

RESPONDING TO ONE NO-TRUMP OPENING BID (incl. Transfers)

It must be emphasised that the following is **an introduction** to the various responses, suitable for beginners (it is assumed that there is no interference bidding). It includes the concepts of ‘Stayman’ and ‘Transfers’, but at a fairly basic level. The use of these can be broadened with some experience.

You need to understand the basic mechanics of these two ‘conventions’ before you can fully use the responses to full benefit.

Stayman:

This is a bid of 2♣ from responder, requesting opener to show any four-card major(s).

In response:

Opener with four hearts bids 2♥;
with four spades bids 2♠;
with no four card major bids 2♦;
with both majors bids 2♥.

Transfer (Red Suit):

With a **five (or more)-card major**, the responder bids the suit **immediately below the major**, i.e. -

with five hearts he bids 2♦,
with five spades he bids 2♥.

In response, opener **must** bid the relevant major, i.e. 2♥ or 2♠. (At introductory level, with 5-5 both majors, choose the better major. You will quickly learn more sophisticated methods).

Hand Categorisation

Important - the first thing to do when responding to 1NT is to categorise your hand as ‘**weak**’, ‘**intermediate**’, ‘**strong**’, or ‘**very strong**’. Even when you achieve ‘expert’ status you will still categorise hands the same way (roughly).

1. **Weak Hand** (0-10 points)

a. Without any 5-card major:

- **PASS** (there is an exception – with a 4-4-4-1 hand and a singleton club, you can bid ‘Stayman’, and **PASS** whatever partner responds - even 2♦)

b. With a 5-card major

- ‘Transfer’ - i.e. bid the suit below the major. Opener will bid the major which you **must then pass**. (With two five-card majors choose the better one)

c. With a 5-card major and a 4-card major

- use ‘Stayman’. Then pass any major response from partner, otherwise bid your five-card major (using this approach, you don’t forgo the chance of finding a 4-4 major fit).

2. **Intermediate Hand** (11-12 points)

a. Without a 4-card major

- with **12** points - bid 2NT, inviting partner to bid 3NT with a maximum (14 or good 13 points).

- with **11** points – bid 2♠ (the bid has no other use playing transfers). Partner can now bid 2NT with a minimum, or bid 3NT with a maximum.

b. With a 4-card major

- use the Stayman 2♣ convention asking partner to bid any four-card major. This is an attempt to find a 4-4 major fit

- Opener will respond:

- 2♦ with no four-card major, over which you will bid **2NT** (11-12 points)

- 2♥ or 2♠ with a four-card suit (with both four hearts and four spades, opener will bid 2♥).

You can then support the major at the **three** level, or bid **2NT** if no major fit has been found. Opener will then pass with a minimum (i.e. 12 points or a poor 13), or with a maximum (14 or good 13 points) will go to game in the agreed major with a fit, or in 3NT with no fit.

(Take care with a sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT. If opener has four spades as well as the four hearts already shown, he should aim for a spade contract – by inference the Stayman bidder must have spades if he can't agree his partner's hearts).

c. With a 5-card major

- use the relevant transfer, and over opener's response, bid **2NT**. Opener then has a number of choices:

- with a minimum – **PASS** without support for the major, or bid 3♥/3♠ with support for the major

- with a maximum – 3NT without support for the major, or bid 4♥/4♠ with support for the major

With five hearts and four spades, transfer to hearts (2♦), and then instead of bidding 2NT, you should bid 2♠ (i.e. on the way to 2NT, giving opener even more choices).

(At this stage with two five-card majors, choose the better one. Better methods are available – Extended Stayman – but only with more experience).

d. With a 6-card major

- use the relevant transfer, and over partner's response, bid 3♥ or 3♠. Opener can then either **PASS** with a minimum, or bid 4♥ or 4♠ with a maximum.

3. **Strong Hand** (13-18 points), (12-18 points with a five card major)

a. Without a 4-card major

– bid 3NT

b. With a 4-card major

- again use the 2♣ Stayman convention asking partner to bid any four card major

- Opener will respond:

- 2♦ with no four-card major, over which you will bid 3NT (13+ points)

- 2♥ or 2♠ with a four-card suit (with both four hearts and four spades, opener will bid 2♥).

You can then support the major at the **four** level, or bid 3NT if no major fit has been found – partner can then judge whether to go to game and whether it should be in the agreed major or in no-trumps.

(Again, take care with a sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3NT. If opener has four spades as well as the four hearts already shown, he should bid 4♠ – by inference the Stayman bidder must have spades if he can't agree his partner's hearts).

c. With a 5-card major

- use the relevant transfer, and over opener's response, bid 3NT. Opener then has two choices:

- with support for your major he will bid 4♥ or 4♠

- with no support for the major he will pass.

