

3.2 Super Acceptance of a transfer.

The law of total tricks (The LAW) implies that it is always safe to super accept with 4 trumps. Thus we super accept with 4 trumps and a min or max hand. Super-accepting with just 3 trumps is a bone of contention, many players will super-accept with 3 good trumps and a non-min hand with good shape.

Now onto an interesting point. The LAW states that it is safe to go to the 3 level (combined number of trumps is 9) if the distribution of points between the two sides is approximately even, or if you have more. This is clearly the case with an opening strong NT, but not so with a weak NT. It is dangerous to super accept with a weak NT opening, but if partner is bust, then why have the opponents not said anything yet? If you play a weak NT, it's up to you. I play super-accepts with a strong NT only.

Before we continue, it is only fair to say that my view of super-accepting is not universally accepted. I will super-accept with 4 trumps or with just 3 very good trumps, suitable shape and a max. Some players suggest super-accepting with any max, either 3 or 4 'trumps'. Others insist that the only requirement for a super-accept is 4 trumps (The Law says that's OK even if minimum).

With these four hands you opened with 1NT and partner bid 2♦, what now? :-

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D
♠ 64	♠ J4	♠ Q4	♠ 64
♥ KQ84	♥ K984	♥ AJ9	♥ AK9
♦ AK82	♦ AK82	♦ AK82	♦ AK82
♣ AJ3	♣ A73	♣ K1082	♣ K1083

Hand A: An obvious super-accept.

Hand B: With 4 trumps I think that a super-accept is in order, but some players will not as they also require a maximum.

Hand C: This one's a maximum but has only 3 trumps. Much more to think about here and it's really up to your (partnership) style.

Hand D: Similar, but with good trumps and the points concentrated in the longer suits I like the hand. I would prefer to super-accept.

I cover super-accepting with just 3 trumps in more detail later.

There are also umpteen variations on what you should bid when you break the transfer (super-accept). Some players insist that a response of the suit below trumps cannot be made as responder needs that for a re-transfer. Others feel that it is more important to be specific about shape. One popular scheme is to show a 2nd suit. Some players prefer only to show doubletons. Yet others will show doubletons only if they are 'worthless' – Qx (maybe Jx) or worse. Another alternative is to pinpoint a weak suit (either 2 or 3 card) that contains no top (A or K) honour. I give one workable scheme here: -

Super Accepts, showing 4 (possibly 5) cards in the major, can work as follows, where min is (15-16) and max is (16½ -17). In this scheme, the doubleton is weak: -

After 1NT - 2♦ (transfer to ♥) -

2♠ doubleton ♠, max pts
 2NT no weak doubleton, max pts
 3♣ doubleton ♣, max pts
 3♦ doubleton ♦, max pts *
 3♥ 4 ♥'s, any shape, min pts *

After 1NT - 2♥ (transfer to ♠) -

2NT no weak doubleton, max pts
 3♣ doubleton ♣, max pts
 3♦ doubleton ♦, max pts
 3♥ doubleton ♥, max pts *
 3♠ 4 ♠'s, any shape, min pts *

After these bids, responder often continues with a re-transfer if necessary, which opener must accept. We always use the cheapest re-transfer bid available: -

3♦ transfer to 3♥ 3♥ transfer to 3♠

* and if the three level bid is unavailable (I call these expensive super-accepts) then: -

4♦ transfer to 4♥ 4♥ transfer to 4♠

Responder is then able to pass or to investigate slam. A subsequent 4NT bid is RKCB when ♠'s are trumps and 4♠ is RKCB when ♥'s are trumps.

