

The Stayman Convention

1. What is Stayman?

It is a bid of 2| in response to partner's opening bid of 1NT. It is used as an enquiry, asking opener to show any 4 card major suits. This bid is popular in most bridge playing countries. The bid of 2| is a conventional bid, i.e. is one where the holding in the suit need not conform to the accepted minimum of 4 cards. All conventional bids must be alerted, and you may have to alert some responses. You may not say "two clubs Stayman" only "two clubs".

2. How do I bid Stayman?

- Bid 2| after partner has opened 1NT
- You can bid 2| after partner has overcalled a minor suit bid with 1NT (15-17pts), again agree this with partner.

3. What are the requirements to bid Stayman over partner's 1NT

- You must be able to control the bidding after the opener has responded to your enquiry. Usually this means having enough values to bid 2NT if partner shows no major (by bidding 2~). Some partnerships make this a requirement so you need to hold 11+ pts over a 12-14 NT opening. Normally you would hold at least one major suit yourself
- If you can sign off at the 2 level in ~s, `s, or @s you can also use 2| as a Stayman enquiry. So you can use Stayman holding a weak hand and 5-4 in the major suits because you can convert to a weakness take-out in the longer suit if necessary
- You need not hold any |s in the hand.
In fact | - ~109763 `AQ72 @KQ86 would be a good example.
- You need not hold both majors, one will do. You need not actually hold a four card major provided you are able to bid your minor suits to reach game. This would be a rare hand and difficult to bid otherwise.
- Normally you would not use Stayman with a 4-3-3-3 hand since these usually play better in no trumps, or with a six-card major suit, and it is better to use transfers with a five-card major suit.

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- You cannot use Stayman if there is an intervention bid by an opponent. Once 1NT is overcalled, then any | bid by you is natural.

4. Can I use Stayman with two 5-card major suits?

- Yes you can, but transfers handle this type of hand better. If you get a 2~ response from opener you need to agree how you ask opener for a 3 card major suit. Players often use 3~ (extended Stayman) for this purpose.

5. Partner has opened 1NT. What are his responses to 2| Stayman?

The usual scheme of responses is:

- 2~ = no four card major suit (alert this bid)
- 2` = a four card ` suit, and possibly a 4 card @ suit as well
- 2@ = a four card @ suit but no four card ` suit.

Are there alternative responses?

Some players show both majors by bidding 2NT(alert). This is not wise since it prevents the use of the a weak hand with 5-4 in the majors. How do I then show both majors? First show `s then bid 3@ over 2NT

6. How do I develop the bidding over opener's response of 2~?

You may develop the bidding in any way you see fit, but you must alert any conventional bid. The usual ways are:

- Bid 2NT or 3NT according to strength
- Bid a five card major at the 3 level (forcing)
- Bid a five card major at the 2-level (weakness take-out)
- Support ~s or pass
- Bid 3| to show a six card | suit (weakness takeout)

A weakness take-out hand is usually 4-9 pts having either a 6 card | suit or 5-4 in the majors. A forcing bid at the 3 level usually shows at least 12 pts.

7. How do I develop the bidding when I have a fit with opener's 4-card major suit?

- You can pass, or raise the suit according to strength.
Raising to 3 of a major asks opener to bid 4 with a maximum opening

or pass with a minimum.

- Bid 4NT (Blackwood convention) to ask for aces as a prelude to a possible slam

8. Examples of hands when partner opens 1NT (12-14), where you would bid 2 | .

| 65 ~A74 ` KQ97 @A864; bid 3NT over a 2~ response
| 65 ~A7 ` KQ875 @9862; bid 2` over a response of 2~ otherwise pass
| 987532 ~6 ` A42 @763; bid 3| over any response
| 8 ~A763 ` Q852 @ J984; pass any response

Beware of a Stayman enquiry with 4-4-4-1 shaped hands and a ~ singleton

9. Are there any circumstances when 2 | over 1NT is not Stayman?

- Yes when the 1NT is doubled (for penalties). 2| then is used to show a take-out in | s. This does not need to be alerted.
- A natural | suit (hardly anyone plays this)

10. When else can I make a Stayman asking bid?

- Over an opening bid of 2 NT(20-22)

Be aware that players often use 3 | to ask for suits from opener in ascending order (Baron convention), so agree with partner that 3 | is 'Stayman'. This bid should only be used with a hand having a major suit and a shortage, otherwise the hand might play as well if not better in 3NT. It can be used to find a fit, as a prelude to asking for aces to see if a slam is likely. With a 5 card major either bid the major direct, or use transfers so that the stronger hand plays the contract.

11. Alerting

Remember that at duplicate bridge, Stayman must be alerted, and any special responses (e.g. 2~ or 2NT) must also be alerted. Alert a 2` response if it denies a four card @ suit., but do not alert 2@ unless it has extra meaning.

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