

THE LEBENSOHL CONVENTION

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

<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>	You hold either:	(a) XX XX KJ10XXX XXX
1-NT	2H	???	Or	(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 on 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 NT raises become ambiguous after an overcall to partner's 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 artificial? How do you bid Stayman and how do you affirm or deny a stopper in the enemy suit if you are seeking a NT final 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

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 has a weak hand in Clubs, or he can rebid as follows: If he 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 last 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.
- (2) "2-NT" followed by a 3-NT over partner's puppet “3C” bid shows value for game, *plus* a stopper in the opponent's suit.

- (g) **The Stayman Convention** is achieved in either of the following 2 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 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 **with** a promised stopper in the enemy suit. Lacking a Major fit, a contract of 3-NT is finalized.

C. THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE LEBENSOHL CONVENTION: - The machinery of the Lebensohl convention makes it easy to avoid a NT 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 you give up is the natural meaning of the 2-NT bid by 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)

(or)

1-NT	2S	3-NT		(XXX AQX KJXX XXX)
				Showing game values with NO 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 Dbl. P ??? (All responses here by the Responder to the Take-Out Double are as referenced above.)