

Transfers When We Open 1NT or 2NT

When we open a strong 2NT (or rebid 2NT after opening 2C) it will normally be an advantage if the strong hand is declarer, and this can be accomplished if the responder uses transfer bids to get to the final contract. The same is true after an opening bid of 1NT, but with more room available, the other advantage is the ability to give the opener a better description of the responder's hand pattern. The weaker the responding hand the more advantage can be gained by transferring to your long suit and passing, especially if it is at least 6 cards, so a minimum 6-2 fit is assured.

There are many transferal systems in use in the Bridge world, and some are very effective, but complicated, and complications can breed mistakes, so I will outline a relatively simple transferal system. The basic principle I generally follow with a very weak hand is to always transfer to a 5-card major or a 6-card minor.

1NT Opening

The first rule is to bid the suit below the one that you want to transfer to, and this suit should be at least 5 cards in length. If you have less than 8 HCPs you now pass. If you have 8 or 9 HCPs you invite 3NT by rebidding 2NT, or with a 6-card major raise it to the 3-level. If you have a good 9 (or more) HCPs and balanced, rebid 3NT with a 5-card suit or 4 of the major with a 6-card suit. If you have 5 hearts and 4 spades, and 8 or 9 HCPs, transfer to hearts and rebid 2S, which opener can pass, or bid 2NT or 3H to play with a minimum, or pick a game with a maximum. If you have 8 or 9 HCPs and no major, bid 2NT to invite 3NT.

If you have a good 9 (or more) HCPs and unbalanced, bid your second suit, indicating an outside singleton or void. Holding at least 9 HCPs and 5-5 in the majors, transfer to spades and rebid 4H.

If you have a 6-card major and slam interest, bid 4D with hearts and 4H with spades. A jump to 4C is normally played as Gerber for Aces. You can also bid 4S with 6+ clubs and slam interest and 5C with diamonds. If you want to forgo Gerber, then drop the transfer levels down 1, thus 4C=H, 4D=S, 4H=C and 4S=D, then with no slam interest and a 6-card minor you can just bid the minor at the 5-level. Opener can bid 4NT, RKCB if they are interested in slam instead of signing off in the suit shown.

An interesting hand came up at the club that could have been solved using transfers: You hold: void, QJxx, Txx, AKJTxx and partner opens 1NT (15-17)? If you bid 2C and partner responds 2H you are happy, but if partner responds 2S, which seems much more likely, you have to guess. Much better is to bid 2S as a transfer to clubs, then after partner takes the transfer you next bid 3H, which shows an unbalanced hand and likely short spades, so if partner rebids 3NT you can pass with some misgivings. As it turns out partner has both majors and raises to 4H which allows you to bid the slam, and even the grand slam if you are playing Voidwood, here 5S.

2NT Opening (or rebid after opening 2C)

The same transfers to the majors apply, but transfer to the minors has too little room for full description, so less definition is available, except at the 4-level as for the 1NT opening, where you can show slam interest by transfers, or for the minors, jump to game with no slam interest.

If you have 5-5 in the minors, a 3S response to 2NT opening often has no specific meaning and therefore can be conveniently played for this type of hand.