

Lebensohl Conventions

Lebensohl has two applications: (1) Countering interference after a 1NT opening bid and (2) Countering Opponent's Weak-Two Opening or Overcall.

Over Interfering Weak-Two Bid

Lebensohl applies when Partner Doubles a Weak-Two Opening bid. The assumption is that the Doubler has 12+ HCP. The Lebensohl bid in this case is used to show the strength of one's hand but still hinges on the 2NT Call. The Advancer's Call will show 3 types of hands BAD(0-7HCP), GAME-FORCE(12+) and INVITATIONAL(8-11HCP). We might note that the Opener's Partner has not yet bid or has Passed.

Bad (0-7) We show our best suit at 2-level – it's a sign-off, if 2-level is not available bid 2N which is a relay requiring Partner to bid 3♣. Your second bid is your suit or pass if it is ♠'s.

Game-Force (12+) Jump bidding a new suit implies Game-force. If you have a balanced hand you might be interested in Game in No-Trump and Lebensohl gives you two ways of trying to get there:

if you have a stopper in Opener's suit, bid NT twice. Ex. 2♥ – X – P – 2NT; P – 3♣ – P – 3NT;

if you don't have a stopper in the bid suit jump to 3NT. Ex. 2♥ – X – P – 3NT; the jump denies a stopper in ♥'s and asks Partner to Pass the bid 3N with a stopper. Without a stopper Partner is forced into a scramble bid, bidding 4-Card suits up the line.

Invitational (8-11) This is where it gets interesting you have two choices based on the Opener's suit.
No jumping!!

If your suit is lower than Opener's, skip the Lebensohl 2NT and bid your suit at the 3-level. Example: 2♥ – X – P – 3♦, or if your suit is ♠'s you would bid 3♠. No Jump to bid a Minor after a Major. You can sign-off by bidding a higher ranking suit at the 2-level: 2♥ – X – P – 2♠.

If your suit is a higher suit than Opener's: By-pass 2-level sign-off and bid 2N and after Partner's 3♣ relay, Bid your suit at the 3-level. The fact that you could have bid the suit at the 2-level and didn't shows an invitational (8-11) hand. **No jumping!!** You went through 2N to get to 3-level.

Over Interfering Overcall of 1NT

There are 4 types of Responding bids when Partner Opens 1NT and there is an intervening interference bid: Natural, Double, Game-force, Special(2NT).

Natural: Over any 2-level bid **except** 2NT. This bid shows a minimum response (6-9 HCP) with little interest in Game. Non-forcing, it shows a natural 5+ Card suit.

Double: Partnership agreement necessary. Choose between (1) stolen bid or (2) Penalty. There are 3 types of hands the penalty Double shows.

Too weak to invite Game, ex: after 1N – 2♥ – ?, holding ♠Q2 ♥KQ43 ♦762 ♣965 you are too weak to invite Game but here you have a holding menacing to overcaller.

Too unbalanced to invite Game, ex: holding ♠AQ2 ♥9 ♦AJT52 ♣J965, the bidding goes 1N – 2♠ – ? You're not a menace but what would do if Partner bid ♥'s or NT?

Based on Vulnerability conditions a Penalty Double looks profitable, ex: the bidding starts 1N – 2♣ – ? and you are holding ♠Q2 ♥95 ♦QT52 ♣AJ965.

Game-force: With 10+ HCP, Game is possible.

3NT shows a hand that would normally bid 3NT **BUT** it denies a stopper in Overcalled suit. Without a stopper Opener is expected to escape to cheapest suit.

A Cue bid of Overcalled Minor suit is Stayman, Ex: 1N – 2♦ – 3♦ shows at least 1 4-Card Major and 10+ HCP. This is a modified Stayman. See below

Any other 3-level bid shows 5+ Card suit and is Game-forcing.

Note: **slow shows!** A bid of 3NT denies a stopper in Overcalled suit; Bidding 2NT first and then 3NT shows stopper and Game invitational values (see next).

