

specific-suits michaels
puppet stayman
smith echo
smolen
last train to clarkesville
italian cuebids
slam spade doubles
trap pass
slow arrival
trent weak two bids


**BRIDGE
CONVENTIONS
IN DEPTH**

**MATTHEW & PAMELA
GRANOVETTER**

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CONVENTIONS
IN DEPTH

MATTHEW & PAMELA
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FOREWORD



How many times have you decided to play a convention and then found when it came up that you still had no idea what to do? The main purpose of this book is to present conventions *in depth*, giving readers and partnerships a thorough understanding of how to continue to get the most out of a convention after the conventional bid has been made.

We think conventions are fun! But only if the partnership is on the same wavelength about what they mean. It's easy to say, 'Let's play Jacoby transfers,' then write it on the convention card and start playing. But suddenly it comes up and you want to know how to make a quantitative bid describing a slam invitation with a five-card major. Are you sure partner will read your subsequent jump to 4NT as not forcing?

We hope you'll take what you like from the book and use it in your own partnerships. You won't find here a study of all existing conventions. Instead, you'll find an interesting selection of conventions, which we particularly enjoy playing and find useful. Most of these conventions are 'add-ons'. They can be added to your card without disturbing the rest of your system. Some go way back to our rubber bridge and cut-around-IMP days at the old Mayfair and Cavendish Clubs in New York. Most come from the tournament world in our discussions with various champions. Some are not exactly conventions but simply nuances, 'state secrets', used until now only by a select few top-level partnerships.

Enjoy!

Matthew and Pamela Granovetter

BASIC
CONVENTIONS -
THE REST OF
THE STORY

PART ONE

Stayman - The Rest of the Story

PREVIEW

Your partner opens the bidding with one notrump (15 to a bad 18) and you hold:

♠ K 8 3 2 ♥ A 4 ♦ A J 10 3 ♣ K 6 4

Partner

1NT

2♠

You

2♣

?

Do you have any idea what to bid next?

THE SOLUTION

In real life, the player with this hand bid 4♣, meaning it as Gerber. His partner thought it was a splinter, showing a singleton, and got very excited with:

♠ A 7 5 4 ♥ K Q J ♦ K Q 4 ♣ J 3 2

Partner checked for keycards, found out your hand had three without the queen of spades, and screeched to a halt in five spades. The good news was that there was only one club loser, but the bad news was that the spades broke 4-1. The whole deal:



♠ 6	♠ K 8 3 2	♠ Q J 10 9
♥ 10 9 7 3 2	♥ A 4	♥ 8 6 5
♦ 8 6 5 2	♦ A J 10 3	♦ 9 7
♣ A 8 7	♣ K 6 4	♣ Q 10 9 5

	♠ A 7 5 4	
	♥ K Q J	
	♦ K Q 4	
	♣ J 3 2	

	N	
W		E
	S	

We can't really say that North-South were unlucky because with these cards they already needed some luck to make four spades.

Is there any way North-South can make a slam investigation without going past game? Yes, there is!

After Stayman and the response of a major by the opening notrump bidder, a bid of three of the other major shows slam interest in opener's major.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♥	3♠ ¹

1. Slam interest in hearts, usually a balanced hand.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥ ¹

1. Slam interest in spades, usually a balanced hand.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♥	3♠ ¹

1. Slam try in hearts.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♠	4♥ ¹

1. Slam try in spades.

In the fourth example auction, responder is unable to bid the other major at the three-level, so he must bid 4♥. This leaves very little room for investigating, but it is better than nothing and is consistent with the other three auctions.



In our original example, the opening bidder, with his 4-3-3-3 minimum hand, has no interest in slam. However, suppose the hands are:

Opener	Responder
♠ A Q J 5	♠ K 8 3 2
♥ J 3 2	♥ A 4
♦ K Q 6 5	♦ A J 10 3
♣ A 2	♣ K 6 4

This time the opener has a maximum in point count, great trumps and a doubleton. The bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥ ¹
4♣	4NT ²
5♠ ³	6♠

1. Slam try in spades, usually balanced.
2. Controls everywhere, so he takes over.
3. Two keycards plus the queen of trumps.

Since responder can set the trump suit by bidding three of the other major, there is no confusion about:

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	4NT

This is clearly quantitative (with four hearts); if you like spades and want to launch into Blackwood, bid 3♥ first, agreeing spades, then bid 4NT next round.

