

GRADUAL MINOR SUIT STAYMAN

Principle : Responder does not unveil his hand and takes entire control over the auction (from beginning to end). Opener takes no initiative.

After **1NT** opening, a direct **2♠** response asks about the relative split between both minor suits :

- **3♣** : ♣ shorter than ♦ (possible ♣ doubleton). Otherwise,
- **2NT** : possible ♦ doubleton.

With no hope of a minor suit game / slam, responder may «**Pass** or correct ». Signoff. Return to **3♣** or **3♦** (instead of a **Jacoby** transfer followed by **Pass**).

1NT	2♠	1NT	2♠
3♣	Pass / 3♦ / 3NT	2NT	3♣ / 3♦ / 3NT

Otherwise, he proceeds with a relay bid of **3♥** (minor suit Stayman).

Opener then elaborates his minor-suit distribution, **at one card shy**.

- **3NT / 3♠** : no 4-card minor suit (3-3 or 3-2 minor suits).

With both major suits controlled : **3♠**. Otherwise : **3NT**.

- **4♣, 4♦** : at least one 4/5-card minor suit. Bid the doubleton minor suit or, failing that, the impossible doubleton minor suit.

1NT	2♠	1NT	2♠
3♣	3♥	2NT	3♥
	(x) : uncertain card		
3NT / 3♠	♣ xx ♦ xxx	3NT / 3♠	♣ xxx ♦ xx(x)
4♣	♣ xx ♦ xxxx(x)	4♦	♣ xxxx(x) ♦ xx
4♦	♣ xxx ♦ xxxx(x)	4♣	♣ xxxx ♦ xxx(x)
			or ♣ xxxx(x) ♦ xxx

Responder's rebids after **3♥** (minor suit Stayman).

Conclusive bids at any level :

- **NT, ♣, ♦** : signoff. Opener must **Pass**.
- **♠** : transfer to the cheaper unbid minor suit. Choice of the declarer.

Asking bids (♥) :

- **4♥** : Control-asking (**Ace** = 2, and **King** = 1). Control count (CC)
A hand opening **1NT** (**15-17 HCP**) has **97%** probability of having a minimum of **4 CC**. Therefore the step responses to **4♥** are : **4♠** (**4 CC**), **4SA** (**5 CC**), and **5♣** (**6+ CC**).

With an unbalanced hand opposite to a balanced hand a slam is likely to make with only **9 CC**, provided a fit exists and there is no duplication, such as A-K or K-Q opposite a singleton (Rozenkranz).

- **5♥** after **4♥** : Ace-asking (**3** responses : 30-1-2). Grand slam attempt.

Notes :

Stayman enables slam investigation with 5-4 minor suit distribution.

*Jacoby transfer to ♦ needs either **2NT** or **3♣** bid. Here, **both bids** remain available.*

*Adaptable to **2NT** opening bid.*

Signoff at the 3 level is no problem.

According to experts / champions, the most difficult facet of slam bidding is locating minor suits slam after opening notrump bids.

A few examples showing how Gradual minor suit Stayman may work in such cases.

W	E	W	E
♠ R 9 8	♠ A D 2	1SA	2♠ (minors ?)
♥ D V X 2	♥ R 8 5	2SA (♣ \geq ♦)	3♥ (Stayman)
♦ A 6	♦ R D V 9 8 7	4♦ (2 ♦ et 4+ ♣)	4♥ (Controls ?)
♣ R D 6 4	♣ 2	4♠ (4 controls)	4SA (Signoff)

♠ R 9 8	♠ A D 2	1SA	2♠ (minors ?)
♥ D X 8 4	♥ V 9 5	2SA (♣ \geq ♦)	3♥ (Stayman)
♦ R 6 4	♦ A D V 9 8 7	3SA (3-2+). Flaw majors.	4♥ (Controls ?)
♣ A R 6	♣ 2	5♣ (5 controls)*	?

Total : 9 controls. Uncertain ♥ control. Responder makes the final decision : **Pass** or, at most, **5♦** (Signoff).

♠ R 9 4	♠ A 6 3	1SA	2♠ (minors ?)
♥ R D 9	♥ 2	3♣ (♣ $<$ ♦)	3♥ (Stayman)
♦ A 9 5 3	♦ R D V	4♦ (3 ♣ et 4+ ♦)	4♥ (Controls ?)
♣ R D 4	♣ A V X 9 7 3	4SA (5 controls)	6♣ (Signoff)

Total : 10 controls. Either 1 Ace or 2 Kings missing.

After changing ♣3 into ♦3

♠ R 9 4	♠ A 6 3	1SA	2♠ (minors ?)
♥ R D 9	♥ 2	3♣ (♣ $<$ ♦)	3♥ (Stayman)
♦ A 9 5 3	♦ R D V 3	4♦ (3 ♣ et 4+ ♦)	4♥ (Controls ?)
♣ R D 4	♣ A V X 9 7	4SA (5 controls)	6♦ (Signoff)*

* The 4-4 (maybe 5-4) fit is better than the 5-3 one.

After changing ♦3 into ♥3

♠ R 9 4	♠ A 6 3	1SA	2♠ (minors ?)
♥ R D 9 3	♥ 2	2SA (♣ \geq ♦)	3♥ (Stayman)
♦ A 9 5	♦ R D V 3	3♠ (3-2+). Majors OK.	4♥ (Controls ?)
♣ R D 4	♣ A V X 9 7	4SA (5 controls)	5♠ (Transfer)
		6♣* (Cheaper minor suit)	Pass

* Both minor suits unbid. Transfer to ♣.