

Introduction

Using Short-Side Trumps

Trump Selection

Introduction – Basic Principles: Gaining Additional Tricks Using Short-Side Trumps

WHAT ARE SHORT-SIDE TRUMPS?

When a partnership reaches a suit contract, whoever has the fewest trumps has the short-side of trumps. For example, if the bidding went 1♥ [Opener] – 2♥ [Responder] you would expect Opener to have at least a 5-card Heart suit and Responder to have a 3 card Heart suit (the Gold Card System uses Reverse Bergen for 4-card support). This is commonly referred to as a 5-3 fit in Hearts, and logically, Responder has the short-side of trumps since he only has 3-card trump support.

Usually, the dummy has the short-side trumps, but in NT bidding when Responder Transfers, the Declarer will have the shorter length in trumps.

OK; SHORT-SIDE DEFINITION IS UNDERSTOOD – NOW WHAT?

Now you need to understand when to pull trumps and when to delay pulling trumps. Let's look at what happens when you have the top trumps and pull trumps first.

Initial Holding		After playing 3 rounds of Spades
<div>Declarer ♠ AKQ32</div> <div>Dummy ♠ 654</div>	<div>Declarer starts with 5 Spades topped by the AKQ. Assume initially that trumps split 3-2. After playing the AKQ, the only trumps remaining are Declarer's 3 and 2.</div> <div>Regardless of how they are used, the remaining trumps will take two tricks. Again, no matter how those remaining trumps are used you will get no more than two tricks.</div> <div>The total tricks taken using trumps is five.</div>	<div>Declarer ♠ 32</div> <div>Dummy ♠</div>

Now let's look at a different use of Responder's trumps:

Declarer

♠ **AKQ32**
♥ **AJ62**
♦ **32**
♣ **AK**

Dummy

♠ **654**
♥ **9**
♦ **AK109**
♣ **106432**

Assume that the opponents lead the 8♦.

If Declarer DELAYS pulling trumps, he can possibly get three additional tricks because of Dummy's shortness in Hearts. There is always a risk that an opponent will over-ruff Dummy but if you pull trumps first the J62 of Hearts will be losers anyway.

First, play the 9♥ to Declarer's Ace. Then play the 2♥ and Trump in Dummy. Use Clubs for transportation back to Declarer's hand and trump another Heart. Repeat the process. If it works (West could possibly over-trump you) you just gained 2-3 additional tricks depending on how successful you are in getting back to declarer's hand to pull trumps. Again, please note that trumping a Diamond in Declarer's hand gives you transportation but not additional tricks.

Understanding the utilization of short-side trumps is relevant to BOTH Declarer and Defenders. Defenders must understand that should they allow Declarer to use short-side trumps for ruffing prior to pulling trumps, Declarer will make extra tricks. The primary defense against a Declarer using short-side trumps for extra tricks is... leading trumps.

Two key elements are necessary to use this declarer technique:

- 1) You can only use the trumps on the short-side that are not critical to winning the tricks when you pull trumps.

Declarer

♠ **65432**
♥ **AJ62**
♦ **32**
♣ **AK**

Dummy

♠ **AKQ**
♥ **9**
♦ **AK109**
♣ **106432**

You cannot use the short-side trumps in this example to trump your Hearts losers in Declarer's hand. If you do, you cannot control your trumps.

Note: There is a technique called "Dummy Reversal" where you ruff so many times on the long side of trumps it actually becomes the short side. That is not relevant here.

2) There must be an additional suit with shortness in the short-side hand that can be usefully trumped (try not to trump winners 😊).

- If Declarer has solid winners in the Dummy's short suit, you obviously don't want to trump those. Try to use those winners to shorten another suit which you can trump once the suit is shortened.
- Even though you have winners in Declarer's hand/suit, if you also have losers in that suit go ahead and trump the losers, pull trumps, and then use the winners.

Declarer

♠ AKQ32
♥ AKQJ
♦ 32
♣ AK

Dummy

♠ 654
♥ 9
♦ A1097
♣ 106432

Even though Dummy is short in Hearts, Declarer does not have any Heart losers to trump. However, Declarer can use the winners in Hearts to shorten Diamonds and then trump a Diamond in the Dummy.

Declarer

♠ AKQ32
♥ AK52
♦ 32
♣ AK

Dummy

♠ 654
♥ 9
♦ A1097
♣ 106432

Declarer has two winners and two losers in Hearts. Use the first winner to void Dummy's Hearts. Then trump two Hearts in the Dummy. Next, pull trumps. THEN take your other winner in Hearts.

