

What is your agreement?

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You are attending a Regional or National Bridge Tournament and learn that pairs are playing the following conventions.

1. Checkback Stayman
2. New Minor Forcing (NMF) also called New Minor Checkback
3. Two-Way New Minor Forcing also called Two-Way Checkback Stayman
4. XYZ
5. Crowhurst
6. Roudi
7. Weak 6-4

A popular agreement among many new, novice club bridge pairs (perhaps 2 out of 3) is to employ New Minor Forcing or as some call it the New Minor “Farce” Convention.

I will briefly review each convention since even if you do not play a convention you should be familiar with the bids. Given all seven (which may have some variations) I will suggest the “BEST” agreement.

For this review, I will assume an opening 1NT bid =15-17HCP playing a 2/1 System or the Modern ACOL System, not 15-16 and that a rebid of 2NT=18-19HCP not 17-18.

New Minor Forcing (NMF)

After the opening bidder opens one of a minor and rebids 1NT/2NT, the bid of the other minor is called NMF. **NMF requires a 5-card major and 10-11HCP**; however, some use it when 4-4 in the majors with game-going 13+HCP strength. The bid is forcing for One Round and the opening bidder must have 11+HCP. Since responder needs only 5/6HCP to make a 1-level bid, may have only one 5/4-card major, the new minor rebid is similar to Stayman 2♣ bid in that it is not a forcing to game bid. So why use it?

- a. It may help to find a 5-3 or 4-4 major suit fit when 5-4 in hearts and spades.
- b. It provides a method for exploring 3NT.
- c. It invites game and may help responder show a 6-card suit.
- d. It often provides a convenient method for responder to often sign-off at the 2-level.

Over a 1NT=12-14/15-17 response by the opening bidder, a jump rebid in the same suit is invitational, as is a jump raise in opener's suit or a jump into a new suit. An invitational jump bid denies a five-card major, leading to many no-trump raises with unbalanced suit-oriented hands.

If the bidding goes 1♣ -1♠ - 1NT and responder is weak with 4-hearts and 4-clubs, you may not bid 3♣ since a new suit by responder is forcing.

To make a forcing bid using NMF, responder rebids his major suit, raises the minor, or bids a new suit. In the case of a forcing raise, responder's major might have only 4-cards.

What if there is no "new minor"? The bidding goes 1♣-1♦-1NT-? Then jump 3m bids are only invitational so responder must bid 3NT with perhaps an unbalanced hand that belongs in a minor suit.

Another NMF drawback is its strength requirements; NMF bidders cannot describe a weak 5-5 major-minor hand. They must just rebid their five-card major and hope for the best. A weak hand with good support for opener's minor is also a problem, whether or not responder's suit is five long. When responder supports the minor, should opener show three-card support for responder? It's guess.

Finally, if you are 4-4 in the majors NMF requires one to bid hearts and then spades independent of suit strength and yet another drawback of NMF is the bidding space wasted by an NMF 2♦ bid.

Is there a better option option? Yes. Checkback Stayman.

Checkback Stayman (CS)

After the opening bidder opens one of a minor and rebids 1NT, the bid 2♣ asks opener to show three-card support for responder's bid major, or to show an unbid 4-card major.

2♦: Denies 3-card support for partner's major, and 4-cards in the other major and a minimum hand.

2♥/2♠: Bidding responder's major shows 3-card support and a minimum hand; bidding the other major shows 4-cards and a minimum hand.

2NT: Denies 3-card support for partner's major and 4-cards in the other major and a maximum hand.

3♥/3♠: Bidding responder's major shows three-card support and a maximum hand; bidding the other major shows 4-cards and a maximum hand.

A partnership agreement is required on how to handle the case of holding four of the other major and three of partner's suit. One may agree to bid up the line, or support partner's suit first. If partner cannot support your first suit, he will invite with 2NT or bid game with 3NT and you may then correct to your other suit.

Over the bid of 2NT, 3♣ are CS. It is used only when if you are 4-4/5-4 in the majors or have a 5-card major.

CS has no strength or length requirements. With CS, responder's new suit bid at the two level is forcing for one round only. Responder may show a second suit and follow with an invitational 2NT or raise opener's suit. A two-level suit rebid shows a five-card suit and a weak hand, with trump support for opener's minor or a minor suit on the side, or

both. Opener can pass with a very strong doubleton. Otherwise he bids minimally to let responder continue to describe his hand.

CS has the drawback that responder can't stop in two of a major with an invitational hand which may result in a risky three-level contract.

NMF and CS both have the drawback that you can't stop at the two level in the minor that is bid artificially. With NMF, responder can't show a weak major-diamond 5-5 opposite a 1♣ opener's 1NT rebid, but can sign off in 2♣. With CS, responder may show a weak 5-5 hand, but again may not sign off in 2♣. But when is the last time you had a weak responding hand and the opponents let you play in 2♣ after a 1♣ opening and 1NT rebid?

Reviewing NMF and CS, I hope you agree that CS is superior to NMF. However is there yet a better convention? Yes, it follows.

Two-Way New Minor Forcing/Two-Way Checkback Stayman

How does it work?

After a 1NT rebid, all invitational sequences begin with 2♣ and game-going sequences begin with 2♦ (whether opening 1♣/1♦ after the bid of 1NT=15-17), three level bids are slam tries and show at least 6-cards in the 3-level bid suit or show 5-5 if two suits have been bid.

The convention may also be used if you open a major and respond 1NT (e.g. 1♥-1♠-1NT=15-17/12-14 - 2♣/2♦).

This convention is much better than either NMF or CS. However, a more flexible convention is XYZ.

XYZ

As represented the "XYZ" convention is used in any 1X-1Y-1Z bidding sequence 1X-1Y-1Z. In Two-Way Checkback/ Two-Way NMF the 1Z bid =1NT=12-14/15-17!

Crowhurst

Crowhurst is an ACOL convention played in conjunction with a weak 12-14HCP opening 1NT bid and assumes that when a player opens a minor, the rebid of 1NT=12-16HCP. After the bid of 1NT, responder next makes the artificial bid of 2♣ with 10+HCP.

Many ACOL bidders have switched to using the conventions when opening 1NT=15-17HCP

Roudi

Roudi is a French convention where again the bid of 2♣ is an artificial bid used after the sequence 1m-1M-1NT=15-17. Responder is required to have a 5-card major with 11+HCP. However some use it with a 4-card major with puppet relays and/or canapé bids.

Weak 6-4

This is not a convention, but a rule used by many when opening not a minor but a major with 11-14HCP and 6-4 in the bid major with a 4-card minor. After opening a major and partner responds 1NT* as a forcing bid, do you rebid your major or show your 4-card minor?

If the number of HCP in the 4-card minor is greater than or equal to those in the major bid one bids their 4-card minor and NOT their weaker 6-card major.

If you are a member of the 66% of the bridge pairs playing th NMF agreement, I hope you are convinced to change to either 2-Way NMF or XYZ!

For a nice review of Two-Way NMF go to:

<https://view.pagetiger.com/gyhtu77f8h/gyhtu77f8h/page44.htm>