

## STAYMAN RESPONSES TO NO-TRUMPS

### What is Stayman?

Stayman is a conventional response of 2♣ to 1NT. *This guarantees a 4-card major* and asks for opener's 4-card major. Stayman gives up the opportunity of signing off in clubs at the two level, instead giving the 2♣ response a far more common and useful purpose, the uncovering of a 4-4 fit in a major suit.

If opener has no 4-card major opener's rebid is 2♦.

If opener has 4 cards in each major it is normal to rebid 2♥.

### How does the bidding develop after Stayman and the response?

After Stayman bids mean exactly what they would have done if the 2♣ bid and its response are taken away.

i) West	East	ii) West	East	iii) West	East	iv) West	East
1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
2♦	2NT	2♥	2NT	2♥	3NT	2♦	3♣

In auction i) East is showing 11-12 HCP and making a game try. He has a 4-card major, but since West doesn't have a 4-card major that becomes irrelevant. East might have hand a):

(a) ♠ KJ 8 7      ♥ 9 8 6      ♦ A Q 4 2      ♣ Q 9

In auction ii) East is showing 11-12 HCP and making a game try. He has a 4-card major which presumably must be spades because he doesn't seem interested in the fact that West has shown four hearts. Again East might have hand a).

In auction iii) East is showing 13+ HCP. He has a 4-card major which presumably must be spades because he doesn't seem interested in the fact that West has shown four hearts. East might have hand b).

(b) ♠ KJ 8 7      ♥ 9 8 6      ♦ A Q 4 2      ♣ A 9

In auction iv) East is showing game forcing values with a 4-card major and good clubs. He might have hand (c).

(c) ♠ KJ 8 7      ♥ 9 8      ♦ 9      ♣ A K J 8 5 4

It is worth commenting that some people play the sequence in auction (iv) as a sign off in clubs. Obviously if you play Stayman you cannot sign off in clubs at the two level, so this is seen as a way of giving you back the means of signing off in clubs, albeit at one level higher. This is perfectly reasonable and a matter of personal choice. Obviously if you play this method the use of 2♣ no longer guarantees a 4-card major.

### Misuse of Stayman

Most hands that are suitable for Stayman have sufficient values for a game try, but you can bid 2♣ if you are prepared for any response. Here are some hands that are unsuitable for a Stayman response of 2♣.

(d) ♠ K J 8 7      ♥ Q 9 8 6      ♦ 9 4      ♣ Q 9 8

With (d) you must pass 1NT. If you use Stayman and hear a 2♦ answer you have no sensible way out. You cannot bid 2NT because that would show 11-12 HCP. Of course it would be helpful to find a 4-4 major fit, but you are not prepared for a 2♦ response so you cannot use Stayman.

(e) ♠ J 3 2      ♥ 7      ♦ A K Q J 7 6      ♣ K 3 2

With (e) it might look tempting to try 2♣, intending to bid 3NT if partner responds 2♥ or 5♦ otherwise. Unfortunately if you hear 2♥ and then jump to 3NT partner will assume you have four spades and might well remove 3NT to 4♠.

(f) ♠ K J 5 4 3      ♥ 5 3      ♦ A Q 4      ♣ K 6 2

With (f) you are looking for a 5-3 fit, not a 4-4 fit. Jump to 3♣ over 1NT, asking opener to bid 4♠ with 3-card or 4-card spade support or 3NT otherwise. Stayman looks for a 4-4 major suit fit, not a 5-3 fit.

### Stayman if you have at least invitational values

[1] Your partner asks you a question with Stayman, hears your reply and then bids 3NT showing 13+ HCP. Your only question is:

*What is the correct denomination? No-trumps or Major Suit?*

(g) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ 8 5 3	♠ A K 4 2	1NT	2♣
♥ A Q 3 2	♥ J 9 6	2♥	3NT
♦ A K 5 2	♦ 7 3	Pass	
♣ 5 3	♣ A K 4 2		

In (g) opener has shown his 4-card heart suit. Responder clearly isn't interested in a heart contract so opener must pass.

(h) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ Q 8 5 3	♠ A K 4 2	1NT	2♣
♥ A Q 3 2	♥ J 9 6	2♥	3NT
♦ A 5 2	♦ 7 3	4♠	
♣ 5 3	♣ A K 4 2		

In (h) opener has shown his 4-card heart suit. Responder clearly isn't interested in a heart contract, but opener should ask why responder used Stayman. Don't forget that responder has guaranteed a 4-card major, so he must have four spades. Opener removes 3NT to 4♠.

