

The 3 Most Common Conventions for Playing Bridge

1. Stayman Convention

Purpose:

The Stayman convention is used after a 1NT (one no-trump) opening to find a 4-4 major suit fit. It allows the responder to ask if the opener has a four-card major suit (hearts or spades).

How it works:

- After the opener bids 1NT, the responder bids 2♣, which is an artificial bid and does not indicate clubs.
- The opener responds as follows:
 - 2♦: No four-card major.
 - 2♥: Four hearts.
 - 2♠: Four spades.
- The responder uses this information to determine the best contract:
 - If the opener has a four-card major matching the responder's suit, the partnership can aim for a major-suit contract.
 - If no 4-4 major suit fit is found, the partnership can stay in no-trump or explore other options.

Why it's useful:

Stayman helps locate 4-4 fits in the major suits, which are often easier to play and score better than no-trump contracts.

2. Jacoby Transfers

Purpose:

Jacoby Transfers are used after a 1NT opening to allow the responder to show a five-card or longer major suit. The goal is to let the stronger hand (the opener) declare the contract, improving play and protecting key honors.

How it works:

- After a 1NT opening:
 - 2♦: A transfer to hearts (forces the opener to bid 2♥).
 - 2♥: A transfer to spades (forces the opener to bid 2♠).

- The responder might then:
 - Pass if they want the partnership to stop at the two-level in the major.
 - Raise to the three or four-level to show additional strength or interest in game/slam.
 - Bid another suit or no-trump to further describe their hand.

Why it's useful:

Jacoby Transfers allow the opener's stronger hand to remain hidden from opponents, while still allowing the partnership to play in the responder's long major suit.

3. Blackwood Convention

Purpose:

The Blackwood convention is used when the partnership is considering a slam (contracts at the 6 or 7 level) to ensure they have enough key cards (aces and kings) to succeed.

How it works:

- A bid of 4NT asks the partner how many aces they hold.
- Responses are:
 - 5♣: 0 or 4 aces.
 - 5♦: 1 ace.
 - 5♥: 2 aces.
 - 5♠: 3 aces.
- If necessary, 5NT can then ask for kings, with similar responses:
 - 6♣: 0 or 4 kings.
 - 6♦: 1 king, and so on.
- Based on the responses, the partnership can decide whether to bid for a slam or stop at a lower level.

Why it's useful:

Blackwood prevents the partnership from overbidding into a slam that is unmakeable due to missing key cards.

Summary of Their Roles

- Stayman: Finds a 4-4 fit in the major suits.
- Jacoby Transfers: Shows a five-card or longer major suit while keeping the stronger hand as declarer.
- Blackwood: Ensures the partnership has enough key cards before bidding for a slam.

These conventions are essential tools for effective communication in bridge and help players reach the optimal contract.

This content was generated by Joe Cusack and is responsible for its accuracy.

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