Better Use of Transfer Bids

**The Initial Transfer Bid**

The transfer procedure is quite simple and is usually used in response to your partner's 1NT or 2NT opening bid (or a No trump rebid after a strong artificial opener (e.g. 2C – 2D – 2NT). Since a 1NT opening bid requires a [balanced hand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balanced_hand), i.e. no more than one doubleton, it promises to have at least two cards in the desired suit:-

* Holding a 5-card major suit, responder would traditionally (without using transfers) have bid two, three or four of that suit depending on strength. Using transfers instead, however, responder will now bid two of the ***suit*** ***below***the major suit wanted**.**
* Partner (the opener) must then bid two of the next suit up (i.e. the major suit in question)
* Examples:
  + 1NT - 2♦ (i.e., "I have a 5-card heart suit, please bid my suit") - opener must rebid 2♥
  + 1NT - 2♥ (i.e., "I have a 5-card spade suit, please bid my suit") - opener must rebid 2♠

**Subsequent ‘Standard’ Continuation Bids**

After the transfer has been completed by the 1NT opener, subsequent bids by the player that initiated the transfer are:

* **Weak hands** (0-10 HCP or LTC 9+ losers)
  + Pass, in order to play a partial game in the transferred suit e.g. 2 Hearts
* **Invitational hands** (11-12 HCP or a LTC 8 losers hand)
  + Re-Bid 2NT with a five card suit but otherwise balanced, giving the stronger partner the option of continuing to game or playing a partial game, in either No trumps or the transferred suit depending on their length
  + Bid three of the transferred suit, promising a six-card suit and invitational values.
* **Game strength hands** (a good 12+ HCP or 7 losers)
  + Bid a New suit, showing 5-4 or 5-5 and this is game forcing
  + 3NT, allowing opener a choice of playing 3NT or 4 of the major if they have 3 or more of the major.
  + Bid four in the transferred suit, to play promising a six -card suit or longer.
* **Better than game strength** use Blackwood when the best denomination is clear

**Using Transfers in Other No Trump Situations**

Transfers work well following some other no-trump bids. A common usage follows an opening bid of 2NT where a weak take-out into three of a major becomes a possibility with 0-3 HCP for example 2NT - 3♥ - 3 ♠, whereas with traditional methods such a bid would be forcing.

I do not recommend using transfers after 1NT doubled or after a 1NT rebid or a 1NT overcall but some players do like to do this. You should still use transfers (as well as Stayman) when, after a strong 2C opening, when partner re- bids 2NT (23/24 HCP balanced)

2♣ - 2♦

2NT - 3♦

3♥  you can now pass this with 0 or 1 HCP or continue bidding with more HCP.

**Non-standard but common alternative bids**

Since a 2♠ response is no longer required for a weak take-out into spades, it is often used in other ways:-

* In the ‘McKendrick’ convention, the 2♠ response is used to sign off with a weak hand in either minor at the 3-level or shows 11 HCP exactly but not holding a 4 or 5 card major. With a maximum hand (14 HCP) it forces opener to bid 3♣ and now:-
  + 1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - **Pass** with a weak hand with at least six clubs.
  + 1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - **3♦** with a weak hand with at least six diamonds.
  + 1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - **3NT** with 11HCP

With a minimum (12 or 13 HCP) partner should bid 2NT

* 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT – now a bid of 3♣ or 3♦ - shows a weak hand with a long minor.
* 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT – if you pass this it shows 11 HCP exactly so no game possible.

**More Advanced Developments from Transfers**

In some partnerships opener can **super-accept** the transfer by bidding three of the major with a maximum hand containing at least four cards in that major but this has dangers when playing pairs.

Although they were part of the early writings on transfers in the 1950s, the ideas of "bouncing" and "breaking" transfer bids have only become reasonably widespread in the UK since the 1990s:-

**Bouncing** (also known as **by-passing or super acceptance**). Following the standard initiation of a transfer sequence (e.g. 1NT - 2♦ - ?).

* + Opener rebids 3♥ with a **maximum** point count (14 with Acol) **and 4-card support** for hearts.
  + With **all** other hands, opener just rebids 2♥.

**Breaking**. Following the same initial sequence of 1NT - 2♦ - ?:

* + Opener rebids three of an **unexpected** suit (3♦) to show maximum points (14) with four card support and a poor doubleton (xx) in the bid suit (e.g. diamonds)

S A J 10

H A Q 9 4

D 7 2

C K 10 8 3

If Opposite a hand like this a game is possible

S 5

H K 10 8 7 5 2

D 9 6 4 3

C Q 5

With these two devices (bouncing and breaking) it is possible to discover, at ‘relatively’ little risk, games that would otherwise be missed. But be warned it can go wrong occasionally.

*Note please that an immediate disadvantage of using transfers is that it is incompatible with a ‘weakness take out’ into 2♦, although, as with the loss of the 2♣ weak take-out when using*[*Stayman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stayman_convention)*, this is not generally considered a serious loss.*