

Lebensohl over Weak 2-Bids

After an auction like:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>
2S	DBL	Pass	3C

your partner often has a difficult decision if he has extra values. Since there is such a wide point range for your minimum response (0 to about 8 or 9 pts.), he doesn't know whether or not it's safe to bid on. The Lebensohl convention was invented to help you give partner a more accurate description of your strength in these situations.

After an opponent opens a weak two-bid and your partner makes a takeout double, your bid of 2NT is Lebensohl. It says nothing about notrump. It asks partner to bid 3C, and you can then pass, sign off in a suit, or make another descriptive bid.

Weak hands (0-6 pts.)

The Lebensohl 2NT is most useful when you have a very weak hand and want to sign off in a suit that is *lower in rank* than the preempter's suit. If your suit is *higher* in rank than the preempter's suit (i.e., LHO opens 2H and you have spades), you make your "normal" minimum bid at the 2-level. But if you would have to go to the 3-level to make a minimum bid in your suit, you start with 2NT to relay partner to 3C. You can now pass if clubs is your suit, or bid another suit. The auction will go:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>
2S	DBL	Pass	2NT
Pass	3C	Pass	Pass (or 3D or 3H)

The doubler will accept your relay with any hand of up to about 18 playing pts., but he can refuse it if he has a very powerful hand. With a hand that will make game opposite an average of about 4-5 pts. in your hand, he should refuse the relay and make another descriptive bid. If he bids higher than 3C, it is forcing; you must bid again, even if you are very weak.

Medium-strength hands (7-10 pts.)

If you bid a suit at the 3-level (instead of using the 2NT sequence), it is encouraging, but not forcing. It shows a hand with constructive values (a good 7 to about 10 pts.), but not enough to jump to game. Doubler can pass with a minimum or bid on with extra values.

You can also use the Lebensohl 2NT to invite when your suit is higher in rank than the preempter's suit. If LHO opens 2H and you have spades, you can sign off in 2S if you're weak. If you instead use the Lebensohl 2NT sequence, it shows invitational values (8-10 pts.). This full auction would be:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>
2H	DBL	Pass	2NT
Pass	3C	Pass	3S

If LHO opened 2D, you can use the sequence to invite in hearts or spades.

Forcing hands (11+ pts.)

The Lebensohl 2NT sequences above all show limited values. If you have invitational or forcing-to-game strength, your jump responses can all retain their standard meaning.

Here are some simple uses of Lebensohl:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>
2H	DBL	Pass	?

♣43 ♥7542 ♦J1053 ♣K84 -- Bid 2NT (Lebensohl). Over 3C, you'll bid 3D to show the very weak sign-off hand.

♠J5 ♥Q654 ♦Q64 ♣Q753 -- With Lebensohl, you can't make a natural 2NT bid. This is a very poor 7 pts., so evaluate it down and use the Lebensohl 2NT. You'll pass partner's 3C.

♠K52 ♥732 ♦AJ643 ♣75 -- Bid 3D to show constructive values. If partner has extra values, he'll bid on.

♠AQ83 ♥742 ♦K873 ♣J9 -- Bid 2NT (Lebensohl). You plan to invite by bidding 3S over partner's 3C.

♠AQ1084 ♥4 ♦A1097 ♣1073 -- Bid 4S. This hand is too good for a Lebensohl sequence, which partner can pass.

Specialized uses of Lebensohl

Lebensohl can be a beneficial addition to your system if you limit it to just the standard treatments above. If you want to adopt some more advanced uses of the convention, you can add special sequences to distinguish between different types of forcing and invitational hands. Here's one approach, which you can simplify or expand to meet your preferences:

Invitational auctions

- **Jump below game (2H-DBL-P-3S)** = One-suited invitation, promising 5+ cards in your suit. To show an invitational hand with only a 4-card suit, you can go through the Lebensohl 2NT sequence (2H-DBL-P-2NT / P-3C-P-3S).

Game auctions

- **Immediate 3NT (2H-DBL-P-3NT)** = Good stoppers in the opponent's suit. Usually denies 4 cards in the other major.
- **Immediate cuebid (2H-DBL-P-3H)** = Asks doubler to bid 3NT with a stopper. (This can also be used to start the description of a one-suited slam try -- see below).
- **Immediate jump cuebid (2H-DBL-P-4H)** = Both minors (if the weak-2 was a major). If the opponent opened 2D, a jump to 4D shows both majors. The jump cuebid shows game values, but is not a slam try. (See below for how to use Lebensohl to make a two-suited slam try.)

Choice-of-game auctions

Lebensohl can help you improve your bidding accuracy when you have a good hand, but only 4 cards in the other major. Since the takeout doubler may have only 3-card support for your suit, it's helpful to give him specific information about your length in the other major and your stoppers in the opponent's suit. To do this, start with the Lebensohl 2NT (ostensibly showing a weak hand), and then follow with a cuebid or 3NT:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>
2H	DBL	Pass	2NT
Pass	3C	Pass	3H or 3NT

- **Lebensohl, then a cuebid (3H)** = 4 cards in other major, but **NO** stopper in the opponent's suit.
- **Lebensohl, then 3NT** = 4 cards in other major **WITH** a stopper.

Both these auctions show forcing-to-game strength and give partner the choice of playing your suit or notrump.

One-suited slam try

- **Cuebid, then 4 of a suit** = One long suit, slam-invitational values. This is used for a hand that's too strong for a simple jump to game. Your cuebid (2H-DBL-P-**3H**) originally asks doubler to bid 3NT with a stopper, but if you then follow with a new suit at the 4-level (**4C, 4D** or **4S**), it shows slam-try values with one long suit.

Two-suited slam tries

Lebensohl can also be used to show a two-suited hand with slam-try (or better) values. To do this, you start with 2NT, then bid a new suit at the 4-level:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>
2H	DBL	Pass	2NT
Pass	3C	Pass	?

- **Lebensohl, then 4C or 4D** = Two-suited slam-try with that suit and the other major. (If the opponent opened a weak 2D, Lebensohl followed by 4H or 4S shows that suit and the other minor.)
 - **Lebensohl, then cuebid at 4-level (4H)** = Two-suited slam-try with both minors. (If the opponent opened a weak 2D, Lebensohl-then-4D is a slam-try with both majors.)
 - **Lebensohl, then 4S** (after a 2H opening) = You can develop your own special meaning for this if you like. Since you can use the cuebid-then-4S to show a slam-try, the Lebensohl-then-4S sequence could be a slam-forcing hand that asks partner to cuebid.
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