



# The modern transfer

Getting better value out of your bids

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**T**HERE ARE A limited number of bids available in bridge. In general, if you want to extract maximum value from the available bids, any bid that asks partner to pass is a waste of space. With every bid we make, we open the door to dozens of possible continuations; but if one bid is dedicated solely to ending the auction, many of those doors become unavailable.

Consider the simple auction 1NT-3NT. This is the classic "terminal" bid. Responder wants to play in 3NT, and opener will pass regardless of his hand. In the case of a 2NT opener, the 3NT response is especially inefficient. Responder may need all the space he can get after such a high opening, and with the 3NT response carrying just one message ("let's play in 3NT"), all the other responses have to take on the extra pressure.

Another example:

1♠ pass 2NT<sup>GF raise</sup> 4♥  
dbl

A penalty double here is a strong suggestion that partner should pass. Partner can overrule, of course, but the expectation is that the auction will end here. Is this a sensible approach when the opponents have already taken away so much bidding space?

Even a simple 1-level opening suffers from the space inadequacy. It is not terminal, but partner is expected to pass it with no values. This is why we need artificial strong bids – we can't afford to open 1♥ with 24 points because there is a chance we might not get another bid.

This article will examine how these auctions, and others, can be given

greater efficiency with the use of transfers. Some of the areas we will look at:

- Transfers over notrump bids
- Transfers in response to a 1♣ opening
- Transfers in competition
- Transfer openings and preempts
- Transfers over artificial openings
- Transfer raises
- Transfer doubles

Not all of the examples in this article will be "transfers" in the common sense. Some of the transfer's close relatives include the puppet (a request for partner to bid the next suit, without necessarily showing that suit) and the submarine opening (a bid that shows a suit with no expectation that partner will bid that suit).

## THE BASIC TRANSFER

Obviously the most commonly played transfer is the 2-level response to 1NT. This convention received a rocky reception in its early days. In 1971's *How To Improve Your Bridge*, Hugh Kelsey, one of the great bridge writers, had this to say about the auction 1NT-2♥-2♠:

"North's 2♥ was a transfer bid demanding conversion to spades. Luckily, South remembered the convention. I don't care for transfer bids myself, maybe because I am lazy and shrink from learning a number of new sequences with subtle shades of meaning. One of the advantages claimed for transfer bids is that the weak hand goes down on the table while the strong hand remains concealed – but is this always a good thing?"

If keeping the strong hand concealed was the only benefit, maybe transfers wouldn't have the universal acceptance they have today. In fact the main benefit of transfers, whether over 1NT or in any other situation, lies in the space saving. In short, a transfer allows you to make two bids for the

price of one, increasing the total number of possible bidding sequences. For example over 1NT, if responder holds an invitational hand with a five card major, transfers allow him to show both these features (first transfer to the major, then make the invitation). In the days before transfers, such an auction was impossible. Similarly, being able to make two bids can allow responder to show two suits at a low level.

## GIVING THE OPPONENTS TWO BITES

Before moving on to the other types of transfer, let's take a moment to consider the downside of these bids. As with any convention, the case for transfers isn't totally one-sided. While the advantages of transfers are significant, there is one clear drawback – the opponents also get two chances to bid.

An example from the 2007 Australian Team Playoff:

♠ K J 10	♠ Q 8 7 4
♥ K 10 9 2	♥ 8 5
♦ 8 5 4	♦ A K 10 9
♣ K 7 5	♣ J 10 8
	♠ A 9
	♥ A 6
	♦ Q J 7 2
	♣ A 9 6 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Nunn	Gumby	Hans	Lazer
		pass	1NT
pass	2♥	dbl	pass
2♠	all pass		

Over Gumby's natural non-forcing 2♥ bid, Hans - Nunn had to make an immediate decision. Nunn took out the double to 2♠ and went two off.

It could be argued that Nunn should have taken the 500 point penalty against 2♥ doubled, although with the kind of hand that Sartaj usually doubles on, this would take a lot of courage! But the point of the deal is that EW only had one chance to get this hand right.

Look how the auction would have gone if NS were playing transfers:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1NT
pass	2♦	dbl	pass
pass	2♥	all pass	

This puts EW under no pressure, and they have no trouble getting out of the auction safely. With East having shown a takeout double of hearts, there is little danger in West passing 2♦ doubled.

The benefit of abandoning transfers is even more apparent if you play a weak notrump, particularly a mini-notrump (10-12). The weaker your hand, the more value there is in getting in and out of the auction quickly.

The problem of giving the opponents two bites is also a factor when it comes to transfer openings, particularly transfer preempts. These will be covered later.

### How to get rid of the transfer

My preferred method is to play 2♥ and 2♠ as natural, and 2♦ as game-forcing Stayman (or relay if you prefer). All invitational hands go via 2♣, a puppet to 2♦ (opener is forced to bid 2♦, and opener goes on to show his invitational hand). Responder can also pass the forced 2♦ bid if he wants to play in 2♦. This method means you give up the use of "junk Stayman" on weak 4441 hands, but being able to escape into 2♦ is ample compensation.