Example 1

West	East	West	East
♠ KQ84	♠ AJ1073	1NT	2♥
♥ 64	♥ AJ	3♥ (1)	4♥ (2)
♦ AK82	♦ Q63	4♠	4NT (3)
♣ A73	♣ KJ10	5♣ (4)	5♦ (5)
		6♦ (6)	6♠ (7)

- (1) West is middle range, but with good trumps and shape he makes the max point super-accept, showing a doubleton ♥.
- (2) re-transfer
- (3) RKCB for ♠.
- (4) 0 or 3
- (5) Do you have ♠Q ?
- (6) Yes, plus ♦K
- (7) East has now located every one of West's high cards, and settles for the small slam.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) super-accept, weak doubleton ♦ (2) re-transfer
♠ KQ84	♠ AJ1073	1NT	2♥	
♥ KQ6	♥ AJ	3♦ (1)	3♥ (2)	
♦ J2	♦ Q63	3♠	4♠	
♣ AQ73	♣ KJ10	pass		

Example 3

West	East	West	East	(1) super-accept, 4 trumps, min pts
♠ KQ84	♠ A10732	1NT	2♥	
♥ K64	♥ J9	3♠ (1)	pass (2)	
♦ K2	♦ Q63			
♣ A932	♣ J76			

(2) opposite a minimum, even with 4 trumps, game does not look good.

Now that's all very simple, but the next thing that has to be decided is; what does the next bid by responder mean if it's not a re-transfer? It would be nice to use the same bids/meanings as when opener made a simple accept, but we cannot.

To start with, there is always less room. Also we use Kickback as opposed to 4♣ as RKCB. And we don't need 4♦ as a general slam try as any bid other than a sign off in game or part-score is a slam try. Let's try to sort things out: -

Let's start with a new suit. Is it a game try (if below 3 of the major), a cue bid or a 2nd suit? It's up to you, but I prefer that a new minor is natural and looking for slam - either in the agreed major, or in the minor if there is a fit there.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	(1) super-accept, 4 trumps, min pts (2) 2 nd suit, looking for slam (3) DRKCB (4) 2 key cards + ♦Q
♠ K984	♠ AQJ32	1NT	2♥	
♥ AJ4	♥ 75	3♠ (1)	4♦ (2)	
♦ K984	♦ AQJ3	4♥ (3)	5♦ (4)	
♣ A9	♣ 75	6♦	pass	

4♦ at (2) is looking for slam and invites opener to bid RKCB. If opener bid 4NT then that would be RKCB with ♠'s as trumps. 4♥ is Kickback bid for ♦'s, but since there is a known double fit it is DRKCB with ♦'s assumed as trumps.

6♦ is an excellent contract, a good 4-4 fit often plays better than a 5-4 fit.

So that's OK, but what if the new suit is the re-transfer suit? This situation may arise when ♥'s are trumps.

Now we have seen that 1NT - 2♥ - 3♦ - 3♥ is a re-transfer, that is fine as responder cannot have a ♥ suit as hands that are 5-5 or 5-4 in the majors go via Stayman, but we have a problem with the sequences

1NT - 2♦ - 2♠ - 3♦.
 1NT - 2♦ - 2NT - 3♦.
 and 1NT - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♦.

Is 3♦ a re-transfer or a ♦ suit? You could choose either but I believe that showing a 2nd suit and maybe finding a superior 4-4 fit for slam is more important than the NT opener being declarer. But actually you can have both! We use 3♦ as a re-transfer, thus 3♥ is not needed as a natural sign off and so a 3♥ bid shows ♦'s as a 2nd suit. But of course you have to be very wary here, standard is that 3♥ would be a weak sign off and you don't want partner passing! And a couple more points about showing the 2nd suit. It can only be a minor (Responder would have bid Stayman rather than transferring if he had both majors) and we do not show a second suit if opener has shown a weak doubleton there.

There is one minor 'error' in the above paragraph. Responder may indeed have a 2nd suit that is a major; but that is only when he is 5-5 in the majors and in that case the 5-4 ♥ fit is preferable to any possible 5-3 ♠ fit.

Example 5

West	East	West	East	(1) super-accept, no weak doubleton (2) ♦ 2 nd suit, looking for slam
♠ AQ4	♠ 75	1NT	2♦	
♥ K984	♥ AQJ32	2NT (1)	3♥ (2)	
♦ K984	♦ AQJ3	? (3)		
♣ A9	♣ 75			

But now we have another problem with these touching (♦/♥) suits. What would 4♥ at (3) mean? Is it a sign off or (D)RKCB for ♦'s? Clearly it needs to be a sign off and so we shall use 4♦ as the (D)RKCB bid. There is a double fit and so we use DRKCB with ♦'s as trumps. If opener just wanted to use RKCB for ♥'s it would be 4♠ Kickback.

