



Lesson 7 - Student Notes

Opening 1NT: 12-14 HCP and a Balanced Hand with Stayman Responses

Before you open 1 of a suit ... **You must check that you do not have a 1NT opener!**

Open 1NT on all BALANCED hands with 12-14 HCP no matter where your honours are placed.

What is a balanced hand? A hand that contains:

- no void
- no singleton
- no more than one doubleton
- it may have **one** 5-card suit but no 'good' 5 card major

Therefore, there are only 3 shapes of card holdings in balanced hands:

- a) 4333
- b) 4432
- c) 5332*

Examples of balanced hand shapes

- | | | | | | |
|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|-------------|
| a) | ♠ A T 7 4 | b) | ♠ K J 6 3 | c) | ♠ J 6 3 |
| | ♥ J 8 2 | | ♥ A J 7 3 | | ♥ A 7 3 |
| | ♦ A J T | | ♦ T 9 2 | | ♦ K Q |
| | ♣ Q 9 5 | | ♣ K J | | ♣ A T 8 6 5 |

* A balanced hand **may include a 5-card suit** – either a **poor* 5 card MAJOR** or

any quality of a 5 card **MINOR** suit.

(*A **poor 5 card major** is one you would not want to rebid since it holds fewer than two of the top 3 honour cards, e.g. A, K, x x x, or K Q x x x, or A Q x x x, in that suit.)

A 1NT opening bid is a known as a limit bid

What does this mean? What is a limit bid?

All **limit bids** show HCP within a narrow range as in the case of a 1NT opening bid – everyone knows Opener has 12-14 HCP! Everyone also knows opener has a balanced hand!

So, a 1NT opening bid is a very good example of a limit bid

It's shape and strength are known!

A limit bid is **not forcing**. Responder can pass!

This means that the responder is **ALWAYS** in charge. **Responder is the BOSS!** Opener only bids again if told or invited to do so by Responder!

Responses to 1NT Opening

(when Responder holds no 4+ card major)

0 – 10 HCP	No GAME possible ... PASS
11 – 12 HCP	Invite - GAME possible - Bid 2NT
13+ HCP	GAME on – Bid it! - 3NT

Responder adds his HCP to partner's **KNOWN 12-14 HCP** and works out what he should bid. Responder does the maths!

Responses to 1NT Opening

(when responder **DOES** hold a 4-card major)

But what if responder holds 11+ HCP together with a 4-card major? We might hold the magic 25+ HCP for game.

- **But should we be playing in NT or in a major suit?**

To explore this, we can use special bids. These are called **Conventional Bids**.

The first **Conventional Bid** you'll learn is called **Stayman**.

You and your partner must agree to use the Stayman Convention.

Stayman Logic

- Responder to a NT opening bid, wants to know if Opener holds a 4-card major because he, Responder, holds one and is looking for a possible 8-card major suit fit.
- Remember major suit contracts are normally preferable to NT contracts as you have ruffing potential to win extra tricks.

The Stayman Convention

- The Stayman Convention is used by Responder **ONLY** after his partner has opened with a **NT bid**.
- ***Responder MUST hold 11+ HCP and a four-card major.**
- Responder bids 2♣. This is the **Stayman Conventional Bid**.
- **This bid says nothing about the club suit** and this is why it must be **alerted** by Opener.
- Instead it has a specific meaning. It **ASKS** opener "Do you hold a 4-card major suit?"
- Opener **MUST alert** the 2♣ bid as **Stayman** and explain to opponents (but only if they ask) what it means.

**Exceptionally, Stayman can be used as an 'escape' from a 1NT contract where responder is very weak and hold for example a 4441 hand when the singleton is clubs. Whatever opener rebids, responder will pass.*

What Can opener rebid after responder's 2♣ Stayman bid?

Well, it all depends on Opener's major suit holding!

a) If Opener **DOES NOT** hold a four-card major:

- Opener **MUST** bid. Opener cannot pass the 2♣. This is the Stayman Convention. Remember it says nothing about the club suit!
- Opener bids 2♦. This bid denies holding either four card major and says nothing about diamonds!

- This is the second part of the Stayman Convention and as a result the 2♦ rebid by opener **MUST** also be alerted but this time by responder!

Here is an example:

West

♠ A 7 4

♥ J 8

♦ A J T 5

♣ Q 9 5 3

12 HCP

1NT

2♦

East

♠ K J 6 3

♥ A Q 7 3

♦ 2

♣ A J T 4

15 HCP

2♣

3NT

West opens 1NT (12-14, balanced hand)

East, responder has a 4-card major and bids

2♣ asking opener 'Do you have a 4-card major?'

Opener alerts the 2♣ bid as Stayman

Opener, has no 4-card major so bids 2♦

Responder alerts the 2♦ bid. It says nothing about the diamond suit. Instead, it denies a 4-card major!

Responder, knowing the partnership have 25+ HCP

for game, bids 3NT.

Responder does the Maths!

Responder's Rebids after a 2♦ Denial by Opener

- With 11-12 HCP, Responder bids 2NT – inviting opener to bid game in NT if opener is maximum for his 1NT opening bid i.e. 11+14 = 25 – enough for game
- With 13+ HCP, Responder knows the partnership have enough for game so bids it! - 3NT

b) When Opener DOES hold a four+ card major:

- Opener **MUST** bid. Opener cannot pass the 2♣. This is the Stayman Convention. Remember it says nothing about the club suit.
- Opener now bids his 4+ card major (2♥ or 2♠).
- If opener holds **both majors** he bids the **lower major first!**

Here is an example;

West	East
♠ Q 7 4	♠ KJT4
♥ K J 5 2	♥ AQ73
♦ A T 4	♦ 2
♣ K 9 3	♣ AJT4
13 HCP	15HCP
1NT	2♣
2♥	4♥

West opens 1NT (12-14, balanced hand)
East, responder has a 4-card major and bids 2♣ asking opener 'Do you have a 4-card major?'

