular Stayman.
- If opener bids either major, bid the game in that suit.
- If opener bids 2  , Jump a level and bid your 4-card major.
- This convention is called ***Smolen***. It must be alerted.

5-4 Game Force Hand Ex.1

South

 A K 9 4

 K J 6 4 2

 4 2

 7 3

North

1 nt

2 

East

pass

pass

South

2 

3 

West

pass

pass

5-4 Game Force Hand Ex.3

South

 A K 9 4 3

 K J 6 4

 4 2

 7 3

North

1 nt

2 

East

pass

pass

South

2 

3 

West

pass

pass

Slam Try Basic Agreement

- There are a number of systems for slam exploration after a 1 nt opening.
 - Some of these are extremely complex and difficult.
 - Some are relatively simple, but there is no expert standard system.
- I will discuss a simple basic system, but this is not a system on which everyone agrees.

Slam Try After No Trump Opening

- Do remember to count.
- If you have enough points to be in slam, and your hand is balanced, just bid it. Don't bother with Stayman.
- With a balanced hand and a legitimate slam try, even if you have a 4-card major, just bid 4 no trump quantitative.
- If your hand is unbalanced, and you think you need to be in a suit, then you might try Stayman.

Slam Try Example 1

♠ A K 9 4
♥ K J 6
♦ K 5 2
♣ A 7 3

- You have 18 points. Your side has between 33 and 35 total points.
- Simply bid six no trump.

Slam Try With Stayman


- After 1 nt ...2 ♣, if opener bids a major suit, 4 nt confirms the major suit as trump and asks for controls.
- After 1 nt ...2 ♣, if opener bids a major suit, or bids two diamonds, 4 ♣ denies the major suit (if opener bid one) and asks for controls.
- This is Gerber aiming for a no trump slam.

Slam Try Example 2

 A K 9 4

 K J 6

 2

 A J 10 7 3

Opener

1nt

2 

Responder

2 


4 nt

Slam Try Example 3

 A K 9 4

 K J 6

 2

 A J 10 7 3


Opener

1nt

2 

Responder

2 


4 

Slam Try Example 4

 A K 9 4

 K J

 10 2

 A J 10 7 5

Opener

1nt

2 

Responder

2 

4 