

FOREWORD BY EDDIE KANTAR

25

BRIDGE CONVENTIONS

YOU

SHOULD KNOW

BARBARA SEAGRAM & MARC SMITH





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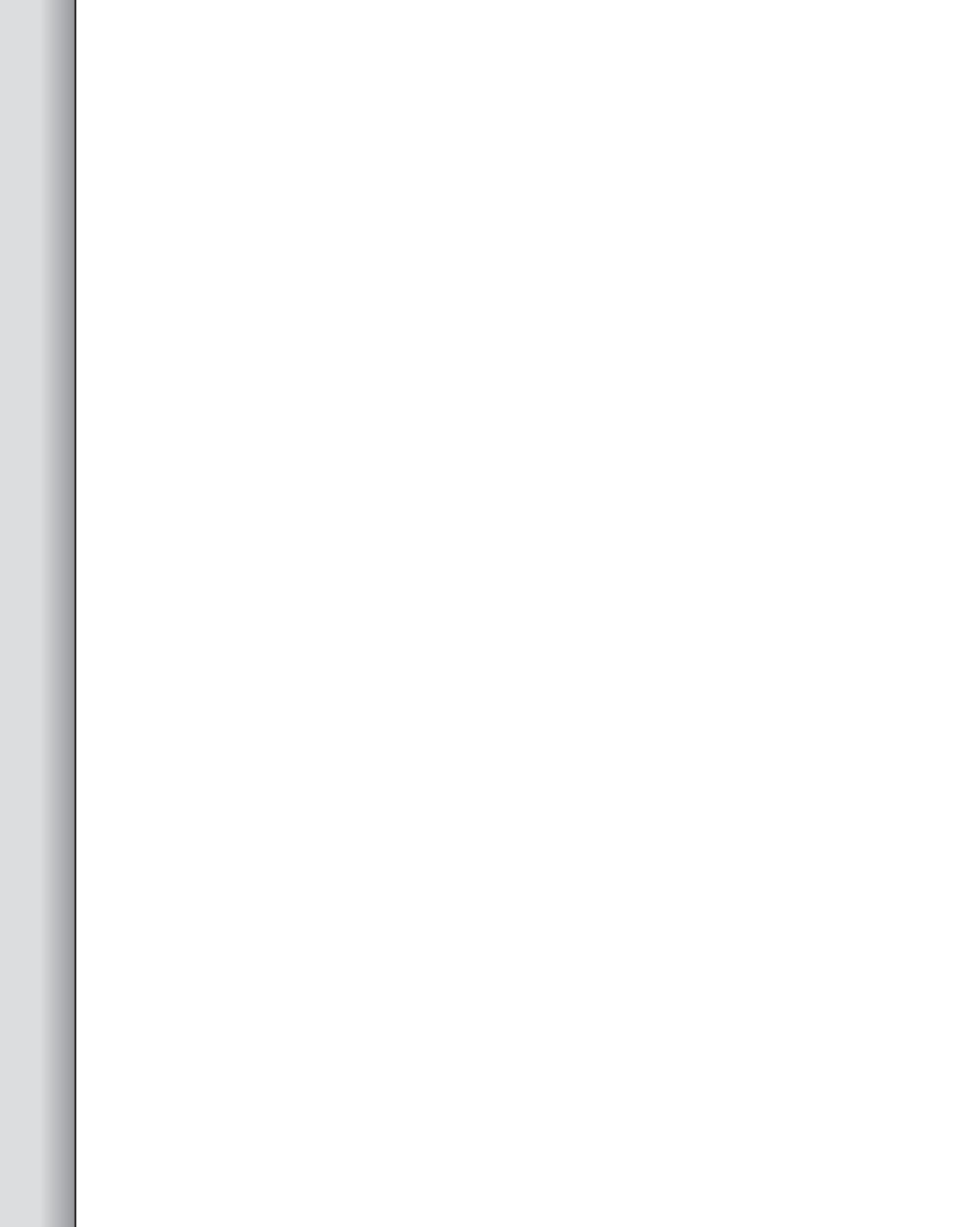
To my wonderful husband, Alex Kornel — my partner in life, in business, and at the table — with all my love.