Example 5 cont.	West	East	
	4♦ (3)	5♣ (4)	(3) DRKCB
	6♦	pass	(4) 2 key cards + ♦Q

6♦ is an excellent contract, the good 4-4 fit again playing better than the 5-4 fit.

Let's have a summary to check how far we've got so far: -

Partial summary of responder's 2nd bid after a super-accept of the transfer to ♥'s,
so after 1NT - 2♦ -

super accept ↓	Responder's 2 nd bid								
	2NT	3♣	3♦	3♥	3♠	3NT	4♣	4♦	4♥
2♠		♣'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	♦'s 2 nd suit					
2NT		♣'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	♦'s 2 nd suit					
3♣			re- transfer	♦'s 2 nd suit					
3♦				sign off			♣'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	
3♥						♦'s 2 nd suit	♣'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	

Partial summary of responder's 2nd bid after a super-accept of the transfer to ♠'s,
so after 1NT - 2♥ -

super accept ↓	Responder's 2 nd bid								
	3♣	3♦	3♥	3♠	3NT	4♣	4♦	4♥	4♠
2NT	♣'s 2 nd suit	♦'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer						
3♣		♦'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer						
3♦			re- transfer	♣'s 2 nd suit					
3♥				sign off		♣'s 2 nd suit	♦'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	
3♠						♣'s 2 nd suit	♦'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	

So that's fine and we have lots of unallocated bids so far. But we also need to define splinters, cue bids, general slam try etc.

Let's start with cue bids. It's best to re-transfer first if this is at a low level and this is what we do for the cheapest 3 sequences. So re-transfer and then cue bid after the forced reply.

Example 6

West	East	West	East	(1) super-accept, no weak doubleton (2) re-transfer
♠ AQ4	♠ K52	1NT	2♦	(3) cue bid
♥ K984	♥ AQJ32	2NT (1)	3♦ (2)	(4) RKCB (Kickback)
♦ A9	♦ 75	3♥	4♣ (3)	(5) 3 key cards
♣ K984	♣ AJ3	4♦ (3)	4♠ (4)	
		4NT (5)	6♥	
		pass		

In the last two 'expensive' super-accept sequences, the re-transfer is up at the four level and so we use 3NT to initiate cue bidding.

Example 7

West	East	West	East	(1) super-accept, 4 trumps, min pts (2) general slam try
♠ AJ4	♠ K52	1NT	2♦	(3) cue bid
♥ K984	♥ AQJ32	3♥ (1)	3NT (2)	(4) RKCB (Kickback)
♦ A9	♦ 75	4♦ (3)	4♠ (4)	(5) 3 key cards
♣ K984	♣ AQ3	4NT (5)	6♥	
		pass		

But responder may not be interested in slam and the re-transfer ensures that opener becomes declarer.

Example 8

West	East	West	East	(1) super-accept, no weak doubleton (2) re-transfer
♠ AK4	♠ Q5	1NT	2♦	
♥ K984	♥ AQ632	2NT (1)	3♦ (2)	
♦ A964	♦ 8732	3♥	4♥	
♣ K9	♣ 65	pass		

And now onto splinters. With the normal accept we needed a 6 card suit to splinter. It's different when opener has super-accepted as he has agreed the trump suit.

Hand E	Hand F	With both of these hands you have slam interest after partner has super-accepted your transfer to ♥'s. Hand E has a 2 nd suit but Q532 is not really a slam quality suit and so I would splinter.
♠ Q532	♠ 7	With Hand F you could splinter but I would prefer to show the
♥ AQ632	♥ AJ963	♦ suit. A 3♦ bid would be a re-transfer and we see how to bid
♦ 2	♦ K1052	this hand later in Example 11.
♣ KQ7	♣ A93	

When Stayman had found a fit we used three of the other major as an ambiguous splinter and that worked fine, so can we do something similar here? 3♠ is available with ♥'s as trumps but with ♠'s as trumps 3♥ is not available. So we'll use 3♠ as an ambiguous splinter when ♥'s are trumps but use direct splinters when ♠'s are trumps. Note that there is little point in splintering into a suit when opener has shown a weak doubleton there – opener will always be interested in slam! In the ♥ sequences the ambiguous splinter means that all possibilities are covered. With the higher super-accepts in the ♠ sequence there is no room for splinters.

