Responder to 1NT or 2NT openings can have a variety of major suit configurations, and usually it’s best to look for an 8-card major suit fit.

There are many conventional responses to NoTrump openings. This Blurb covers Stayman, Garbage Stayman, Puppet Stayman, Forcing Stayman, Smolen, mini-Smolen, 5 – 5 majors, Jacoby, Texas and South African Texas Transfers. Collectively, they cover all cases from one 4-card major through 6+ major suits held by responder. They are covered in Part 1.

Definitions and example auctions of all these conventions appear at the end of this Pamphlet, in Part 3. The opening 1NT range is assumed to be 15 to 17 HCP and the opening 2NT range is 20 or 21 HCP. It is possible to use most of these conventions when playing a Weak NoTrump opening, but responders HCP will have to be correspondingly higher.

Note that opening NoTrump with a singleton will negate the effectiveness of many of these conventions if the singleton is in a major suit. Not Recommended!

In this paper, * mean alertable, e.g., 2 ♥ *

Conventional responses to be used after a NoTrump rebid by opener are covered in Part 2. They include New Minor Force, Support Doubles and Redoubles and Checkback Stayman.

PART ONE – Responses to NoTrump Openings

A responder to a NoTrump opener may face any of these cases requiring major suit responses or searches for an 8-card major fit:

Case 1. a 6+ major
Case 2. two 5- card majors
Case 3. one or two 4-card majors
Case 4. one 5-card major
Case 5. one 5-card and one 4-card major

Case 1. Holding a 6+ card major in response to any No Trump opening, depending on HCP, responder can:

- Jacoby Transfer to the major and then pass or bid game or invite game with a raise; or he can jump to 4NT – Blackwood looking for a slam.

- With a weakish broken 6 or 7-card suit, responder can Texas Transfer or South African Texas Transfer opener to game, making the big hand the declarer. Because there is at least an 8-card fit in the major, only the level is important.
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Case 2. Holding two 5-card majors over a 1NT opener, many players use a jump to 3♥ or 3♦, with the 3♥ bid showing an 8 or 9 HCP hand and the 3♦ bid showing 10+ HCP. Responder also has distribution values as he has a singleton & doubleton or a void.

Depending on his shape and HCP, opener can

- after a 3♥ bid, pass or bid 3♦ or bid 4♥ or 4♦ or 3NT.

- after a 3♦ bid, opener can pick a major suit game or bid 3NT. Responder with extra values can continue on, looking for slam with appropriate strength.

With a 0 to 7 HCP hand, responder can Jacoby Transfer opener to the weaker major and pass. Why to the weaker suit? A suit with some HCP has some trick taking power, especially facing a NoTrump opener. A weak suit, perhaps with no HCP, is useless unless it is trump. Because of the shape of a 5 – 5 hand, the trump suit, although weak, can be used to ruff losers, and thus has some trick-taking value.

5-5 major responses can be made over 2NT opening as well. (See below)

Case 3. Holding one or two 4-card majors over a 1NT opener, responder:

- can use regular or Forcing Stayman to determine if opener has a 4 card major. If opener bids a major held by responder, responder can pass (Garbage Stayman), raise as an invitation with 8 or 9 HCP or bid game with 10+ points.

- If opener bids a major not held by responder, responder should bid 2NT with 8 or 9 HCP or bid 3NT with 10+ points. Opener can infer that responder has the other major. Therefore, if also holding the other major, opener can correct responder’s 2NT or 3NT bid to 3 or 4 of the other major.

- If opener denies any major by bidding 2♦, responder can pass (Garbage Stayman) or bid 2 NT with 8 or 9 HCP or 3NT with 10+ HCP.

Note: holding one 4-card major and an otherwise flat hand, responder should not use Stayman, but should bid 2NT with 8 or 9 HCP or 3NT with 10+ HCP. The reason is implied in the slogan “No Shape, No Stayman”, meaning there’s no ruffing value in such a hand, so NoTrump should be a better contract.

