

Checkback Stayman

(finding a 5-3 fit in a major)

When **opener** has a 15+ balanced hand which includes a 5-card major, she will open in her major and rebid No Trumps. If partner has three cards in opener's major, partner can give delayed 3-card support with her rebid, so the 8-card fit will not be missed. For example:

Example 1

West	East	West	East
♠ A Q 9	♠ J 8 7 6	1♥	1♠
♥ K 9 8 5 2	♥ Q J 7	1NT	2♥
♦ A 9 7	♦ Q 8 5 2		
♣ Q 5	♣ 7 2		

Example 2

West	East	West	East
♠ A Q 9	♠ K 8 7	1♥	2♦
♥ K 9 8 5 2	♥ A J 7	1NT	3♥
♦ A 9 7	♦ Q J 5 2		
♣ Q 5	♣ 7 2		

However, if it is **opener's partner** who has the 5-card major, an 8-card fit in a major may well remain undiscovered, and an inferior (possibly failing) NT contract will often be reached. Note that responder's rebid of her major would guarantee a 6+ card suit.

Example 3

West	East	West	East
♠ A Q 7	♠ K 8 7	1♦	1♥
♥ K 9 8	♥ A J 7 4 3	1NT	3NT
♦ A 9 7 6 4	♦ Q 8 5		
♣ Q 5	♣ 7 2		

Example 4

West	East	West	East
♠ A 9 4	♠ K 8 7 3 2	1♥	1♠
♥ A J 7 6	♥ K 8	1NT	3NT
♦ K 9 3	♦ A J 8		
♣ J 5 4	♣ 9 3 2		

Even on a hand where 3NT will also make, with 25-26 HCP and an 8 card major fit, 3NT makes 65% of the time and game in a major makes 80% of the time, so it is generally better to play in the major unless you consciously decide No Trumps is a better bet. Checkback Stayman is designed to make sure you will not miss game with an 8 card major fit.

After 1any – 1 major – 1NT, if responder bids 2♣ (Checkback) she is asking: "I have 5 cards in my major. Have you got three card support for my major?"

Note: Checkback Stayman is only used with **invitational or better** hands – i.e. 8+ HCP, because if a fit in the major is not found responder may have to sign off in 2NT or higher. *(This is entirely consistent with the 11 HCP minimum requirement for Stayman after partner's opening weak 1NT, which has a range that is three HCP lower than the 15-17 HCP range for a 1NT rebid).* With a weaker hand responder should pass or rebid a 5- card suit rather than use Checkback.

Opener's Rebids

- 2♥/2♠ shows a minimum affirmative (15 or a poor 16 HCP).
- 3♥/3♠ shows a maximum affirmative (17 or a good 16 HCP)
- 2♦ shows a minimum denial – no 3-card support
- 2NT shows a maximum denial – no 3-card support.

Examples

West	East	West	East
♠ A Q 5	♠ K J 7 4 3	1♦	1♠
♥ K 9 8	♥ 7 6 5	1NT	2♣
♦ A 10 7 6 5	♦ K J 8 2	2♠	Pass
♣ Q 5	♣ 7		

West's 2♠ shows three spades and a minimum (15 or a poor 16). East is also minimum (8 HCP) so passes. With 10+ HCP East would bid 4♠.

West	East	West	East
♠ A Q 5	♠ K J 10 9 3	1♦	1♠
♥ K 9 8	♥ J 10 5	1NT	2♣
♦ A Q 10 9 7	♦ K J 8 2	3♠	3♠
♣ J 5	♣ 7		

West's 3♠ shows three spades and a maximum. East has a good 9 HCP so bids 4♠.

West	East	West	East
♠ K 7	♠ Q J 9 8 5	1♥	1♠
♥ A Q J 7 3	♥ K 9 8	1NT	2♣
♦ 8 7 4	♦ Q 3	2♥	4♥
♣ K Q 3	♣ A J 2		

East could rebid 3♥ to show delayed 3-card heart support, rather than 2♣ Checkback, but the best contract might be in spades, e.g. if West has four hearts and three spades. West's 2♥ denies three spades but shows a fifth heart. East is strong enough to bid game.

West	East	West	East
♠ A Q	♠ K J 7 4 2	1♦	1♠
♥ K 9 8	♥ Q 7 5	1NT	2♣
♦ Q J 10 6 5	♦ K 9 8	2NT	3NT
♣ K J 3	♣ 7 4		

West's 2NT denies three spades and shows a maximum (16 or a good 15).

With 15 HCP or a poor 16 HCP West would bid an artificial 2♦, and East would sign off in 2NT.)

West	East	West	East
♠ Q 7	♠ K 10 6 5 4	1♥	1♠
♥ A Q J 8	♥ K 9 4	1NT	2♣
♦ 8 7 2	♦ K 10	2NT	3NT
♣ A Q J 10	♣ 9 5 4		

After West's 1NT, East wants to know whether West has three spades or five hearts. The only way he can find out about both is to bid Checkback 2♣. West's 2NT rebid shows a maximum (good 16 HCP) and denies three spades (and also denies five hearts).

West	East	West	East
♠ Q 7 2	♠ K 10 6 5 4	1♥	1♠
♥ A Q 9 8 3	♥ K 7 4	1NT	2♣
♦ 8 7	♦ Q 3	2♠	Pass
♣ A K 3	♣ 9 8 2		

East has five spades AND three hearts, so could bid 2♥, delayed 3-card support, but by bidding Checkback 2♣, East can also check for an 8-card spade fit. Now West, whose 1NT rebid denied four spades, can now show three spades and a minimum by bidding 2♠. (If West had just two spades and five hearts she would rebid 2♥, confirming her fifth heart). With just 8 HCP, East passes.