

THE LEBENSOHL CONVENTION

A. **PROBLEM:** - Suppose the bidding has gone.

| | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Partner</u> 1-NT | <u>RHO</u> 2H | <u>You</u> ??? | You hold either: Or | (a) XX XX KJ10XXX XXX |
| | | | | (b) AJX XX AQ10XXX XX |

In (a) you would wish to bid **3D** as a sign-off; in (b) you would wish to bid **3D** to push towards either **3-NT** or else **5D**. Obviously you cannot bid **3D** with both (a) and (b) while, at the same time, having Partner being capable of discerning the difference between the two types of circumstances.

Often an Overcall by the Opponents over your Partner's opening **1-NT** will prevent you from making the response you would have otherwise made in a non-competitive auction; i.e., one without interference. For example, one may be precluded from bidding **Stayman** ("**2C**") due to the intervening overcall, and yet you might otherwise be interested in Opener's Major suit holdings. Even natural bids, jumps, and No-Trump raises become ambiguous after an overcall to Partner's opening **1-NT** bid.

Obviously, several questions arise after an Overcall subsequent to your partner's **1-NT** opening bid. Which bids by you are forcing, and which are not? Which bids are invitational? Which bids are natural, and which are artificial? How do you bid **Stayman** and how do you affirm or deny a stopper in the enemy suit, if you are seeking a final No-Trump contract?

All of these questions and ambiguities are handled by the **Lebensohl Convention**.

B. **THE LEBENSOHL CONVENTION:** -

(a) A "**double**" over a **2-level**, interference call is for penalties - (NOT NEGATIVE)

Examples: 1-NT 2S DBL. (or) 1-NT 2C DBL.

(b) A "**double**" over a **3-level**, interference call is negative - (NOT FOR PENALTY)

Examples: 1-NT 3S DBL. (or) 1-NT 3C DBL.

(c) ANY **2-level** suit bid is natural and a sign-off, and Jacoby Transfers are off

Examples: 1-NT 2D 2H (or) 1-NT 2C 2S (or) 1-NT 2H 2S

(d) ANY **3-level** suit bid is natural and Game-forcing, and shows at least a 5-card suit

Examples: (1-NT 2H 3C) (or) (1-NT 2S 3H)

(e) An ARTIFICIAL "2-NT" response is forcing and demands Opener to "puppet" "3C."

Responder can "pass" if he/she holds a weak hand in Clubs, or can re-bid as follows: If he/she bids a suit below the rank of the suit of the overcall, it is a sign-off. If he/she bids a suit above the rank of the enemy suit, it is invitational. In either case scenario, Responder has at least a 5-card suit.

Examples:

| | | | | |
|------|----|--------|---|------------------------|
| 1-NT | 2H | "2-NT" | P | |
| "3C" | P | P | | (A weak hand in Clubs) |
| | | | | |
| 1-NT | 2H | "2-NT" | P | |
| "3C" | P | 3D | | (Sign-off) |
| | | | | |
| 1-NT | 2S | "2-NT" | P | |
| "3C" | P | 3H | | (Sign-off) |
| | | | | |
| 1-NT | 2D | "2-NT" | P | |
| "3C" | P | 3H/3S | | (Invitational) |

(f) A 3-NT response achieved via:

- (1) A direct jump to 3-NT over an enemy overcall shows the values for Game, but denies a stopper in the Opponent's suit which was overcalled.
- (2) "2-NT" followed by a 3-NT over Partner's "puppet" "3C" bid shows value for Game, and affirms one or more stoppers in the Opponent's suit.

(g) The Stayman Convention is achieved in either of the following two ways:

- (1) A Direct cue-bid of the Opponent's overcall suit is Stayman without a stopper in the enemy's bid suit. It is forcing to Game unless the Partnership fails to find a Major suit fit and additionally lacks a stopper for 3-NT. In that rare case, Opener bids "4" of his/her better Minor suit.
- (2) A "2-NT" response followed by a cue-bid of the Opponent's suit over Partner's forced "3C" is also Stayman, but this time it is with a promised one or more stoppers in the enemy suit. Lacking a Major suit fit, a contract of 3-NT is then finalized.

C. THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE LEBENSOHL CONVENTION: - The machinery of the **Lebensohl Convention** makes it easy to avoid a No-Trump contract when neither side has a stopper in the enemy suit. Yet it in no way hinders the search for Major suit fits. In addition, it clearly defines which responses are non-forcing, and which are invitational or forcing. To gain all this, the only thing one gives up is the natural meaning of the invitational 2-NT bid by the Responder; i.e., it precludes the ability of Responder to the 1-NT Opening Bidder to invite to 3-NT by responding 2-NT. In this situation, when playing **Lebensohl** and, therefore, without the ability to invite, it is best to go directly to 3-NT when holding invitational values.

Examples:

| | | | | |
|------|----|--------|---|---|
| 1-NT | 2S | "2-NT" | P | (AQX KXX JXXX XXX) |
| "3C" | P | 3-NT | | (Showing a Spade Stopper) |
| | | | | |
| 1-NT | 2S | 3-NT | | (XXX AQX KJXX XXX) |
| | | | | Showing game values with <u>NO</u> Spade Stopper) |

D. THE LEBENSOHL CONVENTION IS ALSO EMPLOYED SIMILARLY UNDER THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES: - In response to a “Take-Out Double” by Partner, following a weak 2-bid by an Opponent.

Example: 2H Db1. P ???

(All responses here by the Responder to the “Take-Out Double” are as referenced before.)

A. Pass = Penalty

B. Weak (0-7 pts): (1) If your suit is higher-ranking than the suit of the Preemptor, bid it at the 2 level.

(2) If your suit is lower ranking, bid **2-NT** asking Partner to bid **3C** - Then either “*pass*” if your suit is Clubs, else sign-off by then bidding your suit.

C. Medium (8-11 pts.): if your suit is lower in rank, bid it at the 3-level; if higher in rank, bid **2-NT**, then the suit

D. Strong (12+ pts.): (1) Jump to Game-level with a good 4{+}-Card Major suit

(2) Bid **3-NT** immediately - to play, shows no stopper and no 4 card Major

(3) Bid **2-NT** followed by **3-NT** (at least one stopper)

(4) Bid a cue-bid - no stopper, implies, but does not guarantee a 4 card major