

Lesson Summary for U3ABDa12: The Stayman Convention

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Welcome!

To help clarify some points in this week's lesson, we're giving you this Lesson Summary. It describes the same topics from a slightly different angle and is more portable than videos. We've also included some additional detail where it seems needed.

-Ed

Bidding Principles

Weekly summary

A VERY brief overview of each week so far:

1. Open a 12-14 point balanced hand with 1NT. Respond according to your points if you don't have a long (5+) major
2. Respond to partner's 1NT opening bid if you have a long major by using a Red Suit Transfer, then rebid according to your length and strength
3. Open a 12-19 point unbalanced hand with one of your longest suit: 1C, 1D, 1H or 1S. Respond to partner's bid according to your points and shape: support a major if you have 4+, bid your own suit or 1NT or pass
4. Open a 15-19 point balanced hand with one of a suit, planning to rebid 1NT (15-16 points), 2NT (17-18 points) or 3NT (19 points). But if partner raises your suit or bids a suit of their own and there's a suit fit you may change your plan – especially if it's a major suit
5. Open a 12-19 point unbalanced hand with one of your longest suit:
 With a 6-card suit, plan to bid it again (twice).
 With a 5-card suit, plan to bid your second (4+) suit next **if you can**.
 With 12-15 points, your second bid should not be a jump or reverse.
 With 16-19 points, your second bid should be a jump or reverse.
 I say **plan** because partner might pass, or raise your first suit, or bid your second suit, or bid NT giving a point count, or change suit with a jump showing length and strength.
6. When partner opens one of a suit and rebids a second suit without jumping or reversing (showing 12-15 points), you have 4 main options:
 ONE: With an 8-card fit in either suit: raise that suit
 TWO: With no fit, but stops in the unbid suits: bid NT
 THREE: With no fit or stops, but your own 6-card suit: bid your suit again
 FOUR: With no fit, stops or 6-card suit, make a preference bid: choose the better fit
 Choose the level of your response (pass, single raise, jump raise or game) by adding up your total points, assuming partner has the minimum 12
7. When partner opens 1NT and you have a 4-card major (or two) and 11+ HCP, respond 2C (Stayman) to ask them to bid their 4-card major, if they have one; a 2D response says they don't. Then, with a 4:4 fit, bid a Game Invitation or Game, depending on total points - assuming partner has 12. With no fit, bid 2NT or 3NT based on total points - assuming partner has 12.

Lesson Summary

Natural Bids and Conventional Bids

In previous weeks you've learned bids like 1C and 1NT which mean more-or-less what they say: 1C means I've got some Clubs, perhaps we can play in a Club contract; 1NT means I haven't really got a

suit but I've got a balanced hand, perhaps we can play in No Trumps? We call this sort of bid a **Natural Bid**.

This week we introduced your second **Convention**, which is called **Stayman**. (Red Suit Transfers were your first convention.) This is used by making the **Conventional Bid** of 2C in response to your partner's opening bid of 1NT. A conventional bid doesn't have its obvious meaning; this 2C bid says nothing about Clubs, it's asking your partner if they have a 4-card major suit.

Conventional bids are somewhat confusing or misleading if you don't realise that they are conventional. Almost everybody who uses Acol uses the 2C Stayman bid, but there are many more conventions, that you can choose to play or not to play; when you play in a Bridge Club you tell the opponents which conventions you use. **Conventions aren't secret codes!**

Anyway, back to Stayman...

When to use Stayman

If your partner opens 1NT and you have four cards in a major suit (Hearts or Spades or both) you can respond 2C, to ask them if they have four cards in a major suit too. If you both have 4 Spades or 4 Hearts, that's an 8-card fit, which is usually enough to make playing in that suit a better idea than playing in No Trumps.

The other thing you need is enough points. In general, you need at least 11 points to use Stayman, or you can get stuck in a bad contract.

So, use Stayman if:

- Partner opens 1NT
- You have at least 11 points
- You have 4 Hearts, or 4 Spades, or 4 Hearts AND 4 Spades
- OR you have 5 Hearts and 4 Spades, or 4 Hearts and 5 Spades!

If partner opens 1NT and you have 5+ cards in one major, but less than 4 in the other, use a Red Suit Transfer instead.

How Stayman works

Partner opens 1NT and you respond 2C. Partner **MUST NOT PASS!** They must make one of three bids:

- 2D if they do not have 4 Hearts or 4 Spades
- 2H if they have 4 Hearts (and perhaps 4 Spades)
- 2S if they do not have 4 Hearts but do have 4 Spades

Notice that 2D is another conventional bid. It says nothing about Diamonds!

Your next bid if partner bids 2D

If partner responded 2D, you can't have a 4-4 fit in a major, so you must settle on a NT contract. You know that partner has 12-14 points (they opened 1NT). To make 3NT you need a total of 25 points, so:

- With 13+ points bid 3NT, because partner has at least 12 and you have 13; $12+13=25$. So you **MUST** have enough for game. Partner will pass and play in 3NT.
- With 11 or 12 points bid 2NT, because you don't know if partner has 12, 13, or 14 points - and you need a total of 25 for 3NT. This 2NT bid is a Game Invitation. It tells partner to bid 3NT if (AND ONLY IF) they have 14 points. With 12 or 13 points, they must pass and play in 2NT.

Notice that if you have 12 points and bid 2NT, if partner has 13 they should pass (missing game), even though you did have just enough points for game between you. Annoying, but bidding isn't quite precise enough to cover all situations.

