

IMPROVERS' LESSONS

Welcome

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A typical completed travelling score sheet

Board number 1
Dealer N, none vul

Pair No		Contract	By	Lead	Result	Score		Match Points	
NS	EW					NS	EW	NS	EW
1	1	2H	S	AC	3H	140		4	10
2	3	2H	S	AC	4H	170		8	6
3	5	4H	S	KD	4H	420		11	3
4	7	4S ^x	N	7C	(2)		300	0	14
5	2	4C	E	KH	(3)	150		6	8
6	4	4H ^x	S	KD	4H	590		14	0
7	6	4H	S	AC	(1)		50	2	12
8	8	4H	S	KD	4H	420		11	3



The opening bid of 1 No Trump

An opening bid of 1 No Trump shows a balanced hand with 12-14 points

We define “balanced” as:

- No singleton or void

- No more than one doubleton

- No 5-card or longer major suit

The hand will be 4333, 4432 or 5332 shape (if the 5-card suit is a minor).



TRANSFER RESPONSES TO 1 NT

Introduction

The principle of transfer responses is as follows:

- a response of 2♣ is Stayman (dealt with in Session 1)
- a bid of 2♦ shows a 5-card or longer *heart* suit
- a bid of 2♥ shows a 5-card or longer *spade* suit
- a response of 2♠ can now be used in a conventional way
- a response of 2NT is also conventional
- 3-level bids show a strong suit in a hand with slam interest (*but see later for another possible use*)

We shall examine how this structure works, and the advantages that it provides in responding to the 1 NT opening bid.



The responses of 2♦ and 2♥

The response of 2♦ shows a hand containing at least five hearts. It asks opener to bid 2♥. After this, Responder can pass with a limited hand (the equivalent of making a weak takeout bid of 2♥ when using standard responses to 1NT) or bid on with extra values.

Similarly, a response of 2♥ shows a hand with at least five spades and asks partner to bid 2♠. This can be passed (which is equivalent to 1NT - 2♠ when not using transfers) or Responder may bid on.

These responses of 2♦ and 2♥ are known as *red suit transfers*



Continuing the bidding after 1 NT - 2♦ - 2♥

When Responder has made the transfer response of 2♦ and Opener has dutifully bid 2♥, Responder may continue as follows:

Pass	showing a weak takeout to 2♥ (0 points +)
Bid of a new suit (e.g. 2♠, 3♣, 3♦)	natural, forcing for 1 round (opener cannot pass)
3♥	a 6-card or longer heart suit, invitational <i>(but see later for a different possible use)</i>
4♥	a 6-card or longer heart suit, sign-off



In addition, Responder may now bid No Trumps. This would show a balanced hand, bearing in mind that Responder, by using the transfer response, *has already shown a 5-card major suit*.

So, after 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ Responder may bid:

- 2NT : (a) exactly five hearts, otherwise a balanced hand (5332)
 (b) 11-12 points, inviting game

Opener may now:

pass or bid 3♥ (declining the game invitation with 12 points)

raise to 3NT or bid 4♥ with enough to go on to game (13 or 14 points)



Similarly, after 1 NT - 2♦ - 2♥ Responder may bid:

3 NT showing a five card heart suit in a balanced hand and enough points for game, ie 13+ points

Opener may now choose between *EITHER* 3 NT (by passing) when he holds only two hearts *OR* a game of 4♥ with three or four card support for partner's 5-card suit.

Note that, since the 3 NT bid by Responder is not forcing, he must bid more strongly if he wishes to show a 5-card heart suit, a balanced hand and also slam ambitions.



Bidding hands that are a problem without transfers

Using standard (non-transfer) responses to 1 NT, there are a number of hand types that present a problem. Consider the following hand:

♠ 8 7
♥ A Q 6 4 3
♦ K 7 4
♣ Q 10 8

With 11 points, Responder would like to invite to game if opener is maximum. However, if Opener is minimum with only two hearts, a 2NT contract would be preferable to 3♥

Now we may show this hand by bidding 1 NT - 2♦ and after the 2♥ bid by opener, we bid 2 NT. When Opener is minimum, he may pass with no liking for hearts.



Here is another example of how the transfer style of responses may help us to avoid an awkward situation:

♠ 8 7
♥ A K 6 4 3
♦ 8 7
♣ A K J 7

Using standard methods, a forcing response of 3♥ is made, but if Opener bids 3NT, do we bid on? There may be a slam in clubs, but it may be that 3NT is our best spot. The 3♥ consumes too much bidding space.

Now we may show this hand by bidding 1NT - 2♦ and after the 2♥ bid by opener, we bid 3♣. This shows 5 (or more) hearts, 4 (or more) clubs and is forcing. We have described our hand well, and Opener may now bid on according to his hand: 3♥ (minimum), 3NT with no fit for hearts, or 4♥ with three or four cards in hearts (maximum).