Playing on Bridge Base Online recently, I met a young German player called Gerben Dirksen, who proposed an alternative method. He suggests using 2♦ as a transfer to either major, with at least invitational values (and 2♥ and 2♠ as non-forcing). For more information, you will find Dirksen hanging around on BBO under the name Gerben42, where he is happy to answer questions about his convention. OK, that's enough anti-transfer talk – let's get back to the positive stuff.

### OTHER TRANSFERS OVER 1NT

Here are some of the other transfers available over a 1NT opening:

- The minor suit transfer. Playing 2♠ as a transfer to clubs (and 2NT as a transfer to diamonds) is a "2-step" transfer. Besides accepting the transfer, opener also has the option of bidding

the "step" in-between, namely 2NT. This extra step is used to show a fitting honour in the suit, allowing responder with a holding like AQxxxx to take a gamble on a light 3NT.

- Some play 2♠ as a transfer to either minor. This allows you to keep the 2NT response as a natural invitation.
- Texas transfers. An immediate 4♣ is a transfer to 4♥, and 4♦ is a transfer to 4♠. Aside from the ability to right-side the contract without losing preemptive value, these auctions also means you now have two ways to bid the game. Traditionally, transferring with 2♦, followed by 4♥, shows mild slam interest, while going via 4♣ is terminal.

### The 1NT rebid

If transfers can be useful over 1NT openings, they can also be useful over a 1NT rebid. The following method was proposed by Eric Leong in Bridge World in 1991. After the auction starts 1X-1Y-1NT:

- 2♣ = checkback Stayman
- 2♦ = transfer to hearts
- 2♥ = transfer to spades
- 2♠ = puppet to 2NT, showing a big raise of opener's suit

The transfers are used for weak hands and game force hands. All invitational hands go either through 2♣, 2NT, or a direct (natural) jump to the 3-level.

A transfer followed by 2NT is a space-saving raise of opener's original suit. Opener puppets to 3♣, leaving room for responder to continue to describe his hand. For example:

♠ Q 5	♠ A K 9 6 2
♥ J 7 3	♥ 6
♦ A 10 8 3	♦ K Q 9 4
♣ A Q 9 3	♣ K J 5
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♥ transfer to spades
2♠ forced	2NT diamond raise
3♣ waiting	3♥ heart shortage
4♣ control bid	4♦ waiting
4♠ spade feature	4NT Blackwood
5♥	6♦

A similar structure can also be used over a 2NT rebid. Here is what Eric Kokish plays after the auction 1M-1NT-2NT (note that Eric's 1NT is forcing, in a 2-over-1 GF system):

1♥	1NT
2NT	3♣ = diamonds
	3♦ = heart preference
	3♥ = clubs
	3♠ = both minors
	3NT = natural
	4♥ = weak raise

### Other 1NT auctions

The benefit of transfers is not limited to responder – they can also help solve opener's rebid problems. Sartaj Hans and Tony Nunn play the following continuations after a 1NT response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid. Opener rebids:

1M - 1NT - 2♣ = diamonds
2♦ = hearts
2♥ = 14-16 with 6 card major
2♠ = natural
2NT = 5+ clubs
3m = natural game force
3♥ = forcing

This structure allows you to stay at the two level on hands where the field is bidding 1♥-1NT-3♥. It also allows opener to fully bid out his shape with 5431 hands, reserving the 3-level jump shift for classical 5-5 game force hands. 6-4 shapes are also easier to bid, as you can transfer to the 6-card suit and then bid the 4-card suit.

### 3NT as a transfer

In the introduction to this article, I mentioned the auctions 1NT-3NT and 2NT-3NT. Unlike the 1NT opening, where making the most of your space is not an important consideration, a 2NT opening takes up a lot of space right when we need it the most. Sad to say, I have rarely seen a pair accurately reach a good minor-suit contract after a 2NT opening.

This is a standard 2NT structure:

3♣ = stayman (or puppet stayman)
3♦ = hearts
3♥ = spades
3♠ = minor-oriented hand
3NT = terminal

With a balanced hand, or a four- or five-card major, we will generally land on our feet using Stayman or the basic 3♦ and 3♥ transfers. But there are a wide range of minor-oriented hands to consider, all of which have to go through 3♠ (or 4♣/4♦).

Consider the effect of switching the 3♠ bid and the 3NT bid. 3♠ is a transfer to

3NT, and 3NT becomes the minor-suit slam try. This opens up a wealth of additional sequences: 3♠-3NT-pass, 3♠-3NT-4♣, 3♠-3NT-4♦, 3NT-4♣-4♦, etc. All that remains is to find a good use for these extra sequences (and to hope that partner remembers that 2NT-3NT is artificial and forcing).