Barbara

To the most important people in my life: my wife Charlotte, my dog Georgio, and all the bridge partners who have patiently suffered my idiosyncracies over the years.

Marc

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# FOREWORD

I have just read a good bridge book, a very good bridge book — the one you have in your hands. I don't know whether everyone who writes a foreword reads the book as thoroughly as I have this one, but I did, and you have a treat in store for yourself.

You are about to familiarize yourself with twenty-five of the most popular and useful bidding conventions described succinctly, simply, and clearly — very clearly. Barbara Seagram and Marc Smith, a Canadian and a Brit, an unlikely pairing, have come up with a winner.

My gut feeling is that a reader who knows nothing or next to nothing about the convention being explained will leave the chapter thinking he or she can play the convention. It doesn't get any better than that.

In addition to the clarity of the explanations, and to my mind the most important feature of the book, a review-type quiz follows each chapter which further hammers home the important concepts. The summary of the main points contained in the chapter, which is laid out neatly before each quiz, is the icing on the cake.

I'm a bridge teacher and I'm going to recommend this book to my students. What more can I say other than that by hook or by crook you should make sure your partner also has a copy of this book? It still takes two to tango.

*Eddie Kantar*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

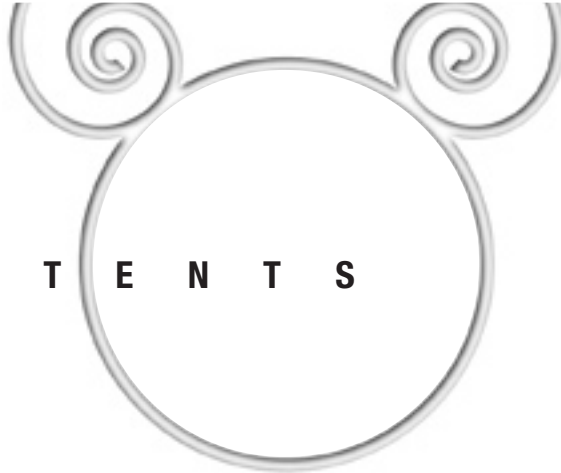
My sincere thanks to an incredible teacher, Michael Davey, who taught me to love this game; to my dear friend and mentor, Eddie Kantar, whose books, friendship and humor have inspired my teaching for twenty years; to Alan LeBendig, the kindest and best friend ever, who is always there to give advice, wisdom and support; and to a great lady, Kate Buckman, who started the Kate Buckman Bridge Studio in Toronto in 1958 and who invited me to work for her in 1975; Kate taught me the magic of running a bridge club. My sincere thanks to all the thousands of students and members of our Studio who have taught me to learn and who have been so supportive over all the years. And last but not least, my thanks to our editor, Ray Lee, who made this book possible.

*Barbara Seagram*

I'd like to thank Eddie Kantar for his kind words in the Foreword, and for his many helpful suggestions on the manuscript. Eddie's comments were particularly useful in regard to the example hands, a number of which were improved considerably as a result of his input.

*Marc Smith*

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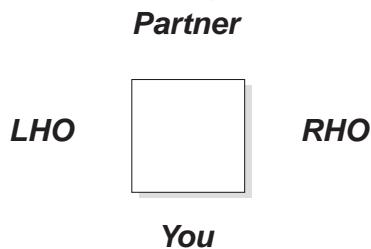




## A U T H O R S ' N O T E

In the course of this book, we frequently refer to ‘points’. If you are bidding notrump, then this means high-card points (HCP) since you cannot count distribution for notrump purposes. However, when bidding suits, ‘points’ means total points (HCP + distributional points) unless we specifically say ‘HCP’.

The opposition are referred to as LHO (left-hand opponent) and RHO (right-hand opponent). When partner opens the bidding, RHO bids next, then you, followed by LHO, and then partner again. If in doubt, refer to this diagram:



Throughout this book, you will see the terms ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’. Describing a bid as natural means that, for instance, if you bid spades, it shows spades. An artificial (or conventional) bid, on the other hand, is quite different. For example, you might make a conventional club bid, and doing so may say nothing about your club holding. Your bid could show both majors, or ask your partner a question about his hand, or mean something else entirely, but it does not necessarily show the suit you have actually bid — hence the term ‘artificial’.