These 'other major' bids also apply after a 2NT opening:

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♥	3♠ ¹

1. Hearts, slam try.

Opener	Responder
2NT	3♣
3♠	4♥ ¹

1. Spades, slam try.



Opener

2NT
3♥/3♠

1. Quantitative.

Responder

3♣
4NT¹

2NT
3♥
4♣

1. Hearts, slam try.
2. Blackwood.

3♣
3♠¹
4NT²

What about the sequence we started off with, where responder jumped to the four-level?

Opener

1NT
2♠

Responder

2♣
4♣/4♦/4♥

It's useful to play these jumps to a new suit as splinters. But a word of caution: a splinter bid should promise reasonable trumps (we suggest Q10xx or better). By jumping to the four-level, you take up lots of investigation-room, and may end up in a poor slam, such as on these hands:

Opener

♠ A 7 6 5
♥ A J 8 4
♦ K 7
♣ K J 10

Responder

♠ Q 8 3 2
♥ 9
♦ A Q J 4 2
♣ A Q 4

1NT
2♠
?

2♣
4♥

Slam looks like a good bet from the notrump bidder's perspective, so opener checked for key-cards and bid a slam. This slam was less than 50%, however, because in addition to needing the king of spades onside, North-South needed a 3-2 spade break. It didn't work out that way and they went down a trick.

What should responder do? Conscious of his weak trumps, he should go slowly:

Opener

♠ A 7 6 5
♥ A J 8 4
♦ K 7
♣ K J 10

Responder

♠ Q 8 3 2
♥ 9
♦ A Q J 4 2
♣ A Q 4



Opener

1NT

2♠

4♣

4♥

pass³

Responder

2♣

3♥¹

4♦

5♠²

1. Slam try in spades, usually with a balanced hand.
2. How good are your trumps?
3. Not so good.

The whole deal was:

	♠ Q 8 3 2										
	♥ 9										
	♦ A Q J 4 2										
	♣ A Q 4										
♠ J 4	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 10 9
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K Q 3 2		♥ 10 7 6 5									
♦ 8 3		♦ 10 9 6 5									
♣ 9 8 6 5 3		♣ 7 2									
	♠ A 7 6 5										
	♥ A J 8 4										
	♦ K 7										
	♣ K J 10										

Notice that if we improve the trump spots, the slam makes:

	♠ Q 10 9 2										
	♥ 9										
	♦ A Q J 4 2										
	♣ A Q 4										
♠ J 4	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 8 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K Q 3 2		♥ 10 7 6 5									
♦ 8 3		♦ 10 9 6 5									
♣ 9 8 6 5 3		♣ 7 2									
	♠ A 7 6 5										
	♥ A J 8 4										
	♦ K 7										
	♣ K J 10										

Now the auction would proceed like this:



South	North
1NT	2♣
2♠	4♥ ¹
4NT	5♠ ²
6♠	

1. Splinter bid.
2. Two keycards plus the queen of trumps.

South got the ♥K lead, won the ace, played a club to the queen, and led the queen of trumps off dummy. Had the queen lost to the king, he would win the next lead in dummy and finesse for the jack of spades on his right. What a difference the spots make!

Here are some more misunderstandings that frequently occur after Stayman:

1. If opener responds 2♦, what does two-of-a-major by responder mean?

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥ or 2♠

2. If opener responds with a major, what does the bid of a minor suit by responder mean? How forcing is it?

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♣

3. If opener has both majors, which should he bid first?

4. Can opener have a five-card major? If so, how does he show it?

OUR SUGGESTIONS

1. If opener responds 2♦, what does two-of-a-major by responder mean?

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥ or 2♠

We do not bid Stayman with a very weak hand and four-four or five-four in the majors, at least as a partnership agreement (we may decide to do this at favorable vulnerability, but partner will not play us for it). We simply transfer to the five-card major and leave it at that.



Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦ or 2♥	2♠ ¹

1. Five spades, a shade too weak to transfer and then bid 2NT.

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♦	2♥ ¹

1. Five hearts and four spades, a shade too weak for Smolen.

(The excellent Smolen convention shows five-four in the majors and a game force. You bid Stayman, and if your partner responds with 2♦, you jump in your four-card major. Partner will convert to your five-card major with three of them, or rebid 3NT without. Works over a 2NT opening bid as well, except that you don't jump. For a full description, see Part 2.)

