

What's Standard?

Using Grant Standard: Interference Over 1NT — by David Lindop 

Previous articles in this series, the Grant Basic and Grant Standard Summary Charts, and corresponding convention cards, can be found at www.audreygrant.com.

To complete our discussion of handling notrump opening bids and responses, let's take another look at the Summary Chart:

OPENING BIDS	RESPONSES
1NT: 14+ to 17 (can include 5-card major) (responses remain same if 1NT is doubled; responses remain same after 2♣ overcall except double is now Stayman; transfers off after 2♦ or higher overcall & cuebid is Stayman)	2♣: Stayman 2♦: 5+ hearts (transfer) 2♥: 5+ spades (transfer) 2♠: transfer to 3♣ (to sign off in clubs or diamonds) 3♣/3♦: 6+ suit; invit. to 3NT 3♥/3♠: Forcing; invit. to slam
2NT: 20 to 21 (with 22-24 open 2♣ and rebid 2NT) (with 25-27 open 2♣ and rebid 3NT)	3♣: Stayman 3♦: 5+ hearts (transfer) 3♥: 5+ spades (transfer) (Stayman and transfers also apply after 2♣-2♦-2NT/3NT)

When 1NT is Doubled

A basic partnership principle is that all conventional agreements are “off” —no longer apply—if an opponent interferes, **unless the partnership has made an agreement to the contrary.**

As the chart shows, the Grant Standard agreement is to use Stayman and transfers in response to an opening 1NT. Suppose we hold this hand as ♠ J 8 3 South and partner ♥ Q 9 7 6 4 2 opens 1NT. Our ♦ 7 plan is to respond ♣ 8 4 2 2♦ to transfer opener to 2♥ and then pass, stopping safely in partscore. But what if East doubles:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1NT	Double	?

If we now respond 2♦, partner might pass if we haven't discussed this situation! We'd have to bid an old-fashioned 2♥ if we wanted to play partscore in hearts.

Does this approach make sense? It did at one time, when a double of 1NT was primarily for penalty. Responder might have a weak hand with length in a minor suit and want to sign off in 2♣ or 2♦ instead of passing 1NT. However, in modern competitive bidding, the double of 1NT is often used as some form of

takeout rather than penalty. So, the popular style is to agree to ignore the double and continue to use both Stayman and transfers since the double has not used up any bidding room. That's the agreement adopted by Grant Standard and included on the Summary Chart: “responses remain same if 1NT is doubled.” So, we

can confidently bid 2♦ with this hand and expect partner to treat it as a transfer to 2♥.

If 1NT is doubled, another call becomes available, the redouble. The standard agreement is that this shows about 8 or more points, with the expectation of making at least 1NT and interest in doubling the opponents if they run to some other contract.

After a 2♣ Overcall

In today's competitive style, it has become common to give an artificial meaning to a 2♣ overcall of 1NT—typically to show a one-suited or two-suited type of hand. Since there's still room to use all the conventional responses except Stayman, we've adopted the popular agreement that “responses remain the same after a 2♣ overcall except that double is now Stayman.” In other words, “systems are on.”

The reason for using the double to replace Stayman is that it is not too effective to use a double for penalty if the 2♣ overcall is (usually) artificial. For example, suppose we have this hand and the auction begins:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1NT	2♣*	?

The 2♣ overcall is alerted as showing some one-suited hand. Double might leave us awkwardly placed if the opponents now bid to 2♠. We don't have a suitable hand for a penalty double and we might have missed a heart fit. It's also inconvenient to use a cuebid of 3♣ as Stayman, since that might get the partnership too high if partner has a minimum for the 1NT opening. So, having double available as Stayman is useful in this situation.

This agreement won't always work well and some partnerships may prefer more complex arrangements, but it's better to have a reasonable agreement than none at all.

After 2♦ or Higher Overcall

When the opponent's overcall is 2♦ or higher, it takes away both Stayman and at least some of the transfer bids, so our agreement is that “transfers are off after a 2♦ or higher overcall and a cuebid is Stayman.” Again, there are other possibilities, but this should be fine for most partnerships.

Suppose we hold ♠ Q 4 this hand as South ♥ K 10 8 7 5 3 and the bidding ♦ 8 4 starts off: ♣ 9 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1NT	2♦	?

We don't have much but, opposite a 1NT opening, we don't want to let East buy the contract in diamonds. Since transfers are off, we simply compete by bidding a natural 2♥.

Our 2♥ bid is not forcing but it does show some values, since we could pass with a very weak hand once East overcalls. With a good fit for hearts, opener should be willing to compete higher.

There is a school of thought that transfers should continue to be used in this situation with a double of 2♦ saying “East stole my bid so my double is a transfer to hearts.” This has some merit and is an extension of our agreement to use a double of a 2♣ overcall as Stayman. However, most partnerships prefer ♠ A 7 5 to reserve a double of ♥ 8 3 2♦ for this type of hand. ♦ Q J 9 5 This is a good, old-fashioned ♣ J 10 7 3 penalty double of East’s overcall. Partner has about 15 or more points and at least two diamonds, so we expect to collect a sizeable penalty.

