

Stayman is a convention that uses 2♣ as an artificial bid to enquire about the 1NT opener's major suit holding. Opener's responses to Stayman 2♣ are: -

- 2♦ = no 4 card major
- 2♥ = 4 card ♥ suit, may have 4 ♠'s
- 2♠ = 4 card ♠ suit, denies 4 ♥'s

Higher bids (e.g. 2NT) are not generally used, but see section 2.7.

Note also that if you allow 5 card majors in your opening 1NT then obviously the 2♥/♠ response may be a 5 card suit.

The first thing that we have to consider when using Stayman is the high card points requirement. There are various versions of Stayman but the best (and most widely used – very important) is 'garbage' Stayman. So called because the Stayman bidder does not promise any points.

Once responder has bid 2♣, Stayman, he has various options after opener's reply and everything is covered in this Stayman section: -

- 1) pass or correct to 2♥/♠
- 2) invite to game in a major or NT
- 3) bid game in a major or NT
- 4) enquire further about opener's shape
- 5) ask about key cards/aces
- 6) look for slam via splinters, RKCB, Gerber and other means.

Weak Hands

Hand A Hand B

♠ Q963 ♠ Q9852
 ♥ J763 ♥ J763
 ♦ J9852 ♦ J2
 ♣ - ♣ 74

How do you bid these hands if partner opens 1NT? If there was a points requirement then you would have to pass, even though you know that there is a better contract. Playing 'garbage' Stayman it is easy. With Hand A you bid 2♣ and pass any response from partner. And Hand B? You could transfer (more about transfers later) but if you transfer into ♠'s then you may miss a 4-4 ♥ fit. The way to bid weak hands that are 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors is to use Stayman. You pass 2♥/♠ and convert a 2♦ response into your 5 card major.

Hand C Hand D

♠ J6 ♠ 74
 ♥ Q963 ♥ J2
 ♦ J95 ♦ J763
 ♣ J874 ♣ J9852

These two hands are different. If you bid Stayman with Hand C then all is well if partner responds 2♥, but not if the reply is 2♦/♠. You cannot risk Stayman and so have to pass the 1NT opening. With Hand D it would be nice to be able to sign off in 2♣ but you cannot, 2♣ is Stayman. So again pass 1NT with this hand.

Invitational Hands

Hand E	Hand F
♠ 975	♠ K973
♥ K973	♥ A974
♦ J2	♦ J2
♣ A974	♣ 975

Hand G

♠ K973
♥ 975
♦ J2
♣ A974

Invitational hands present no problem. Here partner has opened 1NT. With Hand E you bid 2♣. If partner responds 2♥ then you invite game by bidding 3♥. If partner responds 2♦/♠ then you invite game by bidding 2NT. Hand F is similar; you bid 2NT over a 2♦ response and raise 2♥/♠ to 3♥/♠, invitational.

Hand G is slightly different. Again you bid 2♣ Stayman. If partner responds 2♦ you reply 2NT. If partner responds 2♠ then you invite with 3♠. But if partner responds 2♥ then he may also have 4♠'s. No problem, you can still invite with 2NT as partner knows that you must have a 4 card major (thus ♠'s) in order to bid Stayman. If he also has 4♠'s then he will correct to 3♠ or 4♠. Note, however, that playing 4-way transfers then this hand must bid 2♠ at the second turn (instead of 2NT). This is explained in the section 2.2.

Strong Hands

Hand H	Hand J
♠ K975	♠ KQ73
♥ K973	♥ A74
♦ J2	♦ J2
♣ A97	♣ K975

We also use Stayman with strong hands. These examples are good enough for game opposite a strong NT and we start off by looking for a 4-4 major suit fit, so 2♣. With Hand H if partner replies either 2♥ or 2♠ then we raise to game in that suit. With Hand J it is slightly more subtle. A 2♠ response is raised to 4♠ and 2♦ receives 3NT. If partner bids 2♥ then we bid 3NT; partner knows that we have 4♠'s as otherwise we would not have bid Stayman but bid 3NT directly, so he converts to 4♠ if he also has 4♠'s.

Very Strong Hands

Hand K	Hand L
♠ K975	♠ AK3
♥ K973	♥ KJ73
♦ AJ	♦ Q2
♣ AJ7	♣ KQ52

Here we are definitely looking for slam opposite a strong NT opener. Again we use Stayman as a tool to find a fit. With Hand K we bid a small slam in the major if partner replies 2♥/♠. After a 2♦ reply you could try 6NT; but 4NT (quantitative) is probably best, without a fit you need a maximum partner. Hand L is most certainly worth slam – perhaps a grand, we start with Stayman. If partner responds 2♦/♠ (denying 4♥'s) then we should investigate a ♣ slam. This Hand J is dealt with in section 2.5.

No Major

Hand M	Hand N
♠ K95	♠ Q32
♥ 1093	♥ K73
♦ AJ7	♦ J2
♣ A976	♣ KQJ52

Hand M is balanced with no 4 card major. There are the values for 3NT – so bid it. This hand responds 3NT directly.

Hand N again has the values for 3NT but has a good ♣ suit. 2♣ is Stayman, 3♣ is defined in section 5.2 and is looking for slam. This is a good hand but not good enough to go slamming, so simply bid 3NT.

2.1 Denying a 4 card major

Many books will tell you that if partner opens 1NT and your shape is 4333 or 3433 then you should ignore Stayman and jump directly to 3NT if you have the values for game. *This is not one of those books!*

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Partner opens a strong NT (15-17), what do you do? Obviously you have the values to try game, but Stayman or a direct 3NT? Now ‘everybody’ would bid Stayman with Hand A – if there is a fit in either major that will be preferable to 3NT with this small doubleton ♦. And Hand B? Again, use Stayman. If a 4-4 ♥ fit exists, then 4♥ will normally be a far superior contract to 3NT. But what about Hand C? A direct 3NT on this flat hand or look for the 4-4 ♥ fit? This is from a club tournament and South opened 1NT, 15-17. North raised immediately to 3NT with Hand C. Is this the recommended bidding? I said no, the two players disagreed. Let’s examine this all in a little more detail.
♠ KQ53	♠ 74	♠ A107	
♥ KJ74	♥ A1053	♥ A1053	
♦ 64	♦ A1074	♦ J42	
♣ 1094	♣ J94	♣ 1094	

Now we all agree (I hope) that 4-4 major suit fits are usually better than 3NT, especially if one player has a weak doubleton. The argument for not bidding Stayman on Hand C is that it is totally flat – no ruffing values. I totally agree, no ruffing values in this hand – but what about partner? He has opened 1NT, promising a balanced 15-17. If he does not have a 4 (or 5!) card ♥ suit then there is no problem with bidding Stayman (you end up in 3NT anyway). So, let’s consider the case where partner does have a 4 card ♥ suit, is 3NT best? – very unlikely! The point is that although you do not have ruffing potential, partner may well have! Partner’s most likely shape is (any order) 4432. If he shows 4 ♥’s then, with this shape, you almost certainly belong in 4♥, not 3NT. Partner will have a doubleton opposite one of your 3 card suits – when opponents have 8 cards in a suit then that spells trouble for a non-max 3NT. And what if partner also happens to be exactly 3433? Nowhere near so likely, but 4♥ is still probably the best spot! In this case you have three 6 card suits with the opponents on lead. It only needs one of them to be divided 5-2 (or worse) and 3NT is probably a disaster. The only case where it is preferable to play in 3NT rather than 4 of a major is when you have *ample* points (say 27+) and at least a double stop in every suit, even then, 4 of the major may be better. In this actual case you are nowhere near max for 3NT and both minor suits are suspect. Additionally, of course, if you are one of the enlightened pairs who may open 1NT with a 5 card major, then you will be the laughing stock of the club if you end up in 3NT missing a 5-4 ♥ fit!

Now if you change Hand C slightly, and swap the ♥A with the ♣4, thus having a very weak 4 card ♥ suit, then I would agree that there is a case for forgetting Stayman. With this actual hand (4 ½ points in ♥’s) the strong ♥ suit means that *all* the other suits *cannot* be adequately covered. Quite simply, a 4-4 fit will usually produce an extra trick and stops the rot of opponents running a suit.

The experts will continue to argue this for years to come (whether or not to bid Stayman when 4333 or 3433). Apart from all the arguments that I have put forward, two are undeniable: - (1) Partner may have a 5 card major and (2) Computer studies have shown that bidding Stayman has a higher success rate.

Never (or hardly ever) deny a 4 card major !

To satisfy the unbelievers, let’s look at possible bidding sequences a little more closely: -

West	East	<u>Example 1</u>
♠ KQ63	♠ A74	You are playing a strong NT. Obviously you open 1♣, partner replies 1♥, you support with 2♥ and partner raises to 4♥. But who was dealer? Makes no difference, the bidding is the same. Actually instead of the final 4♥, 3NT is a better bid just in case opener has supported on a 3 card suit; either way, the correct 4♥ contract is easily
♥ KJ74	♥ AQ53	
♦ 65	♦ J74	
♣ KJ5	♣ Q94	

reached.

Now what happens if you are playing a weak NT? You open 1NT, partner bids Stayman and you again reach the simple 4♥. If East opens the bidding that is certainly the case, but what if West is dealer? There are players out there who would not bid Stayman with 4333 type shape and just game values! 3NT is the wrong contract.

West	East	<u>Example 2</u>
♠ KQ63	♠ A74	Let's try a couple of strong NT openers. If you ignore Stayman then you reach 3NT making +2 if ♠'s fail to break 3-3. You always make 12 tricks in ♥'s. This shows (yet again) the power of a good 4-4 fit. Are there people out there who are trying to tell me that if East opens 1NT then they reach 4♥ but if West opens 1NT they play in 3NT?
♥ KJ74	♥ AQ53	
♦ K5	♦ A74	
♣ KJ5	♣ Q94	

West	East	<u>Example 3</u>
♠ KJ	♠ AQ4	So when does this policy of ignoring Stayman work? When you have an abundance of points (28 is a good norm) <i>and</i> all the side suits well covered. Often, the weakest suit is the 'trump suit'. Here, ten top tricks, maybe also a ♥ trick in 3NT. And if ♥'s are trumps? Not so nice, you have to tackle ♥'s if they are trumps and it does not play so nicely.
♥ Q764	♥ 9532	
♦ KQ63	♦ AJ4	
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ9	

There – 'I told you so' shout all the 3NT leapers in unison – 'East should not bid Stayman on his 4333 shape'. Hogwash – it has little to do with being 4333. Consider what happens if East opens the bidding with 1NT. Presumably West then bids Stayman?

Something is wrong – you reach 3NT if West is dealer but 4♥ when East is dealer? The answer is that deciding not to bid Stayman has little to do with being 4333, you must make the same decision if 4432! When the West hand opens 1NT in example 3, East could simply bid 3NT. And if East opens? - then West could simply bid 3NT. Being 4333 or 4432 is largely irrelevant to this decision to ignore Stayman, it is the quality of the 4-4 fit and having excellent cover in the outside suits that counts.

West East Example 4

♠ KJ92 ♠ AQ84
♥ Q104 ♥ KJ2
♦ AJ3 ♦ KQ4
♣ A64 ♣ 732

One more example, loads of points, so 3NT with 4333 shape? This deal illustrates what I have just said ideally. Partner (either!) opens 1NT. If you simply bid 3NT because you are 4333 then you will be in an inferior contract. Go for the 4-4 fit when you have decent trumps, especially if all outside suits are not well covered. The 4333 shape is a red herring.

East Example 5

♠ K62
♥ J732
♦ AKQ
♣ Q73

Partner opens a strong NT. Loads of points. Partner's 15-17 plus this 15 means 30-32. Worth looking for slam? NO. Even if there is a ♥ fit then there is no slam because of the poor quality of these ♥'s. With this abundance of points outside the major, bid 3NT. Another way of looking at it is that this hand is not worth 15 points!

West East

♠ AQ3 ♠ K62
♥ K8654 ♥ J732
♦ J8 ♦ AKQ
♣ AJ5 ♣ Q73

But partner's 1NT may include a 5 card major! True, but in that case his suit quality is not so great (we open the major with good suits) and so even with a 5-4 fit 3NT may be best. Note that this decision to bid 3NT with ample points outside the weak major applies to 4432 as well as 4333 type hands. Of course not if the other 4 carder is the other major!

West East Example 6

♠ A1064 ♠ J952
♥ KQ84 ♥ A6
♦ AK4 ♦ QJ2
♣ 92 ♣ AK64

Even with weak trumps it may still be best to play in the 4-4 fit, here 6♠ is a very reasonable contract but there are only 11 tricks in NT. Even if you replace the ♣4 with a small ♥ so that the East hand is 4333, 6♠ does not need ♥'s behaving and is the best spot.

West East Example 7

♠ AQ3 ♠ KJ6
♥ KJ654 ♥ Q732
♦ Q8 ♦ 1072
♣ AJ5 ♣ KQ3

And look at this example. Many (most) players would choose to open 1NT with the West hand. East really would look pretty silly if he bids 3NT when opponents have 5 or 6 tricks off the top.

But there are always exceptions, and now we come onto something slightly different; we may have a 4-4 major suit fit but we have a long strong outside suit: -

West	East	<u>Example 8</u>
♠ A953	♠ J642	West opens 1NT, what should East do?
♥ A765	♥ 32	In these situations where the 4 card major is very weak and there
♦ AJ7	♦ 8	is a source of tricks elsewhere it is often best to go for the nine
♣ K9	♣ AQ8763	trick 3NT game. I would raise 1NT directly to 3NT with this East hand.

West	East	<u>Example 9</u>
♠ A953	♠ J642	And if the 4 card major is very weak and we have 6 excellent cards
♥ K84	♥ AQJ1096	in the other major then that may well be the best strain. With this
♦ AK4	♦ Q	East hand I would transfer into ♥'s and then bid 4♥ (well actually
♣ Q82	♣ 93	I would transfer to 4♥ via a Texas Transfer – we cover these later).

I must emphasise here that ignoring the 4-4 fit is very rarely a good decision. It only applies when: -

- the other three suits are *well* covered (with at least 27-28 combined pts and with no obvious weakness) and usually only when the 'trump' suit is very poor or
- the 4 card major is very weak and you have a strong 6 card suit elsewhere or
- we are not strong/shapely enough to bid over partner's 1NT.

OK, so we virtually always bid Stayman when we have a 4 card major. But does the 2♣ Stayman bid guarantee a 4 card major? And what are the continuations by opener and responder after 1NT - 2♣ - ? that's what the next 80 or so pages are all about!

2.2 Stayman When Using 4-way Transfers

We have seen that when playing 'standard' Stayman then the 2♣ bid always promises at least one 4 card major. Later on we will be discussing 4-way Jacoby transfers and for the transfers to the minors we need, directly over a 1NT opening:-

2♠ (transfer to ♣'s) 2NT (transfer to ♦'s)

No problem with the 2♠ bid (it is redundant) but using 2NT as a transfer means that it is no longer available as the limit raise (8-9 pts) (without a 4 card major). This means that *all* limit raises have to go via Stayman, regardless of whether they contain a 4 card major or not.

So we have to clear up how 2NT can be used as a transfer as it is normally used as an invitational (8-9 pts) raise in NT. Simple, we simply bid 2♣ and then bid 2NT after partner's response to 'Stayman'. Thus, when playing these 4-way transfers, a 2♣ 'Stayman' bid no longer guarantees a 4 card major. Does this lead to difficulties and a 4-4 major suit ever being missed? No, let's have some examples -

Example 1	West	East	West	East
(1) Stayman, may have no 4 card major	♠ J863 ♥ K64	♠ A97 ♥ Q93	1NT 2♠	2♣ (1) 2NT (2)
(2) invitational, 3 or less ♠'s	♦ AK63 ♣ AJ	♦ Q2 ♣ 109764	pass	

Example 2	West	East	West	East
(1) Stayman, may have no 4 card major	♠ J86 ♥ K64	♠ A97 ♥ Q93	1NT 2♦	2♣ (1) 2NT (2)
(2) invitational, may have any major suit holding	♦ AK63 ♣ AJ3	♦ Q2 ♣ 109764	pass	

So that all works fine, with no problems. The only area which needs some thought is when opener has both majors. In that case he obviously responds 2♥, but a responder with 4 ♠'s cannot now simply bid 2NT as opener will not know if he has 4 ♠'s or not. A problem?

No. Holding an invitational hand responder should bid 2NT if he does not have 4 ♠'s but bid 2♠ if he does. Thus,

In the sequence, 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠, 2♠ promises a 4 card ♠ suit and invitational values.

In the sequence, 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT, 2NT is invitational with no 4 card ♠ suit.

Note These invitational sequences are just one reason why opener should always respond 2♥ to Stayman when holding both majors. If he responds 2♠ and the bidding is 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT then opener has no idea if responder has 4 ♥'s or not.

Example 3

West	East	West	East
♠ AJ106	♠ K94	1NT	2♣
♥ AK64	♥ J97	2♥	2NT (1)
♦ Q63	♦ J975	pass	
♣ J3	♣ A105		

(1) In 'standard', this bid promises an invitational hand with 4 ♠'s and so opener may wish to retreat into 3♠. Playing 4-way transfers, this bid shows an invitational hand without a 4 card major. Opener passes the 2NT bid with this minimum. He would bid 3NT with a max whereas it would be 4♠ if not playing 4-way transfers.

Example 4

West	East	West	East
♠ AJ106	♠ K954	1NT	2♣
♥ AK64	♥ J97	2♥	2♠ (1)
♦ Q63	♦ J75	pass (2)	
♣ J3	♣ A105		

(1) In 'standard' this particular sequence is up to partnership understanding. When not using transfers, the bid is often used to show an invitational (or slightly less, say 7-8 pts) hand with 5 ♠'s. Since we can show that hand type using transfers we define a different meaning when using 4-way transfers: - Playing 4-way transfers this shows an invitational hand with 4 ♠'s. Opener will pass with a minimum and 4 ♠'s, correct to 2NT with a minimum without 4 ♠'s and bid the relevant game if holding a maximum.

(2) West has a minimum, so passes the invitational 2♠.

Being at the low level of 2♠ has other advantages. Sometimes a 4-3 fit may be preferable: -

Example 5

West	East	West	East
♠ AK6	♠ Q754	1NT	2♣
♥ Q9432	♥ 7	2♥	2♠
♦ Q63	♦ K75	pass	
♣ A3	♣ K9642		

In this example, 2♠ is better than 2NT

Example 6

West	East	West	East
♠ AJ86	♠ KQ54	1NT	2♣
♥ AK64	♥ J97	2♥	3NT (1)
♦ Q63	♦ A7	4♠	pass
♣ J3	♣ Q1092		

(1) This is the same if playing 4-way transfers or standard. The jump to 3NT shows game values with 4 ♠'s. If East did not have 4 ♠'s then he would have bid a direct 3NT.

Recap

Sequence A 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠

Sequence B 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠

Although seemingly similar, these sequences are totally different: -

With sequence A, 2♠ is to play. Responder has a weak hand containing 4 ♥'s and 5 ♠'s.

With sequence B, 2♠ is invitational. Responder has an invitational hand containing 4 ♠'s.

So the invitational sequences are: -

Sequence B 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ is invitational, with a four card ♠ suit

Sequence C 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT is invitational, may have 0,1 or 2 four card majors

Sequence D 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT is invitational, no four card major

Sequence E 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT is invitational, may have a four card ♥ suit

And obviously the following sequences are weak: -

Sequence F 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ is weak, with 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s

Sequence A 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ is weak, with 4 ♥'s and 5 ♠'s

When we get on to discuss 5-5 major suited hands, we see that it is best to also use either sequence A or F with a very weak 5-5 hand. Basically, try Stayman and then bid the best 5 card major if there is no 5-4 fit.

