

Transfer bidding – PART 2: Advanced Issues

Editor's note: there are several different ways that players incorporate the 2NT and 2♠ bid into a transfer bidding style. This article describes the scheme advocated by Andrew Kambites.

The 2♠ response to 1NT

Nowadays all aspiring partnerships play red suit transfers, but there are a lot of different ideas on how to utilise higher bids. Our recommended method is commonly played and highly effective. It is called a 'Baron' 2♠.

The 2♠ response to 1NT shows either a balanced raise to 2NT without a 4-card major, or a hand with slam interest without a 5-card suit.

With a minimum 1NT, opener rebids 2NT after a 2♠ response. Responder passes this with the balanced raise to 2NT. Responder bids on to show the slam try hand.

(n) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K 8 7 4	♠ A 9 6	1NT	2♠
♥ A 8	♥ K Q 5 2	2NT	3NT
♦ 10 7 5 4	♦ A Q 3 2		
♣ A J 7	♣ K 9		

In example (n) responder loses interest in a slam when opener announces a minimum 1NT and signs off in 3NT. It is possible that a 4-4 heart fit may be missed, but with a combined total of 30 HCP and no weak suit that should hardly matter.

(o) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ 9 8 7 4	♠ A K 6	1NT	2♠
♥ A 8	♥ K Q 5 2	2NT	3♦
♦ K Q 5 4	♦ A J 3 2	4♦	6♦
♣ K 8 7	♣ A 9		

In example (o) responder is still interested in a slam even opposite a minimum 1NT opening, so responder continues with a forcing 3♦ over 2NT. This denies 4 clubs and shows 4 diamonds. The partners now bid their 4-card suits until either a fit is found or 3NT is reached.

If opener has a maximum 1NT opener rebids the cheapest 4-card suit over 2♠. Responder can show the game invitational type by then bidding 3NT. If responder instead continues by supporting opener or bidding a new suit then the slam hunt is on, though if either partner bids 3NT that can be passed.

(p) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K 8 7	♠ A 9 6	1NT	2♠
♥ K 8	♥ A Q 5 2	3♣	3♦
♦ K 10 9 4	♦ A Q 3 2	4♦	6♦
♣ A 8 7 4	♣ K 9		

In example (p) opener decides that he would accept a game try because of the good diamond intermediates. 3♣ is opener's lowest 4-card suit. Responder shows slam interest with 3♦ and opener is pleased to give support,

Note that playing the Baron 2♠ makes a quantitative 4NT in response to 1NT redundant.

The 2NT response to 1NT

The 2NT response to 1NT requires opener to bid 3♣. This is called a relay bid rather than a transfer bid because responder might not have clubs. Responder will have one of three hand types.

Firstly responder may intend to sign off in 3♣. Responder will pass the 3♣ relay.

Secondly responder may intend to sign off in 3♦. Responder will bid 3♦ over 3♣.

Thirdly responder may have a minor two-suiter, at least 5-4 shape with game forcing values. In that case after 1NT: 2NT: 3♣ responder will:

- (i) Bid 3♥ with a singleton heart.
- (ii) Bid 3♠ with a singleton spade.
- (iii) Bid 3NT with no singleton (i.e. 2-2-5-4 or 2-2-4-5 shape)

Here are some examples of this in action:

(q) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K Q 10 3	♠ 4	1NT	2NT
♥ K Q 8 7	♥ A 6 2	3♣	3♠
♦ K 8	♦ A J 7 6 4	3NT	
♣ 9 5 3	♣ A K J 10		

In (q) responder shows the singleton spade, but with wasted values in spades and no minor suit fit opener is not tempted to go beyond 3NT.

(r) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ J 5 3	♠ 4	1NT	2NT
♥ K Q 8	♥ A 6 2	3♣	3♠
♦ K Q 8	♦ A J 7 6 4	4♣	6♣
♣ Q 5 3 2	♣ A K J 10		

In example (r) opener can see that 3NT will be doomed on a spade lead so opener chooses to play in a club contract. With the likelihood of few wasted spade values opposite responder bids the excellent 30 HCP slam.

If opener has very strong clubs it is possible to break the 3♣ relay by bidding 3♦, but that is far rarer than breaking the transfer opposite a red suit transfer.

