



Responding to a 1NT opener with a 4-card major

What is a bridge convention?

Bids may be "natural" (they are based on a holding of the suit bid, or a balanced distribution in the case of a notrump bid) or "**artificial**" (they show a feature unrelated to the named denomination). A bridge convention is a partnership agreement about an **artificial** call or a set of related artificial calls. It is a code that you use to communicate with your partner.

Stayman Convention

The Stayman convention is a set of artificial bids when responding to a 1NT opening bid by partner. Stayman is used to find a 4-4 major suit fit, this convention:

- Enables the partnership to find a 4-4 major suit fit
- Improves bidding accuracy by taking out the guess work
- The NT Opener will be the declarer, thereby keeping the stronger hand concealed

The actual working of Stayman is simple. When partner opens 1NT, responder will only use Stayman when holding at least one 4 card major suit and at least an invitational hand (8 or more points).

Stayman Response to 1NT Opener

Responder bids 2♣ which is artificial. It says nothing about clubs, but instead tells opener about responders' hand and asks opener a question:
I have invitational or better values with a 4-card major. Do you have a 4-card major?

NT Opener Rebid to Stayman

The 1NT opener can now respond to the question asked, do I have a 4-card major?

- 2♦ - No, I do not have a 4-card major.
- 2♥ - I have a 4-card heart suit, (and possibly a 4 card spade suit as well)
- 2♠ - I have a 4-card spade suit, but do not have a 4-card heart suit

Responder can now show their point count and fit:

- 2NT – Invitational values, and no major suit fit
- 3♥ - Invitational values, with a 4-4 fit in hearts.
- 3♠ - Invitational values, with a 4-4 fit in spades.
- 3NT – Game forcing values, and no major suit fit.
- 4♥ - Game forcing values, with a 4-4 fit in hearts.
- 4♠ - Game forcing values, with a 4-4 fit in spades.

NT Opener rebids

Once responder has shown their point count, and fit, the NT opener is in position to place the final contract:

- Over 2NT, with a minimal hand and holding 4-4 in the major suits opener can bid 3♠, to play, because partner must have 4 spades to have used Stayman.
- Over 2NT, with a maximal hand and holding 4-4 in the major suits, opener can bid 4♠, to play because partner must have 4 spades to have used Stayman.
- Over 2NT, with any other minimal hand opener can pass.
- Over 2NT, with any other maximal hand, opener can bid 3NT.
- Over 3♥ - Opener will pass with a minimal hand and bid 4♥ with a maximal hand.
- Over 3♠ - Opener will pass with a minimal hand and bid 4♠ with a maximal hand.
- Over 3NT, opener will bid 4♠ with 4-4 in the majors, or pass with any other hand.

Summary of all Bids

Responder pts	No 4 card major	4 card major
0-7 Part Score	Pass	Pass
8-9 invite	2NT	2C Fit → 3M No Fit → 2NT
10-15 Game Force	3NT	2C Fit → 4M No Fit → 3NT

Opener's actions to invitational and game forcing bids are as follows:

1. 15 points - decline invitations.
2. 16-17 points – accept invitation.

Responding to 2NT with a 4-card major

When partner opens with 2NT, Stayman is still used, however because the level is higher, you cannot invite. A game forcing hand only needs 5 points since partner is showing 20-21 HCP by opening 2NT. Bid 3♣ Stayman, with 5+ points and a 4-card major.

NT Opener Rebids to Stayman

The 2NT opener can now respond to the question asked, do I have a 4-card major?

- 3♦ - No, I do not have a 4-card major.
- 3♥ - I have a 4-card heart suit, (and possibly a 4 card spade suit as well).
- 3♠ - I have a 4-card spade suit, but do not have a 4 card heart suit.

Responder can now show their point count and fit:

- 3NT – Game values, and no major suit fit.
- 4♥ - Game forcing values, with a 4-4 fit in hearts.
- 4♠ - Game forcing values, with a 4-4 fit in spades.

NT Opener rebids

The Notrump opener should pass. The one exception is:

- Over 3NT, opener will bid 4♠ with 4-4 in the majors, or pass with any other hand. This is because responder must have 4 spades to have used Stayman.

Responding with 5-4 in the majors

When you are 5-4 in the majors, there are three cases:

1. When you have less than invitational value will be covered in next week's lesson.
2. When you have invitational values:
 - Start with 2♣ Stayman.
 - a. If partner bids 2♦ denying a 4-card major, bid your 5 card major at the two level.
 - b. If partner shows a major, invite by bidding 3 of the major.
3. When you have game forcing values:
 - Start with 2♣ Stayman.
 - If partner bids 2♦ denying a 4-card major, bid your 5 card major at the three level.
 - If partner shows a major, bid game in the major.

Defensive Tip

Since conventional bids do not convey any information with respect to that suits length and strength, defenders are most often safe to double that suit for lead direction. For example, if you double the Stayman bid of 2♣ you are telling your partner that you have a preference for a club lead.