



# Stayman Convention

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## North

Opens 1NT (15-17)

## South

J x x x

Q x x x

J T x x

x

This convention was named after Samuel Stayman, who was Life Master #48. It is the single most common bridge convention. However, Stayman did not invent it. The system was first developed by a British player, C. J. Marx, and then independently re-invented by George Rappee (Stayman's partner) in 1945.

Why is this basic convention needed? Finding a major suit fit provides an 80% chance of making game with 26 HCPs, while 3NT has approximately a 60% chance of success with the same number of points.

## Standard Stayman

A responder uses Stayman (a 2-club bid after 1NT) when holding at least one four-card major, 8+ HCPs, and a short suit. Stayman should not be used with a 4-3-3-3 distribution.

Responder asks: "Opener, do you have a four-card major?" **There are just 3 answers!**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>2 D</b> | I have no four-card major                                   |
| <b>2 H</b> | I have a 4+-card heart suit (opener may also have 4 spades) |
| <b>2 S</b> | I have 4+ spades and <b>no</b> four-card heart suit         |

## Responder's Second Bid

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>Pass*</b> | A special case sometimes called " <b><u>Garbage Stayman,</u></b> " in which responder has a weak 4-4-4-1 or 4-4-5-0 hand. (See box above)                |
| <b>2 NT</b>  | Invitational (8-9 points) with no apparent 4-4 major fit.  |
| <b>3 NT</b>  | Game-going points (10+) with no apparent 4-4 major fit.  |
| <b>4 NT</b>  | Slam invitation, quantitative, showing 16 points and no 4-4 major fit. Partner will bid 6NT with maximum values (17 points) or pass with minimum values. |

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Raise to 3</b> | Raising to 3 of opener's major is invitational, confirming a 4-4 fit was found and showing 8-9 points.                  |
| <b>Raise to 4</b> | Jumping to 4 of opener's major shows game-going values but no interest in slam.   |
| <b>2H or 2S</b>   | After a 2D response by opener, this bid shows responder's five-card major and says that responder is 5-4 in the majors. |

**[NOTE: Smolen** is a convention used as a response to a 1NT opening bid (or natural 1NT overcall) after opener denies a four-card major in response to a Stayman bid by bidding 2D. It is used when the responder is 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors and has enough values for game. **In Smolen, the responder jumps to the three level** in the suit in which he/she has four cards, indicating that he/she has five in the other major. If the opener has three cards in his/her partner's five-card major, he/she can bid game in the major.]

**Your partner opens 1NT. What should you bid in the examples below?**

|          |                                    |          |                                    |          |  |
|----------|------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|--|
| <b>A</b> | K J x x<br>J x x x<br>A x<br>T x x | <b>C</b> | K J x x x<br>x<br>K x x x x<br>A Q | <b>E</b> | K J x x x<br>x x<br>K J x<br>x x x     |
| <b>B</b> | K J x x<br>J x<br>x x x<br>K J x x | <b>D</b> | A x x x<br>K x x<br>K x x<br>x x x | <b>F</b> | J x x x<br>Q x x x<br>J x x x x<br>- - |

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- A** 2C - Stayman, then raise either major to three, or bid 2NT to invite.  
**B** 2C - Stayman, raise a spade response to invite, or bid 2NT  
**C** 2H (transfer), then bid 3D to show a second five-card suit and game-going values. Opener can decide where to place the contract.  
**D** 3NT. Yep, 3NT because you have 4-3-3-3 distribution (no shortness) and game values.  
**E** 2H (transfer) Then invite to game by bidding 2NT.  
**F** 2C, then PASS! This is "garbage" Stayman. Wonderful. First you get a convention in your name....and then it gets "trashed" by the next generation.

In these examples, you are the player who opens 1NT. What should you bid in each case?

Opener 1

K Q x  
A x x x  
K Q x  
J x x

|          | Bidding       |      |
|----------|---------------|------|
| <b>G</b> | 1 NT          | 2 C  |
|          | 2 H           | 3 H  |
|          | <div>??</div> |      |
| <b>H</b> | 1 NT          | 2 C  |
|          | 2 H           | 2 NT |
|          | <div>??</div> |      |

Opener 2

K Q x x  
A x x x  
K Q J  
Q x

|          | Bidding       |      |
|----------|---------------|------|
| <b>J</b> | 1 NT          | 2 C  |
|          | 2 H           | 2 NT |
|          | <div>??</div> |      |
| <b>K</b> | 1 NT          | 2 C  |
|          | 2 H           | 3 H  |
|          | <div>??</div> |      |

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- G** With only 15 points, PASS partner's invitation to game.
- H** Again, PASS. With only 15 points, decline the invitation to game.
- J** 4S! Partner does not have four hearts, but he/she has four spades, and you have a four-four fit. His/her invitational values combined with your 17points are enough for game.
- K** points is enough for game.
- K** 4H - with 17 points, accept the game invitation in hearts.