

When partner opens 1NT then he has said it all – a balanced hand in the 15-17 point range, with at least two cards in every suit.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5
♠ 982	♠ J92	♠ K92	♠ K92	♠ K92
♥ Q10852	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052
♦ J87	♦ J87	♦ J87	♦ A107	♦ A107
♣ Q9	♣ 95	♣ 95	♣ Q5	♣ A5

Consider these five hands after partner has opened 1NT (15-17). They all have a decent 5 card ♥ suit and either ♥'s or NT could possibly be the final contract with all five. But Hand 1 is weak, Hand 2 is invitational, Hand 3 is worth game, Hand 4 is slam invitational and Hand 5 is definitely worth slam. But how do we inform partner that we have a ♥ suit and then also tell partner about our strength?

With traditional natural methods you bid naturally. So 2♥, weak with hand 1. With Hands 3,4 and 5 you bid 3♥, forcing. Quite what you are meant to do with hand 2 is undefined. Just toss a coin? Of course it's totally unworkable, you cannot define weak, invitational and strong hands with just two bids (2♥ & 3♥); the solution was found by Oswald Jacoby. With all of these hands your first bid is 2♦, a transfer that says that you have 5 ♥'s (any strength) and requests partner to bid 2♥, regardless of his strength or ♥ holding. The same applies with a ♠ suit, when 2♥ is the transfer bid.

Once opener complies with our transfer request, we then show the strength of our hand. In all of these examples we have a 5 card ♥ suit. Our initial transfer promises at least 5 cards in the suit and so we *do not* repeat it. All of these hands are relatively balanced and so NT is the natural rebid.

How does the bidding progress with our 5 example hands?

Hand 1: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - pass. This hand is not strong enough to bid again. You need 8-9 points to invite and so the only options were to pass the original 1NT or to transfer and then pass. Transferring usually works out best.

Hand 2: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT. An invitational sequence. With a minimal hand, opener may either pass or bid 3♥. With a maximum he will bid either 3NT or 4♥.

Hand 3: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3NT. This shows game values with 5 ♥'s. If opener has 4 ♥'s he will convert to 4♥; if opener has only 2 ♥'s he will pass 3NT; if opener has 3 ♥'s he usually elects to go for the 5-3 fit but may pass 3NT with good holdings in the other suits.

Hand 4: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4NT. This is a slam invitation showing a 5 card ♥ suit.

Hand 5: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♣. As we use 4NT as a natural slam invitation this is Gerber, asking for aces on the way to slam. I will cover ace asking conventions (Blackwood and Gerber) in subsequent news-sheets.

Fine, but what does responder do if he has an unbalanced hand and so does not want to bid NT at his 2nd turn? Perhaps a 6 card suit, or a 2nd suit? We will cover this when we look at Jacoby transfers in more detail next week.