

The Stayman Convention

The Stayman Convention is another widely used Convention; it is so widely used and there are no other Conventional bids that use 2♣ after a 1NT Opening. That being the case the Stayman bid is neither Alert-able or Announce-able. This bid, like the Jacoby Transfer, is an attempt to reveal a Magic-8 fit. The **T**ransfer bid **T**ells Partner to bid something. Conversely, **S**tayman **a**sks a question: "*Partner, Do you have a 4-Card Major*".

In the following bidding sequence (Pass – 1NT - Pass - 2♣; Pass - ?) The Partner of the NT Opener, by bidding 2♣, asks the Stayman question "*Partner, Do you have a 4-Card Major*"

The Opener has 3 answers to choose from. Yes, No and Yes

2♦ → says No. We do not have a 4-4 fit

2♥ → says Yes, I have 4 or more ♥'s and I may have 4♠'s

2♠ → says Yes, I have 4 or more ♠'s but I don't have 4♥'s

Note: If you are 4-4, or 5-4, or 4-5 in the Majors you always bid 2♥

Like the Transfer bid the stronger opener bids the suit that is likely to be the contract suit, keeping the strong hand hidden. Stayman and Transfer bids accomplish this same purpose.

If the Opener's response reveals a Magic-8 (or better) fit the Responder (the Stayman bidder) confirms the fit by bidding the appropriate level of the suit

8-9 HCP → bid 3 of the suit, if there is a fit (Note: with 8 HCP & Openers promised minimum 15 your side has 23 HCP)

10+ HCP → bid 4 of the suit, if there is a fit (Min 15 + Min 10 = 25 → game level)

If Opener does not bid responder's suit: you show the 'possible misfit' by bidding a level of NT.

8-9 HCP → bid 2NT, if there is no fit revealed by Opener's bid (Again 8 + 15 = 23 HCP total)

10+ HCP → bid 3NT, if there is no fit revealed by Opener's bid (Min 15 + Min 10 = 25 → game level)

You may have noticed that the < 8 HCP option is missing from the choice. This is because the Stayman bidder can't pass if he gets the 2♦ (saying No) response. 2♦ is an artificial bid – artificial bids cannot be passed. So Mr Stayman has to bid and, if you recall the Responder, which Mr Stayman is, has to have 8+ HCP to bid 2NT. Thus to make a Stayman bid, asking for a 4-Card Major the Responder must have at least 8 HCP just in case there is no fit.

There is a little tricky element here. If you have 4♠'s and Opener rebids 2♥ saying he has 4♥'s he may also have 4♠'s but once you respond with NT he knows your suit was ♠'s. Your rejection of his ♥'s told him that your suit was ♠'s, there is no need for you to bid the ♠'s – partner knows you have 4♠'s so just bid the appropriate level of NT, i.e. 2NT or 3NT.

Note that as in the Jacoby Transfer case if there is no fit reveals you end up at the appropriate level of NT; as you would have if the try for a fit hadn't occurred.