This principal of using short-side trumps becomes a key element in selecting trumps when you have more than one fit.

SO HOW DOES SHORT-SIDE TRUMP MANAGEMENT AFFECT BIDDING?

In the past, Dummy support points were added to hand evaluation. Now that hands are opened more aggressively (12 HCP hands), a lot of the distributional evaluations have been dropped. That doesn't mean you cannot associate USEFUL distributional values with hand evaluation bidding decisions – both for accepting or declining invitations or even trump vs. NT contract decisions.

For example, after opening 2NT, my partner indicates (using Smolen) a hand with a 5-card Heart suit and a 4-card Spade suit. With the hand to the right, can you see ANY opportunity to take advantage of a trump suit (do you think you can TRUMP ANY SUIT)? Conversely, can you see any weakness that requires a trump suit for protection? The 8-card fit in Hearts should produce tricks but the contract should be 3NT (because there isn't a practical use or need for trumps).

♠ K76
♥ K84
♦ KQJ9
♣ AKJ

Now your partner opens 1♥ and you have a nice simple raise to 2♥. Your partner invites you to game with a 3♥ bid. Traditionally, you bid 4♥ with 8-9 HCP and Pass with 6-7 HCP. However, since your partner can probably take advantage of your singleton Diamond using the short-side trumps, bid 4♥.

♠ KJ103
♥ K96
♦ 3
♣ 85432

Note: This chapter is used as a prelude to deciding which suit to select as trumps (next chapter).

Introduction – Bidding Fundamentals: Trump Selection with 6-2 vs 5-3 vs 4-4 fits

WE HAVE MORE THAN ONE 8-CARD FIT; WHICH ONE SHOULD I PICK?

Before this topic is explained, understand that every generalization made about bridge can be utterly destroyed by specific circumstances/results. However, since there is no crystal ball to predict the future (bridge would be boring if that were true anyway) we must rely on statistical generalities as a guide to the best choices.

In GENERAL, 4-4 fits are better (produce more tricks) than 5-3 and 6-2 fits. There are two basic reasons that are used to choose 4-4 fits:

- 1) In the previous section, it was demonstrated that a really effective method to achieve additional tricks on a contract was to use the short-side trumps to ruff Declarer's losers before pulling trumps. The fewer trumps that exist on the short-side the more limited the opportunity and the more vulnerable you are to opponents leading trumps. To utilize short-side trumps there is a REQUIREMENT that there be an opportunity (shortness) to USE the short-side trumps.

Therefore, a 4-4 fit provides declarer an option to decide which hand can become the short-side based upon which hand can leverage that opportunity (which hand has shortness).

- 2) When there are two 8-card fits (let's assume 5-3 and 4-4) and you select the 4-4 as the trump suit, you can set up the long suit to discard losers on the extra tricks in the 5-card side.

Declarer

♠ **AK632**
 ♥ **KQ96**
 ♦ **3**
 ♣ **854**

Dummy

♠ **Q54**
 ♥ **A432**
 ♦ **1097**
 ♣ **AK2**

If Spades are trump, the Diamond shortness is on the long side of trumps.

Trumping Diamonds in Declarer's hand will avoid Diamond losers but it will not produce additional tricks (the 3♠ and 2♠ will produce tricks no matter how you use them).

If Hearts are trump you can gain tricks by trumping Diamonds, and the Declarer's hand BECOMES the short-side.

Now the 2nd benefit comes into play. After gaining initial control, if opponents did not lead a Diamond, it will be necessary to lose a Diamond in order to void the suit in Declarer's hand. Ruff two Diamonds in Declarer's hand, pull trumps then start playing Spades. It is likely you will have extra spade winners and can discard the 2♣ on those winners. This hand can make 6 Hearts but can only make 5 Spades. If Spades are trump you cannot discard the 2♣ to gain a trick, and you cannot ruff Diamonds for extra tricks.

This hand is definitely designed to show these principles but the technique is solid. In this particular case, discarding the Club is the key to an extra trick. Understanding both benefits is necessary to improve your game.

The same logic applies when there is a 6-2 fit and a 4-4 fit. The shorter the short-side, the more difficult it is to utilize. Therefore, a 4-4 is better than a 5-3 and a 5-3 is better than a 6-2. Chapter 5 discusses using Stayman when you are 6-4 in the Majors to check for a 4-4 fit first (rather than using a Texas Transfer initially). This "short-side logic" is why.