2. If opener responds with a major, what does the bid of a minor suit by responder mean? How forcing is it?

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♣

For simplicity, the new suit is forcing to game. The above auction shows four hearts, five clubs and a game force, although you could have four spades and five clubs, planning next to bid 4♠ as a natural slam try (e.g., ♠KQxx ♥xx ♦xx ♣AKJxx).

3. If opener has both majors, which should he bid first?

There should not be a hard-and-fast rule for this. You should use your judgment. If your spades are AKxx and your hearts are Jxxx, you should bid spades first. Perhaps the hand is something like this:

	♠ Q 9 5 4										
	♥ A 7 4 3										
	♦ A Q J 3										
	♣ 5										
♠ 2		♠ J 10 8 6									
♥ K Q 10 9		♥ 8									
♦ 10 8 7 2		♦ 9 5 4									
♣ J 9 8 7		♣ A 10 6 4 2									
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K 7 3										
	♥ J 6 5 2										
	♦ K 6										
	♣ K Q 3										



In four spades, you can stand the bad trump break; in four hearts you cannot. When the deal actually occurred, West led the ♥K against 4♠. Declarer won the ace and cashed three rounds of trumps. Next he played four rounds of diamonds, pitching two hearts. East gave it his best shot by refusing to ruff the fourth diamond, winning the ace of clubs and playing the last trump. Declarer would have been short a trick had his clubs been KJx instead of KQx.

4. Can opener have a five-card major? If so, how does he show it?

Yes, but opener should be careful. Suppose he has five spades and two hearts, and responder has three spades and five hearts. Responder transfers to hearts and then bids 3NT. Now you're playing 3NT instead of your 5-3 spade fit. Therefore, if you open 1NT with five in a major, you should always have 3 cards in the other major. Here's what can happen if you don't follow this rule:

Opener	Responder
♠ A 9	♠ K Q 8 7 2
♥ K Q 7 6 2	♥ A J 3
♦ J 5 4	♦ 3 2
♣ A Q 3	♣ J 8 4

1NT	2♥ ¹
2♠	3NT
pass	

1. Transfer.

The opponents take the first five diamond tricks; meanwhile you are cold for 4♥. But if you have three spades along with your five-card heart suit, you are safe:

Opener	Responder
♠ A 9 4	♠ K Q 8 7 2
♥ K Q 7 6 2	♥ A J 3
♦ J 5 4	♦ 3 2
♣ A Q	♣ J 8 4

1NT	2♥ ¹
2♠	3NT
4♠	

1. Transfer.

If you've opened 1NT with a five-card major and partner bids Stayman, jump to three of your suit. Again, you do not want to miss that 5-3 fit.

Opener

♠ A 9 4
♥ K Q 7 6 2
♦ J 3
♣ A Q J

Responder

♠ K Q 8 7
♥ A J 3
♦ 5 4
♣ 8 4 3 2

1NT

3♥

2♣

4♥



Conventions are fun!

These wonderful agreements and gadgets turn your everyday bidding system into something personal, something that fits the exact style that you and your partner want to play. And now you can choose from some seventy expert-level ideas to add to your bidding arsenal, quickly and painlessly.

In this book you'll find:

Basic Conventions – the Rest of the Story: find out how top-level players have turbocharged such standard conventions as Stayman, Jacoby and Texas Transfers, Drury, Weak Jump Shifts, and more.

Bread and Butter Conventions: some conventions that are standard with most experts but may not be for you, such as Smolen, Slow Arrival, Italian Cuebids, the best defenses to Multi and Bergen Raises, Retransfers, Clarifying Cuebids, and others.

Defensive and Cardplay Conventions: learn more about Trump Suit Preference, Obvious Shift carding, the Slam Spade Double, the Lead-directing Pass, and many more.

Fine Arts Conventions: not for the faint of heart, some of these ideas will really make you sit up and take notice. Would you enjoy playing Last Train to Clarkesville, Yellow Rose of Texas, Vacant Doubletons, Double Keycard Blackwood, Trent Weak Two-bids, or the XYZ Convention, for example? Read this book and find out!



MATTHEW & PAMELA GRANOVETTER are publishers of *Bridge Today* and *Bridge Today Digest*, as well as the founders of the Bridge Today Online University. They are the authors of a number of books, many of them award winners. They also write *Partnership Bridge*, a popular feature in the *ACBL Bulletin*. They live with their two children in Jerusalem, Israel.

