



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(156) 1M (X) Transfers

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Level: 6

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General

When partner opens the bidding with a Major suit and right hand opponent makes a takeout double, the modern approach for many expert partnerships is to play transfer bids by the Responder. By Responder transferring to the suit with length instead of bidding it, we gain many advantages in these competitive bidding auctions. Let's look at how we use these transfers by Responder and what they gain for us.

Transfers by Responder over a Takeout Double

After a Major suit opening bid and a takeout double by RHO, the best approach is to play bids by Responder as transfers for all bids 1NT and higher. These transfer bids generally show *Negative Freebids* (long suits with 5-9 points) in the suits that we transfer into.

Examples

1♥ X ___?

- 1NT* Transfer to ♣, usually 6-card ♣ suit, 5-9 HCP.
- 2♣* Transfer to ♦, usually 6-card ♦ suit, 5-9 HCP.
- 2♦* Constructive ♥ raise, 7-9 points, 3-4 card ♥.
- 2♥* Weak raise to 2♥, 3-7 points, 3-4 card ♥.

1♠ X ___?

- 1NT* Transfer to ♣, usually 6-card ♣ suit, 5-9 HCP.
- 2♣* Transfer to ♦, usually 6-card ♦ suit, 5-9 HCP.
- 2♦* Transfer to ♥, usually 6-card ♥ suit, 5-9 HCP.
- 2♥* Constructive ♠ raise, 7-9 points, 3-4 card ♠.
- 2♠* Weak raise to 2♠, 3-7 points, 3-4 card ♠.

Other 1-level Responses Unchanged

We also play that other bids at the 1-level, below 1NT, are natural.

There are not many of these bids:

1♥ X XX

1♠ X XX These XX still shows 10+ points and implies no fit (could have 3-card support.)

1♥ X 1♠ This 1♠ bid remains unchanged as well, showing 4+card ♠, 6+ points, 1F.

Advantages to Transfers -- Putting the Strong Hand on Lead

One of the big advantages to playing these transfer bids into Responder's long suit is that if we buy the contract, it is likely to be in the long suit of the weak hand. In this case, the opening bidder will become the declarer - allowing the strong hand to be hidden from the opponents and forcing the strong opponent (the takeout doubler) to be on opening lead.

Example

1♠ X 2♣ 2♥
3♦ All Pass

Advantages to Transfers -- More Ways to Raise Partner

Another advantage of playing transfers by the Responder (as you may have noticed above) is that we gain two ways to raise Opener's suit. The direct raise of partner's suit is weak and is a blocking raise, while transferring in to partner's suit (bidding the suit right under their suit) is a constructive raise. These multiple raise options are one of the most useful parts of playing transfers by Responder in this auction.

Advanced Treatment - Lead-Directing Transfer with a Fit for Opener

Responder can also use these transfer bids in another way (if the partnership so chooses to allow) and that is to show a lead-directing bid with a fit. In this situation, Responder transfers to new suit, always planning to return to the fit. This is a lead-directing raise of partner's suit. There are some down sides to doing this, like when the opponents preempt the bidding to a high level, so do not try this without discussion with partner and consideration.

What We Give Up Playing Transfers

You may have noticed that we do lose one call when we play these transfer bids by Responder: the natural 1NT response. This is not much to give up, because in these competitive auctions Responder rarely buys the contract for 1NT, as Advancer will likely bid some 4-card suit at the 2-level with some values. It is also the case that if opener has a strong hand and we are headed towards game, we do not want Responder to become the declarer in 3NT - we much prefer for the strong hand to declare and for the strong opponent to be on opening lead. So although we do lose the natural 1NT bid by playing transfer bids by Responder, it does not hurt us much.

Conclusion

Transfer responses in competitive auctions allow our side to compete in the bidding in a variety of ways. This is particularly valuable when one opponent has shown a strong hand (for example, by making a takeout double) and we want to put that hand on opening lead and force them to lead away from their honors and into our partner's strong holdings. If you have a regular partnership and are looking for some sophisticated upgrades to your competitive bidding treatments, consider adopting these transfer responses.