



Lake Norman Bridge Center December 2023 Newsletter

Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah!!

There will be no bridge on Monday, December 25, Tuesday, December 26,
and Monday, January 1, 2024

Congratulations on Reaching the Next Plateau

Paul Cornwell: Junior Master
Steve Hamburg: Life Master
Shirley Jeffers: Silver Life Master
Susan Saldana: Junior Master

December Games and Schedule

December 4, Mon - Unit Special game, \$6, upgraded points
December 5, Tue - 11:15 am Christmas Party (catered) followed by Unit Special game at
12:30 pm, \$10, upgraded points
December 7, Thur - Unit Special game, \$6, upgraded points
December 11, Mon - STAC Game, \$7, $\frac{1}{4}$ each GOLD, Red, Silver, and Black points!
December 12, Tue - STAC Game, \$7, $\frac{1}{4}$ each GOLD, Red, Silver, and Black points!
December 14, Thur - STAC Game, \$7, $\frac{1}{4}$ each GOLD, Red, Silver, and Black points!
December 18, Mon - Grass Roots game, \$6, upgraded points
December 19, Tue - Grass Roots game, \$6, upgraded points
December 21, Thur - Grass Roots game, \$6, upgraded points
December 25, Mon - NO GAME - Christmas Day
December 26, Tue - NO GAME - Day after Christmas
December 28, Thur - Regular game, \$5

Member News

Linda Campagna is still at Abernathy Laurels at 102 Leonard Avenue, Newton, NC 28658 and can have visitors. Her room phone is (828) 465-8597. Please continue to pray for her.

70% Club

Congratulations to:
John Euler and Ella Rice - 70.00% on November 28

Upcoming Sectionals and Regionals in December

<https://tournaments.acbl.org>

Click the link and then on the highlighted "info" to view the tournament flyer and information.

Partnership Desk

Call **Marlene Smith**, our Partnership Director, when you want to play but need a partner. Her phone number is 704-992-1260 and her email address is crzy4brdg@yahoo.com. She can charm anyone to come in and play, and she will always try to get the best match for you!

Happy 75th Birthday Dave Smith!

November 17



Dave's Faves

The Answer to Notrump Bidding Interference – Lebensohl

References:

The Lebensohl Convention Complete in Contract Bridge, Ron Anderson; Devyn Press, Inc., 1987.

25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know, Barbara Seagram & Marc Smith; Master Point Press, 1999.

Bidding Charts of Bridge Conventions, Robert Probasco; RCProbasco, 2012.

INTRODUCTION

In the early history of bridge, there was little interference in the bidding following a 1 NT opener. In modern bidding, nearly everyone will overcall an opponent's 1 NT opening bid with the right kind of hand. To complicate this trend, many of the overcalls are now conventional, showing two-suited or single-suited hands. Therefore, it has become mandatory for a good partnership to learn how to handle an overcall of partner's 1 NT opening bid.

Lebensohl is the answer to this problem. However, this is a complex convention and will not likely be covered entirely in one brief lesson. Partnership agreement is necessary to correctly interpret certain sequences. This lesson will take a simple and common approach. Using **Lebensohl** will still require advance discussion with partner.

LEBENSOHL FOLLOWING NATURAL TWO-LEVEL OVERCALLS

To start, let's investigate some general "rules" regarding how to use the **Lebensohl** convention. Each bidding sequence will start with partner opening with 1 NT and RHO overcalling at the two-level. The best approach to learning **Lebensohl** is to give a series of bidding sequences and follow-up with an explanation of meaning. It is of utmost importance for a partnership to understand what is **TO PLAY** and what is **FORCING** or **NON-FORCING**. There are also **INVITATIONAL** sequences that will be discussed where applicable.

If RHO **DOUBLES** partner's 1 NT bid, all partnership systems (i.e.: Stayman, Jacoby transfer, four-suit transfers, etc.) are **ON**. Texas transfers can still be used after an overcall at the two-level, but should be discussed with partner.

- **DOUBLE** is for *penalty*.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♠	DOUBLE	PASS
PASS			
Your Hand:	♠ K Q 10 7	♥ 8 3	♦ J 9 8 5
			♣ 9 8 2

Discussion: Game is not likely your way and the opponents are not going to be happy with the spade break and strength. You are likely to take at least three spade tricks and partner can probably produce three tricks or more in the other suits. As stated above, **DOUBLE** is for *penalty* and there is no reason for partner to bid.

- A suit bid at the two-level is **TO PLAY**.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♥	2 ♠	PASS
?			