Note: This Chapter on trump selection is included to provide background logic for many bidding techniques used in the rest of the book.

Lesson 1

**Changes to Stayman when
using 4-way Transfers**

Smolen

Trash Stayman

Chapter 1 – Changes to Stayman

INTRODUCTION

Stayman is one of the first fundamental conventions most players learn. You probably feel very comfortable with your knowledge of the Stayman convention. The only reason Stayman is included in this book is because there are other conventions The Gold Card uses that affect the responses to Stayman. Specifically, 4-way Transfers (meaning there is a specific bid to Transfer to each suit) have a direct impact on Stayman which changes traditional Stayman bidding.

West	North	East	South
	1NT	P	2NT
P	3♦	P	P

With 4-way Transfers, a response of 2NT is a Transfer to Diamonds.

It is amusing that almost every player seems to have an opinion on what he thinks is the “worst bid in Bridge.” Personally, I think the worst bid in Bridge is Standard American’s bid to transfer to Diamonds. Without delving into the rationale of why that bid is bad, 4-way Transfers are a fundamental part of this book. Having said that, in the future 1NT[Opener] – 2NT[Responder] will be a Transfer to Diamonds. This bid formerly meant that the Responder had 8-9 HCP and lacked a 4+ card Major. Now a 2NT response means you have 6+ Diamonds and are forcing your partner to bid 3♦ (or accept by other means shown in later chapters).

USING STAYMAN TO SHOW AN INVITATIONAL HAND WITHOUT A 4-CARD MAJOR

Since 2NT is no longer an invitational response, there is another sequence that will be used to show an invitational hand. Stayman has always IMPLIED an invitational hand with at least one 4-card Major (Chapter 3 will go into more detail). When using 4-way transfers, a Responder bid of 2NT after Stayman now means you have an invitational hand, does not promise a 4-card Major, and is Alertable.

See the bidding examples below:

In the example shown to the right, the primary focus is to establish that 2NT may or may not promise a 4-card Major. The 2NT bid is Alertable. In the next chapter we will cover additional responses in this sequence other than 2NT. The 2♣ bid promises 8-9 HCP and the 2NT bid confirms that range (3NT would have raised the shown HCP to 10+).

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

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

Again, in this example, the 2NT is Alertable. The 2NT bid does not promise a 4-card Heart holding. Remember, in the past, Stayman PROMISED at least one 4-card Major.

West	North	East	South
	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♥	P	2♠

Since 2NT does not promise a 4-card Major, this is the ONLY way (using the Gold Card System) to show an invitational hand with a 4-card Spade holding after Opener bids Hearts. This is one bid I wish wasn't necessary. This bid violates the principle that the 1NT Opener be declarer in any final contract. Showing this example was necessary before the Alert required for the next sequence is discussed.

The 2NT response for this sequence shows an invitational hand and DENIES a 4-card Major (you would support Hearts if you had four Hearts and you would have

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

bid Spades, like the example above, if you had four Spades). The 2NT bid is, again, Alertable. If opponents ask for an explanation of the Alert, you should explain that your partner is showing an invitational hand and does not have a 4-card Major.

What about a 3NT response? A Stayman response ALWAYS promises a 4-card Major when the 2nd bid is 3NT. Why? Because 1NT[Opener] – 3NT[Responder] still means what it has always meant: you have 10+ HCP and do not have a 4-card

Major. Therefore, a 3NT response after Stayman promises a 4-card Major.

INITIAL RESPONSE TO 1NT EXAMPLES

To make sure we are on the same page, for each of these examples, your partner opens 1NT, the opponent passes. In each example what is your initial response?

♠ K76
♥ 32
♦ QJ4
♣ Q10543

1st response is 2♣.
Even without a 4-card
Major you need to bid
2♣ to show 8 HCP.

♠ K52
♥ J62
♦ QJ962
♣ 62

1st response is Pass.
You still need 8 HCP
to bid Stayman.

♠ A1054
♥ J76
♦ KJ92
♣ A8

1st response is 2♣.
You have 13 HCP and
four Spades.

♠ KQ2
♥ 1095
♦ QJ8
♣ A972

1st response is 3NT.
No need for Stayman.
With 12 HCP, 3NT
describes your hand.