### RESPONDING TO A 1♣ OPENING

In recent years, transfers have also come into common use in responding to a natural 1♣ opening. Let's be honest, do we really need a natural 1♦ response when partner opens 1♣? There is a convention called Walsh, which basically means you bid a four-card major ahead of a five-card diamond suit. Most pairs fall into two categories: those who play Walsh, and those who bid the four-card major anyway without being aware that the convention has a name.

Once we've acknowledged that we don't need the 1♦ bid, the path is clear to set up a transfer structure. 1♦ shows hearts, 1♥ shows spades, etc. There are several ways to use the 1♠ response; some play it as showing diamonds, some play it as clubs, and you could even play it as a transfer to 1NT. This auction came up at an OzOne training camp: 1♣ - 1♠; 1NT - pass.

The 1♠ response was a transfer to notrumps, showing (among many other options) a hand slightly too strong for a 1NT response. This allows a neat stop at the 1-level where most pairs would be playing in 2NT. With a normal 6-9 count, responder would have bid a direct 1NT just like everyone else.

This is just one of the advantages of using transfers in this position. A greater gain is that you can stay a level lower on simple auctions like 1♣-1♥-2♥.

With transfers this auction becomes 1♣-1♦-1♥, saving a whole extra level. As well as giving you more space to accurately describe your shape, it gives you one useful auction you never had before: 1♣-1♦-1♥-pass. If responder bids again over 1♥, you know he doesn't have a worthless 6-count.

You can play opener's 1♥ rebid as promising exactly 3-card support, so partner immediately knows the extent

of the fit. More importantly, when opener fails to bid 1♥, eg. 1♣-1♦-1NT, you know he has at most two hearts.

Here is the 1♣ structure played by Ishmael Del'Monte and Paul Gosney:

- 1♣ - 1♦ = 4+ hearts
- 1♥ = 4+ spades
- 1♠ = no major
- 1NT = 5+ clubs, game force
- 2♣ = 5+ diamonds, game force
- 2♦ = weak with 6+ in either major

Note how the 1♠ response, denying a major, allows opener to declare 1NT while still preventing a one-level overcall from 4th seat. See Andy Hung's article on page 11 for a real-life example.

### Responding to a strong club

Transfers are also useful in responding to a strong club. Traditionally, strong clubbers have used the 1NT response to show a balanced hand, whether forcing (as in original Precision) or limited (as in modern methods).

These auctions will travel more smoothly if you use 1♥ to show balanced hands (a transfer to notrump, you might say). Here is a simple structure I use with casual partners:

- 1♣<sup>15+</sup> 1♦ = 9+ any shape
- 1♥ = 5-8 balanced/semi-balanced
- 1♠ = 0-4 any shape
- 1NT = 5-8, 4-card major, longer minor
- 2♣ = 5-8, both majors 4+4+
- 2♦ = 5-8, transfer to 5+ hearts
- 2♥ = 5-8, transfer to 5+ spades
- 2♠+ = unbalanced minor-oriented

Over 1NT, opener can bid his own hand, or bid 2♣ asking for a transfer to responder's major.

### TRANSFER OPENING BIDS

If transfers are able to save space, the perfect way to use that space is with a relay system. The aim of a relay system is to describe every possible hand shape at as low a level as possible, so every step is critical.

This is why relay players often use submarine openings. The 1♦ opening shows hearts and the 1♥ opening shows spades. In response to the 1♦ opening, responder can use all the regular responses that would apply over a normal 1♥ opening, but there is one extra bid available: the 1♥ response. This is generally used as a relay, asking opener to describe his hand.

There are two major benefits in this method. Firstly, there is the obvious saving of space. By keeping the bidding one step lower, there are twice as many possible auctions available, allowing the description of twice as many hand shapes. (Don't believe me? Try it and see.)

Secondly, this method allows responder (known as relayer) to be the first to bid opener's suit. So if hearts is the final contract, the relayer will be declarer. This is a big deal because in a relay auction, opener will be revealing his entire hand in the auction (to his partner and to the opponents). If he then ends up as declarer, his partner's cards will also be exposed and the defenders will be able to see everything.

A good relay system will strive to ensure that opener does not bid his suits naturally. This isn't as easy as it sounds, because there are other more important considerations in a relay auction (the two main ones being symmetry and space efficiency). But a good opening bid structure (1♦ showing hearts and 1♥ showing spades) will get you off to a good start.

(Be warned though: some countries, in particular the USA, do not have the freedom of system design that we take for granted down under. So check with the local authorities before attempting to use these openings outside Australia or New Zealand).