Your Hand: ♠ A Q 10 7 2 ♥ 8 3 ♦ 10 9 8 ♣ 9 7 2

Discussion: Partner should **PASS**. By the rules, a suit bid at the two-level is **TO PLAY**.

- A suit bid at the three-level in any of the other three suits is **FORCING TO GAME**.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♠	3 ♥	PASS
?			

Your Hand: ♠ 7 2 ♥ A Q J 8 3 ♦ K J 6 5 ♣ 8 2

Discussion: This bid is 100% **GAME FORCING** and shows a 5+-card heart suit and 10+ HCPs. Partner is expected to bid game in hearts with 3+-card support or bid 3 NT with a spade stopper. (**NOTE:** With a 6-card or greater heart suit and 6-8+ HCPs, you can make a **Texas Transfer** (i.e.: 4 ♦) bid. Texas transfers are **ON** over a two-level overcall of partner's 1 NT bid.)

- A bid of 2 NT is asking partner to bid 3 ♣. Now any re-bid by you at a rank **below** the overcalled suit is a sign-off. (**NOTE:** If you wish to sign-off in clubs, **PASS** partner's bid.) Any suit bid by you **above** the rank of the overcalled suit is **INVITATIONAL**.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♥	2 NT	PASS
3 ♣	PASS	3 ♦	

Your Hand: ♠ 7 2 ♥ 8 3 ♦ K J 9 8 5 3 ♣ J 9 2

Discussion: This is the type of hand that you would have transferred to diamonds without the interference. Diamonds are below hearts by rank. Therefore, by the rules, 3 ♦ is **TO PLAY**.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♥	2 NT	PASS
3 ♣	PASS	3 ♠	

Your Hand: ♠ K Q 10 7 2 ♥ 8 3 ♦ K 10 9 8 ♣ 9 2

Discussion: Without interference, you would have transferred to spades and invited to game in notrump or spades. Since spades outrank hearts, the 3 ♠ bid is **INVITATIONAL**. With a minimum NT bid, partner will **PASS**. With a maximum NT bid, partner will bid 4 ♠ with 3+-card support or bid 3 NT without support and a heart stopper. Lacking both, and holding maximum values, partner will start looking for the best game.

- An immediate cuebid is **STAYMAN** and promises at least one four-card major. It also **DENIES** a stopper in the opponents' suit. The opening 1 NT bidder (partner) now has a number of options which will be discussed below.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♥	3 ♥	PASS
?			

Your Hand: ♠ Q 10 9 7 ♥ 8 3 ♦ A Q J ♣ Q 9 8 4

Discussion: A direct cuebid is **STAYMAN** *without* a heart stopper. Partner can bid spades with a 4-card fit or 3 NT without four spades, but with a heart stopper. If partner does not have a heart stopper, playing a part score or a game in spades with a **4-3** fit may be an option.

- A bid of 2 NT followed by a cuebid over partner's 3 ♣ bid is **STAYMAN** and **SHOWS** a stopper in the opponents' suit. The opening 1 NT bidder (partner) can now bid a four-card major or bid 3 NT without one.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♥	2 NT	PASS
3 ♣	PASS	3 ♥	PASS
?			

Your Hand: ♠ Q 10 9 7 ♥ A 3 ♦ Q J 10 ♣ Q 9 8 4

Discussion: This hand is similar to the previous example, but this time you have a heart stopper. Bid 2 NT (**Lebensohl**) on the first bid and follow-up with the cuebid. Again, this is **STAYMAN**, but *with* a heart stopper. Partner can bid spades with a 4-card fit or 3 NT without four spades.

- An immediate jump to 3 NT after the overall shows **GAME-FORCING** values, but **DENIES** a stopper in the opponents' suit. If opener (partner) does not have a stopper, the best suit-fit is pursued.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♥	3 NT	PASS
?			

Your Hand: ♠ A 10 ♥ 8 3 2 ♦ A Q 8 ♣ Q 9 7 5 2

Discussion: Points are there for a game bid of 3 NT, but this bid **DENIES** a heart stopper. Partner should **PASS** with a heart stopper or look for a suit fit without a stopper. The concept of "**Fast Denies**" is standard for **Lebensohl**.

- A bid of 2 NT followed by a bid of 3 NT over partner's 3 ♣ bid **SHOWS** a stopper in the opponents' suit and asks partner to **PASS**.

