

The Jacoby Transfer

One of the greatest players of all time Oswald Jacoby came up with this treatment. Without doubt, it is either the most or 2nd most used convention. The Stayman Convention is the only one that might push The Jacoby Transfer to 2nd place. Since they are complementary, and used in different circumstances it is the frequency of certain hand types not popularity that determines the most used convention.

The Jacoby Transfer has one simple criteria: does the Responder have a 5+Card Major or a 6+Card Minor. If the answer is yes, then this is definitely the way to go when partner opens 1NT. You might have been surprised that there is no HCP requirement associated with this convention. In fact, if you have 0 HCP it is even more important that you use this convention if you have a 5+Card Major or 6+Card Minor.

The foremost reasons for the transfer is two-fold. Once the transfer is completed it is guaranteed that the stronger (NT opener) hand is not exposed to the opponents, as Dummy. Equally important; the strong hand is last to play to the first trick and has therefore best chance of gaining early control of the POTH. There's a third reason, the strong hand, with all its trick taking assets is hidden.

How Does It Work?

When Partner opens 1NT and your hand meets the criteria (5+card Major, any HCP) you make an *artificial bid*¹ that requires your partner to make another bid; the one you just told him to make. Let's start with the Majors. If you have a 5+Card ♥ suit you anticipate that it should be Trump but you want your stronger Partner to be the DECLARER; so you can't bid ♥'s – that would make you the Declarer. You bid 2♦ telling Partner to bid 2♥. That's why it is called a transfer, the 2♦ 'forces' your Partner to bid your long suit transferring the declaring of the suit to the opener. Remember the Opener can't have more than 1 Doubleton so the chances are 3 to 1 that the partnership will have a Magic-8 fit. You have transferred Declarer-ship to the strong hand using your long suit as Trump.

If your 5+Card suit is ♠'s you bid 2♥ telling Partner to Bid 2♠ to accept transfer of Responder's suit to the strong hand. That is, transferring involves bidding the suit that ranks directly below the desired suit.

Have you noticed that, whether the Opener 'obeys' your 'force' or not, you have not yet told him how many HCP's you have. But that's OK. Once he accepts the transfer you will have the opportunity to tell him your HCP count and you do that like this:

If you have → your rebid is

< 8 HCP → **Pass** The end result is the same as if Partner opened and you bid 2 of suit.

8-9 HCP → **2NT** The end result is the same as if Partner opened 1NT and you bid 2NT

10+ HCP → **3NT** The end result is the same as if Partner opened 1NT and you bid 3NT

Note that the last two are the same responses you would have given if the Jacoby Transfer didn't exist. You have now armed your partner with almost perfect information about your hand. They know your point count with good accuracy and also know you have a 5+Cards in the transferred suit. Declarer can then use this information to decide to play in a NoTrump or (Trump) suit contract and at what level. We will now put you in the Opener's seat so you can see how those decisions are made.

This is your hand: ♠AQ4 ♥KT98 ♦KT9 ♣KJ8 a Balanced hand with 16 HCP so you open the bidding with 1NT. Your left hand opponent Passes and your Partner responds with 2♥. You, at first, get excited to see that your Partner likes your ♥'s. Then... you remember that the 2♥ bid is a transfer,

¹ Recall that normal bids are describing a hand in standard manner, in that way everyone understands the meaning of the bid. An artificial bid may (might be describing a special feature) or may not be describing the shape/size of a hand). Thus, it is considered a conventional bid, and the opponents are entitled to know the meaning. Artificial bids **always** require your partner to bid.

your partner really has 5+♠'s and wants you to bid ♠'s. You announce ALOUD "SPADES²". The 2♥ bid is a conventional bid which usually needs to be alerted in one way or another. However, ACBL realizes the this type of bid is almost universal so rather than requiring an Alert; it allows it is simply announced as "SPADES" - the suit your are being told to bid.