Your next bid if partner bids your suit

If you have four Hearts and partner responds 2H, or you have four Spades and partner responds 2S, you have a **FIT** and just need 25 points to bid game in your suit:

- With 13+ points bid 4H/S, because partner has at least 12 and you have 13; $12+13=25$. So you **KNOW** you have enough for game. Partner will pass and play in 4H/S.
- With 11 or 12 points bid 3H/S, because you don't know if partner has 12, 13, or 14 points - and you need a total of 25. This 3H/S bid is a Game Invitation. It tells partner to bid 4H/S if (AND ONLY IF) they have 14 points. With 12 or 13 points, they must pass and play in 3H/S.

Notice that if you have 12 points and bid 3H/S, if partner has 13 they should pass (missing game), even though you did have just enough points for game between you. Annoying, but bidding isn't quite precise enough to cover all situations

Your next bid if partner doesn't bid your suit

If you have four Hearts and partner responds 2S, or you have four Spades and partner responds 2H, you *probably* don't have a fit and must settle on a NT contract, exactly as if partner had replied 2D:

- With 13+ points bid 3NT, because partner has at least 12 and you have 13; $12+13=25$. So you **MUST** have enough for game. Partner will pass and play in 3NT.
- With 11 or 12 points bid 2NT, because you don't know if partner has 12, 13, or 14 points - and you need a total of 25. This 2NT bid is a Game Invitation. It tells partner to bid 3NT if (AND ONLY IF) they have 14 points. With 12 or 13 points, they must pass and play in 2NT.

Notice that if you have 12 points and bid 2NT, if partner has 13 they should pass (missing game), even though you did have just enough points for game between you. Annoying, but bidding isn't quite precise enough to cover all situations.

Questions and Answers

Should I use Stayman with 4 Hearts and 5 Spades (or vice versa)?

YES. You've a better chance of finding an 8-card fit using Stayman than a Red Suit Transfer. A Transfer forces partner to bid your suit so you might get a 5:2 fit; Stayman is more flexible, allowing you to find a 4:4 fit, a 5:4 fit, or even a 5:3 fit and partner can still choose NT if you don't find a fit.

I've used Stayman with 4 Hearts and 5 Spades (or vice versa) - how does it work?

If partner responds 2H or 2S, you've found your 4:4 fit. DO NOT bid your other major, even if it's your 5-card suit. Raise to 3 or 4 depending on your points, as usual.

If partner responds 2D, you could rebid 2NT or 3NT (depending on points) as usual, but have the option of bidding your 5-card suit. This tells partner you have 5 of them and 4 of the other major (otherwise you would have used a transfer). Partner can then accept your suit (with 3-card support) by passing or raising it, or rebid NT (with 2-card support). There are just four different situations:

1NT 2C 2D 2H	I have 5H, 4S, and 11-12 points: enough points for 2NT but you might prefer Hearts
1NT 2C 2D 2S	I have 4H, 5S, and 11-12 points: enough points for 2NT but you might prefer Spades
1NT 2C 2D 3H	I have 5H, 4S, and 13+ points: enough points for 3NT but you might prefer Hearts
1NT 2C 2D 3S	I have 4H, 5S, and 13+ points: enough points for 3NT but you might prefer Spades

The first two are a Game Invitation (like a 2NT response); the second two are a Game Force, partner must bid game in NT or the 5-card suit I've shown.

I opened 1NT with a 5-card major, how do I respond to Stayman?

You respond by showing your 5-card major; partner will assume it's a 4-card major, but that's OK, the best you can do.

They should pass...?

I keep saying things like *if partner has 13 they should pass (missing game)*... Because that's what they **should** do, but they **might** decide they have a GOOD 13 points (a fit, or lots of nines and tens, or some other excuse) and bend the rules slightly. In the end, it comes down to optimism!

We suggest that you start off being a pessimist: stick to the rules every time. After you've been playing for a few months, you might decide to get a bit more optimistic, to take a few more risks...

Should I bid again after responding to 2C?

SOMETIMES. Usually, the 1NT Opener will pass whatever their partner bids, once they have responded to the 2C (Stayman) bid, unless it's Game Invitation (a raise to 3H or 3S), which they should raise to game if they have 14 points. Notice how the Stayman bidder is in charge!

However, if partner responded 2H to your 2C bid (showing 4 Hearts) and you then bid 2NT or 3NT, partner knows that you have four Spades because you used Stayman! In this case, they can CORRECT your NT bid to Spades if they also have four Spades:

- If you bid 2NT (11-12 points), they may correct to 3S, or 4S (if strong enough for game)
- If you bid 3NT (13+ points), they may correct to 4S (strong enough for game)

You might need to read this section twice. Or maybe these examples will help:

1NT 2C 2H 2NT 3S: 2NT rebid shows 11-12 points. I have 4S and 12-13, not enough for game

1NT 2C 2H 2NT 4S: 2NT rebid shows 11-12 points. I have 4S and 14, enough for game

1NT 2C 2H 2NT 4S: 3NT rebid shows 13+ points. Even if I have 12, that's enough for game

Can I use Stayman with less than 11 points?

Yes, but only with rare types of hand. It's a bit complicated and confusing.

So the answer is NO, for now.

Why? Because if partner responds 2D, with 11+ points you can SAFELY bid 2NT; partner may only have 12 points, and you need 23 points to be reasonably sure of making 2NT.

So if you have less than 11 points, even if you have one or two 4-card majors, resist the temptation to use Stayman and pass 1NT.