With five of one major and four of the other, the simplest approach for learners, is to transfer to the five-card suit, and then after opener's bid of the transfer suit, bid the four card suit at the three level (forcing), - i.e. way to 3NT, giving opener even more choices.

d. With a 6-card major

- use the relevant transfer, and over partner's response, bid 4♥ or 4♠.

4. **Very Strong Hand** (19+ points)

investigate slam possibilities by bidding 4NT. This is known as a quantitative 4NT, asking partner to bid 6NT with a maximum opening hand (14 or 'good' 13).

(5. **Intermediate/Strong** - (10+ points) - with a seven-card major)

bid directly to 4major.

(Note – Stayman is ideally used in hands containing a singleton or void. On stronger hands without a singleton or void (or doubleton), many players would decide not to use Stayman even when containing a four-card major, since there is less ruffing value in the hand).

Exercises: (Assume an opening 1NT of 12-14 points):

- | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|
| a) ♠ KJ752 | b) ♠ KJ73 | c) ♠ Q64 | d) ♠ AQ875 | e) ♠ AKJ87 |
| ♥ 762 | ♥ A964 | ♥ J96 | ♥ K43 | ♥ A83 |
| ♦ A986 | ♦ K7 | ♦ A72 | ♦ Q98 | ♦ Q52 |
| ♣ 4 | ♣ 743 | ♣ Q874 | ♣ 97 | ♣ 97 |

f) ♠ AKJ7532 ♥ Q62 ♦ K6 ♣ 4	g) ♠ KJ73 ♥ A9 ♦ A7653 ♣ Q4	h) ♠ Q64 ♥ J96 ♦ AK72 ♣ KJ4	i) ♠ AQ8 ♥ A103 ♦ AQ98 ♣ K75	j) ♠ A108 ♥ A83 ♦ Q52 ♣ Q1097
k) ♠ AQ7 ♥ K62 ♦ Q95 ♣ 1084	l) ♠ KJ743 ♥ A962 ♦ 76 ♣ 84	m) ♠ Q64 ♥ AJ9632 ♦ 76 ♣ K4	n) ♠ Q642 ♥ AJ62 ♦ J1052 ♣ 7	o) ♠ AQ10843 ♥ 108 ♦ 5 ♣ AK83

- a) 2♥ - (weak) – transfer with 8 points and a five card suit. Opener MUST bid 2♠ which you then pass.
- b) 2♣ - (intermediate) - 11 points - two four card majors bid 2♣ Stayman. If opener responds 2♦ (no four-card major) – bid 2NT. Opener can then raise to 3NT with a maximum. If opener bids a major, bid 3major, inviting partner to bid 4major with a maximum.
- c) **PASS** - (weak) - 9 points – flat hand.
- d) 2♥ - (intermediate) – transfer with 11 points and a five card spade suit. Opener MUST bid 2♠. You then bid 2NT showing precisely five spades and an intermediate hand. Opener can then choose to pass, bid 3♠, bid 3NT, or bid 4♠.
- e) 2♥ - (strong) – transfer with 14 points and a five card spade suit. Opener MUST bid 2♠. You then bid 3NT showing precisely five spades and a strong hand. Opener can then choose to pass, or bid 4♠ with spade support.
- f) 4♠ - (intermediate) - a good seven card spade suit.
- g) 2♣ - (strong) - 14 points with a four card spade suit (ignore the five card diamond suit) bid Stayman 2♣. If opener bids 2♦ or 2♥, bid 3NT (if opener has four hearts and had four spades he would convert this to 4♠). If he bids 2♠, bid 4♠.
- h) 3NT - (strong) - 14 points with no four card major.
- i) 4NT - (very strong) - asking opener to pass with a minimum, or bid 6NT with a maximum.
- j) 2NT - (intermediate) - 12 points and no four card major. Invite partner to bid 3NT with a maximum, or pass with a minimum.
- k) 2♠ - (intermediate) – exactly 11 points. Bid 2♠. Opener will bid 2NT with a minimum, and 3NT with a maximum.
- l) 2♣ - (weak). With 5/4 majors you can try for a fit despite being weak. If opener bids 2♦, just bid 2♠. If opener bids 2♥ or 2♠ just pass.
- m) 2♦ - (intermediate) – transfer with an intermediate hand. Opener MUST bid 2♥. You then bid 3♥, showing intermediate values and a six-card suit. Opener can then bid accordingly.
- n) 2♣ - (weak) – the only weak hand where you can bid Stayman without a five-card suit. Just pass opener’s response.
- o) 2♥ - (strong) – transfer. Opener MUST bid 2♠. You then raise to 4♠.

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