

## Refining the Stayman Convention

What do you do if Partner opens with 1NT and you are holding 5♥'s and 4♠'s or 4♥'s and 5♠'s.

Do you bid Transfer to the 5-Card suit or bid Stayman? You Bid Stayman!!

If Opener has a 4-Card Major he will bid it at the 2-level and you will know that there is an 8 or 9-Card fit and you respond with an appropriate level of the suit with more trump.

8-9 PP → bid 3 of the suit PP==> is Playing Points Since there is a fit you can count both HCP

10+ PP → bid 4 of the suit and distributional points.

If Opener responds 2♦ saying No; you bid your 5-Card suit as follows:

< 9 HCP → bid 2 of the suit This time there is no Magic-8 guaranteed so use HCP not PP.  
This is a drop-dead bid NT opener must Pass (you might have had < 8 HCP)

10+ HCP → bid 3 of the suit In this case Opener knows partnership has Game going points and can pick the appropriate contract; 3NT or 4 of suit with 8-Card fit.

Note: The normal rebid after 2♦ is a NT response showing points; the fact that you bid a suit is signal to Partner that you hold 5 in that suit. The NT Opener can then choose the contract to be in the suit or NT.

### Smolen Transfers

This is a refinement of the above bid when you hold 10+ HCP bid. It requires a Partnership agreement because the Smolen transfers require that you hold both Majors 5-4 or even 6-4 (or 4-5, 4-6) in the Majors. After the 2♦ rebid by 1NT Opener you bid the shorter suit at the 3-level which is then a pseudo-transfer to the other Major or NoTrump. If Opener hold 3-Cards in Transferred suit he bids Game in that suit otherwise bids 3NT. Here's an example. Your partner opens 1 NT and you hold:

♠AQT56 ♥AQ74 ♦J5 ♣63 your bid is 2♣ asking for a 4-card Major, partner responds negatively with 2♦. your rebid is 3♥ which by agreement means you hold 5♠ and 4♥ and 10+ HCP. It is a game force bid. The NT opener must bid either 4♠ or 3NT.

### We Transfer to Majors, Is It Possible to Transfer to a Minor Suit

The short answer is yes; the details are a bit longer. There are three treatments: One is called a Relay. The relay is the way it is generally taught. However, I prefer transferring to a Minor in a fashion similar to Major suit transfers. But doing it in a straight-forward way creates a problem. One easily surmountable.

#### **Relays:**

In the absence of a 4-Card Major and with only 8+ HCP and a 6-Card Minor you respond 2♣ to the 1NT open. When the 2♣ bid is made the Opener must announce "CLUBS" and then, in turn bid 3♣.

If ♣'s is your 6-Card Minor:

< 12 HCP → Pass There is no Game in site – get out cheaply

> 12 HCP bid 4♣ If Opener has more that 2♣ and has 16/17 HCP he can bid 5♣

If ♦'s is your 6-Card Minor:

< 12 HCP → bid 3♦ There is no Game in site – get out but you'll have to play the hand

> 12 HCP bid 4♦ If Opener has more that 2♦ and has 16/17 HCP he can bid 5♦

The drawback of the relay – in addition to to ending at the 3-level – is the ♦ suit. If ♦'s are the suit

the strong hand becomes the Dummy. A disadvantage that transfers were invented to avoid.

### **4-Suit Transfers :**

The straight forward method. In the absence of a 4-Card Major and only with 8+ HCP and a 6-Card Minor Responder bids

2♣ → Transfer to ♣'s Opener announces "CLUBS" and bids 3♣

2NT → Transfer to ♦'s Opener announces "DIAMONDS" and bids 3♦ Note that you lose the 2NT bid showing 8-9 HCP

Responder has a final rebid:

8-12 HCP → Pass, There is no Game in site – get out but now strong hand is hidden

> 12 HCP bid 3NT If Opener has more that 2 of suit and has 16/17 HCP he can bid 5 of suit

If you employ 4-suit transfers in this manner you lose the natural, and far more important, 2NT bid. The loss of the 2NT point showing bid is what makes the following the preferable method.

**I know you're wondering what happens if I have 8-9 HCP no distributional assets? I used to be able to bid 2NT to show my flat 8-9 HCP hand, but now 2NT means transfer to ♦'s. How can I show the flat 8-9 HCP hand? Recall you need at least 8 HCP to bid Stayman, so now if you use 4-suit transfers you just bid 2♣-Stayman. Regardless of holding. Whatever partner rebids you, on your rebid, you now bid 2NT. In this particular case you may not have had an 4-card Major (a known requirement to bid Stayman) so Partner must make the Statement: "Partner may or may not have a 4-card Major". The opener also needs to be aware that the 2♣-Stayman may be this work-around and either Pass or bid 3NT with 17 HCP.**