

Minor suit Transfers

Transfers to a major after a 1NT opening are very common, but transfers to a minor are different. First of all, you will be at the 3 level, and so you really need a six card suit if you don't have a strong (game going) hand. Secondly, there is only one 'obviously' free bid available (2♠). One quite popular method when holding a weak hand and a long minor is simply to bid 2♠, requiring opener to bid 3♣ which is then either passed or corrected to 3♦. There is, however, a far more accurate method of minor suit transfers available, which involves the use of both 2♠ and 2NT as transfer bids.

Now I have said that the 2♠ bid is redundant when we play transfers and also that 2NT is free as we can show an invitational raise via 2♣. But it may be timely to check on some common uses of these 2♠ and 2NT bids in order to ensure that we cover all of these options by other bids and that they really are free: -

- 1) 2♠ (8 pts) and 2NT (9 pts) are both balanced and invitational to 3NT
- 2) 2♠ is natural and weak
- 3) 2♠ shows a weak hand with a long minor suit
- 4) 2♠ is Baron, seeking a 4-4 fit
- 5) 2♠ and 2NT (and 3♣) are as defined in Truppet Stayman
- 6) 2NT is a puppet to 3♣, either weak ♣'s or a 3 suiter looking for slam
- 7) 2♠ is Minor Suit Stayman
- 8) 2♠ is either a limit 2NT type bid or a balanced slam try.

- 1) 2♠ (8 pts) and 2NT (9 pts) are both balanced and invitational to 3NT.

This scheme is use by some less experienced players in the UK (they play a weak NT so it's actually 11 pts and 12 pts). I guess that this distinction may aid declarer in a borderline case but it really is squandering two bids for just one meaning and we need all the bids we can get.

- 2) 2♠ is natural and weak

Hand A	Hand B	Before the days of transfers both of these hands would simply respond with their major suit, fine.
♠ 7	♠ Q10972	Nowadays we transfer; nothing is lost with Hand A but with
♥ Q10972	♥ 7	Hand B if we transfer with 2♥ then there is a risk that LHO
♦ Q76	♦ J76	will double to show ♥'s and the opponents will find a ♥
♣ J652	♣ J652	fit that may otherwise have been lost. A valid point, but not so important as to squander this otherwise very useful bid.

3) 2♠ shows a weak hand with a long minor suit

This is a simple variation used by many less experienced players. 2♠ is simply a puppet to 3♣ and responder either passes or bids 3♦ which opener passes. 2NT directly over the opening 1NT is played as invitational.

4) 2♠ is Baron, asking the range and seeking a 4-4 fit

A Baron bid shows no 5 card suit and is generally looking for a 4-4 fit (usually a minor) for slam purposes. It is common in the UK to play 3♣ over an opening 2NT as Baron and this use of 2♠ over 1NT is gaining in popularity. Over 2♠ opener replies: -

2NT minimum, may have any shape. Responder will normally start bidding 4 card suits up the line until a fit is found. However, the 2♠ bid may also be used as a quantitative raise and responder will then pass.

3♣ → 3♠ with a maximum, 4 card suits are bid up the line.

The 2NT bid is not needed as a natural invitation (the response to 2♠ tells responder if opener is maximum or not) and so may be used for what you wish, usually a puppet to 3♣.

Now this all works, but it is nowhere near as efficient as our SARS sequences. Let's have a look at some other options: -

5) 2♠ and 2NT (and 3♣) are as defined in Truppet Stayman

Truppet Stayman is a convention involving **T**ransfers and **P**uppets. 2♠ is game forcing and is a puppet to 2NT. After the forced 2NT responder then bids 3♣/♦ with a single suited hand or any other bid to show both minors. The direct 2NT over opener's 1NT is a transfer to ♣'s and 3♣ is a transfer to ♦'s. An invitational 2NT is bid via 2♣.

I guess that this all works OK but we can do everything with simpler methods. We transfer into the minor with our single minor suited hand (weak, invitational or strong) and with both minors and a game forcing or slam seeking hand SARS works fine. And, as we shall see later, it is very convenient to have an in-between bid available when transferring to the minors. Another disadvantage of Truppet Stayman is that the direct 3♣ bid over 1NT is utilised. We have another use for this and so no Truppets for us.

6) 2NT is a puppet to 3♣, either weak ♣'s or a 3 suiter looking for slam

You respond 2NT with either type of hand. With a ♣ bust you pass opener's 3♣ bid; with a three suiter you bid your singleton/void (or the suit below if you prefer that). This works fine but we can also do both of these; we transfer with the weak ♣ hand and we also have splinters which will be defined later.

With this scheme there is no obvious mechanism for showing the weak ♦ hand.

7) 2♠ is Minor Suit Stayman

This is quite popular for those who do not use 4-way transfers, and there are different variations within Minor Suit Stayman. I'll cover two common variants: -

7a) 'Garbage' Minor Suit Stayman

With this variation, popular in the States, the 2♠ bid does not promise anything in the way of values and so opener cannot bid above 3♦. The responses to 2♠ are: -

2NT	no 4 card minor
3♣	4 (or 5) ♣'s
3♦	4 (or 5) ♦'s

With two 4 card minors, opener bids the better one.

What can I say? 'Primitive' is apt, but this is popular, even with some experts.

Responder will bid 2♠ with any of three hand types: -

- 1- A weak hand with a long ♦ suit.
- 2- A weak hand with both minor suits
- 3- A hand interested in slam, usually containing both minors.

Now this works (otherwise it would not be played by so many people) but it really is rather limited. Let's look at the three hand types: -

- 1- OK with ♦'s, but there is no provision for a weak hand with ♣'s.
- 2- How often do you come across a weak hand that can play in either minor at the 3 level but not in 1NT? And since opener may have no 4 card minor, it may well have to play opposite 3 card support.
- 3- This is fine, but our SARS sequences are far superior as they can find out opener's exact minor suit holding rather than just establishing that he has a 4 card minor. And, with this scheme, when opener shows a 4 card minor responder does not know if it is a 4 or 5 carder or if opener also has 4 cards in the other minor.

So, not really very satisfactory, let's look at another variant of Minor Suit Stayman: -

7b) Game Forcing Minor Suit Stayman

With this variant responder must have at least game going values and is usually looking for a minor suit slam. Responder may have just one or both minors. The responses to 2♠ are:

2NT	no 4 card minor but slam interest
3♣	4 (or 5) ♣'s
3♦	4 (or 5) ♦'s
3♥	two 4 card minors with a ♥ control
3♠	two 4 card minors with a ♠ control
3NT	no 4 card minor and no slam interest

I guess that this variation works but there are a few drawbacks: -

- 1- We have no bid to show our weak hand with a long minor suit.
- 2- The responses do not tell us if opener has a 4 or 5 card minor.
- 3- What does responder do with a hand containing a 4 card minor and also a 4 card major?

And, of course, we can get all of this information and more with our SARS sequences.

Whichever variation of Minor Suit Stayman you use, 2NT is free for the conventional limit raise.

8) 2♠ is either a limit 2NT type bid or a balanced slam try

This system is popular in the UK, we use 2♠ to ask opener's strength and the direct 2NT is generally used to sign off with a weak hand and a long minor suit (a puppet to 3♣ which responder either passes or corrects to 3♦).

The responses to 2♠ are: -

2NT	minimum
3♣	maximum.