[2] Your partner asks you a question with Stayman, hears your reply and then bids 2NT showing 11-12+ HCP. There are two questions you must ask:

- (i) *What is the correct denomination? No-trumps or Major Suit?*
- (ii) *What is the correct level? Game or Part Score?*

Opener must bear in mind that responder is guaranteeing a 4-card major by responding 2♣.

(j) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K J 8 7	♠ Q 10 5 4	1NT	2♣
♥ A Q 3 2	♥ K 10 7	2♥	2NT
♦ 9 8	♦ A 3 2	4♠	
♣ A 8 7	♣ K 3 2		

In example (j) opener shows the lower of the two major suits in response to 2♣. 2NT is a game try, but since responder doesn't like hearts responder must hold 4 spades. Opener has two decisions to make. With a maximum 1NT opener chooses game rather than part score, and knowing of a 4-4 spade fit opener opts for the spade contract, hence 4♠.

Note that 4♠ is a far superior contract to 3NT, justifying responder's decision to look for the major suit fit even though responder has 4-3-3-3 shape.

(k) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K J 8 7	♠ Q 10 5 4	1NT	2♣
♥ Q 5 3 2	♥ K 10 7	2♥	2NT
♦ Q 10	♦ A 3 2	3♠	
♣ A 10 7	♣ K 3 2		

Example (k) is similar to (j). Opener knows of a 4-4 spade fit but is minimum so he signs off in 3♠.

If the response to Stayman reveals a fit responder can bid game directly, or make a game try.

(l) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ A 7 4	♠ 9 8	1NT	2♣
♥ K 7 4 2	♥ A Q 6 5	2♥	3♥
♦ A Q 6 4	♦ K 8 5 2	4♥	
♣ J 3	♣ Q 10 4		

In (i) responder makes a game try with 3♥ and opener, with 14 points, is happy to accept.

(m) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ A 7 4	♠ 9 8	1NT	2♣
♥ J 7 4 2	♥ A Q 6 5	2♥	3♥
♦ A Q 6 4	♦ K 8 5 2		
♣ J 3	♣ Q 10 4		

In (m) responder makes a game try with 3♥ but opener, with only 12 points, passes.

### Stayman if you have a weak hand

(j) ♠ Q 10 8 7 6	♥ K 7 4 3	♦ 3	♣ 5 3 2
(k) ♠ K 8 7 2	♥ Q 10 9 7	♦ Q 9 6 5 4	♣ -

.With (j) you can use Stayman, intending to pass 2♥ or 2♠, or to sign off in 2♣ if opener's rebid is 2♦.

With (k) it is reasonable to bid 2♣, intending to pass any rebid by opener. *If you bid Stayman without the point values for a raise to 2NT you must be prepared to either pass the response or make a clear sign-off bid.*

### Stayman over a 2NT opening bid

A 2NT opening bid shows 20-22 HCP. Ideally it should show a balanced hand, however on each of the hands below 2NT is the best available bid. Each of them is too strong for an opening one-bid, but not strong enough for an Acrol 2♣. The suits in (n) and (o) are not strong enough for an Acrol two bid.

(n)	♠ K Q 6 5	♥ A K 7 6	♦ A	♣ K Q 10 6
(o)	♠ Q 10 7 5 4	♥ A Q 5	♦ A K J	♣ A 8
(p)	♠ 9 8	♥ K J 8	♦ A K	♣ A K Q 10 7 6

It is even more important that responder uses Stayman if he has a 4-card major because opener could have a hand with quite considerable shape.

(r)	Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
	♠ K J 8 6	♠ Q 10 4 3	2NT	3♣
	♥ A K	♥ 8 5 2	3♠	4♠
	♦ K Q J 3 2	♦ A 8 7		
	♣ A 3	♣ 9 8 7		

Note that responder has a totally balanced 4-3-3-3 shape, but 4♠ is a far better contract than 3NT.

(s)	Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
	♠ K J 8	♠ Q 10 4 3	2NT	3♣
	♥ A K	♥ 8 5 2	3♦	3NT
	♦ K Q J 3 2	♦ A 8 7		
	♣ A 3 2	♣ 9 8 7		

(t)	Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
	♠ K J 8 6	♠ Q 10 4 3	2NT	3♣
	♥ A K 6 2	♥ 8 5 3	3♥	3NT
	♦ K Q J 3	♦ A 8 7	4♠	
	♣ A	♣ 9 8 7		

As in previous examples where the opening was 1NT, responder guarantees a 4-card major when he uses Stayman. Responder's 3NT shows he doesn't want to play in hearts, but opener knows of the 4-4 spade fit. Note again that responder has a totally balanced 4-3-3-3 shape, but 4♠ is a far better contract than 3NT.