




www.vubridge.com

Introduction to Stayman over 1NT. Part 1 of 2. ACOL version.
Summer 2015

VB#1 Y2 Stayman Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AQJ	
	♥ QT84	
	♦ 96	
	♣ KJ82	
West		East
♠ T83		♠ 9762
♥ A5		♥ 732
♦ KQJT3		♦ 8542
♣ 643		♣ AT
	South	
	♠ K54	
	♥ KJ96	
	♦ A7	
	♣ Q975	

We've heard rumours that there are bridge players who live long and productive lives without the Stayman convention, but we've never met any. It's time for you to learn all about it, and who better than your friends at VuBridge to get you started?

Why Stayman? Stayman serves two main purposes: Firstly, it enables us to find 4-4 major fits over No-trump openings. Secondly, it arranges the bidding so that the No-trump bidder names the suit first, thus keeping opener's hand concealed, which may be worth something.

Like many conventions, Stayman begins with an artificial bid that asks partner a question. Over a 1NT opener, the responder bids 2♣, which says nothing about Clubs. It asks partner, "Do you have a four-card major?" In order to bid Stayman, the responder needs to have a four-card major of his own, and (often but not always) invitational values.

There are only *three* permissible answers to Stayman. They are:

2♦: No, partner, I have not got a four-card major.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ K

Bidding.

Let's talk about the bidding, since we can now see partner's hand. The beauty of opening 1NT is that we have made a **limit bid**: We've shown both our shape and point-count. In essence, we've fulfilled our destiny, and now it's up to partner.

(This, by the way, is true any time we have limited our hand. We rarely should bid again unless partner requires or requests us to do so.)

Partner knows we belong in game. He can do the maths, and his 13-pointer added to ours is plenty. His main question, before he puts us in game, is "can we play this in 4♥?" He has a balanced hand, it is true, but his shortage in Diamonds leads him to suspect that 4♥ might prove to be superior to 3NT.

He uses the Stayman 2♣ bid. "Partner, do you have a four-card major?" This requires us to bid again, answering his question. We respond 2♥ to show the four-card Heart suit and North raises this to game.

Play.

What is important to note with this deal is that 3NT goes down. The mutual weakness in Diamonds means that a Diamond lead (obvious from that West hand!) sets up six tricks for East-West in No-trumps.

In Hearts, though, the actual play is a doddle. We take the ♦A at trick one and hasten to draw trumps. West takes his ♥A, cashes a Diamond and gets off play with a Spade.

We can finish what we started (drawing trumps) and then knock out the ♣A. When Clubs prove to be 3-2 (a 4-1 break would have threatened the contract) we make our game for the loss of the ♥A, the ♣A and a Diamond.

2♥: Yes, partner, I have four Hearts, and *maybe* four Spades. We bid our four-card suits up-the-line.

2♠: Yes, partner, I have four Spades, and do not have four Hearts.


Hand 1 shows a routine use of the convention.



www.vubridge.com

Introduction to Stayman over 1NT. Part 1 of 2. ACOL version.
Summer 2015

VB#1 Y2 Stayman Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 64	
	♥ A863	
	♦ AK86	
	♣ J42	
West		East
♠ KQJ9		♠ T73
♥ JT2		♥ Q9
♦ 943		♦ QJT2
♣ QT7		♣ 9863
	South	
	♠ A852	
	♥ K754	
	♦ 75	
	♣ AK5	

In this deal, the Stayman convention will again be employed in order to find the best contract.

The main rationale for Stayman is that it locates 4-4 major fits. Declaring such hands with a trump suit will typically produce at least one more trick than a No-trump contract.

In the play, you'll have to think carefully about how to generate the correct number of winners.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding.

We open 1NT with a maximum 14 points.

Partner likes the sound of this, and with his four-card Heart suit, asks if we have a major of our own. Why? Because, with a 2·4·4·3 shape he appreciates that 4♥ might be a better contract than 3NT if we have a 4-4 trump fit.

There are two reasons why the major suit fit may prove to be superior. One is that 3NT may suffer from a mutual weakness in a suit (see Hand 1 for an obvious example). The other is where extra tricks can be made by ruffing. This particular example illustrates the second of these.

