

Transfer Method For Dealing With Interference to 1NT Openings

By Henry C. Jackson

Based on the Article by Michael
Donnelly in the November 2016 Bridge
Bulletin

Why This Instead of Lebensohl?

- This method may be easier to remember than Lebensohl.
- Lebensohl does not right-side contracts unless “Stayman” is used.
- Lebensohl’s direct-seat penalty doubles rarely work because opponents rarely use natural overcalls.
- Instead they use transfer bids (Tonto), two suited bids (DONT, etc.), and bid suits they do not have to tell their partner what suits they have (i.e., 2D shows the majors).

Strong or Weak NT Openings?

- This presentation will deal with Strong Notrump Openings.
- With some modifications such as retaining penalty doubles of overcalls, this method can work well with Weak Notrump Openings.

How Does It Work?

- If Opponent Doubles, all systems are on:
 - 2♣ is Stayman.
 - 2♦ transfers to 2♥.
 - 2♥ transfers to 2♠.
 - 2♠ and 2NT do what they normally do.
 - Discuss the meaning of Redouble with Partner otherwise assume it shows we hold the balance of power.
 - Your 3 or 4 level bids are unaffected.

If Opponent Overcalls 2♣

- Double is Stayman.
- 2♦ transfers to 2♥.
- 2♥ transfers to 2♠.
- 2♠ and 2NT do what they normally do.
- Your 3 or 4 level bids are unaffected.

If Opponent Overcalls 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠

- Your 2-level suit bids are natural and non-forcing.
- You should have at least **five** cards in your suit.
- You should hold **less than 8 HCP**.
- These bids are essentially signoffs and may wrong-side the contract but keep the level low and describe your hand in one bid.

If Opponent Overcalls 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ Continued.

- With 8+ and a long suit transfer as follows:
 - 2NT transfers to 3♣
 - 3♣ transfers to 3♦
 - 3♦ transfers to 3♥
 - 3♥ transfers to 3♠
 - 3♠ shows game-going values with stopper.
 - 3NT shows game-going values without a stopper.
- After Opener accepts the transfer, Responder may return to 3NT to show only 5-cards, raise to game, make a slam try or even pass!

If Opponent Overcalls 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ Continued.

- Responder can use a transfer to the Opponent's known (anchor) suit as Stayman and keep Double as Penalty.
- A better choice may be to use a Negative Double as Stayman since this could keep the bidding lower.
- If Negative doubles are used, a transfer into Opponent's suit could be used to show 4-4-4-1 or 4-4-5-0 hands.

Interference At The Three Level

- Remember that Texas transfers are on over interference.
- Use Negative Doubles instead of this method or Lebensohl.
- Opponents use dastardly methods and occasionally 3-level pre-empts because they work!

Handling Interference

A transfer system after opponent's interference over a 1NT opening

BY MICHAEL DONNELLY, Boca Raton FL

Many partnerships use Jacoby transfers in order to assure that the stronger hand declares the contract after a strong (15–17 HCP) 1NT opening. There seems to be little justification for not pursuing a similar approach when the opponents enter the auction. A significant benefit of transferring after an opponent overcalls is that it allows the partnership to “right-side” the contract, making the stronger hand the declarer. With this in mind, when the opponents double or make a direct two-level suit overcall of your strong 1NT opening bid, the following approach applies:

1) If the opponents double: All system aspects remain in effect. Thus, 2♣ is Stayman, 2♦ is a transfer to 2♥ and 2♥ is a transfer to 2♠.

2) If the opponents overcall 2♣: Double by the responder is Stayman while all other system aspects remain in effect. Thus, 2♦ is a transfer to 2♥, and 2♥ is a transfer to 2♠.

3) If the opponents overcall 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠: All suit bids by the responder at the two level are natural and non-forcing. The suit should be five cards or longer, and the hand should hold less than 8 HCP. Any such bid is essentially a signoff. Responder may also compete against such overcalls as follows:

A) 2NT: Transfer to 3♣. Shows clubs. If responder bids again following partner's acceptance of the transfer, it shows strength.

B) 3♣: Transfer to 3♦. Shows diamonds. If responder bids again following partner's acceptance of the transfer, it shows strength.

C) 3♦: Transfer to 3♥. Shows hearts, plus game-going values if a 2♥ bid was available.

D) 3♥: Transfer to 3♠. Shows spades, plus game-going values if a 2♠ bid was available.

E) 3♠: Game-going values with a stopper in the opponent's suit.

F) 3NT: Game-going values without a stopper in the opponent's suit.

In all of the 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ overcall situations noted above, a transfer into the opponent's suit may be used as Stayman. For example, if an opponent makes a direct overcall of 2♥, a bid of 3♦ by responder, an “impossible” transfer to 3♥, would be Stayman. However, for partnerships which use negative doubles of the opponent's two-level overcalls, the need for Stayman as such is eliminated. Thus, a three-level transfer into the opponent's suit may be better used to describe hands which would otherwise be difficult to show. One possibility would allocate the impossible transfer be reserved for hands with game-going values and either 4–4–4–1 or 4–4–5–0 shape, with shortness in the enemy's suit. In effect, when dealt a hand with such distribution and partner opens 1NT, the opponent's two-level overcall may actually be beneficial, as it allows you to accurately describe your hand with one bid.

In examples C and D above, responder may occasionally have reason to transfer with less than game-going values, and will subsequently pass partner's response. For example, partner opens 1NT and RHO overcalls 2♥. You hold:

♠Q1097432 ♥73 ♦J75 ♣7.

Believing that the hand may play at least one trick better if partner declares, a “counterfeit” ostensibly game-going 3♥ transfer to 3♠ may be used in order to protect partner's hand

from an early and potentially damaging heart lead. As the partnership holds at least nine trumps, it should be protected by the Law of Total Tricks. While making overtricks by right-siding the contract may be of little consequence in team play, an enormous benefit is gained when they are earned in match-point play. This far-sighted action may pay even bigger dividends if the auction should become more competitive.



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