

Lebensohl Conventions

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

Over Interfering Weak-Two Bid

Lebensohl applies when Partner Doubles a Weak-Two Opening bid. The assumption is that the Doubler has 12+ HCP, i.e. an opening hand. The Lebensohl bid in this case is used to show the strength of one's hand but hinges on the 2NT Call. The Advancer's (Doubler's partner) call will show 1 of 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 (Capelletti, DONT etc...)

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

Natural: 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. If **Penalty** there are 3 types of hands the penalty Double shows.

- Too weak to invite Game, ex: after 1N – 2♥ – X, 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, but have points ex: holding ♠AQ2 ♥9 ♦AJT52 ♣J965, and the bidding goes 1N – 2♠ – X You're not a menace but what would you do if Partner bids ♥'s or NT?
- Based on Vulnerability conditions a Penalty Double looks profitable, ex: the bidding starts 1N – 2♠ – X 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 SPECIAL REPOSSES).

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After Responder's Indicated Game-Force

Responder Jumps 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 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: 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.

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.

Let's look a 3 Cases: Partner Opens 1NT and RHO Overcalls 2♣

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3
♠83	♠7	♠A4
♥864	♥AQ84	♥K83
♦52	♦75	♦Q95
♣KJT863	♣QJ8743	♣AQ763

Hand 1: you surely don't want to try to defend 2♣, and since Partner has 2+♣ A low-level ♣ contract seems to be desirable. We want Partner to bid ♣'s. Bidding 2N forces Partner to do that and you will Pass.

Hand 2: You have game going HCP and would be happy with a ♣, ♥, or NT game. Lebensohl makes exploration for these easy. You start with a forcing 3♣. If Partner responds with ♥'s you're happy, if P rebids 3♦ you can show your ♥ suit, and then Partner can choose between NT (with a ♠ stopper), ♥, or ♣.

Hand 3: You have a ♠ stopper and game-going, possibly slam. 3N would indicate game-going but denies stopper, you cannot cue ♠'s that's stayman. 3♣ is game-force response, showing 5+♣. How you proceed from here depends on Partners rebid, but remember if you rebid 3N that shows stopper and Partner my pass. If Partner rebids 3N (probably has stopper) you could bid 4NT quantitative! If Partner rebids rebids a red suit you could cue bid ♠'s asking for a stopper. In any case partner should be well suited to determine where to go. If Partner choses 3N you can always bid 4♣ ace/key-card asking.