

RESPONDING TO ONE NO-TRUMP OPENING BID

It must be emphasised that the following is merely a **basic introduction** to the various responses, suitable for beginners (it is assumed that there is no interference bidding). You will very quickly discover various embellishments to the system of responses (in particular ‘**transfers**’, and a much broader use of ‘Stayman’), and a much fuller description would be given at a later time.

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), (0-9 points with a five card major)
 - a. Without any 5-card suit (or 5 clubs)
 - **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 five card suit (except clubs – see 1a)
 - bid the 5-card suit – a weak take out, which partner **must pass**.
2. **Intermediate Hand** (11-12 points), (10-11 points with a five card major)
 - a. Without a 4-card major
 - with 12 points or a ‘good’ 11 points - bid 2NT, inviting partner to bid 3NT with a maximum (14 or good 13 points)
 - 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
 - Partner (opener) responds:
 - 2♦ - 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 – partner can then judge whether to go to game and whether it should be in the agreed major or in no-trumps.
 - (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 Stayman (2♣) and over partner’s response, jump to 3major (an invitational bid). Partner can pass with a minimum, bid 4major with a maximum and major support, or bid 3NT with a maximum and no support.
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

- Partner (opener) responds:

- 2♦ - 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

- bid directly to 3major – a forcing bid. Partner must bid either 3NT with no support, or bid 4major with support

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:

Over partner's 1NT (12-14 points):

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

- a) 2♠ - (weak) - 8 points with a five card suit – a weak take-out. Partner **MUST PASS** this bid.

- b) 2♣ - (intermediate) - 11 points - two four card majors bid Stayman 2♣. If partner responds 2♦ (no four card major) – bid 2NT. Partner can raise to 3NT with a maximum. If partner bids a major, bid 3major, inviting partner to bid 4major with a maximum.
- c) **PASS** - (weak) - 9 points – flat hand.
- d) 2♣ - (intermediate) - 11 with a good five card spade suit. If partner doesn't support spades, jump-bid to 3♠. Partner will either pass with a minimum, or bid 3NT or 4♠ with a maximum.
- e) 3♠ - (strong) - 14 points and a good five card spade suit. 3♠ is forcing i.e. partner cannot pass – he has to bid either 3NT or 4♠.
- 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 partner bids 2♦ or 2♥, bid 3NT (if partner 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 partner 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.

AFH