### Unlimited openings

Transfer openings are mostly used in conjunction with a strong club. However, a secondary benefit of transfer openings is that they can be played as forcing, removing the need for any kind of strong opening. Crimson Death is one system that takes advantage of this:

- 1♣ = 4+ hearts, 8-37 points
- 1♦ = 4+ spades, 8-37 points
- 1♥ = 4+ diamonds, 15-37 points
- 1♠ = 4+ clubs, 15-37 points
- 1NT = 11-14 balanced, no major
- 2♣/2♦ = 10-14, 6+ natural suit

A point range of 8-37 may sound problematic, but it all comes good when responder immediately limits his hand. For example, in response to 1♣:

- 1♦ = 10+ any
- 1♥ = 0-5 any
- 1♠+ = 6-9 natural

Obviously this structure has some flaws; if the opponents intervene before responder limits his hand, this system loses a bit of accuracy. Still, it's a fun system to play, and it works more often than not. The full system is available on my website, redgrover.com.

### Defending against a submarine opening

As with any other transfer, the extra space is also available to be used by the defenders. When the opponents open 1♦ showing hearts, the defenders have a 1♥ overcall available in addition to all the regular overcalls. Here are three possible ways to productively use the extra step:

- You could play the 1♥ overcall as natural. Many submarine systems play canapé openings; 1♦ promises hearts, but it could be a weak four card suit with a longer suit elsewhere. If you have a good heart suit of your own, you might still want to consider a heart contract in your direction.
- You could play the 1♥ overcall as an additional takeout bid. For example, a regular double could be a traditional 12+ takeout, while the 1♥ overcall is a weaker distributional takeout.
- My preferred method is to play the 1♥ overcall as four spades and a longer minor, eg a 4315 shape. Over a regular 1♥ opening, with this shape you would have to decide between an off-shape takeout double (hoping partner doesn't bid your singleton), or a 2-minor overcall (which risks losing the spades).

### THE USEFUL SPACE PRINCIPLE (USP)

In the early 1980s, Jeff Rubens wrote a series of Bridge World articles on what he called the *Useful Space Principle*. In short, the USP states that when assigning bidding space in your system, you should assign it where it is most needed, without worrying about the natural or traditional meanings of the bids. The essence of the USP is that it removes space from a task that is deemed less important, and allocates that space for more frequent usage.

This is really just another form of transfer; in an auction where 2♥ is traditionally used to show hearts, you might get better value from using 2♦ to show hearts instead.

The best known convention from these articles is *Rubens Advances*, which will be discussed in Part Two of this article next issue. This month, we'll look at another of his suggestions, Kickback.

Kickback is a substitute for keycard Blackwood, where the ace ask is transferred to a lower level to save space.

Consider this auction:

1♣      3♣  
4NT     5♦

At this point you discover that you are missing two aces, but it is too late to go back to 5♣. Has this ever happened to you? Well, I hope not, as if you weren't prepared for a 5♦ response you should not have bid 4NT! But Kickback will allow you to ask for aces safely.

The bid immediately above four of the trump suit is the ace ask (4♦ in the above auction). Step responses are the same as in normal keycard Blackwood. This allows you to safely stop at the 5-level after any possible response.

Here is an example from last year's national junior team selection event.

♠ K Q 9  
♥ A 9 5 4  
♦ K 8 3  
♣ K 8 6

♠ 10 8 7 6 5 4 3	♠ J 2
♥ 10 7	♥ Q 6 3 2
♦ —	♦ Q 7 2
♣ J 4 3 2	♣ 10 9 7 5

♠ A  
♥ K J 8  
♦ A J 10 9 6 5 4  
♣ A Q

WEST Howard	NORTH Ware	EAST Williams	SOUTH Griffiths
		pass	1♦
3♠	3NT	pass	4♦
pass	4♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♣	pass	5♥
pass	7NT	all pass	

North's 4♥ bid was Kickback, Roman Keycard Blackwood for diamonds. Playing 4♥ as Blackwood here keeps the bidding low, to allow more space

for subsequent grand slam tries (or to allow a quick signoff if South gives an inconvenient response). It also frees up the 4NT bid to be used as natural. If North had held a hand that was unsuitable for slam, he would have been able to bid a natural 4NT signoff instead of asking for aces.

### FIFTH SUIT FORCING

One of the more bizarre conventions I have ever been talked into playing is Fifth Suit Forcing (from Peter Crouch, Bridge World June 1991).

A bid of the 4th suit (normally known as fourth suit forcing) is played as a puppet/transfer to the next higher suit. When opener accepts the transfer, responder can pass, or bid again to show an invitational hand.

If instead responder bids the suit above the 4th suit (the suit he could have transferred to), this is artificial and forcing. This bid functions similarly to the traditional fourth suit forcing bid.

As usual, the point of all these machinations is to create extra sequences. All the standard 4th suit forcing auctions are available, as well as a whole new set of auctions starting with the puppet.

I had the pleasure of being in the South seat when the following auction arose:

NORTH	SOUTH
1♣	1♦
1♠	2♠
pass	

My 2♠ bid was "fifth suit forcing", an artificial game force. If I had wanted to raise spades, I would have used the 2♥ transfer. Of course, my partner (who had convinced me to play the system) failed to recognize this natural-looking sequence, and he passed 2♠. At the other table they were playing normal fourth suit forcing, and they reached 6♣. Both auctions were equally successful, as 2♠ (in the 4-1 fit) and 6♣ (in the 5-4 fit) were both unbeatable.

