

## Lesson 2 – Using “StayJac” Responding to 1NT Opening using Stayman & Jacoby

Updated 2021

Important: These rules apply when your partner **opened** the bidding with 1NT. This lesson explains how the **responder** should bid.

Responder: Count your points. Put your hand into one of these three categories:

<b>Points</b>	<b>Game level?</b>
0-7	Partscore only, game level is very unlikely
8-9	Invitational hand, game level is possible if partner has 16-17 HCP
10+	Game level in a major or NT is reachable with 25-26 points; Responder is responsible for communicating the point count; game level in a minor requires 29+ points

The responder to a 1NT opening bid is designated the “*Captain*.” The responder is steering this ship, so to speak. The responder is the one with the most responsibility to ensure the partnership gets to the best level that is attainable.

**Important note:** When you are using Stayman and Jacoby, all the 2-level suit bids are codes. None of those bids mean anything about the suit bid. Here’s what I tell my students, “Think of the 1NT opening bid as a fire engine with lights flashing and sirens on. Both of you need to be on high alert to what comes next!”



This lesson may seem somewhat complicated, but as you play and practice, you will find that it becomes much easier. The bids may have to be memorized to start, but you will find they actually make a lot of sense. You are conveying information to each other with the goal of finding the best contract. By using these two techniques, you are trying to ensure that the stronger hand (Opener with 15-17 HCP) becomes the Declarer and the weaker hand becomes the Dummy hand (exposed to the opponents). Also, by using Stayman, you can find an 8-card fit in trump when you both have 4 of a major.

I have found this to be one of the most difficult system of bids to introduce to beginners. That’s why I recommend the “Easy Way” first. However, I feel Stayman and Jacoby are so important and should be mastered as soon as possible.

### **Category 1 (0-7 HCP) – keep the bidding low:**

Within this point range, you will almost always **pass**. There is one exception: when you have a 5-card major. Then, the opposite applies — you **should not** pass, even with 0 points. As you gain more experience, you will be pleased to know, this rule will not change.

## **Jacoby Transfer (used whenever Responder has 5 or more of a major):**

To use this transfer technique, you must have 5 cards (or more) in a major suit and any number of points, even 0. Yes, **even with 0 points** you will demand that your partner bid your suit! Usually, it is a better option to insist on a trump suit than to leave your partner in No Trump when you have a 5-card major. Jacoby Transfer is a **demand bid**. Responder is telling the Opener to bid a major and Opener must do as told!

**With 5+ hearts**, Responder bids **2♦**. Opener immediately says, "Hearts" so everyone knows that this transfer refers to hearts. As soon as the next player bids or passes, Opener must bid **2♥** (one rank up from Diamonds).

**With 5+ spades**, Responder bids **2♥**. Opener immediately says, "Spades" and bids **2♠** (one rank up from Hearts) after opponent's turn.

**After transferring, Responder rebids as follows:** (yes, you should memorize this) Pass with 0-7 points, bid 2NT with 8-9 points, or bid 3NT with 10+ pts.

With the minimum responding hand (0-7 pts), you cannot give your partner any options. You are better off in a trump suit, even if partner has a doubleton in that major. You do not have enough points together for game, so keep the bidding low. With a medium hand (8-9 pts) or a maximum hand (10+ pts), you can give your partner the option of staying in NT or choosing the major suit. You've already told your partner you have 5 in a major; now tell the Opener point count.

How does the opener decide? If the opener has only 2 cards in Responder's suit, a NT contract can be a better choice, so they can pass. If the opener has 3-4 cards in that major suit, they have the choice to bid the suit, since you have shown 5 cards in that suit and they will know there is an 8-card fit.

Also, by bidding 2NT, you are showing 8-9 pts, so opener can bring it to game level if they have 17 points (maybe even 16, though that is a gamble if Responder has just 8 points).

By bidding 3NT, Responder is showing 10+ points and opener can pass or bid **4♥** or **4♠** with 3 or 4 cards in your major suit.

\*Here is one exception when Responder bids **2♦** or **2♥** transferring to a 5-card major: If Opener has the maximum number of points (17) and the maximum number of cards (4) in the same major suit transfer by the Responder, they should **super-accept** the transfer and bid **3♠** or **3♥** immediately to show this maximum hand and the 9-card fit in trump. Then Responder can decide whether to bid to game level (**4♠** or **4♥**) or pass. With 9 trump cards together, you have extra strength, but with few points, it could still be difficult to take 10 tricks. Opener is inviting you to consider game level, but does not know whether you have 0 points or 7 points or more. If Opener does not super-accept immediately, Responder will pass with fewer than 8 points. That could make a big difference. If Responder has a

singleton or a void and has points in the higher part of that range (5-7 pts), game level could be there. Judgment is needed.

Jacoby Transfer is used whenever the responder has a 5-card major. The 2<sup>nd</sup> call by responder (Pass, 2NT or 3NT) will show point count.

### **Category 2 (8-9 HCP) – invite to game:**

If your partner opens with 1NT and you have 8 points or more, you should almost always bid! Get ready! If you have a 5-card major, you will use Jacoby Transfer. The bidding for Jacoby transfer is detailed on Page 2.

With a balanced hand and no 4- or 5-card major, bid 2NT.

With a 4-card major, but no 5-card major, you will use Stayman.

### **Stayman Convention:**

***You must have 8+ HCP to use Stayman. Do not use Stayman with 0-7 pts.***

With 8 points or more and a 4-card major, you should explore the possibility that your partner might also have a 4-card major (8 cards together).

Bid **2♣** (Stayman). This is an artificial bid (code) and does not mean Clubs.