Special: An almost all-purpose bid that is the essence of the Lebensohl Convention. Responder bids 2NT to show several hand types. **Requires a 3♣ relay bid by Opener.**

After responder bids 2NT and the next opponent passes, opener **must** rebid 3♣. This is artificial and asks responder to clarify his hand type. These are the types of hands that should use 2NT:

TYPE 1 – A Hand with stopper in Opponents suit and will stop at 3NT. (see above note).

TYPE 2 – A Stayman-like hand with Game-invite HCP's and a stopper in Opponents suit.

TYPE 3 – A One-suited hand that is either invitational to Game or a hand that wants to sign-off in at the 3-level.

After Responder's Indicated Game-Force

Jump to 3NT Shows 10+ without stopper

Opener can Pass with stopper

Without stopper Opener starts scramble bid up-the-line of 4-Card suits.

Cue-bid of OverCalled suit: modified Stayman responses apply

3♣, then a 3♦ rebid by opener denies a 4-card major. A 3♥ rebid shows 4+ ♥'s (and does not deny 4♠'s), while a 3♠ rebid shows 4+♠'s (and denies 4♥'s), i.e. it is the standard stayman only at the 3-level rather than the 2-level

3♦ shows both Majors, Opener must rebid 3♥ or 3♠ with 4-Card Major or 3NT with no 4-Card Major.

3♥ – opener must rebid 3♠ with a 4-Card ♠ suit or 3NT with no 4-Card Major.

3♠ – opener must rebid 4♥ with a 4-Card ♥ suit or 3NT with no 4-Card Major.

Game-forcing jump to 3-level:

Opener's rebids and all other bids are natural. e.g. 1N – 2♦ – 3♥

Special – Responder's Lebensohl 2NT (might not be Game-Force) Opener relay bids 3♣

Type 1 – 3N is Natural to play and implies a stopper in OverCalled suit. Slow shows (stopper).

Type 2 – cue bid of OverCalled suit is Stayman-like, Game-force **and** implies stopper in Opponents suit. Opener can bid 3NT without 4-Card Major or 3 of 4-Card Major. Responder then bids 3N or 4 of Major

Type 3 Pass indicates 6+ ♣'s and less than invitational bid. This is a sign off bid!

Type 3 – 3♦, 3♥, 3♠ If responder was unable to bid the suit at the 2-level and rather bid 2NT, this is a sign-off bid. Responder likely has 8-9HCP and 5+Card suit. *This situation occurs when Overcalled suit is higher than Responder's suit.*

Type 3 – 3♦, 3♥, 3♠ If responder was able to bid the suit at the 2-level and rather bid 2NT, this is an invitational bid – *example* 1N – 2♦ – 2N – P; 3♣ – P – 3♥... the Responder's first bid could have been 2♥ rather than 2N thus the 3♥ bid invites the Opener to bid either 3N or with four ♥'s to bid 4♥. *This occurs when Overcalled suit is lower than Responders suit.*

Note: Over an interfering conventional bid, such as DONT or Cappelletti; Lebensohl in ON, ignore the fact of a second suit and proceed normally.

More On OverCalling

We have already considered the topic of OverCalls. Our goal here is to provide the details to help us refine both OverCalling and Advancing after Partner OverCalls. OverCalls first: If you are Overcalling at the 1-level you need a good suit or a strong hand or both. What do we mean by "good suit"? For the 1-level your OverCalled suit should have a SQ=7; for the 2-level SQ=8 should be used. (SQ = # of Cards in Suit + # of Honors, including Ten, in that suit).

If you are considering OverCalling at the 2-level there are additional considerations if both Opponents have bid: (a) Is their auction a 2-over-1? If so, how many points are left for Partner? Is the suit Safe? e.g. 1♣ – P – 1♠ – ? Either 2♦ or 2♥, are safe as opposed to the less safe 2♣ in the following 1♦ – P – 1♠ – ? Why are 2♦ or 2♥ safe and 2♣ less so? In the first case both opponents "by-passed ♦'s and ♥'s meaning they likely don't have length in those suits. In the second case, there is a possibility that Opener had ♣'s and was ready to reverse. Unless your ♣ holding is 6+ you might be in for a rude surprise. You would have a strong hand with some strength in your suit sitting on your left.