Opener alerts the 2♣ bid as Stayman

Opener, has 4-cards in hearts so bids 2♥
East now knows the partnership have an 8-card heart fit and 25+HCPS - enough to bid game - 4♥

Responder does the Maths!

Responder's Rebid after 2♥ or

2♠ by Opener

- If Responder's major matches the major bid by the Opener, then Responder supports that suit.
 - 11-12 HCP Responder bids 3 of the major
 - 13+ Responder bids 4 of the major
- If the Responder's major does NOT match the Opener's major then Responder bids NT.
 - 11-12 HCP Responder bids 2NT (an invitation) and with
 - 13+ HCP Responder bids 3NT.

c) When Opener DOES hold four cards in BOTH majors:

NB If Opener holds both majors but shows Hearts first and Responder rebids 3NT, Responder **MUST** hold 4 spades. This gives Opener the choice to play in 3NT or convert to 4♠!

Here is an example

West	East
♠ A Q T 7	♠ K J T 4
♥ K J 5 2	♥ A Q 7
♦ A T 4	♦ 9 8
♣ 5 4	♣ A T 9 8
13 HCP	15 HCP
1NT	2♣
2♥	3NT
4♠	

West opens 1NT (12-14, balanced hand) East, responder has a 4-card major and bids 2♣ asking opener 'Do you have a 4-card major?'

Opener **alerts** the 2♣ bid as Stayman Opener, has **both** 4-cards majors so bids 2♥ the lower major first.

East does not hold 4 cards in hearts but with 25+HCP in the partnership - enough for game bids 3NT. West now thinks to bid Stayman Responder **MUST** have 4 cards in spades so Opener converts the game contract to 4♠

Responder does the Maths!

Something to bear in mind for later

This term we are playing hands where the bidding auction is not contested by your opponents. But in real life at the bridge table you will learn that this is not the norm! So, if Opener bids 1NT and his left-hand opponent who is next to bid makes any positive bid (i.e. does not Pass), Responder should not use Stayman but instead bid his suits naturally!

REMEMBER: Conventional Bids **MUST** be **ALERTED**:

- These are not natural bids in that they **do not show the suit bid**.
- Instead, a Conventional bid carries a specific meaning
- Because of this, **Conventional** bids **MUST** be **alerted**.
- The **Alert card** is shown by the bidder's partner, who is obliged to explain, if asked, what the partnership agreement is for that specific **Conventional** bid.
- Opponents may ask the player showing the **Alert card** what it means, but **only** when it is their turn to bid - best illustrated in practice play.
- **Conventional** bids are useful tools enabling a partnership to find the best contract economically

Test your understanding of The Stayman Convention in the quiz & hands for this lesson, then keep practising its use till you feel comfortable with it! Play and practice is the way to master this game!

Defence Card Play in a NT contract: **Opening Lead** The Rule of 11

The lead of the **4th highest or 4th best of your longest suit** is a great lead in NT. As defenders' this is your work suit!

Partner should return this suit whenever he can. Your side hope to win tricks in this suit!

But why is the 4th best card so important?

	North	
	♦ K 6 5	
West		East
♦ Q T 8 7		♦ A J 9 2
	South	
	♦ 4 3	

In this example, South is declarer in a NT contract. West has to make the opening lead and chooses his 4th best card – the **7** - from his longest suit

The Rule of 11

If a lead is **4th highest or 4th best card** from a player's **longest & strongest suit** then you can subtract the face value of the card from eleven to give the number of higher cards in that suit held by the remaining 3 hands.

So, let's look at the example above

West lead the **7**, his **4th best card in his diamond suit**.

Declarer plays low from North, dummy.

What should East do?

Assuming West has led his **4th-best**, East uses the Rule of 11

to work out $11 - 7 = 4$

East now knows there are 4 cards higher than the card led in the North, East and South hands.

East can see all 4 of them (A,K,J,9) between his hand and dummy.

East now knows that South has no card higher than the 7, so lets the **7** win the first trick so that West can continue the suit.

The defence should take all 4 tricks in diamonds!

Without the rule of 11, an unthinking defender may have risen with the \spadesuit A – gifting declarer a trick!

summary

- A **balanced hand** has:
 - no voids
 - no singleton
 - no more than one doubleton
 - i.e. is one of these three shapes 4333, 5332, 4432
- **With 12-14 HCP and a balanced hand, opener bids 1NT**
- Responder's options – Pass, invite to game, or bid game – **Responder - Do the maths!**
- Natural vs **Conventional** bidding after NT opening bids
- **Stayman**: The $2\clubsuit$ Stayman Bid **Asks** partner '*Do you have a 4-card major?*'
- Opener bids $2\spadesuit$ with no 4-card major
- The need for and how to **alert** conventional bids
- A good opening lead in a NT contract by defenders is the **4th best from your longest & strongest suit**
- Everyone at the table should use the **Rule of 11** to work out the 'best' card to play!
- If your opponents make a positive bid i.e. other than passing, before responder has a chance to bid, Stayman is **NOT** used. Responder bids his suits naturally.