Note Playing traditional methods Sequence B, 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠, is redundant. It is sometimes used to show a hand with 5 ♠'s and 7-8 points which is not quite good enough to transfer and then invite. I guess that it's reasonable, but with no equivalent with a ♥ suit it really is a luxury that we cannot afford as we need the bid to show our invitational hand with 4 ♠'s.

Garbage or Crawling Stayman?

The Crawling Stayman convention seems to have some following these days so let's look at it: -

Crawling Stayman is an 'extension' of Garbage Stayman and is meant to be an improvement when responder has a weak hand containing both majors.

Hand A Playing our Garbage Stayman you may have a problem with this particular hand type. You start off with 2♣ but if partner replies 2♦ then you are simply on a guess as to which major to retreat into. Crawling Stayman solved this dilemma. After partner's 2♦ bid you bid 2♥ which, when crawling, shows both majors and opener then chooses the best suit.

♠ Q8642
♥ Q8642
♦ 76
♣ 3

Excellent, so our weak 5-5 hand is solved. But is this really excellent?

Hand B	Hand C	No! This time consider one of these hands. We use our Garbage Stayman and bid 2♣ with both. If partner responds 2♦ then we bid our 5 card suit. Playing Crawling Stayman this is not possible as a 2♥ bid promises 5-5. So with Hand B a Crawling Stayman player would have to transfer to ♥'s and possibly miss a 4-4 (or 4-5) ♠ fit.
♠ Q864 ♥ Q8642 ♦ 763 ♣ 3	♠ Q8642 ♥ Q864 ♦ 763 ♣ 3	

So neither convention is perfect, but since hand type B is more frequent than hand type A let's keep everything upright and forget all about crawling.

I won't bother to go into it, but there are further extensions to Crawling Stayman which enable 8 card minor suit fits to be located at the 3 level. As I said, let's forget all about it.

Opener's bid after Responder's Invitational 2NT

In standard methods (playing a strong NT) responder raises 1NT to 2NT with 8-9 points and no four card major. Using 4-way transfers we go via Stayman, but we have seen that that's no problem. But what should opener do when responder has invited with 2NT? Clearly he usually bids 3NT or passes, but we can occasionally make use of the 3♥/♠ (or even 3♣/♦) bids: -

If opener is going to accept the game invitation then he can bid a 5 card major just in case there is a 5-3 fit there.

Suppose that you open 1NT and the bidding goes 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - ? :-

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠ K86	♠ K86	♠ KJ6	♠ KJ64	♠ KJ64
♥ AJ1084	♥ AQ1094	♥ 108742	♥ AQ104	♥ AQ104
♦ KJ6	♦ KJ6	♦ AQ6	♦ Q96	♦ KJ9
♣ K3	♣ K3	♣ AQ	♣ K6	♣ K6

Hand 1: Pass, you do not have enough to accept the invitation.

Hand 2: Bid 3♥. You have enough to accept the game invitation and should show your decent 5 card suit.

Hand 3: You could bid a forcing 3♥, but with all the honours outside the suit, I prefer 3NT.

Hand 4: Pass, partner has denied 4♠'s.

Hand 5: Bid 3NT. The sequences 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♠/4♠ do not exist when playing 4-way transfers as the 2NT bid here by responder denies 4♠'s.

And it's much the same if opener has a 5 card ♠ suit and the bidding starts 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT; where a 3♠ bid by opener shows a decent 5 card ♠ suit.

And a similar situation applies when responder has a 4 card ♠ suit and the bidding has gone 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ - ?. But this time if opener has 4♠'s then there is a fit there: -

Hand 1: Bid 2NT. Again, you do not have enough to accept the invitation. If the ♣'s were weaker then passing 2♠ and playing in the Moysian fit is a very real possibility.

Hand 2: Bid 3♥. You again have enough to accept the game invitation and should show your decent 5 card suit. Partner's 4 card ♠ suit is irrelevant.

Hand 3: Again, you could bid a forcing 3♥, but with all the honours outside the suit, I still prefer 3NT.

Hand 4: Pass. You have a 4-4 ♠ fit but you are minimum.

Hand 5: Bid 4♠, obviously.

And what would a 3♠ bid by opener after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ mean?

You could well use it as passing the buck, showing 4 card support but not sure whether to go to game or not. Quite plausible, but consider this hand: -

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ7	♠ KJ85	1NT	2♣
♥ AQJ8	♥ K95	2♥	2♠
♦ 95	♦ 6432	3♠ (1)	4♠
♣ KJ97	♣ Q8	pass	

With a weak doubleton minor, West uses the 3♠ bid at (1) to show decent 3 card ♠ support and offering 4♠ as an alternative contract to 3NT. Reverse East's minors and 4♠ is still best.

Now consider this one: -

West	West	East	
♠ 95	1NT	2♣	Partner's 2NT bid is invitational and denies 4 ♠'s. We have game values but should we bid 3♥ to try to play in a Moysian fit?
♥ AQJ8	2♥	2NT	No. A 3♥ bid here shows 5 ♥'s and, in any case, the Moysian fit will not play well as it is the long trump hand taking the ♠ ruff.
♦ AQ7	?		No, its best to take your chances in 3NT.
♣ KJ97			

So the sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♥ promises a 5 card ♥ suit.

And what would a 3♠ bid by opener after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT mean?

Could it be a hand 4-4 in the majors with a weak minor and suggesting the ♠ Moysian fit?

West	West	East	
♠ KJ97	1NT	2♣	Partner's 2NT bid is again invitational and denies 4 ♠'s. We have game values but should we bid 3♠ to try to play in a Moysian fit there?
♥ AQJ8	2♥	2NT	No. If there is a ♦ problem it will be the hand long in trumps that will be forced. It's best to take your chances in 3NT and if you keep quiet about the ♠'s you may get a not unwelcome ♠ lead.
♦ 95	?		
♣ AQ7			

So the sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♠ is undefined.

Now again consider 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT what would 3♣ or 3♦ mean?

Hand 5	Hand 6	Partner has an invitational hand with no 4 card major. With Hand 5 it seems prudent to bid 3♣, to play. This will almost certainly be a safer contract than 2NT unless partner is exactly 3352. Hand 6 is similar and should bid 3♦ to play.
♠ 86	♠ 86	
♥ AK64	♥ AK64	
♦ K9	♦ AQ873	
♣ AQ873	♣ K9	

And after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT what would 3♣ or 3♦ mean?

Hand 7	Hand 8	Partner again has an invitational hand and may or may not have a 4 card major. With Hand 7 it may be best to bid 3♣, to play. With Hand 7 it's not clear, but with Hand 8 it must be best to bid 3♦ now if you had opened it with 1NT.
♠ 86	♠ Q6	
♥ AQ6	♥ K6	
♦ K97	♦ AQ8743	
♣ AQ873	♣ K97	

But after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT things are different.

Hand 9	Hand 10	Partner again has an invitational hand but we do not know if he has a 4 card ♥ suit or not. Bidding 3♣ with Hand 9 would be silly if partner has 3442 shape. And it's much the same with Hand 10. It's probably best to pass 2NT with these hands.
♠ AQ64	♠ AQ64	
♥ 86	♥ 86	
♦ K9	♦ AQ873	
♣ AQ873	♣ K9	

Summary: 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♥,
1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♠ and
1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ show a decent 5 card suit and offer responder the choice of games.

And 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♠ is showing decent 3 card support
but 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♠ is not required and is undefined.

And 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♣,
1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♦,
1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3♣ and
1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3♦ are all weak, to play.

But 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♣ and
1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♦ are not required and are undefined.

2.3 The 3♣/3♦ bids by responder after bidding Stayman

In this section we discuss the situation where opener replies to Stayman with a major suit bid and responder then bids a minor at the 3 level. So the four sequences: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣
1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♦ 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♦

Four fairly similar sequences, a 3 level minor suit bid after Stayman had received a major suit reply. But what does this 3♣/♦ bid mean? If you ask around then you will probably get any or all of the following: -

- 1) The 3♣/♦ bid is to play, saying nothing about majors.
- 2) The 3♣/♦ bid is natural, looking for slam, saying nothing about majors.
- 3) Natural, 4 card major & 5 card minor, game forcing.
- 4) Natural, 4 card major & 5 card minor, forcing for one round.
- 5) Natural, 4 card major & 4 card minor, seeking a 4-4 fit for slam.
- 6) Natural, invitational.
- 7) Natural, weak, 4 card major & 6 card minor.
- 8) 3♦ is Stayman in Doubt (SID).
- 9) 3♣ is Spring Stayman
- 10) A more sophisticated idea for both 3♣ and 3♦.

Many non-steady partnerships will have never discussed this, so let's look at all the sensible alternatives (assume a strong NT throughout): -

1) The 3♣/♦ bids are to play

Back in the days before transfers (to minors) it was not easy to play in a ♣ contract with a very weak hand because 2♣ is Stayman and 3♣ a slam try. The solution was to first bid 2♣ and then 3♣ over any response. The 3♣ bid simply showed 6 ♣'s (probably no 4 card major) and was to play. These days we have transfers to the minors and so this meaning is redundant. Now that transfers to the majors are common (so 2♦ is used as a transfer to ♥'s), the same situation applies in ♦'s.

So, no sensible use for our 4 sequences yet. Let's continue the search: -

2) The 3♣/♦ bid is natural, looking for slam, saying nothing about majors.

This scheme is favoured by players who do not play 4-way transfers and who would like to play direct jumps to 3♣/♦ as something special. The direct jumps to 3♣/♦ are discussed in detail later. Anyway, we play transfers to the minors and so do not need these bids to show good minor suits.

3) Natural, 4 card major & 5 card minor, game forcing

This is the most popular use of the bids, but it is totally unsatisfactory!

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens a strong NT. So bid Stayman and then your long minor if no major suit fit is immediately found? Certainly a plausible use for these sequences. But wait a minute, we will learn later that a transfer followed by a new suit is game forcing. So we can bid both of these hands by transferring to the minor and then bidding the major. Game forcing.
♠ 2	♠ AK98	
♥ K984	♥ 8	
♦ J3	♦ KQJ83	
♣ AQJ763	♣ 872	

Now bidding Stayman on these hand types is a popular treatment, but there are drawbacks. If LHO sticks his oar in and the opponents compete, then opener is left in the dark. You have bid 2♣ and that really means nothing – you could be weak, invitational, have a 4 card major or not etc. At least if you transfer to the minor partner knows something about your hand, and LHO is less likely to interfere over 2♠/2NT. If you bid Stayman first then you have little chance of showing both suits if opponents intervene.

But my main objection to this treatment is that opener does not know which 4-card major responder has if opener responds 2♦. Consider these examples: -

Example 1

West	East 1	East 2	West	East
♠ A4	♠ 75	♠ Q1087	1NT	2♣
♥ KJ9	♥ Q1087	♥ 75	2♦	3♣
♦ A962	♦ K7	♦ K7	? (1)	
♣ KJ76	♣ AQ543	♣ AQ543		

So what does West bid at (1)? If East has Hand 2 then 3NT is fine, if East has Hand 1 then West wants to play in the Moysian ♥ fit.

Example 2

West	East 3	East 4	West	East
♠ A4	♠ K5	♠ Q1087	1NT	2♣
♥ KJ9	♥ Q1087	♥ 7	2♦	3♣
♦ A962	♦ 7	♦ K5	3NT (1)	4♣
♣ KJ76	♣ AQ10543	♣ AQ10543	?	

Let's suppose that West tosses a coin and it comes down 3NT, so he bids 3NT at (1). This happens to be no problem as partner has a stronger hand this time and is looking for slam anyway. So East bids 4♣, looking for a ♣ slam; West would be delighted to accept if he knew that his ♥'s were working (East 3) but not opposite East 4.

Bidding Stayman unnecessarily gives the defence knowledge about opener's hand. If opener responds 2♦ or with the 'wrong' major then the defence has additional information about his hand. And you are no better off if you bid Stayman and a 4-4 major suit fit is found immediately. If opener also has a fit for responder's minor then there may well be a slam which is easier to find if responder had bid both of his suits: -

Example 3

West	East	West	East
♠ Q743	♠ K8	1NT	2♣
♥ AQ74	♥ K963	2♥	4♥
♦ A3	♦ 84	pass	
♣ KJ8	♣ AQ764		

The ♥ fit is found immediately but East has no idea about the superb ♣ fit and so quite reasonably simply bids game. An easy 6♥ missed.

Example 4

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ74	♠ K963	1NT	2♣
♥ Q743	♥ K8	2♥	3♣
♦ A3	♦ 84	3♠ (1)	4♠ (2)
♣ KJ8	♣ AQ764	pass	

This time West knows about East's two suits at (1) so he shows his ♠ support, he cannot realistically do anything else as he has no idea if East is interested in slam or not. And at (2) East does not know about the great ♣ fit and again quite reasonably just bids game. Slam again missed.

We will see how easy it is to bid these last four example hands correctly when we come onto minor suit transfers, and in particular minor-major two suiters, in section 4.2

- ♠ K963 And one further point. Consider this East hand from example 4 but slightly
 - ♥ Q8 stronger. Suppose that partner opens 1♥ (or 1♦), what do you respond?
 - ♦ Q4 This is an analogous situation, you have a game forcing two-suiter opposite
 - ♣ AQ764 partner's opener. The recommended bid is 2♣ followed by a forcing ♠ bid.
- So why on earth would you want to do it the other way round when partner opens 1NT? And, what's more, partner does not even know that it's a ♠ suit when you bid Stayman!

No, these types of hands must be bid by transferring to the minor and then bidding the major, opener then knows both of responder's suits. Simple.

4) Natural, 4 card major & 5 card minor, forcing for one round

This is one answer that I got when I was asking about the sequence. I guess an invitational sequence?

Since the 3♣/♦ bid is at the three level it is difficult to see how this is not game forcing. Makes no sense to me. We use the transfer to a minor sequences with strong hands and so this meaning does not exist. Let's look further for a *useful* purpose for these sequences: -

5) Natural, 4 card major & 4 card minor, seeking a 4-4 fit for slam

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens a strong NT and the hand is worth slam if (and probably only if) there is a 4-4 fit. So obviously start with Stayman and if no major fit materialises then bid your 4 card minor looking for the fit there. This obviously is the best use so far and is very sensible. But actually there are a couple of drawbacks. First, could this 3♣/♦ bid be a 5 card suit?
♠ K92	♠ KJ52	
♥ KJ52	♥ K92	
♦ AJ83	♦ K3	
♣ K3	♣ AJ83	

Hand C	And secondly how does responder bid if he has no 4 card major but one or two 4 card minors, say Hand C? The problem is that responder has started off by being the captain and finding something out about opener's shape, but by then bidding naturally he is passing some of the captaincy back to opener. As you will see later, we have a far better scheme whereby responder can establish if opener has a 4 (or 5!) card minor(s).	
♠ K92		
♥ K3		
♦ AJ83		
♣ KJ52		

6) Natural, invitational

Why not transfer? If responder does not have a 4 card major but has a minor suit, then he can transfer into the minor or simply invite with 2NT (via 2♣ playing 4-way transfers). As we see later when we discuss 4-way transfers (specifically transfers to a minor) opener can show game interest when responder transfers to a minor.

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A we simply invite with 2NT (via 2♣ as we shall see later).
♠ K106	♠ 976	Hand B is similar, but with no real possibility of an entry outside ♦'s it is best to transfer into ♦'s. If opener has the ♦Axx required to make 3NT then he will super-accept. We go through all of this later.
♥ 87	♥ J4	
♦ K9876	♦ KQ8764	
♣ Q42	♣ J2	

7) Natural, weak, 4 card major & 6 card minor

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens a strong NT. Seems simple, look for the 4-4 fit and if it does not materialise then settle for 3 of the minor.
♠ 2	♠ Q984	Let's look a little deeper. With Hand A we have no problem, if partner bids 2♦/♠ then we bid 3♣; works fine if partner is on the same wavelength. But then what about Hand B? You may miss a 4-4 ♠ fit. Now this scheme works fine (you may occasionally miss a 4-4 ♠ fit) and is what I would recommend if these sequences were not needed elsewhere.
♥ Q984	♥ 2	
♦ J3	♦ J3	
♣ Q87642	♣ Q87642	

Oops, I've given it away – there is a really good use for both the 3♣ and the 3♦ bids in these sequences. So with these hand types, simply transfer into the minor.

8) 3♣ is Spring Stayman

With this convention, popular in France, the 3♣ bid is artificial and asks opener to define his hand; in particular the minor suits. This convention is, in fact, very similar to what we shall be using but has the disadvantage that the bidding may go above 3NT when there is no fit.

So what do we use these sequences for? The 3♣ bid is used to find out about opener's minor suit distribution, fully covered in section 2.5. The 3♦ bid agrees the major suit as trumps and enquires: -

9) 3♦ is Stayman in Doubt (SID)

Stayman in Doubt (SID) is a convention designed to ignore 4-4 major suit fits when both hands are 4333 (or 3433). When responder has one of these flat hands with game values and partner opens 1NT then responder bids 2♣ Stayman. If opener replies in responder's 4 card major then responder bids an artificial 3♦ that says 'I am totally flat with 4 of your major, if you are also totally flat then bid 3NT'. This enables the contract to be 3NT when there is total duplication of shape. Now you need only to refer back to section 2.1 to see what I think of this philosophy. Even with total duplication in shape 4 of the major is usually best unless there are 28+ points with all three outside suits very well covered. However, this philosophy of 3♦ to ask about opener's shape can be extended such that it is a really useful conventional bid; especially when investigating slam.

Let's call it Advanced Stayman in Doubt (ASID). It's fully described next.

10) A more sophisticated idea for both 3♣ and 3♦

We have just decided to use 3♦ as a shape/strength enquiry (ASID) when the major suit is 'agreed' as trumps. But what about that 3♣ bid? We shall use 3♣ to enquire more about opener's distribution, normally specifically looking for a minor suit fit. This is our form of minor suit Stayman. It is widely used in Holland and is superior to the French equivalent, Spring Stayman. More about it later.

2.4 3♦ (after Stayman) - Advanced SID (ASID)

So finally we are really going to define a meaning for the sequences

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♦ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♦.

The 3♦ bid agrees trumps (but does not rule out 3NT as a final contract) and asks opener to further define his hand. Responder has 4 trumps but may be any shape (unlike the original SID convention). Responder is the captain. Opener's replies are: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♦ :-

3♥ = 3433, min
 3♠ = doubleton ♠
 3NT = 3433, non min
 4♣ = doubleton ♣
 4♦ = doubleton ♦
 4♥ = 5 card ♥ suit

after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♦ :-

3♥ = doubleton ♥
 3♠ = 4333, min
 3NT = 4333, non min
 4♣ = doubleton ♣
 4♦ = doubleton ♦
 4♠ = 5 card ♠ suit

Responder may then sign off in the appropriate contract or investigate slam. It is fairly logical to use a subsequent 4♠ as RKCB in the ♥ sequence and 4NT in the ♠ sequence.

Obviously we need to elaborate on a few of the aspects. Let's start with the totally flat hand that is shown by 3 of the major or 3NT. All examples assume a strong NT: -

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ K87	♠ A92	1NT	2♣	(1) ASID enquiry
♥ AJ43	♥ K952	2♥	3♦ (1)	(2) 3433, min
♦ K74	♦ Q95	3♥ (2)	pass (3)	(3) good judgement
♣ AJ4	♣ 963			

East establishes that West is minimum with totally duplicated distribution, so he stays out of game (neither 3NT nor 4♥ is likely to be a success). Note that both East and West evaluate their hands as a minimum because of the flat shape.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ8	♠ A92	1NT	2♣	(1) ASID enquiry
♥ K743	♥ J952	2♥	3♦ (1)	(2) 3433, max
♦ A74	♦ QJ5	3NT (2)	pass (3)	
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ6			

(3) With ample points and poor trumps, East elects to go for the NT game.

