

What's Standard?

Using Grant Standard: Responding to 1NT — by David Lindop 

Previous articles in this series, the Grant Basic and Grant Standard Summary Charts, and corresponding convention cards, can be found at www.audreygrant.com.

For responding to 1NT, the Summary Chart gives an overview of our methods:

RESPONSES	
2♣:	Stayman
2♦:	5+ hearts (transfer)
2♥:	5+ spades (transfer)
2♠:	transfer to 3♣ (to sign off in clubs or diamonds)
3♣/3♦:	6+ suit; invit. to 3NT
3♥/3♠:	Forcing; invit. to slam

In the previous issue we discussed responding with balanced hands and the basic use of Stayman. Now let's take a further look at Stayman and see how it is nicely integrated with Jacoby transfer bids.

Four-card Major

Stayman is used with a hand of at least invitational strength and at least one four-card major suit. **This includes hands which have five or more cards in the other major.** If ♠ K J 8 3 2 partner opens 1NT ♥ A J 7 5 and we hold this ♦ 8 hand as responder, ♣ J 4 3 we start with 2♣, *not with a transfer to spades*. If opener bids 2♥, we raise to 4♥; if opener bids 2♠; we raise to 4♠.

What if opener bids 2♦, showing no four-card major? Now we jump to 3♠, which is forcing and asks opener to choose between 4♠ and 3NT. With three-card support for spades, opener will typically bid 4♠; with a doubleton spade, opener will choose 3NT. If opener chooses 3NT, we'll accept that decision even with our singleton diamond. Opener doesn't have four hearts or three spades so, hopefully, opener has some length and strength in diamonds.

♠ K 9 7 5 With this hand we
♥ K 10 9 7 3 start with a response
♦ Q 4 of 2♣ to partner's
♣ 8 3 1NT opening. If
partner bids 2♥ or 2♠, we make an
invitational raise to the three level.

If partner bids 2♦, we bid 2♥, showing an invitational hand with a five-card heart suit. Partner can infer that we also have four spades, since we would have simply started with a transfer to hearts if we didn't have four spades as well. With three-card support for hearts, partner can pass with a minimum and jump to game with a maximum; with a doubleton heart, partner can bid 2NT with a minimum and 3NT with a maximum.

♠ A 10 8 7 6 3 With a four-card
♥ K Q 10 8 major, start with
♦ 7 4 2♣. If opener
♣ 3 bids 2♥ or 2♠,
raise to game. If opener bids 2♦,
jump to 4♠. Opener has at least two
spades, so we'll be in at least an
eight-card fit.

Exercising Judgment

Like all conventions, Stayman is a tool. We must decide when and how to use it.

Do we have to use Stayman when we have a four-card major? No. ♠ J 8 7 3 With this hand, many
♥ Q J 5 players would simply
♦ K 10 3 raise 1NT to 3NT.
♣ K J 9 Even if partner has a
four-card spade suit, there doesn't
appear to be much advantage to
playing in spades instead of
notrump. Our spades are weak and
our strength is concentrated in the
other suits. We should be okay in
notrump even if partner has a low
doubleton in one of the suits.

Do we need at least invitational strength—8 or more points—to use Stayman? *Not if we are short in clubs and feel we can handle any response partner will make.* With

♠ Q 8 7 3 this hand, we can
♥ Q J 6 4 respond 2♣. If opener
♦ 10 8 6 3 bids 2♥ or 2♠, we
♣ 5 pass, having found an
eight-card fit. If opener bids 2♦, we
can pass and hope for the best. It's
possible opener has only a doubleton
diamond and we'll regret our decision
when the deal is over. Since opener
doesn't have four hearts or four
spades, however, it's likely opener
has length in diamonds.

♠ J 9 6 5 What about this hand?
♥ K 7 6 2 If we respond 2♣, we
♦ 7 4 may get lucky if opener
♣ J 8 3 bids 2♥ or 2♠ and we
can pass. But what if opener bids
2♦? We don't want to play there and
a bid of 2NT would be invitational.
Partner might bid 3NT, accepting
our invitation, and be defeated several
tricks. It is probably best to exercise
our judgment and pass.

Stayman and Slam

Stayman may be used when responder has enough to consider bidding a slam ... but with some cautions.

♠ A J 10 3 This hand has 18
♥ A Q 9 3 high-card points. If
♦ 6 4 partner opens 1NT,
♣ A K 5 we know we're headed
for slam since the partnership has at
least 33 combined points. We start
with 2♣. If partner bids 2♥ we raise
to 6♥; if partner bids 2♠, we raise to
6♠; if partner bids 2♦, we raise to
6NT, knowing we don't have an
eight-card major-suit fit.

It isn't necessary on this hand, but what if we wanted to ask for aces after finding our fit? For example, suppose the auction begins like this:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1NT	2♣
2♥	?

The standard agreement is that 4♣, the Gerber convention, is used to ask for aces in this situation. 4NT is quantitative, not Blackwood.

♠ 9 4 To see why 4NT isn't
♥ A K J 4 Blackwood, consider
♦ A J 6 3 this hand. With 16 high-
♣ Q J 5 card points we have
enough to invite slam if partner
opens 1NT but not enough to commit
the partnership to slam. If we didn't
have four hearts, we would make a
quantitative raise to 4NT. Opener
would pass with a minimum and
accept (bid slam) with a maximum.