♠ Q1064
♥ K105
♦ K42
♣ 542

1st response is 2♣.
You have 8 HCP and
four Spades.

♠ 86
♥ A632
♦ AK104
♣ 432

1st response is 2♣.
You have 11 HCP and
four Hearts.

♠ KJ64
♥ K1075
♦ K965
♣ 10

1st response is 2♣.
Even with 10+ HCP
you want to know if
your partner has a
4-card Major.

♠ J93
♥ A962
♦ K7
♣ 10952

1st response is 2♣.
You have 8 HCP
and four Hearts.

♠ Q543
♥ K753
♦ 102
♣ A86

1st response is 2♣.
You have 9 HCP and
a 4-card holding in
both Majors.

SECOND RESPONSE FOLLOWING 1NT [Opener] – 2♣ [Responder] EXAMPLES

Summarizing, what is your response (for those same non-passed hands) after the Opener gives a Stayman response of 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ (as shown in the bidding matrix next to each answer area)?

♠ K76
♥ 32
♦ QJ4
♣ Q10543

<table><tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>1N</td><td>P</td><td>2♣</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>2♦</td><td>P</td><td>?</td></tr></table>	W	N	E	S		1N	P	2♣	P	2♦	P	?	2NT: You are showing your 8-9 HCP. Your partner Alerts, and if asked, “May or May Not have a 4-card Major”.
W	N	E	S										
	1N	P	2♣										
P	2♦	P	?										
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W	N	E	S										
	1N	P	2♣										
P	2♥	P	?										
<table><tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>1N</td><td>P</td><td>2♣</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>2♠</td><td>P</td><td>?</td></tr></table>	W	N	E	S		1N	P	2♣	P	2♠	P	?	2NT: You are showing your 8-9 HCP. Your partner Alerts, and if asked, “May or May Not have a 4-card Major”.
W	N	E	S										
	1N	P	2♣										
P	2♠	P	?										

♠ A1054
♥ J76
♦ KJ92
♣ A8

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♦	P	?

3NT: You are showing your 10+ HCP. Your 3NT bid does promise a 4-card Major.

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♥	P	?

3NT: You are showing your 10+ HCP and a 4-card Spade suit. Partner will correct to Spades if he also has a 4-card Spade suit.

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	?

4♠: You are showing your 10+ HCP and, obviously, 4-card Spade support.

♠ Q1064
 ♥ K105
 ♦ K42
 ♣ 542

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W	N	E	S													
	1N	P	2♣													
P	2♦	P	?													
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W	N	E	S													
	1N	P	2♣													
P	2♥	P	?													
<table><tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>1N</td><td>P</td><td>2♣</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>2♠</td><td>P</td><td>?</td></tr></table>				W	N	E	S		1N	P	2♣	P	2♠	P	?	3♠: You are showing your 8-9 HCP and 4-card Spade support.
W	N	E	S													
	1N	P	2♣													
P	2♠	P	?													

♠ 86
 ♥ A632
 ♦ AK104
 ♣ 432

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♦	P	?

3NT: You are showing your 10+ HCP and at least one 4-card Major.

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♥	P	?

4♥: You are showing your 10+ HCP and 4-card Heart support.

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	?

3NT: You are showing your 10+ HCP and a 4-card Heart suit.

♠ KJ64
 ♥ K1075
 ♦ K965
 ♣ 10

	<p>3NT: You are showing your 10+ HCP. 3NT does promise at least one 4-card Major.</p>			
	<p>4♥: You are showing your 10+ HCP and 4-card Heart support.</p>			
	<p>4♠: You are showing your 10+ HCP and 4-card Spade support.</p>			

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♦	P	?

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♥	P	?

W	N	E	S
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	?

♠ J93
 ♥ A962
 ♦ K7
 ♣ 10952

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W	N	E	S										
	1N	P	2♣										
P	2♦	P	?										
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W	N	E	S										
	1N	P	2♣										
P	2♥	P	?										
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	1N	P	2♣										
P	2♠	P	?										

♠ Q543
 ♥ K753
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W	N	E	S										
	1N	P	2♣										
P	2♥	P	?										
<table><tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>1N</td><td>P</td><td>2♣</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>2♠</td><td>P</td><td>?</td></tr></table>	W	N	E	S		1N	P	2♣	P	2♠	P	?	<p>3♠: You are showing your 8-9 HCP and 4-card Spade support.</p>
W	N	E	S										
	1N	P	2♣										
P	2♠	P	?										