(You are saying: "Partner, I have a 4-card major. I want to know if you have a 4-card major. If we have 8 cards in the same major suit, we should be in a trump contract, rather than No Trump.")

When you use Stayman, Opener knows that you have a 4-card major, but does not know in which suit. In fact, you may have 4 cards in both majors.

Opener will respond as follows:

**2♦** means "I do not have a 4-card major." This bid does not mean diamonds.

**2♠** means "I have 4 cards in spades and I do not have 4 cards in hearts."

**2♥** means "I have 4 cards in hearts, but I may also have 4 cards in spades."

The next bidding sequences require analytical thinking.

Responder knows whether their 4-card majors are a match (8 cards together). If so, you have found your trump fit. With a fit, your next bid will be a pass or a raise in that suit to the 3 or 4 level depending on how many points you have.

If Opener does not have a 4-card major (i.e., responds **2♦**) or Opener's major is different from Responder's (therefore, you do not have an 8-card fit in a trump suit), then Responder's next bid is **2NT**. Opener then has the option of bidding 3NT with 17 pts. If Opener has 4 of both majors, and bids **2♥**, which does not deny having 4 spades, and Responder changes the bid to 2NT (showing 8-9 pts), Opener then knows that Responder does not have 4 hearts but must have 4 spades or would not have used Stayman. Opener has the option of bidding **3♠** or **4♠**. Opener knows the Responder's point count and must figure it out based on their total points.

With fewer than 8 points, only Jacoby Transfers can be used. With 8 or more points, **Stayman** and **Jacoby Transfers** can be used.

With 8-9 points, transfer your partner (Opener) into your 5-card major, next bid 2NT. You are now giving your partner your point range of 8-9 and these options.

With only 2 cards in your major and 15-16 pts, Opener will pass.

With only 2 cards in your major and 17 pts, Opener will raise it to 3NT.

With 3-4 cards in your major and 15-16 pts, Opener will raise it to 3 or 4 of the major. Judgment is required to decide which level.

With 3-4 cards in your major and 17 pts, Opener will raise it to 4 of the major.

Don't worry if you find this complicated at first. It will all make sense eventually.

Reminder: Game in 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠ requires **25+ points**.

### **Summary:**

#### **Minimum Responding Hand (0-7 pts) – Jacoby transfer or pass.**

Opener	Responder's Hand	Responder's Bid	Opener's Rebid
<b>1NT</b>	0-7 pts, no 5-card major	Pass	
	5-card major in Hearts	<b>2♦</b> (Jacoby)	Transfer to <b>2♥</b>
	5-card major in Spades	<b>2♥</b> (Jacoby)	Transfer to <b>2♠</b>

Responder will then pass. Final contract is 1NT, 2♥ or 2♠.

#### **Medium Responding Hand (8-9 pts) – Jacoby transfer or Stayman.**

Opener	Responder's Medium Hand	Responder's Bid	Opener's Rebid
<b>1NT</b>	No 4- or 5-card major	<b>2NT</b>	15-16 pts – Pass 17 pts – Bid 3NT
	5-card major in Hearts	<b>2♦</b> (Jacoby)	Transfer to <b>2♥</b>
	5-card major in Spades	<b>2♥</b> (Jacoby)	Transfer to <b>2♠</b>
	4-card major	<b>2♣</b> (Stayman)	With no 4-card major, bid <b>2♦</b> With 4 spades, bid <b>2♠</b> (denying 4 hearts) With 4 hearts, bid <b>2♥</b> (could also have 4 spades)

Responder will continue the bidding to show 8-9 pts, as follows:

If using Jacoby transfer, bid 2NT next.

If using Stayman, bid 3♥ or 3♠ to show a fit in the major suit or 2NT to show no fit.

Opener should take the bidding to game with 17 pts.

(With 15 pts, game is not advised. With 16 pts, game is not assured. Therefore, unless Opener has 17 pts, Opener should usually pass.)

**Category 3 (10+ HCP) – take it to game:**

Opener	Responder's Hand	Responder's Bid	Opener's Rebid
<b>1NT</b>	No 4- or 5-card major	<b>3NT</b>	Pass
	5-card major in Hearts	<b>2♦</b> (Jacoby)	Transfer to <b>2♥</b>
	5-card major in Spades	<b>2♥</b> (Jacoby)	Transfer to <b>2♠</b>
	4-card major	<b>2♣</b> (Stayman)	With no 4-card major, bid <b>2♦</b> With 4 spades, bid <b>2♠</b> (denying 4 hearts) With 4 hearts, bid <b>2♥</b> (could also have 4 spades)

Responder will continue the bidding to show 10+ pts, as follows:

If using Jacoby transfer, bid 3NT next.

If using Stayman, bid 4♥ or 4♠ to show a fit in the major suit or 3NT to show no fit.

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**If you have 8+ HCP, a long suit in a minor (6+ cards), and no 4-card major, consider a bid of 3♦ or 3♣ in response to 1NT. You cannot bid at the 2 level because all 2 level response bids are codes. Opener then has the option to change it to 3NT with stoppers in all other suits. If Opener has only 2 cards in the minor, sometimes that can be difficult. Opener will then have to make a judgment call.**

**Eventually, you may wish to learn the 2♠ first response to 1NT. This is considered a transfer to clubs and Opener would immediately say, "Clubs." However, more advanced players use other methods to transfer to a minor suit and this can become much more complicated and very confusing to beginners, so I have omitted this bid for now. I find it easier for beginners to just jump to the 3 level in the minor and leave it up to the Opener to decide whether to pass or bid 3NT.**