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q8	♠ 962	1NT	2♣	(1) ASID enquiry
♥ A10743	♥ Q952	2♥	3♦ (1)	(2) 5♥'s
♦ A74	♦ KQ5	4♥ (2)	pass	
♣ AJ2	♣ KQ6			

It really would be pretty silly to be in 3NT on this deal.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ8	♠ AJ6	1NT	2♣	(1) ASID enquiry
♥ AJ74	♥ Q952	2♥	3♦ (1)	(2) doubleton ♦
♦ Q4	♦ 852	4♦ (2)	4♥	
♣ A942	♣ KQ6	pass		

ASID is not only used for looking for the best possible game; if responder bids on over game, he is looking for slam (or he may simply bid slam): -

Example 5

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ85	♠ A6	1NT	2♣	(1) ASID enquiry
♥ KQ74	♥ AJ92	2♥	3♦ (1)	(2) doubleton ♣
♦ QJ4	♦ K1093	4♣ (2)	6♥	
♣ Q2	♣ A73	pass		

A reasonable slam on minimal values. Excellent on a non-♣ lead.

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ7	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A42	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♦'s
♦ A765	♦ KQJ4	3♠ (2)	etc (3)	(3) East knows West is 3343
♣ K94	♣ Q8			and bids on to 6♦.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ4	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A42	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) a 5 card minor
♦ A7652	♦ KQJ4	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ KJ	♣ Q8	3NT (4)	etc (5)	(4) ♦'s
				(5) East bids on to 6♦ or 6NT.

Example 3

Sometimes there is no minor suit fit: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ4	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A42	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) a 5 card minor
♦ A2	♦ KQJ4	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ K7652	♣ Q8	3♠ (4)	3NT (5)	(4) ♣'s
		pass		(5) wrong one

After the minor suit shape ask, a bid of 4 of a minor sets the trump suit. Since it is preferable to use something lower than 4NT as the key card ask with a minor suit, we use this bid to double up as RKCB. You could play Kickback or cue bid if you prefer but that would leave less room for quantitative bids as explained later.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A62	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) two 4 card minors
♦ A982	♦ KQJ4	3NT (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) ♦'s are trumps, RKCB
♣ A652	♣ K8	4♥ (4)	etc to 7♦	(4) 3 key cards

Example 5

As promised, East Hand L from the beginning of section 2.

West	East (L)	West	East	
♠ 976	♠ AK3	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AQ	♥ KJ73	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) two 4 card minors
♦ AJ52	♦ Q3	3NT (2)	4♣ (3)	(3) setting trumps, RKCB
♣ AJ107	♣ KQ52	4♦ (4)	etc to 6♣	(4) 3 key cards

As I said in the previous example, playing 4 of a minor at (3) to set trumps and as RKCB is very sensible.

Fit Showing Quantitatives

We have seen that it is advantageous to use 4 of the minor as RKCB. Then 4NT is obviously quantitative, but is there a minor suit fit or not? Responder knows this but opener may well need to know, especially if he fancies a minor suit slam if there is a fit.

The answer is to reserve a 4♠ bid (and sometimes 4♥) as further quantitative bids, similar to 4NT but stating that there is a fit. This is no problem as the bids would be cue bids otherwise and with minor suits as trumps it is better to have the RKCB bid at a low level.

So, basically, 4NT is quantitative with no fit and 4♠ is quantitative but acknowledges a fit. In the situations, where opener has shown both minors, then 4♥ is used to indicate the ♣ fit and 4♠ for the ♦ fit. We can also extend the principle to indicate to opener what sort of fit (4-4, 5-4, 5-3) we have. The complete scheme is as follows, where the spare bids may be used as cue bids or anything else you wish: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♥

(4 ♣'s)

3♠ is

3NT is to play, no fit

4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s

4♦ is

4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 4-4 ♣ fit

4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 4-5 ♣ fit

4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♠

(4 ♦'s)

3NT is to play, no fit

4♣ is

4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s

4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 4-4 ♦ fit

4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 4-5 ♦ fit

4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3NT
 (4 ♣'s + 4 ♦'s)

4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s
 4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s
 4♥ is quantitative, indicating a ♣ fit
 4♠ is quantitative, indicating a ♦ fit
 4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3♠
 (5 ♣'s)

3NT is to play, no fit
 4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s
 4♦ is
 4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 5-3 ♣ fit
 4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 5-4 ♣ fit
 4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3NT
 (5 ♦'s)

4♣ is
 4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s
 4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 5-3 ♦ fit
 4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 5-4 ♦ fit
 4NT is quantitative, no fit.

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ7	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A42	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♦'s
♦ A765	♦ KQJ4	3♠ (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) quantitative, 4-4 ♦ fit
♣ K94	♣ J8	4NT (4)	pass	

(4) With a flat minimum, West elects to play in 4NT.

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ7	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AJ2	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♦'s
♦ A765	♦ Q8	3♠ (2)	4NT (3)	(3) quantitative, no fit
♣ K94	♣ AQJ8	6NT (4)	pass	

Note that East needs a better hand to invite than he had in example 6 because there is no fit. West knows there is no fit, so East must have around 17 points to invite (with a lesser hand he would sign off with 3NT at (3)). With his max and top cards, West accepts at (4).

Example 8

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q72	♠ K984	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A72	♥ KJ	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) a 5 card minor
♦ AQJ65	♦ K103	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ K9	♣ AQ84	3NT (4)	4♥ (5)	(4) ♦'s
		6♦	pass	(5) quantitative, 5-3 fit

With just a 5-3 fit, East needs a good hand (good 16 or 17) to invite slam at (5). West has values to accept and the 5-3 fit is probably superior to 6NT. The mere fact that East has invited (rather than bid slam/RKCB) means that there are not points to spare and a decent fit is usually safer. Also, of course, West knows a great deal about East's shape. He has 3 ♦'s and at least 4 ♣'s; it is quite likely that he is short in one major and there may be a ruff available.

Incidentally, West does not know that East has a 4 card major for sure. As we will see shortly responder also has to use similar SARS sequences starting with 2♣ when he is just interested in opener's minors.

Since the fit-showing quantitative bids are forcing, responder may use them to indicate the fit and then bid on over opener's reply. I won't bother to elaborate on this possible extension. Most of the time responder will either wish to use RKCB or to invite using a quantitative bid.

2.5.2 Shape Asking Relays after Stayman (SARS) – after a +ve Stayman response.

Here we cover the sequences when opener does have a 4 (perhaps 5) card major, i.e. :-

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥, 3♣ asks: -

3♦ = a 4 card ♣ or ♦ suit (1)
 3♥ = a 5 card ♥ suit
 3♠ = a 4 card ♠ suit
 3NT = 3433

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠, 3♣ asks: -

3♦ = a 4 card ♦ suit (1)
 3♥ = a 4 card ♣ suit (1)
 3♠ = a 5 card ♠ suit
 3NT = 4333

(1) If you have opened 1NT on something like 4252 shape, then you can only indicate the long minor as a 4 card suit. Note that the responses in the ♠ sequence are out of order; this is a slightly better method as an eventual ♦ contract will be played by the 1NT opener.

The ♥ sequence is not totally explicit and so we need another relay to establish the 4 card minor after a 3♦ reply: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♦, 3♥ asks: -

3♠ = 4 ♣'s or possibly 2425
 3NT = 4 ♦'s or possibly 2452

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ K76	♠ AJ98	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A962	♥ K8	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) a 4 card minor
♦ A9	♦ KQ74	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ KQ42	♣ A83	3♠ (4)	3NT	(4) ♣'s
		pass		

With a ♠ or ♦ fit, East would be looking for slam.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ A962	♠ K8	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ K76	♥ AJ98	2♠	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♣'s
♦ A9	♦ KQ74	3♥ (2)	3NT	
♣ KQ42	♣ A83	pass		

Again, no slam with no fit.

A Word About Kickback etc.

We have seen that there are times when it is advisable to use another bid other than 4NT as RKCB. Kickback uses the suit above trumps as the key card ask, so 4NT when ♠'s are trumps and 4♠ when ♥'s are trumps etc. In our situation here we often want 4NT (and other bids) as quantitative, so we use Kickback for the majors and, in this situation, 4 of the minor as RKCB for the minor.

More Fit Showing Quantitatives

Again we have to define our RKCB and quantitative (with and without fit) bids.

Let's assume that we play 4 of the minor as RKCB and Kickback as RKCB for the majors. 4NT, if available, is quantitative without a fit and the next free bid(s) below is (are) quantitative with a fit:

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♥
(5 ♥'s)

3♠ is
3NT is to play, no fit
4♣ is
4♦ is quantitative, indicating a 5-3 ♥ fit
4♥ is to play
4♠ is RKCB (Kickback)
4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♠
(4 ♠'s)

3NT is to play, no fit
4♣ is quantitative, 4-4 ♠ fit
4♦ is quantitative, no fit
4♥ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)
4♠ is to play
4NT is RKCB for ♠'s

Now the above may seem strange, why would responder use SARS if he has a 4 card ♠ suit? The answer probably is that he also has a 4 card minor suit and is looking for a fit in either.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3NT
(3433)

pass is to play, no fit
4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s (3-5 fit)
4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s (3-5 fit)
4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 3-5 ♣ fit
4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 3-5 ♦ fit
4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3♠
(4 ♣'s)

3NT is to play, no fit
4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s
4♦
4♥ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)
4♠ is quantitative, indicating a ♣ fit
4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3NT

(4♦'s)

pass is to play, no fit

4♣ is

4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s

4♥ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)

4♠ is quantitative, indicating a ♦ fit

4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♦

(4♦'s)

3♥ is

3♠ is

3NT is to play, no fit

4♣ is

4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s

4♥ is quantitative, indicating a ♦ fit

4♠ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)

4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♥

(4♣'s)

3♠ is

3NT is to play, no fit

4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s

4♦ is

4♥ is quantitative, indicating a ♣ fit

4♠ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)

4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♠

(5♠'s)

3NT is to play, no fit

4♣ is

4♦ is quantitative, indicating a 5-3 ♠ fit

4♥ is quantitative, no fit

4♠ is to play

4NT is RKCB for ♠'s

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3NT

(4333)

pass is to play, no fit

4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s (3-5 fit)

4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s (3-5 fit)

4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 3-5 ♣ fit

4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 3-5 ♦ fit

4NT is quantitative, no fit

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ76	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A962	♥ K8	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♠'s
♦ A92	♦ KQJ4	3♠ (2)	4NT (3) etc	(3) RKCB
♣ K2	♣ A83	etc to 7♠		

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ6	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A962	♥ K8	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) a 4 card minor
♦ A962	♦ KQJ4	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ K2	♣ A83	3NT (4)	4♦ (5)	(4) ♦'s
		etc to 7♦.		(5) RKCB

Sometimes you may not be looking for slam, but just the best game: -

Example 5

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ6	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AQ962	♥ KJ3	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) 5 ♥'s
♦ Q62	♦ KJ94	3♥ (2)	4♥	
♣ Q7	♣ 98	pass		

SARS is not just used to establish a fit, it is also uncovers possible weakness (shortage) in a possible NT contract: -

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ6	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AQ96	♥ KJ3	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) a 4 card minor
♦ Q652	♦ KJ94	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ Q7	♣ 98	3NT (4)	4♥ (5)	(4) ♦'s
		pass		(5) with a ♣ weakness, East goes for the Moysian fit .

Note that East cannot use 4♥ as a quantitative bid here as it is needed to sign off.

The following example is from a recent (2004) club competition. A hopeless 6NT was reached at 7 of the 9 tables where it was played. Let's have a look at how we handle it using SARS: -

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ92	♠ Q8	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AK103	♥ J7	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♠'s
♦ A93	♦ KQJ42	3♠ (2)	3NT (3)	
♣ 109	♣ AQ42	pass		

East has a slam invitational hand, and would investigate slam if a 5-4 or 4-4 minor suit fit was found. With no such fit there is no slam (5-3 is probably not good enough), so a quiet 3NT at (3) is very prudent. An invitational 4NT (4♦ in our system) would be an overbid at (3) with no fit. Even if East did overbid with a quantitative 4NT (4♦), West, with a complete mis-fit and little in the way of minor suit honours, should pass (bid 4NT).

Another way of bidding this hand is to transfer into ♦'s and then bid ♣'s (we cover this later) but you are then at the 4♣ level and I would prefer a stronger and more shapely hand. I would only look for slam if there is a 4-4 ♣ or 5-4 ♦ fit, and the way to discover that is via SARS.

So, we don't actually need a 4 card major to bid SARS. More of this in the next section.

Summary

It is fairly plain that SARS and the fit Showing quantitatives work very well. We keep the RKCB bid at or below the Kickback level and the Fit Showing quantitatives fill up most of the remaining bids admirably, but are there any drawbacks?

The Down Side?

Just one really. We frequently use 4-of-the-minor as RKCB and that is very sensible as it is just one bid below the safe Kickback threshold, but occasionally we will thus be bidding RKCB with an outside weak suit (not a recommended practice).

This certainly is a negative factor, but most of the time it will work out OK and there is no guarantee that an alternative approach (cue bidding) will work out any better as you are already rather high. I believe that the gains made by using RKCB at a low level and the gains from using Fit Showing Quantitatives more than outweigh any negative results from occasionally using Blackwood with a weak suit. And remember, the Blackwood bidder is usually responder and partner has opened a strong NT and so usually has a holding in the weak suit.

Basically, you cannot have everything. If you wish your RKCB bids to be at or below the Kickback level then you may occasionally have to bid RKCB with a weak suit outside.

2.5.3 Minor Suit Stayman.

There are various versions of minor suit Stayman. Perhaps the most common is 2♠ as this bid is redundant when you play major suit Jacoby transfers. Let's just have a look at this 2♠ as minor suit Stayman; opener responds 2NT with no 4 card minor and 3♣/♦ holding a 4 card minor (if both, he bids his best one?). Woefully inadequate! There is no mechanism to show both minors and what if opener has a 5 card minor? Yet this is the choice of many experts! I think that we can certainly find something far better! Read on.

Another, somewhat antiquated, but more accurate version is the Sharples 4♣/♦ after Stayman. We, however, wish to retain the traditional 4♣ Gerber bid and so we utilise our 3♣ asking after Stayman (SARS) as a substitute for Minor Suit Stayman. Thus our original 2♣ bid may not contain a 4 card major if we subsequently bid 3♣.

Actually, our SARS scheme is a definite improvement on 2♠ Minor Suit Stayman as it allows us to find minor suit fits after trying (and failing) to find a major suit fit. Also, SARS enables us to establish partner's shape much more closely.

Bidding Stayman and subsequent Shape Asking Relays with no 4 card Major

Hand A Partner opens a strong NT. You want to be in slam, preferably in a minor suit if there is a fit. 4NT, quantitative, would find the fit, but only if partner does not pass. With this slam forcing hand we need to have some form of Minor Suit Stayman. The solution? Bid 2♣ anyway and then ask about partner's shape by bidding 3♣ next turn.

♠ AJ8
♥ K3
♦ KQJ4
♣ KJ84

Example A.1

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ7	♠ AJ8	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A42	♥ K3	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) 4♦'s, so 3343
♦ A1065	♦ KQJ4	3♠ (2)	etc. (3)	(3) and onwards to 6♦.
♣ A95	♣ KJ84			

No problem. There is also no problem if opener does have a 4 card major, we simply employ the Shape Asking Relay. Partner may assume that we have the other major, but that does not matter, we are the Captain: -

Example A.2

West	East	West	East	
♠ K1072	♠ AJ8	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A42	♥ K3	2♠	3♣ (1)	(2) 4♦'s
♦ A1065	♦ KQJ4	3♦ (2)	etc (3)	(3) with the fit established, East bids on to 6♦.
♣ A9	♣ KJ84			

After a 3♣ shape ask, asker often finds a fit; and if there is or is not a minor suit fit this is always established below the level of 3NT (a big advantage over Sharples 4♣/♦). When no fit is found, then asker can always sign off in 3NT. A bid of the minor shown agrees trumps and is best used as RKCB. 4NT is invitational, and we have our Fit Showing Quantitatives to indicate if there is a fit or not.

Obviously this knowledge of whether there is a fit is extremely useful for opener in deciding if he should push on or not.

Now quite a lot of new stuff here and it certainly needs clarifying with examples.

Hand B I came across this hand in a British magazine's bidding quiz. You were asked the correct bid after partner had opened 1NT. Now actually the problem involved a weak NT opening (12-14) and so I have adjusted this hand slightly by 3 points (the ♠J was the ♠A) so that now partner opens a strong NT (15-17).
 ♠ J4
 ♥ K73
 ♦ AQ42
 ♣ KQ76
 What do you do? The recommended bid was 3NT. The author stating that 'You have a balanced hand with no four card major, and therefore little prospect of playing in anything other than a no-trump contract. You are very strong, but do you have enough for slam?'. I have adjusted the author's comments for a strong NT opening:
 -

To be fair, the system used was not sophisticated, with no mechanism for finding a 4-4 minor suit other than a quantitative 4NT, which may be too high. We however, can do much better than the recommended 3NT bid as we can establish any minor suit fit below 3NT.

West	East	This was the complete hand shown in the solutions. The recommended bidding being 1NT – 3NT – pass.
♠ A7	♠ J4	The author went on to say 'With balanced hands you should aim for 33 points to be able to make a small slam. You have 15 and your partner's maximum is 17, so your maximum combined total is 32: not usually enough for a slam. Settle for 3NT.'
♥ AQJ2	♥ K73	
♦ KJ105	♦ AQ42	
♣ J105	♣ KQ76	

As I said, the bidding quiz scenario had a limited bidding system, so this statement may be true in context; but it is not true if you have our more sophisticated system to find 4-4 minor suit fits below the level of 3NT.

Finally, the author adds 'In general, if you have a balanced hand you need 16 points to have a real chance to make slam in no-trumps after your partner has opened a strong NT. On this hand, your limit is surprisingly just 9 tricks after the ♠ lead'. Probably true, but why not investigate a minor suit slam if you have the tools! 6♦ is an excellent contract, requiring only a 3-2 trump break (+ chances if they are 4-1).

Let's use this Hand B in all of the following examples and see if we can get to the correct contract depending upon opener's shape and strength.

We start with the actual hand (the ♠J and ♠A are interchanged from the original weak NT deal): -

Example B.1

West	East	West	East	
♠ A7	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQJ2	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ105	♦ AQ42	3♦ (3)	3♥ (4)	(3) 4 card ♣ or ♦
♣ J105	♣ KQ76	3NT (5)	4♠ (6)	(4) which?
		6♦ (7)	pass	(5) ♦'s
				(6) quantitative, ♦ fit

(7) With a near maximum, superb trumps, decent shape and good intermediates; West has no problem in accepting the invitation.

Example B.2

West	East	West	East	
♠ A7	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQ92	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ85	♦ AQ42	3♦ (3)	3♥ (4)	(3) 4 card ♣ or ♦
♣ J52	♣ KQ76	3NT (5)	4♠ (6)	(4) which?
		5♦ (7)	pass	(5) ♦'s
				(6) quantitative, ♦ fit

(7) With a bare minimum, West cannot accept the slam invitation. Because of his poor holding in both black suits, he elects for 5♦ instead of 4NT.

Note that 3NT probably will not even make if the ♥'s fail to split.

Example B.3

West	East	West	East	
♠ A987	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQJ2	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ5	♦ AQ42	3♠ (3)	3NT (4)	(3) 4 card ♠
♣ J5	♣ KQ76	pass		

(4) With no fit, the East hand is not worth an invitation.