You could develop things further and use spare bids in the cheaper sequences to show voids but I'll leave that up to you.

So, after 1NT - 2♦ - 2♠/2NT/3♣/3♦/3♥, 3♠ is the ambiguous splinter and

3NT asks	4♣ = ♣ singleton/void
	4♦ = ♦ singleton/void
	4♥ = ♠ singleton/void

Example 9

West	East (E)	West	East	
♠ AK4	♠ Q532	1NT	2♦	(1) super-accept, no weak doubleton
♥ K984	♥ AQ632	2NT (1)	3♠ (2)	(2) ambiguous splinter
♦ Q964	♦ 2	3NT (3)	4♦ (4)	(3) where?
♣ A9	♣ KQ7	4♠ (5) etc to 6♥		(4) ♦'s
				(5) RKCB

In the ♠ sequences we splinter directly.

Example 10

West	East	West	East	
♠ K984	♠ AQJ632	1NT	2♥	(1) super-accept, no weak doubleton
♥ AK4	♥ Q53	2NT (1)	4♦ (2)	(2) splinter
♦ Q964	♦ 2	4NT (3) etc to 6♠		(3) RKCB
♣ A9	♣ KQ7			

Complete summary of responder's 2nd bid after a super-accept of the transfer to ♥'s,
so after 1NT - 2♦ -

super accept ↓	Responder's 2 nd bid								
	2NT	3♣	3♦	3♥	3♠	3NT	4♣	4♦	4♥
2♠		♣'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	♦'s 2 nd suit	ambig. splinter				
2NT		♣'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	♦'s 2 nd suit	ambig. splinter				
3♣			re- transfer	♦'s 2 nd suit	ambig. splinter				
3♦				sign off	ambig. splinter	general slam try	♣'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	
3♥					ambig. splinter	general slam try	♣'s 2 nd suit	♦'s 2 nd suit	to play

Complete summary of responder's 2nd bid after a super-accept of the transfer to ♠'s,
so after 1NT - 2♥ -

super accept ↓	Responder's 2 nd bid								
	3♣	3♦	3♥	3♠	3NT	4♣	4♦	4♥	4♠
2NT	♣'s 2 nd suit	♦'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer			splinter	splinter	splinter	
3♣		♦'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer				splinter	splinter	
3♦			re- transfer	♣'s 2 nd suit		splinter		splinter	
3♥				sign off	general slam try	♣'s 2 nd suit	♦'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	
3♠					general slam try	♣'s 2 nd suit	♦'s 2 nd suit	re- transfer	

When responder has a 2nd suit and also a shortage, should he splinter or show the 2nd suit after a super-accept? It probably depends upon the quality of the suits but as I said earlier I would usually prefer to show the 2nd suit if it's a good one.

Example 11

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ3	♠ 7	1NT	2♦ (1)	(1) transfer
♥ KQ102	♥ AJ963	3♣ (2)	3♥ (3)	(2) super accept, 2 ♣'s
♦ AQ96	♦ K1052	4♠ (4)	etc to 6♦	(3) ♦'s 2 nd suit
♣ 85	♣ A93			(4) DRKCB

Note that West bid Blackwood (DRKCB) at (4) despite holding a worthless doubleton. This is fine in this situation as he has already shown this weak doubleton and partner is looking for slam – and hence has the suit covered.

So that's covers super-accepts with 4 card support. I have not gone into it in as much detail as I have for other aspects (because you may choose to adopt a different super-accept philosophy). And there are many improvements/additions that you may wish to make. And there are even a few murky areas – such as what are the (D)RKCB bids in all the situations where responder has shown a 2nd suit. I could write another 20 pages but I don't really want to in an area where you may choose to play something completely different. I'll leave there.

