

Mini Lesson 1: Stayman

Stayman is a bridge convention used by *Responder* to discover a major-suit fit after partner opens 1NT. It is one of the most widely used conventions in the world.

- **Why use Stayman?** An eight-card (or longer) trump fit in a major is usually safer and will produce more tricks than playing in notrump.
- **When do you use Stayman?** When your partner opens 1NT and you hold four or more cards in one or both majors **and** at least an invitational hand (8+ HCP). So in this auction

Opener

Responder

1NT

2♣

responder's 2♣ is Stayman, a conventional inquiry that says nothing about clubs. It simply asks the opener to reveal whether (s)he holds a four-card major. It asks: "*Partner, do you have a four-card major?*"

Opener's Rebids. If partner does have a four-card major, (s)he bids it. If opener doesn't have a four-card major, (s)he bids 2♦. The opener thus answers your question with the following rebids:

- 2♦ denies four or more cards in either major suit.
- 2♥ shows at least four hearts, may also have spades.
- 2♠ shows at least four spades, and denies four hearts.

Then what do you as Responder do? You have a number of options for your next bid:

- If the notrump opener names a major suit and you have four+ cards in that suit, you bid **three** of that major (invitational) with 8-9 HCP, or **four** of that major with 10+ HCP.
- If the notrump opener bids a major suit in which you do not have at least four cards, you:
 - bid 2NT (invitational) with 8-9 HCP, or 3NT (game) with 10+ HCP.
 - If partner bids 2♠, and you have five cards in ♥s, you can bid 3♥s with game going values. *Declarer* can then choose to bid 3NT, or 4 of that major is (s)he has a 5-3 fit.
- If the notrump bidder bids 2♦, the opener denies a four-card major.
 - With 4-5 distribution in the majors, you may bid your five-card suit at the 2 level with 8-9 HCP, or at the 3 level with 10+ HCP. This allows your partner to find game in a major with a 5-3 fit.
 - Without a 4-5 distribution in the majors, you bid a notrump contract, same as above.

Other Considerations

- Agree with your partner, whether you will be using **Stayman** after 1.) a 1NT overcall, 2.) opening bids of 2NT, or 3.) notrump rebids after an opening 2♣ (artificial and strong) bid. (*Jim and I use it in all these situations.*)
- *What if you have a 4-3-3-3 hand?* Stayman is usually not used with 4333 shape, since this distribution tends to be better playing in no-trumps, as you have no trumping power.
- *What if you have 10 points, but a lousy four card major?* Bid the major. The lousy four card suit doesn't take any tricks in NT, but might when trumping in.

Test Your Stayman

The Stayman convention is used to locate a 4-4 major suit fit after partner opens 1NT.

Your partner opens the bidding 1NT. What do you respond with each of the following hands?

1. ♠KQ54 ♥A98 ♦32 ♣J984
Pass 2♣ 2NT 2♠ 3NT
2. ♠K532 ♥943 ♦9765 ♣Q2
Pass 2♣ 2NT 2♠
3. ♠Q4 ♥AJ94 ♦Q32 ♣10843
Pass 2♣ 2NT 2♥
4. ♠AKQ4 ♥KJ102 ♦AJ52 ♣9
2NT 2♣ 2♥ 3NT
5. ♠954 ♥J9 ♦A53 ♣KQ976
Pass 2♣ 3NT 2♦

You open 1NT, partner responds with Stayman. What do you bid with the following:

6. ♠AK87 ♥K1072 ♦A6 ♣QJ10
2♥ 2♠ 2NT 3NT
7. ♠AK2 ♥975 ♦KQ4 ♣A1082
Pass 2♦ 2NT 2♠
8. ♠9872 ♥A2 ♦AJ8 ♣KQJ2
2♦ 2♥ 2NT 2♠