Here, we are gifted with two majors, and we bid them *up-the-line*, naming Hearts before Spades.

As an aside, some players are taught to respond 2NT (or something equally weird) if they have both majors in response to a 2♣ Stayman enquiry. This method is not recommended for children, adults or anyone else, as it is cumbersome and unnecessary. Just make the cheapest bid (2♥) and listen to what partner has to say.

Partner's raise to 3♥ shows two things:

- 1) a Heart fit
- 2) sufficient points to invite game.

With a maximum for the 1NT opener, we are pleased to go to game in Hearts.

Play.

When we do our **Count** and **Plan** we come up with one loser in each of the Spade, Heart and Club suits. However, when we count top winners, we can only see seven: one Spade, two Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs. Where are we going to get the tenth trick from?

If we can use our trumps separately, by making

three Hearts in hand and two Spade ruffs in dummy, that will give us what we need. So, we duck the ♠K at trick 1 and take the second Spade trick.

At tricks three and four, we draw two rounds of trumps with our ♥A and ♥K. Then we ruff a Spade, cross to the ♣K and ruff the last Spade. Then we can actually claim the contract. If we wanted to play the hand out, we'd cash our top two Club winners, the ♦A and concede the last two tricks to the ♣Q and the boss trump. A 4-1 trump break would have spelled defeat but a 3-2 break is well within the odds.

This went very nicely for us but it would have been a far different story had we been in No-trumps. In 3NT you must count your winners. Here, we would only have taken one Spade, two Hearts (with a third available via the 3-2 split), two Diamonds and two Clubs. One off.


This deal makes a great case for Stayman and for playing in a suit rather than No-trumps.



www.vubridge.com

Introduction to Stayman over 1NT. Part 1 of 2. ACOL version.
Summer 2015

VB#1 Y2 Stayman Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ QJT3	
	♥ J8	
	♦ A753	
	♣ AJ3	
West		East
♠ 752		♠ 64
♥ AT6		♥ KQ94
♦ JT4		♦ Q862
♣ T987		♣ K62
	South	
	♠ AK98	
	♥ 7532	
	♦ K9	
	♣ Q54	

On this deal you have to make sure you bid accurately as the 1NT opener.

That's easy, you say. Leave everything to partner after making a *limit bid*?

Well, usually that's true, but not always.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♥
P	3NT	P	4♣
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ T

Bidding.

We open 1NT and now it's up to partner. With 13 points and a 4·2·4·3 shape, he could raise to 3NT and hope we could scrape up nine tricks. That wouldn't be ridiculous. However, he knows that a 4-4 major fit can often produce extra tricks, so he invokes the Stayman convention by bidding 2♣.

Initially we disappoint him by responding 2♥. Note the requirements for this bid. We show four-card major suits up-the-line (so when we have both Hearts and Spades we bid Hearts first). Furthermore, it is *length* that matters and not *strength* – partner has asked us if we have a four-card major, not if we have a good four-card major.

Now partner jumps to 3NT and many players would be tempted to Pass. "What does it have to do with me?", they will ask. However, to use Stayman, partner simply must have a four-card major – why bother otherwise? Therefore, if partner hasn't got four Hearts, guess which suit he does have... Go on, it really isn't difficult. So, instead of Passing 3NT you must "correct" to 4♣.

Play.

As the cards lie, 4♣ is tricky. Mind you, "tricky" is better than "impossible", which is what 3NT would have been. Count the tricks in No-trumps – four Spades, no Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs. That's it. One down.

In 4♣ we only have three certain losers. A Club (when the finesse loses) and two Hearts. Our winners will come from two Clubs, two Diamonds and **six** Spades. We make six trump tricks by ruffing two Hearts in dummy and then taking four big trumps in hand. As usual in this type of deal we have to be patient – by not drawing trumps and by conceding our losers in a side-suit to set up ruffs.

[Note that an initial trump lead and subsequent continuation would have led to our downfall. The defenders would have been able to draw

three rounds of trumps before we were in a position to ruff Hearts, so we would only have made five trump tricks instead of six].