Examples of using transfer responses

Responding to West's opening bid of 1 NT

♠ Q 9 8 7 5
♥ 7 5 2
♦ J 10 8
♣ 7 4

East responds 2♥ and passes the 2♠ reply. This has the advantage that the opening lead comes round to partner's stronger hand, which may help to protect his holdings in a particular suit.

♠ 8 7
♥ A Q 7 5 2
♦ 8 7 2
♣ A K 4

East bids 2♦ and then bids 3NT over West's 2♥ reply. This shows exactly five hearts in a balanced hand and enough values for game. With ♣J rather than ♣K, East would bid 2NT (invitational) on his second bid.



♠ 8 7
♥ A Q 8 7 5 2
♦ A 8 7
♣ 7 4

East responds 2♦ and passes the 2♥ reply. This has the advantage that the opening lead comes round to partner's stronger hand, which may help to protect his holdings in a particular suit.

♠ A J 8 7
♥ K 10 8 7 2
♦ K 7
♣ 7 4

East bids 2♦ and over the 2♥ reply he continues with 2♠. This invites West to bid the best game holding a maximum, and with a minimum to bid 2NT, 3♥ or 3♠ which responder may pass.

♠ K 8
♥ A Q 8 7 5
♦ K 7
♣ Q 9 7 4

East responds 2♦. After Opener's 2♥ reply, Responder should realise that, with points in all suits, a no trump contract is a likely alternative to game in hearts, so should now bid 3NT rather than 3♣ (forcing).



♠ K 7 3
♥ A Q 8 7 5
♦ 7
♣ A Q 7 4

This time, East bids 2♦ (transfer) and then 3♣ (forcing). If Opener now bids 3♥ to show a minimum, East may bid 3♠. This cannot be a suit (East would have preferred 2♠ over 2♥) helping West to judge the best contract.

♠ 8 7
♥ A Q 8 7 2
♦ Q 7
♣ Q J 7 4

East bids 2♦ and over the 2♥ reply he continues with 2NT, as he is not strong enough for a bid of 3♣. He has shown a balanced invitational hand with a five card heart suit – a good description.

♠ 9 8
♥ A Q 8 7 5
♦ 8 7
♣ A J 10 9

East responds 2♦ and this time may continue with 3♣ (forcing). This may seem excessive but is in fact safe. This is because if Opener is minimum he will now bid 3♥ and East can pass.



Opener's continuation after a red suit transfer

Often Responder, after the transfer and Opener's reply, may make a bid that decides the final contract. However, he may choose a continuation that asks Opener's opinion. For example:

West	East
1NT	2♦
2♥	2NT

This is invitational, so Opener has two questions to answer:

- Should I accept the game invitation or settle for a part-score?
- Is hearts or no trumps the correct denomination?



The bidding starts:

West	East
1NT	2♦
2♥	2NT
?	

♠ K J 7
♥ 7 2
♦ A Q 7 3
♣ K 6 4 2

West passes 2NT. With only two hearts he prefers this to a heart contract, and with a poor 13 point hand he is not worth a game. If he had 14 points, or even some good intermediate cards, he would raise to 3NT.

♠ A J 8
♥ K 7 5
♦ A Q 4 2
♣ 7 4 3

West jumps to 4♥. His hand is maximum, so he accepts the invitation, and he has 3-card support for partner's 5-card heart suit. If West had only 12 points, or a poor 13 points, he would bid just 3♥.



The Range Finder 2♠ response to 1NT

Using red suit transfers, a natural response of 2♠ is no longer needed. It is therefore available to be used in a conventional (artificial) sense. It shows

- EITHER a value raise to 2NT, 11-12 points, no 4-card major (else Responder would use Stayman)
- OR 18+ points with slam ambitions, searching for a 4-4 fit (including the minor suits)

Opener replies 2NT with a minimum hand (and Responder, with the first type will pass, but with the strong type will, of course, bid on). With a maximum, opener shows his lowest 4-card suit. With the strong type of hand, responder may now move forward, looking for a possible fit for slam purposes.



The 2♠ response in action

West opens 1NT, and East holds:

♠ K 8 7
♥ J 10 5
♦ K Q 9 7
♣ K 9 8

East bids 2♠. If West shows a minimum with a rebid of 2NT, East will pass. However, if West has a maximum and bids a suit, East will simply bid 3NT. This shows West which type of 2♠ bid East had.

♠ K Q 5 4
♥ A 8
♦ K Q 10 8
♣ A 7 4

East again bids 2♠. If West shows a minimum by bidding 2NT, East will content himself with 3NT. But if West shows a maximum by bidding a suit, East will bid on, raising or bidding his own suits.