There are then various different subsequent bids to show all sorts of hand types.

Now this is all fine, but I am a simple soul and do not like to complicate things unnecessarily. SARS is extremely efficient if looking for 4-4 minor suit fits and transfers to the minors are excellent and are pretty well established worldwide.

There are also umpteen other variations for these 2♠/NT bids but I don't really like any of them and we'll stick with transfers to the minors because: -

- It's simple
- It's what a large number of people worldwide play
- It complements the rest of our structure perfectly.

Transfers to the Minors

So, that's settled. We are going to use 2♠ and 2NT as transfers to the minors. They are also use in conjunction with transfers to the majors and the whole set-up is often referred to as 4-way transfers. After a 1NT opening we now have :-

2♠ transfer to ♣'s and 2NT transfer to ♦'s

If responder has a poor hand and simply wants to play in 3 of a minor, he passes opener's normal acceptance of the transfer: -

1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - pass or 1NT - 2NT - 3♦ - pass

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ4	♠ 983	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♥ AQ6	♥ J5	3♦ (2)	pass (3)	(2) I have poor ♦'s
♦ 753	♦ KJ9862			(3) then 3♦ is best.
♣ AJ108	♣ 97			

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ A104	♠ J983	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♥ AQJ	♥ 5	3♦ (2)	pass (3)	(2) I have poor ♦'s
♦ 753	♦ KJ9862			(3) then 3♦ is best.
♣ AJ108	♣ 97			

Note that in example 2 there may be a 4-4 ♠ fit. Unfortunately with this weak hand type responder cannot look for the major suit fit.

4.1 Super Acceptance of Minor suit Transfers

If opener has a good holding in the transfer suit then he should try for 3NT by making the ‘in-between bid’; so 2NT in the case of a transfer to ♣’s and 3♣ when the transfer was to ♦’s. If he has a bad holding, he should simply complete the transfer. In the case of an in-between reply, responder will bid 3NT with a good hand/suit or simply complete the transfer with a bad hand. And the requirements for the in-between bid? There are differing opinions but best is that 3 cards to a top honour (A,K or Q) or any 4 will do. The over-riding consideration for a super-accept is this support for partner’s long minor, the overall strength is less important.

When opener super-accepts he promises good support for responder’s minor and responder should bid 3NT with a decent suit even if the hand does not quite contain invitational values.

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ4	♠ Q93	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦’s
♥ AQ6	♥ 95	3♣ (2)	3NT (3)	
♦ Q53	♦ KJ9862	pass		
♣ QJ108	♣ 97			

(2) Let’s try 3NT if you have anything remotely decent (a super-accept).

(3) I’m not ashamed of my hand, Barcus is willing.

A good 3NT contract has been reached on minimal values. Note that the important factor in opener deciding to super-accept or not is not whether he is min or max, but whether he has good cards in responder’s suit.

And what happens if responder has a miserable hand and opener super-accepts? Then responder simply signs off himself -

1NT - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♣ - pass or 1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 3♦ - pass

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ4	♠ 853	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦’s
♥ AQ6	♥ 85	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) super-accept
♦ Q53	♦ J98762	pass		(3) I’ll be happy if I go just one down in 3♦.
♣ QJ108	♣ 97			

Responder, of course, may have his sights set on greater things than just 3NT. He is not just limited to 3 of the minor or 3NT, the initial transfer may be any strength and, as we shall see, there are numerous hand types.

Further Development of the Auction using 4-Way Transfers

Up to now we have only used these transfers to a minor with weak hands. As with major suit transfers, they can be used with stronger hands. Since we are necessarily at the three level there is no room for invitational bids, so any bid by responder after making a minor suit transfer is game forcing. A new suit at a minimal level is natural, and since the hand is necessarily strong the original minor may be just 5 card.

4.2 The Minor-Major two Suiter

Hand A How do you bid Hand A after partner has opened a strong NT? Some players bid Stayman, and after a 2♦/♥ response a 3♣ bid shows a strong hand and a ♣ suit. But does it also show ♠'s? Enough. There is a much better way to be specific about this hand type and we need this sequence for our SARS shape ask. So we transfer into the minor and subsequently bid 3♠, I.e. 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♠, showing 5+ ♣'s, 4 ♠'s and game forcing.

Now this is an excellent method and is what I shall be using in the examples but there is one possible improvement that you might like to consider if you are a firm believer that the NT opener should always be declarer. Instead of bidding your 4 card major after the minor suit transfer, you bid the other major (à la Smolen). This has the obvious advantage that opener is declarer but you do lose an awful lot of bidding space when ♥'s are the suit (a transfer to the next suit up is fine, a transfer to the suit below uses a complete bidding level! – that's why I don't like Smolen.). I'll assume the natural approach, thus: -

1NT - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♥/♠	is game forcing and shows 5 ♣'s and 4 ♥/♠'s
1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♥/♠	is game forcing and shows 5 ♣'s and 4 ♥/♠'s
1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 3♥/♠	is game forcing and shows 5 ♦'s and 4 ♥/♠'s
1NT - 2NT - 3♦ - 3♥/♠	is game forcing and shows 5 ♦'s and 4 ♥/♠'s

Quite often opener will have no ambitions other than a simple 3NT: -

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ 863	♠ KQ97	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♥ AKQ63	♥ 52	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ J3	♦ AK872	3NT	pass	(3) natural
♣ AJ6	♣ K7			

With poor holdings in both of East's suits, West signs off. But responder may choose to bid on with a stronger hand.

If opener likes responder's 2nd suit then he can make a move towards slam. It's best to play that a cue bid agrees the major suit and if opener is interested in a minor suit slam he should bid 4 of the minor to set trumps. Even if opener has super-accepted the minor suit transfer, it would still be preferable to play in a major suit 4-4 fit.

But one very important decision to make is which bid to use as the RKCB bid. Clearly we will use Kickback for the major, but what about the minor? Which is best, four of the minor or Kickback?

The answer is that it is usually best for responder to be the Blackwood bidder - he knows if slam is in the air and with the more shapely hand it's best for him to ask. So after responder has made his 2nd bid of indicating his major suit then if opener bids the minor then that simply sets trumps (and responder will often bid the next suit up, Kickback). And if opener makes a cue bid (thus agreeing the major) then responder will again use Kickback. If opener bids a major suit it is never RKCB.

Let's try to summarize this: -

Opener's 3rd bid after responder shows a minor-major two suiter.

After 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♥:-

- 3♠ = cue bid agreeing ♥'s
- 3NT = natural
- 4♣ = agrees ♣'s as trumps
- 4♦ = cue bid agreeing ♥'s
- 4♥ = agrees ♥'s as trumps (*1)

(*1) may have the ♣A.

After 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♠:-

- 3NT = natural
- 4♣ = agrees ♣'s as trumps
- 4♦ = cue bid agreeing ♠'s
- 4♥ = cue bid agreeing ♠'s
- 4♠ = agrees ♠'s as trumps (*1)

After 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 3♥:-

- 3♠ = cue bid agreeing ♥'s
- 3NT = natural
- 4♣ = cue bid agreeing ♥'s
- 4♦ = agrees ♦'s as trumps
- 4♥ = agrees ♥'s as trumps (*2)

(*2) may have the ♦A.

