

JACOBY TRANSFERS – WHAT TO DO NEXT?

One of the first conventions you learn in bridge is the Jacoby Transfer, and even new players know the basics of it: when partner opens 1NT, 2♦ or 2♥ shows 5+ cards in the next-higher major. An area that is not as well known is what does responder bid after the transfer, to show different lengths and strengths, including when I have a second suit and when I have a slam interest? As it so happens, you’ve come to the right place to find out!

A. A SINGLE SIX-CARD MAJOR

Let’s start with an easy case: you have a 6+-card major. After partner opens 1NT or 2NT, you start by transferring to your major (1NT-2♦/2♥ as a transfer to 2♥/2♠, or 2NT-3♦/3♥ as a transfer to 3♥/3♠), and then pass or raise to the appropriate level of your major depending on your strength: pass when weak, raise to 3 of your Major (3M) with invitational, and bid game with more. Examples:

1NT	2♦*	1NT	2♥*	1NT	2♦*
2♥	Pass	2♠	3♠	2♥	4♥
Weak, to play		Invitational		Game or Slam Values (see below)	

The Weak sequence gives opener no option. You transferred to your 6-card major because it generally plays better than NT when you have a weak hand, and then you pass, to play. When you are invitational (8 or 9 points) with a 6-card major, you know you want to play in your 8-card major fit so you raise to 3 of the major after transferring. This asks opener to pass with a minimum (15 or a bad 16 hcp) or to bid 4 of the major with a non-minimum (good 16 or 17 hcp). The third (game-going) sequence is a bit tricky, because it depends on whether you and your partner play “Texas Transfers” (discussed below). If not, your transfer followed by raising to 4 of the major just shows enough points for game (around 10 to 14 hcp) and a 6+card major. But if you play Texas Transfers, the third sequence is *slam invitational*, asking opener to pass with a minimum but to keep bidding with a non-minimum so we can find a slam.

Texas Transfers: If you and your partner already play Jacoby Transfers and play or want to play a similar and very useful addition to it, I recommend “**Texas Transfers.**” This involves jumping to the *4-level* in the suit below your six-card major. 1NT-4♦/♥* or 2NT-4♦/♥* show 6+ cards in the suit above the 4♦ or 4♥ bid and ask opener to bid 4♥ and 4♠ respectively. This allows responder to distinguish between hands that merely want to get to game – by using the “Texas Transfer” and then passing – and those with a mild slam interest – transferring to 2M and then raising to 4M. For example, you hold: ♠KQ7654 ♥109 ♦K3 ♣Q108. After partner’s 1NT, jump to 4♥* and then pass 4♠. But with ♠KJ9764 ♥K5 ♦A54 ♣K5, bid 2♥ (a transfer to 2♠) and then raise to 4♠, showing a slam interest. Partner should pass with a minimum without a great fit (♠A8 ♥Q82 ♦KJ32 ♣AJ76)

but should bid 4NT Blackwood with a maximum and/or a good fit with good controls (e.g., ♠AQ8 ♥A842 ♦K2 ♣A742). With that hand we actually have a grand slam!

The “Texas Transfer” may also be used with hands that have a definite slam interest and want to “set the suit” and then show a control or ask for keycards afterwards. Bidding the 4-level transfer and then bidding a new suit would show a control in support of slam in the major, and 4NT would be Blackwood. Example: ♠KQJ1065 ♥A109 ♦K3 ♣A108. After 1NT, bid 4♥*. After partner bids 4♠, bid 4NT to ask for Aces (or keycards, if you play Roman Keycard Blackwood).

For those familiar with “**splinter**” bids, these can also be employed after a Jacoby Transfer. With a 6+ card major, a singleton or void in another suit and slam interest, responder transfers and then jumps a level in the *short suit*. So,

1NT	2♦*		1NT	2♥*
2♥	3♠	and	2♠	4♦

show, in the first example, a 6+ card heart suit with a singleton or void in spades, and in the second example, a 6+ card spade suit with a singleton or void in diamonds.

B. A SINGLE FIVE-CARD MAJOR

5-card major suits are shown by transferring at the 2-level and then passing (with a weak hand) or bidding the appropriate number of notrump to invite game, bid game, or invite slam, depending on the number of points responder holds. Examples:

1NT	2♦*	1NT	2♥*	1NT	2♦*
2♥	2NT	2♠	3NT	2♥	4NT
Invitational		Game-forcing		Slam Interest	

The first example shows 8-9 HCP with a five-card heart suit. Opener now corrects to hearts, holding three or more hearts, or stays in notrump with a doubleton. Opener must also clarify whether she is minimum or maximum. With 15 (minimum), opener passes 2NT or rebids 3♥. With a good 16-17 HCP (maximum), opener raises to 4♥ with 3+card support or bids 3NT with a doubleton.

In the second example responder shows game-forcing values (about 10-14 HCP) with 5 spades, giving opener a choice between 3NT and 4M. For example: ♠KJ1075 ♥108 ♦K108 ♣Q5. After 1NT-2♥-2♠-3NT, opener passes with only 2 cards in spades or bids 4♠ with 3+ spades. Do not make the mistake of transferring and then rebidding your major (e.g. 1NT-2♥-2♠-4♠) when you only have a 5-card spade suit. You showed your 5 spades when you bid 2♥, so don't rebid them, which would show a sixth spade. Instead, rebid the appropriate level of NT and give partner a choice.

