



Four Suit Transfers

By Kaltica & Henrys

Four Suit Transfers (i.e. "4ST") are easy enough to understand. Opposite Partner's 1NT opening we have:

2D = Standard Jacoby Transfer to Hearts.

2H = Standard Jacoby Transfer to Spades.

2S = Transfer to Clubs.

2NT = Transfer to Diamonds.

In the case of the latter two transfers Opener can bid the intermediate step as an encouraging "in between" bid. The basis of such encouragement may vary from pair to pair. Some will take it as promising any maximum. Others will agree that it merely guarantees 3+ card support for Responder's long suit. A third group may say that it shows both a maximum AND 3+ card support for the promised suit. Should this come as sufficient encouragement to Responder, Responder will bid HIGHER than that suit as a game or slam effort.

1NT 2NT = 5+ (usually 6+) Diamonds.

3C 3H = Heart card, game or slam try.

Most who play Four Suit Transfers play them opposite 2NT openings, too.

2NT 3NT = FORCING transfer to 4D.

The Ramifications of Four Suit Transfers

If 1NT:2NT shows Diamonds and forces as far as 3D, what does Responder do with a normal flattish hand that wants to raise Opener's No Trump opening one level? Answer: Responder must bid 2C, Stayman, alerting and explaining it as "not promising a four card major".

S- xx H- xxx D- AQ10x C- K109x

Respond 2C to Partner's 15-17 1NT opening so as to rebid 2NT, inviting 3NT. If Partner has opened a 20-21 point 2NT, be careful NOT to raise to 3NT! Bid 3C, *then* 3NT.

The question arises as to what No Trump Opener does with 4-4 in the majors. After 2NT:3C:3H:3NT or 1NT:2C:2H:2NT should

Opener bid the Spade suit?

Answer: No. Responder's No Trump rebid over Opener's Heart call DENIES 4 Spades. WITH 4 Spades Responder MUST rebid them:

1NT 2C = Stayman, not promising a major.

2H 2NT = Denies a major, else 2S here.

2NT 3C = Stayman, not promising a major.

3H 3NT = Signoff, denying a major.

Here is the tricky part: After 2NT:3C:3H

a 3S rebid by Responder may be a "ST TOMAS" slam try in Hearts OR a search for a 4-4 Spade fit. 3S does NOT necessarily promise 4 Spades. Opener must now rebid in No Trump *unless* Opener has 4 Spades. If Opener DOES have 4 Spades Opener should cuebid a minor (if maximal) or rebid HEARTS (if minimal). Study this auction carefully:

2NT 3C = Stayman, not promising a major.

3H 3S = 4 Spades and/or a slam try. Now:

?? - 3NT = Denies 4 Spades.

- 4C = Club cuebid, 4 Spades, max.

- 4D = Diamond cue, 4 Spades, max.

- 4H = 4-4 in the majors, minimum.

After 2NT:3C:3H:3S:3NT, 4H is a slam try in Hearts but rebids of 4C or 4D are ambiguous; Responder MAY have Spades and the bid minor OR be cuebidding towards a Heart slam. For this reason pairs may wish to consider HEARTS as trump for the purpose of any Roman Key Card Blackwood 4NT inquiry subsequent to 2NT:3C:3H:3S.

A Final Word

Four Suit Transfers can be very useful in solving the age-old problem of Responder wanting to know if 1NT Opener has 3+ card support for the long suit.

S- xx H- Ax D- K109xxx C- xxx

This responding hand may produce anywhere from seven to eleven tricks, depending on 1NT Opener's Diamond support. Without Four Suit Transfers we might just close our eyes and raise 1NT to 2NT or even

3NT. Playing Four Suit Transfers, though, we can bid 2NT and proceed towards 3NT only if Opener encourages us with a 3C "in between" bid.

This writeup above from Kaltica "4 suit transfers" represents a family of methods often used in response to 1nt, and rarely (with appropriate changes) in response to 2nt. For simplicity's sake, I will discuss the two basic types of 4 suit transfers in response to 1nt.

In both schemes, a 2c response is some type of stayman (forcing or non-forcing according to partnership agreement), and 2d/2h are Jacoby transfers to 2h and 2s respectively.

In the first form of 4 suit transfers, 2s shows clubs and 2nt shows diamonds, normally one suited hands. opener initially assumes that responder is showing an invitational one suiter and expresses his opinion about accepting the invitation.

If he would reject it, he simply accepts the transfer. Hence, 1nt-2s/2nt-3c/3d would show a hand unwilling to bid 3nt. If he would accept it, he makes the cheapest bid showing (artificially) a superacceptance. Hence, 1nt-2s/2nt-2nt/3c would normally show a maximum 1nt opening bid including fast tricks and honor-third in partner's suit. A hand like axx; akxx; kxx; kxx would be normal for a superacceptance in either minor.

Opener expects to run six tricks in responder's minor plus the a, ak in the majors. Continuations after the initial transfer will vary from partnership to partnership. Here is one sensible scheme:

After a superaccept, responder (1) returns to 3 of her minor with a weak hand; (2) rebids 3nt with an invitational hand; (3) rebids 3 of a new suit to show a singleton in that suit with slam interest; (4) rebids 4nt to show a hand with slam interest and no singleton; (5) rebids 4 of her minor to ask for aces or key cards. The reason that the 4m and 4nt rebids are reversed is to allow the partnership to stop in 4nt if opener doesn't have the right number of aces or key cards.

After a normal acceptance, responder (1) passes with a weak or an invitational hand, (2) rebids 3nt with a mild slam invitation without a side singleton, (3) rebids a new suit to show a singleton with slam interest, (4) rebids 4 of her minor to ask for aces or key cards, or (5) rebids 4nt to show a strong slam invitation.

In both cases, a "long" minor with a balanced slam invitation can be 5 cards long, eg: aqx; kxx; kjxxx; xx. This isn't strong enough to force to slam, but it is easily strong enough to be interested in slam.

Note that stayman followed by a rebid of 3m shows a strong unbalanced hand with some 4 card major, so that the transfers to a minor don't need to include these types of hands.

In this scheme of 4 suit transfers, responses of 3m are often played as showing both minors (3c=weak, 3d=strong), normally 5-5 or better. In the second scheme, the transfers used are 2nt=clubs and 3c=diamonds. The advantage of this method is that it frees up an immediate 2s response for something else, usually either minor suit stayman or showing an invitational raise to 3nt with either a balanced hand or a one suiter. Because opener doesn't have room to show a superaccept, the 2nt/3c transfer scheme doesn't admit invitational one suiters; hence, most who use this scheme should use the 2s=invitation to 3nt bid. However, that eliminates the ability to show weak minor two suiters, and many pairs who use 4 suit transfers consider this to be too high of a cost.

Second half of this write-up by Henry Sun.