

Should I Transfer (with a minor)? - Larry Cohen

Partner has opened 1NT (15-17).

As responder, with a five-card (or longer) MAJOR, I recommend always transferring.

But, with a five-card (or longer) minor, it is a completely different ballgame.

With the major, transferring allows you to play on the two-level. But, with a minor, a transfer puts you on the three level. Why would you want to play in 3C instead of 1NT if you held, say:

S Q6 H J76 D 765 C Q8765?

Just because you can transfer to a minor, doesn't mean you should transfer to the minor.

What if you held:

S KJ H 542 D AQ875 C Q54?

Why bother showing the diamonds? You want to be in 3NT, so bid 3NT.

Just because you can transfer to a minor, doesn't mean you should transfer to the minor.

Even with a six-card minor, why show it if you want to be in 3NT no matter what? Raise 1NT to 3NT with:

S J4 H J3 D K32 C KQJ765.

Just because you can transfer to a minor, doesn't mean you should transfer to the minor.

Why is this different from the handling of a five-plus card major? Because minors pay only 20 points a trick. To bid game in a minor, you need to be on the five level! When partner opens 1NT, I'd guess that five-of-a-minor is the right contract less than 2% of the time. If there is a game, it is "always" in 3NT or a major.

Furthermore, with a bad hand and a major, you can let partner play it on the 2 level. With a bad hand and a minor, you'd have to reach the 3 level (not something you want to do with only a 5-card minor).

If you have a decent hand with a four-card major and a longer minor, you can start with Stayman and then show the minor. For example, responder to 1NT has:

S Q832 H -- D J76 C AQ8652.

He starts with 2C. If partner bids spades, life is easy (raise to game). If partner doesn't bid 2S, then the minor can be shown -- 3C (assuming the partnership plays this as forcing). In this case, responder doesn't want to insist on 3NT. But, with flat hands (as in the earlier examples), responder should insist on notrump instead of looking for greener pastures.

When would you transfer?

When would responder actually start with a transfer to a minor?

If she wants to play in three-of-a-minor! Why would she want to? She has at least a six-card minor and thinks that 3C (or 3D) would have a better chance than 1NT. As examples, I'd prefer to play in three-of-my-minor with either of these hands:

S 3 H 654 D QJ10965 C 543

or

S 6 H 765 D 43 C J765432.

In fact, when you have a weak hand and a 6+ card minor, I recommend always playing in 3 of the minor instead of 1NT (in 1NT, your minor will often produce 0 tricks!).

If she has slam interest. Transferring to a minor and then bidding 3NT shows mild slam interest. With each of these hands, you can transfer and then bid 3NT to invite slam:

S K2 H AJ7 D KJ9765 C K3

or

S Q5 H KQ8 D K2 C AJ10765.

Start with a transfer and next bid 3NT. How will partner know you have slam interest? Because if you didn't, you would have just raised 1NT to 3NT. That is why it would be a big mistake to start with a transfer with something like:

S 54 H 32 D 65 C AKJ9765 -- you are always going to play in 3NT, so just bid it!

SUMMARY

If you have no interest in playing in the minor, then don't transfer! If you might end up with your minor as the trump suit, then show it. It is as simple as that. Just because you can transfer to a minor, doesn't mean you should transfer to the minor.

QUIZ

Question 1

Partner opens 1NT. What is your response?

S J5

H Q32

D 765

C J6542

a) Pass

b) 2S

c) Transfer to clubs

Question 2

Partner opens 1NT. What is your response?

S 87

H K2

D Q2

C KQ107654

a) Pass

b) 2S

c) Transfer to clubs

d) 3NT

Question 3

Partner opens 1NT. What is your response?

S Q1076

H 54

D 32

C AKJ65

a) Pass

b) 2C

c) Transfer to clubs

d) 2NT

e) 3NT

Question 4

Partner opens 1NT. What is your response?

S AK

H KQ7

D QJ1098

C QJ8

a) 2C

b) Transfer to diamonds

c) 3NT

d) 4C

e) 4NT

f) 6NT

Question 5

Partner opens 1NT. What is your response?