Holding one or two 4-card majors over a 2NT opener, responder:

- can bid Stayman to determine if opener has a 4 card major. If opener bids responder’s major, responder should raise it to game with 5+ HCP.
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- If opener denies holding a major by bidding 3♦, responder can pass or bid 3 NT with 5+ HCP.

- If opener bids the major not held by responder, responder with 5+ HCP should bid 3NT. Opener can infer that responder has the other major. If also holding the other major, opener can correct responder’s 3NT bid to the other major.

- Puppet Stayman can also be used. (See below for an explanation of Puppet.)

- The “No Shape, No Stayman” rule applies. (See above – Case 3 Note)

**Case 4. Holding one 5-card major** over a 1NT opener, responder:

- lacking 10+ HCP, can transfer opener to the 5-card major and pass.

- with 10+ HCP, can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major, then bid 3NT, offering opener the choice of game contracts.

Holding one 5-card major over a 2NT opener, responder:

- lacking 5 HCP, can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major and pass.

- with 5+ HCP, can Jacoby Transfer opener to the 5-card major, then bid 3NT, offering opener the choice of game contracts.

**Case 5. Holding one 5-card and one 4-card major** over a 1NT opener, responder:

- should use Stayman or Forcing Stayman to inquire about opener’s 4-card majors. If opener bids either of responder’s majors, responder can pass (Garbage Stayman), raise it to 3 with 8 or 9 points or bid game with 10+ points.

- If opener denies holding a major by bidding 2♦, responder can pass or bid the 5-card major (Garbage Stayman) or, holding 8 or 9 HCP, bid 2NT or Mini – Smolen, or, with 10+ HCP, bid 3NT or Smolen (See below for more on Smolen and Mini - Smolen.)

Holding one 5-card and one 4-card major over a 2NT opening, responder:

- with 5+ HCP should use Stayman to inquire about opener’s 4-card majors. If opener bids either of responder’s majors, responder should raise to game.
- If opener denies holding any major by bidding 3♦, responder can pass or bid 3NT or Smolen (3♥ or 3♠), forcing game in the longer major or 3NT.

- Lacking 5 HCP, responder can pass or transfer opener to the 5-card major and then pass.

Alternatively, Puppet Stayman can be used. (See below)

PART 2 – Responses to NoTrump Rebids after a Major Suit Response.
When opener opens in a minor and responder bids a major, opener often rebids 1NT or 2NT, or there is interference by 4th seat.

**Without interference.** Responder, with 10+ HCP and a decent 5-card major suit, may want to know if opener has 3 of her suit. (With four of responder’s suit, opener would raise.)  

\[1♥ - P - 1♥ - P 1NT (or 2NT) - P - ???\]

With a 6 card suit, responder can rebid it. We avoid rebidding unsupported 5-cards suits in modern duplicate, so there is a responder convention that asks the specific question: “Partner, do you have 3 cards in my suit?” It’s called the **New Minor Force**, and it is a rebid at the cheapest level of the “other” minor: in the example above, it would be 2♦* or 3♦*.  

\[1♥ - P - 1♥ - P 1NT - P - 2♥* . . . \]

With 3 trump, opener bids responder’s major at some level. Lacking 3 trump, opener makes any other bid*, often 2NT. Because opener is forced to bid after her 1NT rebid, responder should have at least 10+ HCP to handle this forced rebid by opener, who may have only 12 points.

See the “Expanded New Minor Force” Blurb for additional cases of the New Minor Force.