What do we do if ♠ 4 this is our hand and ♥ A J 7 5 the auction begins ♦ Q J 9 8 3 this way: ♣ J 8 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1NT	2♠	?

We don’t have a suitable hand for a penalty double and we’d like to look for a heart fit. A cuebid of 3♠ takes the place of Stayman. Over our 3♠ bid, opener will bid 4♥ with a four-card heart suit; otherwise, opener will bid 3NT. If opener bids 3NT, we’ll have to pass and hope partner has something in spades—which is likely in view of the 1NT opening and the fact partner doesn’t have length in hearts.

It may seem like a lot to commit the partnership to game with this hand, but that’s what we’d probably do if East passed. With 9 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit, we’d respond 2♣ as Stayman and then jump to 3NT if partner rebid 2♦ or 2♠. We might finish in 3NT with no spade stopper without the interference!

How do we handle ♠ A J 9 7 4 this hand if partner ♥ 6 3 opens 1NT and the ♦ K Q 7 5 auction proceeds: ♣ 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1NT	2♥	?

We were planning to transfer to 2♠ and then jump to 3NT, but transfers don’t apply after the overcall. A bid of 2♠ would be competitive and partner is likely to pass. Instead, we revert to traditional methods and make a forcing jump to 3♠. This asks opener to choose between 3NT and 4♠.

So, we should be able to handle most auctions when the opponents interfere over 1NT. If we want a more sophisticated approach, we’ll have to adopt more complex methods such as Lebensohl, which are outside our Grant Standard framework.

Responding to 2NT

Once we agree to use Stayman and Jacoby transfer bids over 1NT, it’s typically assumed that we will also use them after a 2NT opening... although we should discuss this with partner.

If we hold this hand ♠ Q 10 7 4 and partner opens ♥ K 9 8 3 2NT, we respond 3♣ ♦ 7 2 as Stayman, asking if ♣ J 6 5

opener has a four-card major. The convention works essentially the same way as over 1NT but there are small differences—apart from the fact that we use 3♣ instead of 2♣.

With the above hand, we would pass over 1NT since we’d be stuck if partner responded 2♦. Since partner promises 20-21 points for 2NT, we can afford to use Stayman with as few as 4 or 5 points. However, there’s no room to invite opener to game over 2NT. As responder, we’ll have to decide whether to stop in partscore or go for the game bonus.

The situation is ♠ 8 6 similar with Jacoby ♥ 10 8 7 6 4 2 transfer bids. If ♦ Q J 3 partner opens 2NT, ♣ 8 4 we would respond 3♦ to transfer opener to 3♥, but then we’ll have to use our judgment—guesswork?—to decide whether to pass or raise to 4♥.

Another change is that we don’t use extended transfers over 2NT.

That is, we don’t use 3♠ to ask opener to bid 4♣ so we can pass or bid 4♦ as a signoff. With a weak hand and a long minor suit, we simply pass and hope opener can scramble eight tricks in 2NT.

3♠ can be given various conventional meanings, but all are outside the scope of Grant Standard. Instead, we simply don’t use it.

After a 2♣ Opening

Both Stayman and Jacoby transfers are also used after an artificial strong 2♣ opening and a 2♦ waiting response when opener rebids 2NT or 3NT. For example, suppose we are South and the auction begins:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♣	Pass	2♦
	Pass	2NT	Pass
			?

North is showing a ♠ Q J 7 3 balanced hand with ♥ 5 2 22-24 points. With ♦ 8 2 this hand, we could ♣ J 8 7 5 3 now bid 3♣ as Stayman, asking for opener to show a four-card major. If opener bids 3♠, we’ll raise to 4♠. If opener bids 3♦ or 3♥, we’ll bid 3NT.

With this hand, ♠ 6 4 we’d bid 3♦ to transfer opener to 3♥ and ♥ Q 9 6 4 2 then bid 3NT. This ♦ 5 3 tells opener we have ♣ Q 10 7 3 a five-card heart suit and let’s opener choose between 3NT and 4♥.

The situation is different if responder makes a ♠ 9 2 positive response ♥ K Q 10 7 3 to 2♣. Suppose we ♦ 7 3 have this hand and ♣ A 10 8 5 the auction begins:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♣	Pass	2♥
	Pass	2NT	Pass
			?

If we now bid 3♣, it is a natural bid showing clubs; it is not Stayman. We’ve already announced a good five-card heart suit and would simply bid 3♠ if we wanted to show a four-card spade suit. There’s no need for Stayman or transfers.

So, we are now prepared for all opening notrump bids and responses. (In the next issue we’ll look at handling the auction when partner opens 1♥ or 1♠.)