## PART TWO

### Interference over our 1NT

An opening 1NT will often put our side in a commanding position, but an overcall from the opponents can still put us under pressure. Consider a 1NT opening from partner, a 2♠ overcall on your right, and you hold one of the following hands:

♠ 65 ♥ QJ9743 ♦ 742 ♣ 92  
♠ A107 ♥ KJ974 ♦ 742 ♣ K2  
♠ 6 ♥ KJ974 ♦ AK742 ♣ 92

Obviously you can't bid 3♥ on all of these hands. To get around this problem, we have a convention called Lebensohl: responder has the option of marking time with an artificial 2NT bid, over which opener is obliged to bid 3♣. This gives responder two ways to bid 3♥; a direct 3♥ is forcing, while with the weaker hand he can go via 2NT.

This is just a partial solution, however; we can use 2NT to handle the first hand, but we are still unable to distinguish between hands 2 and 3. A more powerful convention is Rubensohl. All bids from 2NT to 3♠ are transfers.

1NT	(2♠)	2NT = clubs
		3♣ = diamonds
		3♦ = hearts
		3♥ = stayman
		3♠ = transfer to 3NT
		3NT = natural

As always with transfers, responder now has the ability to make two bids for the price of one. With hand 1, holding only three points, responder can bid 3♦, transferring to hearts, and pass opener's 3♥ bid. With hand 2 responder can transfer to hearts, and then rebid 3NT to give partner a choice. With hand 3, responder can transfer to hearts and then look for slam.

And of course the other big advantage is that the heart contract is right-sided – not just because it is being played by the strong hand, but more importantly because the overcaller is kept on lead.

Note that there are two ways to say 3NT; you can bid it directly, or transfer via 3♠. What's the difference? Bidding 3NT directly shows a stopper, while going via 3♠ denies one. This way, if it

turns out that neither partner has a stopper, then opener can run out into another contract, maybe a 4-3 heart fit if necessary.

Note also that 3♥, the transfer to the opponent's suit, is played as Stayman, seeking a 4-4 heart fit. If opener does not have four hearts, there is still room to look for a spade stopper – accept the transfer to spades and leave partner to decide whether to bid notrumps.

Rubensohl is an Australian convention, invented by Bruce Neill, Sue Lusk, Barbara McDonald and Alan Walsh. The inspiration came from Jeff Rubens (more on Jeff later).

### Rubensohl vs Lebensohl

Lebensohl is also commonly used when the opponents open a weak two and partner makes a takeout double. Responding to partner's takeout double, you must bid even if you have no values, so Lebensohl gives you a way to distinguish the hands where you are forced to bid from the ones where you have real values.

So you might assume that Rubensohl could also apply in this sequence – but this is not the case. Rubensohl's true value comes from showing your shape, while Lebensohl is more useful for showing your strength. When responding to a takeout double, your partner has already given a fair description of his shape, but in terms of strength you could be looking at game, slam, or even just a partscore. Lebensohl is the tool you need here.

When partner opens 1NT, however, defining your strength is not an issue, so you can take advantage of the extra flexibility provided by Rubensohl.

### Interference over our other openings

As we discovered last month, transfers are no longer just for notrumps. Today many of the world's top pairs are playing transfers in competition over all 1-level openings. Check out the BBO files of this year's NOT, and you'll find a wealth of examples – almost every pair in the quarter finals was playing some kind of transfer method.

Here's a brief overview of the basic structure played by Eric Kokish:

1♠	(1♦)	Double = hearts
		1♥ = spades
		1♠ = a negative double
		1NT = natural
		2♣ = forcing club raise
		2♦ = 5+ hearts, limit or better
		2♥ = 5+ spades, limit or

better

The method fits comfortably over all 1-level openings and 1-level intervention (even a takeout double), with the possible exception of 1♣-(1♠) and 1♦-(1♠) where a negative double is indispensable.

Note that the 1NT and 2♣ bids are natural here, not transfers. An alternative arrangement would be to play 1♠ as a transfer to notrumps, and 1NT as a transfer to clubs. Having a transfer to 1NT could be very useful – if responder has a stopper in the opponents' suit such as Kxx, and opener turns up with say Qx, then you have arranged an additional stopper by having opener declare the hand.

The benefit of using 1NT as a transfer is more questionable. If the final contract is 3NT, you'll have the worst possible outcome – 4th hand leading his partner's suit through the opening bidder's stopper. This is why many people choose to not include notrumps in the transfer steps.

Kokish's methods are slightly different over a major-suit opening:

1♥	(Dbl)	1♠ = natural
		1NT = clubs OR doubleton ♥
		2♣ = diamonds
		2♦ = a good 2♥ raise
		2♥ = a bad 2♥ raise

The cost of using 1NT as a transfer is not so great here. There is a chance that it could lead to a wrong-sided 3NT, but mostly the 1NT bid will lead to a heart or club partial. Although the 1NT bid is unlimited, it also could be as little as ♣KJ10xxxx and nothing else.