After 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 3♠:-

- 3NT = natural
- 4♣ = cue bid agreeing ♠'s
- 4♦ = agrees ♦'s as trumps
- 4♥ = cue bid agreeing ♠'s
- 4♠ = agrees ♠'s as trumps (*2)

A subsequent Kickback bid by responder is RKCB for the suit agreed.

But there is a slight ambiguity if opener bids 3NT at his 3rd turn. Consider the auction 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 3♥ - 3NT - 4♥. What is the 4♥ bid? Is it Kickback for ♦'s or setting ♥'s as trumps?

Since responder has only 4 ♥'s and opener may have only two, this is also Kickback.

So that's it. The Kickback suit is always RKCB when bid by responder but is natural (or a cue bid) if bid by opener. This is an example of what I mean: -

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 3♥ - 3NT - 4♥ | is RKCB for ♦'s |
| 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 3♥ - 4♣ - 4♥ | is to play |
| 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 3♥ - 4♣ - 4♠ | is RKCB for ♥'s |

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ103	♠ KQ97	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♥ AJ9	♥ 52	3♣ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) super-accept
♦ Q93	♦ AK872	4♥ (4)	4NT etc to 6♠	(3) natural
♣ QJ9	♣ K7			(4) cue bid agreeing ♠'s

The sequence is also game forcing if opener does not super-accept: -

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ103	♠ KQ97	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♥ AJ9	♥ 52	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) simple accept
♦ 953	♦ AK872	4♣ (4)	4♠	(3) natural
♣ AJ10	♣ K7	pass		(4) cue bid agreeing ♠'s

Example 4

And responder may push on if opener backs off: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ103	♠ KQ97	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♥ AJ9	♥ 5	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) simple accept
♦ 953	♦ AK8762	4♣ (4)	4NT (5)	(3) natural
♣ AJ10	♣ K7	5♣ (6)	6♠	(4) cue bid agreeing ♠'s
		pass		(5) RKCB
				(6) 3 key cards

Example 5

Or opener may be interested in a minor suit slam: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ J63	♠ KQ97	1NT	2NT (1)	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♥ AJ9	♥ 5	3♣ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) super accept
♦ QJ93	♦ AK8762	4♦ (3)	4♥ (4)	(3) natural
♣ AQJ	♣ K7	5♦ (5)	6♦	(4) RKCB (Kickback)
		pass		(5) 2 key cards + ♦Q

With only an invitational hand it's probably best for responder to transfer to the minor and pass if there is no super-accept.

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ K93	♠ J742	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ AK92	♥ 5	3♣ (2)	pass	(2) normal accept
♦ AJ92	♦ 103			
♣ J6	♣ AQ9872			

But if opener super-accepts the minor suit transfer then responder should go for game.

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q953	♠ J742	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ AQ9	♥ 5	2NT (2)	3NT (3)	(2) super accept
♦ AJ9	♦ 103	pass		
♣ K65	♣ AQ9872			

(3) Responder could well bid 3♠ here, but with a long running (after opener has super-accepted) minor suit it may be easier to make 9 tricks in NT as the ♠ suit is rather poor.

It's all very straightforward, I know, but for completeness I'll have to give examples 1-4 (so 8-11 here) from section 2.3 (3) which were so problematic when we did not transfer into the minor: -

Example 8 (1)

West	East 1	East 2	West	East 1	West	East 2
♠ A4	♠ 75	♠ Q1087	1NT	2♠	1NT	2♠
♥ KJ9	♥ Q1087	♥ 75	2NT	3♥	2NT	3♠
♦ A962	♦ K7	♦ K7	4♥	pass	3NT	pass
♣ KJ76	♣ AQ543	♣ AQ543				

When we met these hands earlier West did not know which major East had and so could not play in the Moysian ♥ fit with East 1.

Example 9 (2)

West	East 3	East 4	West	East 3	West	East 4
♠ A4	♠ K5	♠ Q1087	1NT	2♠	1NT	2♠
♥ KJ9	♥ Q1087	♥ 7	2NT	3♥	2NT	3♠
♦ A962	♦ 7	♦ K5	4♣ (1)	etc to 6♣	3NT (2)	pass
♣ KJ76	♣ AQ10543	♣ AQ10543				

(1) West likes East's 2nd suit and so agrees to investigate the ♣ slam.

(2) West does not like East's 2nd suit and so leaves it up to partner to make any further move.

When we met this example before, West had no idea which major East had and so could not investigate slam on the basis of the good ♥'s.

Example 10 (3)

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q743	♠ K8	1NT	2♠	(1) cue bid agreeing ♥'s
♥ AQ74	♥ K963	2NT	3♥	(2) RKCB for ♥'s
♦ A3	♦ 84	4♦ (1)	4♠ (2)	
♣ KJ8	♣ AQ764	etc to 6♥		

When we met this example before the ♥ fit was found immediately but East has no idea about the superb ♣ fit and so quite reasonably simply bid game.

Example 11 (4)

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ74	♠ K963	1NT	2♠	(1) cue bid agreeing ♠'s
♥ Q743	♥ K8	2NT	3♠	(2) RKCB for ♠'s
♦ A3	♦ 84	4♦ (1)	4NT (2)	
♣ KJ8	♣ AQ764	etc to 6♠		

And much the same here. When we met it before West could do no better than support ♠'s at his 3rd turn and the slam was missed.

4.3 The Minor-Minor two Suiter

Here we are covering the four sequences: -

Sequence A/B: 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦ and
Sequence C/D: 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 4♣

So what type of hand do we need for a transfer to one minor and then bidding the other? It needs to be pretty strong, of course, as the auction is game forcing. Let's consider a few candidates: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠ KQ7	♠ Q8	♠ 87	♠ A	♠ 10
♥ 7	♥ J7	♥ 2	♥ A2	♥ 7
♦ AQ976	♦ KQJ42	♦ Q8752	♦ KJ872	♦ 10986543
♣ KQ98	♣ AQ42	♣ K8752	♣ AQJ76	♣ AKJ4

Hand 1 is strong enough to look for slam but the hand is playable in 3 suits. We come on to this later and a splinter is best with this hand type. We see this hand again in sections 5.2 and 5.4

Hand 2 We saw this hand earlier - example 7 in the SARS section 2.5.2. With just 9 cards in the minors it is usually best to use SARS because: -

1. Opener will know that when you do use sequence A or B then you have at least 10 cards in the minors.
2. It is easy to locate either a 4-4 ♣ fit or 5-3 ♦ fit (or better) using SARS.
3. NT may be the best strain.

Hand 3 We see this hand later (section 5.2) when we come on to discuss the meaning of a direct jump to 3♣. This hand is weak and a convention that I don't like uses the 3♣ bid to show a weak hand 5-5 in the minors. I cover this later, but I would simply pass 1NT. This hand is not strong enough for Sequence A/B which is game forcing.

Hand 4 is typical for sequence A/B. It is looking for slam and we meet this hand soon.

Hand 5 just wants to play in the best minor suit game. So transfer to ♦'s and then bid 4♣. You should then end up in the correct game.

When partner opens 1NT and we only have minor suits then NT is very often the best strain. However, there are exceptions. Typical such exceptions are: -

- 1) We have a poor hand with no real entries outside a (minor suit) ruff, or possibly too many quick losers in NT.
- 2) We are looking for slam!

