

Beginners Guide to Transfers

(Written by Bruce Owen)

The 1NT opener is such a precise bid that you, as responder, can now easily assess whether there is **no** chance of game, a **definite** chance of game, or **maybe** a chance of game by inviting. How do you invite? Enter the world of transfers This is a response to partner's opening 1NT . Replies go as follows.

2D – please transfer by bidding 2H

2S – I have exactly 11 pt

2H – please transfer by bidding 2S

2NT I have exactly 12 pts

Beginners progressing to transfers often ask “What is the point of them?” The answer is twofold

1. To keep the stronger hand hidden
2. More important –to be able to *invite* the 1NT opener to game in a major. This is not possible if playing weakness take outs.(WTO) Lets see what I mean by looking at an example when partner has opened 1NT

You have been dealt the following ♠ QJ983 ♥ A104 ♦ KJ6 ♣ 92

If playing WTO you have two choices – either a WTO which compels your partner to pass, or a game force 3S when your partner must choose between 3NT or 4S depending on whether he has 3 spades or not. But suppose partner has just 12pts and a doubleton spade – do you really want to force to game ?? On the other hand s/he could have 14 pts and 3 spades in which case game is probably on and you miss out with a WTO Playing transfers gives you the option of **inviting** to game. How do you do this?

The bidding goes 1NT – 2H –2S then 2NT from you !!! Surprised? What this is saying is – partner I told you I have 5 spades when I asked you to transfer and when I continue with 2NT it means I have 11-12 pts and you must now choose between leaving the 2NT bid in, or take it back to just 3S if you have 3 of them and just 12 pts. However, if you have enough for game either bid 3NT or take it back to 4S if you have 3 of them. *Remember that from responder's point of view the opener might only have a doubleton spade.*

All this assumes you have only 5 spades. If you put the above 4H in as another spade then you know you have a 6-2 fit as a minimum. Now transfer partner to 2S and then bid 3S, and leaving it to partner to choose

If the above hand had another couple of pts in it, then the bidding would be 1NT – 2H –**3NT** saying partner – we have game so either leave the 3NT in or take it take to 4S if you have 3 of them.

What you do **NOT** do is what I have seen a number of times, and that is bid Stayman, There is **never** a reason for bidding Stayman with a 5 card major unless you have 4 of the other one. Remember Stayman asks “Do you have a 4 card major?” If partner denies with 2D you may miss out on a good 5-3 fit.

Lets look at another couple of hands that may have you wondering what to do. Partner opens 1NT in each example.

1. You are dealt ♠ QJ982 ♥ A1043 ♦ 86 ♣ J2

Here, because you **do** have a 4 card major, you bid Stayman. If partner happens to come up with 2H you just leave it in. If the reply is 2D then you can bid 2S which partner should recognise as a WTO and pass.

2. You are dealt ♠ QJ982 ♥ A10643 ♦ 8 ♣ J2

To reiterate I have often seen players bid Stayman with this holding. POINTLESS. You know partner will have at least one three card major or wouldn't have opened 1NT. If Stayman gets a 2D denial you will miss out on a certain 8 card fit in a major. So bid 2D asking partner to bid 2H and then bid 2S. That must show 5/5 in the majors and partner can choose which major to bid.

If however your hand is ♠ QJ982 ♥ AK643 ♦ K6 ♣ J then bid 2D, transferring to hearts and then bid **3S**. This jump bid is game force showing 5/5 in the majors and asking partner to bid game in one of them.

Final point – you have, say ♠ QJ9842 ♥ AK6 ♦ K6 ♣ Q2

Don't transfer when YOU are the stronger hand. Just bid 4S with your known 8+ fit in spades