Playing super-accepts clearly has its advantages. And it also has beneficial repercussions elsewhere: -

♠ J8652	You hold this hand and partner opens a strong NT. Obviously you transfer and partner bids 2♠. What now? 8 points so 2NT? No! This is a poor 8 count with a miserable ♠ suit. Since partner has not super-accepted then game is remote. If you bid on, you will go down (in either a part-score or game) much more often than you will find a makeable game.
♥ 103	
♦ K103	
♣ A52	

This hand was from a club tournament. Nearly everybody was in 2NT or 3♠, with both contracts failing by one trick.

So with this hand it's 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - pass. If opener super-accepted then it would depend upon the type of super-accept as to whether you proceed further or not but you normally would bid game.

3.2.1 Super Accept with 3 Card Support?

This is really up to the particular partnership. It may well work with 3 good trumps and a bit of shape: -

Example 1

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ3	♠ J5	1NT	2♦ (1) (1) transfer
♥ KJ10	♥ AQ963	3♣ (2)	4♦ (3) (2) super accept, 2 ♣'s
♦ AQ963	♦ 108	4♥	pass (3) re-transfer
♣ 85	♣ 9742		

So, a good game contract that will probably be missed if West had simply accepted the transfer.

Super accepting with only 3 trumps (and a max) is by no means that popular. You may run into difficulties when responder has minimal values – you are at the three level with only 8 trumps.

Example 2

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ3	♠ 75	1NT	2♦ (1) (1) transfer
♥ KJ10	♥ 98632	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3) (2) super accept, 2 ♣'s
♦ AQ963	♦ 74	3♥	pass (3) re-transfer
♣ 85	♣ Q742		

Example 3 But then you may reach a good slam: -

West	East	West	East
♠ AQ3	♠ 75	1NT	2♦ (1) (1) transfer
♥ KQ10	♥ AJ963	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3) (2) super accept, 2 ♣'s
♦ AQ963	♦ K102	3♥	4♣ (4) (3) re-transfer
♣ 85	♣ A97	4♦ (4)	4♠ (5) (4) cue bid
		etc to 6♥	(5) RKCB

Note that it is fairly safe for East to bid Blackwood at (5) as West has already shown a weak doubleton ♣ and would normally have a top ♠ honour. If West had simply accepted the transfer, then East probably would not consider investigating slam.

When playing 3-card super-accepts it really is important to have our ability to show a 2nd suit. A good 4-4 fit elsewhere will virtually always be better for slam.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ32	♠ 76	1NT	2♦ (1)	(1) transfer
♥ AK10	♥ QJ963	3♣ (2)	3♥ (3)	(2) super accept, 2 ♣'s
♦ A1096	♦ KQ52	etc to 6♦		(3) ♦'s 2 nd suit
♣ 85	♣ A9			

Now example 4 looks fine but there is a problem with super-accepting a transfer to ♥'s with just 3 card support when you also have 4 ♠'s: -

East	
♠ KQ954	East may be 5-5 in the majors! If West were to super-accept with the hand above opposite this East then it would be very difficult to find the ♠ fit, let alone the ♠ slam.
♥ QJ963	
♦ 532	So my advice is do not super-accept a transfer to ♥'s with just three card support when holding 4 ♠'s.
♣ -	

When responder has a 2nd suit and also a shortage, should he splinter or show the 2nd suit after a super-accept? If you allow 3-card super accepts it is surely best to show the 2nd suit.

Example 5

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ32	♠ 7	1NT	2♦ (1)	(1) transfer
♥ KQ10	♥ AJ963	3♣ (2)	3♥ (3)	(2) super accept, 2 ♣'s
♦ AQ96	♦ K1052	4♠ (4)	etc to 6♦	(3) ♦'s 2 nd suit
♣ 85	♣ A93			(4) DRKCB

It really is a matter of personal preference if you decide to super-accept with just 3 trumps. Sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. With a superb fit like Examples 3-5, it certainly seems to make sense. And it may make finding slam in another strain easier. But on the other hand responder may feel more secure if he knows that opener always has 4 cards in the major.