

Muppet Stayman over 2NT

BridgeCentric Productions

Muppet Stayman, named after a Jim Henson character (just kidding), is a modification of Puppet Stayman over 2NT. Its purpose is to find 5/3 and 4/4 major suit fits as well as allow the responder to be able to bid easily with five Spades and four Hearts without having to go through an awkward Smolen system. It starts off simply enough by the responder using a 3♣ bid to engage Muppet Stayman. This asks the opener for a five-card major or if they have a four-card major. If the opener does not hold a five-card major but holds one or both four-card majors, the opener will rebid 3♦. All Muppet Stayman bids are alertable.

Example 1

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	3♣!	Pass	3♦!
South			
♠AK87			
♥J87			
♦AQT8			
♣AQ3			

Example 2

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	3♣!	Pass	3♦!
South			
♠AQ87			
♥QJ87			
♦A8			
♣AQ9			

In both examples South is denying a five-card major but promising at least one four-card major.

If the responder has one four-card major it will be shown by bidding the major suit not held.

Example 3

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	3♥!
South			
♠A872			
♥74			
♦AT82			
♣874			

Example 4

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	3♠!
South			
♠A2			
♥KJ87			
♦983			
♣8743			

North has denied a five-card major but has promised at least one four-card major with 3♦. South is showing the four-card major by bidding the major suit not held.

If the opener has promised at least one four-card major and the responder has both four-card majors without interest in slam, the responder will bid 4♦ asking the opener to bid a four-card major or the better major if the opener holds both major suits.

Example 5

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	4♦!
Pass	4♥	All Pass	
North		South	
♠KQT		♠A872	
♥KJ86		♥Q974	
♦AK74		♦82	
♣A9		♣874	

Example 6

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	4♦!
Pass	4♠	All Pass	
North		South	
♠KQJ6		♠A872	
♥QT42		♥KJ87	
♦AK		♦98	
♣KQ6		♣874	

North has denied a five-card major but has promised at least one four-card major with 3♦. South is showing both four-card majors without slam interest and asking North to pick the better major suit by bidding 4♦ over 3♦.

If the responder has both four-card majors with interest in slam, the responder will bid 4♣. The opener will bid either major suit directly and naturally with a minimum hand that does not want to cooperate for slam.

Example 7

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	4♣!
Pass	4♥	All Pass	
North		South	
♠KQT		♠AJ72	
♥K863		♥Q974	
♦AK7		♦J2	
♣AJ2		♣K74	

Example 8

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	4♣!
Pass	4♠	All Pass	
North		South	
♠KQJ6		♠A872	
♥QT4		♥KJ87	
♦AK2		♦Q8	
♣KQ6		♣J74	

North has denied a five-card major but has promised at least one four-card major with 3♦. South is showing both four-card majors with slam interest by bidding 4♦ over 3♦ and asking North to show the strength of the hand and the major suit. North is showing a minimum hand by bidding the major directly.

If the opener does have interest in slam with a good hand, the opener will set Hearts as trump by bidding 4♦ or Spades as trump by bidding 4NT. Both bids will serve as RKC 3014 for the selected major suit. Key Card bids above 3NT are not alertable, they are post alerts. This means that after the auction is over you must explain to the opponents that a Key Card auction has taken place and what the follow up bids have meant.

Example 9

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	4♣!
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♥	All Pass	
North		South	
♠KQT		♠AJ72	
♥KT86		♥Q974	
♦AK87		♦J2	
♣AQ		♣K74	

Example 10

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	4♣!
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♠	All Pass	
North		South	
♠KQJ6		♠A872	
♥Q4		♥KJ87	
♦AKJT2		♦Q8	
♣A6		♣J74	

North has denied a five-card major but has promised at least one four-card major with 3♦. South is showing both four-card majors with slam interest by bidding 4♦ over 3♦. North is showing a maximum hand and selecting the trump suit by bidding 4♦ for Hearts and 4NT for Spades. South is responding in RKC 3014 steps, using the second step to show one or four Key Cards.

So far, Muppet Stayman is the same as Puppet Stayman. It differs when the opener has a five-card major or neither a five- nor four-card major. With a five-card major, the opener will bid 3♠ when holding five Spades or 3NT when holding five Hearts.