Transfers over 2NT

These are similar to transfers over 1NT

(s) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K 10 7	♠ 8 4 2	2NT	3♦
♥ A 2	♥ Q 8 7 6 4	3♥	3NT
♦ A K J 7 6	♦ Q 4 3	P	
♣ A Q 2	♣ K 7		

(t) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K 10	♠ 8 4 2	2NT	3♦
♥ A J 2	♥ Q 8 7 6 4	3♥	3NT
♦ A K J 7 6	♦ Q 4 3	4♥	
♣ A 9 2	♣ K 7		

(u) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K Q 10	♠ 6	2NT	3♦
♥ A 2	♥ Q 8 7 6 4	3♥	4♣
♦ A K J 7 6	♦ Q 4 3	4NT	
♣ A 9 2	♣ K Q 3 2		

In (u) 4NT is natural, saying opener doesn't like hearts or clubs.

(v) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ A 10	♠ 8 4 2	2NT	3♦
♥ A J 3 2	♥ K Q 7 6 4	4♥	4NT
♦ A K J 7	♦ Q 4 3	5NT	6♥
♣ A 9 2	♣ K 7		

Opener can break the transfer by bidding a new suit and should be more willing to do so than 1NT opener, because it is rare that responder transfers opposite a 2NT opening without intending to bid game. In (v) a transfer break leads to an excellent slam.

(w) Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ K 10 7 6	♠ 8 4	2NT	3♦
♥ A	♥ J 8 7 6 4 2	3NT	Pass
♦ A K J 7 6	♦ Q 4 3		
♣ A Q 2	♣ K 7		

However, if opener breaks the transfer by bidding 3NT that shows that opener has a singleton in responder's suit, as in (w). This will cross responder's intentions on the rare occasions that responder intended to sign off at the 3 level, but the important gain is that it warns responder from becoming too optimistic with a weak 6-card suit.

ILLUSTRATIVE HANDS

<p>♠ KQ9 ♥ 953 ♦ AQ43 ♣ AKQ</p> <p>♠ 54 ♠ A32 ♥ A42 ♥ KQJ106 ♦ 762 ♦ 1098 ♣ 76532 ♣ 98</p> <p>♠ J10876 ♥ 87 ♦ KJ5 ♣ J104</p>	<p>Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♠</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>3♥ shows 5+ spades and requires partner to bid 3♠. 3NT shows 5+ points and exactly 5 spades. With 3-card spade support North bids 4♠. 4♠ makes 10 tricks, losing 2 hearts and ♠A. 3NT is two off on a heart lead.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>		2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠	All Pass	
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<p>♠ KQ92 ♥ J42 ♦ 762 ♣ 765</p> <p>♠ J10876 ♠ 54 ♥ 87 ♥ AQ5 ♦ KJ5 ♦ AQ43 ♣ J104 ♣ AKQ2</p> <p>♠ A3 ♥ K10963 ♦ 1098 ♣ 983</p>	<p>Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♠</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>3♥ shows 5+ spades and requires partner to bid 3♠. 3NT shows 5+ points and exactly 5 spades. With only 2 spades East passes. 3NT makes 9 tricks. 4♠ loses 4 trump tricks and maybe a heart as well.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT	All Pass		
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<p>♠ J108764 ♥ 87 ♦ KJ5 ♣ J10</p> <p>♠ A3 ♠ K92 ♥ KQ1096 ♥ J4 ♦ 1098 ♦ 76 32 ♣ 983 ♣ 7654</p> <p>♠ Q5 ♥ A532 ♦ AQ4 ♣ AKQ2</p>	<p>Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♠</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>3♥ shows 5+ spades and requires partner to bid 3♠. 4♠ is a sign off, showing 6+ spades. 4♠ loses just 2 trump tricks if declarer wins the heart lead and immediately plays 3 rounds of clubs, discarding a heart. 3NT is at least one off on a heart lead.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>				2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass	
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<p> ♠ QJ109 ♥ J93 ♦ 73 ♣ 7542 ♠ K2 ♥ AQ52 ♦ KJ98 ♣ AQJ ♠ 63 ♥ K10864 ♦ 642 ♣ 863 </p>	<p>Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♥</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♦</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5♦</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>6♦</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p> 3♥ shows 5+ spades and requires partner to bid 3♠. 4♦ shows 4 diamonds as well as 5 spades. Game forcing. 5♦ shows 4-card diamond support. 6♦ makes if declarer ruffs 2 spades in dummy before drawing trumps. Indeed this establishes his fifth spade as a winner and he has 13 tricks. 6♠ or 6NT have no realistic chance. </p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass	5♦	Pass	6♦	All Pass
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