

The Stayman Convention

This was invented by Sam Stayman, an American Bridge player.

When can I use it?

After a 1NT or 2NT opening bid. It is a 2♣ bid, by responder, which is announced by the 1NT opener as “Stayman”. It usually has 11+ HCP and at least one four card major suit.

Why bother using it?

1. You are investigating whether or not you have a “fit” (8 cards) in a major suit: often on the way to 2NT or 3NT.
2. It can also be used for some other types of hands:
 - Weak hands with at least 5-4 in the two major suits
 - Weak hands with long diamonds **and** support for **both** majors.
 - Weak hands with at least six clubs (will later bid 3♣).

How does the 1NT opener respond to partner’s Stayman bid

1. With one or two four card majors, bid the lowest (not the best) at the **lowest level possible**. The bidding is now under **responder’s** control.
2. Without a four card major, bid 2♦ as a “negative”. The bidding now is in **partner’s hands** as you have made a second limit bid.
3. A further bid by partner after a “negative”, at the two level, is a **weak takeout** and **must be passed**.

How would you bid these hands after partner has opened 1NT?

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

A - Bid 2♣ then 2♥ over a 2♦ negative. Pass if partner bids 2♥ or 2♠. Without Stayman responder would just bid 2♥ – a weak takeout. Stayman adds another option.

B - Bid 2♣ then pass any rebid! This is quite a rare use of Stayman, responder (you) have to be sure that any bid by opener will lead to a playable contract.

C -- Bid 2♣ then 3♣ over any rebid. Using Stayman means you can’t sign off in 2♣, so you have committed your partnership to the three level. Note that it is very likely that your opponents may have a major fit, even if your 3♣ bid fails.