Here's a suggestion from a very good Player and excellent teacher. Ray Depew recommends (a) Overcalling 1♦ whenever LHO Opens 1♣ and you have 4♦'s and (b) when this occurs you treat Partners 1♦ as if he had Opened, that is ignore the 1♣ Opening. Why? Because it opens up the opportunity for Partner to better describe his hand. 1♣ – 1♦ – 1♥ – ?; 1♠ shows 5 ♠'s while X shows 4. And 1♣ – 1♦ – 1♠ – ?; X promises 4♥'s.

Now, let's look at the details, all the while taking note that HCP is not a Key factor.

Level – At the 1-level almost anything goes, especially when not vulnerable. It is relatively safe at this level – someone is likely to rescue you if you are in the wrong contract. The criteria for the 2-level are significantly different; still HCP are not crucial. Primarily you need a better suit since you may get stuck with the bid, perhaps even doubled.

Suit Quality

1-Level

5-Card suit ... have at least 2 Honors (i.e. SQ=7)

6-Card suit ... can be very weak (maybe even SQ= 6)

2-Level

5-Card suit ... avoid mediocre suits, suits should have 3 Honors (i.e. SQ=8)

6-Card suit ... when Not Vulnerable suit can be weak, Vulnerable needs SQ=8

Vulnerability – Vulnerability is of minor concern at 1-level; however, at 2-level good players are careful about OverCalls when Vulnerability is unfavorable.

Holding in Opponents Suit

Be aggressive when short in Opponent suit and conservative with length. This is true whether RHO Opens at 1-level or preempts.

In competitive bidding: It is the hand with shortness in Opponents suit who must strive to take action

Too Strong to Overcall: Care must be taken. Some hands are indeed too strong (18+ PP) to Overcall but use the X only when you think you may miss game if there is danger you might miss Game if you are passed out; otherwise OverCall.

OverCall in "Sandwich Seat with caution.

Use Care when OverCalling with 4-Card suit

4-Card OverCall:

Should contain 3 Honors, i.e. SQ=7

If Vulnerable OverCall hand should resemble an Opening Bid

Use as method of last resort – no reasonable alternative

Advancer Response

No Fit (less than 3-Cards)

New Suit at 1-level: Non-Forcing, Constructive shows a good suit and no-fit. Should meet SQ = 7 criteria or assuredly be longer than Overcaller's suit. OverCaller can (1) Pass, (2) support Advancer, (3) Rebid his suit.

New Suit at 2/3-level: Non-Forcing, Constructive shows no-fit and a better suit than 1-level counterpart. Should meet SQ = 7 criteria or assuredly be longer than Overcaller's suit. OverCaller can (1) Pass, (2) support Advancer, (3) Rebid his suit.

Bid NoTrump: Non-Forcing and shows a balanced hand with full stopper(s) in opponents suit(s) and partial stoppers in unbid suits. OverCaller can (1) Pass, (2) support Advancer, (3) Rebid his suit.

Jump bid New Suit or NoTrump: Strongly Invitational but not forcing. Suit bid shows good (3 of top 4 Honors) 6-Card suit and 10+ HCP. OverCaller can (1) Pass, (2) Bid NoTrump, (3) Rebid his suit.

Cue Bid Openers suit: Normally a fit showing bid with strong 10+ HCP hand; but if Advancer bids a new suit after cue bidding he is showing a very good suit and bid is absolutely forcing for 1 round.

Advancer's bids with a (3-Card) fit

Single-Raise: usually shows 3-Card support and 7-10 PP. OverCaller bids accordingly.

Raise to 3-level: Weak jump raise showing 4-Card support – not much more effectively a LOTT bid.

Raise to 4-level: Weak jump raise showing 4-Card support – not much more effectively a LOTT bid.

Cue Bid Opponents suit: Shows (3-Card) limit-raise or better. If Opponents bid two suits: Cue bid of cheapest suit shows 3-Card support and Cue bid of non-cheapest suit shows at least 4-Card support.