

# What's Standard?

Using Grant Standard: Responding to 1NT — by David Lindop 

Previous articles in this series, the Grant Basic and Grant Standard Summary Charts, and corresponding convention cards, can be found at [www.audreygrant.com](http://www.audreygrant.com).

For responding to 1NT, the Summary Chart gives an overview of our methods:

| RESPONSES |                                                      |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 2♣:       | Stayman                                              |
| 2♦:       | 5+ hearts (transfer)                                 |
| 2♥:       | 5+ spades (transfer)                                 |
| 2♠:       | transfer to 3♣<br>(to sign off in clubs or diamonds) |
| 3♣/3♦:    | 6+ suit; invit. to 3NT                               |
| 3♥/3♠:    | Forcing; invit. to slam                              |

We previously looked at the basic use of Stayman and Transfers. Now let's look a little deeper.

## Exercising Judgment

Both Stayman and transfers are tools that are available and responder must choose when to use them.

♠ Q 8 3 Partner opens 1NT  
♥ 8 7 5 4 3 and we have to decide  
♦ K J what to do. With a  
♣ J 9 4 five-card major, we can respond 2♦ to transfer opener to 2♥ and pass, but is that the best choice? We can't be sure 2♥ will be better than 1NT. Partner might have a doubleton heart. Even if partner has three hearts, we might still take as many tricks in notrump as hearts with all our high cards in side suits.

Also, we have 7 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit, for a total of 8. With 8-9 points, we usually invite game. Should we plan to transfer to hearts and then bid 2NT, inviting game?

There's no right answer. Some players would pass 1NT; some would transfer to 2♥ and pass; some would transfer and bid 2NT. The point is that our conventions don't provide answers, just methods to apply once we decide what we want to do.

## Transfers and Slam

With a five-card or longer major, it seems automatic to start with a transfer when partner opens 1NT. However, if we also have 16 or more points and are interested in reaching slam, we must look ahead. A simple raise after a transfer is only inviting game and a jump to game is a signoff. How do we show slam interest?

♠ K J 3 Here we have 16  
♥ K J 9 7 4 high-card points plus  
♦ A Q 1 length point for the  
♣ Q 9 4 five-card suit. That's enough to invite slam but not enough to commit the partnership to slam. The way to do this is to start with a transfer to hearts and then bid 4NT:

| OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------|-----------|
| 1NT    | 2♦        |
| 2♥     | 4NT       |

4NT is not Blackwood. It's similar to a quantitative—invitational—raise from 1NT to 4NT except that we are showing a five-card heart suit along the way. With a minimum, opener can pass or bid 5♥ with three-card or longer support. With a maximum, opener can accept the invitation by jumping to 6♥ or 6NT.

♠ A J 10 8 5 Here we have 18  
♥ K J 2 high-card points and  
♦ Q 4 1 length point for  
♣ A K 5 the five-card suit. That's enough to bid slam. To show the five-card major and let opener choose between 6♠ and 6NT, we transfer to spades and jump to 5NT:

| OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------|-----------|
| 1NT    | 2♥        |
| 2♠     | 5NT       |

This isn't the grand slam force. It simply asks opener to pick a slam: 6♠ with three-card or longer support; otherwise 6NT. There's no need to ask for aces in this type of auction. We have enough combined strength that we shouldn't be missing two aces. It's more likely we could be missing the ♥A-Q or ♦A-K!

♠ A J A hand like this is a  
♥ K Q 9 8 5 little more awkward.  
♦ A Q 10 7 We aren't sure if we  
♣ 7 3 belong in slam and  
we also don't know whether we belong in hearts, diamonds, or notrump. Fortunately, we can do a little exploration because a new suit is forcing after a Jacoby transfer. We can begin the auction like this:

| OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------|-----------|
| 1NT    | 2♦        |
| 2♥     | 3♦        |

Our transfer bid of 2♦ shows five or more hearts and our subsequent bid of 3♦ is forcing, showing four or more diamonds. It doesn't say we forgot we were playing transfers!

Hopefully, opener's next bid will help us decide what to do. If opener bids 3♥, for example, showing support for hearts, we can cuebid 3♠ and begin looking for slam. If instead, partner bids 3NT, showing no interest in either hearts or diamonds, we can pass or make one more try with an invitational raise to 4NT.

No one said transfers were going to make things any easier! They just give us some new options.

♠ A J 9 8 7 5 With a six-card or  
♥ 3 longer major and  
♦ A Q J enough strength  
♣ A 9 3 for a slam, we can simply transfer to the major and bid slam. Here we could bid 2♥ to transfer to 2♠ and then jump to 6♠. But what if we want to invite slam with a six-card or longer suit, or explore delicately for a grand slam?

♠ 8 4 If we start with a  
♥ A K J 9 7 3 transfer of 2♦ and  
♦ Q J 3 opener bids 2♥,  
♣ A 4 what next? A raise to 3♥ would be invitational; a raise to 4♥ would be a signoff; a bid of 3♦ would show a second suit. We could jump to 5♥ as an invitation, but that risks getting us too high.

Some partnerships have methods (such as Texas transfer bids) to help get around this dilemma. In Grant Standard, however, we can use the popular approach of treating an immediate jump to 3♥ or 3♠ by responder as a slam try, showing a six-card or longer suit.

