

PuPpEt Stayman

A Basic Standard Version and More Modern One

Presented by Mike Savage

2NT – Here's a standard basic version of Puppet Stayman.

3C = Asks if opener has a five-card major.

3D = Shows no five-card major but has at least one four-card major.

3H/3S = Shows 4 cards in the other major—so the big hand will always be declarer.

3NT = Denies a four-card major and is to play.

4C = Gerber (some partnerships play 4C as 4-4 in the majors with slam interest).

4D = Shows two four-card majors.

3H/3S = Shows five cards in the bid major.

3NT = Denies either a five-card or four-card major.

3D/3H = Jacoby Transfer to hearts/spades.

3S = Minor Suit Stayman.

3NT = To play.

2NT—**Shown below is a more recent version of Puppet Stayman (there are others).**

3C = Asks if opener has a five-card major.

3D = No five-card major (regardless if he *has* or doesn't have a four-card major).

3H/3S = Shows four cards in the other major.

3NT = To play.

4C/4D = Shows at least a five-card minor (often longer) with slam interest.

4H/4S = Shows a stiff or void in the bid major with both minors and slam interest.

3H/3S = Shows a five-card major.

4C/4D = Shows at least a five-card minor (often longer) with slam interest.

3NT = Shows a maximum and no four-card major.

3D/3H = Jacoby Transfer to hearts/spades.

3S = Relay to 3NT, to play (After 3NT, your partnership *can* assign meanings to 4C, 4D, 4H & 4S).

3NT = Bid with two four-card majors (some 5-4s) & asks opener to bid a 4-card major or pass.

Playing Puppet Stayman, the downside is you *may* miss 4-4 heart fits when responder has 5 spades and 4 hearts, but the upside is you can find out if opener has a 5-card major. Features of modern Puppet are:

1. The big hand does not disclose if it has a 4-card major, unless there is a guaranteed 4-4 fit and thus the hidden hand is more unknown (always a good thing as it makes defending tougher).
2. This principle is enacted in always bidding 3D in response to 3C without a 5-card major and by responder bidding 3NT when he has 4-4 (or *sometimes* with 5-4) in the majors.
3. With 5-4 in the majors, responder can either ask opener to bid a 4-card major by bidding 3NT (opener will pass without one) or with five hearts, transfer to hearts and then bid 3S and with five spades transfer to spades and then bid 3NT (occasionally, you may miss a 4-4 heart fit).
4. Handling 5-4 in the majors at the 3-level, frees up the 4-level for the minors, after bidding 3C 1st.

As to when to use Stayman, Puppet Stayman or Jacoby Transfer over 2NT, here are some sound bidding guidelines that Marshall Miles set forth in a recent Bridge Bulletin article:

- #1. If you have 4-3-3-3 distribution, just play in no-trump—don't look for an eight-card major fit.
- #2. If you have 5-3-3-2 distribution, don't transfer—use Stayman and play in a nine-card major fit if you have one, but don't look for a 5-3 major fit—as it will *usually* play as well in no-trump.
- #3. If responder is 5-4-4-0, 5-4-3-1 (and usually 5-4-2-2), fully explore for an eight-card or better major fit as most of the time finding and playing in such a fit will be worth a trick or two.