

Lebensohl over Reverses

A reverse occurs when opener and responder make three bids in three different suits- the first two bids are at the one level and the third is a nonjump bid at the two level of a suit of higher rank than the opener's first bid suit.

Because reverses are forcing to the 3-level, opener should have a king more than opening values (i.e. 16+) to reverse. If opener has a bare 16-17 (i.e. not enough to force to game opposite a minimal response), then responder should have the means to apply the brakes if they also have a minimal response.

The reverse auctions are:

- 1♣-1♠-2♥
- 1♦-1♠-2♥
- 1♣-1♠-2♦
- 1♣-1♥-2♦

In standard systems, responder's rebid of the fourth suit is natural and gameforcing. In order to apply the brakes, responder rebids his suit or 2NT. When playing Lebensohl over reverses, this doesn't change, however, 2NT is now Lebensohl and can never be passed.

In the following sequences, we will examine the first of the listed reverse auctions: 1♣-1♠-2♥.

- 1♣-1♠-2♥-3♣ *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-3♦ *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-3♥ *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-3♠ *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-3NT

Natural and gameforcing (same as standard).

- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2♣

Natural and nonforcing (same as standard).

- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*

Lebensohl. This bid is forcing.

- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♣*

The completion of the relay to 3♣ shows a minimal reverse. Responder now completes the relay sequence in a similar manner to Lebensohl over 1NT.

- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♣*-Pass *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♣*-3♦* *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♣*-3♥*

Just like in Lebensohl over 1NT, these bids are all signoffs.

- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♣*-3♠* *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♣*-3NT*

What do you think responder was up to? He showed a weak hand and got a weak response from opener and then did something impossible. Responder must have a slamtry opposite a minimal reverse.

- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♦* *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♥* *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3♠* *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-3NT* *or*
- 1♣-1♠-2♥-2NT*-4♣*

But what if opener has a gameforcing hand? He hardly wants to be passed out in 3♣ when he holds the values for game. The solution is to bid something other than 3♣.

Lebensohl in Response to Takeout Doubles

Lebensohl can be used in other bidding situations. The most common of these is over a weaktwo by the opponents.

- (2♥)-Double-2♠*
To play. Definitely not a hand to be proud of.
- (2♥)-Double-2NT*-3♣*-Pass *or*
(2♥)-Double-2NT*-3♣*-3♦* *or*
(2♥)-Double-2NT*-3♣*-3♥*
To play. Again, not a hand to write home about.
Just like using Lebensohl over reverses, the doubler can bid something other than 3♣ to show a good hand.
- (2♥)-Double-3♣* *or*
(2♥)-Double-3♦* *or*
(2♥)-Double-3♠*
Definitely shows some competitive values. If I had to assign a number, I would guess around 8 or 9.
Just like using Lebensohl over reverses, if responder uses Lebensohl as a relay and follows up with 3♠, then this should be a try for slam.

The other sequences are the same as described above.

There are two other auctions where I typically play Lebensohl.

- (1♥)-Double(2♥)-?
Whenever the opponents bid and raise a suit through partner's takeout double, 2NT is never natural. It can only be Lebensohl.
- (1♣)-Double(2♥*)-?
If the opponents are playing weak jump shifts, then Lebensohl is almost a requirement to get back the room you've already lost by their ferocious bidding.