♠ A 7
 ♥ Q 10 9
 ♦ A 9 8 4
 ♣ K J 6 3



♠ K Q J 10
 ♥ A 6 5
 ♦ K Q J 10
 ♣ A 2

West
 1NT
 3♣²
 4♦⁴
 5♥⁶
 pass

East
 2♠¹
 3♦³
 4NT⁵
 6♦

- 1 East is looking for a slam and tries to locate a 4-4 suit fit
- 2 Showing a maximum and a 4-card club suit
- 3 Four diamonds and slam interest
- 4 Confirming the 4-4 diamond fit
- 5 Blackwood, checking that two aces are not missing
- 6 Two aces



♠ A 7
 ♥ Q 10 9
 ♦ A 9 8 4
 ♣ Q 9 8 6



♠ K Q 5 4
 ♥ A 8
 ♦ K Q 10 8
 ♣ A 7 2

West	East
1NT	2♠ ¹
2NT ²	3♠ ³
3NT ⁴	pass

- 1 East has slam interest if Opener is maximum
- 2 West's 2NT rebid shows a minimum hand
- 3 East is no longer thinking of a slam. However, he bids 3♠ in case Opener has a spade fit.
- 4 No fit for spades



The 2NT response to 1NT

Since the invitational raise to 2NT can now be made via the response of 2♠ (called a Range Finder in NZ, but sometimes called a Baron 2♠ response), the immediate bid of 2NT can be put to a different use.

The response of 2NT tells Opener to bid 3♣. It shows a weak hand with a long minor suit that simply wants to play in the suit at the 3-level (but see later for a further use with a strong hand). After opener bids 3♣, Responder passes or bids 3♦.

♠ 10 9 7 6
♥ K Q J 9
♦ Q 4
♣ A 5 4



♠ 8
♥ 3 2
♦ J 10 9 6 5 3 2
♣ Q J 2

West	East
1NT	2NT
3♣	3♦
pass	



Responding to 1NT with Invitational or Strong Unbalanced Hands

What follows lays out some possible options for bidding good unbalanced hands – *you should discuss with your regular partner which methods you choose.*

With a good hand containing a major suit of 6+ cards, you have two options:

- (i) jump in the suit directly, eg 1NT–3♥;
- (ii) transfer to the suit and then repeat it, eg 1NT–2♦–2♥–3♥.

You should use one of these to show a game invitational hand with 6+♥, and the other to show a slam try with 6+♥. Which you should choose is a matter to discuss with your partner; my personal preference is to use the direct jump as invitational, and the repeat of the transferred suit as a slam try.



With a hand containing a minor suit of 6+ cards, most players use a direct jump bid to show a hand that is invitational to 3NT: thus 1NT–3♣ or 3♦ means “I have a good 6 card minor with about 10-11 points – please bid 3NT if you are maximum and have some help in my minor, otherwise pass”

So how can we show a slam try in a minor? We can use an extension of the 2NT transfer bid as follows:

- (i) 1NT – 2NT – 3♣ - pass = a weak hand with long ♣
- (ii) 1NT – 2NT – 3♣ - 3♦ = a weak hand with long ♦
- (iii) 1NT – 2NT – 3♣ - 3♥ = a strong hand with long ♣
- (iv) 1NT – 2NT – 3♣ - 3♠ = a strong hand with long ♦
- (v) 1NT – 2NT – 3♣ - 3NT = a strong hand with both minors

These methods cover all possible cases where you have an unbalanced hand containing a minor suit. *It is essential that you discuss with your partner before using these bids!*



The Gerber Convention

Very rarely, all you might want to know is how many aces the 1NT Opener has; how do you do this? You cannot bid 4NT (Blackwood), because this is quantitative (asking partner to pass or bid 6NT with a maximum).

This is one of the few cases where the 4♣ Gerber ace asking convention can be used (NB; *the wider use of Gerber as a general ace asking bid in other circumstances is NOT recommended*). Opener shows the number of aces that he holds by bidding up the line, ie

4♦ with no aces

4♥ with one ace

4♠ with two aces, etc



Some further matters to discuss with your partner

These transfer bids can also be used if partner overcalls opponent's bid with 1NT, bearing in mind that this shows a balanced hand of 16-18 points with a good stop in their suit.

How about extension of these ideas to the 2NT opening?

You can use many of the ideas that we have discussed over a 2NT opening (usually showing a 20-22 balanced hand). So 3♣ is Stayman, and 3♦ and 3♥ are red suit transfers. However, 3NT is now to play, of course; what about a bid of 3♠? Many players use this as "Minor suit Stayman" or simply to show interest in the minors and going beyond 3NT. *Discuss this with your partner!*



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