

Lesson 3 by Roger Lord

Stayman

This device, a bid of two clubs over partner's one notrump opening to ask for a four-card major, was invented by George Rapee of New York. Rapee's regular partner Sam Stayman first wrote about it for the Bridge World magazine in 1945, and the Stayman convention quickly became standard practice. Numerous variations have been used, and partnerships should determine their agreements. For this lesson, we use "non-forcing" Stayman, with the inelegantly named "garbage Stayman" as an adjunct. In conjunction with Stayman, we use Jacoby transfers, which will be the subject of the next lesson.

We assume a "strong" one notrump—that is, 15-17 HCP. "Balanced" patterns are 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2 with five of either a minor or a major, and an optional 6-3-2-2 with a six-card minor.

When the opening notrumper's partner (hereafter known as "responder") has values at least sufficient to invite game (a good eight HCP or greater), along with one or both four-card majors, responder bids two clubs, artificial (saying nothing about clubs), asking whether opener has a four-card major, to locate a 4-4 fit. If the answer is yes, or if opener has a five-card major, opener bids two of the major. With both four-card majors, opener bids two hearts. Holding neither four-card major, opener replies two diamonds, which says nothing about diamonds or about the relative strength of the hand.

After opener's initial reply, responder can bid a natural two notrump or higher, or raise the major to three or four, or jump in an unbid major, or take slam-going action such as three of a minor or four notrump.

Below are some Stayman auctions along with explanations. All hands from one through nine begin with an opening notrump and a Stayman inquiry.

1. Responder: S 53 H QJ74 D K1093 C Q108

Opener	Responder
1 Notrump	2 Clubs
2 Diamonds or 2 Spades	2 Notrump
1 Notrump	2 Clubs
2 Hearts	3 Hearts

When opener's answer is two diamonds or 2 spades, responder, with a good eight HCP, invites game with a raise to two notrump, asking whether opener has better than a minimum, to which opener passes or goes to three notrump. A "good eight HCP" here refers to the good intermediate cards plus the heart QJ combination. When opener's answer to two clubs is two hearts, responder, with nine points in support, raises to three hearts, again game invitational.

2. Responder: S QJ53 H 7 D K1093 C Q1084

Opener	
1 Notrump	2 Clubs
2 Spades	4 Spades

Or	1 Notrump	2 Clubs
	2 Hearts	2 Spades

After opener answers with two spades, the value of responder's hand increases to 11 points in support, enough for a leap to four spades. After opener answers with two hearts, responder rebids two spades, which shows fewer than four hearts and exactly four spades, game invitational, non-forcing. (If responder had held four hearts, she would have raised hearts, and if responder had held more than four spades, she would have begun with a transfer to spades –see next lesson.) Holding four spades, over the second-round two spades, opener raises responder's spades to the three or four level, depending upon the size of opener's hand. Holding fewer than four spades, opener would sign off at two notrump with a minimum or jump to three notrump with a maximum.

3. Responder: S A10763 H KJ54 D Q10 C 75

	Opener	Responder
	1 notrump	2 Clubs
	2 Hearts or 2 spades	4 Hearts or 4 Spades
Or	1 notrump	2 Clubs
	2 Diamonds	3 Spades

Responder, with a game forcing hand, searches for a fit in either major. When the answer to Stayman is two hearts or two spades, responder goes directly to game in the major. Over a two diamond answer, responder jumps to three spades, which is forcing and shows four hearts and five or more spades. The opener now bids three notrump with 2 spades, or raises to four spades with three-card support.

4. Responder: S KQ86 H AJ107 D A5 C Q93

	Opener	Responder
	1 Notrump	2 Clubs
	2 Diamonds	4 Notrump

Responder's second bid, four notrump, is "quantitative" (not Blackwood), meaning that it is natural, non-forcing and invitational to slam. Opener now passes with a minimum, or makes another natural bid with a better hand. For example, over one notrump—two clubs—two diamonds—four notrump, opener may bid five clubs to show a club suit and search for a superior slam if responder fits clubs.

5. Responder : S KQ86 H A107 H A C Q10932

	Opener	Responder
	1 Notrump	2 Clubs
	2 Diamonds or 2 hearts	3 Clubs

This hand also is worth a slam investigation. When notrumper does not answer Stayman with two spades, responder tries for a fit in clubs. The three club rebid is forcing to game and a slam try,

guaranteeing five or more clubs and one or both four-card majors. Opener can sign off in notrump, or he can raise clubs or bid a new suit as his hand may call for.

6. Responder: S J1053 H J4 D 872 C K1083

	Opener	Responder
	2 Notrump	3 Clubs
	3 Spades	4 Spades
Or	2 Notrump	3 Clubs
	3 Diamonds	3 Notrump
Or	2 Notrump	3 Clubs
	3 Hearts	3 Notrump
	4 Spades	

Stayman is used over two notrump opening bids, as well as over a delayed notrump bid after an opening two clubs. With hand six, responder's three clubs is Stayman. Responder raises three spades to four spades. If opener's rebid is three diamonds or three hearts, responder signs off at three notrump. However, if opener has both four-card majors, having bid three hearts, she now goes to four spades, knowing that responder must have the four-card major because of the Stayman three clubs.

7. Responder: S A1092 H 87 D J874 C AJ6

Opener	RHO	Responder
1 Notrump	2 Hearts	3 Hearts

Sometimes the opponents don't want to listen to your Stayman sequence. Suppose you have Hand 7., ready to search for a spade fit and the right game, but RHO obstructs your plan with a two heart overcall. You can recover by substituting a cuebid, three hearts, which forces the partnership to game and asks opener to bid a four-card spade suit or to revert to notrump.

8. Responder: S 10854 HJ743 D 97652 C ---

Opener	Responder
1 Notrump	2 Clubs
2 Diamonds or 2 Hearts or 2 Spades	Responder will pass any bid.

9. Responder: S J9653 H QJ754 D 10 C 54

Opener	Responder
1 Notrump	2 Clubs
2 Diamonds	2 Hearts
Opener will pass or correct.	

8. and 9. are examples of garbage Stayman, which is an optional treatment. On 8., responder will pass any bid opener may make, including two diamonds. If responder instead were to pass one notrump, she

ensures getting a minus score. Often, the next opponent will reopen with a double, which will be passed for a substantial penalty. By escaping via Stayman into a reasonable suit fit, the partnership can utilize the club shortness by taking some ruffing tricks. Besides, taking immediate action may forestall a double or overcall, as the opponents' overall strength is unknown, and they may fail to bid their workable partscore.

On 9., responder bids Stayman, and if opener has four of a major, an immediate fit will be found. Otherwise, over two clubs, if opener bids two diamonds, responder says two hearts, and opener will pass with three cards in hearts, or correct to spades with a doubleton heart and three spades. A partnership must have prior agreement before employing garbage Stayman, so that opener will know not to bid again on these sequences.