S 4

H 765

D KJ87652

C 42

a) Pass

b) 2S

c) Transfer to diamonds

d) 3NT

Question 6

Partner opens 2NT this time. What is your response?

S 42

H 87

D KQ8762

C 983

a) Pass

b) 3S

c) Transfer to diamonds

d) 3NT

Question 7

Partner opens 1NT. What is your response?

S --

H 2

D AQJ9876

C KQ1098

a) Pass

b) 2S

c) Transfer to a Minor

d) Bid 6D

e) Other

ANSWERS

Q1) a) Pass. Leave well enough alone. You don't want to contract for 9 tricks!

Q2) d) 3NT. Just do it! You have no interest in playing any other contract. Transferring and then bidding 3NT would paint the wrong picture (telling partner you have interest in other contracts).

Q3) b) 2C. Start with Stayman. Raise 2S to 4S, otherwise bid 3NT. Never mention the clubs- you have no intention of playing in a club contract.

Q4) f) 6NT. You never will play in diamonds, so don't show them. No need for Gerber since your side can't be off 2 aces (your side has at least 33 HCP). You never will bid 7 (partner likely needs A-AK-AK which he can't have). So, just do it! (Ed. note: When you have 33 HCP and there are only 40 HCP in the deck, you cannot be missing two Aces as that would add up to 8 HCP and there are only 7 HCP outstanding.)

Q5) c) Transfer to diamonds.
Finally, a transfer! You want to play in 3D. Get there.

Q6) d) 3NT. Just as over 1NT, there are many methods over 2NT. You don't want to look for game in the minor, though, when 3NT is much easier.

Q7) d) Bid 6D. You might miss out on 7, but there isn't much of an intelligent way to get there. Could you go down? On a really bad day, but you can't be afraid of that type of luck.

**ED NOTE: We suggest that if you are going to transfer to a minor that you bid:
1NT - 2S. Partner will be forced to bid 3C and if your minor is Diamonds, you will now correct to 3D.**

If you are playing something called Four Way Transfers, then you employ a different method.

FOR THOSE WHO PLAY TWO OVER ONE A SUGGESTED MODIFICATION by BARBARA & ALEX

You and your partner have agreed to play Two Over One with 1 NT as a Forcing bid. i.e.

1H - 1NT

Opening bidder cannot pass as 1NT now shows 6-12 points including distribution.

Opening bidder has

S Ax
H KJxxx
D Kxx
C Qxx

This is a very No Trump-like hand and Opener would very much like to pass but cannot because the partnership is playing 1NT as forcing.

THIS IS A BIG FLAW IN THE TWO OVER ONE SYSTEM

We suggest that you play 1NT as being semi-forcing. What does that mean??? It means that the 1NT bidder still has 6-12 points including distribution but Opening bidder is now allowed to pass with a flat 12-13 HCP, such as above hand.

Many people play this BUT we suggest a modification. We suggest that you only bid 1NT in response to a major with 6-12 points and NO three-card trump support for partner's major. The 1NT bid this becomes a warning cry. "Look out! We do not have a good fit in your major!"

Opening bidder with hand above will pass.

So what should Responder do if he has 10-12 points (including distribution) and he has three-card support for partner's major?

Here's what we like:

1H -2S shows 10-12 points including distribution and 3 card support for partner's major.

1S - 3H shows 10-12 points including distribution and 3 card support for partner's major.

Opener now revalues his hand, deciding where to go from here.

You have lost the ability to jump shift in the other major but we deem this to be a small loss.

The 1NT semi-forcing is alertable. You say : " It is semi-forcing and shows 2 or fewer cards in my major."

The criss-cross bids 1H -2S and 1S -3H are also alertable.

And yes, we do recommend using Bergen in uncontested auctions, with four-card support.

SLOW DOWN, YOU PLAY TOO FAST!

