



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(79) Responding to 1NT with Minors

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Level: 2, 3

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General

When partner opens 1NT our primary focus is on the Major suits - we think about Stayman and Transfers first. If we do not have a 4-card or 5-card Major then we turn our focus to other things - traditionally just bidding the appropriate number of Notrump. But there are times when we want to describe our minor suits as well.

Minor Suit Hands

When we are deciding whether to try to show a minor suit (or just show our values) we need to be able to communicate our shape (minor suit length) as well as our strength (bucket) to partner. Our ability to describe our hand to partner (both length and bucket) will vary with each hand type/strength - we will not always have room to share all the information we want with partner.

Note: We will assume that our methods are 4-suited Transfers with bidding the "gap" as the superaccept for rest of this discussion.

1-Suiters: 6+card Minor Suits

Level: 2

With a 6+card minor suit you can transfer to the minor.

- *Weak, 0-7 points* - signoff in 3-minor
 - With ♣, bid 2♠ (transfer to ♣) and pass.
 - With ♦, bid 2NT (transfer to ♦) and pass.
- *Invitational, 8-9 points.*
 - With ♣, start with 2♠ (transfer to ♣) -
 - If partner makes the expected bid of 3♣ then pass.
 - If partner superaccepts with 2NT then we can bid on to game (usually 3NT.)
 - With ♦, start with 2NT (transfer to ♦) -
 - If partner makes the expected bid of 3♦ then pass.

- If partner superaccepts with 3♣ then we can bid on to game (usually 3NT.)
- *Game Forcing, 10+ points* - With most game forcing hands we will just bid 3NT. But if we have shortness we may be worried about our short suit for Notrump. In this case, we can show these hands by transferring to our minor and then bidding our shortness.
 - *Example: 2♠, transfer to ♣, then bid 3♥.* This shows long ♣, S/V in ♥, and GF values.

Now that we know how to handle the single-suited minor suit hands let's examine which two-suited hands we will take action with.

New 3-Level Responses to 1NT Opening (New Agreements)

Level: 2, 3

We will add a new 1NT - 3L response structure that is designed to handle our two-suited minor suit hands (both minors.)

1NT ___?

- 3♣* - 5+/5+ minors, Weak (less than invitational.)
- 3♦* - 5+/5+ minors, Game Forcing
- 3♥* - Mini-Splinter, 3-1-5/4, Game Forcing (9 cards in the minors)
- 3♠* - Mini-Splinter, 1-3-5/4, Game Forcing (9 cards in the minors)

2-Suiters: 5+/5+ Minors

Level: 2

- *Weak, 0-7 points* - With a bad hand and this shape, we want to get partner out of 1NT and we do so by bidding 3♣. This is not invitational, partner will either pass or correct to 3♦.
- *Invitational, 8-9 points* - With these values we just invite game in the normal way (as if we had a balanced 8-9 points.) This is a rare hand in that with 9 HCP and some length values we will just bid game and with only 7 HCP and scattered values then we usually just bid 3♣ and signoff in 3-minor. Thus, we only bid this way with a great 7 HCP or a normal 8 HCP and 1-length point.
- *Game Forcing, 10+ points* - When we have 10+ points and this shape we use 3♦* to show this hand. We will sometimes have slam interest and sometimes only be looking for the best game. partner can now bid 3NT, show a 5-card Major, or drive the auction to 5-minor or 6-minor.

2-Suiters: 5/4 Minors

Level: 3

- With a 2-2-5/4 hand we treat this as a balanced hand.
 - *Weak, 0-7 points* – Pass
 - *Invitational, 8-9 points* – Invite as we would with a balanced hand, Stayman then rebid 2NT (or *Size Ask* if that is a part of your system.)
 - *Game Forcing, 10+ points* – Just bid 3NT.
- With 3/1-5/4 hands we want to better describe our hand whenever it is possible.
 - *Weak, 0-7 points* – Pass
 - *Invitational, 8-9 points* – There is not enough space to show our shape and still limit our hand to invitational values. Thus, we just show this as “general invitational hand” – Stayman followed by 2NT (or *Size Ask*.)
 - *Game Forcing, 10+ points* – With these values we can show this hand by using 3-Major as a “Mini-Splinter.”
 - 3♥ 3-1-5/4, we bid our singleton.
 - 3♠ 1-3-5/4, we bid our singleton.
 - With a Game Forcing hand we may want to play in 3NT, 4-Major (in a 5-3 or even 4-3 fit), or 5-minor (or even 6-minor). With a hand that has so many options to explore to is useful to have a special bid that describes the entire hand in one call.

Conclusion

You may have noticed that to show these minor suit oriented hands we were forced to use 2♠, 2NT, and all four suits at the 3-level (that is, six bids.) By contrast, we generally use only three bids, Stayman and two transfer bids (2♦ and 2♥), to show the Major suit oriented hands. We need more bids to describe the minor suit hands due to the fact that each of these bids leaves us with less room to further describe our hand than the highly efficient Stayman and Jacoby Transfers (Majors are more important than minors, so it makes sense that we will want to front-load these suits.) Despite this structure taking up a lot of bids, it is effective at keeping us out of many bad 3NT contracts, allowing us to explore for 6-minor slams without going beyond 3NT, and only giving away information to the opponents when we choose to do so (when we think that information will be more useful for partner.) Give this more complete minor suit structure a try with your favorite partner.