Example 11

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	3♣!	Pass	3♠!
South			
♠AK875			
♥J87			
♦AQT			
♣AQ3			

Example 12

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	3♣!	Pass	3NT!
South			
♠AQ8			
♥QJ872			
♦A8			
♣AQ9			

North is asking South about the length of South's major suits. South is showing five Spades by bidding 3♠ and showing five Hearts by bidding 3NT.

If the opener has shown five Spades over 3♣ the responder will continue the auction naturally. 3NT is natural with no fit for Spades and no interest in slam. 4♣ and 4♦ are natural, denying a fit for Spades with some interest in slam. 4♠ is natural, showing a fit but denying interest in slam. 4NT is a natural quantitative bid, denying a Spade fit. 4♥ is an artificial bid, setting Spades as trump, and showing interest in slam. The opener will bid 4♠ with a minimum hand, 4NT as RKC 3014, or make cue bids of 4♣/4♦/4♥ looking for slam in Spades.

South's rebids over 3♠

West	North	East	South	
	2NT	Pass	3♣!	Meanings
Pass	3♠!	Pass	3NT	Natural, no fit
			4♣	Natural and forcing, no fit
			4♦	Natural and forcing, no fit
			4♥	Slam try in Spades
			4♠	Natural, no interest in slam
			4NT	Natural with no fit, invitational to 6NT

These responses are the same as they are after a regular Puppet Stayman auction with a positive Spade response.

If the opener has shown five Hearts by bidding 3NT the responder's rebids will be a little different. Pass shows a minimum hand without interest in slam. 4♣ is natural with some interest in slam. 4♦ is a transfer to 4♥. This will be used to get out in 4♥ or to continue the auction looking for slam in Hearts. After a 4♦ transfer to 4♥ the responder may continue the auction with a cue bid or 4NT as RKC 3014 looking for slam in Hearts.

South's rebids over 3NT

West	North	East	South	
	2NT	Pass	3♣!	Meanings
Pass	3NT!	Pass	Pass	Natural, no fit, no slam interest
			4♣	Natural and forcing, no fit
			4♦	Transfer to 4♥ to play or to look for slam
			4NT	Natural with no fit, invitational to 6NT

None of these bids have addressed how the responder will proceed with five Spades and four Hearts or five Spades and three Hearts. (It is correct to use Muppet Stayman with five Spades and three Hearts because it enables a 5/3 Heart fit to be found.)

This is where things can get a little weird. In any event, holding five Spades and either three or four Hearts, the responder will start with 3♣. If the opener happens to show a five-card major, great you know how to proceed. If the opener denies a five-card major but shows one or both four-card majors with 3♦, the responder will start with 3♥ to show four or more Spades. The opener will bid 3♠ to show a three- or four-card Spade suit or 3NT to deny three Spades. After a 3♠ rebid by the opener, the responder will bid 3NT to show only four Spades allowing the opener to pass with three Spades or correct to 4♠ when holding four Spades. The responder may also cue bid 4♣, 4♦, or 4♥ over 3♠ with five Spades and interest in slam, or may bid 4♠ with five Spades and no slam interest.

Example 13

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	3♥!
Pass	3♠!	Pass	3NT!
Pass	Pass	Pass	
North		South	
♠KQT		♠A872	
♥KJ86		♥Q97	
♦AK74		♦82	
♣A9		♣8742	

Example 14

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	3♥!
Pass	3♠!	Pass	3NT!
Pass	4♠	All Pass	
North		South	
♠KQJ6		♠A872	
♥QT42		♥KJ7	
♦AK		♦98	
♣KQ6		♣8754	

In both examples, South is showing four or five Spades by bidding 3♥. North is promising three or four Spades by bidding 3♠. South is denying a fifth Spade by bidding 3NT. In example 13, North is denying a fourth Spade by passing 3NT. In example 14, North is confirming a fourth Spade by continuing to 4♠.

Example 15

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	3♥!
Pass	3♠!	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
North		South	
♠KQT		♠A872	
♥KJ86		♥Q97	
♦AK74		♦82	
♣A9		♣8742	

Example 16

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	3♥!
Pass	3♠!	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
North		South	
♠KQJ6		♠A872	
♥QT42		♥KJ7	
♦AK		♦98	
♣KQ6		♣8754	

In both examples North is showing three or four Spades by bidding 3♠ over 3♥. South is confirming a fifth Spade by not bidding 3NT. In example 15, South is promising five Spades and is making cue bid in Diamonds, North cue bids 4♥ and South continues with RKC 3014 for Spades. In example 16, South is confirming a fifth Spade with a minimum hand.