A more sophisticated responder asking convention after a NoTrump rebid is called **Reverse Checkback Stayman**. It is similar to the New Minor Force, but is always a rebid of 2♠*:  

\[1♠ - P - 1♥ (or 1♥) - P 1NT - P - 2♠* . . . \]

It asks not only about responder’s major suit, but also about the other major: responder could have both. Opener’s rebids are forced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2♠*</th>
<th>2♥* or 2♠* (A raise)</th>
<th>2♥* or 2♣* (Not opener’s suit)</th>
<th>2NT*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I have 3 of your bid major and 4 of the other major”</td>
<td>“I have 3 of your suit, not 4 of the other major”</td>
<td>“I have 4 of the other major”</td>
<td>“I have none of the above”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any other rebid other than 2♠* by responder is natural, and is usually to play.
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With Interference. [1♣ - P - 1♥ - 1♠ ???] There is an opener convention called a Support Double or ReDouble that tells responder, without being asked, if opener has 3 of responder’s major suit. As the name implies, it is a rebid of Double (or redouble if 4th seat has doubled). [1♠ - P - 1♥ - 1♠ Dbl*] Dbl shows 3 Hearts in opener’s hand. Any other bid* denies 3-card support by opener. Notice a Support Double or ReDouble is a “Tell” by opener, whereas a New Minor Force is an “Ask” by responder.

PART 3 – Definitions and Examples of Conventions

Stayman. Used over 1NT or 2NT, a 2♠ or 3♠ bid asks opener if she has any 4+ card major. [1NT – P - 2♠ - P 2♠ ...] In this example, responder asked, and opener replied “Yes, I have 4+ Spade cards but not 4 Hearts cards”.

Responder can then bid anything from pass to 3♠ or 4♠ or 2NT or 3NT, denying 4 Spade cards, to 4NT Blackwood for Spades. Typically, the Stayman responder has 8+ HCP, but there is no lower HCP limit if the contract can be improved over 1NT. (see Garbage Stayman).

Garbage Stayman. The classic weak hand that could use Garbage Stayman is the following 0 HCP hand: (♣9878 ♥8765 ♦76543 ♠-) When partner opens 1NT, this hand might not take a single trick. However, because opener must rebid 2♦ or 2♥ or 2♣ over responder’s 2♠ (Stayman) bid, responder can pass any rebid and greatly improve the contract. She will have at least a 4 – 4 fit or 3 – 5 trump fit with opener, and a void to ruff Club losers.

Garbage Stayman has no exact definition, but it starts with a regular 2♠ Stayman bid and then attempts to end the auction at a low level. Other examples have been described above in context.

Forcing Stayman. Forcing Stayman uses a response of 2♦* (or 3♦* over a 2NT opening) rather than 2♠ or 3♠. It guarantees the strength for game, but otherwise is the same as regular Stayman, i.e., it asks opener for a 4+ card major.

With a 4-card major, players continue on to game. [1NT - P - 2♦* - P 2♥ - P - 4♥]

As the 2♦ or 3♦ rebid is not available, opener without a 4+ card major bids 3NT. [1NT - P - 2♦* - P 3NT ...]

Forcing Stayman is often used by players opening a Weak NoTrump (12 to 14, for example) but is otherwise rarely seen.
Puppet Stayman over 2NT. Responder can use “Puppet Stayman” to determine if the 2NT opener has a 5-card major. Responder should have at least 5 HCP to use Puppet.

If a fit with opener’s 5-card major is found, responder can bid game, or with 10+ HCP, can continue on toward slam.

Like regular Stayman, Puppet Stayman over 2NT starts with a response of 3♣*.

- Opener rebids 3NT if not holding a 4 or 5-card major, thus setting the contract.
- Opener rebids any 5-card major suit.
  - lacking 3+ trumps, responder bids 3NT or higher.
  - with 3+ trumps, responder bids game or continues toward slam.
- Without a 5-card major, but with one or two 4-card majors, opener rebids 3♦*.
  - if holding both majors, responder bids 4♦*, offering opener her choice of major suit games. [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♦* – P - 4♦* – P 4♠ ...].
  - if holding one major, responder bids it; opener then raises it or bids 3NT. [2NT – P – 3♣* – P 3♦ – P - 3♥ – P 3NT (or 4♥) ... ].