Note the transfer raise of the major: 2♦ shows a constructive 2♥ bid, while the 2♥ raise could be complete rubbish.

## Switch

If transfers in competition seem a bit intimidating, Switch is a simpler structure from Marty Bergen that achieves a similar result (from *Bridge Additions 96* by Matthew Granovetter).

When you open 1♣ or 1♦ and the opponents overcall 1♠, responder should switch the meanings of the two unbid suits. For example:

1♣ (1♠) 2♦ = hearts  
2♥ = diamonds

This achieves the desired result of keeping the overcaller on lead, preventing a lead through opener's strength into the overcaller's suit. And while it doesn't always save you space, it does give you the usual advantage of having two bids for the price of one. Furthermore, it also allows you to keep your negative doubles.

While Bergen's original convention applies specifically to 1♠ overcalls, Granovetter recommends playing the convention over all overcalls and jump overcalls. For example:

1♠ (2♦) 2♥ = clubs  
3♣ = hearts  
1♦ (2♥) 2♠ = clubs  
3♣ = spades

This gives you some of the advantages of the transfer, but also has the merit of being incredibly simple to remember.

I have my own variation of Switch that I enjoy playing: instead of just switching the two unbid suits, I like to switch the double as well!

1♥ (2♦) Dbl = clubs  
2♠ = takeout double, NF  
3♣ = spades  
3♦ = takeout double, GF

You won't need to look too far to find the obvious flaws in this method, so I wouldn't recommend it in an important event, especially at IMPs. But it's fun to play, and can lead to some juicy partscore penalties when opener has a misfit for your suit:

E/All ♠ 8 6 5  
♥ K 10 6 5 2  
♦ 9  
♣ 8 7 5 4

♠ 3 ♠ AK J 7 2  
♥ Q J 3 ♥ A 8 7 4  
♦ A 6 2 ♦ J 7 3  
♣ Q J 10 9 3 2 ♣ 6  
♠ Q 10 9 4  
♥ 9  
♦ K Q 10 8 5 4  
♣ A K

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	2♦
dbl <sup>1</sup>	pass	pass <sup>2</sup>	pass

1. Transfer to clubs.
2. A reasonable gamble at Matchpoints, with quick tricks and a known misfit.

2♦ doubled should have gone for 500, but even after a misdefence, 200 was still a top board.

### The 3♠ transfer

Whether using transfers in competition or not, I still like to play 3♠ as a transfer to 3NT. It's optional – usually you will choose to transfer the contract to partner, but with the appropriate hand you can still make other arrangements and play it yourself.

Giving up the "natural" 3♠ is not a huge price to pay. For most pairs it would probably be a splinter (or maybe a fit-showing jump), but there are other ways to show those types of hand.

### Playing from the right side

How important is it really to keep the overcaller on lead? A superficial glance at the Deep Finesse analysis of your local duplicate may suggest it's not that critical – on most deals, double dummy you can make the same number of tricks from either side.

However, even when the Deep Finesse analysis suggests otherwise, there can still be advantages in rightsiding the contract. In general, if the overcaller's partner is on lead, the defence are likely to lead their best suit at trick one, leading from weakness towards strength. If you can put the overcaller on lead, he will first need to decide if it is safe to even lead his suit. On a bad day, he may have an honour in every suit, forced to guess which one to lead from. For example:

♠ 9 7 3  
♥ K Q 10 7 4  
♦ 3 2  
♣ A 7 4

♠ A Q 8 4 ♠ 10 6 5 2  
♥ 5 ♥ 8 6 3  
♦ A Q 7 6 4 ♦ K J 10 8  
♣ J 6 2 ♣ 10 9  
♠ K J  
♥ A J 9 2  
♦ 9 5  
♣ K Q 8 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♦	1♣
1♦	dbl <sup>1</sup>	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

1. Transfer to hearts.

4♥ is a hopeless contract from either hand, but it has slightly better chances when West is on lead. West is immediately faced with the choice of whether or not to lead an ace, and if so, which one. Maybe West would find the winning ♦A lead anyway, but at least this auction puts him to the test.

On the actual deal the defence can still survive on a diamond lead, but change a few cards around so that there is only one diamond loser, and now even the ♦A lead is no good:

♠ 9 7 3  
♥ K Q 10 7 4  
♦ 3 2  
♣ A 7 4

♠ A Q 8 4 ♠ J 10 6  
♥ 5 ♥ 8 6 3  
♦ A Q 7 6 4 ♦ K J 10 8 5  
♣ J 6 2 ♣ 10 9  
♠ K 5 2  
♥ A J 9 2  
♦ 9  
♣ K Q 8 5 3

West is never going to find a low diamond lead at trick one. But if East is on lead, a smart defender may hit on the lead of the ♦K, just in case an urgent switch is needed.

