

Puppet Stayman

A modified version of Stayman

By Mick Riccio

dynamick747@gmail.com



Stayman is a [convention](#) used by a partnership to find a 4-4 trump fit in a [major](#) suit after making a 1NT or 2NT opening bid or a 1NT overcall.

We seek major suit trump contracts at times, as opposed to no trump contracts, because the possibility of ruffing often produces overtricks.

Puppet Stayman is a convention used by a partnership seeking a 5-3 or 4-4 fit in a major suit after making a 1NT or 2NT opening. Following a 1NT opening, responder with a game forcing hand jump bids 3♣ to force game and to ask opener for a 5- or 4-card major. With a 5-card major, opener bids the major showing 5 cards. If opener has only 4 cards in the major, they bid 3♦ to show one or two 4-card majors. With no 5- or 4-card major, opener rebids 3NT.

PUPPET STAYMAN responses to a 1NT or 2NT opening or 2NT rebid after opening 2♣

Responses to a 1NT opening.

3♣ = Puppet Stayman asking opener for a 4- or 5-card major. Promising 10+ Hcp.

2♦ → hearts (Transfer)

2♥ → spades (Transfer)

3NT = no 3+ major, to play showing 10+ HCP

Responses to a 2NT (20-21) opening or 2NT rebid after a 2♣ opening (22-24):

3♣ = Puppet Stayman asking opener for a 4- or 5-card major.

3♦ = → hearts (Transfer)

3♥ = → spades (Transfer)

3NT = no 3+ major, to play

Responder bids 3♣ seeking information about opener's major suit holding. Opener's rebid:

3NT denying a 4- or 5-card major

3♥ showing a 5-card heart suit. Do the math. Find game or slam.

3♠ showing a 5-card spade suit. Do the math. Find game or slam.

3♦ holding one or two 4-card majors and denying a 5-card major.

Responder's rebid following a 3♦ rebid by opener holding a 4-card major and denying a 5-card major

- 3♥ showing a 4-card spade suit and denying a 4-card heart suit
- 3♠ showing a 4-card heart suit and denying a 4-card spade suit
- 3NT denying a 4-card major, to play
- 4♣ showing 4 spades and 4 hearts with slam interest
- 4♦ showing 4 spades and 4 hearts, no slam interest, opener chooses

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
2NT	3♣
3♦	3♥

If responder has just one 4-card major he bids the one he does *not* have. This sequence shows 4 spades and denies 4 hearts. Opener either bids game in spades or bids 3NT.

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
2NT	3♣
3♦	4♦

If responder has two 4-card majors, then he bids 4♦, telling opener to pick a major and typically denies interest in slam.

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
2NT	3♣
3♦	4♣

This sequence can also be used to tell opener to pick a major, and shows slam interest, whereas 4♦ shows interest only in game.

Examples

Partner opens 2NT, how do you bid these hands?

♠AQ65 ♥7643 ♦76 ♣832

Responder should bid 3♣. If opener rebids 3♦, we bid 4♦, which confirms both majors and denies interest in slam. Since opener has a 4-card major, they would normally choose that major. If opener shows a 5-card major, we'll raise to game in that major.

♠AQ65 ♥832 ♦76 ♣7643

This is perfect hand for Puppet, which will allow us to find a 4-4 (or 5-4) spade fit or a 5-3 fit in hearts. Bid 3♣.

♠AQ653 ♥Q74 ♦76 ♣764

We might have a 5-3 spade fit or a 5-3 heart fit. We have no way of looking for both of them. If we use Puppet we lose the 5-3 spade fit. If we transfer to spades we lose the 5-3 heart fit. As we cannot have it both ways, I prefer the spade transfer. Opener is more likely to have 3 spades than to have 5 hearts.

♠Q743 ♥AQ653 ♦76 ♣74

If you do not use Smolen, just transfer to Hearts and then bid 3♠.

♠QJ43 ♥AQJ7 ♦K3 ♣T96

2NT by Partner, 3♣ by you, 3♦ by Partner. If you bid 4♣ here you declare slam interest and opener will bid the 4-card major. Asking for controls will work in the off chance that opener has only one Ace. Unlikely, but it could happen.

♠ Q943 ♥ AJT7 ♦ K3 ♣ T96

I would bid 3♣ with this hand, and if opener rebids 3♦, I would bid 4♦, and we would settle for game. If opener rebid 3NT, I would pass.

♠ Q643 ♥ KQ42 ♦ KQT9 ♣ 7

First bid 3♣ to find out if opener has a 4- or 5-card major. If opener shows a 5-card major, use RKC to explore for slam. If opener shows a 4-card major, bid 4♣ to show both with slam interest. If opener bids 3NT, 4♣ is Gerber.

Responses to a 1NT opening continued in more detail:

3♣ = Puppet Stayman

2♦ = → hearts (Transfer)

2♥ = → spades (Transfer)

2♠ = → club or diamond bust

3NT = no 3+ major, to play

Responder bids 3♣ seeking information about opener's major suit holding. When responding to 1NT, Responder obviously needs a good 10+ hand which guarantees game if opener lacks a 4-card major.

Opener replies:

3NT denying a 4- or 5-card major

3♥ showing a 5-card heart suit

3♠ showing a 5-card spade suit

3♦ holding a 4-card major and denying a 5-card major; following this, responder bids:

3♥ showing a 4-card spade suit and denying a 4-card heart suit

3♠ showing a 4-card heart suit and denying a 4-card spade suit

3NT denying a 4-card major, to play

4♣ showing 4 spades and 4 hearts with slam interest

4♦ showing 4 spades and 4 hearts, you choose

Some people play Puppet Stayman **only** over 2NT or a 2NT rebid following 2♣. You should always play what is most comfortable for your partnership. ♣