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This Week in Bridge

(8) Minor Suit Transfers - 4-Suited Transfers

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Level: 2

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General

When partner opens 1NT we can transfer to the Majors with Jacoby Transfers. These transfers allow for several advantages over natural bidding - the Notrump Opener gets to play the hand in 2-Major and Responder can show multiple hand types (minimum, invitational, strong.) Being able to save your partner from playing in 1NT when you have a horrible hand is useful (especially vulnerable.)

Being able to use the same bid with hands that want to sign off and look for slam saves us a lot of space and frees up other bids to have other meanings. The same transfer principle can be applied to the minors.

4-Suited Transfers

4-Suited Transfers are additions to Jacoby Transfers - allowing us to transfer to both ♣ and ♦ as well as ♥ and ♠. When we transfer to a minor we will be playing at the 3-level. Since we will be forcing the auction higher than a Jacoby Transfer, these *Minor Suit Transfers* promise 6+ card suits. Here are the basic bids:

1NT	2♠*	Transfer to ♣, 6+c♣, 0+ HCP
1NT	2NT*	Transfer to ♦, 6+c♦, 0+ HCP

Note: Both of these bids are alertable, since they promise something very different than what 2♠ or 2NT would naturally mean.

Superaccepting Minor Suit Transfers

When partner transfers to a Major, you can announce that you like the Major by superaccepting and jumping to 3-Major. We want Opener to have a way to show partner that we have a great fit for their Minor Suit Transfer as well. We could jump in the minor, bid 4-minor, but then we would be beyond 3NT - the most likely game we will want to play. That would be a disaster! We need to come up with a better way of telling partner that we like their suit. We do this by taking advantage of some extra bidding space - we use the "in-between" bid:

- When we transfer to ♣ we do so by bidding 2♠* which asks partner to bid 3♣. But there is an “in-between” step of 2NT. Opener bids 2NT to show he has a great ♣ holding.
- When we transfer to ♦ we do so by bidding 2NT* which asks partner to bid 3♦. But there is an “in-between” step of 3♣. Opener bids 3♣ to show he has a great ♦ holding.

This “in-between” superaccept has an additional advantage that it does not get us any higher than if we had accepted the transfer in the normal fashion. If partner has a very bad hand, he can still sign off in the 3-minor (though he will be playing it instead of us.)

What does it take to superaccept a minor?

So now the question becomes how good of a holding do we need to have in Responder’s minor in order to superaccept?

- xx The worst holding, do not superaccept!
- Hx (Honor dbltn) Not good enough, we might not be able to run the suit.
- xxx Still not good enough, we might not be able to set up our suit fast enough.
- Qxx Some partnerships play that Qxx is good enough to superaccept.
- Kxx Finally good enough to superaccept.
- Axx Great!
- xxxx Four small is a good holding, but we do not have the honor partner
might need to run the suit. It is reasonable to superaccept with this holding and a maximum 1NT opener.
- Hxxx (Honor fourth) The best holding!

Our recommendation for superaccepting – any hand with Kxx, Axx, Kxxx, Axxx. Additionally, we would superaccept with a maximum 1NT Opener and any 4-card support.

Notes: You can choose to have your default bid be the “in-between step” and show a superaccept by bidding the suit (the second step.) Either way is playable, the key is to have an agreement with partner for how you tell them you really like the suit. Players just starting to play this often find it easier to remember that the “in-between bid” is a superaccept.

Potential Problems with 4-Suited Transfers - “What we give up”

When you play 4-Suited Transfers you don't give up much in comparison to standard bidding (what were you using the 2♣ bid for before?) But there is one significant complexity that we do have to deal with when we add 4-Suited Transfers. When the auction goes 1NT-2NT*, this is no longer "invitational" with 8-9 HCP. It is now a transfer to ♦. So now we must figure out a way to invite when we have a normal 8-9 HCP and a balanced hand...

The way that we now invite with a balanced is to go through Stayman (even without a 4-card Major.)

1NT 2♣

2♦ 2NT This shows 8-9 HCP and "may or may not have a 4c Major".

Note: One of the additional advantages of playing 4-suited Transfers is you can invite in a minor by using a transfer. Thus, you free up the direct 3-level minor suit bids to be used for other conventional things - 5/5 minors, Puppet Stayman, etc. Your partnership can decide how to make use of the new available space on the convention card!

Follow-up Bids

After we transfer to a minor we would like to know what our follow-up bids mean. The most common follow-up bid is 3NT - usually to play. But what if Responder now bids a new suit at the 3-level... What does that show?

Example

1NT 2♠*

3♣ 3♥*

A new suit after a minor suit transfer is not natural - if we had a 4-card Major we would have started with Stayman to look for our 4-4 Major suit fit. Thus, 3♥ shows ♥ shortness (singleton or void) and a game forcing hand (9+ pts.) This asks partner to bid 3NT with good ♥ stoppers or to play 5♣ with poor stoppers in ♥.

Note: This shortness bid can also be used to explore slam when Responder has a stronger hand. If Opener has no HCP in the ♥ suit then the hands will fit together very well and take a lot of tricks.

Conclusion

Playing 4-Suited Transfers adds a small amount of complexity to our bidding with balanced hands, since we give up the natural 2NT response to 1NT, but what we gain in the ability to show our specific long minor suit outweighs this complexity. Give these 4-Suited Transfers a try and get used to using them with hands of a variety of strengths: Weak, Invitational, Game, and Slam-Going values.