Perhaps a ♥ game is the best contract: -

Example B.4

West	East	West	East	
♠ A7	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQ982	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ5	♦ AQ42	3♥ (3)	4♦ (4)	(3) 5 ♥'s
♣ J85	♣ KQ76	4♥	pass	(4) quantitative, 5-3 ♥ fit

And there may be a slam in ♥'s: -

Example B.5

West	East	West	East	
♠ A7	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQJ82	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ5	♦ AQ42	3♥ (3)	4♦ (4)	(3) 5 ♥'s
♣ J105	♣ KQ76	6♥	pass	(4) quantitative, 5-3 ♥ fit

And ♣'s may be just as good a suit for slam: -

Example B.6

West	East	West	East	
♠ A72	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQ82	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ K7	♦ AQ42	3♦ (3)	3♥ (4)	(3) a 4 card minor
♣ A1052	♣ KQ76	3♠ (5)	4♠ (6)	(4) which
		6♣	pass	(5) ♣'s
				(6) quantitative, ♣ fit

All in all, I think that there is more to this East hand than just selling out in 3NT (which may not even make). Don't you agree? So don't believe everything that you read in the magazines.

The bottom lines: -

Look for a fit. We really do need a good mechanism for finding slams with a fit and this concept of the Fit Showing Quantitatives really does improve slam bidding, especially with slam invitational hands.

Invitational slam bidding is an area that is grossly overlooked in modern bidding theory. One is more likely to hold a slam invitational hand than one that definitely wants to go slamming – think about it.

Minor suit slams are often overlooked in favour of less secure 6NT contracts. Perhaps a negative effect of matchpoint (pairs) scoring? It's usually best to go for the safer contract.

Points are important, of course, but the value of a fit is underestimated. The following example shows that even an excellent 17 count is not good enough opposite a respectable strong NT opener if there is no fit.

For this final example, we'll improve the East hand slightly so that it's certainly looking for slam, but have a West hand with no fit.

Example B.7

West	East	West	East	
♠ A973	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQJ2	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ	♦ AQ42	3♠ (3)	4♦ (4)	(3) 4 card ♠
♣ J95	♣ AK76	4NT	pass	(4) quantitative, no fit

East has a maximal invitation (some would jump straight in). West has a decent hand, but with no fit there is no slam.

2.6 **Responder has 5-4, 4-5, 6-4 or 4-6 in the Majors.**

And now for something completely different. Partner opens 1NT and we have 9 cards in the majors (5-4 or 4-5) or 10 cards (6-4 or 4-6).

Hand A We have covered the weak 5-4 (or 4-5) hands already, just to recap: -
 With this 'garbage' hand you just want to play in a better spot than 1NT. So transfer and get partner playing in 2♠? That would often be fine, but it may just be that partner has 4 (or even 5) ♥'s and you miss a 4-4 ♥ fit. So best to bid 2♣ and then pass a 2♥ or 2♠ bid but convert 2♦ to 2♠. Thus the Stayman sequence: -

♠ Q9652
 ♥ Q854
 ♦ 93
 ♣ 76

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ shows a weak hand with 5 ♥'s & 4 ♠'s and is drop dead.
 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ shows a weak hand with 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s and is drop dead.

And how about if you are 64 or 46 in the majors and weak? There are two options here; you can bid Stayman and then the 6-carder if opener replies 2♦. The other, perhaps preferable, option is to simply transfer into the 6 card suit.

Hand B	Hand C	Partner opens 1NT.
♠ K842 ♥ Q98542 ♦ 105 ♣ 2	♠ KJ8542 ♥ J982 ♦ 105 ♣ 2	Some would bid 2♣ with both of these hands. Others would transfer into the 6 card suit. Yet others would bid Stayman with Hand B and transfer with Hand C because of the weaker ♥'s. And me? I would always look for the 4-4 fit, but that is my 'thing'. However, transferring may well work out best as the strong NT hand will always be declarer. It's up to you and does not really matter too much.

Example

Dealer:	♠ K842	West	North	East	South
South	♥ Q98542				
Both vul	♦ 105	-	-	-	1NT
	♣ 2	pass	2♣	pass	2♠
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ J73	N	♠ 96			
♥ K3	W E	♥ AJ10			
♦ K98	S	♦ Q763			
♣ Q10543		♣ K876			
	♠ AQ105				
	♥ 76				2♠ probably plays better than 2♥, but then I
	♦ AJ42				guess that it's just as easy to construct hands
	♣ AJ9				where 2♥ plays better.

Hand D Take this example, with very weak ♥'s and a robust ♠ suit it is surely best to transfer into ♠'s and pass. We cover transfers later.

♠ QJ10852
♥ J872
♦ 74
♣ 9

Hand E It's similar with an invitational hand. Here the ♠'s are far better than the ♥'s and so it will normally work out best to transfer into ♠'s and then invite with

♠ KQ10852 3♠.
♥ J872
♦ J4
♣ 9

Hand F And the same with a game going hand. This hand should simply transfer into ♠'s. We can transfer into 4♠ directly with a Texas transfer when we have no slam interest and we'll cover it later.

♠ KQ10852
♥ J872
♦ K4
♣ 9

Hand G OK, but what about hands with a decent 4 card major? You could transfer into the 5/6 card major and then bid the 4 carder (so 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ here).

♠ QJ852
♥ AJ87
♦ K4
♣ 74

This sequence is normally considered as game forcing. However, the recommended modern practice is to reserve the transfer sequences for 5-5 hands and to bid Stayman on *all* major suit 5-4's and 6-4's (no matter what strength). With this example bid Stayman and raise any major suit response to game. If opener responds 2♦ then jump to 3♠, game forcing, offering partner the choice of 4♠ or 3NT. A possible slight improvement on this scheme is to jump in the 4 card major, thus ensuring that the NT opener is declarer (the Smolen Convention – we'll cover it in detail later). So that's fine with Hand G, but what about invitational hands? ...

Smolen at the two level

I'll mention this but it's perhaps a somewhat unwieldy convention that I don't really like. When opener replies 2♦ to our Stayman enquiry we use both 2♥ and 2♠ as artificial bids: -

- 2♥ is a puppet to 2♠ which may be a weak hand (5-4, responder passes the 2♠ bid) or any number of other meanings (responder bids on).
- 2♠ asks opener to define his hand.

Amongst all of these complex sequences it is possible for responder to hit upon the correct contract when he is 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors but there are drawbacks: -

- 1) We lose our fundamental 'Garbage Stayman' possibility of playing in 2♥ with a weak 4-5 hand.
- 2) It is rather complex.
- 3) It goes against the general Smolen philosophy in that responder is usually declarer in an eventual 3♠ or 4♠ contract.
- 4) Nobody (or very few) plays it.

So you don't like 'Smolen at the two level'? Then there is no established method to handle invitational 5-4's & 4-5's – tough luck?! The scheme I outlined for game forcing hands (Smolen 3♥/♠ or natural 3♥/♠ over partner's 2♦ response to Stayman) is pretty well universally used but there is no simple invitational bid if opener responds 2♦ to your Stayman enquiry! Your options are a game force (Smolen 3♥/♠ or natural 3♥/♠), an offbeat 2NT or pass. This is, however, what the majority of experienced players play and so I'll cover it in detail in the next section.

But don't despair! There is a simple solution to the invitational 5-4 / 4-5 (and 6-4 / 4-6) problem (Quest transfers) and we will meet them later and they have the advantages that: -

- 1) We retain our fundamental 'Garbage Stayman' possibilities with all weak hands.
- 2) They are simple.
- 3) Opener becomes declarer in virtually all ♥, ♠ or NT contracts
- 4) 'Everybody' will be playing them in the future!?

But first, let's look at what people do at present: -

2.6.1 The Traditional Method – Smolen etc.

Smolen is game forcing and is basically a command for partner to bid 4♥/♠ so that he becomes declarer in that contract (or perhaps a slam). Declaring from the NT opener's hand very often has its advantages: -

Example

Dealer:	♠ AK9	West	North	East	South
North	♥ Q3				
Both vul	♦ KQ75	-	1NT (1)	pass	2♣
	♣ K863	pass	2♦	pass	3♠ (2)
		pass	4♠	all pass	
♠ 105	N	♠ 742			
♥ 10872	W E	♥ J95	(1) 15-17		
♦ J964	S	♦ A1082	(2) natural and forcing, not playing		
♣ QJ10		♣ A42	Smolen		
	♠ QJ863				
	♥ AK64				
	♦ 3				
	♣ 975				

West leads the obvious ♣Q, down one. Clearly the wrong hand is declarer. Let's see how we can solve this problem (by playing Smolen): -

Smolen

We will be covering transfers later and we will see that game going two suiters are easy. The traditional method using Jacoby transfers is to transfer into the 5 card suit and then bid your 4 card suit (game forcing). This is certainly the recommended method with a 5 card major and a 4 or 5 card minor. However, with 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors, most serious players these days employ Stayman (they use the transfer and bid sequences in the majors only when 5-5). So, with a game forcing 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors opposite a 1NT opening you bid Stayman. If partner replies in a major then raise to game. And what if partner replies 2♦? Normally you bid 3 of your 5 card major (game forcing) and give partner the choice between 4 of the major or 3NT. A slight improvement on this (when playing a strong NT) is the Smolen convention, whereby you bid 3 of your 4 card major, thus giving opener the same options but ensuring that the 1NT opener is declarer

So when playing Smolen we have: -

Hand A

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥ shows 5 ♠'s, 4 ♥'s game forcing.

♠ QJ852
♥ AK87
♦ J4
♣ 74

Opener normally completes this Smolen transfer by bidding 4♠.
3NT is an allowable but not common alternative. It notes that responder is 5-4 but suggesting that 3NT is preferable.

Hand B

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠ shows 5 ♥'s, 4 ♠'s game forcing.

♠ KJ52
♥ AJ872
♦ J4
♣ 74

Opener normally completes this Smolen transfer by bidding 4♥.
Again 3NT is an allowable but not common alternative, noting that responder is 4-5 but suggesting that 3NT is preferable.

Example

Dealer:	♠ AQ104	West	North	East	South
South	♥ 108543				
Both vul	♦ A3	-	-	-	1NT
	♣ 62	pass	2♣	pass	2♦
		pass	3♠ (1)	pass	4♥
♠ 652	N	♠ 9873	all pass		
♥ AQJ	W E	♥ 76			
♦ K764	S	♦ J109			
♣ 543		♣ Q1087	(1) Smolen. 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s		

♠ KJ
♥ K92
♦ Q852
♣ AKJ9

If North was declarer, then ♦J lead would kill the contract. With South as declarer, careful play will see the contract home despite the bad trump position.

So, all very nice and simple. But hang on! If after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥ opener is expected to bid 4♠, then what the hell does 3♠ mean? And come to think of it, what do 4♣, 4♦ and 4♥ mean? And the similar bids in the 3♠ sequence?

Explicitly, after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥ ... what are 3♠, 4♣, 4♦ and 4♥?
 and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠ ... what are 4♣ and 4♦?

Responder has shown 5-4 (or 4-5) shape and game-going values (but no more – although he may have of course). Opener has denied a 4 card major. Why on earth would he want to break the Smolen transfer? Simple, he has a max, good 3 card support for responder's 5 card suit and shape that indicates that slam may be on if partner is interested.

But what should these bids mean? A cue bid? A 2nd suit? A (weak) doubleton? I guess that you could choose it to be any of these, but I prefer the cue bid option. So let's state that these bids are cue bids, showing the ace of the suit bid (or ♥A in the case of 3♠) and good three card support (slam interest).

Thus we could have: -

After	1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥	and after	1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠
	3♠ = three ♠'s + ♥A		4♣ = three ♥'s + ♣A ?
	4♣ = three ♠'s + ♣A		4♦ = three ♥'s + ♦A ? (*)
	4♦ = three ♠'s + ♦A		4♥ = normal transfer completion
	4♥ = slam interest but no ace to cue (*)		
	4♠ = normal transfer completion		

We could call these bids Smolen super-accepts.

It's unfortunate that there is not so much room in the sequence with ♥'s as trumps; I guess that you could decide not to play Smolen ?

Example

West	East	West	East	
♠ KJ7	♠ AQ954	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
♥ K103	♥ AQ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) 3 ♠'s, ♦A, slam interest
♦ AKJ8	♦ Q105	4♦ (2)	4NT (3)	
♣ Q95	♣ 2	etc to 6♠		

With excellent support for both majors, West cues his ♦ ace. East could re-transfer with 4♥ at (3) but it is hardly important who is declarer. RKCB finds the excellent ♠ slam.

So they can work well, but Smolen super-accepts are by no means established – you are already in a game forcing situation and so it has less sense. Combined with the fact that it's awkward with ♥'s as trumps and that you perhaps wish to leave the suit below trumps (*) available for a re-transfer, the Smolen transfer will normally be simply completed on most occasions. So we'll stick with straightforward

Smolen (if you play a strong NT – see next page for the weak NT) and not bother with super-accepts.

Smolen Playing a Weak NT?

At the start of this Smolen section I gave an example of the advantage of playing Smolen (the lead coming up to the strong balanced hand). Playing a weak NT, however, the advantages are not so obvious. Responder has an equally strong (perhaps stronger hand). If you play a weak NT and like the idea of the 'Smolen super-accepts' then it may be preferable to forget all about Smolen and go back to the natural method (responder bids 3 of his 5-carder, game forcing). Opener then has straightforward super-accepts available: -

So then we have: -

After	1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥	and after	1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠
3♠	= three ♥'s + ♠A	4♣	= three ♠'s + ♣A
4♣	= three ♥'s + ♣A	4♦	= three ♠'s + ♦A
4♦	= three ♥'s + ♦A	4♥	= three ♠'s + ♥A
4♥	= no slam interest (or no ace to cue)	4♠	= no slam interest (or no ace to cue)

Much simpler, and nearly complete (no distinction between no ace and no interest is a problem – we solve this later with Quest transfers). Playing a weak NT you have to weigh up the possible advantage of the NT bidder being declarer against the advantage that these super-accepts have to offer. Up to you, but I do like to keep things simple!

Example (playing a Weak NT)

Dealer:	♠ AQ975	West	North	East	South
South	♥ AQ104				
Both vul	♦ K3	-	-	-	1NT (1)
	♣ K2	pass	2♣	pass	2♦
		pass	3♠ (2)	pass	4♣ (3)
♠ J3	N	pass	4NT (4)	pass	5♥ (5)
♥ 975	W E	pass	6♠	all pass	
♦ QJ102	S				
♣ J976					
	♠ K108		(1) 12-14		
	♥ KJ		(2) 5-4, forcing, not playing Smolen		
	♦ 8654		(3) ♣A, super accept		
	♣ AQ54		(4) RKCB		
			(5) 2 key cards		

An excellent contract if played by North, I guess it's swings and roundabouts if you play a weak NT; but not playing Smolen is simpler and seems superior, especially in light of these super-accepts. Anyway, for the next couple of sections on 5-4's and 6-4's I'll assume that we play a strong NT and Smolen without super-accepts.

And it's all academic anyway, when we come onto Quest transfers we will see that Smolen (or the natural 3♥/♠ jump) is redundant whichever strength of NT you play.

We have covered weak hands and there are 4 more basic hand types to be covered. They are as follows, with both 5-4's and 6-4's being covered for each type.

- 2.6.1.1 invitational 5-4's, where we want to invite game.
- 2.6.1.2 invitational 6-4's, where we want to invite game.
- 2.6.1.3 game going 5-4's, where we want to play in just 3NT or 4♥/♠.
- 2.6.1.4 game going 6-4's, where we want to play in just 4♥ or 4♠.
- 2.6.1.5 game going 5-4's, but with slam interest.

- 2.6.1.6 game going 6-4's, but with slam interest.
- 2.6.1.7 slam going 5-4's, how to investigate slam.
- 2.6.1.8 slam going 6-4's, how to investigate slam.

You will discover that everything is not perfect, however. And I have kept the same order, section titles, example numbers etc in the next chapter (Quest Transfers) where all the loose ends are tidied up – and more.

2.6.1.1 Invitational 5-4's, where we want to invite game.

I guess that there are two options here: You could transfer into the 5-carder and then invite with 2NT – the problem is that you may miss a 4-4 fit. The more sensible alternative is to bid Stayman and then 2NT if no fit is uncovered (but you may miss a 5-3 fit). We can't have everything, and a 5-3 fit will often play just as well in NT but a 4-4 fit should not be missed. So, Stayman.

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens 1NT.
♠ K842	♠ KJ854	With Hand A we bid 2♣. If partner responds 2♦ then we bid 2NT. If partner responds 2♠ then we invite with 3♠. If partner responds 2♥ then it's worth game with a 5-4 fit, so 4♥. And much the same with Hand B although some conservative players may prefer to just invite over a 2♥/♠ response.
♥ KJ854	♥ KJ82	
♦ J52	♦ 105	
♣ 2	♣ 32	

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ3	♠ K842	1NT	2♣	(1) invitational
♥ Q9	♥ KJ854	2♦	2NT (1)	
♦ K964	♦ J52	pass		
♣ A753	♣ 2			

A poor contract, but with limited tools ...?

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ3	♠ K842	1NT	2♣	(1) invitational
♥ AQ3	♥ KJ854	2♦	2NT (1)	
♦ KQ64	♦ J52	3NT	pass	
♣ J53	♣ 2			

I would much prefer to be in 4♥.

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ AKJ	♠ Q1042	1NT	2♣	(1) invitational
♥ KQ	♥ AJ854	2♦	2NT (1)	
♦ A864	♦ 532	3NT	pass	
♣ 9853	♣ 2			

It is debatable if the East hand is really worth an invitation at (1). West obviously accepts and 3NT will make if the ♣'s split. But how do you reach the good 4♥ contract?

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ 96	♠ KJ842	1NT	2♣	(1) invitational
♥ A54	♥ KJ82	2♦	2NT (1)	
♦ AK64	♦ 105	3NT	pass	
♣ AQ85	♣ 32			

A poor game that West would have avoided if he knew that the hand was a mis-fit. Note that West has no idea that the hand is a mis-fit, we play 4-way transfers and so 2♣ followed by 2NT may be any shape.

2.6.1.2 Invitational 6-4's, where we want to invite game.

So, Smolen/traditional methods do not work too well with invitational 5-4's, but how about 6-4's?

It's even worse! Suppose that we start with Stayman, if a fit is uncovered then you can invite or perhaps just go for the game. But what if opener responds 2♦ and we still feel that there may be a game in a possible 6-3 fit? In the similar situation when we were 5-4 (or 4-5) we had to settle for a not completely satisfactory 2NT (we may miss a superior 5-3 fit). We cannot afford to miss a 6-3 fit (either partscore or game), so what's the solution?

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens 1NT (strong).
♠ Q1042	♠ KJ9542	These hands are probably too strong to sign off at the two level. If we bid Smolen then that is game forcing. How can we show that we have invitational values and a 6 card suit when partner responds 2♦ to our initial Stayman? 2NT is the only invitational bid. We have the same dilemma when playing a weak NT (3 points different).
♥ KJ8542	♥ Q942	
♦ 105	♦ 105	
♣ 2	♣ 2	

Example 5

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ3	♠ KJ9542	1NT	2♣	(1) invitational
♥ AK3	♥ Q942	2♦	2NT (1)	
♦ K64	♦ 105	pass		
♣ 9753	♣ 2			Obviously bidding 2NT as invitational is silly.

So should you transfer into the 6-carder with these hand types? You then have an invitational bid (3 of the 6-carder) if partner simply completes the transfer. Often fine, but not if you miss a 4-4 fit in the other major (you cannot bid the 4 card major as that is played as 5-5 by most players, or else as forcing): -

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ 63	♠ KJ9542	1NT	2♥ (1)	(1) transfer to ♠'s
♥ AK103	♥ Q942	2♠	3♠ (2)	(2) invitational, 6 ♠'s
♦ KQJ4	♦ 105	3NT	pass	
♣ A73	♣ 2			

A silly contract, ♥'s never got a mention! 4♠ may be preferable to 3NT, but 4♥ is the best contract. You may sometimes get away with inviting with 2NT with the 5-4's but the 6-4's are impossible.

