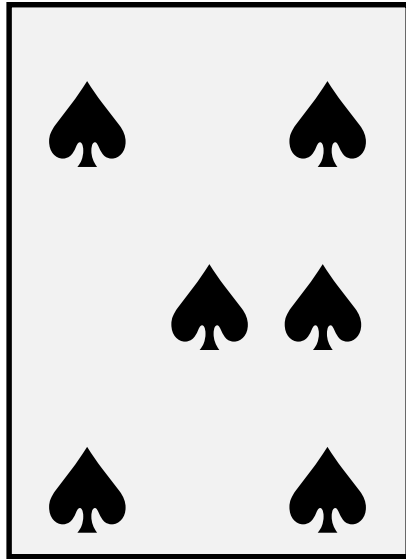


“Bridge is such a sensational game that I wouldn't mind being in jail if I had three cellmates who were decent players and who were willing to keep the game going 24 hours a day.”

- *Warren Buffett*



six

2♣ Stayman
Responses to Stayman
4NT Blackwood
Responses to Blackwood

Two conventions

Conventional wisdom

In this chapter you are going to learn your first two 'conventions'. A convention is an artificial bid and implies something other than what it normally means. The use of conventions in an auction is akin to using big words in a sentence. Big words, like Bridge conventions enable you to be more articulate about what you say. The good news is there are only three conventions (the third is in chapter eight) you will need to learn in this book. The road to good bidding is paved with good conventions.

2♣ Stayman

When partner opens 1NT you know she has 15-17 HCP, a balanced hand, and at most one doubleton. As responder and the person in charge, you will make decisions about what denomination to play in and how high to bid. In many cases, because you have so much information about opener's hand, your decision will be easy. Sometimes however, you will require more information about opener's hand before you decide how high or what in. For instance, you may have a four-card major and want to know if opener has the same four-card major (a golden fit). A 2♣ response to a 1NT opening bid is conventional, asking if opener has a four-card major.

The auction and hands:

♠ AQ74	♠ KJ63
♥ 65	♥ 97
♦ AQ92	♦ KJ85
♣ A73	♣ K83
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1NT	2♣*
2♠	4♠
* Stayman	

figure 6:1

The conversation

West	1NT - "I have 15-17 HCP with a balanced hand."
East	2♣ - "I have 9+ points and was wondering if you have a four-card major?"
West	2♠ - "I do not have four hearts but, I do have four spades."
East	4♠ - "We have a 'golden fit'. Let's play in spades and in game."

Responses to 2♣ Stayman

When partner responds 2♣ Stayman to your 1NT opening bid, you will have to be alert first to recognize the conventional meaning and then how to respond. You cannot pass. 2♣ Stayman says:



1. Nothing at all about clubs.
2. Shows 9+ points.
3. Asks if opener holds a four-card major.
4. Promises at least one four-card major.

The 1NT bidder has the option of three responses to Stayman:

- 2♦ Denies a four-card major.
- 2♥ Reveals a four-card heart suit.
- 2♠ Reveals a four-card spade suit and denies holding four hearts.

North

♠ J873
♥ Q763
♦ 32
♣ K76

South

♠ A2
♥ J54
♦ AQ6
♣ AQ832

*Auction

S	N
1NT	2♣
2♦	2NT
3NT	

Stayman 'Verboten'

Do not use Stayman with less than nine points. In the hand on the left, S opened the bidding 1NT, showing 15-17 HCP and a balanced hand. N has four cards in both majors but only 6 HCP. N bid 2♣ Stayman and S responded 2♦ (denying a four-card major). Now N is in trouble. She can't pass 2♦ as they do not have a diamond fit. N will have to bid 2NT (caution bid) which invites S to bid 3NT. With a maximum hand, S will accept the invitation and bid 3NT. 3NT is an ambitious contract with a total of only 23 HCP and will most likely fail. With less than nine points and no long suit to bid, it is generally best to pass 1NT and wish partner good luck. **Culprit:** North

*The auction should have gone 1NT – pass.

At the table

In each of the following hands you open 1NT and partner responds 2♣ Stayman. It is your second bid.

1)	2)	3)	4)	5)
♠ A532	♠ K94	♠ AQJ6	♠ K85	♠ KQ5
♥ K65	♥ AQ4	♥ J1094	♥ AJ104	♥ KQ7
♦ KQJ6	♦ 104	♦ K8	♦ AKQ4	♦ 987
♣ A3	♣ AK873	♣ KQ7	♣ 87	♣ AQ42

Hand 1 **Bid 2♠.** Denies four hearts, but shows four spades.

Hand 2 **Bid 2♦.** Denies a four-card major.

