

Stayman Convention

It is usually correct to play in a 4-4 major fit rather than in notrumps. The Stayman convention is a bid of 2♣ in response to a 1NT opener. It is used to find these 4-4 major fits. 2♣ is no longer used as a weakness takeout to clubs.

To use this 2♣ bid responder must have

either: at least one 4-card major suit and 11+ HCP

or: at least 5-4 in the majors with any point count

The fewer points responder has with this 5-4 shape in the majors the more important it is to use Stayman.

The 1NT opener **must** reply to the 2♣ Stayman bid

1NT – 2♣
?

Opener's rebid:

2♦ = no 4-card major suit

2♥ = 4 hearts and may still have 4 spades

2♠ = 4 spades and denies having 4 hearts

Examples

1. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ K 8 7	♠ A J 5 4	1 NT	2 ♣ ⁽¹⁾
♥ A Q 9	♥ K 8	2 ♦ ⁽²⁾	2 NT
♦ A 8 6	♦ K J 7 3	3 NT ⁽³⁾	Pass
♣ J 8 6 4	♣ 9 7 3		

1. East uses Stayman to look for a 4-card major.
2. West bid of 2♦ denies holding a major.
3. East now bids 2NT (as they know partner does not have a major). This bid shows 11-12 HCP and is invitational to 3NT. West bids game 3NT with 14 HCP.

2. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9	♠ K 8 7 3	1 NT	2 ♣ ⁽¹⁾
♥ K 8 7 2	♥ A Q 5 4	2 ♥ ⁽²⁾	4 ♥ ⁽³⁾
♦ A 8 6 2	♦ K Q 7	Pass	
♣ J 8	♣ 9 7		

1. East uses Stayman to look for a 4-card major.
2. West bids 2♥ showing 4 cards (may still have 4 spades).
3. East jumps 4♥ showing a game hand (13+ HCP) and a 4-4 fit.

3. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9	♠ K 8 7 3	1 NT	2 ♣
♥ K 8 7 2	♥ A Q 5	2 ♥	3 NT
♦ A 8 6 2	♦ K Q	Pass	
♣ J 8	♣ Q 7 3 2		

1. East uses Stayman to look for a 4-card major.
2. West bids 2♥ showing 4 cards (may still have 4 spades).
3. East jumps to 3NT to show game going points and no heart fit! By implication East has shown 4 spades and game values.

4. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9 2	♠ K 8 7 3	1 NT	2 ♣
♥ K 8 7 2	♥ A Q 5	2 ♥	3 NT
♦ A 8 6	♦ K Q	4 ♠	Pass
♣ J 8	♣ Q 7 3 2		

1. East uses Stayman to look for a 4-card major.
2. West bids 2♥ showing 4 cards (may still have 4 spades).
3. East jumps to 3NT to show game going points and no heart fit.
4. West converts to 4♠ as East has shown 4 spades.

5. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A 9	♠ K 8 7 3 2	1 NT	2 ♣
♥ K 8 7 2	♥ Q 5 4 3	2 ♥	Pass
♦ A Q 6	♦ 3 2		
♣ J 8 2	♣ 9 7		

1. East uses Stayman to look for a 4-card major.
2. West bids 2♥ showing 4 cards (may still have 4 spades).
3. East passes (with a weak hand) – happy with the fit.

6. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9	♠ K 8 7 3 2	1 NT	2 ♣
♥ K 8 7	♥ Q 5 4 3	2 ♦	2 ♠
♦ A 8 6 2	♦ 7 3	Pass	
♣ J 8 2	♣ 9 7		

1. East uses Stayman to look for a 4-card major.
2. West bids 2♦ denying a 4-card major.
3. East bids 2♠ with the 5-card suit showing a weak hand (and by implication, has 4 hearts). Partner MUST pass this as it shows a weak take-out.

The Stayman bid can also be used in two other situations:

- 2♣ over a strong 1NT overcall
- 3♣ over the strong 2NT opening

Obviously there will need to be an adjustment of point counts in these different situations.

1. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ K Q	♠ J 5 3	2 NT	3 ♣
♥ A Q J	♥ 9 7 3 2	3 ♦	3 NT
♦ A Q 3	♦ K 8		
♣ K J 7 4 3	♣ A 10 6 5		

After a strong 2NT opener – East bids 3♣ looking for a 4-card major, West rebids 3♦ denying a 4-card major. East chooses 3NT as the final contract.

2. After South opens 1♦ – West has a strong 1NT overcall:

WEST	EAST	SOUTH	WEST	EAST
♠ A J 5 3	♠ Q 10 7 2	(1♦)	1NT	2♣
♥ A 5 4	♥ K 9		2♠	3♠
♦ A Q 4	♦ 8 7 6 2		4♠	
♣ Q J 10	♣ K 5 3			

East bids 2♣ looking for a spade fit, West rebids 2♠ showing 4 spades and denying 4 hearts. East invites with 3♠ and West, with a maximum, bids game.

Flow chart of responses after 1NT - 2♣ Stayman

Opener	Responder's subsequent bids	Opener's subsequent bids
2♦ No major	2♥ Both majors weak (5♥/4♠ or 5/5) 2♠ Both majors weak (5♠/4♥)	Pass after 2♥ can correct to 2♠ (showing more spades than hearts)
	2NT Invitational (11-12)	Pass with minimum (12-13) 3NT with maximum (14 or 13 with a 5 card suit)
	3NT Enough for game	Pass
2♥ Has 4 hearts (can have 4 spades)	2NT Invitational (11-12), must have 4 spades	Pass with minimum (12-13) 3NT maximum no 4 card spades 4♠ maximum with 4 card spades
	3NT Enough for game, must have 4 spades	Pass if does not have 4 spades 4♠ with 4 card spades
2♠ Has 4 spades (denies 4 hearts)	2NT Invitational (11-12), must have 4 hearts	Pass with minimum (12-13) 3NT with maximum (14 or 13 with a 5 card suit)
	3NT Enough for game, must have 4 hearts	Pass