

This is an extract from the ‘Beginner’s Pages’ and basic Jacoby transfers are covered. Jacoby transfers are covered in much more detail in chapter 3 of the advanced NT bidding book.

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 1♥, 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. Ace asking conventions (Blackwood and Gerber) are covered elsewhere

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? So let’s have a look at responding hands that are not relatively balanced: -

Hand 6	Hand 7	Hand 8	Hand 9	Hand 10	Hand 11
♠ 2	♠ J9	♠ 92	♠ 92	♠ J9	♠ 92
♥ Q10852	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ1052	♥ AQ10652	♥ AQ10652
♦ J8754	♦ J872	♦ KJ874	♦ AK107	♦ 872	♦ KJ87
♣ Q9	♣ 95	♣ 9	♣ A5	♣ 95	♣ 9

Consider the first 4 hands after partner has opened 1NT (15-17). They all have a decent 5 card ♥ suit but this time they also have a 2nd suit, so how should we bid them?

They all have a decent 5 card ♥ suit and either ♥’s, ♦’s or NT could possibly be the final contract with all four. But Hand 6 is weak, Hand 7 is invitational, Hand 8 is worth game and Hand 9 is worth slam. How do we

inform partner that we have a ♥ suit plus a ♦ suit and then also tell partner about our strength?

We start off with a 2♦ transfer bid with all of the hands.

Once opener complies with our transfer request, we then show the strength of our hand. In the examples 6-9 we have a 5 card ♥ suit. Our initial transfer promises at least 5 cards in the suit and we can now bid our 2nd suit naturally (if we are strong enough). But be careful, a transfer followed by a 2nd suit is always game forcing.

So how does the bidding progress with our first 4 example hands (6-9)?

- Hand 6: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - pass. This hand is not strong enough to bid again. You need 8-9 points to invite and it's best to play unbalanced hands in a suit contract. You are not strong enough to look for a ♦ fit as a 3♦ bid would be game forcing.
- Hand 7: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT. An invitational sequence, you cannot bid ♦'s as that would be game forcing; you really have no option but to treat the hand as balanced. With a minimal hand, opener may either pass or bid 3♥. With a maximum he will bid either 3NT or 4♥.
- Hand 8: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♦. This shows game values with 5 ♥'s and 4+ ♦'s. Partner should know enough to select the best game contract - 3NT, 4♥ or (rarely) 5♦.
- Hand 9: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♦. This sequence starts off the same, inform partner of your two suits and later investigate the best slam.

The last two hands (10&11) have a 6 card ♥ suit, how do we handle them? We start with a transfer and then bid the suit naturally - 3♥ is invitational to game and 4♥ is to play: -

- Hand 10: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♥. This shows an invitational hand with 6 ♥'s. Partner will either pass or bid 4♥.
- Hand 11: 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♥. This shows game values with 6 ♥'s. Partner will pass.

Remember, you need a 6 card suit to transfer and then bid the suit again. If you transfer and then bid a new suit, this is game forcing