Hand 3 **Bid 2♥.** Shows a four-card heart suit.

Hand 4 **Bid 2♥.** Shows a four-card heart suit.

Hand 5 **Bid 2♦.** Denies a four-card major.



Remember! A 2♣ response to a 1NT opening bid is an artificial bid and says nothing about clubs. A 2♦ response to Stayman is also an artificial bid and says nothing about diamonds.

Sam Stayman

(1909-1993) was a New Yorker. The eponym of the 'Stayman' convention, Stayman was actually invented by George Rapee, a regular partner of Sam. Sam gave it a head of steam in an article he wrote and has been given credit for it ever since.

"With 4-3-3-3 shape, don't bother with Stayman. With no side suit shortage, the opportunity to trump is diminished!"

4NT Blackwood

Your second convention is called '**Blackwood**'. A jump to 4NT asks how many aces partner has. It would be great if you could ask out loud: "partner how many aces do you have"? But you cannot do that, it is an indictable offence. People will stare in your general direction and you will not be invited back.

'4NT Blackwood' is the legal way to ask for aces. If you have a hand with slam ambitions, and need only to know how many aces your partner has, bid 'Blackwood'. 4NT Blackwood is a forcing bid.



4NT (Blackwood)

Responses

5♣ = 0 or 4 aces

5♦ = 1 ace

5♥ = 2 aces

5♠ = 3 aces

If you find you hold all four aces, you can ask for kings by bidding 5NT.



5NT (Blackwood)

Responder

6♣ = 0 or 4 kings

6♦ = 1 king

6♥ = 2 kings

6♠ = 3 kings

Happiness

4NT Blackwood will elicit a response from partner at the five-level, so you must be careful if diamonds or clubs is the agreed suit. You must consider all possible responses partner can make when replying to 'Blackwood'. As an example, let us say that clubs is the agreed suit and you are interested in a slam in clubs. You bid 4NT 'Blackwood' asking for aces and your partner responds 5♦, showing one ace. The 5♦ response takes you past the game level of 5♣ (the agreed suit) which now commits you to 6♣. If you have only one ace in your hand to go with the one ace your partner has shown, that means you are at the six-level (needing 12 tricks) and missing two aces! You are one ace shy of any hope of happiness.

At the table

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ 3	♠ 9842
♥ AKJ10965	♥ Q872
♦ KQ6	♦ A4
♣ A3	♣ KQ9

figure 6:2

W has a real blockbuster of a hand and figures that a slam in hearts stands a fair chance provided the partnership is not missing two aces. **W** bid 4NT asking for aces. The 5♣ response from **E** reveals one ace. With three aces all up (missing only one ace), **W** went onto 6♥.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♥	3♥
4NT*	5♦+
6♥	pass

* Blackwood
+ One ace

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ Q9862	♠ AK42
♥ A3	♥ 4
♦ AQ54	♦ 2
♣ 93	♣ AKQ8764

figure 6:3

In this auction **E** gets excited when **W** opens the bidding 1♠. **E** has a rock-crusher of a hand and needs only to know how many aces **W** holds. If **W** has no aces, **E** will stop in 5♠. If **W** has one ace, **E** will stop in 6♠. If **W** has both the missing aces, (accounting for all four aces) **E** bids 7♠.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	4NT*
5♥+	7♠
pass	

* Blackwood
+ Two aces

Easley R. Blackwood (1903 - 1992) was an Indianapolis player. The eponym of the 'Blackwood' convention, Easley created 'Blackwood' to ask for aces and kings. Along with Stayman, 'Blackwood' is the most recognized and used convention in the world of Bridge.

Card play technique

Length tricks

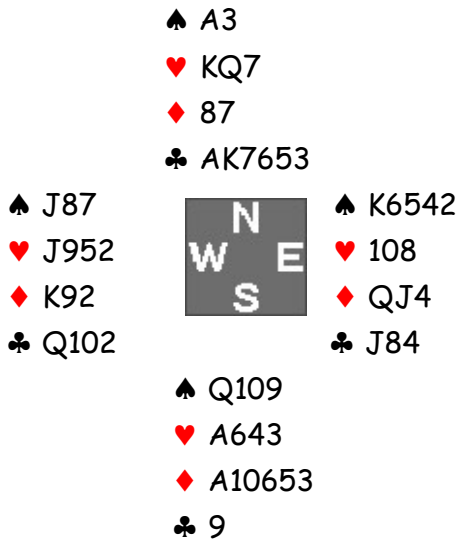


figure 6:4

In figure 6:4 S is in a contract of 3NT. The N hand has length in the club suit. When playing in a no-trump contract it is good to establish tricks from long suits. Note what would happen if declarer played three rounds of clubs. (The ♣A, followed by the ♣K and then the ♣3). Both opponents would have to follow suit with W winning the ♣Q on the third round. Now the remaining three clubs in the N hand, the ♣7, ♣6 and ♣5 are established tricks. When establishing 'length tricks' you have to concede a trick or two to the opponents before the suit comes good. Give and ye shall receive.