It was necessary to explain and review the changes in Stayman bidding in order to move forward in our understanding and utilization of 4-way Transfers. Hopefully, you found this to be very straight-forward.

Chapter 2 - Smolen

SMOLEN

A specific bidding problem occurs when your partner opens 1NT and you are 5-4 in the Majors. Should you Transfer or use Stayman? As it is with many bidding situations, much depends on how many HCP/values you have in your hand. With at least an invitational hand, you should use Stayman/Smolen. Officially, Smolen is only oriented toward game forcing hands. However, Smolen can also operate at the invitational level (it usually isn't called Smolen at the invitational level). As your experience carries you beyond the intermediate level, you may replace some of the invitational level Smolen with an expanded Trash Stayman (next chapter). For now, you should find Smolen very useful.

If you are below invitational (0-7 HCP), you should Transfer to the 5-card Major and Pass.

The first lesson is focused on Stayman as the initial response to 1NT. Having said that, you may be surprised to find out that the initial response to 1NT, when holding 5-4 or 4-5 in the Majors is... Stayman (provided you have at least 8 HCP). Smolen is only initiated when the 1NT opener denies a 4-card Major (2♦). Smolen provides an excellent way of accomplishing the objective of 1NT opener declaring the hand. Basically, Responder will name the 4-card Major at either an invitational or game forcing level to reveal the 5-card holding in the other Major. Smolen responses are Alertable.

When learning a new convention, it is often easy to forget. Smolen is easy. For what reason would my partner be bidding a Major when I just finished telling him I don't have a 4-card Major? OH, its Smolen.

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

When Opener denies a 4-card Major, Responder can bid Smolen and show a 5-4 or 4-5 shape in the Majors AND HCP range in a single bid.

SMOLEN BIDDING SEQUENCES

The Gold Card System utilizes both an invitational level and a game forcing set of Smolen responses. There are different approaches to how to utilize the 2-level bidding space (other than Smolen). The advantage of using an invitational version of Smolen is that it is easy to remember, easy to learn and it is a consistent approach when used with this system.

There are only four Smolen bid choices following a 1NT/Stayman/2♦ opening sequence:

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

In the example shown here, Responder is showing a hand that has four Hearts (the suit he bid) and five Spades. Since he bid at the 2-level, he is showing an invitational hand (8-9 HCP).

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

This time it is the other Major (Hearts). Remember, Responder is bidding the shorter Major. Responder is showing four Spades and five Hearts. Since the bid is at the 2-level, Responder is showing 8-9 HCP.

West	North	East	South
	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♦	P	3♥

In this example, again the Responder is showing four Hearts and five Spades. However, this time, he bid at the 3-level showing a game forcing hand (10+ HCP).

West	North	East	South
	1NT	P	2♣
P	2♦	P	3♠

Lastly, Responder is showing five Hearts and four Spades with 10+ HCP.

Again, with Smolen, Responder bids his 4-card suit so when circumstances arrive where Opener has 3-card support, the strong hand can declare the contract and the weak hand becomes the dummy.

SMOLEN RESPONSE EXAMPLES

Here are some examples of hands that utilize Smolen. Assume the bidding has gone as follows:

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

♠ K763
♥ A8752
♦ Q87
♣ 9

The Smolen bid would be 2♠, showing an hand with five Hearts, four Spades and 8-9 HCP (invitational).

♠ 109763
♥ AQ65
♦ 72
♣ K4

The Smolen bid would be 2♥, showing a hand with five Spades, four Hearts and 8-9 HCP (invitational).

♠ AQ1096
♥ AQ82
♦ 9752
♣

The Smolen bid would be 3♥, showing a game forcing hand with five Spades, four Hearts and 10+ HCP.

♠ A943
♥ AQ853
♦
♣ 6532

The Smolen bid would be 3♠, showing a game forcing hand with five Hearts, four Spades and 10+ HCP.

SMOLEN OVER 2NT

First, you should know that invitational bids do not exist over 2NT. If you bid anything (other than a Transfer then Pass) you are forcing to game.

Given that your partner's 2NT bid promises 20-21 HCP, you only need 4 HCP to employ Stayman. The same 4 HCP is the necessary minimum to utilize Smolen and again, it is following Opener's subsequent of a 4-card Major, that you have the opportunity to employ Smolen.