In fact, a trump switch by East at trick two would also have been good enough. (As the cards lie, we would have succeeded by rising with the ♣A at trick one, to prevent this. However, that might have left us vulnerable to a subsequent Club ruff, if the suit had broken 5-2).

We must ensure that we take full advantage of the reprieve by playing Hearts immediately – now the trump switch comes too late, as we are a tempo ahead.



Introduction to Stayman over 1NT. Part 1 of 2. ACOL version.
Summer 2015

VB#1 Y2 Stayman Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 2D
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ JT82	
	♥ QT83	
	♦ QT53	
	♣ 3	
West		East
♠ K65		♠ AQ73
♥ 752		♥ AJ9
♦ A2		♦ 874
♣ QJ842		♣ T95
	South	
	♠ 94	
	♥ K64	
	♦ KJ96	
	♣ AK76	

We've learned that the responder usually has invitational values to use Stayman.

Not always, though – this hand being one of the exceptions.

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♦
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ A

Bidding.

We have a maximum 1NT opening bid in fourth seat and may expect to play in game once partner responds with a 2♣ Stayman enquiry. However, we get a surprise when partner passes our 2♦ bid, which simply denies holding a four-card major. We suspect a Senior Moment until he lays down the dummy. Ah! Now we get it! Partner is desperately searching for a fit – he hopes for a major fit (obviously) but knows that Diamonds are likely to be playable as a trump suit.

The concept is this: With a hand that looks like this dummy, it is usually better to play in a suit than No-trumps. Why? Because the declarer can use the trumps independently to make some desperately needed tricks. Even if the suit contract fails it is likely to be cheaper than going lots off in 1NT. Think of it as damage limitation.

What a disaster this would be in No-trumps after a Club lead. We might make six tricks, five would be more likely. At least in a suit, we have a fighting chance.

Partner doesn't care whether we bid Diamonds, Hearts or Spades. Whatever we say, he Passes.

[By the way, this is one of the reasons why 2NT is NOT a legitimate response to Stayman. Had we bid 2NT for denial – as we have seen some misguided people do – we would have been in an even deeper hole].

Play.

The loser count is not too depressing (two Spades, one or two Hearts, one Diamond) but to make sufficient winners we have to make our trumps independently. We will get two Club tricks, the ♥K and five Diamond tricks. We can make the contract by ruffing two Clubs on table.

The opening ♦A lead is a good one for the defence. They were paying attention to the bidding (what a novel concept!) and knew that our tricks were likely to come from ruffs. West smartly leads trumps, knocking out two rounds.

After that, we are on our way, cashing our ♣A K and ruffing a Club.

We take our chances and get a nice break when we attempt to return to hand with a Heart and find East with the ♥A. He couldn't go in with his Ace because it would have set up two or three tricks in Hearts for us. (That partly makes up for his partner's vicious trump lead). We then ruff the final Club; we don't have to worry about being over-ruffed at that point, because dummy's Diamonds are boss.


Then we're done. We have two more tricks in trumps and the rest belong to the opponents. We heave a sigh of relief, and thank our partner once more for putting us in a suit. His Karma is riding high today.

So, isn't Stayman wonderful? See why we said at the beginning that you can't live without it? Pessimists may point out that we won't always hold four-card support for partner's Diamonds. True, but he was taking the worthwhile gamble that a fit was available in Spades, Hearts or Diamonds – that's three separate chances.



Introduction to Stayman over 1NT. Part 1 of 2. ACOL version.
Summer 2015

VB#1 Y2 Stayman Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ KJ85	
	♥ T98	
	♦ T64	
	♣ AKQ	
West		East
♠ 4		♠ Q732
♥ KJ643		♥ Q7
♦ KJ5		♦ Q932
♣ T872		♣ 964
	South	
	♠ AT96	
	♥ A52	
	♦ A87	
	♣ J53	

This hand provides a good contrast to the first three deals. In Hands 1-3, the 4-4 major suit fit provided a better spot than 3NT for two separate reasons.

Is this always true? Well, by no means...

On this deal your side is going to eschew an eight-card major suit fit. You'll see why as the hand develops.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ 4

Bidding.