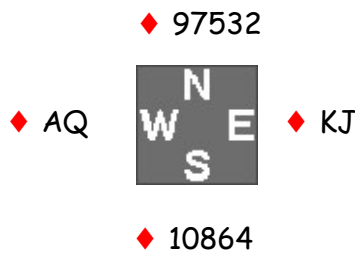


figure 6:5

In figure 6:5 N and S have length in the diamond suit, but the suit is very weak. As ugly as it is, with a bit of patience, you can still establish length tricks. In this case, you have to lead the diamond suit twice, allowing the opponents to win the first two tricks. However, the last laugh is yours as you have established three length tricks in diamonds. Do not fret about giving up the lead to the opponents if it means you gain tricks in the end. Length is strength.

Department of defence

Middle - Up - Down (MUD)

As we learn more about which card to lead from certain combinations, be cognitive of the fact that you are giving information to partner about your holding in the suit. The idea that you can convey information about your holding in a suit from the card you choose to lead is one of the fascinations of Bridge.

If you hold three or more rags (small cards) in a suit, such as ♣ 962, you have options as to which club to lead. If you lead the ♣2 you will be suggesting to partner that you have an honor card in the suit (small, promising an honor). If you lead the ♣9, followed by the ♣6 or ♣2 you will have suggested a doubleton club (hi - lo from a doubleton). From the ♣ 962, lead **Middle-Up-Down (MUD)**. Lead the ♣6 (Middle) then the ♣9 (Up) and finally the ♣2 (Down). After three rounds of clubs, partner will get the picture.

From each of the following club combinations, lead the card underlined.

♣ 98632 ♣ 865 ♣ 9753 ♣ 876542 ♣ 10872

In the first four combinations, by the time the third round of clubs has been played, partner will have a good idea of the club situation in all four hands. Note in the last example how the ♣2 is the suggested lead. This is because **MUD** only applies when holding rags in a suit. The ♣10 is an honor card, so lead the ♣2 (small, promising an honor)

If you do not put time and attention into learning about leads and how to defend, you will not be able to defend yourself. Your only cry will be...

“Defend me God, from myself”

When leading **MUD**, the suit combination does not have an honor.



Summary

- **Conventions** are an important component of any bidding system. A convention is an artificial bid which implies something other than its natural meaning.
- When partner opens 1NT, a response of 2♣ has a conventional meaning that says nothing about clubs. A 2♣ response to a 1NT opening bid is **Stayman** asking if opener has a four-card major.
- In response to Stayman opener **must respond** with 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠.
- Another convention is **Blackwood**. You can ask partner how many aces she holds by jumping to 4NT. You can continue to ask for kings (if all aces are accounted for) by bidding 5NT.
- **Length tricks** come from long suits. You develop long suits by leading them. You might have to lose a trick or two to establish the suit, but eventually they come good.

Nearly Normal Norman
says: By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. When you are declarer, formulate some type of plan before you embark on playing the cards. Any plan, so long as you have a plan.



Nearly Normal Norman

Mental challenge

“Many games provide fun, but Bridge grips you. It exercises your mind. Your mind can rust, you know, but Bridge prevents the rust from forming.”

- Omar Sharif

Exercises - chapter six

A. Your partner opened 1NT. Your bid.

1)	2)	3)	4)
♠ A8	♠ 10983	♠ J864	♠ J1074
♥ J865	♥ K95	♥ K6	♥ Q95
♦ A10874	♦ A1065	♦ QJ953	♦ A103
♣ Q2	♣ 73	♣ A2	♣ A92

B. You open 1NT and partner responded 2♣ Stayman. Your bid.

1)	2)	3)	4)
♠ AKQ4	♠ KJ5	♠ Q984	♠ A94
♥ 10943	♥ AQ4	♥ AJ9	♥ A76
♦ A76	♦ K54	♦ A74	♦ 32
♣ K2	♣ A1074	♣ A83	♣ AK985

C. You open 1♠ and partner responded 4NT Blackwood. Your bid.

1)	2)	3)	4)
♠ AJ1064	♠ K8753	♠ AJ932	♠ KQ983
♥ A3	♥ Q73	♥ KJ85	♥ KQ73
♦ 1093	♦ QJ3	♦ 7	♦ 3
♣ A75	♣ A4	♣ A97	♣ QJ3