After you complete the transfer by bidding 2♠, Responder continues with a rebid of 2NT, telling you he has 8 or 9 HCP. You add his 8 to your 'flat'³ 16 to arrive at 24 HCP. Not enough for Game, so your choices are:

- Pass and play 2NT with 24 HCP and 8 ♠'s or,
- Bid and play 3♠

Your analysis goes something like: I probably have to lose 3 Aces and possibly a trick to the ♠K that's 4 tricks and there are substantial holes beneath all my K's → it's likely that a couple of their Q's can be made good. In 'normal' trump contracts there is no advantage gained by Trumping in the long Trump hand; the benefit of Trump generally comes from using the cards in the short hand to Trump. In this case the short suit has the bigger Trump. Trump that are usually needed to draw Trump meaning that some advantage the Magic-8 offers may not be there⁴. 2NT may be the better contract choice.

Can You, as NT Opener Refuse the Transfer?

If your RHO⁵ (right hand opponent) bids rather than Passes, you may Pass. RHO's bid has removed the necessity to transfer and has taken you 'off the hook'.

If you want to end the partnership forever there is a very good chance that a Pass after Partner asks you to Transfer might do the trick. You can't Pass, you may bid something else, but you can not Pass.

What Does a Responder Do when 5-5 in the Majors

If you are 5-5 then you are guaranteed an 8-Card fit. Why the guarantee? Partner's 1NT Opening only permits only one Doubleton which means she has at least a 3-Card suit in one of your Majors. So how do we handle this? It all depends on how many points you have.

You have less than 8 HCP

Bid 2♦ transferring Partner to ♥'s. Once transfer is complete you bid 2♠. Partner has to ask himself why did she transfer me to ♥'s and then bid ♠'s? Ah! Shes' 5-5 and no points; she's giving me the option to let her play in play 2♠ or I can bid and play 3♥.

You have 8+ HCP

Bid 2♥, transferring Partner to ♠'s. After the transfer you bid 3♥ (with 8-9 PP) or with 10+ HCP bid 4♥. In either case Partner knows your points and that you are 5-5, if partner prefers ♠'s she can bid them at the appropriate level. If asked the meaning of the 3 bid you should say "It's a real suit" or "It's an extra suit"

Can You still use Jacoby if Opponents Bid?

Yes!! If the Opponent uses the bid you wanted to make, you can Double. A Double in this case tells partner I wanted to bid that!! Take my Double to mean the same thing as what our opponent just bid.

Example: You wanted to bid 2♦ to transfer, the bidding goes 1NT – 2♦ – X(you) ...

2 We used to announce "Transfer" but recently the laws have change to wit we now announce the suit being transferred to. And although it is practically a universal bid it is still an artificial bid and you have to tell the opponents.

3 flat means that there are no distributional points available to add to the HCP. 3334 is as flat as it gets. 4432 is semi-flat but is also referred to as flat. 5332 hands are also considered semi-flat.

4 Even though you are the Declarer you know the Dummy will have 5 Trump and you 3 – you are the shorter trump holding for trick gaining but you have a flat hand so won't have an opportunity to utilize your trump in that fashion.

5 RHO and its Companion LHO refers to Right and Left Hand Opponent

If in this case you had intended to bid 2♥ transferring Partner to ♠'s, the bid is still available. Go ahead and bid the transferring 2♥.

If Opponents bid 2♠ and you didn't want to transfer or relay to the Minor(s) make sure you talk this situation over with Partner. The normal agreement is: any bid after 2♠ OverCall is a natural bid.

Note: After Partner follows your transfer instructions and bids what you told him to bid; you normally **show your points by bidding a level of NT**. **You do not rebid your suit.** There is an exception, when you have Transferred your Partner to a 6-card suit. If you bid the suit your Partner bid as a Transfer you are showing a 6-card suit. Example: 1N – 2♦ – P – 2♥; The transfer is now complete and if you bid 3♥ you are showing 6♥'s and 8-9 HCP or by bidding 4♥ you are showing 10+ HCP and 6♥'s. If you do not have a 6-card suit, you **always** bid a level of NT (2 or 3) to show your point level.

Remember... a normal Transfer to a 5-card suit requires a **NoTrump** bid to show how many points you have. 2NT--> 8-9 HCP; 3NT -> 10+ HCP (HCP not Playing points you still don't know if there is a fit).

Note: Since partner's 1NT open promises no more than one doubleton, there is a very good chance that a 8-card fit will be revealed by the transfer.