Puppet Stayman can be used over 1NT, but such usage is rare.

Smolen. Typically used over 1NT openings, Smolen is used when responder holds 5 – 4 in the majors and 10+ HCP. Smolen is game forcing.

Smolen starts out with a normal Stayman 2♣ bid. If opener rebids in a major, bidding continues normally and Smolen isn’t necessary. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♥ – P - 4♥].

If opener rebids 2♦, denying a 4+ card major, Smolen comes into play with a bid of the 4-card major at the 3-level: [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P - 3♥*]. This bid shows responder’s 4-card major, but tells opener that responder has 5 of the other major.

- with 3 of the “other major”, an 8-card fit has been found and opener can bid the game as declarer. [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P - 3♥* – P 4♠ ...].
- lacking 3 of the “other major”, opener bids 3NT.
  [1NT – P – 2♣ – P 2♦ – P - 3♥* – P 3NT ...].

Smolen could be used over 2NT openings with 5+ HCP and without a jump over 3♦. [2NT – P – 3♣ – P 3♦ – P – 3♥* – P 4♠ ...] It would be mutually exclusive with Puppet Stayman over 2NT.
Mini Smolen. Used over 1NT openings when responder holds 5 – 4 in the majors and 8 or 9 HCP. Like Smolen, it starts with a 2♣ response, and, if opener shows a 4+ card major, normal bidding applies: [1NT - P - 2♣ - P 2♥ - P 3♥ ...].

If opener rebids 2♦, denying a 4+ card major, Mini Smolen comes into play with a bid of a major at the 2-level: [1NT - P - 2♣ - P 2♦ - P - 2♥* ...]. This bid shows responder’s 4-card major, and tells opener that responder has 5 of the other major with 8 or 9 HCP. Opener can bid 2NT or 3NT without a 3-card fit or bid responder’s 5-card major with a fit. [1NT - P - 2♣ - P 2♦ - P - 2♥* - P 2♠ ...]. Mini Smolen is mutually exclusive with Garbage Stayman.

5 – 5 Majors (no conventional name). When responder to 1NT holds 5 of both majors, a common response is to jump to 3 of one of the majors. The choice depends on responder’s HCP: with 8 or 9 HCP, over 1NT she bid 3♥; with 10+ HCP she bids 3♠ (game forcing). [1NT – P - 3♥ ...] with (♠QJT62 ♥K9876 ♦QJ ♣2). Opener chooses between 3♥, 3♠, 4♥, 4♠ or 3NT.

With 10+, like (♠AJT62 ♥KQ876 ♦J42 ♣-), responder bids 3♠ - game forcing - and opener chooses between 4♥, 4♠ or 3NT. Responder can continue on toward slam.

Holding two 5-card majors over a 2NT opening, responder:

- with 5+ HCP should Jacoby Transfer opener to 3♥, then bid 3♠ to show both suits, asking opener to pick a major game or bid 3NT. Responder can continue on, looking for slam with appropriate strength.

- with fewer than 5 HCP, responder can Jacoby Transfer opener to the weaker major and then pass.

Jacoby Transfer. A Jacoby Transfer is a response that asks opener to bid 2♥ or 2♣ or 3♥ or 3♠. It says opener has a 5+ card major suit, and asks opener to bid it. It is invoked by a bid of the suit below the desired rebid: 2♦ asks opener to bid 2♥ and 2♥ asks opener to bid 2♠. It should be “announced” by opener, not alerted. An announcement is simply saying the word “transfer” loud enough for opponents to hear.

Jacoby Transfer is used after a 1NT opening or a 2NT opening or 2NT rebid, and has no minimum or maximum HCP range. This means it can be used to bail out with a weak hand after a NT opener, or can be used to show opener a 5+-card suit on the way to slam, or anything in between. Examples:
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[1NT – P - 2♣ - P  2♥ - P - P ...] A weak responder, wanting to play in 2♥ rather than in 1NT, with a hand such as: (♣9 ♥KJ987 ♦T987 ♠Q43).