Finally, we apologize to the politically correct amongst you for using the male pronoun exclusively throughout the book, for convenience. At all times you can assume that ‘he’ means ‘he or she’.

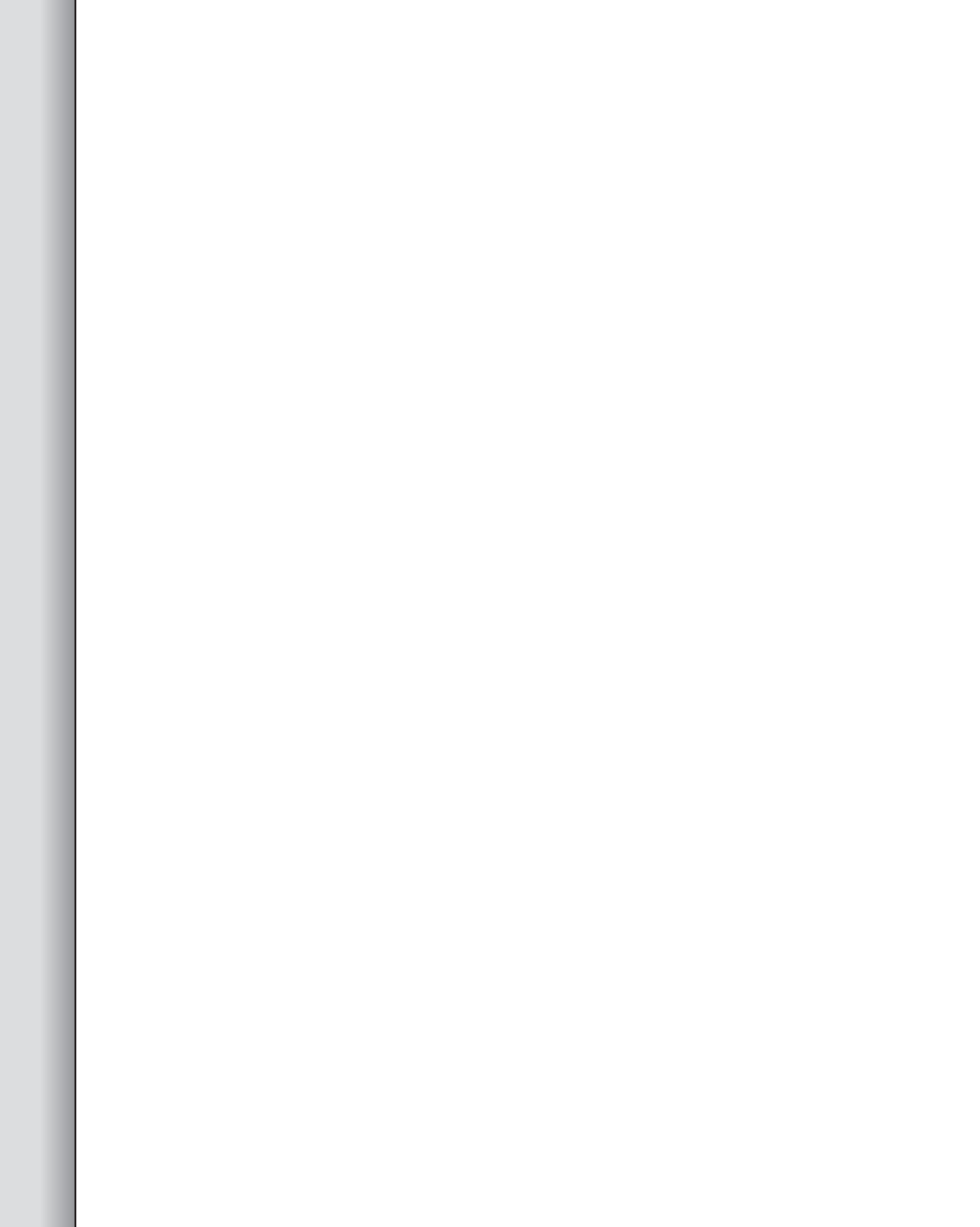
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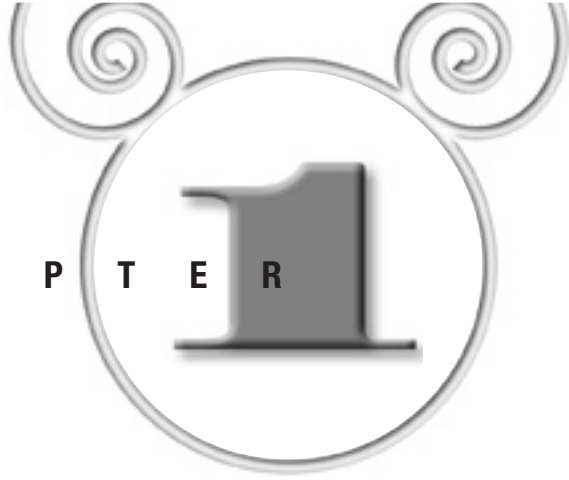
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**LEARN THESE  
FIRST**