1) Let's look at the poor hands first (partner opens a strong NT): -

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens 1NT. Hand A is very weak, with no game possibilities. Best is to simply transfer into ♦'s and play in 3♦. There is no room to subsequently mention the ♣ suit.
♠ 4	♠ 4	Hand B is different. There is good chance of game (5♦ or 5♣) if partner has a suitable hand. So transfer in to ♦'s and then bid 4♣, forcing.
♥ 9	♥ 9	
♦ J98632	♦ K108632	
♣ J9842	♣ KJ974	

Example 1

West	East (B)	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ J96	♠ 4	1NT	2NT (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ AK87	♥ 9	3♦ (2)	4♣ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ Q4	♦ K108632	? (4)		
♣ AQ65	♣ KJ974			

Exactly what West should bid at (4) and how the auction stops in 5♣ is covered when we complete this example in section 4.3.3. If partner super-accepts the transfer to ♦'s then responder should still bid 4♣ at (3) as there may be a superior ♣ fit.

2) We are looking for slam!

Hand C	Hand D	Partner again opens a strong NT. This time we have a great two-suiter. Partner must have at least 3 card support for one of our minors (he opened 1NT). So we transfer into our longest minor and then bid the other. Thus we have: -
♠ 4	♠ 4	
♥ 9	♥ 9	
♦ AK842	♦ KQ9754	
♣ KQ9754	♣ AK842	

With Hand C: 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♦ etc. Sequence A (super-accept)
 or : 1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♦ etc. Sequence B (normal accept)
 With Hand D: 1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 4♣ etc. Sequence C (super-accept)
 or : 1NT - 2NT - 3♦ - 4♣ etc. Sequence D (normal accept)

We only transfer into a minor and then bid the other when holding 10+ cards in the minors; with 5-4 or 4-5 we would use SARS. Now we have an idea about suitable hands for sequences A - D, but what are the continuations?

4.3.1 Asking for Aces or Key cards when Responder has a Minor-Minor Two Suiter

After sequence A/B opener or responder may eventually ask for key cards. After sequence C/D it is only responder who may ask – we come onto that later. Since responder has at least ten cards in the minors in all of the sequences we need to use DRKCB (or EDRKCB). The actual bid for this ask will be discussed later, but the replies are as expected –

After a keycard ask the responses are: -

Next step = 0 or 3 key cards
Next step + 1 = 1 or 4 key cards
Next step + 2 = 2 or 5 key cards, no ♣Q or ♦Q
Next step + 2 = 2 or 5 key cards + ♣Q or ♦Q or both

After a 0/3 or 1/4 response the next free bid asks for queens. The responses are: -

Next step = no queen
Next step + 1 = ♣Q
Next step + 2 = ♦Q
Next step + 3 = both queens

And after a 2/5 response showing a queen, the next free bid asks for clarification: -

Next step = ♣Q
Next step + 1 = ♦Q
Next step + 2 = both queens

Further Extensions to DRKCB (and EDRKCB)

Now we have seen that the key queens are very important cards, usually more important than a non-key king. But very occasionally asker may need to know about outside kings, the way to ask is that the free bid above a queen ask or queen clarification asks about non-key kings. If the response to DRKCB was 2/5 denying a queen then it's the next free bid that asks for kings. And after a queen ask or clarification and response then the next free bid asks for kings.

The responses to a king ask are: -

Next step = no king
Next step + 1 = ♥K
Next step + 2 = ♠K
Next step + 3 = both kings

This king ask is normally only employed when all the key cards and key queens are present and a grand slam is in the offing.

4.3.2 The continuations after Sequence A/B, 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦

So here we are specifically considering the sequences: -

Sequence A: 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♦ ... (super-accept)

Sequence B: 1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♦ ... (normal accept)

It does not matter if opener has super-accepted or not as the continuations are identical.

With Sequence A or B (as opposed to Sequence C or D) we are at a nice low level and either party can describe their hand/get in the appropriate Blackwood bid or whatever in relative ease. Responder's 3♦ bid is forcing to game and typically shows 5-5 or 4-6 or 5-6 in the minors (usually more ♣'s than ♦'s or equal length). Opener has two possible bids below 3NT (3♥ and 3♠) and these will be defined shortly

Opener's options are thus 3♥/♠ (to be defined) 3NT (natural) or 4♣/♦. The 4♣/♦ bids state that 3NT is questionable and that a ♣ or ♦ contract would be preferable.

We will be covering everything in detail shortly, but let's first set the groundwork. Clearly opener will bid 3NT with cover in both majors, but what should opener do if he cannot bid 3NT? Presumably he cannot bid 3NT because he has one or two doubtful majors. In that case he has good cards in one or both minors and slam could well be there if responder has a decent hand. But how should opener continue? What would a 3♥ or 3♠ bid mean?

Without discussion these would probably be cue bids, but with a weak major it is surely best for opener to find out about responder's major suits, in particular shortage.

Here we are specifically concerned with sequence A/B. 3NT is natural. 4♣ and 4♦ are best used to set trumps when opener has no desperate need to establish responder's shortage. These bids generally deny a major suit ace. We shall use 3♥ as the shortage ask and we use 3♠ as a general waiting bid when opener has no 4 card minor (so can't bid 4♣/♦), is not really interested in shortage and cannot bid 3NT. All of this is covered shortly.

So after 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦ we have: -

3♥	=	shortage ask
3♠	=	a waiting bid
3NT	=	natural, both majors covered
4♣	=	♣'s are trumps
4♦	=	♦'s are trumps

Here we have 4 distinct bids (4♣ & 4♦ are similar) that opener may make and we will be covering them all in detail in this order: -

- 4.3.2.1 3NT - natural, both majors covered.
- 4.3.2.2 3♥ - shortage ask.
- 4.3.2.3 4♣/♦ - natural, setting the trump suit
- 4.3.2.4 3♠ - a waiting bid.

4.3.2.1 3NT - natural, after sequence A/B

With cover in both majors, opener tries 3NT: -

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ64	♠ 9	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ AQ64	♥ 103	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ Q64	♦ A9872	3NT (4)	pass (5)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♣ K5	♣ AJ874			(4) both majors covered

(5) East has shown his shape and is more than happy if West has both majors covered and suggests 3NT.

But opener does not really need such robust majors. He should assume that responder has a decent hand and so all he really needs is stops in both majors.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ64	♠ 9	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ KJ64	♥ 103	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ KQ4	♦ A9872	3NT (4)	pass	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♣ K5	♣ AJ874			(4) both majors covered

Very occasionally responder will wish to pull this 3NT to 5 of a minor.

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ K87	♠ 10	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ AJ10	♥ 7	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ Q753	♦ AKJ4	3NT (4)	5♣ (5)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♣ AJ2	♣ 10986543	5♦	pass	(4) both majors covered
				(5) pass or correct

But if responder has a strong slam seeking hand he will make a noise over 3NT.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ QJ64	♠ 9	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ KJ64	♥ A	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ KQ4	♦ A9872	3NT (4)	? (5)	(4) both majors covered
♣ K5	♣ AQ8764			

Now the continuations after 3NT when responder wishes to look for slam have to be defined: -

After 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦ - 3NT we have: -	4♣ = DRKCB
	4♦ =
	4♥ = EDRKCB
	4♠ = EDRKCB
	4NT = quantitative
	5♣ = pass or correct

Example 4 cont.