Basically, you cannot sensibly bid these invitational hands unless you employ Quest transfers!

2.6.1.3 Game going 5-4's, where we want to play in just 3NT or 4♥/♠.

Here we use Smolen. We start with the 5-4's again.

Hand C	Hand D	Partner opens 1NT (strong).
♠ AQ42	♠ KJ954	Having failed to find a 4-4 or better fit with Stayman, these hands now want to play in game in a 5-3 fit or else 3NT. So we start with Stayman and if there is no immediate fit we bid 3 of the 4-carder - Smolen. Partner knows our major suit distribution is 5(or 6)-4 and bids either 3NT or 4 of the major if there's a 5-3 fit.
♥ K9854	♥ AJ42	
♦ J52	♦ Q5	
♣ 5	♣ 52	

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q3	♠ KJ954	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5+ ♠'s
♥ K103	♥ AJ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	
♦ K984	♦ Q5	3NT	pass	
♣ AKJ3	♣ 52			

Looks good to me.

Example 8

The 5-3 fit is usually best if opener has a weak suit: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ A83	♠ KJ954	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5+ ♠'s
♥ K103	♥ AJ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	
♦ AKJ3	♦ Q5	4♠	pass	
♣ J84	♣ 52			

So no problems here. If you simply want to play in game then Smolen gets you to the correct spot played by the correct hand. And so it should – that is what it was designed to do!

2.6.1.4 Game going 6-4's, where we want to play in just 4♥ or 4♠.

Again, we have responded 2♣ to partner's 1NT opening and he replied 2♦. Here we shall consider hands that are certainly worth game (in the 6-3 or 6-2 fit) but where we really do not wish partner to make a move towards slam.

In the corresponding situation with 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors we informed partner that we had these 9 cards in the majors and left it up to him to play in a 5-3 fit or in 3NT. In this situation with a 6 card suit we want (partner) to play in the 6-3 or 6-2 fit.

Hand E	Hand F	Partner opens 1NT (strong).
♠ AQ42	♠ KJ9542	Having failed to find a 4-4 or better fit with Stayman, these hands now simply want to play in the long major suit game. We do not want to encourage partner, and so we bid 4♦/♥. This is a Texas Transfer (known as Extended Texas) and shows a desire to play in 4 of the major without inviting partner to bid on.
♥ K98542	♥ AJ42	
♦ 85	♦ 105	
♣ 5	♣ 2	

So we have
and

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♦ - transfer to 4♥	
1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♥ - transfer to 4♠	as Extended Texas transfers.

Example

West	East	West	East	
♠ A63	♠ KJ9542	1NT	2♣	(1) Extended Texas
♥ K75	♥ AJ42	2♦	4♥ (1)	
♦ AQ74	♦ 105	4♠	pass .	
♣ K63	♣ 2			

This works fine (provided partner does not forget and leave you in 4♥!). Anyway, an excellent scheme and we use it for this hand type even when we move on to Quest transfers.

2.6.1.5 Game Going 5-4's with some Slam Interest

Here we are concerned with hand types that are not adverse to a slam suggestion from partner or may wish to make a mild try themselves. We start with Stayman of course and then Smolen 3♥/♠. Smolen does not lend itself to super-accepts and so opener normally either bids 3NT or bids 4 of our 5 card major. We are then at the level of 3NT or 4 of the 5-3 fit and it's up to us to take the next step.

Hand G	Hand H	We begin with Stayman, if partner responds in a major then we are definitely in slam mode. It's best to use 4♣ as RKCB for the major.
♠ AK854	♠ AK42	If there is no immediate fit then there may still be slam if there is a 5-3 fit. So Smolen. If partner denies a 5-3 fit with 3NT (or prefers 3NT) then you can either give up or try a quantitative 4NT. If partner confirms a 5-3 fit then you are at the level of 4 of the major. It's up to you if you cue bid, Blackwood or whatever next.
♥ AQJ2	♥ AJ954	
♦ J52	♦ K5	
♣ 5	♣ J2	

Example 9

West	East	West	East	
♠ J73	♠ AK42	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5+ ♥'s
♥ K3	♥ AJ954	2♦	3♠ (1)	(2) quantitative
♦ AQ84	♦ K5	3NT	4NT (2)	
♣ AK93	♣ J2	6♥	pass	

West is max here and so bids slam. It's not a very good one (neither is 6NT); I guess that if West does not confirm a 5-3 fit then East needs more to go slamming?

With a fit, East should have a go: -

Example 10

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q7	♠ AK42	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5+ ♥'s
♥ KQ3	♥ AJ954	2♦	3♠ (1)	(2) 3 ♥'s
♦ QJ42	♦ K5	4♥ (2)	4♠ (3)	(3) RKCB (Kickback)
♣ AQ93	♣ J2	5♥ (4)	6♥	(4) 2 key cards + ♥Q
	pass			

Good show. It looks like East's bidding works fine, but

... but is it (a good show)? Luckily West had the right cards but it is not usually a good idea to bid Blackwood when you have a weak doubleton and don't know about partner's overall strength or holding in the weak suit: -

Example 11

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q7	♠ AK42	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5+ ♥'s
♥ KQ3	♥ AJ954	2♦	3♠ (1)	(2) 3 ♥'s
♦ AQJ84	♦ K5	4♥ (2)	4♠ (3)	(3) RKCB (Kickback)
♣ Q93	♣ J2	5♥ (4)	6♥	(4) 2 key cards + ♥Q
		pass		

East has got uncomfortably high and only knows that one key card is missing. There is no space to find out if the missing card is the ♥K or the ♣A, or if partner has the ♣K; and so he takes a chance and plays the percentages – it worked last time, so just unlucky? Perhaps, but see how we handle this example later playing Quest transfers.

We also have a similar problem if West's trumps are rather poor: -

Example 12

West	East	West	East	
♠ J87	♠ AK42	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5+ ♥'s
♥ Q63	♥ AJ954	2♦	3♠ (1)	(2) 3 ♥'s
♦ AQJ	♦ K5	4♥ (2)	4♠ (3)	(3) RKCB (Kickback)
♣ AQ83	♣ J2	5♥ (4)	6♥	(4) 2 key cards + ♥Q
		pass		

West had no chance to inform East that he was minimum and so the poor slam was reached with exactly the same sequence as the good one (good slam, that is, not good sequence!) in example 10.

Now I realise that you want to know how these hands should be bid. Be patient. All good things come to those who wait. We'll finish all the examples using Smolen before we move on to the superior scheme (Quest transfers).

2.6.1.6 Game Going 6-4's with some Slam Interest

And how about 6-4's where we would not be adverse to partner's advances towards slam with a 6-3 fit?

Hand F Hand G Partner opens 1NT (strong).

<p>♠ AQJ2 ♥ KQ8542 ♦ 105 ♣ 2</p>	<p>♠ AK9542 ♥ AQ42 ♦ 105 ♣ 2</p>	<p>Having failed to find a 4-4 or better fit with Stayman, there is still a chance of slam if partner has 3 of our long major and the right cards. This time we go through our Smolen sequence right up to the point where we have transferred into our longer suit. If partner bids 3NT (usually showing a doubleton or perhaps a weak triplet) then we re-transfer (with 4♦/♥) into our 6-carder to show this good hand. Opener will normally simply accept this transfer. Note that some players state that opener <i>must</i> accept the re-transfer. I'm not so sure, there are most certainly hands where responder would not go past 4 of the major without a push from opener where slam is on. Remember, the fact that responder did not use Extended Texas is a mild slam invitation and responder may feel that he cannot move on without a nudge from opener.</p>
----------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Example 13

West	East	West	East	
♠ 107	♠ AK9542	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
♥ KJ3	♥ AQ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) I prefer NT
♦ AK83	♦ 105	3NT (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) re-transfer, slam interest
♣ KQ53	♣ 2	4♠ (4)	pass	(4) no slam interest

If partner had responded to our original Smolen bid by bidding 4 of our major (showing three card support), then we could agree to cue bid our singleton/void. This would show slam ambitions but could be either a 5-4 or 6-4 type hand.

Example 14

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ7	♠ AK9542	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
♥ KJ3	♥ AQ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) 3 ♠'s
♦ QJ8	♦ 105	4♠ (2)	5♣ (3)	(3) ♣ shortage, slam interest
♣ KQJ3	♣ 2	5♠	pass	

East had options here. Instead of cueing the shortage he could have tried RKCB, but I believe that indicating the shortage is better. This was indeed valuable information to West as he then knew that ♣ KQ were not pulling their full weight.

So it's one too many, whether you cue or bid RKCB. But surely East should try for slam, shouldn't he? Just tough that 5♠ has 3 top losers? Playing Quest transfers it's easy to stop low (4♠), as we will see later.

When opener has just a doubleton, slam may still be on. After responder's Smolen transfer opener bid 3NT, but when responder re-transfers to show a 6 card suit, opener may break the transfer with a suitable hand: -

Example 15

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ	♠ AK9542	1NT	2♣	(1) Smolen, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
♥ KJ3	♥ AQ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) 2 ♠'s
♦ AJ87	♦ 105	3NT (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) 6 ♠'s, slam interest
♣ AJ53	♣ 2	4NT (4) etc to 6♠		(4) RKCB

West has a near max hand, but is 2-3 in partner's majors; thus 3NT at (2) is correct. However, East's subsequent 4♥ (3) bid shows slam interest - otherwise he would use Extended Texas at (1) - and West's hand becomes enormous. Excellent major suit holdings (for what he has shown) and controls in the minors must make slam an excellent proposition. West must break the transfer at (4) to show slam ambitions. A 5♣ cue bid would be equally effective.

Contrast this West hand with the previous example; first round controls in the minors are all-important. Quacks in the minors are useless and even a king may be worthless opposite a singleton/void.

2.6.1.7 Slam going 5-4's, how to investigate slam.

Hand H	Hand J	Partner opens 1NT (strong).
♠ AQJ2	♠ AK954	We are obviously going to slam here, preferably in a
♥ KQ854	♥ AQ42	major suit and possibly a grand. So we start with Stayman.
♦ K52	♦ 1052	After a 2♦ response we bid Smolen and partner completes the
♣ 2	♣ A	transfer. What now?

A 5♣ cue bid is obviously a good move with Hand J, but what about Hand H? ...

1NT	2♣	You hold Hand H and the bidding has started like this. What
2♦	3♠	now? A key card ask looks like a good idea, but it's going
4♥	?	to be difficult to establish if partner has the ♠K rather than
		the ♣K. There are ways to establish specific kings after RKCB but
		generally only if all key cards are present. Agreeing to cue bid the shortage is also a very playable
		method.

Anyway, we have established our fit and you can choose your favourite slam seeking methods. I'll cover the best slam seeking method when we move on to discuss these hands using Quest transfers.

2.6.1.8 Slam going 6-4's, how to investigate slam.

Hand K	Hand L	Partner opens 1NT (strong).
♠ AKJ542	♠ AQJ2	Clearly going to slam again. So obviously Stayman and
♥ AQJ2	♥ KQ8542	Smolen. If partner completes the Smolen transfer then we
♦ A5	♦ -	go into our preferred slam mode.
♣ 2	♣ KQ2	Should partner bid 3NT (usually showing just 2 card support for our
		6-carder) then we bid 4♦/♥ - a re-transfer and promising a
		6 card suit. Partner may simply accept this re-transfer or perhaps super accept with a very good
		doubleton. Either way we then go into slam mode. I will again cover the method for investigating the best
		slam when we cover these hands using Quest transfers.

Well, that's covered the commonly used Smolen approach. Not totally satisfactory, eh? So let's see if we can come up with something better

2.6.2 A New Approach to 5-4, 6-4 etc.

So as we have seen, the invitational hands (and others) pose a huge problem using traditional/Smolen methods. I'll come onto the solution shortly but first we need to establish that a bidding sequence that we need is free.

When opener has replied 2♦ to Stayman, there is one sequence that has not yet been defined: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦

So what are the possible uses for this sequence? It cannot be a weak hand with a 4 card major and a ♦ suit (pass 2♦). It's not an invitational ♦ hand - we would transfer into ♦'s or simply invite with 2NT (via 2♣). But there are ½ a dozen or so quite plausible uses in current practice: -

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) 3♦ is Extended Stayman | a weak (or forcing) 5-5 in the majors |
| 2) 3♦ is invitational | 5+ ♦'s and a 4 card major |
| 3) 3♦ is forcing for one round | 5+ ♦'s and a 4 card major |
| 4) 3♦ is game forcing | 5+ ♦'s and a 4 card major |
| 5) 3♦ is looking for slam | 4♦'s and a 4 card major |
| 6) 3♦ is Weissberger | an invitational (or forcing) 5-5 or 5-4 in the majors |

Let's look at these possibilities: -

1) 3♦ is Extended Stayman?

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens a strong NT. You could start off with 2♣, when a 2♥/♠ reply would be music to your ears. Of course partner will usually reply 2♦. 3♦ by you is then the Extended Stayman convention, showing 5-5 in the majors and asking partner to bid a 3 card major. You then pass with Hand A and raise to game with Hand B. Looks OK? But what do you do with an invitational hand? And isn't the two level safer with hand A?
♠ Q9876	♠ KQ984	
♥ Q8432	♥ QJ842	
♦ 93	♦ J3	
♣ 2	♣ 2	

No, Extended Stayman does not really work. Transfers have solved all the problems, and we see how to handle invitational, game forcing and slam seeking 5-5's later.

2) 3♦ is invitational, 5+ ♦'s and a 4 card major?

Hand C	Hand D	Partner opens a strong NT. You obviously try Stayman but get a 2♦ response. You have invitational values, so try 3♦ with Hand C? I don't like it. First of all, there is no similar bid when you have a ♣ suit (Hand D) - 3♣ is SARS. So you have to rebid 2NT with Hand D (fine). But in any case I would prefer to rebid 2NT with Hand C – if partner is minimum and does not like ♦'s you are at the 3 level and fixed; the 2NT rebid is far better.
♠ 43	♠ 43	
♥ K987	♥ K987	
♦ AJ873	♦ 82	
♣ 82	♣ AJ873	

3) 3♦ is forcing for one round, 5+ ♦'s and a 4 card major?

Hand E Hand F

♠ Q3 ♠ 43
♥ K987 ♥ K987
♦ AJ8743 ♦ AJ874
♣ 8 ♣ 98

I got this answer from two leading players at the club. But I don't really understand it! Forcing for one round? Since you are already at the 3♦ level I guess that you may subside in 4♦? It makes little sense to me. With hands like this *you* have to decide where you are going. With Hand E I would transfer into ♦'s and then bid 3♥ - game forcing. With Hand F I would try Stayman and then an invitational 2NT if there is no fit (or 3NT if you are desperate).

4) 3♦ is game forcing, 5+ ♦'s and a 4 card major?

Hand G

Hand H

♠ J3 ♠ 43
♥ K987 ♥ K987
♦ AQ8743 ♦ AQJ74
♣ 8 ♣ J8

Now this is more like it! No pussyfooting around. So you try Stayman and get a 2♦ response. A 3♦ bid is then game forcing. But what have you achieved? You are at the 3♦ level and have shown an undisclosed major and a ♦ suit. Consider the alternative approach (transfer to ♦'s and then bid 3 of the major – we cover how to transfer into minors later). This latter approach has some major advantages: -

- (a) Opener has a mechanism to tell you if he likes your ♦ suit (a super-accept - we cover this later).
- (b) Opener knows which major suit you have.
- (c) Opener will usually be declarer however you bid the hand. If you start with Stayman and opener bids the major that you don't have and you bid 3♦, 3NT is quite likely to be the final resting place. Why give the defence the gratuitous information about opener's 4 card major?

Not convinced? No problem! Suppose that you do elect to bid Stayman with Hands G and H and get a 2♦ response. As I said, there is little point in attempting to describe your hand to partner with a natural 3♦ (he does not know which major you hold nor if you have 5 or 6 ♦'s or even if you have slam ambitions!). You know partner's point range and something about his distribution. It's far better to bid 3♣, SARS, and find out more about opener's shape.

One more point. We have established that a sequence like 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♦ is ASID and not ♠'s and ♦'s. It would thus be inconsistent to have our sequence showing a major and ♦'s.

So, whether you elect to transfer to the minor (my personal preference) or to bid Stayman followed by SARS with these hand types does not really matter, the sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦ is not needed in a natural sense. We most certainly do not need three options of bidding for the same hand type.

5) 3♦ is looking for slam, 4♦'s and a 4 card major.

We discussed this option in section 2.3. It obviously works OK but as I said we have SARS which copes equally well (better).

6) 3♦ is the Weissberger Convention, an invitational (or forcing) 5-5 or 5-4 in the majors

Now here we do have something that caters for invitational hands. With this scheme the sequences 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠ are invitational, showing 4-5 and 5-4 resp. (a treatment used by some British players).

The 3♦ bid in the sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦ is then used to show either: -

- (a) 5♠'s and 4♥'s, game forcing or
- (b) 5♠'s and 5♥'s, game forcing or
- (c) 5♠'s and 5♥'s, invitational

Now this works (I suppose) but the responses to the 3♦ bid are somewhat convoluted. Also, a game forcing 4-5 is not catered for and there is no mention of 6-4's or 4-6's. Also, most players are used to having the jumps to 3♥/♠ as game forcing and using Jacoby Transfers with invitational and game forcing 5-5's. Another drawback is that responder will be declarer much of the time.

No, we have a far simpler solution which covers everything: -

A New Approach to 5-4, 6-4 etc. - Quest Transfers

So what is the solution to our invitational sequences? We just need a little lateral thinking and to forget about gadgets such as Smolen and Weissberger.

The 3♦ bid is not needed. Thus we use it (and 3♥) as transfers – simple.

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦,

3♦ = transfer to ♥'s

3♥ = transfer to ♠'s

This is now so straightforward that I hardly need to write any more (but I will). This initial transfer may be game invitational or stronger, 5-4 or 6-4 types. Unlike Smolen (which is game forcing), Quest transfers are invitational or better (unlimited).

After a Quest transfer opener has the obvious super-accepts available whichever suit is trumps. What's more, you can choose whatever type of super-accept suits your partnership style – perhaps similar to what you do over a Jacoby Transfer? But, as responder is known to be short in both minor suits, I prefer to show an ace. Let's assume that we use super accepts to show an ace, then we have: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦

and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥

3♥ = normal accept

3♠ = normal accept

where a normal accept is a minimal hand with two card support or perhaps three. And we have the super-accepts: -

3♠ = three ♥'s + ♠A

3NT = natural, non-min,

3NT = natural, non-min,
normally 3-2 in the majors

normally 2-3 in the majors

4♣ = three ♠'s + ♣A

4♣ = three ♥'s + ♣A

4♦ = three ♠'s + ♦A

4♦ = three ♥'s + ♦A *

4♥ = three ♠'s + ♥A *

4♥ = three ♥'s (no ace to cue)

4♠ = three ♠'s (no ace to cue)

* Note Some players prefer not to use the bid below the agreed suit as a super-accept as they want to reserve it for partner's use as the re-transfer. In that case the 4-of-the-major super-accept may have the ace of the re-transfer suit. I much prefer to have the complete set of super-accepts and assume this in the examples.

After a super-accept responder will normally re-transfer if possible, and then either pass or investigate slam.

This all works fine, but we still have no bid to explicitly show the invitational hand if you opt for these simpler Quest transfers rather than Smolen or natural. No problem, it is up to opener to super-accept

with a suitable hand: -

Quest transfers are defined as invitational or better.

