

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

A new contingent has finished the beginning bridge class. Please welcome them to our Saturday practice sessions. I have set up a couple of “learner tables” for those and other novices who want more hands-on support during their initial visits.

Of course, please be supportive of all our new members. Our club is very new and many of the current players have less than 9 months of experience. Help them when you can; be patient otherwise. With time we’ll build a vibrant community where we’ll get all the competition we can hope for.

Also, **thank you** for your support in purchasing bridge club supplies. I have enough for three additional bridge tables (already in place). I’ll use any remaining funds to purchase a few more decks of cards near the end of the year (or another table if we need it).

I plan to teach one more beginner class this summer (starting June 22) and then will take a breather and take stock. This past Saturday we had 32 players, including about 8 attendees from our most recent beginner class. After the summer class, I expect we’ll see as many as 40 players on any given Saturday. So, we’ll see where we end up as the year progresses.

As always, practice, practice, practice! Our message to the community: bridge is fun and intellectually stimulating – come join us! All ages are welcome!

Please note that the **May 25** practice session is **canceled**. The library has a special activity scheduled.

Beginner Bridge Lessons

Next Class:

The next beginner class is scheduled to start June 22, 2024 at the Olney library.

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

Every Saturday from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library.

*Note: The May 25 session is **canceled**. The library has a special event that day.*

Transfer, Please - I

So, a number of members have mentioned an interest in learning alternative bids over a 1 NT opening bid when looking for a suit fit. One such approach involves the use of “transfers.” In this article we’ll explore the basic uses of such transfer bids.

As taught in the beginner bridge class, when responding to an opening 1NT bid, a player bids 2 of a major to show a weaker hand with 5 or more cards in the major. A bid of 3 in the major shows a game-going hand – either in 3NT or in the major (if partner holds 3 or more cards in the major suit).

This is a simple approach – but it has a few drawbacks. First, if you arrive at a major suit contract, the declarer will be the weaker hand. The 1NT hand will be exposed. In addition, the simple approach is ... simple. It doesn’t allow you to easily distinguish between a weak hand and an invitational hand, it doesn’t allow you to show a strong hand with a long minor suit, and it doesn’t allow you to easily explore a slam contract when the responder’s hand is very strong.

Transfers (formally known as “Jacoby transfers” in honor of Oswald Jacoby, the originator of the concept) solve many of these problems.

So, how do transfers work? After an opening bid of 1NT (with a similar approach after an opening bid of 2NT), a player with 5 or more hearts and an unbalanced hand bids 2D. This is an artificial bid that demands that their partner accept the transfer and bid 2H. Similarly, a player with 5 spades bids an artificial 2H, where their partner must bid 2S to complete the transfer.

The responder then has several options:

- 1) Pass with a weak hand (< 8 high card points).
- 2) Bid 2NT with an invitational hand (8 – 9 points) and 5 cards in the major suit.
- 3) Raise to 3 of the major with an invitational hand (8 – 9 points) and 6+ in the major suit.
- 4) Bid 3NT with 10+ points and 5 in the major suit.
- 5) Raise to 4 of the major with 10+ points and 6+ in the major suit.
- 6) Bid a new suit with 10+ points to further describe your hand. This bid is forcing to game (in 3NT or one of the two bid suits).

After one of the above bids, the 1NT opener can usually decide where to end up. They’ll make an appropriate decision based on a) whether they have 2 or 3+ cards in the major suit; and b) whether they have a maximum hand (17 high card points).

For example, after an invitational 2NT, the opener can pass with 2 in the major, rebid the major suit with 3+ cards, bid 3NT with 2 hearts and a maximum hand, or jump to 4 in the major with a maximum hand and 3+ cards in the major.

After an invitational bid of 3 in the major suit, the opener will pass with a minimum hand, but raise to 4 with a maximum. After any of the other bids, the result will be a game bid in 3NT or in one of the bid suits.

In a future article, we’ll discuss how to use transfers to the minor suits as well as how to investigate slam rather than sign off at the game level. Examples are forthcoming.

Preemptive Bids – II

In the last newsletter, I discussed the basic requirements for a preemptive bid – at the 2-level, 3-level, and 4-level. In this article, I will sketch out the bidding options, as well as possible rebids, for the partner of the 3-level preemptive bidder.

After a 3-level preemptive bid (3C, 3D, 3H, or 3S), the responder knows that the preemptive bidder has 7 or more cards in their suit (and 6 – 11 total points). Moreover, the preemptive bidder promises to win enough tricks to go set by only two tricks (if vulnerable) or three tricks (not vulnerable). For example, if the bid is 3S (vulnerable), then you should expect partner’s hand to take 7 tricks (two short of the 9 required for the contract). Partner expects to give up a penalty of 2 times 100 = 200 points (500 if doubled).

Therefore, your initial thought after hearing partner’s preemptive bid is “pass”. However, you have two additional options – one when your hand is very weak, and one when your hand is stronger.

