

Jacoby Transfers

Getting the Strong Notrump Hand to Declare the Major

One of the primary objectives of bidding is to find an eight card major suit fit and play in it at the appropriate level. Jacoby transfer bids make it easier to describe hands with five and six card major suits when partner opens 1NT.

This is how it works, you bid the suit below your long major suit:

2♦ says	"I have 5+ hearts"
2♥ says	"I have 5+ spades"

Now partner bids your suit, 2♥ or 2♠. This has transferred the declaring of the major to partner's stronger hand. It is an advantage to have the hand with more high cards make the last play at trick one. Look at the following suit combinations:

♣K76	♣AQ2	♣KQ6
♣843	♣543	♣975

Would you prefer to have the top or bottom holding in dummy if you were declaring 2♥ on the ♣J lead? You want to make the strong notrump opener the declarer in order to protect its tenaces from being lead through. Also it can be useful to have the strong hand concealed during the play, so that the best defense is not obvious to the opponents.

The cost of playing transfers is that you can no longer play in 2♦ after partner opens 1NT. You must alert the opponents, the current rule is to say "transfer" when partner bids 2♦ or 2♥. After you transfer the suit to your partner, either you are done bidding or you want partner to choose the level and possibly the denomination to play in.

With 0-7 points you are finished bidding, with 8-9 you want partner to bid game with a maximum, and with 10 points you know your side has a game. If you have a six card or longer suit, you want to play in your known eight card fit; with five, you would like partner to choose, playing in your suit only with three card or longer support. You do this by bidding NT when you have only a five card suit and raising when you have six or more:

Bid after the Transfer	Hand Strength	Point Range	Major Suit Length
Pass	Sign-off	0-7	5+ card suit
2NT	Invite	8-9	5 card suit
3 major	Invite	8-9	6+ card suit
3NT	Game Force	10+	5 card suit
4 major	Game Force	10+	6+ card suit

What does 2♠ mean over 1NT now?

People play many different conventions, so be sure to check on this with a new partner. The simplest treatment is to use 2♠ to sign off in your six card minor. It asks partner to bid 3♣ over which you either pass or bid 3♦.

More advanced treatments include *Minor Suit Stayman* and *Four Suit Transfers*. *Minor Suit Stayman* is used with a slam try that includes both minors and asks partner to bid a four card minor if they have one, otherwise to bid 2NT. *Four suit transfer* bidders use 2♠ to transfer to clubs and 2NT to transfer to diamonds, this allows both sign off and invitational minor suit hands to be bid since partner can refuse the transfer when she would turn down an invitation. This has the disadvantage of giving up the natural invitational raise in notrump, partner must bid 2♣ then 2NT with that hand.

Responding to One NoTrump with Both Majors

When you transfer to a major, and then bid a second suit at the three level your bid is forcing to game. The reason for this is that you have no safety above 2NT with less than 26 points and no eight card fit.

So how do you handle a hand with both majors?

- Transfer to the 5-card suit with a weak hand and 5-4 in the majors
- Use Stayman with 5-4 in the majors and game invitational values or higher
- Start with a Jacoby Transfer when both of your majors are at least 5 cards long
- Rebid at the 3 level with a game force (or raise a shown 4 card major to 4)
- Rebid at the 2 level with a game invite (or raise a shown 4 card major to 3)

When Partner Opens 2NT or 3NT

When your partner opens 2NT or 3NT, you can still use Jacoby transfers. There is less bidding room to work with, so there are no invitational hands. If you do not pass or pass after transferring, then the auction is forcing to game. Over 2NT, when you transfer to your 5+ card major with game values and only a five card suit, you bid 3NT next; but with six or more, you raise to four of the major. Again, hands with both majors use Stayman when one major is only four cards long and start with a transfer with longer suits.

Transfers are Still Available after Partner Overcalls in Notrump

It is very useful to also play transfers and Stayman after partner overcalls any number of notrump. The transfer to the opponents major suit is usually used to express doubt about notrump with game values but not four or more cards in the unbid major.