This hand is by ACBL and BBO

Play of the Hand - A key trick-one play

It's often said that many contracts go down at trick one. A careless play can mean all the difference in this deal from Bridge Master, a free, interactive declarer-play program on Bridge Base Online.

Dir: South ♠ A 2
Vul: None ♥ 6 5 4
♦ K Q 10 4 3 2
♣ 3 2

♠ K Q J 10 9 8
♥ A 3 2
♦ A 5
♣ A K

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			2♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	6♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass

The bidding:

South opens a strong 2♣. North responds with a natural, positive 3♦, showing a long suit with two of the top three honors. South bids 3♠ and North, having already described their hand, bids 4♠, confirming a fit. South raises to slam and East doubles.

A double of a freely bid slam – called a “Lightner double” – asks for an unusual lead (or dummy’s first bid suit).

West obediently leads the ♦6.

	♠ A 2	
	♥ 6 5 4	
	♦ K Q 10 4 3 2	
	♣ 3 2	
♠ 3	N	♠ 7 6 5 4
♥ 9 8 7	W — E	♥ K Q J 10
♦ J 9 8 7 6	S	♦ —
♣ 7 6 5 4		♣ Q J 10 9 8
	♠ K Q J 10 9 8	
	♥ A 3 2	
	♦ A 5	
	♣ A K	

You have 12 top tricks, but it looks like this diamond is going to be ruffed. Sure enough, you play low, and East plays the ♠4. What do you play?

You must play the ♦A – unblocking – so that you can win any return, pull trumps and take the marked diamond finesse (♦5 to dummy's 10) and discard two hearts on the ♦K Q.

Should you fail to unblock, you have no entry to dummy for the good diamonds.

Tony's NEVER DO THIS List by Tony Jackson

Very few things in bridge are "never". Almost all rules have exceptions. But there are some things that are so egregious, you should really try to avoid them. This is my personal list of "never do this".

Good players may disagree with some of these. Ultimately, you have to decide for yourself. But I firmly believe that you will improve your game dramatically if you consistently avoid these items.

1. Never Raise Your Own Preempt

Say you pick up a broken 7 card heart suit and you consider preempting. You would like to bid 3H but the quality of your suit deters you and you settle on bidding just 2 Hearts. The bidding continues:

2H - (P) - P - (2S)

And now you are considering bidding 3 hearts? No, No, NO. You made your choice and now you need to stick with it. Why? Because the point of a preempt is to get in the way of the opponents safely. If you preempt, often the opponents do not know whether to compete or pass. They may not know if they should double you or not. But if you raise your own preempt, you give them more opportunity to exchange information, and you also give them more chances to double you.

Raising your own preempt is helping the opponents. They get more info and more chances to do the right thing.

Also know this: when you preempt, your partner is allowed to raise the preempt or "take a save", but you are not allowed to do that. Let's say you open 2 Hearts:

2H - (2S) - 4H - (4S)?

You MUST NOT bid higher. Your partner may, but you may not. There are two very good reasons for this.

Reason number 1: Your partner knows what you have (a 2H Preempt). But what do you know about your partner's hand? Almost nothing. Your partner is captain, not you.

When you preempt, your partner is now captain and gets to make the decisions. You are not captain.

Reason number 2: The idea of preempting is NOT to try to keep bidding until you get a bad score. I'd really like that to sink in:

When you preempt, your goal is NOT to get a bad board!

In fact, preempting is NOT about trying to buy the contract at all. When you preempt, you are trying to make life harder for the opponents. You are trying to take bidding space away from them so that they don't get to the optimal contract. Maybe they should be in slam but they only bid game. Maybe they should be in a part score but your preempt goads them on to bidding a game that they can't make. You don't know if it will work: often they will still find the optimal contract. You have to accept that and move on. You did what you could.

2. Never Bid Blackwood When Holding a Void

Why do we ask for Aces? To make sure we aren't off two aces if we are intending to bid a slam. The problem with a void is that, unless your partner has all the outstanding aces, you will not know if the aces partner has are "useful" aces or not useful ones.