They can be treated in a similar way to Jacoby transfers but there is one very big (and very important) difference – super-accepts. When playing Jacoby transfers super-accepts are often very useful, but they are usually not essential as responder can invite after a normal accept. With Quest transfers it is different, you are at the 3 level and there is no room for a polite 2nd invitation. Quest transfers are defined as **invitational** or better and opener **must** super-accept with a suitable hand. This also makes slam bidding much easier of course.

First of all, let's look at a typical hand that's difficult without Quest Transfers: -

Hand A Partner opens a strong NT. You start with Stayman but get a 2♦ response. What now? 2NT is reasonable, but there may be a better 5-3 ♥ fit (either partscore or game). 3♥/♠ is forcing (whether you play Smolen or not). So you simply have to give up on a possible fit and bid 2NT?

♠ K1042
♥ KJ752
♦ 75
♣ 52

Playing Quest Transfers it's easy. Stayman to start and then transfer over a 2♦ response. Partner simply accepts the transfer with an unsuitable hand and will super-accept if game is on. Occasionally you will end up in 3♥ or 3♠ with a 5-2 fit, but that's probably just as good (often better) than 2NT.

Example A

West	East (A)	West	East	
♠ A73	♠ K1042	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest transfer
♥ 983	♥ KJ752	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) normal accept
♦ KQ6	♦ 75	3♥ (2)	pass (3)	(3) with no more than an
♣ AQJ7	♣ 52			invitational hand, East
				passes

With a minimum (a flat hand) West correctly does not super-accept.

Example B

West	East (A)	West	East	
♠ Q3	♠ KJ102	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest transfer
♥ Q93	♥ KJ752	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) Super-accept, ♣A
♦ KQ64	♦ 75	4♣ (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) re-transfer
♣ AK76	♣ 52	4♥	pass	

This West has good trumps and reasonable shape, so he super-accepts.

So clearly Quest transfers work in this otherwise difficult scenario. We now have to look at all the cases that we covered earlier, but this time using Quest transfers: -

- 2.6.2.1 invitational 5-4's, where we want to invite game.
- 2.6.2.2 invitational 6-4's, where we want to invite game.
- 2.6.2.3 game going 5-4's, where we want to play in just 3NT or 4♥/♠.
- 2.6.2.4 game going 6-4's, where we want to play in just 4♥ or 4♠.
- 2.6.2.5 game going 5-4's, but with slam interest.
- 2.6.2.6 game going 6-4's, but with slam interest.
- 2.6.2.7 slam going 5-4's, how to investigate slam.
- 2.6.2.8 slam going 6-4's, how to investigate slam.

Now Quest transfers, although straightforward, are new! There are most certainly die-hards out there who have always played Smolen or natural methods, and so I accommodated them in the previous sections. I will now cover Quest transfers in the same detail. And to make it easy for everybody I will use the same examples and chapter titles for the Quest and Smolen sections. Just see which you think works best!

2.6.2.1 Invitational 5-4's, where we want to invite game.

Simple. We start with Stayman and if we get a 2♦ response we make a Quest Transfer.

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ3	♠ K842	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest transfer
♥ Q9	♥ KJ854	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) normal accept
♦ K964	♦ J52	3♥ (2)	pass (3)	(3) only invitational, so pass
♣ A753	♣ 2			

A good contract, better than 2NT which is what we reached earlier when not playing Quest transfers (1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - pass). A 5-2 fit will often play better than NT, as in this case.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ3	♠ K842	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest transfer
♥ AQ3	♥ KJ854	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) Super-accept, ♠ A
♦ KQ64	♦ J52	3♠ (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) re-transfer
♣ J53	♣ 2	4♥	pass	

Playing standard methods we landed up in the inferior 3NT.

Example 3

Occasionally opener may super-accept with just two trumps – when he has top cards in both the majors: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ AKJ	♠ Q1042	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest transfer
♥ KQ	♥ AJ854	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) super-accept. ♠ A
♦ A864	♦ 532	3♠ (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) re-transfer
♣ 9853	♣ 2	4♥	pass	

West knows that East has a maximum of 4 cards in the minors and so there are at most 3 losers there.

Playing traditional methods we end up in 3NT if East invites with 2NT. And East may not even elect to invite, but simply bid 2♥.

Example 4

East has a clear invitation in this example, but the knowledge of responder's shape may mean that poor games are avoided on mis-fits: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ 96	♠ KJ842	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest transfer
♥ A54	♥ KJ82	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) an excellent bid with the
♦ AK64	♦ 105	3♠ (2)	pass	knowledge of the mis-fit
♣ AQ85	♣ 32			

A combined 25 points, so most pairs will reach 3NT. The poor 3NT game was reached earlier with the sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3NT. 3♠ may not make but it's better than 3NT which stands very little chance. Playing the invitational Quest transfer is superior to the invitational 2NT, as West knows it's a mis-fit and can avoid 3NT.

2.6.2.2 Invitational 6-4's, where we want to invite game.

We handle 6-4 invitational hands in the same way and can use the re-transfer if necessary.

Example 5

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ3	♠ KJ9542	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest transfer
♥ AK3	♥ Q942	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) Super-accept, ♥A
♦ K64	♦ 105	4♥ (2)	4♠	
♣ 9753	♣ 2	pass		

With great major suit cards, west should accept. We floundered in a silly 2NT when we had no Quest transfer and East bid an invitational 2NT. Note that as we play 4-way transfers West has no way of knowing that East even has a 4 card major and so does not know how good his major suit holdings are if east bids 2NT.

This 4♠ contract is played from the 'wrong' hand. But it's better to play in the correct contract than to play in a poor one from the 'right' hand. Even if South does lead a ♦ and you lose the first 3 tricks, 4♠ is still odds-on to make.

With the following example playing Smolen etc we were fed up with being in the wrong contract using Stayman and 2NT, so we used a Jacoby transfer. Needless to say, that did not work either. It's no problem playing Quest transfers as the original Stayman always finds the 4-4 fit: -

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ 63	♠ KJ9542	1NT	2♣	(1) with great shape, worth an
♥ AK103	♥ Q942	2♥	3♥ (1)	invitation
♦ KQJ4	♦ 105	4♥	pass	
♣ A73	♣ 2			

We managed to land in a poor 3NT (or 4♠) when we bid this example via a Jacoby transfer.

2.6.2.3 Game 5-4's where we want to play in just 3NT or 4♥/♠.

This is quite simple, and the best contract should be reached whether you play Smolen or Quest. We've seen these before, but let's just check that Quest transfers work equally well: -

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q3	♠ KJ954	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5+ ♠'s
♥ K103	♥ AJ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) min
♦ K984	♦ Q5	3♠ (2)	3NT (3)	(3) offering the choice of 3NT
♣ AKJ3	♣ 52	pass		or 4♠.

Looks good to me. Same final contract as before.

Example 8

West	East	West	East	
♠ A83	♠ KJ954	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5+ ♠'s
♥ K103	♥ AJ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) super accept, ♦A.
♦ AKJ3	♦ Q5	4♦ (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) re-transfer
♣ J84	♣ 52	4♠	pass	

The super accept at (2) is marginal (West is minimum but does have good top cards and trumps) but 4♠ would be reached either way.

2.6.2.4 Game going 6-4's, where we want to play in just 4♥ or 4♠.

This is exactly the same whatever scheme you use. Stayman followed by Extended Texas jumps to 4♦/♥ if no fit is found. Quest or Smolen do not feature.

2.6.2.5 Game Going 5-4's with some Slam Interest

Here we are concerned with hand types that are not adverse to a slam suggestion from partner or may wish to make a mild try themselves. We start with Stayman of course and then a Quest transfer.

Example 9

West	East	West	East	
♠ J73	♠ AK42	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5+ ♥'s
♥ K3	♥ AJ954	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) non-min
♦ AQ84	♦ K5	3NT (2)	4NT (3)	(3) quantitative
♣ AK93	♣ J2	pass (4)		

Note that 4NT is quantitative after a 3NT bid from opener, so what does responder do when he had 5 or 6 ♠'s and wants to bid Blackwood? The answer is that with just 5 ♠'s he normally would not, and with 6 ♠'s he can re-transfer, we come onto that shortly when we discuss the 6-4 type hands

When we bid this hand using Smolen we ended up in a poor 6♥ after East bid the quantitative 4NT at (3). It was perhaps debatable if West should have accepted the slam invitation with a mis-fit, but he is max. Playing Quest transfers it's slightly different. West's 3NT bid has already promised a maximum (otherwise he would simply accept the transfer) and so East's quantitative bid ask for something extra – this can only mean good ♥'s and/or ♠'s.

♠ QJ3	West's ♥Kx is good, but the poor ♠'s are not good enough and so he, aware of
♥ K3	the mis-fit, correctly declines the invitation at (4). But exchange the ♠7 and ♦Q
♦ A874	to get this hand and opener should accept by bidding 6NT. Points in partner's
♣ AK93	suits are all important – it's what you need when you have already shown a
	maximum.

Example 10

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q7	♠ AK42	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5+ ♥'s
♥ KQ3	♥ AJ954	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) max, 3 ♥'s + ♣A
♦ QJ42	♦ K5	4♣ (2)	4♠ (3)	(3) RKCB (Kickback)*
♣ AQ93	♣ J2	5♥ (4)	6♥	(4) 2 key cards + ♥Q
		pass		

We reached the same good slam playing Smolen but that sequence really was not a good one because East launched into Blackwood with a small doubleton (♣) – not good practice. Here it's fine as West has cue bid the ♣A.

* Now I said that 4♠ at (3) is RKCB, but is simple RKCB really the best meaning? We will discuss it shortly, but let's first do the examples 11 & 12 that we saw earlier.

Example 11

When we bid this one earlier East bid the poor slam because he knew nothing much other than that there was a key card missing.

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ	♠ AK42	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5+ ♥'s
♥ KQ3	♥ AJ954	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) 3 ♥'s + ♦A
♦ AQJ84	♦ K5	4♦ (2)	4NT (3)	(3) ♠ cue bid
♣ Q93	♣ J2	5♥ (4)	pass	

West super-accepted and so East is certainly in slam mode. But he knows to be very careful as West has denied the ♣A. Blackwood is not a good idea with a weak doubleton and so he cue bids instead. Note that when you play Kickback then 4NT is the ♠ cue bid. West's 5♥ at (4) denies the ♣K and so the poor slam is avoided. If West did have the ♣K then he had two options – he could cue it, in which case East would bid 6♦ to transfer the 6♥ contract to West. West could also simply bid 6♥.

Example 12

West	East	West	East	
♠ J87	♠ AK42	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5+ ♥'s
♥ Q63	♥ AJ954	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) min
♦ AQJ	♦ K5	3♥ (2)	3NT (3)	
♣ AQ83	♣ J2	4♥	pass	

When we bid this example earlier West had no chance to inform East that he was minimum and so the poor ♥ slam was reached. Here East knows that West is minimum and so elects not to go slamming. Very wise. He bids 3NT at (3) to give opener the choice of 3NT or 4♥.

Note that the West hand is certainly minimum here as the queens in partner's short suits (the minors) may not be worth much. Since responder is known to hold 4 ♠'s West might consider passing 3NT at pairs scoring.

2.6.2.6 Game Going 6-4's with some Slam Interest

Let's look at 6-4's where we would not be adverse to partner's advances towards slam with a 6-3 fit. If opener responds 3NT to our Quest transfer then we can re-transfer. This shows slam interest as we did not use Extended Texas.

Example 13

West	East	West	East	
♠ 107	♠ AK9542	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
♥ KJ3	♥ AQ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) I prefer NT, non min.
♦ AK83	♦ 105	3NT (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) re-transfer, slam interest
♣ KQ53	♣ 2	4♠ (4)	pass	(4) no slam interest

As it happens, exactly the same as the Smolen sequence. Fine.

In the next example we got too high (5♠) playing Smolen.

Example 14

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ7	♠ AK9542	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
♥ KJ3	♥ AQ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) 3 ♠'s, non-min, no ace to cue
♦ QJ8	♦ 105	4♠ (2)	pass	
♣ KQJ3	♣ 2			

Playing Quest transfers it's easy to stop low (4♠).

When opener has just a doubleton trump, slam may still be on. After responder's Quest transfer opener bid 3NT showing a non-min, when responder re-transfers to show a 6 card suit and slam interest (no Texas), opener breaks the transfer with a suitable hand: -

Example 15

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ	♠ AK9542	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
♥ KJ3	♥ AQ42	2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) 2 ♠'s, non-min
♦ AJ87	♦ 105	3NT (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) 6 ♠'s, slam interest
♣ AJ53	♣ 2	4NT (4)	etc to 6♠	(4) *(D)RKCB for ♠'s

* The same as the previous Smolen auction except that the 4NT at (4) is to be discussed shortly.

2.6.2.7

Slam going 5-4's, how to investigate slam.

Hand H	Hand J	Partner opens 1NT (strong).
♠ AQJ2	♠ AK954	Much the same as when using Smolen. We are obviously looking for a slam here, preferably in a major suit. So we start with Stayman. After a 2♦ response we bid Quest and then whatever your favourite slam seeking method is.
♥ KQ854	♥ AQ42	
♦ K52	♦ 1052	
♣ 2	♣ A	

Of course you do have a big advantage when using Quest in that opener will cue bid an ace in response to Quest if he has 3 trumps and is non-min. It certainly would be handy to know if partner has the ♣A or not with Hand H.

So what is the best method to investigate slam with these types of hand? A 5♣ cue bid is possibly a good move with Hand J, but what about Hand H? ...

1NT	2♣	You hold Hand H and the bidding has started like this. What now?
2♦	3♦	Note that we are already way ahead of the previous Smolen auction
4♣	? (1)	in that the level is just 4♣, opener has cue bid indicating the ♣A, 3 trumps and a non-min. Playing Smolen the auction would be at 4♥ with responder in the dark.

A key card ask looks like a good idea, but it's going to be difficult to establish if partner has the ♠K rather than the ♣K. There are ways to establish specific kings after RKCB but generally only if all key cards are present.

The answer is that responder should employ Double Roman Key Card Blackwood – DRKCB. With these major 2-suited hands the kings (and queens) in the major suits are very important and minor suit kings are often insignificant.

The trump suit has been established but East really also needs to know about key cards in the other major as well. So East uses two suit, or Double RKCB (DRKCB); there are thus 6 key cards.

DRKCB after a Quest transfer

When responder has shown at least 9 cards in the majors then the king (and sometimes queen – as we shall see later) in both major suits are important. So our RKCB (Kickback) bid is now DRKCB, with both major suit kings counted as key cards. The responses are: -

Next step = 0 or 3 key cards
Next step + 1 = 1 or 4 key cards
Next step + 2 = 2 or 5 key cards
Next step + 3 = 2 or 5 key cards + the ‘trump’ queen

Where, by ‘trump’ queen I mean the queen of responder’s longer suit.

Example 16

West	East	West	East	
♠ K9	♠ AQJ2	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5 ♥’s & 4 ♠’s
♥ AJ3	♥ KQ854	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) 3 ♥’s, non-min + ♣A
♦ QJ87	♦ K52	4♣ (2)	4♠ (3)	(3) DRKCB (Kickback)
♣ AJ53	♣ 2	4NT (4)	6♥ (5)	(4) 3 key cards
		pass		

(5) As long as the ♠K is included along with the key cards then 3 key cards is all East needs.

If the ♠K was not included then a 2 key card response would leave slam dubious.

If the DRKCB reply was 0/3 or 1/4 and so gave no information about the trump queen, asker may enquire about both queens with the next free bid, the responses are: -

Next step = no queen
Next step + 1 = ♥Q
Next step + 2 = ♠Q
Next step + 3 = ♥Q & ♠Q

And if the response was 2/5 and thus indicated the presence or absence of the trump queen, asker may enquire about the other queen. The responses are up to you but best is that you simply use the same procedure as you do with your normal RKCB trump queen ask. Here I assume that the next bid up denies the major suit queen and that any other bid acknowledges it – show a king or else return to the trump suit, so: -

Next step = denies the other major suit queen
Return to the trump suit = shows the other queen but denies ♣K or ♦K.
any other bid = shows the other queen and the king of the suit bid.

Note that a queen ask does not necessarily guarantee that all key cards are present, asker may simply be looking for the small slam.

2.6.2.8 Slam going 6-4's, how to investigate slam.

Hand K	Hand L	Partner opens 1NT (strong).
♠ AKJ542	♠ AQJ2	And the same here. Stayman, Quest and then onto slam; either
♥ AQJ2	♥ KQ8542	small or grand. Again you have more to go on using Quest
♦ A5	♦ -	because of the possible super accept response (or lack of it).
♣ 2	♣ KQ2	

Now you could choose to use either RKCB or DRKCB with 5-4's but with 6-4's responder really should use DRKCB. The problem is that opener will not always know if responder is 5-4 or 6-4 and so it's best to always use DRKCB with these two-suited (5-4 or 6-4 type) hands.

Example 17		West	East	
West	East	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
		2♦	3♥ (1)	(2) min, 2 or 3 ♠'s
♠ Q9	♠ AKJ542	3♠ (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) 6 ♠'s, slam interest
♥ 953	♥ AQJ2	4♠ (4)	4NT (5)	(4) nothing extra
♦ KQJ3	♦ A5	5♦ (6)	6♠	(5) DRKCB
♣ AQJ6	♣ 2	pass		(6) 1 key card

West has a good doubleton ♠, but with poor ♥'s he really can do nothing more than complete the re-transfer at (4). However, the East hand is still looking for slam, possibly even a grand, but when West's response at (6) revealed that either the ♣A or ♥K was missing he gave up on the grand.

There is another interesting point in this auction; the re-transfer at (3) is not really a re-transfer of course, as West has already bid ♠'s. Thus East can bid either 4♥ or 4♠ at (3). It's best to play 4♠ as a sign off and 4♥ as looking for slam with a 6 card suit. A subsequent Blackwood bid by either opener or responder is then DRKCB.

But with this Hand K it is certainly worth looking for the grand. Consider the situation where West has a more suitable hand. This one's the same strength but the king in responder's 2nd suit is worth more than 3 points elsewhere: -

Example 18		West	East	(1) Quest, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
				(2) min, 2 or 3 ♠'s
West	East	1NT	2♣	(3) 6 ♠'s, slam interest
		2♦	3♥ (1)	(4) completing the re-transfer
♠ Q9	♠ AKJ542	3♠ (2)	4♥ (3)	(5) DRKCB
♥ K83	♥ AQJ2	4♠ (4)	4NT (5)	(6) 2 key cards + ♠Q
♦ KJ83	♦ A5	5♠ (6)	6♣ (7)	(7) minor suit kings?
♣ AQ65	♣ 2	6♠ (8)	7NT	(8) ♦K only
		pass		

5NT at (7) would have been queen clarification, so 6♣ is the (♣/♦) king ask.
6♠ at (8) is next step + 2.