In the third example, when responder transfers and then jumps to 4NT this is **not** Blackwood but slam invitational with a 5-card suit and 16-17 (or perhaps a good 15) HCP. Example: ♠KJ1075 ♥A108 ♦KQ8 ♣K5. After 1NT-2♥*-2♠, jump to 4NT, giving partner a choice between passing or bidding 6NT (with only 2 spades) or bidding 5♠ or 6♠ (with 3+ spades). **A transfer followed by 4NT is a quantitative raise of notrump, not Blackwood.**

If you are afraid you and your partner will be on different wavelengths if you transfer and then jump to 4NT, there is another more economical way of showing a hand with a 5-card major and slam interest without getting past 3NT. In “standard” bidding, you could simply jump to 3 of your major on your first bid, instead of transferring: 1NT-3♠. In response, partner bids:

- (a) 3NT with a doubleton in your major;
- (b) 4♠ with a minimum with 3-4 spades; or
- (c) a new suit as a control in support of spades with a maximum and 3- or 4-card ♠ support. I recommend this treatment unless you need to use the jump to 3 of a major to show some other kind of hand, as discussed below.

C. A 5+ CARD MAJOR AND A 4+ CARD MINOR

Transferring to a Major and then bidding a minor is *game-forcing* with 5+ of the major and 4+ of the minor. The second suit is natural, even if it is the same suit as the initial transfer bid. Thus,

1NT 2♦*	and	1NT 2♥*
2♥ 3♦		2♠ 3♣

are game-forcing, showing at least five of the major and at least four of the minor: in the first example, 5+ hearts and 4+ diamonds and in the second example 5+ spades and 4+ clubs. In response, opener should bid:

- (a) 3 of the shown major with 3+ card support;
- (b) 3NT with a doubleton in the major and good stoppers in the other two suits; or
- (c) a new suit with good support for the second suit and an Ace or King in the new suit.

Example: ♠AKJ ♥A10 ♦KQ87 ♣10875. After you open 1NT and it goes: 1NT-2♥*-2♠-3♦, bid 3♠, showing 3-card ♠ support. If it had gone 1NT-2♦*-2♥-3♦, then bid 3♠, this time showing the ♠A or ♠K and good diamond support (without 3+ cards in partner’s heart suit).

General rule: when responder shows 1 or 2 suits and asks the NT bidder for support: (a) opener’s bid of responder’s first of two suits shows support for that suit; (b) a new suit is a control in support of the last bid suit; and (c) NT is negative for both.

D. SUPER-ACCEPTING A TRANSFER

Every now and then life gets good. Not only are you happy to open with a 1NT opener, but partner transfers to a suit that you really like, and you have a maximum hand as well. Example: ♠Ax ♥A10xx ♦Kxx ♣AQxx. You open 1NT and partner, bless her heart, transfers with 2♦! You are now worth 18 support points. Instead of merely accepting the transfer with 2♥ you should jump to 3♥ to “super-accept,” showing 4 cards in the major and a maximum. If responder had a marginal hand that might otherwise have passed she can now bid the game, knowing of the super fit. Example: ♠75 ♥A10875♦K87 ♣5432. After 1NT-2♦*-3♥, bid 4♥.

E. TRANSFERS IN COMPETITION

Should the opponents be rude enough to overcall, transfers are off at the two-level and *on* at the four-level **as long as the overcall was 3♣ or lower**. Be sure you and your partner have discussed this and are on the same wavelength.

If the opponents double your partner’s transfer bid, Pass with a doubleton in her suit, accept the transfer with three or more trumps, and super-accept with 4 trumps and a maximum. If you pass, showing a doubleton, responder’s **redouble** is a “re-transfer,” requiring you to bid the shown major even though you only have two.

BIDDING EXAMPLES

1.		2.	
Dealer	Responder	Dealer	Responder
♠AQJ8	♠9	♠A1054	♠6
♥AJ8	♥K7543	♥1075	♥AJ986
♦J76	♦K98	♦AKJ7	♦Q96
♣K92	♣AQ76	♣A3	♣J85
3.		4.	
Dealer	Responder	Dealer	Responder
♠AK105	♠J8	♠10876	♠KJ3
♥Q76	♥AKJ854	♥J9	♥KQ854
♦AQ97	♦K	♦AK54	♦J
♣Q4	♣K1076	♣AKJ	♣Q876

5.
 Dealer Responder
 ♠ KQ54 ♠ A8
 ♥ AQ5 ♥ K7632
 ♦ A86 ♦ J
 ♣ J76 ♣ AK854

6.
 Dealer Responder
 ♠ AJ105 ♠ 6
 ♥ 9854 ♥ AQJ763
 ♦ K2 ♦ 98
 ♣ AKQ ♣ J984

7.
 Dealer Responder
 ♠ A103 ♠ KJ976
 ♥ KJ87 ♥ 10
 ♦ A854 ♦ 1093
 ♣ A1076 ♣ KJ95

8.
 Dealer Responder
 ♠ AQ7 ♠ J
 ♥ KJ4 ♥ 87653
 ♦ KQ7 ♦ 109
 ♣ J4 ♣ AK953

ANSWERS

1.
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ 3♣
 3♥ 4♥
 Pass

2.
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ 2NT
 4♥ Pass

3.
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ 4♥
 4♠ 4NT
 5♠* 6♥ *2 w/Queen
 Pass

4.
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ 3♣
 3♦ 3NT
 Pass

5.
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ 3♣
 3♥ 4NT
 5♠* 6♥
 Pass

6.
 1NT 4♦
 4♥ Pass

7.
 1NT 2♥
 2♠ 2NT
 4♠ Pass

8.
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ Pass