

Lebensohl

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There are three situations in which Lebensohl may be used:

- After interference over 1NT
- After partner doubles a weak two-bid
- After partner reverses

After Interference Over 1NT

After partner opens 1NT and the next opponent overcalls 2D, 2H, or 2S at the two level, Lebensohl is used by responder to:

1. Distinguish between forcing, non-forcing, and invitational hands
2. Affirm or deny a stopper in the opponent's suit when bidding game
3. Affirm or deny a stopper in the opponent's suit when using Stayman

After the opponent's overcall, a bid of 2NT by responder is not natural but instead is a relay to 3♣. Whether responder chooses to use this relay or chooses some other bid conveys information to opener.

Suppose the overcaller bids 2♠, and responder has one of the following hands:

- | | |
|------------|---------|
| A. ♠-xx | B. ♠-xx |
| ♥-QJ109xxx | ♥-AQJxx |
| ♦-xx | ♦-Kxx |
| ♣-xx | ♣-xxx |

With Hand A, responder would like to play 3♥. With Hand B, responder would like to play in game in hearts or NT, depending on opener's hand. Without Lebensohl, responder has no method to tell opener which type hand he has.

To show a weak hand (like Hand A), responder first bids 2N. After opener bids 3♣, responder would pass (if his suit was clubs) or otherwise bid 3♦ or 3♥. Responder can show a better hand by bidding a new suit at the three level without going through the 3♣ relay. If the new suit is 3♣ or (non-jump) 3♦, it is invitational, showing a six-card suit headed by AQ or KQ and no outside strength. If the new suit is a major, it is forcing and shows a five-card suit. To make a forcing bid, responder should have 9 HCP (could be done with a very good 8 such as xx/QJ10xx/KQx/xxx or xx/A10xxx/Axxx/xx).

Suppose the overcaller bids 2♦, and responder has one of the following hands:

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| C. ♠-QJ10xx | D. ♠-QJ10xx | E. ♠-QJ10xx |
| ♥-QJx | ♥-QJx | ♥-QJx |
| ♦-xx | ♦-xx | ♦-xx |
| ♣-xxx | ♣-Kxx | ♣-KQx |

Now responder has room to bid his suit at the two level. A new suit at the two level is to play (like Hand C). There are now two other options: going through the relay followed by 3♠ and jumping to 3♠ directly. The first sequence shows an invitational hand (like Hand D). The immediate jump is game forcing (like Hand E). Note that the recommended auctions for Hands

B and E show **five-card** suits. If responder has six or more cards in a major suit and a game-going hand, he should use Texas Transfer directly over the overcall.

The second use of Lebensohl is to affirm or deny a stopper in the opponent's suit to determine whether or not to play in 3NT. Bidding 3NT directly over the overcall denies a stopper ("Direct Denies"). Going through the relay and then bidding 3NT shows a stopper. After 1N-(2♠), consider:

F. ♠-xx	G. ♠-Ax
♥-Kxx	♥-Kxx
♦-Kxxx	♦-Kxxx
♣-Axxx	♣-xxxx

With Hand F, bid 3N directly (Direct denies a stop). With Hand G, bid 2N and, after partner bids 3♣, bid 3N, showing a stop by going through the relay. With Hand F, if partner also does not have a stop, he will bid a suit at the four-level to try to find a makeable contract.

The third use of Lebensohl is to affirm or deny a stopper in the opponent's suit when using Stayman. A cue bid of the opponent's suit is Stayman. Making the cue bid directly ("Direct Denies") denies a stopper. Going through the relay and then cue bidding shows a stop. After 1N-(2♦), consider:

H. ♠-xx	I. ♠-xx
♥-AQxx	♥-AQxx
♦-xxx	♦-Kxx
♣-KJ10x	♣-J10xx

With no diamond stop in Hand H, cue bid 3♦ directly (Stayman). Raise 3♥ to 4, bid 3N over 3♠ (partner may then try 4♣ if he also has no diamond stop), or raise 4♣ to 5. With Hand I, bid 2N and then cue-bid 3♦. Raise 3♥ to 4, bid 3N over 3♠ or pass 3N.

Note: This tutorial does not use Lebensohl after a 2C overcall of partner's 1N opening. It is recommended that a double of 2C is Stayman and other bids have their normal meaning.

Note: Some partnerships play a 3C or 3D bid after an overcall of partner's 1N opening is forcing rather than invitational. Make sure that you and partner are in agreement.

Note: Lebensohl is used only when the opponents make an **immediate** overcall of 1NT. When the opponents overcall in the passout seat [1N-(P)-P-(2X)-P-(P)], now 2N is not Lebensohl. A useful agreement is to play it as 5-5 in the minors.

Note: Some beginning and intermediate players like to play "stolen bid" after an overcall of partner's 1NT. It is possible to do so and still play Lebensohl.

After Partner Doubles a Weak Two-Bid

After partner doubles a weak two-bid and the next opponent passes, Lebensohl is used to distinguish between forcing, non-forcing, and invitational hands. 2N (Lebensohl) in response to partner's double asks (but does not require) partner to bid 3♣. The strength shown by the

Lebensohl bid varies dependent upon the rank of opener's weak two-bid and the rank of your own suit.

If it is possible to bid your suit at the two level, such a bid would show less than 8 points. Bidding Lebensohl and then bidding your suit after partner responds 3♣ would show an invitational hand of 8-9 (possibly a bad 10) points. With a good 10-12 points, jump in your suit. With stronger hands, jump to game, cue bid, or make a penalty pass.

If it not possible to bid your suit at the two level, then show less than 8 points by bidding 2N (Lebensohl), asking (but not requiring) partner to bid 3♣. After partner's 3♣, pass if your suit is clubs; otherwise bid it. With 8-10 points, bid your suit directly at the three level in response to partner's double. With 11 or more points, make a stronger bid (jump, cue bid or pass for penalty).

When you make a 2N Lebensohl bid, the doubler must recognize that you might pass 3♣ if he bids that. Thus, with extra strength, doubler should bid his own suit or 3N depending upon his strength and shape. After (2H)-X-(P)-2N-(P)

- A. Holding AKJ10xx/xx/AQx/Kx, doubler should bid 3♠.
- B. Holding AKJx/AQx/Axx/Qxx, doubler should bid 3N.

After Partner Reverses

If your partner reverses, you cannot pass. A reverse is forcing for one round. After partner reverses, Lebensohl can be used to show the strength of your hand. If you bid at the 3 level after the reverse, you show 8+points. After 1C-1H-2D,

- A Bid 3C with A3/K876/1032/J975
- B Bid 3D with A32/K876/Q1043/J9

After 1D-1S-2H,

- A. Bid 3H with A8654/K953/J10/53
- B. Bid 3D with A865/K93/J108/J93

If you want to raise one of partner's suits to the 3 level and you have less than 8 points, bid 2N (Lebensohl) first. Partner is asked to bid 3C, which you may pass if this is one of partner's suits or you may raise partner's bid in one of the other suits. After 1C-1H-2D,

- A. Bid 2N and pass (after partner bids 3C) with Q32/K876/864/ J32
- B. Bid 2N and then, after partner bids 3C, bid 3D with Q32/K876/ 10864/J2

If you initially bid a major and have 5+cards in your suit, you should usually rebid it at the two level, regardless of the strength of your hand. Sometimes it is possible to bid the fourth suit at the two level. In this case, it can be either natural and forcing OR conventional. For example, after 1C-1S-2D, bid 2H with A8654/K953/J10/53. After 1C-1H-2D, bid 2S with 6432/KJ53/A32/86.