West	East	
3NT (4)	4♣ (5)	(5) DRKCB
4NT (6)	6♣	(6) 2 key cards + a queen
6♦	pass	

Example 5

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ QJ64	♠ -	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ KQ6	♥ A	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ KQ4	♦ A98762	3NT (4)	4♠ (5)	(4) both majors covered
♣ K52	♣ AJ8764	5♥ (6)	5♠ (7)	(5) EDRKCB
		6♣ (8)	6♦ (9)	(6) 2 key cards + a queen
		pass		(7) clarify queens
				(8) ♦Q only

East is not certain about the grand at (9) – he was hoping for a two queen reply. He knows that West has the ♦KQx(x) and that the ♣Q is missing. There is no real way to establish if the ♣K is doubleton or not and so stopping in 6♦ is very sensible.

Now very occasionally (when both key queens are present) responder may wish to ask for major suit kings.

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ QJ64	♠ A	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ QJ64	♥ A2	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ AQ4	♦ KJ872	3NT (4)	4♣ (5)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♣ K5	♣ AQJ76	4NT (6)	5♠ (7)	(4) both majors covered
		5NT (8)	6NT	(5) DRKCB
		pass		(6) 2 key cards + a queen
				(7) non-key kings?
				(8) neither

If East had bid 5♥ at (7) then that would ask for clarification of queens. So the next free bid asks for kings (confirming that all key cards and key queens are present). Either major suit king would have been enough for the grand.

Sometimes responder will have to ask for queens before a king ask.

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ K964	♠ A	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ Q864	♥ A2	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ AK4	♦ Q10872	3NT (4)	4♣ (5)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♣ KQ	♣ AJ976	4♦ (6)	4♥ (7)	(4) both majors covered
		4NT (8)	5♥ (9)	(5) DRKCB
		6♣ (10)	7NT	(6) 3 key cards
		pass		(7) queens?
				(8) ♣Q only
				(9) non-key kings?
				(10) ♠K

Note the importance of playing DRKCB as opposed to RKCB. East needed to establish both the ♦ K,Q and the ♣Q before investigating the grand.

4.3.2.2 3♥ - The shortage ask after sequence A/B.

Let's see how the shortage ask works. Responder has at least 10 cards in the minors (with 5-4 or 4-5 he uses SARS) and so has at most 3 cards in the majors.

after 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦, 3♥ enquires about responder's shortage: -

- 3♠ = singleton ♥
- 3NT = singleton ♠
- 4♣ = void ♥
- 4♦ = void ♠
- 4♥ = EDRKCB
- 4♠ = EDRKCB
- 4NT = DRKCB
- 5♣ = no slam interest – pass or correct.

Responder uses the 4♥/♠/NT bids when he has a hand that is too strong to allow opener to take charge (a possible grand slam).

Warning: *This shortage ask and the 3♠ waiting bid are something new and unless you have agreed it, most players would take them as a cue bids. Be very careful. If you (or your partner) are likely to forget this convention (and make a cue bid) then skip this section!*

If opener bids 4♥ after ascertaining the shortage this is DRKCB.

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ J72	♠ 9	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ AJ7	♥ 63	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ KQ64	♦ A8732	3♥ (4)	3NT (5)	(4) shortage?
♣ AQ5	♣ KJ874	4♥ (6)	5♣ (7)	(5) singleton ♠
		6♦	pass	(6) DRKCB
				(7) 2 key cards, no queen

That clearly works fine. But after a response to the shortage ask that defines the singleton/void opener may wish to show no further slam interest. This is easy when the response is at a lowish level (4♣/♦ = no slam interest and 4♥ = DRKCB) but if 4♣/♦ are not available then we have to define the no slam interest bids. Simple, we use 5♣/♦ when the 4 level is unavailable. Thus we have: -

After 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥: -

Responder replies: -

Opener's next bid: -

3♠ =	singleton ♥	→	4♥ =	DRKCB,	4♣/4♦ =	no slam interest
3NT =	singleton ♠	→	4♥ =	DRKCB,	4♣/4♦ =	no slam interest
4♣ =	void ♥	→	4♥ =	DRKCB,	5♣/4♦ =	no slam interest
4♦ =	void ♠	→	4♥ =	DRKCB,	5♣/5♦ =	no slam interest

After any of the 'no slam interest' bids by opener, 4♥ by responder is always DRKCB. Now there would appear to be a problem when opener has bid 5♣ or 5♦. But actually there is not; if responder has a void and is still interested in slam after opener has signed off opposite the void, then responder has a hand strong enough that he should have 'broken' the shortage ask by bidding EDRKCB over opener's 3♥ bid.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ J72	♠ 63	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ AJ7	♥ 9	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ KQ64	♦ A8732	3♥ (4)	3♠ (5)	(4) shortage?
♣ AQ5	♣ KJ874	4♦ (6)	5♦	(5) singleton ♥
		pass		(6) wrong shortage

Example 3

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ J72	♠ A3	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ AJ7	♥ 9	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ KQ64	♦ A8732	3♥ (4)	3♠ (5)	(4) shortage?
♣ AQ5	♣ KJ874	4♦ (6)	4♥ (7)	(5) singleton ♥
		4♠ (8)	4NT (9)	(6) wrong shortage
		5♠ (10)	6♦ or 6NT (11)	(7) DRKCB
		pass		(8) 3 key cards
				(9) queens?
				(10) both

(11) East knows that 7♦ may well make, but not if West is 4243.

With a rock crusher responder cannot let opener take control and so he has to 'break the shortage ask' by bidding DRKCB or EDRKCB over the 3♥ shortage ask. Remember, responder knows that opener is interested in at least one of the minor suits (not necessarily ♣'s even after a super-accept) and has a major suit ace when making a shortage ask.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ J72	♠ AK	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ AJ7	♥ 9	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ KQ64	♦ A8732	3♥ (4)	4NT (5)	(4) shortage?
♣ AQ5	♣ KJ874	5♣ (6)	5♥ (7)	(5) DRKCB
		6♦ (8)	7♣	(6) 3 key cards
		7♦	pass	(7) queens?
				(8) both

And when responder has a void and wants to take control, it's EDRKCB.

Example 5

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ J72	♠ -	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ AJ7	♥ KQ	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ KQ64	♦ A8732	3♥ (4)	4♠ (5)	(4) shortage?
♣ AQ5	♣ KJ8764	4NT (6)	5♥ (7)	(5) EDRKCB
		6♦ (8)	7♣	(6) 3 key cards
		7♦	pass	(7) queens?
				(8) both

When responder wants to settle in 5 of a minor he should bid 5♣ and offer opener the choice of minor suit.

Example 6

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ Q87	♠ 6	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ AJ10	♥ 7	3♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ K7532	♦ AQ84	3♥ (4)	5♣ (5)	(4) shortage?
♣ AJ	♣ 10986543	5♦	pass	(5) pass or correct

(5) East cannot be sure which suit West likes. It's probably ♦'s but it could just be ♣'s. East wants to play in game in the best one and so bids 5♣ which West will correct.

4.3.2.3 4♣/♦ - setting the trump suit after sequence A/B.

When West has reasonable holdings in both majors there is little point in asking for shortage (and he should have a ♥/♠ ace for the shortage ask). If the majors are not good enough for 3NT then he has to find another bid. With definite preference for one minor (a 4 card suit) then he bids 4 of the minor to set trumps: -

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ QJ2	♠ 63	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ Q84	♥ 9	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ KQ65	♦ A8732	4♦ (4)	5♦	(4) I prefer ♦'s
♣ AQ5	♣ KJ874	pass		

Note that it is unlikely that West has a major suit ace when he bids 4♣/♦ as he would normally then ask for shortage.