Sometimes I hear people say "I do have a void, but that's ok because I'm only going to bid slam if we have all four aces." That makes no sense to me. You are basing your criteria for bidding slam on the wrong thing.

So how do you bid slam then? Either just bid it, or use control bidding.

3. Never Raise Your Partner's 2-level or Higher Balancing Bid

Consider this auction where your partner balances at the 2-level:

(1D) - P - (1H) - P

(2H) - P - (P) - 2S

(P) - ?

What happened: The opponents found a heart fit and were about to pass it out at 2 Hearts and your partner, in the balancing seat (pass-out seat) bids 2 Spades. Guess what: Your partner is already bidding your hand.

What does that mean? It means that, by virtue of the fact that the opponents stopped so low, your partner is making the assumption that you have some spades and also that you have some points. Each side rates to have from 18 to 22 hcp. So your partner is making her bid based on your combined holdings, even though your partner hasn't seen your hand. What does this mean for you? It means: Do not raise them to 3 Spades. They are already bidding your hand and theirs. Do NOT punish your partner for balancing.

4. Never Underlead an Ace on Opening Lead Against a Suit Contract

When I started playing bridge in Santa Rosa, I asked Randee (my first bridge partner in Santa Rosa) if she ever underled aces, and her response was "I'm not a good enough player to do that." What she meant is: this is a fancy trick that experts will do on occasion, but it is quite risky - I would say dangerous - and I do not do it. Mike Lawrence has a whole chapter on how bad this is in his book on opening leads. In fact, I'll quote him here:

"As terrible as leading an unsupported ace is, underleading an ace against a suit contract shows a new magnitude of bad judgment." And then he enumerates the reasons why it is so bad. Don't do it.

5. Never Bid 2NT to play (in later rounds of bidding) without knowing your side has 23+ HCP

One of the things you are taught early in your bridge education is that it is safe to go to the 2-level (*raising partner*) with about six points after your partner opens. But it's only safe at the 2-level if you have a fit in your partner's suit. You do NOT want to get to 2NT with only 18 or 20 HCP. Think of it this way: If your side has 20 HCP, you have half the points in the deck. Why on earth do you think you can take almost 2/3 of the tricks (8 out of 13) with only half the points?

Here is another way to think about it. How many points does it take to make 3NT on average? 25. How many points does it take to make 1NT on average? Well, that can vary a lot, but let's say just over half the points to take just over half the tricks, so 21. Well, if it takes 21 points (on average) to make 1NT, and 25 points (on average) to make 3NT, then you can see why it takes 23 points to make 2NT.

This is not a guarantee that with 23 points you will make 2NT! Of course there are other factors: long suits, placement of honors, etc. But often people do not appreciate how

difficult 2NT can be and so they get there without sufficient values and they go down several tricks and get a very bad board.

Another way to put it: Making 2NT is almost as hard as making 3NT. Let's look at the kind of auction that gets people into trouble:

1D - (P) - 1S - (P)

2C - (P) - 2NT

Opener has said "I have diamonds and clubs" and responder said "I have 4 spades". How many points should responder have for their 2NT bid? 11-12 HCP! This is an invitational bid. What should responder do with less? Well, you could pass with a tolerance for clubs. you could take a preference back to diamonds. You could rebid your spades. Yes, you may get to a 7 card fit with any of those. That's still better than 2NT with insufficient values. Here's another auction:

1D - (P) - 1S - (P)

2C - (P) - 2S - (P)

2NT

Now responder has said "I have spades and not a lot of points" (6-9) and opener with a singleton or void in spades is afraid to pass and bids 2NT with insufficient points. This is a bad idea because the 2NT bid is a game invitation showing extra values (about 16-18) just short of a jump shift. If you don't have the values and you don't have spades, where are your tricks coming from? If you have a misfit, don't ratchet up the bidding! Just get out cheaply before you make it worse.

Never retreat into notrump as a "safe place". Better to play in a 7 card fit than to play in notrump with insufficient values.