

STAYMAN

No Trump Openings

In Standard systems an opening bid of 1NT shows 15-17 High Card Points and a balanced hand. It is descriptive in many ways in that it shows the hand's strength and distribution in the one bid, it but says nothing about suits. Opener has a balanced hand, but may have 5 clubs or a doubleton, one major, both majors or neither major. The 1NT opening wipes out the entire 1-level; any further bidding starts at the 2-level. This means that there is often not much room to manoeuvre to find the best contract. This problem is more pronounced with a 2NT opening.

Responses

Responder wants to be in a position to sign off at the lowest level if they have a poor hand and a long major; to identify whether the partnership has an 8-card fit in a major suit when they have a game-forcing hand; and to involve partner in the decision making when they have an invitational hand. There is simply not enough room to cover all these options without using conventions like Stayman and transfers.

Stayman

The Stayman Convention is a bid of 2♣ in response to partner's 1NT opening.

- It says that responder has at least one 4-card major
- It asks opener whether they have a 4-card major

Opener's responses are:

- 2♦ - I have neither 4 hearts nor 4 spades
- 2♥ - I have 4 hearts; I may also have 4 spades
- 2♠ - I don't have 4 hearts but I do have 4 spades

Responder must be able to cope with any rebid that opener makes. If responder has two 4-card majors and a weak hand it is superficially attractive to bid 2♣ and pass when opener bids a major. The problem is that opener may bid 2♦ denying a major. For this reason responder should have a hand that is strong enough to bid 2NT (or 3NT) if opener's rebid shows that there is no fit in a major.

♠ A Q 9 8		♠ J 5
♥ Q 9 7		♥ A 10 6 5
♦ K Q 9		♦ 8 6 4
♣ K J 4		♣ A Q 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 NT	All pass

West's 1 NT shows 15-17 HCP and a balanced hand, East bids 2 ♣ Stayman because they want to play in 4 ♥ if opener has a 4-card heart suit. West shows 4 spades and denies 4 hearts, and East settles in 3 NT.

♠ K Q 8 6		♠ A 5 4
♥ A K J 7		♥ Q 10 8 5
♦ 8 6		♦ 7 3 2
♣ A 4 3		♣ K 6 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
4 ♥	All pass		

East bids 2 ♣ Stayman because playing in hearts is preferable to playing in no trumps if the partnership has a heart fit. Opener shows 4 hearts and responder invites game. Opener has a maximum so they bid 4 ♥.