

Transfer Walsh is a method of continuation after a 1♣ open in a normal system, eg Acol with 5 card majors, or two over one, but not a strong club system.

Why have something new? Consider some of the deficiencies of standard natural methods ...

You have a biddable but weak hand with 5 hearts. Can you show that your suit is 5 cards and weak? Or can you miss the 5/3 fit, or avoid a 5/1 fit? If opener always raises on a 3 card suit, then you are in trouble when you have only a 4 card suit. (Other simpler methods such as a major response that guarantees 5 cards can solve this particular problem, but have other deficiencies.)

You as responder have a weak hand with 5 spades and 4 hearts. Can you show the lengths in both suits, and the weakness, and play in the best fitting 2M contract opposite a balanced minimum opener?

This time you have 6 spades. Can you show precisely that length, at all strengths?

You find your major fit, but to invite game you bid 3M which opener passes. You have your combined 24 points, but on a bad break or losing finesses, you go one off. Wouldn't it be nice to use 2M as a game invitation, so that a weaker opener can play there?

OK, enough.

Transfer Walsh enables you to show, precisely, whether your majors are 4, 5, or 6 in length, and ALSO, whether you are weak, invitational, or game forcing. This is for all combinations, and for one or both majors. With the treatment described below, all game invitational responder hands are shown by a bid at the 2-level, opener knowing whether it is 4, 5, or 6, and if the invitation is declined you play at the 2-level. It is completely EBU legal at level 3 or higher.

You can play it with a weak 1NT or a strong 1NT. My preference is 1NT=15/16, and this article reflects that, but if yours is different, you can alter the rebid strengths accordingly. My 1C open if balanced is 12-14, or 17+.

Transfer Walsh at its basic level is simply a reply of 1♦ to show hearts, and 1♥ to show spades. The suit could be 4 cards or longer. This is NOT a transfer per se, as opener does not necessarily complete the transfer. There are many treatments and variations, but probably the key decision is what constitutes a transfer completion at the one level. There are essentially two alternatives when you do not have 4 card support - complete the transfer with 3 card support and break it by bidding 1NT with 2, ignoring strength; or complete the transfer with lower range strength (eg 12-14) and break it by bidding 1NT and higher strength (eg 17/18), ignoring whether 2 or 3. Having tried both strains, my preference is the latter. When responder is weak, playing in a 5-2 major fit at 1♥/♠ is better than playing in 1NT or higher.

These are the typical opener rebids after a major "transfer" :

If you have 2 or 3 card support and a 12-14 count, you complete the transfer at the 1-level. Responder if less than invitational strength passes with a 5 card suit, but with only 4 bids 1NT, or tries spades over hearts. Responder with stronger hands makes further moves.

If you have 2 or 3 card support but a 17/18 count, rebid 1NT (or 2NT with 19+).

If you have 4 card support, you jump to 2 of the suit with 12-14, or 3 of the suit with 17/18.

However, if you do not have 3 card major support, a rebid of 2♣ shows 6 clubs. (The 1♣ open is usually balanced, but can alternatively be a long suit.)

When you have 6 clubs and also 3 card major support, and responder with only 4 of the major rebids 1NT after your major completion, you of course convert that to 2♣.

That's it in outline. If opener shows a 17/18 hand with 1NT, responder can transfer to show a 5 card suit. Opener will play in 2M with 3 card support, but with only 2 cards will rebid 2NT - the combined minimum count makes this safe. Whatever opener does, responder can of course raise to game now.

As responder with spades will bid 1♥, the initial response of 1♠ is now freed to have other meanings. If you use this as a relay, or to transfer to 1NT, this has advantages, as it both right-sides a NT contract, and enables you to have follow-on bids if you wish. Doing this then of course frees up a 1NT response to mean something else. You can use that 1NT, or the 1♠ bid if you want a natural 1NT, to show a diamond suit in a weak hand, that allows partner to pass/raise or correct to 2♦. However, there may be better uses ...

That is the basic essence of transfer walsh. Over opener's rebid you can play any method of your choice, such as xyz, transfers, or whatever.

Discuss objectives, style, and continuations with your favourite partner. To give an idea of more complex methods that you might use, I present below the key points in the approach I use.