These are the extreme examples. A more common outcome of right-siding is simply that the declarer will be saved from having to make an early guess, or the opponents will have a chance to give up a trick on the lead.

## RUBENS TRANSFER ADVANCES

We've looked at the auctions where we open and the opponents intervene; but what about when they open and *we* intervene? It can be tricky responding to partner's overcall.

This brings us to Jeff Rubens' best known invention, *Rubens Advances*. These are played in auctions where the opponents open the bidding and we overcall. All suit bids from the cuebid up to (and not including) the single raise, are transfers. For example:

(1♠) 2♦ (pass) ?

2♥ = natural (transfers start with the cuebid)

2♠ = clubs

2NT = natural

3♠ = constructive raise

3♦ = preemptive raise (transfers end at the single raise)

Here are some example hands from Rubens' original article in *Bridge World*:

Opener	Overcaller	Responder	Advancer
1♠	2♥	pass	?

♠ 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ K 4 3 2 ♣ K J 10 4 3 2

Bid 2♠, a transfer to clubs. Partner will accept the transfer with a minimum or a misfit, and you will play in 3♣.

♠ 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A Q 3 2 ♣ K J 10 4 3 2

Again bid 2♠, planning to show the diamonds over partner's 3♣ bid.

♠ A 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A J 3 2 ♣ K J 10 4 3 2

This time you get to show all three of your features: 2♠ (clubs), followed by 3♦ (diamonds) and finally 3NT (showing your tenuous spade stopper).

Unlike the transfers in the previous section, the downside of this structure is that some denominations may occasionally be wrongsided, But this is a small price to pay when you consider the many advantages of the transfers. (Notice that 2NT is not included in the transfers because we can't afford to wrongside a notrump contract).

## TRANSFER DOUBLES

The following concept was proposed by OzOne coach Eric Kokish at the 2006 training camp. It originates from the Meckwell strong club system.

After a strong club and a positive response (setting up a game force), the

opponents intervene in the auction. Traditionally, when the opponents intervene in a game force auction, pass is forcing and double is penalty.

For example, in the auction

1♣<sup>16+</sup> any (pass) 1♥<sup>GF</sup> (4♠)

opener's options are:

1. Raise to 5♥ (or bid a new suit).
2. Pass, and then pass again if partner doubles.
3. Pass, and then do something else if partner doubles.
4. Make a penalty double, probably ending the auction.

However, as I mentioned in the introduction to last month's article, playing a penalty double means that partner is expected to pass. This means we are not making maximum use of the available bids, at a time when the opponents have already taken most of our space.

Meckwell mix these four options around to gain greater flexibility. Instead of playing penalty doubles, Meckwell play Pass as a transfer to the double. Partner will "accept the transfer", ie. Double, with any hand that would have passed a penalty double.

This frees up the opener's double to show a different kind of hand, in this case a hand with support for partner, but not a clear desire to take the push to the five level.

This method gives you all the sequences that would be available under traditional methods, along with several additional sequences; namely, all the auctions that can stem from the double.

## LEAD DIRECTING DOUBLES

Speaking of doubles, consider this common auction:

1♠ pass 4♣ dbl

East's 4♣ shows a splinter (a good hand with spade support and a club shortage). South, your partner, doubles 4♣. What does this mean? Without prior discussion, my guess is that partner intends this as lead directing. But is this really a logical interpretation? What advantage is there in leading clubs when dummy is known to have a singleton?

A better use for the double is as a transfer! Use the double to ask for a diamond lead.

## TRANSFER PREEMPTS

Many players will be familiar with the convention known strangely as Namyats (Stayman spelled backwards). A 4♣ opening shows a preemptive type hand that you would consider a little too strong for a 4♥ opening. 4♦ shows the same thing in spades. Playing this convention, when your partner opens 4♥ or 4♠ you can avoid marginal slam tries, knowing that partner could have shown a stronger hand if he had it.

That's the most common type of transfer preempt, but there are also a few eccentrics out there who transfer to their 3-level preempts as well. They would open 3♣ with a diamond preempt, 3♦ with a heart preempt, etc.

The point of playing preempts is to take up immediate space and put the opponents under pressure. Against that, the point of transfers is to save space and give our team extra chances to bid. So how do these things go together? Well, obviously they don't.

If you come up against an opponent playing transfer preempts, just make sure you discuss the meanings of all the possible sequences, and you should be able to take advantage of their extra space. For example, if they open 3♣ showing diamonds, the simplest approach is probably to play an immediate double of 3♣ as takeout (of diamonds) and a delayed double as penalties. This way you get to play takeout doubles and penalty doubles at the same time.

## Other transfer preempts

While not transfers in the strictest sense, here are some other preemptive bids in the transfer family:

- The widely played European multi-2♦ opening shows a preempt in either hearts or in spades. With nothing to say, responder "accepts the transfer" to 2♥, and opener will correct to 2♠ with a spade preempt.
- 2♦ opening showing both majors. This method suffers from the same disadvantage as other transfer preempts.