So that's fine, but what if the DRKCB reply shows 0/3 or 1/4 keycards and says nothing about the trump queen? Then the next bid up then asks about queens: -

Let's change the ♦ suit in example 18 very slightly: -

Example 19		West	East	(1) Quest, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
				(2) min, 2 or 3 ♠'s
West	East	1NT	2♣	(3) 6 ♠'s, slam interest
		2♦	3♥ (1)	(4) completing the re-transfer
♠ Q9	♠ AKJ542	3♠ (2)	4♥ (3)	(5) DRKCB
♥ K83	♥ AQJ2	4♠ (4)	4NT (5)	(6) 3 key cards
♦ AJ83	♦ K5	5♣ (6)	5♦ (7)	(7) queens?
♣ AQ65	♣ 2	5NT (8)	7NT	(8) ♠Q
		pass		

And sometimes the information about the other major suit queen is useful: -

Example 20		West	East	(1) Quest, 5 ♠'s & 4 ♥'s
				(2) min, 2 or 3 ♠'s
West	East	1NT	2♣	(3) 6 ♠'s, slam interest
		2♦	3♥ (1)	(4) completing the re-transfer
♠ Q9	♠ AKJ542	3♠ (2)	4♥ (3)	(5) DRKCB
♥ Q93	♥ AKJ2	4♠ (4)	4NT (5)	(6) 2 key card + ♠Q
♦ AJ83	♦ K4	5♠ (6)	5NT (7)	(7) ♥ queen?
♣ AQ65	♣ 2	6♠ (8)	7NT	(8) yes, no king.
		Pass		

- ♠ Q9 If West had denied the ♥Q, say with this hand, then the grand is not a good bet.
- ♥ 983 Note that the ♥Q is more important than the ♣K.
- ♦ AJ83
- ♣ AKJ5

So DRKCB works like a treat with Hand K and similar hands, but what about Hand L?

Exclusion Double Roman Keycard Blackwood (EDRKCB)

Hand L is not interested in the ♦ A and so should use Exclusion DRKCB = EDRKCB.

A rare beast, but there are situations where we are only interested in the kings (and perhaps queens) of two suits and have a void. Exclusion RKCB (ERKCB) would enable us to ask for key cards outside the exclusion suit and Double RKCB (DRKCB) would enable us to locate the king in the other major directly but responder would not know about our void (and thus include that ace in his reply). So when our partner does not know about our void and we are in a situation where DRKCB is the Blackwood bid, then a bid of 5 of a minor is EDRKCB. So with EDRKCB we have 5 key cards; the three aces outside the exclusion suit and the two key kings. The step responses are the obvious 0/3, 1/4, 2.

Example 21

West	East (L)	West	East	
♠ K9	♠ AQJ2	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5 ♥'s & 4 ♠'s
♥ AJ3	♥ KQ8542	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) 3 ♠'s, non-min + ♣A
♦ KJ853	♦ -	4♣ (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) re-transfer, 6 ♥'s
♣ A87	♣ KQ2	4♥	5♦ (4)	(4) EDRKCB
		5♥ (5)	7♥	(5) 3 key cards
		pass		

But is opener did not have the ♠ K it's different: -

Example 22

West	East (L)	West	East	
♠ 98	♠ AQJ2	1NT	2♣	(1) Quest, 5 ♥'s & 4 ♠'s
♥ AJ3	♥ KQ8542	2♦	3♦ (1)	(2) 3 ♠'s, non-min + ♣A
♦ AQ853	♦ -	4♣ (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) re-transfer, 6 ♥'s
♣ AJ7	♣ KQ2	4♥	5♦ (4)	(4) EDRKCB
		5NT (5)	6♥	(5) 2 key cards
		pass		

So DRKCB and EDRKCB work fine in this scenario, whether opener has super-accepted or not. It's up to you if you wish to include them in your armoury, and we come upon them again in section 3.1.4 when we discuss hands that are 5-5 in the majors (where I believe that they are even more important). Let's move on to something different: -

2.6.2.9 The 3♠ bid using Quest Transfers

Now that we are using Quest transfers, the previous Smolen/natural sequence

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠ is a spare bid.

I guess that you could use it for whatever you like, but it needs to be a hand type that can cope with a 2♥/♠ response to Stayman. There are a few possibilities, but my favourite is strong 4-4 (game forcing) in the majors with both minor suits weak: -

Hand M	Hand N	Partner opens 1NT (strong).
♠ AQ92	♠ AK94	You try Stayman but get a 2♦ response. Now 3NT is the standard bid and will often be fine. But a Moysian fit may be best if partner has good 3 card support for one major and a weak minor.
♥ KQJ5	♥ AQ102	
♦ J85	♦ 105	
♣ 72	♣ 743	

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ KJ7	♠ AQ92	1NT	2♣	(1) both majors, weak minors
♥ A3	♥ KQJ5	2♦	3♠ (1)	(2) With very weak ♣'s, West elects to play in the Moysian fit.
♦ AK973	♦ J85	4♠ (2)	pass	
♣ J53	♣ 72			

Example 2

Sometimes 3NT would be a very poor contract: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ6	♠ AK94	1NT	2♣	(1) both majors, weak minors
♥ K73	♥ AQ102	2♦	3♠ (1)	(2) West knows that the opponents have 4 or 5 ♦ tricks off the top.
♦ 73	♦ 105	4♥ (2)	pass	
♣ AKQ102	♣ 743			

Example 3

And nothing is lost if West has both minors well covered: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q7	♠ AK94	1NT	2♣	(1) both majors, weak minors
♥ J73	♥ AQ102	2♦	3♠ (1)	(2) let then lead a minor, see if I care.
♦ AK973	♦ 105	3NT (2)	pass	
♣ AQ10	♣ 743			

2.6.3

Summary of all 5-4's and 6-4's (assuming no fit is found)

(a) when using Smolen

Weak 5-4 *	Stayman and correct, or transfer if you prefer.
Weak 6-4 *	Transfer, or Stayman and correct if you prefer.
Invitational 5-4	Stayman. There is no invitational bid other than 2NT if Stayman gets a 2♦ response (Smolen is game forcing).
Invitational 6-4	Stayman or Transfer? There is no invitational bid (except 2NT) if Stayman gets a 2♦ response so it's probably best to use a Jacoby transfer? It's no problem using Quest transfers of course.
Game going 5-4	Stayman and Smolen 3♠/♥.
Game going 6-4 *	Stayman and Extended Texas 4♦/♥
Slam interest 5-4	Stayman and Smolen. If partner replies 3NT to Smolen then a quantitative 4NT is the slam try.
Slam interest 6-4	Stayman, Smolen and Smolen re-transfer.

(b) when using Quest Transfers

Weak 5-4 *	Stayman and correct, or transfer if you prefer.
Weak 6-4 *	Transfer, or Stayman and correct if you prefer.
Invitational 5-4	Stayman and Quest Transfer 3♦/♥. Partner is expected to super accept if game is on. If the shape and quality of the majors is poor then 2NT is a remote alternative to the Quest Transfer.
Invitational 6-4	Stayman and Quest Transfer. Partner is expected to super accept if game is on.
Game going 5-4	Stayman and Quest Transfer. If opener simply completes the Quest Transfer then bid 3NT, partner will pass or correct to a 5-3 fit.
Game going 6-4 *	Stayman and Extended Texas 4♦/♥.
Slam interest 5-4	Stayman and Quest Transfer. If partner has a hand such that slam makes then he will presumably super-accept. If opener responded 3NT to the Quest transfer then there probably is no slam, you could try a quantitative 4NT with a really good invitational hand.
Slam interest 6-4	Stayman, Quest Transfer and Quest re-transfer.

The * sequences are the same whether you play Smolen (or natural) or Quest Transfers.

The Advantages of Quest Transfers

- They are simple.
- The super-accept structure is complete (a bid for each suit + one over).
- The straightforward super-accepts mean that invitational hands are easy.
- Responder does not have to stretch with a hand that possibly has slam potential (opener will

super-accept).

- Slam bidding is easier as opener has indicated if he is min or not and has had a chance to cue bid.
- The 3♠ bid is free for use to show 4-4 in the majors and weak minors.

The original Stayman concept incorporated a 2NT response to show a maximum hand. Now this is acceptable if your style is to guarantee invitational values with your Stayman enquiry. These days, most people play garbage Stayman and so this response is unsound if partner has a weak hand and there is no major suit fit.

Another idea which has some followers is that 2NT shows both majors. Again, unsound because if opener is minimum then the 3 level may be too high, even with a fit. Let's hear the general expert view: -

Marty Bergen can be quoted as saying '*never, Never, NEVER respond 2NT to Stayman*'. Ron Klinger states '*the 2NT response doesn't exist. The idea that it should be to show both majors is totally unsound*'. Excellent advice, unless you and your partner **really** know what you are doing.

When we get onto transfers (Section 3) you will see that opener super-accepting when he likes responder's suit is widely accepted (even though responder's transfer bid promises zero points). This philosophy can be extended to the situation where responder has bid Stayman.

If you are maximum, and like the fact that responder probably has a major suit, then a super accept is in order. Let's start with the basic idea: -

- 1) 1NT - 2♣ - 3♦ = maximum, both majors
- 2) 1NT - 2♣ - 3♥ = maximum, 5♥'s
- 3) 1NT - 2♣ - 3♠ = maximum, 5♠'s

Why are these responses sound? First consider 2 & 3, partner (responder) has either invitational values or both majors (or a better hand). If it is the weak hand with two 4 card majors then this 3 level bid is sound according to the law of total tricks. If responder's hand does not contain this major, then he must have invitational values and can bid 3NT (or 4 of the major to play in a 5-3 fit) as you are max. And how about sequence 1? No problem if partner has any invitational hand, he just chooses the correct game contract. If partner is very weak with both majors then you usually have a 9 card fit and always a double fit, so settling in 3 of a major is OK. But why do we use 3♦ for the 'both majors' bid when 2NT is available? We have 3 available bids (2NT, 3♣ or 3♦). We need the 2NT/3♣ bids as described later, so 3♦ shows this max with both majors hand.

So, after 1NT - 2♣ - 3♦ (max, both majors) we have: -

- 3♥ = sign off
- 3♠ = sign off
- 3NT = to play
- 4♣ = Gerber
- 4♦ = transfer to ♥'s
- 4♥ = transfer to ♠'s

Example 1

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ64	♠ K852	1NT	2♣
♥ AJ106	♥ Q9853	3♦ (1)	4♥ (2)
♦ Q53	♦ 2	4♠	pass (3)
♣ A8	♣ 972		

(1) Max, both majors

(2) Transfer, the double fit and a max partner make 4♠ a good bet.

An excellent contract. Very difficult to bid if West had simply replied 2♥ to the Stayman enquiry. Note that East elects to play in the 4-4 fit. The 4-4 fit will often provide an extra trick over the 5-4 fit. If you don't agree (I have a 'thing' about 4-4 fits), then transfer into the 5-4 fit at (2) by bidding 4♦. No problem. Either way you reach a very reasonable game.

Example 2

West	East	West	East
♠ AJ106	♠ 98532	1NT	2♣
♥ AQ64	♥ J852	3♦ (1)	3♠ (2)
♦ Q53	♦ 72	pass	
♣ A8	♣ 92		

(1) Max, both majors

(2) It is perhaps a matter of style if you want to play in the 4-4 or 5-4 fit in a partial.

Example 3

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ6	♠ K9852	1NT	2♣
♥ A9864	♥ K852	3♥ (1)	4♥
♦ Q53	♦ 7	pass	
♣ A8	♣ 932		

(1) Max, 5♥'s

An excellent game that would be difficult to bid if West had responded 2♥.

Example 4 Sometimes a 5-3 fit may be located and a thin but respectable game bid: -

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ754	♠ K86	1NT	2♣ (1) (1) Intending to pass 2♦/♠
♥ KQ4	♥ A852	3♠ (2)	4♠ (2) Max, 5 ♠'s
♦ A4	♦ 87632		
♣ J54	♣ 7		

4♠ is a very respectable contract, the bidding would normally go 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - pass.

Example 5 And it does not go wrong if East has a heap: -

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ754	♠ 9862	1NT	2♣ (1) Max, 5 ♠'s
♥ KQ4	♥ J852	3♠ (1)	pass
♦ A54	♦ 8762		
♣ J5	♣ Q		

The opponents would surely find 3♣ if West bid just 2♠.

Example 6 And nothing is lost when there is no fit: -

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ75	♠ K8	1NT	2♣ (1)
♥ KQ94	♥ J8	3♦ (2)	3NT (3)
♦ Q53	♦ J764		
♣ A8	♣ KJ842		

(1) intending to invite with 2NT next.
(2) Max, both majors.
(3) Max is good enough, let's try 3NT

This concept of showing your maximum hand (when 4-4 or with a 5 card major) is also used if there is intervention: -

Example 7

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ754	♠ K862	1NT	pass	2♣	3♣
♥ KQ4	♥ J852	3♠	pass	4♠	
♦ Q53	♦ K762				
♣ A8	♣ 2				

Example 8 Usually after intervention there is still room to show both majors (using 3♦): -

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ75	♠ K862	1NT	pass	2♣	3♣
♥ KQ43	♥ J852	3♦ (1)	pass	4♠	
♦ Q53	♦ K762				

♣ A8 ♣ 2 (1) Max, both majors

Example 9 And how about after a 3♦ intervention? :-

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ75	♠ K862	1NT	pass	2♣	3♦
♥ KQ43	♥ J852	? (1)			
♦ A8	♦ 2				
♣ Q53	♣ K762				

(1) What would a double show here? Standard would be penalties. Showing a ♦ holding such as ♦AJ1085. But realistically, very unlikely. You could well apply the ‘stolen bid’ principle here and use the double to show a 3♦ bid – i.e. max with both majors.

So far we have only considered situations where responder is weak. When responder is strong the knowledge that opener is maximum with both majors does no harm at all: -

Example 10

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ75	♠ KJ102	1NT	2♣	(1) Max, both majors
♥ KQ43	♥ AJ982	3♦ (1)	4♥ (2)	(2) transfer
♦ A83	♦ K62	4♠	4NT (3)	(3) RKCB
♣ Q5	♣ 8	etc to 6♠		

Note that without this convention, the poorer 6♥ contract may be reached (but East should use SARS to find the 4-4 ♠ fit).

So, an old concept (the 2NT response) rejuvenated (except that we use 3♦). Something to think about? And the down side? Defenders know more about declarer’s shape.

If responder has a 4 card major, he normally bids 3♦ to establish the possible fit. With a weak hand he passes the 3♥/♠ reply; with a game going or slam hand he bids on.

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ54	♠ K973	1NT	2♣	(1) 5♦'s and a 4 card major
♥ K4	♥ Q1052	2NT (1)	3♦ (2)	(2) which major?
♦ AQ953	♦ J842	3♠ (3)	4♠	(3) ♠'s
♣ A8	♣ 6	pass		

A reasonable game that would normally be missed.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q542	♠ 1093	1NT	2♣	(1) 5♦'s and a 4 card major
♥ AJ	♥ Q1052	2NT (1)	3♣ (2)	(2) transfer to ♦'s
♦ AK953	♦ J10764	3♦	pass	
♣ K8	♣ 6			

Under normal methods, this hand would be played in the inferior 2♠ (1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - pass).

But responder may be interested in the minor suit slam. It is probably best to agree that 4♦ after the transfer to 3♦ is RKCB for ♦'s. When East has a 4 card major it is normally best to look for the major suit fit, but if slamming it may be best to go for the minor suit slam if the major suit is weak: -

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ84	♠ 10973	1NT	2♣	(1) 5♦'s and a 4 card major
♥ A9	♥ K2	2NT (1)	3♣ (2)	(2) transfer to ♦'s
♦ K9863	♦ AQ102	3♦	4♦ (3)	(3) RKCB for ♦'s
♣ K8	♣ A94	4♥ (4)	6♦	(4) 3 key cards
		pass		

6♠ is a reasonable contract but 6♦ is virtually 100%.

If East looks for a major suit fit but none materialises, he can fall back on the minor suit:-

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ	♠ K1093	1NT	2♣	(1) 5 ♦'s and a 4 card major
♥ A1054	♥ J2	2NT (1)	3♦ (2)	(2) which major?
♦ K9863	♦ AQ102	3♥ (3)	?	(3) ♥'s
♣ K8	♣ A94			

East is in a spot now. It was pairs scoring and so he hoped for a ♠ slam. Now he wants to check on key cards with ♦'s as trumps, but a RKCB bid would be for ♥'s as trumps. The solution? Double RKCB is of no use (East may well be only interested in one of West's suits). We need to have two RKCB bids, one for the major and one for the minor. You cannot play Kickback for ♦'s as 4♥ would be a sign off. Best is to play 4 of the minor as RKCB for the minor and play Kickback (or 4NT if you prefer) for the major.

West	East	So our bidding sequence continues: -
1NT	2♣	(4) RKCB for ♦'s
2NT	3♦	(5) 3 key cards
3♥	4♦ (4)	
4♥ (5)	6♦	
pass		

Note that under traditional methods East would probably not discover the superb ♦ fit. A likely auction is 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3NT - pass. East does not have the values to press on over 3NT (unless he knows about the superb ♦ fit)

Example 5

West	East	West	East	(1) 5 ♦'s and a 4 card major
♠ AQ54	♠ K1093	1NT	2♣	(2) which major?
♥ A10	♥ J2	2NT (1)	3♦ (2)	(3) ♠'s
♦ K9863	♦ AQ102	3♠ (3)	4NT (4)	(4) RKCB for ♠'s
♣ K8	♣ A94	5♠ (5)	5NT (6)	(5) 2 key cards + ♠Q
		6♣ (7)	6♦ (8)	(6) king ask
		7♠ (9)	pass	(7) ♣K
				(8) ♦K?
				(9) yes

Of course it may not be so easy if you don't play this variation of RKCB. But even then 6♠ will probably get a good score as most of the field will not know about the ♦ fit and be in 4♠ (1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3NT - 4♠).

So, little doubt that these super-accepts enable thin games to be reached when responder has a very poor hand. And when responder has an invitational or better hand? Super, these bids are very explicit and should enable the correct game/slam to be reached with ease.

Let's just summarize the bids after responder has established opener's two suits via a 3♦ 'which major' enquiry: -

Opener has ♣'s and ♥'s

After 1NT - 2♣ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥:-

- 3♠ =
- 3NT = to play
- 4♣ = RKCB for ♣'s
- 4♦ =
- 4♥ = to play
- 4♠ = RKCB for ♥'s

Opener has ♣'s and ♠'s

After 1NT - 2♣ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♠ :-

- 3NT = to play
- 4♣ = RKCB for ♣'s
- 4♦ =
- 4♥ =
- 4♠ = to play
- 4NT = RKCB for ♠'s

Opener has ♦'s and ♥'s

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2NT - 3♦ - 3♥:-

- 3♠ =
- 3NT = to play
- 4♣ =
- 4♦ = RKCB for ♦'s
- 4♥ = to play
- 4♠ = RKCB for ♥'s

Opener has ♦'s and ♠'s

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2NT - 3♦ - 3♠ :-

- 3NT = to play
- 4♣ =
- 4♦ = RKCB for ♦'s
- 4♥ =
- 4♠ = to play
- 4NT = RKCB for ♠'s

And what about these spare bids of the other major and the other minor?

They may be used for whatever you wish, maybe cue bids, but be wary of the auction going past the RKCB bid.

4NT in the ♥ sequences and 4♥ in the ♠ sequences could be used as quantitative NT bids, but there's not much point as opener has already shown a maximum hand.

Summary of Stayman Super Accepts

1NT - 2♣ - 2NT	=	maximum, 5 ♦'s and a 4 card major
1NT - 2♣ - 3♣	=	maximum, 5 ♣'s and a 4 card major
1NT - 2♣ - 3♦	=	maximum, both majors
1NT - 2♣ - 3♥	=	maximum, 5 ♥'s
1NT - 2♣ - 3♠	=	maximum, 5 ♠'s

The Downside

And what are the drawbacks of these super-accepts?

- 1) we may occasionally get too high (3♥/♠)
- 2) these 3♥ and 3♠ contracts will sometimes be played from the wrong hand
- 3) the defence know opener's shape

Not really problems, if 3♥/♠ fails then the opponents can surely make something. Anyway, this really is a small price to pay for all the games (and slams) that will otherwise be missed. So the defence know opener's shape, but you will not reach the right contract unless his shape is determined.