An example transfer walsh system that utilises more complex developments

Objectives :

- Convey immediately whether opener is balanced or has long clubs

- Convey balanced opener strength ranges (12-14, 17/18, 19/20)

- Convey responder strength ranges opposite a 12-14 (up to 10, 11/12, 13+)

- Show precise lengths of responder's major holdings within those ranges.

- Allow responder to describe minor suit holdings in those ranges, but without exact length definition

- Where possible to right-side the contracts so they are played by opener

- Where possible to express a game invitation such that if there is a major fit, but no game, it can be played in 2M

- Enable a weak responder to show a 4 card major, but if no fit is found, to play in 2♣ or 2♦

- Cater for interference from opposition

Key treatments adopted :

1♣ may be 6 card, or is balanced and guarantees at least a doubleton in each major. The balanced hands include a 20 count, so a 2NT open is therefore 21/22, and 2♣ then 2NT is 23/24.

The initial responses to 1♣ are:

- 1♦ shows hearts, at least 4 cards

- 1♥ shows spades, at least 4 cards

- 1♠ is a relay denying a 4 card major. Responder may be balanced, or have a long minor. This frees the 1NT, 2♣, 2♦ replies.

- 1NT shows {54} in the majors (either way)

- 2♣ is {44} both majors 11+
- 2♦ is {55} both majors
- 2♥/♠ is natural 6 card, up to 8 hcp
- 2NT is {55} in the minors
- 3♣/♦ is natural, weak and preemptive

Apart from a weak {44}, "both major" responder hands show both suits immediately in one bid. This means that in competition both suits are precisely known immediately, and X is unambiguously for penalty.

Opener to a "1red" response with 4 card support completes the transfer with a jump. With 2 or 3 card support he completes the transfer with 12-14, rebids 1NT with 17/18, 2NT with 19/20. Over the NT rebids, stayman, minor suit stayman, and 4 suit transfers apply (normal responses to NT are on). Opener rebids clubs with a 6 card suit, but with 3 card support he initially completes but then converts a possible NT to clubs.

Responder on transfer completion can pass if weak with 5 cards, or "retransfer" to show 5 and invitational or better 11+. Opener will decline the invitation by rebidding NT on a doubleton, or the major with 3, (but responder can raise to game, or ace ask etc), or accept by bidding game. A fit declined is played in 2M.

A 6 card responder shows 9-12 by raising the major, and 3M from opener therefore invites the 11/12 to bid game. Responder with 13 just bids game.

A responder with a non-fit 4 card major can rebid 1NT or 2 of either minor to play, except that after a heart transfer, a spade/NT inversion is used so that opener plays 1NT in the sequence 1♣ 1♦ 1♥ 1♠ 1NT, and opener plays spades in the sequence 1♣ 1♦ 1♥ 1NT 2♠. After the inverted 1♠, responder with 4 hearts can then also make a game invitation in a long minor as below.

Opener to a "1♠" relay rebids clubs with 6, else bids 1NT 12-14, 2NT 17/18, and with 19/20 bids 2♥ to puppet 2♠ then rebids 2NT. (If he rebids 3♣ over 2♠, this shows a natural heart reverse.)

"NT continuations" are off, because a minor is to play, and a major bid by responder (having already denied the major) is a slam invitation in the corresponding minor.

Responder after 1♣ 1♠ 1NT can pass or raise if balanced (eg 2NT on 11/12), bid 2♣ or 2♦ to play, bid 3♣ or 3♦ as GF, or bid 2M (having already denied the major) as a game invitation in the corresponding minor. This latter can be played in 2NT or 3m if opener refuses the game, depending on fit.

The "both majors" nature of some of the responses makes it easy to show both the hand strength and major length after 2nd seat opponent interferes with a 1-level bid. It is "system on", with X meaning "I would have bid that", so 1♣ (1♠) X is balanced or a minor. Higher bids are as uninterrupted. If the opponent bids a major, then the "both majors" meaning applies now only to the other major, so after 1♣ (1♥) responder shows his spade holding by :

- X = 4 spades exactly, up to 10 hcp
- 1NT = 5 spades exactly, up to 10 hcp
- 2♣ = 4 spades exactly, 11+
- 2♦ = 5+ spades, 11+
- 2♥ (cue) = 6 spades, 9/10
- 2♠ = 6 spades, up to 8

Discuss methods with your partner to design your own transfer Walsh continuations, but I hope this gives you some ideas. If you would like a copy of my detailed system notes, please email me.

Try it. You'll have fun, and find it indispensable.