First, if you have a weak hand but have three of partner’s trump suit, you expect that together you hold a total of 10 trumps. The **Law of Total Tricks** (which is not a “law” but is instead a guideline) proposes that you can bid a number of tricks equal to your total trumps, even with very weak hands. In this case your 10 trumps

indicates that you can bid to the 4-level (4s). You may go set, but you expect that the opponents will win a game contract otherwise.

Alternatively, if you have sufficient winning tricks to boost the number of total tricks to a game score, then you can also bid on. For example, after the above 3S bid, you can raise to 4S if you have 3 additional tricks in your hand.

But how do you determine whether you have those 3 extra tricks? You count your sure winners (also called “**quick tricks**”). Both A and KQ represent 1 quick trick, AK represents 2 quick tricks, AQ represents 1.5 quick tricks, and Kx represents 0.5 quick tricks. If in the trump suit, a K or Q represents 1 quick trick. Add your quick tricks plus your partner’s expected tricks – if that number is sufficient for game, bid it.

As the preemptive bidder, you will generally pass after your partner’s bid. Your partner is the captain of the hand. You have clearly identified your hand with your preemptive bid. You need not say more unless forced.

There are two other special cases to cover: a responding bid of 3NT or of a new suit.

A bid of 3NT requires strength in the unbid suits and sufficient cards in the bid suit to provide entry to the preempting hand. We will show an example in a future article.

A new suit bid (e.g., 3D – pass – 3S) shows a strong hand with a strong suit (6 cards with three of the top five high cards). A new suit bid is forcing for one round. In this case only, the preempting bidder must bid. There are two choices: raise partner’s suit with 2+ cards in support or rebid their own suit with less support. We will show an example in a future newsletter.

I will continue with the preemption theme in a future newsletter.

Try to Bid (and Play) It

This is a practice hand. Try to bid and play it.

North Deals None Vul	♠ A Q 9 2 ♥ J 9 ♦ K Q J 5 ♣ K 6 2	♠ K J 4 3 ♥ Q 4 3 ♦ A 10 8 7 ♣ A 9	
♠ 10 7 5 ♥ A 10 6 ♦ 9 6 4 2 ♣ Q 10 8		♠ 8 6 ♥ K 8 7 5 2 ♦ 3 ♣ J 7 5 4 3	
West Pass	North 1 N 2 ♥	East Pass All pass	South 2 ♦

South has a weak hand (4 high card points) and could pass North’s 1NT opening bid. But the unbalanced structure of South’s hand leans away from a No Trump contract. A tricky choice – but South decides to transfer to hearts instead. See the article on transfer bids earlier. South passes the 2H rebid with their weak hand.

As for the play, North would have a difficult time at 1NT. With only two hearts, it may be possible to set up South’s hearts...but there are no high-card entries into South’s hand to cash them. I think North would be lucky to win 4 or 5 tricks at 1NT (down at least 2). The South hand may take no tricks.

However, in a 2H contract, South should lose 1 spade, 2 hearts, 1 diamond, and probably two clubs, to score 7 tricks (down 1). The South hand will actually win a few tricks.

With these weak hands opposite a 1NT opening, you will always need to make a choice. The structure of the hand will help you determine whether to pass or transfer.

Famous Bridgies

Oswald Jacoby was a famous bridge expert, writer, and general popularizer of all games. However, many current bridge players know him well – his Jacoby transfers (explored earlier in this newsletter) and Jacoby 2NT conventions are widely used among more experienced players.

Jacoby started out well – he lied about his age to join the Army during World War I at age 15, but spent the majority of his time behind the lines winning at poker. He used those winnings to attend Columbia University as a math major, but dropped out after separately earning his actuary license (the youngest licensed in NY history at that time). A few years later he subsequently quit his CPA job to take up gaming full time. He excelled at bridge, chess, backgammon, poker, and many other games. Jacoby worked for counterintelligence (enemy codes and later computing) for the Navy during World War II and the Korean War.

After his service, Jacoby won 31 North American bridge championships and authored the syndicated *Jacoby on Bridge* column for 34 years. He authored numerous books about his multiple game interests. His son, Jim, was also an expert player.

Bridge Quotes

*There have always been people better than me at **some** game, even when I was in my prime. But I am still the best player of **all** games in the world today. There's no one around who can beat me. **Oswald Jacoby**, *Jacoby on Bridge* (1989).*

Olney Bridge Club

The primary purpose of the Olney MD Bridge Club is to teach and encourage social bridge in the areas including and surrounding Olney, Maryland.

We meet regularly (Saturdays from 2:30 – 4:30) at the Olney library for practice playing sessions.

Please feel free to send email to bridgeinfo@bridge.careytutor.com with any questions, comments, recommendations, or other correspondence for the editor. In particular, if you have a bridge article to include in a future newsletter or a suggestion of a possible topic, any such submission would be much appreciated.

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