When opener bids 4♣/♦ over 3♦ it sets the trump suit (although we still use DRKCB of course). It's easiest on the memory if we use 4♥/♠ as the EDRKCB bids.

After 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦ - 4♣

4♦ = DRKCB
 4♥ = EDRKCB
 4♠ = EDRKCB

After 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦ - 4♦

4♥ = EDRKCB
 4♠ = EDRKCB
 4NT = DRKCB

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ QJ6	♠ A3	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ QJ5	♥ 2	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ AJ96	♦ KQ732	4♦ (4)	4NT (5)	(4) I prefer ♦'s
♣ AJ5	♣ KQ987	5♥ (6)	6♦	(5) DRKCB
		pass		(6) 2 key cards, no queen

4.3.2.4 3♠ - a waiting bid after sequence A/B.

When opener makes the 'waiting' 3♠ bid then the onus is back on responder. The 3♠ bid generally denies a major suit ace (otherwise opener would ask for shortage) and also denies good enough majors to bid 3NT. Responder will often sign off in five of a minor. But with a good hand (either a major suit ace or a void) he may press on. The responses to the 'waiting' 3♠ are: -

after 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦ - 3♠ we have: -

3NT	=	DRKCB
4♣	=	EDRKCB (♥'s)
4♦	=	EDRKCB (♠'s)
4♥	=	
4♠	=	
4NT	=	please bid 5♣ or 5♦

Example 1

Here West has a holding not good enough for 3NT and so with no definite preference for either minor he passes the buck with a 'waiting' 3♠ bid: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q92	♠ 63	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ QJ64	♥ -	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) super-accept
♦ KQ6	♦ A8753	3♠ (4)	4NT (5)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♣ AQ5	♣ KJ8742	5♣	pass	(4) waiting
				(5) please bid 5♣ or 5♦

The 3♠ waiting bid is generally not interested in slam, just the best minor suit game. But East may have a more powerful hand: -

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q92	♠ A	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ QJ42	♥ 3	2NT (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) super-accept
♦ KQ6	♦ A8753	3♠ (4)	3NT (5)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♣ AQ5	♣ K98742	4♠ (6)	4NT (7)	(4) waiting
		5♥ (8)	6♣ (9)	(5) DRKCB
		pass		(6) 2 key cards + a queen
				(7) clarify queens
				(8) both
				(9) pass or correct

4.3.3 The continuations after Sequence C/D, 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 4♣

So here we are considering the sequences: -

Sequence C: 1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 4♣ ... (super-accept)
Sequence D: 1NT - 2NT - 3♦ - 4♣ ... (normal accept)

With big hands and equal length minors (5-5) it is best to transfer into ♣'s as there is then more bidding space to investigate slam.

So here responder has more ♦'s than ♣'s, usually 6 ♦'s and 4 or 5 ♣'s. But note that with a good hand with 6 ♦'s and 5 ♣'s it may well be best to use sequence A/B as there is so much more room for investigating slam.

After 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 4♣, opener does not know if responder is weakish or not. What's more there is precious little room and opener cannot bid much higher because responder needs room for a possible Blackwood bid. If opener were to bid 4NT then 5♣ or 5♦ by responder would be a sign off and so there is no room for Blackwood. Responder could elect to use Sequence A or B of course when everything is simple. But if responder has longer ♦'s than ♣'s and slam interest he may choose the more space consuming route in order to emphasise his ♦'s.

Hand E	Take Hand E for example. Partner has opened 1NT and this hand wants to be in slam. 6 or 7♣ will be fine with a 4 card ♣ fit, but with no ♣ fit a 6-3♦ fit will do nicely. So this hand really has to use Sequence C/D. Now it is also possible to bid SARS or a splinter with this type of hand and I would not argue (but the ♥'s are a bit too weak for a splinter), but most people would prefer the more natural approach to emphasise their good suits, so transfer into the long suit and then bid the other.
♠ -	
♥ A73	
♦ KJ9754	
♣ AK84	

As it certainly is possible that responder has slam in mind and needs bidding space opener cannot bid too high. Thus we restrict opener's next bid to 4♦; this is a simple waiting bid. This then leaves responder maximum room to investigate slam.

After the 4♦ waiting bid responder's options are: -

4♥ = EDRKCB
4♠ = EDRKCB
4NT = DRKCB
5♣ = pass or correct

Example 1 An example from a recent teams event. 3NT was reached at one table and 5♦ at the other (neither were successful). The bidding given shows how the best contract can be reached if you play 4-way transfers.

West	East	West	East
♠ K87	♠ 10	1NT	2NT (1)
♥ AJ10	♥ 7	3♦ (2)	4♣ (3)
♦ AJ	♦ 10986543	4♦ (4)	5♣ (5)
♣ Q7532	♣ AKJ4	pass	

- (1) transfer to ♦'s
- (2) not quite good enough to super-accept
- (3) ♦-♣ two suiter, game forcing
- (4) forced (waiting)
- (5) East signs off. He bids 5♣ which West will normally correct to 5♦ unless he has 4+ ♣'s.

Note that in this sequence East may be weak(ish) and West cannot take control (with DRKCB or whatever). The 4♦ bid at (4) is mandatory.

If opener has a very suitable hand he may occasionally over-rule responder's decision to sign off in 5 of a minor. Opener knows that responder probably has a singleton in each major.

Example 2

West	East	West	East
♠ J7	♠ 10	1NT	2NT (1)
♥ AJ10	♥ 7	3♣ (2)	4♣ (3)
♦ AK2	♦ 10986543	4♦ (4)	5♣ (5)
♣ Q7532	♣ AKJ4	6♣ (6)	pass

- (1) transfer to ♦'s
- (2) super-accept
- (3) ♦-♣ two suiter, game forcing
- (4) forced (waiting)
- (5) East signs off
- (6) With excellent minors and a major suit ace, 6♣ is a good bet.

Example 3 But it will very often be responder who is looking for slam: -

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ K875	♠ 4	1NT	2NT (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ AJ10	♥ 9	3♦ (2)	4♣ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ AJ	♦ KQ9754	4♦ (4)	4NT (5)	(4) waiting
♣ Q753	♣ AK842	5♥ (6)	6♣ (7)	(5) DRKCB
		pass		(6) 2 key cards + a queen
				(7) pass or correct

Example 4 With a void, responder uses EDRKCB: -

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ K875	♠ -	1NT	2NT (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ KJ10	♥ A73	3♦ (2)	4♣ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ AQ	♦ KJ9754	4♦ (4)	4♠ (5)	(4) waiting
♣ Q753	♣ AK84	5♣ (6)	5♥ (7)	(5) EDRKCB
		6♦ (8)	7♣ (9)	(6) 1 key card
		pass		(7) queens?
				(8) both
				(9) pass or correct

Finally, remember this example 1 from the start of section 4.3? We now know how East signs off in 5 of a minor: -

Example 1(4.3) cont.