C H A P T E R



## STAYMAN 2♣ response to a 1NT opening

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

♥ **Samuel M. Stayman** (1909-1993) was Life Master #48. He first described the convention that bears his name in 1945 in an article in *The Bridge World*, but it was actually invented by his partner, **George Rapee!** Stayman was world champion three times, and won twenty North American championship titles. The Stayman convention is one of only two (Blackwood being the other) that are used in some form by just about every partnership from beginners to world champions.

The Stayman convention allows you to find 4-4 major suit fits after you or your partner has opened 1NT and helps you to choose the right contract with a five-card major and invitational values. Major suits usually play better than notrump when you have at least an 8-card fit.

Stayman is a 2♣ response to an opening 1NT bid that has nothing to do with clubs, but instead asks opener — ‘Do you have a four-card major?’

<b>Partner</b>	<b>You</b>
1NT	2♣

## BY THE WAY

*Note that there are two main ways of playing Stayman, and both work equally well provided that both you and partner know which one you are using. If you prefer to play that a 2♥ response shows four hearts and denies four spades, and that 2♠ shows four spades and may also have four hearts, there's nothing wrong with that. In this book, we assume you are playing the set of responses we recommend in the text.*



Opener's responses are easy to remember:

- 2♦ 'I have no four-card major'
- 2♥ 'I have four hearts and I may also have four spades'
- 2♠ 'I have four spades but I do not have four hearts'

**NO OTHER RESPONSES ARE ALLOWED**

## When can I use Stayman?

Once you have bid Stayman, you have committed your partnership to getting at least as high as 2NT. Since partner's 2♦ response doesn't promise diamonds, you can't just pass it out of fright! The basic requirements are:

- 8+ high-card points (i.e. at least invitational values)
- at least one four-card major
- a short suit (i.e. you should not use Stayman with 4-3-3-3 shape)

## Stayman on game-forcing hands

If you have a hand with enough values to bid game, and one or two 4-card majors, Stayman is an invaluable tool to help you decide on the right contract over partner's 1NT opening. If he responds showing a fit in a four-card major that you own, then you raise to game in that suit. If he responds 2♦ denying a major, you bid 3NT. Whatever happens, you will reach the best game.

With two four-card majors, opener should convert to your known suit if necessary. Suppose his hand is:

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

**Partner**

1NT

2♥

4♠

**You**

2♣

3NT

pass

## BY THE WAY

*This auction illustrates that it is on the second round of bidding that you tell partner which level is appropriate for your combined values. Here, you want to play in game but have no slam interest, so you jump right to game. You should have a hand worth about 11-15 points.*



As usual, 2♣ asked if partner had a four-card major and 2♥ showed that suit. This time you showed enough values for game by jumping to 3NT. Holding four spades as well as four hearts, partner converted 3NT to 4♠.

## Stayman on invitational hands

You should use Stayman any time you have a four-card major and invitational values, unless you are 4-3-3-3. There are three possible outcomes:

### 1. Partner denies a four-card major

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
1NT	2♣
2♦	2NT
pass	

You ask if partner has a four-card major and 2♦ says ‘No’. You now show an invitational hand by rebidding 2NT. With a minimum partner passes (with a maximum he will bid 3NT). This sequence has the same meaning as when you bid 2NT directly over the opening 1NT (‘bid game with a maximum, partner’).