West	North	East	South
	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♦	P	3♥

Both of these examples show 4+ HCP. The first bidding example indicates a 5-card Spade suit and a 4-Card Heart suit.

West	North	East	South
	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♦	P	3♠

The second bidding example shows a 5-card Heart suit and a 4-card Spade suit.

SMOLEN DOES NOT LIMIT YOUR HAND

You could have enough HCP to be interested in slam but want to find out if a fit exists before pursuing the slam. You may need to find a fit in order to consider slam. Look at the example on the right. You do not have enough HCP to pursue 6NT (following a 2NT opening bid); BUT if you can find a fit, you may very well have a makeable slam. You should initially use Stayman and when partner denies a 4-card Major (by bidding 3♦), you initiate Smolen (by bidding 3♠) to see if partner has a

♠ K763
♥ A8752
♦ K87
♣ 9

West	North	East	South
	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♦	P	3♠
	?		

3-card Heart suit. If he does, THEN you might explore slam by initiating 1430 Ace Asking.

PUPPET STAYMAN OVER 2NT

For those of you that are familiar with Puppet Stayman, the Gold Card System does not use Puppet Stayman. The reason the Gold Card System doesn't use Puppet Stayman is it directly conflicts with Smolen and Forcing Raises (covered in Chapter 6). Puppet Stayman will be listed in the Appendix for those of you who already use and like Puppet and are willing to lose the parts of the Gold Card System that conflict with Puppet.

Chapter 3 – Trash Stayman

TRASH STAYMAN

Trash Stayman is a unique bid but one that produces amazing results when used properly.

West	North	East	South
	1NT	P	2♣
P	Any	P	Pass

The mechanics of Trash Stayman are simple. When partner opens 1NT, you initiate Stayman then Responder passes any Opener bid. Given that Opener only has three possible bids after Stayman (2♠, 2♥ or 2♦), Responder can manipulate Opener

into a suit contract when NT would be a disaster. The first time you do this to your partner he will be alarmed at your Pass.

CRITERIA FOR TRASH STAYMAN – HCP AND SHAPE

Just because have the shape that would allow you to Pass your partner's 1NT opening does not mean you should employ Trash Stayman. Trash Stayman should only be used when you KNOW your partner is in trouble in a 1NT contract. Let's ASSUME your partner has 16 HCP (15-17 average). If you have FEWER than 4 HCP your partnership does not have the majority of the HCP in the combined hand. In NT contracts, HCP are the muscle. If you have 2 HCP, your partnership range is 17-19, giving your opponents a range of 21-23 HCP. Perhaps a good guideline is 3 HCP or less to use Trash Stayman.

Shape is just as important as HCP. When your partner responds to Stayman he is giving a positive response (I have Hearts [2♥] or I have Spades [2♠]) or a negative response (I don't have a 4-card Major [2♦]). The negative response says nothing about Diamonds but logically we can assume worst case is 3-3-2-5 (three Spades, three Hearts, two Diamonds and five Clubs) which is a perfectly fine shape to open 1NT. The perfect shape for Trash Stayman is 4-4-5-0 which would assure at

least a 7-card fit even in the worst-case scenario. Aside from perfect shape, it is imperative you have at least four Diamonds. It would be better to see two 3-card Majors and five Diamonds than make ANY concession to Diamond length. Again, YOU MUST HAVE AT LEAST FOUR DIAMONDS (five would be better).

In a local tournament, I was playing opposite some friends who use an intermediate NT range (13-15). My LHO (left-hand Opponent) opened 1NT. Then Pass, Pass, Double, all Pass. He took one trick. Unfortunately, his partner (my RHO) missed an opportunity to use Trash Stayman. It was a team event and that board gave us a significant advantage. The point I am making is Trash Stayman can make a huge difference and save Opener from a lot of heartache.

Each of these hands is a great example of a hand where you should use Trash Stayman.

♠ J986
♥ 643
♦ Q10942
♣ 2

Again, it is better to have the 5th Diamond than the 4th Heart. This hand is a great Trash Stayman hand.

♠ 10876
♥ 10652
♦ J876
♣ 7

You have great shape. Just hope partner has a Major or at least more than a 2-card Diamond suit.

♠ 10962
♥ K92
♦ 10963
♣ 42

While not perfect, this hand still demands the use of Trash Stayman.

In chapter 12 an additional “Trash” bid will be discussed: a Trash Transfer to the Minors.