With a four-card major, we begin
with 2♣. Suppose partner bids 2♦,
showing no major, or 2♠, showing
four spades but not four hearts. Now
what? We don't have an eight-card
major-suit fit but still want to invite
slam, so we make an invitational jump
to 4NT. After using Stayman, we
usually reserve 4NT as a quantitative
raise, not Blackwood.

We also need to know how to
invite slam if we do find a fit after
using Stayman. Suppose we hold the
above hand and the auction begins:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1NT	2♣
2♥	?

We are too strong to sign off in 4♥ but
not strong enough to take the part-
nership to 6♥. Asking for aces won't
help. We still won't know whether we
have enough combined strength for
slam. The solution is to raise to 5♥,
showing a hand too strong for 4♥ but
not quite strong enough for 6♥.
Opener may pass with a minimum
and bid slam with a maximum.

Stayman from Opener's Side

As an exercise to make sure we
understand the Stayman conven-
tion, let's try a couple of hands from
opener's side of the table.

♠ Q 8 5 4 With a balanced hand
♥ A K 7 3 and 16 points, we open
♦ A 4 1NT. Partner responds
♣ Q J 5 2♣. We bid 2♥ and
partner jumps to 3NT. Now what?

OPENER	RESPONDER
1NT	2♣
2♥	3NT
?	

We should bid 4♠. Why did partner
use Stayman and then jump to 3NT
when we showed our hearts?

Partner has enough strength for
game but was interested in looking
for a spade fit. We can confidently put
the partnership in its
eight-card fit.

♠ K J 9 5 We open 1NT, partner
♥ A 6 responds 2♣ and we
♦ Q J 7 3 bid 2♠. What do we do
♣ K J 4 if partner now bids 4NT?

OPENER	RESPONDER
1NT	2♣
2♠	4NT
?	

We should pass. 4NT is a quantitative
raise, inviting us to bid slam. We
have a minimum and should decline
the invitation. Why did partner use
Stayman? Because partner has a
four-card heart suit. What if partner
had a spade fit and wanted to ask for
aces? Partner would have jumped to
4♣, the Gerber convention.

Jacoby Transfer Bids

Stayman is useful only when we
have a four-card major suit. With a
five-card or longer major suit, we
use Jacoby transfer bids. The basic
mechanics are straightforward:

- 2♦ asks opener to bid 2♥
- 2♥ asks opener to bid 2♠

Putting transfers to use is a little
more challenging. Jacoby transfers
allow us to sign off in partscore,
invite game or bid game when we
have a five-card or longer major suit.

Six-card or Longer Major

With a six-card or longer major suit,
we start by transferring to the major.
Then, with 0-7 points, we pass; with
8-9 points we raise; with 10-15, we
♠ 8 3 jump to game in
♥ J 9 7 5 4 2 the major.

♦ 6 We would respond
♣ 10 8 4 3 2♦ to partner's 1NT
opening bid. When partner bids 2♥,

we pass, leaving the partnership in
partscore in hearts.

We can immediately see an advantage
of transfers. The weaker hand becomes
dummy, leaving the stronger hand con-
cealed, making the defense more chal-
lenging. We don't need any high-card
strength to make a transfer bid. The
weaker we are, the more important that

♠ K 8 7 6 4 3 we make the long suit
♥ 9 4 trumps.

♦ 7 2 With 7 high-card
♣ K J 6 points plus 2 length
points for the six-card suit, we have
enough to invite game. Over 1NT,
♠ K Q 3 we respond 2♥.
♥ A J 9 7 5 2 When opener bids
♦ J 7 2 2♠, we raise to 3♠,
♣ 5 inviting game.

With enough for game, we bid 2♦ as a
transfer to hearts and then jump to 4♥.

Five-card Major

With a five-card major suit, we start
by transferring to the major. With 0-7
points, we pass; with 8-9 points we bid
♠ K J 8 6 5 2NT; with 10-15, we
♥ Q 9 4 jump to 3NT.

♦ Q 6 We respond 2♥. After
♣ 8 4 3 partner bids 2♠, we bid
2NT to show a hand of 8-9 points with
five spades. With a minimum, opener
passes or bids 3♠. With a maximum,
opener can raise to
♠ 9 3 3NT or jump to 4♠.

♥ A Q 8 7 4 We respond 2♦ to
♦ Q 7 6 transfer opener to 2♥.
♣ K 10 4 Then we jump to 3NT.

With a doubleton heart, opener passes.
With three or more hearts, opener bids
4♥. We reach the best game contract.

Stayman and Jacoby transfers
work in concert after a 1NT opening.
Chart 1 provides a useful summary.

*(In the next issue we'll look at some more
complex auctions involving Jacoby transfer
bids and look at other responses to 1NT.)*

Chart 1 - Combing Stayman and Transfers

Number of Cards in the Major Suit	Responder's Point Range		
	0-7 points	8-9 points	10-15 points
6 or more cards	Transfer and pass	Transfer and raise	Transfer and bid game
5 cards	Transfer and pass	Transfer and bid 2NT	Transfer and bid 3NT
4 cards	Pass	2♣ (Stayman)	2♣ (Stayman)
3 or fewer cards	Pass	2NT	3NT