### 2. Partner bids the major you were looking for

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♠
4♠	pass

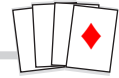
You ask if partner has a four-card major and his 2♠ shows a four-card suit. You now show an invitational hand with four-card support by raising to 3♠. This time partner is maximum for his 1NT opening so he accepts the invitation.

### 3. Partner bids the ‘wrong’ major

If you were looking for a heart fit, and partner’s response to Stayman is 2♠, then you will simply invite game in notrump. You know he doesn’t have four hearts. But what if partner responds 2♥ when you were looking for a spade fit? He can still have four spades. The answer is that it’s up to partner to tell you now. You simply raise notrump

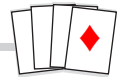
#### BY THE WAY

*Throughout this book we shall use terms such as ‘weak’, ‘invitational’ and ‘game-forcing’ to describe the strength of a hand. When partner has opened a 15-17 point 1NT, these are the categories for you as responder: 0-7 points is ‘weak’, which means that you have no game interest; 8-9 points is ‘invitational’: you have game interest if partner is maximum; a ‘game-forcing’ hand has 10+ points.*



#### BY THE WAY

*Remember that responding 2♠ to Stayman shows four spades and at the same time denies four hearts.*



as before. Once again, the continuations are the same whether partner responds 2♦ or 2♥. Remember that you promised at least one four-card major when you bid 2♣ over the opening 1NT. You don't have hearts, so if partner has both majors he knows there is a 4-4 spade fit. He will place the contract in spades at the appropriate level.

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
1NT	2♣
2♥	2NT
3♠	pass

## *Stayman in the slam zone*

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
1NT	2♣
2♠	4NT
?	

### BY THE WAY

*This does not mean that you cannot find out how many aces partner has once you have used Stayman. Later in this book (Chapter 6) we shall describe the Gerber convention, a bid of 4♣ over a 1NT opening used to ask for aces. This convention still applies after using Stayman — i.e. a sequence such as 1NT-2♣-2♥-4♣ is still Gerber.*



You are probably familiar with the auction 1NT-4NT, which invites opener to pass with a minimum or to bid 6NT with a maximum. This is called a *quantitative raise* and shows about 16 points.

This sequence is exactly the same except that we have sidetracked to check on majors. 4NT in this auction is not Blackwood, therefore. It is exactly the same quantitative raise it would have been if Stayman had not entered the auction. You have bid 2♣ first in order to discover whether there is a 4-4 heart fit. There isn't, so you invite to slam in notrump.

## *Other invitational Stayman sequences*

Remember that over 1NT, a direct bid of 2♥ or 2♠ shows five or more of the major but is a 'drop dead' bid. Stayman is useful for handling hands with a five-card major suit and invitational values.

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥

This sequence shows invitational values and 5+ hearts. Partner can pass 2♥, convert to 2NT, or bid game in hearts or notrump, all of which you will pass.

## Stayman on weak hands

A few pages back, we said that responder must have at least invitational values (8+ points) to bid 2♣ over 1NT. There are two exceptions to this:

♠ J 8 5 3   ♥ Q 9 7 6   ♦ Q 10 8 6 3   ♣ —

This hand certainly does not have invitational values but it does have a safety net. If opener responds 2♥ or 2♠, then you are happy to pass. If he doesn't have a four-card major then he will bid 2♦ and you can safely pass that too since he must have at least two diamonds to open 1NT.

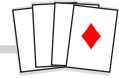
Unfortunately, by assigning a conventional meaning to a 2♣ response to 1NT, you've lost the natural use of the bid, which is to show a weak hand with clubs. So now what do you do with

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

You bid Stayman anyway! And you rebid 3♣ over opener's response. Partner must pass. Notice that with this hand type, you do not need to have a major to bid Stayman, since you are planning on rebidding 3♣ to sign off. However, if you have a four-card major as well as your clubs, bidding Stayman gives you a chance of finding a major-suit fit and getting out at the two-level.

### BY THE WAY

*You may also choose to bid Stayman and pass any response holding a 4-4-4-1 shape or with 4-3-5-1 or 3-4-5-1 (all with club singletons), but this will sometimes backfire. For example, if you bid 2♣ with 4-4-4-1 and pass 2♦, opener may have a 3-3-2-5 shape and 2♦ will be a silly contract.*



## One more thing...

There is one final sequence that should be mentioned.

