

TWO-WAY STAYMAN

This version of Stayman is easy to learn and remember. It is a useful convention for underdogs, because responder will often play a hand that is played by opener at the other tables. If things go right, the result may be a fine score. If they go wrong, so what, you were going to lose anyway.

In response to a 1NT opening, responses have these meanings::

2♣ - Any sort of invitational hand, denies game-going strength Opener shows any major, but with both majors he bids 2NT with a minimum and 3♣ with a maximum. This will avoid getting the bidding too high when opener has both majors and a minimum, with responder having neither major. This response can also be made with a weak three-suited hand short in diamonds, planning to pass any two-level bid by opener. If opener ungraciously shows both majors, responder's 3♥/3♠ bid closes the auction, even if opener has shown a maximum hand. Otherwise, any rebid by responder is invitational. That could be awkward when responder has an invitational hand with five hearts and opener bids 2♠. She will normally bid 3♥, which opener will have to pass with a minimum, even with a doubleton heart. To reduce this danger, responder should just bid 2NT over 2♠ when holding five hearts and a balanced hand. Simulations have shown that a 5-3-3-2 hand should just stay in notrump rather than seek a 5-3 fit in a major.

2♦ - Any sort of game-going or better hand. Opener shows a major, bidding 2♠ with both (planning to bid 3♥ later if spades are not raised). When opener responds in two of a major, responder should not jump to 3NT when holding three-card support. Instead she should bid a forcing 2NT, giving opener a chance to rebid a five-card suit. She should also rebid 2NT when holding four hearts after opener has responded 2♠, in case opener has four hearts too. A rebid of three in a minor implies at least some slam interest.

2♥/2♠- Natural signoff bids (not Alertable). While the response denies much interest in game, opener can raise one level (only) to show an extremely good supporting hand.

2NT - Puppet to 3♣, usually with a long minor suit and weak hand, with no interest in game. If responder corrects 3♣ to 3♦, opener must pass. If responder follows with a 3NT bid, that shows something like 5-5 in the minors and little interest in slam. With a stronger 5-5 he can rebid 4NT, (implying a few high cards in the majors), or jump to 4♦ over 3♣ (implying major suit weakness) or just start with 2♦ and see what develops. Rebidding three of a major after a 2NT response is currently undefined. A singleton-showing meaning is unwise because the next hand has the opportunity to double for a lead of that suit. Perhaps the best use is as a natural bid, implying a 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 hand with both minors and some slam interest.

3♣/3♦- A two-suited invitational hand with hearts and the minor named, not forcing. These conventional responses are necessary because opener's 2♠ response to 2♣ would prevent the showing of both suits at a reasonable level.

3♥/3♠- Natural, slam interest, a good suit of at least five cards.

Texas Transfers are applicable, but in competition only through 3♣ (when both transfers would be jump bids)..