2.8 After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥/♠ - 2NT. – what is a suit bid?

Here we consider the sequences: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♥ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♠

What can they possibly mean? Obviously forcing to game. But why not simply bid 3NT? Maybe opener has opened with a 5 card major and is giving responder a choice? Possibly, but if opener elected to open 1NT instead of 1♥/♠ then he presumably has a hand suited to NT and partner's bidding has not changed that.

Hand A However, some people's style is to open 1NT on hands like this and then a bid that says '*I have values for game and my major is 5 card and I have a weak suit*' may come in very handy.

♠ AQJ94
♥ KJ4
♦ 63
♣ AQ6

Example

West	East	West	East
♠ AQJ94	♠ K86	1NT	2♣
♥ KJ4	♥ A852	2♠	2NT
♦ 63	♦ Q75	3♠ (1)	4♠ (2)
♣ AQ6	♣ J75	pass	

(1) West is worried about ♦'s and so emphasises his ♠'s, this bid is forcing to 3NT/4♠.

(2) With good ♠'s, East elects to go for the major suit game.

Now you could elaborate on this principle, with West bidding the suit which he is worried about. But that really would be giving too much information away to the defence, especially if the final contract is 3NT.

The bottom line. Many experienced players will open 1NT on any balanced hand with a 5 card major. If you go along with this philosophy then this is certainly a good convention for you. It is only available when partner has an invitational hand.

Note If you play Stayman Super-Accepts then this convention may not be required. However, some players prefer to reserve the Stayman super-accepts for hands that are absolutely top of the range like this.

♠ AQJ94
♥ KJ9
♦ 103
♣ AQ9

And note also that the Stayman Super-Accept is perhaps dodgy when playing a weak NT, but this sequence is fine as responder has invitational values.

2.9 Looking for Slam (after Stayman)

We have defined most of responder's 2nd bids after Stayman, but there are a few remaining. Consider: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ , what is 3♠, 4♣ or 4♦ ?

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ , what is 3♥, 4♣, 4♦ or 4♥ ?

There certainly is a good case for having splinters, but what is the best way to go about it? What sort of hand do we need for a splinter?

Example 1

West 1	West 2	East	West	East
♠ A984	♠ AKJ4	♠ Q763	1NT	2♣
♥ KJ	♥ KJ	♥ AQ74	2♠	?
♦ A984	♦ A984	♦ 2		
♣ KJ8	♣ 982	♣ AQ73		

Let's suppose that you play 4♦ as a splinter in this situation. East bids 4♦ and West likes his hand. 4NT (RKCB) looks right. 6♠ is reached, making easily with West 2 but failing with West 1. What is the problem? East really needs better trumps to splinter and we need to be able to make a general slam try below the level of game. So one of these bids needs to be reserved as a general slam try (showing either no shortage and/or dodgy trumps).

One method is to use 3 of the other major as the general slam try, with 4♣, 4♦ and 4♥ (if ♠'s are trumps) as splinters. This works reasonably well, but is incomplete (no ♠ splinter if ♥'s are trumps. Also, many players are used to having 4♣ as Gerber (of course I mean RKCB).

Is there a solution? Yes, we retain 4♣ as RKCB. Our general slam try is either an ASID sequence or 4♦. We use 3 of the other major as an ambiguous splinter.

So, after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ -

- 3♠ = ambiguous splinter
- 4♣ = RKCB for ♥'s
- 4♦ = slam try, no shortage

and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ -

- 3♥ = ambiguous splinter
- 4♣ = RKCB for ♠'s
- 4♦ = slam try, no shortage

2.9.1 Splinters after Stayman has found a fit

So we have decided upon 3 of the other major as an ambiguous splinter. Ambiguous splinters really do have an advantage over the direct splinter in that they lose nothing and do not give anything away to the defence if opener has an unsuitable hand for investigating slam. Opener can sign off in 4 of the major or ask about the shortage. The next bid up asks: -

So, after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠,

3NT asks 4♣ = ♣ singleton/void
 4♦ = ♦ singleton/void
 4♥ = ♠ singleton/void

and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥,

3♠ asks 3NT = ambiguous void
 4♣ = ♣ singleton
 4♦ = ♦ singleton
 4♥ = ♥ singleton

In the ♠ sequence, we have a couple of spare bids (3NT and 4♠). We will use 3NT to show an ambiguous void, with 4♣ as a relay to find out where. There is no room in the ♥ sequence for something similar so the shortage may be singleton or void.

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥ - 3♠ - 3NT,

4♣ asks 4♦ = ♦ void
 4♥ = ♥ void
 4♠ = ♣ void

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ A4	♠ K83	1NT	2♣	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ Q1084	♥ KJ75	2♥	3♠ (1)	(2) where?
♦ KQ54	♦ 7	3NT (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) ♦ shortage
♣ KQ8	♣ AJ1062	4♥ (4)	pass	(4) not interested

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ A42	♠ 3	1NT	2♣	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ Q1084	♥ KJ75	2♥	3♠ (1)	(2) where?
♦ KQ5	♦ A87	3NT (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) ♠ shortage
♣ KQ8	♣ AJ1062	4♠ (4)	etc to 6♥	(4) RKCB. Even with this flat West hand 6♥ is fine as there are no wasted values.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter (2) not interested
♠ KQ2	♠ 3	1NT	2♣	
♥ Q1084	♥ KJ75	2♥	3♠ (1)	
♦ KQ5	♦ A87	4♥ (2)	pass	
♣ KQ8	♣ AJ1062			

With examples 2-4 there is an alternative approach available. This is fully described later, but you could transfer to the minor and then bid 3 of the major (game forcing). The problem using the transfer to the minor method with these example hands is that when opener agrees your major then you are already at the 4 level and so you really need a better hand to venture forth opposite a possible minimum.

The splinter bids are, by definition, interested in slam.

Example 5

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter (2) where? (3) it's a void (4) where? (5) void ♥
♠ AJ82	♠ KQ107	1NT	2♣	
♥ J84	♥ -	2♠	3♥ (1)	
♦ KQ5	♦ A832	3♠ (2)	3NT (3)	
♣ AQ8	♣ KJ762	4♣ (4)	4♥ (5)	
		4NT etc to 7♠		

This East hand could have splintered over the 1NT directly (see section 5.4) but chose the Stayman route because of the good quality of the ♠ suit and relatively poor ♦'s. Another approach is that East could transfer into ♣'s and then bid ♠'s, we cover transfers to minors later.

Hands that are definitely slamming.

Hand A	Hand B	Now we saw in the previous examples that responder's hand may be slam invitational or definitely slamming. There is, however, a problem with hands that are definitely slamming with ♠ shortage. With these hands we would be bidding 4♥ in response to partner's shortage enquiry and the problem is that he may then pass! So with these very strong hands with ♠ shortage we have to take another route. With Hand A you could either try SARS or else you could choose to splinter directly (this is covered later). With Hand B you could transfer to ♣'s (we cover this later) and then bid ♥'s or you could again choose to splinter directly.
♠ 4	♠ -	
♥ KQ107	♥ KQ107	
♦ A832	♦ A832	
♣ KJ76	♣ KJ762	

There is also a similar problem with a hand that has a ♣ void as 4♠ shows this, and partner may pass 4♠. So with a ♣ void and a slam forcing hand you also have to choose an alternative approach

2.9.2 4♦ - The General Slam Try

The bidding has started 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥/♠. If responder is interested in slam in the suit then he has a number of options including key card ask, (ambiguous) splinter or ASID. Without shortage you cannot splinter, ASID may not help when you have found the fit but don't know if slam is there - you want partner to try for slam. Sometimes, with no clear course of action, it may be best to pass the buck. So we define: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥/♠ - 4♦

as a slam try in the agreed suit but usually without a shortage. It invites opener to look for slam if he has decent trumps and a non-min. If opener is interested, then RKCB (I prefer 4♠ when ♥'s are trumps) is the usual continuation.

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens a strong NT, you bid Stayman and partner responds 2♠ (A) or 2♥ (B). There really is little point in enquiring about partner's shape (using ASID) and you have no shortage to splinter. You want to invite slam but have nothing special to say. So bid 4♦, this agrees trumps and leaves it up to partner. If he bids RKCB (I prefer 4♠ as the RKCB bid with ♥'s) then he can find out all about your hand.
♠ AJ84	♠ A9	
♥ A92	♥ KQ107	
♦ KJ9	♦ A87	
♣ A87	♣ K862	

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) general slam try agreeing ♥'s (2) minimum.
♠ KQ	♠ A9	1NT	2♣	
♥ J842	♥ KQ107	2♥	4♦ (1)	
♦ KQ5	♦ A87	4♥ (2)	pass	
♣ AJ73	♣ K862			

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) general slam try agreeing ♠'s (2) RKCB for ♠'s (3) 3 key cards
♠ KQ76	♠ AJ84	1NT	2♣	
♥ KQ5	♥ A92	2♠	4♦ (1)	
♦ A106	♦ KJ9	4NT (2)	5♣ (3)	
♣ K93	♣ A87	6♠	pass	

Note that 6♠ is pretty solid whereas 6NT would be on a guess. Another testament to the good 4-4 fit.

2.9.3 4♣ - Gerber/RKCB after Stayman

Here we consider the sequences: -

- 1) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♣
- 2) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♣
- 3) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♣

(1) is a simple ace ask (Gerber).

(2) and (3) are RKCB.

4NT bids are quantitative.

2.9.3.1 4♣ - Gerber after a 2♦ response to Stayman

Much the same as the standard Gerber bid after a 1NT opening, except that responder is known to have a 4 card major.

Hand A	Hand B	Hand A first looks for a ♠ fit. With no fit, 6NT is still a good bet, but best to check on the aces. You never know!
♠ AQJ10	♠ K8	
♥ KQ6	♥ KQJ6	Hand B was looking for 7♥. You could now check on aces and try 7NT. This hand should, however, be looking for a ♣ fit and should bid 3♣ (SARS) looking for 7♣.
♦ QJ4	♦ AJ6	
♣ K73	♣ KQ109	

So, we only really use Gerber after Stayman if we have no other good 4 card suit (we would try SARS). Thus typically 4333 or 3433 shapes.

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) With a good 5 card suit West elects to open and 1NT is fine.
♠ K9	♠ AQJ10	1NT (1)	2♣	(2) Gerber
♥ J109	♥ KQ6	2♦	4♣ (2)	(3) 1 ace
♦ AK5	♦ QJ4	4♥ (3)	4NT (4)	(4) glad I checked!
♣ QJ1098	♣ K73	pass		

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) bid 3♣ (SARS) here and onto 7♣ when the ♣ fit is uncovered. All the aces and all the kings does not mean that 7NT is safe.
♠ AJ7	♠ K8	1NT	2♣	
♥ A72	♥ KQJ6	2♦	? (1)	
♦ K85	♦ AJ6			
♣ AJ72	♣ KQ109			

2.9.3.2 4♣ - RKCB after a 2♥/♠ response to Stayman

When opener acknowledges a major suit, 4♣ is the key card ask. I prefer to call it RKCB and retain the name Gerber when specifically asking for aces.

Hand A	Hand B	Same hands as before. This time Hand A gets a 2♠ response to Stayman. So 4♣, RKCB, to check on key cards on the way to 6♠. Hand B discovers the ♥ fit. 7♥ is surely there if all the key cards are present.
♠ KQJ3	♠ K8	
♥ K76	♥ KQJ6	
♦ A105	♦ AJ6	
♣ KQ10	♣ KQ109	

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) RKCB (2) 3 key cards
♠ A874	♠ KQJ3	1NT	2♣	
♥ A82	♥ K76	2♠	4♣ (1)	
♦ KJ7	♦ A105	4♦ (2)	6♠	
♣ A72	♣ KQ10	pass		

Here we see the power of the 4-4 fit yet again. In 6NT we need to find the ♦Q, in 6♠ we are safe provided the trumps split 3-2. (3 rounds of trumps, eliminate ♣'s and throw in on the 3rd round of ♥'s). Another example of why you should still bid Stayman when 4333.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) RKCB (2) 3 key cards
♠ AJ5	♠ K8	1NT	2♣	
♥ A852	♥ KQJ6	2♥	4♣ (1)	
♦ K7	♦ AJ6	4♦ (2)	etc to 7♥	
♣ AJ72	♣ KQ109			

Example 3

West	East	West	East	(1) RKCB (2) 3 key cards (3) ♥Q? (4) no
♠ AJ5	♠ KQ	1NT	2♣	
♥ A852	♥ KJ106	2♥	4♣ (1)	
♦ J7	♦ AKQ	4♦ (2)	4♠ (3)	
♣ AJ72	♣ KQ109	4NT (4)	6♥ or 6NT	

If you don't play RKCB here then it may be difficult to establish that the ♥Q is missing. It's up to you what you play at (4) to deny the trump queen, I assume the next bid.

2.9.4 4NT (and 4 of the other major) after Stayman

4NT is always quantitative. We have the following sequences to consider: -

- 1) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4NT
- 2) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4NT
- 3) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4NT

also, there are three redundant sequences: -

- 4) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♠
- 5) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♠
- 6) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♥

We shall define all of these as quantitative.

2.9.4.1 4NT and 4♠ after opener has denied a 4 card major

First, the sequences 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♠ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4NT.

We use the 4♦ and 4♥ bids here as Extended Texas transfers and so 4♠ is free. We shall define both 4♠ and 4NT as quantitative. Responder has one or two 4 card majors (otherwise he would not have gone via Stayman) but opener has none. Now a normal 4NT quantitative bid is 15-17 pts, so let's make it easier for opener by saying how good the quantitative bid is.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♠ = quantitative, 15-16. One or two 4 card majors
 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4NT = quantitative, 17. One or two 4 card majors

Opener now has slightly more to go on. He simply uses the normal replies to a quantitative 4NT bid. I.e. sign off in 4NT, look for a minor suit fit or bid 6NT. Note that opener must have a *good* minor suit to look for a minor suit slam – responder does not have another decent 4 card suit or he would have used SARS.

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) 15-16	
				(2) I have good ♦'s, forcing	
♠ Q94	♠ AJ76	1NT	2♣		
♥ 84	♥ A7	2♦	4♠ (1)		
♦ AKQ9	♦ J532	5♦ (2)	6♦		
♣ AJ84	♣ KQ6	pass			

West liked his hand and the ♦ suit, so he accepted the invitation but tried for a ♦ slam. East was pleased to oblige.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) 15-16	
♠ J9	♠ AQ76	1NT	2♣		
♥ KJ4	♥ A7	2♦	4♠ (1)		
♦ AK94	♦ J532	4NT	pass		
♣ A984	♣ KQ6				

This time, West does not have enough opposite 15-16 and so he signs off. He would have taken his chances opposite 17: -

Example 3

But it's always best to look for a decent fit, here 6♦ is superior to 6NT: -

West	East	West	East	(1) 17
				(2) I have good ♦'s, forcing
♠ J9	♠ AQ76	1NT	2♣	
♥ KJ4	♥ A7	2♦	4NT (1)	
♦ AK94	♦ Q532	5♦ (2)	6♦	
♣ A984	♣ KQ6	pass		

West knows that East does not have a good 4 card 2nd suit (he did not try SARS). So there is no point in looking for a ♣ slam. The ♦ suit, however, is robust, so try it at (2).

East also knows what's going on of course. He knows that West will only suggest ♦'s with a good suit and so he accepts ♦'s as trumps.

Example 4

If opener has a reasonable 5 card suit then he bids it at the six level: -

West	East	West	East	(1) 17
				(2) I have a 5 card ♣ suit
				(3) excellent
♠ J9	♠ AQ76	1NT	2♣	
♥ K42	♥ A7	2♦	4NT (1)	
♦ AK4	♦ J532	6♣ (2)	pass (3)	
♣ AJ984	♣ KQ6			

2.9.4.2 4NT and 4♥ after opener has replied 2♠ to Stayman

A similar situation here, there is again no major suit fit. Opener has 4 ♠'s and responder has 4 ♥'s.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♥ = quantitative, 15-16. Four card ♥ suit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4NT = quantitative, 17. Four card ♥ suit.

Much the same as earlier, opener may sign off, look for a minor suit fit or bid 6NT. Again, responder is unlikely to have another decent 4 card suit as he would probably have looked for a fit via SARS.

Example 4

It may just be that opener has a 5 card ♠ suit: -

West	East	West	East	(1) 15-16, quantitative
♠ AQ974	♠ J103	1NT	2♣	
♥ QJ9	♥ AK76	2♠	4♥ (1)	
♦ J6	♦ A72	4♠ (2)	pass	
♣ AJ8	♣ 96			

The 4♠ bid at (2) is best defined as a 5 card suit and offering 4♠ or 4NT as a final resting place. With a 5 card ♠ suit and a max hand, opener bids 6♠ (or 5♠ if you prefer), offering the choice of 6♠ or 6NT.

Example 5

Occasionally we may luck out with this use of 4♥ as a quantitative bid if opener has good 3 card support for ♥'s and goes for the Moysian fit: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ AK94	♠ J53	1NT	2♣	
♥ QJ9	♥ AK76	2♠	4♥ (1)	
♦ J6	♦ A72	pass		
♣ A984	♣ KJ6			(1) 15-16, quantitative (and obviously 4 ♥'s as responder went via Stayman).

2.9.4.3 4NT and 4♠ after opener has replied 2♥ to Stayman

So, the two remaining sequences. But things are slightly different this time as opener may have 4 ♠'s in addition to his 4 ♥'s.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♠ = quantitative, 15-16. Four card ♠ suit.
 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4NT = quantitative, 17. Four card ♠ suit.

In addition to the normal options (4NT, 6NT or a minor suit slam), there is also the possibility of a ♠ fit.

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ A1064	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AK95	♥ 42	2♥	4♠ (1)	
♦ A8	♦ K532	6♠	pass	
♣ J97	♣ AK6			

West has just enough to accept East's invitation with ♠'s as trumps. East did not go via SARS because his ♦ suit is a bit ropey for a ♦ slam.

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ A8	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AK95	♥ 42	2♥	4♠ (1)	
♦ Q876	♦ K532	4NT	pass	
♣ QJ9	♣ AK6			

West has the same values, but with no good fit there is no slam. As East did not try SARS, West knows that a possible ♦ fit would not be a good suit for slam.

Example 8

West	East	West	East	
♠ A1064	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AQ95	♥ 42	2♥	4♠ (1)	
♦ A8	♦ K432	pass		
♣ J97	♣ AQ6			

A ♠ fit this time, but West is minimum and so no slam.

Example 9

West	East	West	East	
♠ A1064	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) max quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AQ95	♥ 42	2♥	4NT (1)	
♦ A8	♦ KJ32	6♠	pass	
♣ J97	♣ AK6			

West has the same minimum hand, but this time East's quantitative bid shows max (17 points). West accepts because there is a fit.

Example 10

West	East	West	East	
♠ A106	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AJ95	♥ 42	2♥	4♠ (1)	
♦ AQJ7	♦ K432	5♦	6♦	
♣ J9	♣ AK6	pass		

West is maximum. With good intermediates, an excellent ♦ suit and good ♠ support, the ♦ slam is worth investigating.

Example 11

With no \diamond fit, you are generally heading for 6NT and hope it makes? ...

West	East	West	East	
\spadesuit A106	\spadesuit KQJ7	1NT	$2\clubsuit$	(1) quantitative, $4\spadesuit$'s
\heartsuit AJ95	\heartsuit K82	$2\heartsuit$	$4\spadesuit$ (1)	
\diamondsuit AQJ7	\diamondsuit 432	$5\diamondsuit$ (2)	$5\spadesuit$ (3)	
\clubsuit J9	\clubsuit AK6	$6\spadesuit$	pass	

After West's $5\diamondsuit$ at (2) we are heading for slam. But it does no harm for East to emphasise his good \spadesuit 's at (3). West is only too happy to oblige.

*** End of Chapter 2 ***