



# The Stayman Convention

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### Conventional Bids

A conventional bid is an artificial bid: unlike a natural bid it does not mean that you are offering to play in the denomination you have just bid.

Because it is artificial it is also *forcing* – partner may not pass.

Conventional bids are often named after a player credited with inventing their artificial meaning.

One such is “**Stayman**” named for Samuel Stayman of the USA (though he did not actually think of it first!)

### The Stayman Response to 1NT

In response to an opening bid of 1NT 2♣ is an *artificial* bid.

It says nothing about clubs: it simply asks partner whether he has any 4-card majors.

Its purpose is to find the best game – sometimes you can make 4♥ or 4♠ when 3NT has too many losers, because the trump suit controls a suit where you do not have enough stoppers.

**Stayman is a device for locating a 4-4 major fit**

There are two provisos for using Stayman:

1. *You must have at least one 4-card major.* (precisely 4 cards, not 5 )
2. *You must be prepared for any response partner may make*

### Responding to the Stayman 2♣ Enquiry

There are only three possible replies:

2♦	“I have no 4-card major”
2♥	“I have 4 hearts. I may have 4 spades also”
2♠	“I have 4 spades. I do not have 4 hearts”

### Further Bidding after Opener’s Response

♠ A74	N	♠ KJ63
♥ J8	W	♥ AQ73
♦ AJ105	E	♦ 2
♣ Q953	S	♣ AJ104
1NT		2♣
2♦		3NT

West has no 4-card major.  
East gives up and signs off in 3NT.

♠ Q73	N	♠ KJ104
♥ KJ52	W	♥ AQ73
♦ A104	E	♦ 2
♣ K93	S	♣ AJ104
1NT		2♣
2♥		4♥

West shows 4 hearts, so there is an 8-card heart fit. East has enough to bid game

♠ KQ74	N	♠ 9
♥ J8	W	♥ AQ73
♦ AJ104	E	♦ KQ72
♣ Q93	S	♣ AJ104
1NT		2♣
2♠		3NT

West denies 4 hearts, so there is no 4-4 major fit. At least there should be a spade stopper!

♠ A74	N	♠ KJ103
♥ J8	W	♥ AQ73
♦ AJ105	E	♦ 82
♣ Q953	S	♣ J104
1NT		2♣
2♦		2NT
Pass		

West has no 4-card major.  
East invites game with 2NT.  
West is minimum, and passes

♠ A74	N	♠ KJ103
♥ KJ104	W	♥ AQ73
♦ A5	E	♦ 82
♣ Q953	S	♣ J104
1NT		2♣
2♥		3♥
4♥		

West shows 4 hearts, so there is a 4-4 fit. East invites game by raising to 3♥. West is maximum and bids on to game.

♠ AQ73	N	♠ KJ104
♥ KJ52	W	♥ Q73
♦ A104	E	♦ 82
♣ 93	S	♣ AJ104
1NT		2♣
2♥		2NT
4♠		Pass

West shows 4 hearts. East invites game with 2NT. When he bid 2♣ he promised a 4-card major, so West, with a maximum, bids 4♠

Stayman can also be used after a 1NT overcall (showing 15-18 HCP). In this case only 8+ HCP are needed.



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## Weak Stayman

There is one additional use to the Stayman Convention which is relatively rare. After partner has opened 1NT and you have a very weak hand you can occasionally use Stayman to find a better place to play. In this situation you will not have 11 or more High card points but you must be able to stand any reply that partner might make.

♠ A74	N	♠ 5432
♥ J8	W	♥ 9743
♦ AJ105	E	♦ 8764
♣ Q953	S	♣ J
1NT		2♣
2♦		Pass

West has no 4-card major.  
so bids 2♦, West passes

♠ A74	N	♠ 98632
♥ KJ104	W	♥ 9873
♦ A5	E	♦ 8762
♣ Q953	S	♣
1NT		2♣
2♥		Pass

West shows 4 hearts, East passes

♠ AQ73	N	♠ 10642
♥ KJ52	W	♥ Q74
♦ A104	E	♦ 87432
♣ 93	S	♣ A
1NT		2♣
2♥		Pass

West shows 4 hearts. East passes