<i><b>You</b></i>	<i><b>Partner</b></i>
1NT	2♣
2♦	3♥

What do you think partner has this time?

Since he jumped to the three-level, he must have values for game, so you cannot pass. Why didn't he bid 3♥ directly over 1NT, though? The answer is that not only does he have at least five hearts, but he also has four spades. Something like:

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

Partner bid Stayman to find out whether you had four spades. Once that possibility was gone (after your 2♦ response), he jumped to 3♥, asking you to choose between 4♥ and 3NT. He could also use the same sequence on a much stronger hand with slam interest, in which case he'll bid again once he knows whether you have three hearts.



# Summary

- ✓ Responder must have at least one four-card major.
- ✓ Responder should not use Stayman with 4-3-3-3 shape.
- ✓ Responder must have at least 8HCP to use Stayman unless he can handle every response. This means that with 4-4-5-0 (or in very rare cases 4-4-4-1, 3-4-5-1, or 4-3-5-1), or long clubs (see below) it is okay to use Stayman with fewer than 8 HCP.
- ✓ Opener must respond to Stayman. He responds 2♦ (no four-card major), 2♥ (four hearts and maybe four spades too) or 2♠ (four spades and definitely not four hearts). Passing 2♣ is not an option.
- ✓ With both majors, opener responds 2♥, and should convert to spades if responder does not raise hearts (unless responder rebids 3♣ — see next point).
- ✓ With a weak hand, including six or more clubs, responder can use Stayman, then rebid 3♣. Opener must pass this.
- ✓ Responder must bid the full value of his hand on the second round by bidding or inviting game or slam. Without interest in game, responder may also pass opener's response to Stayman.
- ✓ A 4NT bid immediately after a response to Stayman is a quantitative raise. It does not ask for aces.
- ✓ After 1NT-2♣-2♦, a 2♥ or 2♠ rebid by the Stayman bidder is invitational with at least a five-card suit.
- ✓ A jump to 3♥ or 3♠ after using Stayman shows at least a five-card suit, a game-forcing hand, and four cards in the other major. A direct jump to 3♥ or 3♠ without going through Stayman shows at least a five-card suit and a game-forcing hand, but denies four cards in the other major.

## STAYMAN 2♣ RESPONSE TO 1NT

# NOW TRY THESE...

[To Answers](#)

1. On each of these hands, partner opens 1NT (15-17 points). What do you respond? If you decide to bid Stayman 2♣, what do you intend to do over each of partner's three possible responses?

<b>a</b>	♠ K J 7 3 ♥ J 5 3 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ 10 8 6	<b>b</b>	♠ K J 3 2 ♥ J 7 ♦ 8 6 3 ♣ K J 5 3	<b>c</b>	♠ K J 7 3 2 ♥ 8 ♦ K 7 4 2 ♣ A Q 2
<b>d</b>	♠ K J 7 3 2 ♥ A J 5 2 ♦ Q 3 ♣ 10 6	<b>e</b>	♠ K J 7 3 2 ♥ 8 ♦ 8 7 4 2 ♣ J 6 2	<b>f</b>	♠ K J 7 3 ♥ J 5 3 2 ♦ 7 3 ♣ 10 8 6
<b>g</b>	♠ J 7 6 3 ♥ Q 8 7 3 ♦ J 9 8 5 2 ♣ —	<b>h</b>	♠ K J 7 3 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ J 6 2	<b>i</b>	♠ A 7 3 2 ♥ K 8 2 ♦ A J 4 ♣ 7 6 2

2. This time you are opener. What do you bid next in each case?

<b>a</b>	♠ KQ4 ♥ A642 ♦ KQ5 ♣ J74	<b>b</b>	♠ KQ7 ♥ A642 ♦ KQ53 ♣ J4
<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>
1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
2♥	3♥	2♥	2NT
?		?	
<b>c</b>	♠ KQ74 ♥ A642 ♦ KQ5 ♣ J4	<b>d</b>	♠ KQ74 ♥ A642 ♦ KQJ ♣ J4
<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>
1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
2♥	3♣	2♥	2♠
?		?	
<b>e</b>	♠ KQ94 ♥ A104 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ J4	<b>f</b>	♠ KQJ4 ♥ A104 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ J4
<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>
1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥	2♠	4NT
?		?	
<b>g</b>	♠ KQJ ♥ A104 ♦ KQJ42 ♣ J4	<b>h</b>	♠ KQJ ♥ A104 ♦ KQJ42 ♣ J4
<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>
1NT	2♣	1NT	2♣
2♦	3♣	2♦	2♠
?		?	

