Transfers and Puppet Stayman (TAPS)

TAPS, in particular the Puppet Stayman described here, is used in responding to **1NT** or **2NT** whenever the partnership has agreed that a notrump opening or rebid could include a 5-card major. This version also allows opener to be 2-2 in the majors.

Puppet Stayman should right-side the contract (when possible), find all 4-4 and 5-3 fits and not give the opponents too much unnecessary info. And, for memory purposes, using the same structure over **1NT** as over **2NT** would be nice. That's a lot to ask. This one gets the strong hand on play, gives up a little distributional info but finds all the 4-4 and most of the 5-3 major suit fits. Balanced hands with a four-card major and a four-card minor or with both minors are a problem. We have no Baron-type mechanism for investigating game or slam in the minor with those. Further, allowing the notrump bidder to be 2-2 in the majors is an extra complication.

After **2NT**, any response is a game force in principle (responder *could* transfer to a major and then pass if opener accepts the transfer). But, over **1NT** we can show a variety of invitational hands in addition to the game-forcing ones.

Transfers after 1NT:

2♦, 2♥: Transfers (weak, invitational or game-forcing) to the next higher suit. They guarantee 5+ cards in the implied suit.

2♠: Either a transfer to clubs (any strength) or an invitational hand with diamonds.

2NT: The standard invitational raise.

3♣: Weak or game-forcing transfer to diamonds.

3♦: 5=5 in the minors and game-forcing.

3♥: 3=1=5=4 or 3=1=4=5. Game force.

3♠: 1=3=5=4 or 1=3=4=5. Game force.

3NT: To play, with no major suit interest.

4♣: Gerber

Puppet Stayman after 1NT:

2♣ is Puppet Stayman asking the notrump bidder if he has a 5-card major. It shows at least invitational strength. Opener responds as follows.

2♦:	Shows a 4-card major or 3 spades (a 4-card major or 3=2 or 3=3 in the majors).
2♠:	Shows 5 spades.
2NT:	Shows 5 hearts.
2♥:	Shows none of the above; so, 2=2 or 2=3 in the majors.

After a **2♦** response, responder's bids show the following.

> **2♥**: Responder either has 4 spades or a balanced raise to **2NT** or **3NT**. Opener bids **2♠** with four or **2NT/3NT** otherwise. Responder then raises **2♠** to **3♠/4♠** or bids **2NT/3NT**. If opener rebids **2NT** then responder passes or raises to **3NT**.

> **2♠**: Shows 4 hearts but not 4 spades. Opener bids **2NT** or **3NT** without hearts. He bids **3♥** or **4♥** with that suit. Responder can still raise a signoff with game-going strength.

> **2NT**: Shows 4=4 in the majors, invitational. Opener places the contract.

> **3♦**: Shows 5=4 or 5=5 in the majors, invitational or better. Opener places the contract.

> **3NT**: Shows 4=4 in the majors, game forcing. Opener places the contract.

> **4NT**: Shows 4=4 in the majors. Invites slam.

> **5NT**: Shows 4=4 in the majors. Opener picks a slam.

Transfers after 2NT:

3♦, 3♥: Transfers to the next higher suit. They guarantee at least 5 cards in the implied suit.

3♠: Transfer to clubs. Either very weak or a slam try.

3NT: To play, with no major suit interest.

4♣: Transfer to diamonds. Either very weak or a slam try.

4♦: 5=5 in the minors. Slam-try.

5m: To play.

Puppet Stayman after 2NT:

3♣ is Puppet Stayman asking the notrump bidder if he has a 5-card major. It is forcing to game. Opener responds as follows.

> **3♦**:   Shows a 4-card major or 3 spades (a 4-card major or 3=2 or 3=3 in the majors).
> **3♠**:   Shows 5 spades.
> **3NT**: Shows 5 hearts.
> **3♥**:   Shows none of the above; so, 2=2 or 2=3 in the majors.

After a **3♦** response, responder's bids show the following.

> **3♥**: Responder either has 4 spades or a balanced raise to **3NT**. Opener bids **3♠** with four spades or **3NT** otherwise. Responder then places the contract.

> **3♠**: Shows 4 hearts but not 4 spades. Opener bids **3NT** without hearts.

3NT: Shows 4=4 in the majors. Opener places the contract.

4♦: Shows 5=4 or 5=5 in the majors. Opener picks a game.

4NT: Shows 4=4 in the majors. Invites slam.

5NT: Shows 4=4 in the majors. Opener picks a slam.

Some Specific TAPS Auctions

In the following auctions, **... 1NT** or **... 2NT** implies a strong club context and opener has bid or rebid **1NT** or **2NT**. The sequence is one of the situations where Checkback does not apply.