[1NT – P - 2♦ - P  2♥ - P - 3NT ...] A game-forcing responder rebid, offering opener a choice of 4♥ or 3NT, with this example hand: (♠97 ♥KJ987 ♦KJ8 ♣QJ3).

[1NT – P - 2♣ - P  2♥ - P - 4NT ...] A slam-going responder, setting trump as Hearts, with this hand: (♠A ♥AKJ987 ♦K98 ♣QJ3). After opener accepts the transfer, responder can cue bid 1st or 2nd round controls or use Blackwood as an Ace-ask, looking for slam.

**Texas Transfer.** Texas Transfers in major suits are made to the 4-level after a 1NT or 2NT opening. Like Jacoby Transfers, they ask opener, the stronger hand, to be declarer in a major suit contract. Texas Transfers are not strong hands, but have 6 or 7 Hearts or Spades and slightly less than game forcing HCP strength, i.e., they are preemptive. They usually have little chance for slam, such as a hand with 1 or more worthless doubletons.

To bid a Texas Transfer, responder jumps to the suit below the desired major, exactly as Jacoby Transfers do: [1NT – P – 4♥* - P  4♠ ...] A Texas Transfer to 4 Spades. An example hand for this transfer could be: (♣AJT9862 ♥87 ♦87 ♣A2)

Note that responder could theoretically get the same results by bidding a Jacoby Transfer, then jumping to game in the major. The reason to use Texas Transfers rather than a Jacoby Transfer and a subsequent jump to game is to prevent opponents from getting lead-directing or other bids into the auction before the game is bid: [1NT – P – 2♦ - 2♠ ??? ...]. In this Jacoby Transfer auction, 4th seat has gotten his Spade into the auction at a low level as lead-directing or as a possible sacrifice.

A comparable Texas Transfer sequence would be: [1NT – P – 4♣* - P  4♥ ...] In this case, 4th seat was reluctant to put a 4♠ bid in over 4♥* because it is too high. The opening leader therefore doesn’t know about the Spade strength in 4th seat’s hand, so may make a lead not advantageous to the defense.

**South African Texas Transfer.** The original form of Texas Transfers is now called South African Texas Transfers. I have no idea where the South African part came from, or why they used the “Texas” part of the name. In any event, they work like Texas Transfers, but are more sophisticated, while retaining their preemptive nature.

Playing South African Texas Transfers, a direct bid of 4♥ or 4♠ means responder wants to play the hand: it’s not a transfer.
A South African Texas Transfer to 4♥ is bid by jumping to 4♠: [1NT – P – 4♠* ...]

A South African Texas Transfer to 4♠ is bid by jumping to 4♦: [1NT – P – 4♦* ...] (An easy way to remember is: “low minor to low major and high minor to high major”).

Why is it “more sophisticated”? Because responder can determine which hand is to be the declarer. An responder hand that might want to declare the hand at 4♥ and not transfer to the NoTrump opener is: (♣K3 ♥KJT9876 ♦K8 ♠97).

If this hand becomes the dummy at 4♥, the Spade and Diamond Kings are subject to immediate attack on the opening lead by the lead of a Diamond or Spade (for example, the ♣Queen or ♥Queen). This could amount to a 1 or 2 trick difference in the outcome. However, as declarer, these Kings are safe on the opening lead if responder becomes declarer.

It gets even more sophisticated: When responder bids 4♠* or 4♦*, transferring opener to Hearts or Spades, opener has the option to “re-transfer” the hand back to responder by bidding the intermediate suit and not accepting the transfer:

[1NT – P – 4♦* - P – 4♥! ...] Transferring the 4♠ contract back to responder for some reason. An opening NoTrump hand with no tenaces might want to do this; for example: (♣KQJ ♥QJT9 ♦AK7 ♠972). There is no suit in danger on the opening lead if this hand is dummy, so opener might want responder to declare it instead.