West	East (B)	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ J96	♠ 4	1NT	2NT (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ AK87	♥ 9	3♦ (2)	4♣ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ Q4	♦ K108632	4♦ (4)	5♣ (5)	(4) waiting
♣ AQ65	♣ KJ974	pass		(5) pass or correct

But make the West hand slightly more suitable and he could go on to slam: -

West	East (B)	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ A96	♠ 4	1NT	2NT (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ A876	♥ 9	3♦ (2)	4♣ (3)	(3) 2 nd suit, forcing
♦ QJ	♦ K108632	4♦ (4)	5♣ (5)	(4) waiting
♣ AQ65	♣ KJ974	6♣	pass	(5) pass or correct

4.4 The single (minor) suited hand

Partner opens 1NT, we have a long minor suit and immediately have options. We have already met a few of these: -

- 1 - pass 1NT
- 2 - transfer into our minor and then pass
- 3 - invite 3NT by bidding 2NT (via Stayman as we play 4-way transfers)
- 4 - transfer into our minor and then bid 3NT only over a super-accept
- 5 - bid 3NT directly
- 6 - transfer into our minor and then bid 3NT
- 7 - transfer into our minor and then bid 5 of the minor
- 8 - bid a quantitative 4NT directly
- 9 - transfer into our minor and then bid a quantitative 4NT
- 10 - transfer into our minor and then splinter
- 11 - transfer into our minor and then ask about key cards
- 12 - ask about aces directly (Gerber)

Let's have a quick example of each: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 1 has no ambitions and 1NT is probably better than 3♦, so pass.
♠ J63	♠ K7	♠ J76	Hand 2 will play better in ♦'s. So transfer and pass 3♦ (convert a super-accept 3♣ into 3♦).
♥ 64	♥ 93	♥ 93	Hand 3 invites, so 2NT (via 2♣).
♦ K8563	♦ J109765	♦ KJ975	
♣ Q52	♣ 742	♣ K42	
Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6	Hand 4 transfers and then bids 3NT only if partner super-accepts.
♠ Q93	♠ Q93	♠ J3	Hand 5 simply bids 3NT without transferring.
♥ 95	♥ Q5	♥ K6	Hand 6 is stronger. Slam is possible so transfer and then bid 3NT over a normal accept.
♦ KJ9862	♦ KQ6532	♦ KQJ876	
♣ 97	♣ 97	♣ K64	
Hand 7	Hand 8	Hand 9	Hand 7. Anything could be right, but 5♦ is probably a good bet. So transfer and bid it, or maybe even bid 5♦ directly.
♠ -	♠ A6	♠ A6	Hand 8 does not want to emphasise this ♦ suit.
♥ J5	♥ KJ3	♥ J85	He could (should) have tried SARS. I guess a quantitative 4NT is not unreasonable?
♦ QJ1086432	♦ K9864	♦ AQJ96	Hand 9 is similar but has a decent ♦ suit, so transfer and then bid a quantitative 4NT.
♣ J73	♣ KJ2	♣ K42	
Hand 10	Hand 11	Hand 12	Hand 10 is also slam invitational, but with a singleton we indicate this by splintering.
♠ K85	♠ A	♠ A	Hand 11 transfers and then bids RKCB (4♦).
♥ 4	♥ KQ	♥ A	Hand 12 only needs to know about aces, so Gerber directly.
♦ AQ9765	♦ QJ98752	♦ KQJ9862	
♣ J95	♣ KQJ	♣ KQJ10	

4.4.1 Transfer followed by 3NT

Suppose partner opens a strong NT and we have an excellent hand containing a good long minor suit. Traditionally we bid 3 of our minor, game forcing and looking for slam. However we now have 4-way transfers and can show these hand types by transferring first. This has a number of advantages: -

- 1) The NT bidder gets to play the hand more often, whether game or slam.
- 2) Responder knows immediately if opener has good support for the minor (he will super-accept).
- 3) It frees the direct jumps for another purpose (see 5.2).

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	All of these hands are worthy of an attempt at slam and directly bidding the suit at the three level is a way to handle these strong hands. However, they can all be satisfactorily dealt with using transfers and we have another use for the direct 3 level bids - see 5.2.
♠ J3	♠ A6	♠ K7	
♥ K6	♥ 93	♥ A93	
♦ K64	♦ AQJ654	♦ AKJ762	
♣ KQJ876	♣ K64	♣ 64	

So, with these big hands with a minor suit, we transfer. If partner super-accepts then we either bid 3NT or we can investigate slam. 4NT is quantitative (see next section). You have to decide which bids are RKCB; we will continue to use Kickback.

Unlike previous sections, there is a difference when opener has super-accepted. If opener has super-accepted then a 3NT bid by responder means that he needed the additional help from opener. If there was no super-accept then why didn't responder bid 3NT directly over 1NT? The answer is that his hand is too good and the sequence is mildly slam invitational.

So let's start with the super-accept as that's simplest,

1NT - 2♠ - 2NT - 3NT and 1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 3NT.

This really is the main point of having the super-accept. If opener has three to an honour in the transfer suit he should super-accept and responder will bid 3NT with a decent suit/hand: -

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ KJ7	♠ 86	1NT	2♠	(2) super-accept
♥ AJ105	♥ 96	2NT	(2) 3NT	
♦ AJ105	♦ 642	pass		
♣ K95	♣ AQ8762			

East can be sure of 6 ♣ tricks and so it only remains for West to find 3 tricks elsewhere.

Now let's move on to when opener has made a normal accept,

1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3NT and 1NT - 2NT - 3♦ - 3NT

Opener may pass. If he wishes to investigate slam then he can bid Kickback. If he has a hand unsuitable for Blackwood (a weak suit) then he can bid 4 of the minor which invites responder to bid Kickback with a suitable hand or else cue bid.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ74	♠ J3	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ AJ105	♥ K6	3♣ (2)	3NT (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ AJ	♦ K64	pass (4)		(3) looking for slam
♣ 952	♣ KQJ876			(4) I'm minimum

This East hand is a bit light to look for slam, but it is worth it if opener has the right cards, a good long suit is a big plus: -

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ A1074	♠ J3	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ AQ9	♥ K6	3♣ (2)	3NT (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ AQJ	♦ K64	4♦ (4)	etc to 6♣	(3) looking for slam
♣ 952	♣ KQJ876			(4) RKCB

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ J74	♠ A	1NT	2♠ (1)	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♥ AKQ9	♥ 864	3♣ (2)	3NT (3)	(2) normal accept
♦ AQ3	♦ K64	4♣ (4)	4♦ (5)	(3) looking for slam
♣ 952	♣ KQJ876	etc to 6♣		(4) slam interest
				(5) RKCB

West did not want to bid RKCB at (4) because of potential ♠ losers off the top.

4.4.2 Transfer followed by 4NT

This is clearly quantitative, but there is a distinction between hands where opener has super-accepted and those where he has not. The difference is that after a normal accept then 3NT is already slam invitational (because responder would have simply bid 3NT over 1NT if he had no slam ambitions). But after a super-accept 3NT simply means that responder needs help in the minor for 3NT.

Note that we do not generally bid 4NT with a singleton, but prefer a slam invitational splinter (see 4.4.4).

Let's start with the situation after a super-accept. Responder simply has a slam invitational hand.

So 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT - 4NT and 1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 4NT.

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ KJ74	♠ 65	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ A9	♥ K6	2NT (2)	4NT (3)	(3) quantitative
♦ AQ32	♦ K64	6♣	pass	
♣ K52	♣ AQJ876			

With a max and good top cards, opener has no problem in accepting the slam invitation.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ KJ74	♠ 65	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ AJ	♥ K6	2NT (2)	4NT (3)	(3) quantitative
♦ QJ32	♦ K64	pass (4)		
♣ K52	♣ AQJ876			

But this West hand is minimum and so declines the invitation. A pass of 4NT is probably better than bidding 5♣ (to play).