This series is all about using Stayman to locate that precious eight-card major fit. Look at North. He's got a great major, and yet he elected not to use the convention. Why not?

Let's talk theory... Why might we choose to play in a trump suit rather than No-trumps once a 4-4 (or longer) fit has been identified? One reason is that we can get rid of losers by trumping them in the other hand. Another reason is that ruffing the early rounds of a long suit may establish the remaining cards in that suit as winners.

Think back to the early hands in this series. Remember how extra tricks were generated by trumping losers? Take a look at this dummy. It is as flat as a pancake. There's going to be no trumping in that hand! There are no long suits to set up and no short suits to ruff.

So, with sufficient points for game and one balanced hand opposite another, it is often correct to try for the game contract that requires the fewest tricks, namely 3NT. The four-four fit can be a great trump suit, but it can also prove disastrous if the opposition trumps split badly. When our side has enough points to make game likely and both partners have essentially flat hands, 3NT is often the safest resting place.

[It is worth noting that it is not categorically wrong to use Stayman with the North hand, because it would be possible to construct hands where 4♠ is a superior contract to 3NT].

Also, North (poor, deluded fellow) thought that his intermediate cards (the ♥10 9 8 and the ♦10) might be useful backing cards to our honours in 3NT. In principle that was well-thought out. However, in practice, they proved as useful as the ♥4 3 2 and the ♦2. That's not partner's fault, of course.

Play.

West leads the fourth-highest of his long suit and we study the dummy, realising that it's a "find the lady" deal. Where is the ♠Q? If we can

find her, we can finesse her. To get some clues as to her whereabouts, we will delay the fateful decision until the last possible moment.

We duck two rounds of Hearts and win the third, discovering West started with five and East two. We cash three top Clubs, just to see if that will tell us anything – and it does. We notice that East started with three Clubs and West with four. That makes East strong favourite to have length in Spades (he has eight cards in Spades and Diamonds, while West has just four cards in those suits).

So it becomes better than 50-50 to finesse through East for the ♠Q. When it works we have our nine tricks.

Note that the alternative contract of 4♣ is hopeless. Even if we were to locate the ♠Q successfully, there would be two losers in each red suit, and no possibility of discarding them or ruffing them.



www.vubridge.com

Introduction to Stayman over 1NT. Part 1 of 2. ACOL version.
Summer 2015

VB#1 Y2 Stayman Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	2NT
P	3♣	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

We pick up the biggest hand of the week. The opening bid is straightforward – 2NT.

Examine partner's hand. He only has 5 points but that's enough to bid to game opposite a balanced hand containing 20-22 points. However, with a 1·4·4·4 shape, North appreciates that 4♥ might be a superior spot to 3NT if there is a 4-4 Heart fit available. Looking at the North-South hands, we can see straight away that 3NT would fall foul of a Spade lead – defeated before it got going. 4♥ is a far superior contract.

So, North uses Stayman to enquire about our majors. Over a 3♣ response, he would close the auction by bidding 3NT. He would do the same thing if we were to deny a major by responding 3♦ – having no better option than to take the risk that our Spades were strong enough to withstand an attack in that quarter. As it is, we reply 3♥ (which is music to North's ears). He raises happily to 4♥.

Play.

After the ♠Q lead, we should combine the drawing of trumps with the ruffing of a couple of Spades on table. Consequently, we win the trick and take the first of those ruffs immediately, before playing a Heart. West wins with the ♥A and plays back a trump (as nothing else is any better). We are in complete control, and can ruff another Spade in dummy before drawing the last trump.

The providential fall of the ♦10 means that we can overtake the ♦J with the ♦Q and cash the ♦9 for an overtrick. We can even try the Club finesse for the twelfth trick but that's a slice of luck too far. No matter, eleven tricks is very nice, thank you. (And much better than playing in 3NT down one).

North

♠ 8
♥ KT73
♦ Q982
♣ T842

West

♠ QJT92
♥ A4
♦ T3
♣ K953



East

♠ K764
♥ 852
♦ 7654
♣ J7

South

♠ A53
♥ QJ96
♦ AKJ
♣ AQ6

Stayman can indeed be used after a 2NT opening bid.

It's a perfectly logical extension of the convention.