If the responder has five Spades and four Hearts, the responder may bid 4♣ or 4♦ over a 3♦ rebid by the opener just as it would be if the responder held 4/4 in the majors. This may result in a 4/4 fit being played instead of a 5/4 fit but that fifth card in a side suit may just be good for a pitch of a loser. Something not possible if the 5/4 fit were trumps.

Example 17

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	4♣!
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			
North		South	
♠KQT		♠AJ762	
♥K863		♥Q974	
♦AK7		♦J2	
♣AJ2		♣K7	

Example 18

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♦!	Pass	4♦!
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			
North		South	
♠KQJ6		♠A8732	
♥QT42		♥KJ75	
♦AK		♦98	
♣KQ6		♣87	

North is promising one or both four-card majors. With 5/4 in the majors, just as with 4/4 in the majors, South will bid 4♣ with some slam interest and both majors or 4♦ with no slam interest and both majors.

If the opener has neither a five-card major nor a four-card major, the opener will rebid 3♥ over 3♣. This will allow the responder to show or deny a five-card Spade suit. The responder will bid 3♠ over 3♥ to **deny** a five-card Spade suit. This serves as a transfer to 3NT. The responder will bid 3NT over 3♥ to **show** a five-card Spade suit. Like with the other bids in Muppet Stayman, these bids are designed to get the No Trump bidder to declare a possible 5/3 Spade fit. The opener will correct 3NT to 4♠ to confirm a 5/3 Spade fit or may cue bid 4♣, 4♦, or 4♥, also confirming a 5/3 Spade fit.

Example 19

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♥!	Pass	3♠!
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			
North		South	
♠KQT		♠AJ7	
♥K83		♥Q97	
♦AK74		♦J2	
♣AJ2		♣87543	

Example 20

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♣!
Pass	3♥!	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			
North		South	
♠KQJ		♠A8732	
♥QT4		♥KJ75	
♦AK52		♦98	
♣KQ6		♣87	

In both examples North is denying a four-card or longer major by bidding 3♥ over 3♣. In example 19 South is denying a five-card Spade suit. In example 20, South is promising a five-card Spade suit and North is confirming a 5/3 Spade fit.

If the responder has five Hearts and four Spades, the responder will transfer to Hearts then bid 3♠. If the responder has five Hearts and less than four Spades, the responder will transfer to Hearts then bid on naturally.

Example 21

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♦!
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
South			
♠K872 ♥AJ873 ♦83 ♣92			

Example 22

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♦!
Pass	3♥!	Pass	3NT
South			
♠832 ♥KJ743 ♦Q5 ♣T93			

In example 21 South is showing five Hearts and four Spades. This is a forcing bid. In example 22, South is showing five Hearts but denying four Spades. 3NT is nonforcing.

And finally, after a 3♦ transfer to Hearts, the opener may deny three Hearts and show five Spades by bidding 3♠ over the 3♦ transfer. A completed transfer to Hearts (2NT – 3♦ / 3♥) does not promise three Hearts but does deny five Spades when the opener holds only two Hearts.)

Example 23

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♦!
Pass	3♥!	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♥	All Pass	
North		South	
♠KQT2		♠AJ7	
♥K82		♥Q9764	
♦AK76		♦J2	
♣AJ		♣875	

Example 24

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	3♦!
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
North		South	
♠KQJ76		♠A43	
♥QT		♥KJ752	
♦AK2		♦98	
♣KQ6		♣872	

In example 23, North is confirming a 5/3 Heart fit by correcting 3NT to 4♥. In example 24, North is denying three Hearts and promising five Spades by bidding three Spades over the 3♦ transfer to Hearts.

Muppet Stayman is a large improvement over regular Puppet Stayman. It allows for all 5/3 and 4/4 major suits to be found as well as allowing the No Trump bidder to declare all contracts except a possible 4/4 Spade fit when the responder holds four Spades and five Hearts. It does take a bit more memory work and I do not recommend this convention for casual players or any player less than advanced. If you elect to use this convention with your partner it is important to remember that accidents will happen when it is first being applied. Just shrug those accidents off. It is also important to note that not everyone plays Muppet the same way. The main difference is the inversion of the 3♠ and 3NT bids over a 3♥ response. Some people play 3♠ shows five Spades and 3NT is natural. It is better to play them inverted but make sure you and your partner are on the same page.

Good luck!