With a poor fit for the major, opener bids 3NT. With a good fit, opener can raise to game with a minimum or cuebid with a maximum. A bid of 4NT by responder would now be the Blackwood convention.

### From Opener's Side

After opening 1NT, most of opener's rebids are automatic. Even later bids are usually limited to answering questions posed by responder.

♠ K J 7 4 With a balanced hand  
♥ J 3 and 15 high-card  
♦ A Q 5 points, we open 1NT. If  
♣ K J 7 3 responder bids 2♣, we bid 2♠, showing the four-card major suit. If responder then raises to 3♠, we pass since responder is asking whether we have a minimum or a maximum, and we have a minimum.

If responder bids 2♦, we automatically accept the transfer by bidding 2♥. If responder then bids 2NT, we pass because we have a minimum. If responder bids 3NT—asking us to choose between 4♥ and 3NT—we pass with only a doubleton heart.

Opener does have one option when responder transfers. With four-card support, opener can “super accept” by jumping a level. (There are variations outside the current scope.) So, if partner were to respond 2♥, we could jump to 3♠ with this hand rather than bidding 2♠. This might get the partnership too high if responder has a weak hand and was planning to pass, but it might also get us to a close game if responder has a hand just short of an invitation.

### Partscore in a Minor

Since 2♣ is Stayman and 2♦ is a transfer to hearts, we have no way to stop in partscore at the two level in a minor suit. This is a disadvantage of these conventions. To play in a minor suit, we have to go to the three level.

Grant Standard use the popular approach of *extended transfers*, which takes advantage of the fact that a response of 2♠ is no longer needed to show spades when the partnership uses Jacoby transfers:

- 2♠ asks opener to bid 3♣

Responder can then pass to leave the partnership in a club partscore or bid 3♦ to play partscore in diamonds.

♠ 8 6 2 With this hand, we  
♥ 5 respond 2♠ to 1NT.  
♦ Q 10 8 7 5 2 When opener dutifully bids 3♣, we  
♣ J 8 3 bid 3♦ and opener is expected to pass.

This shows a weakness of extended transfers: the strong hand is dummy when responder has diamonds. However, methods to get around this (such as four suit transfers) are outside our current scope.

♠ 4 As usual, we have to  
♥ 7 5 2 exercise judgment as  
♦ J 9 7 2 responder. If partner  
♣ Q J 7 6 5 opens 1NT, we have a choice between passing and bidding 2♠ to get opener to bid 3♣. Will we be better off playing at the three level in clubs? Hard to tell. It's probably best to pass and let partner try to scramble seven tricks in 1NT.

♠ Q 4 Don't waste time  
♥ 7 5 transferring when  
♦ A J 5 the partnership is  
♣ K 10 8 7 6 5 headed for game. With this hand, simply raise to 3NT.

### Inviting Game in a Minor

Extended transfers don't provide a way to invite game with a minor suit. Since we rarely want to play in 5♣ or 5♦ even with a fit in a minor suit, we usually raise to 2NT to invite game when holding a five-card or longer minor suit.

♠ 8 6 With this hand, for  
♥ J 8 4 example, we simply  
♦ Q J 9 6 3 raise to 2NT and don't  
♣ A 10 4 mention diamonds.

However, with a good six-card minor suit—typically headed by two of the top three honors—our methods do provide an alternative:

- A jump to 3♣ or to 3♦ invites opener to bid 3NT.

♠ 8 3 With this hand,  
♥ 7 4 we would jump to  
♦ A Q 10 6 5 3 3♦ in response to  
♣ 10 6 2 1NT. With a poor fit for diamonds, opener will pass and we'll stop in partscore in diamonds. If partner has a fit for diamonds—the missing ♦K—and stoppers in the other suits, partner can bid 3NT and try for nine tricks.

### Minor Suit Slams

Investigating slam in a minor suit is awkward. **To make a forcing bid in a minor suit, we have to start with 2♣ and then bid the minor suit.**

♠ 6 4 If partner opens  
♥ J 6 1NT, a response of  
♦ A Q J 7 5 3 2♦ would be a  
♣ A K 7 transfer; a response of 2♠ followed by 3♦ over opener's 3♣ would be a signoff; and a jump to 3♦ would be invitational. Instead, we begin by responding 2♣. Opener is going to assume this is Stayman and will bid 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠. Now we bid 3♦ which (hopefully) alerts partner that we actually have a strong hand with diamonds.

Opener can bid 3NT with a poor fit for diamonds and no interest in slam. With a fit for diamonds, opener can simply raise to 4♦ or make a cuebid with a maximum and interest in reaching slam. Our slam bidding methods can take over from there.

♠ 6 4 A hand like this can  
♥ A Q 7 3 be challenging when  
♦ J 6 responding to 1NT.  
♣ A K J 8 5 We start with 2♣. If opener bids 2♥, we want to invite slam in hearts. Perhaps the simplest call we can make is 5♥. (To ask for aces we would jump to 4♣, Gerber—see last issue.)

If opener bids 2♦ or 2♠, we now bid 3♣. This is forcing, showing slam interest in clubs. If opener bids 3NT, we can pass and give up on slam or make one more try by raising to 4NT. If opener raises clubs or bids another suit, we can move toward slam.

Our methods give us lots of options but we still have to decide how best to make use of them.

(In the next issue we'll look at handling interference and responses to 2NT.)