... 1NT	**-**	**2♣**	**2♠** shows 5=5 in the majors, invitational or better and forcing to **2NT**. **2NT** is invitational and **3NT** is to play. Over **2♠** or **2NT** opener places the contract.
2♥	**-**	**?**	
... 1NT	**-**	**2♣**	**3♠** is invitational and **4♠** is to play. **2NT** is invitational and **3NT** is to play.
2♠	**-**	**?**	
... 1NT	**-**	**2♣**	**3♦** is an invitational-or-better transfer to opener's hearts.
2NT	**-**	**?**	
... 1NT	**-**	**2♦**	Shows 4=5 in the majors, invitational. Assumes that, in the run up to **1NT**, the option to right-side spades has not been "blown."
2♥	**-**	**2NT**	
... 1NT	**-**	**2♦**	Shows 4=5 in the majors. Opener places the contract. Assumes that, in the run up to **1NT**, the option to right-side spades has not been "blown."
2♥	**-**	**3NT**	
... 1NT	**-**	**2♦**	Shows 5 hearts and fewer than 4 spades. Invitational or better. Forcing to **2NT**. (But natural 4=5 majors if the possibility of right-siding spades was blown in the run up to **1NT**. See above.)
2♥	**-**	**2♠**	
... 1NT	**-**	**2♠**	Opener can only bid **2NT** or **3♣**. **3♣** says opener would accept an invite if responder has clubs. **2NT** shows anything else.
?			
... 1NT	**-**	**2♠**	**Pass** is weak with clubs. **3♦** is invitational with diamonds. **3M** is game-forcing with 5+ clubs and exactly 4 cards in **M**. **3NT** is to play and confirms clubs.
3♣	**-**	**?**	

... 1NT	**-**	**2♠**		**3♣** is to play. **3♦** is invitational with diamonds. **3M** is game-forcing with 5+ clubs and 4 cards in **M**. **3NT** confirms clubs.
2NT	**-**	**?**		
... 1NT	**-**	**3♣**		**Pass** is weak with diamonds. **3M** is game-forcing with 5+ diamonds and 4 cards in **M**. **3NT** is a slam-try in diamonds.
3♦	**-**	**?**		

... 2NT	**-**	**3♣**		**3♠** shows 5=5 in the majors. **3NT** is to play. **4♣** is Gerber and **4NT** is quantitative.
3♥	**-**	**?**		
... 2NT	**-**	**3♣**		**3NT** and **4♠** are to play. **4m** shows a 3- or 4-card heart suit and 5+ cards in **m**. Slam try. **4NT** is KRKB for spades.
3♠	**-**	**?**		
... 2NT	**-**	**3♣**		**4♦** is a transfer to opener's 5-card heart suit. **4♣** shows a 5+ card club suit and 3 or 4 spades. **4♥** shows 3 or 4 spades and 5+ diamonds. Try not to forget! Both **4♣** and **4♥** are slam tries.
3NT	**-**	**?**		
... 2NT	**-**	**3♦**		Opener normally bids **3♥** to accept the transfer. But, with exactly five spades and two hearts opener can bid **3♠** in case responder is 3=5. **4m** is a superaccept for hearts.
?				
... 2NT	**-**	**3♦**		Shows 4=5 in the majors. Opener places the contract. Assumes the option to right-side spades has not been "blown" in the run up to **2NT**.
3♥	**-**	**3NT**		
... 2NT	**-**	**3♦**		Shows 5 hearts and fewer than 4 spades. Forcing to **3NT**. But natural 4=5 majors if the possibility of right-siding spades was blown in the run up to **2NT**. See above.
3♥	**-**	**3♠**		
... 2NT	**-**	**3♥**		Opener normally bids **3♠** to accept the transfer. But, with exactly two spades and five hearts opener can bid **3NT** in case responder is 5=3. **4m** is a superaccept for spades.
?				
... 2NT	**-**	**3♠**		**Pass** shows a very weak hand; **4♦** is KRKB for clubs. **4M** shows shortness in **M**. **5♣** is weak and to play.
4♣	**-**	**?**		

... 2NT - **3♠** **4♣** - **4M** **<u>4NT</u>**	**4NT** says "We don't have a great fit. Maybe we should stop here."	
... 2NT - **4♣** **4♦** - **<u>?</u>**	**Pass** shows a very weak hand; **4♥** is KRKB for diamonds. **4♠** shows shortness in spades. **5♦** is weak and to play.	
... 2NT - **4♣** **4♦** - **4♠** **<u>4NT</u>**	**4NT** says "We don't have a great fit. Maybe we should stop here."	
... 2NT - **4♦** **<u>?</u>**	**4♥** is **KRKB** for clubs. **4♠** is **KRKB** for diamonds. **4NT** says "We don't have a great fit. Maybe we should stop here."	
... 2NT - **3♦/3♥** **3♥/3♠** - **<u>4m</u>**	Natural. 5+ cards in **M** and 4+ in **m**. Slam-try.	
... 2NT - **3♣** **3♦** - **3M** **3NT** - **<u>4m</u>**	Natural. 3 or 4 cards in a major and 4+ in **m**. Slam-try. **4NT** instead of **4m** is classic Blackwood.	

Bruce Watson, May 5/2020