If you want to play a bid showing both majors, a better opening is 2♥. The most effective thing about the 2♥ opening is that it can be passed, so the player in 2nd seat has to make an immediate decision.

• Myxomatosis twos. Myxos are going to need a paragraph all of their own...

### Myxomatosis twos

Bob Sebesfi is the inventor of two widely-played conventions: SWINE (an escape method from a doubled 1NT opening), and Myxomatosis Twos. If you have to play transfer preempts, Myxos are definitely the way to do it:

- 2♣ = 10-15, 6+♣ OR a weak two in diamonds OR a weak major two-suiter \*
- 2♦ = 10-15, 6+♦ OR a weak two in hearts OR a weak black two-suiter
- 2♥ = natural strong two OR a weak two in spades OR a weak minor two-suiter
- 2♠ = natural strong two OR a 3♣ preempt OR a weak red two-suiter OR solid club suit with a side-honour
- 2NT = weak two suiter with odd suits

\* This structure will require some modification if you don't play a strong club. See [www.redgrover.com](http://www.redgrover.com) for details.

All the usual downside of the transfer preempt is still there, but there is ample compensation in the ability to show many different hands while giving minimal information to the defenders. This is the perfect convention for those who are unable to decide whether to play weak twos, multi twos or RCO twos.

### RESPONDING TO A PREEMPT

While transfers may not be very effective for preemptive purposes, they can be useful in recovering space after partner has preempted.

You open a natural weak two in spades, and partner responds 3♣. Forcing or non-forcing?

Traditionally, this is played as forcing. With no interest in game, partner will simply pass your preempt, even with a void spade.

This is fine if you have a traditional weak two in spades. If you have an "Australian" weak two, say a five card suit headed by the KQ, then maybe 2♠

isn't such a great spot and you'll wish partner could have bid 3♣.

With transfer responses, you can have the best of both worlds. Play all bids from 2NT up to raise-minus-one as transfers. Partner responds 2NT as a transfer to 3♣. Then with a weak hand he can pass 3♣; with a strong hand, he can continue to bid out his shape.

There are other benefits of transfers in this position. Consider this auction:

2♠	3♣
3♦	3♠

This shows an invitational raise in spades, with diamond values.

2♠	3♥
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This is a transfer raise to 3♠, showing an invitational hand with mixed values. 2♠-3♠ is still available as a natural preemptive raise.

2♠	3♦
3♥	4♣

This shows hearts and clubs. Without transfers, there would be no way to get both suits into the auction.

### Responses to multi 2♦

Transfers are also commonly used in response to a 2♦ multi (weak two in either major). Responder can bid 4♣ asking opener to transfer to his suit, allowing responder to be declarer. Alternatively, responder can bid 4♦, asking opener to bid his suit, making opener declarer. In other words,

2♦	4♣
4♥	4♠

4♣ says "Please transfer to your suit, I want to be declarer", and 4♥ says "My suit is spades".

If responder was happy to be dummy, he would have bid 4♦, asking opener to bid his suit immediately.

For a well publicised example of this auction, check out Problem Five of our October 2004 bidding forum – the online readers' forum is archived at [www.australianbridge.com/biddingforumarchive](http://www.australianbridge.com/biddingforumarchive).

### TRANSFERS FOR A SPONSOR

In our August 2007 issue, Robert Black wrote about the legend of how Al Roth's wife was only allowed to bid clubs, to minimize the chance of her becoming declarer. However, transfers are a more efficient way to keep part-

ner out of the hotseat. We can simply agree to play all your bids as transfers and all my bids as natural. As long as you never bid a suit you actually have, there's no risk of you having to play the hand. If you show a suit I like, I can accept the transfer – otherwise I will just continue to bid my own suits naturally.

These days there are a lot of professional-sponsor partnerships in Australia. Why don't these pairs use this simple system? Because it's illegal. Law 40E1 states "The sponsoring organisation may prescribe a convention card ... and may establish regulations for its use, including a requirement that both members of a partnership employ the same system".

So how do you keep partner out of the way without upsetting the authorities? Here's my recommended system: play a 1♣ opening as a hand that wants to be declarer (maybe a hand with a positionally vulnerable holding such as an AQ or Kx). Open 1♦ with hands that would be better suited to being dummy (maybe a hand with a small doubleton, or a hand whose owner needs to go out and have a smoke).

The rest of the system is just standard, with regular five-card major openings.

Responses to 1♣ are as per the system I described in the previous issue: 1♦ shows hearts, 1♥ shows spades, etc. Responses to 1♦ are natural.

Of course, I'm not suggesting that one player should always open 1♣ and the other should always open 1♦. It's a matter of hand evaluation. It's up to you to evaluate your hands properly, and it could take some practice to learn to distinguish a 1♣ opening from a 1♦ opening.

But if you're in any doubt, I'd suggest opening 1♦ on most hands and leaving the 1♣ openings to partner. ☺ ♥♠