That's pretty straightforward, so let's look at the situation after a normal accept, this time responder has a very good hand as 3NT is already slam invitational.

So 1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - 4NT and 1NT - 2NT - 3♦ - 4NT.

Example 3

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ KJ74	♠ 65	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ AQ9	♥ KJ	3♣ (2)	4NT (3)	(3) quantitative
♦ AQ32	♦ K64	pass		
♣ 52	♣ AKJ1076			

With no more than a bare minimum and very poor ♣'s, West cannot accept the slam invitation.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ K974	♠ 65	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ A92	♥ KJ	3♣ (2)	4NT (3)	(3) quantitative
♦ AQ32	♦ K64	6NT	pass	
♣ Q2	♣ AKJ1076			

Here West is absolutely minimum, but 4NT is extremely encouraging and this time the ♣Q is a golden card; that's what makes the difference.

4.4.3 Transfer followed by 4 of the minor

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	These hands are too good to simply rebid 3NT after transferring. The answer is to transfer and then bid the minor at the 4 level. This shows an excellent hand, looking for slam. Since we have gone past 3NT responder must have very strong slam ambitions.
♠ 6	♠ A6	♠ 64	
♥ K6	♥ 9	♥ K93	
♦ AK4	♦ AKQJ654	♦ AKQJ76	
♣ KQJ8762	♣ K64	♣ K6	

Now here we have a slight problem. We have a very big single suited hand, seriously looking for slam (whether opener has super-accepted or not). But we are rather high and we do not wish our RKCB bid to be above the Kickback level. You could choose to use Kickback, but we really need the Kickback suit as a splinter (next section).

The answer is that 4 of the minor is also RKCB.

So here we are concerned with the sequences: -

1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 4♣ and 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 4♦

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ KQJ4	♠ A6	1NT	2NT	(2) normal accept
♥ QJ7	♥ 9	3♦ (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) long ♦'s, RKCB
♦ 973	♦ AKQJ654	etc to 6♦		
♣ AQJ	♣ K64			

Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ KJ53	♠ Q4	1NT	2NT	(2) normal accept
♥ AQ74	♥ K93	3♦ (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) long ♦'s, RKCB
♦ 953	♦ AKQJ76	etc to 6♦ or 6NT		
♣ AJ	♣ K6			

Note that some experts state that 4 of the minor in the sequences 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 4♣ and 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 4♦ is invitational. This, in my view, is nonsense. There are not many hands where you would want to invite 5♣/♦ and possibly play in 4♣/♦ instead of 3NT.

When one asks for key cards and there are two missing, it is usually preferable to stop in 4NT rather than 5 of the minor, especially at matchpoint scoring.

Example 3

West	East	West	East		(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ QJ105	♠ K4	1NT	2NT	(1)	(2) normal accept
♥ AKJ	♥ Q103	3♦	4♦	(2)	(3) long ♦'s, RKCB
♦ J53	♦ KQ10976	4♠	4NT	(3)	(4) 1 key card
♣ KJ3	♣ AQ	pass		(4)	(5) sign off
				(5)	

Using 4-of-the-minor as RKCB means that it is virtually always possible to sign off in 4NT. The only possible exception is with ♦'s as trumps and when opener has two key cards plus the ♦Q: -

Example 4

West	East	West	East		(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ KJ52	♠ Q4	1NT	2NT	(1)	(2) super-accept
♥ AJ10	♥ KQ3	3♣	4♦	(2)	(3) long ♦'s, RKCB
♦ Q53	♦ KJ10976	5♣	5♦	(3)	(4) 2 key cards + ♦Q
♣ AJ3	♣ KQ	pass		(4)	(5) sign off
				(5)	

4.4.4 Splinters after a minor suit transfer

Hand A This hand comes from a club competition, how do you bid it after partner opens 1NT? Obviously you start with a 2♠ transfer to ♣'s and suppose that partner super-accepts with 2NT. What now? You have a slam invitational hand and probably the deciding factor is the ♥ singleton. Partner needs to know this. So, after a minor suit transfer we need splinters whether opener has super-accepted or not. It's best to play these splinters as slam invitational, i.e. not as strong as the hands in section 4.4.3 where we launched into RKCB.

Thus we have: -

After 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ ,

4♦ = ♦ shortage
 4♥ = ♥ shortage
 4♠ = ♠ shortage

After 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ ,

4♥ = ♥ shortage
 4♠ = ♠ shortage
 5♣ = ♣ shortage

Example 1 This is the actual hand from the club. If opener likes the shortage he can check for keycards (next free bid – if there is one below 4NT) or simply bid slam.

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ A97	♠ K85	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ 762	♥ 4	2NT (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) ♥ shortage
♦ AKQ7	♦ J95	4♠ (4)	5♣ (5)	(4) RKCB
♣ K108	♣ AQ9765	6♣	pass	(5) 1 key card

Example 2 But with wasted values he signs off.

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
♠ A74	♠ K85	1NT	2NT (1)	(2) super-accept
♥ K62	♥ 4	3♣ (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) ♥ shortage
♦ K108	♦ AQ9765	5♦	pass	
♣ KQ72	♣ J95			

Example 3 And sometimes 4NT may be better than 5 of the minor.

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♣'s
♠ AJ7	♠ K85	1NT	2♠ (1)	(2) normal accept
♥ AQ72	♥ 4	3♣ (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) ♥ shortage
♦ K1072	♦ J95	4NT	pass	
♣ K10	♣ AQ9765			

4.4.5 Transfer followed by 5 of the minor

If you transfer and then bid 5 of the minor then you have bypassed 3NT and used up valuable bidding space. I guess that the only excuse can be that 5 of the minor is probably the only viable game contract and slam is remote?

So here we are concerned with the sequences: -

1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 5♣ and 1NT - 2NT - 3♣/♦ - 5♦

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) transfer to ♦'s
				(2) normal accept
♠ Q953	♠ -	1NT	2NT	(1)
♥ AQ74	♥ J5	3♦	(2) 5♦	(3)
♦ 95	♦ QJ1086432			
♣ AKQ	♣ J73			

There are no guarantees, of course. Sometimes game will fail and very occasionally a slam will be missed. But 5 of the minor is generally a good bet on hands like this, especially if played by West. Remember, opener has denied Axx or Kxx by not super-accepting.

A perhaps preferable alternative is to simply bid 5♦ at (1).

Any Disadvantages with 4-way transfers?

Now every convention gives up something (the use of the bid as natural). Here we have used 2NT as a transfer but have overcome any obstacles. So any drawbacks? There are a couple. Since you cannot bid a direct invitational 2NT but have to go via Stayman then the opponents will learn about opener's (and so probably declarer's) shape. Also, the 2♣ bid may be doubled for a lead or whatever. A small price to pay for such a powerful convention.

Alternatives

Some players prefer to have the super-accept and normal accept the other way round. This has the advantage that opener is declarer in many high level contracts (but not all). But it has the disadvantage that opener will not be declarer in so many part-scores! Swings and roundabouts. Let's keep it simple and play the 'standard' way.

*** End of Chapter 4 ***