- 1**
- a** 2♣ You will bid 2NT over a 2♦ response and raise a response of either major to the 3-level to show an invitational hand.
  - b** 2♣ You will bid 2NT over a 2♦/2♥ response and raise a 2♠ response to the 3-level.
  - c** 3♠ You have a game-forcing hand with a 5-card major and so do not need Stayman.
  - d** 2♣ This time you use Stayman in case you have a 4-4 heart fit. You will raise a response of either major to game, and bid 3♠ over 2♦ (forcing and showing five spades and four hearts).
  - e** 2♠ You have a five-card major and a weak hand, so do not use Stayman. Knowing partner has four hearts will not help you.
  - f** pass While 2♥ or 2♠ might be a better contract than 1NT if partner has a four-card major, you cannot handle a 2♦ response to Stayman.
  - g** 2♣ You intend to pass any response.
  - h** 2♣ You will raise a 2♠ response to 3♠, and over either a 2♦ or 2♥ response you will bid an invitational 2♠ showing your five-card suit.
  - i** 3NT Never use Stayman with 4-3-3-3 distribution.
- 2**
- a** pass With a flat 15 points, you have no excuse for accepting partner's invitation.
  - b** pass Partner is inviting, but you have a minimum.
  - c** pass Partner wants to play 3♠, and he's not promising spades.
  - d** 4♠ Partner has invitational values with five spades, and your hand has a fourth spade and 16 HCP.
  - e** 4♥ This is just the same as the situation in (d). Partner has five hearts and is inviting game. You have 16 high, three good hearts and a ruffing value. Go for it!
  - f** 6NT *4NT isn't Blackwood!* Partner has four hearts, and having failed to find a fit in that suit has invited you to slam in notrump. Your 17 points look great.
  - g** pass We know, you have a great 17 and you don't like clubs much. So what?
  - h** 4♠ Partner shows an invitational hand in this sequence. You have a maximum with three good spades. Just do it.



*Balancing  
Blackwood & Gerber  
Cuebid Raises  
Control-showing Cuebids  
Fourth-Suit Forcing  
Grand Slam Force  
Help Suit Game Tries  
Jacoby & Texas Major-suit Transfers  
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Reverse Drury  
Reverses  
Roman Key Card Blackwood  
Splinter Bids  
Stayman  
Takeout Doubles  
Two Clubs Strong Artificial Opening  
Weak Two-Bids*

If you're like most beginning bridge players, you want to know more about bidding systems, and especially about conventions. Even if you just play socially, it can't hurt to add a few choice gadgets to your bidding arsenal. This book describes and explains 25 basic conventions and treatments that you can easily assimilate into your own bidding. Each one is clearly and simply explained, and you'll see how it fits into any standard bidding system if you decide to use it. Every chapter includes a helpful summary of key points and a quiz with full explanations of all the answers.

**"A reader who knows next to nothing about the convention being explained will leave each chapter thinking he or she can play it. It doesn't get any better than that."**

— *Eddie Kantar*

**Barbara Seagram** owns and manages one of the largest bridge schools in North America, Kate Buckman's Bridge Studio in Toronto, and teaches more than 1000 new students every year to enjoy the game of bridge. She has been awarded 'Master Teacher' status by the American Bridge Teachers' Association, of which she is a Director.



**Marc Smith** writes monthly columns for 'Bridge' and 'Bridge Plus' magazines in Britain and for 'The OKbridge Spectator' which is published on the Internet. He occasionally writes for the ACBL 'Bridge Bulletin' and is an expert bidding forum panelist for numerous magazines. His books include a Star Trek bridge parody, 'Enterprising Tales', and 'Countdown to Winning Bridge' (with Tim Bourke).