OPENER (Partner)	RHO	RESPONDER (You)	LHO
1 NT	2 ♥	2 NT	PASS
3 ♣	PASS	3 NT	

Your Hand: ♠ A 10 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ Q 8 7 ♣ Q 9 7 5 2

Discussion: This is very similar to the previous hand except that you now have a heart stopper. Points are there for game. **You get to 3 NT slowly**. This tells partner that you **do have** hearts stopped.

LEBENSOHL FOLLOWING ARTIFICIAL OVERCALLS

In modern bridge bidding there are numerous conventional bids over a 1 NT opener that are not natural and show two-suited or one suited hands. These bids are definitely obstructive in nature and tend to help the opponents find a fit at the lowest possible level. For this reason, it is important to be able to continue communication with partner and not allow the opponents to steal the bid. With a few exceptions, all **Lebensohl** bids are **ON**. The rules regarding cuebids have to be modified slightly since, in many cases, you will not know exactly which two suits the opponents have. If both suits are known, cuebid the higher suit for **STAYMAN**, if such a bid is applicable. *You would not want to make a Stayman bid if the opponents are showing both major suits!*

Following an artificial overcall of 2 ♣, **DOUBLE** for **STAYMAN**. Over natural overcalls, **DOUBLE** is for penalty. Over artificial bids, **DOUBLE** promises defensive values in one or both of the opponents' suits and partner is invited to **DOUBLE** whatever he can. A **DOUBLE** after an initial **PASS** of the artificial bid is always for **PENALTY**. Over an immediate **DOUBLE** of the 1 NT bid by the opponents, all systems are **ON**. **Lebensohl** is not needed in that situation.

Lebensohl is indeed a complex convention, but extremely valuable when the situation arises. If your partnership agrees to play **Lebensohl**, fine-tune the application over natural bids and then have a good discussion about how to apply the rules over artificial bids. As with all bids and conventions in your toolbox, partnership understanding is of utmost importance. In my third reference at the beginning of this article, there is an extremely helpful flow chart for the **Lebensohl** convention. This chart is the best visual I can recommend if the explanations above are confusing.

Let's look at a couple of hands where **Lebensohl** resulted in superior results. Both hands were played in virtual games during the pandemic.

Hand: A
Dealer: E
Vul: E-W

	N		
W	♠ Q ♥ A 4 ♦ 9 8 7 ♣ K 9 8 7 6 3 2	E	
♠ J 5 ♥ J 10 8 6 2 ♦ K Q 4 ♣ J 10 4	S	♠ K 7 4 3 ♥ Q 7 3 ♦ A 10 6 5 ♣ A Q	
	♠ A 10 9 8 6 2 ♥ K 9 5 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ 5		

Bidding:	W	N	E	S
	2 NT (3)	Pass (4)	1 NT (1)	2 ♠ (2)
	3 ♥ (6)	Pass	3 ♣ (5)	Pass
			Pass (7)	Pass

Notes:

1. Standard notrump opener (15-17 HCPs, balanced distribution).

2. This is not a perfect overcall of a 1 NT opener, but with a 6-card suit and favorable vulnerability, this is an acceptable bid.
3. **LEBENSÖHL**. With invitational values (8-9 HCPs), West does not want to give up on the hand. The holding is not strong enough to bid 3♥ which is forcing to game. Following partner's requested bid of 3♣, West is planning to make an **INVITATIONAL** bid of 3♥.
4. North actually entered the bidding with 3♣ at one table. Although vulnerability is favorable, this bid at the three-level could be disastrous with this auction. **PASS** is probably the best choice.
5. As requested following the **LEBENSÖHL** bid by West, East must bid 3♣.
6. This bid shows at least a 5-card suit and is **INVITATIONAL** to game.
7. Even with 3-card support, East has the lower end of the 1 NT opener (15 HCPs). **PASS** is the correct call.

The opening bid of 1 NT by East and the overcall of 2♠ by South were common at nearly all nine tables in play on this day. However, only one **E-W** pair played **Lebensohl**, resulting in the 2 NT bid by West. East followed the request by partner and bid 3♣. West made the **INVITATIONAL** bid of 3♥ and, with a minimum notrump opener of 15 HCPs, East **PASSED**. This resulted in a top result for **E-W**. At other tables, West faced a dilemma regarding a bid over 2♠. The choice was 3♥ at most tables, suggesting game values in a hand with only 8 HCPs. At the majority of tables, **E-W** could not resist bidding game at either 4♥ or 3 NT, going down in both contracts. In this situation, **Lebensohl** is by far the most accurate treatment of an **INVITATIONAL** hand. Many partnerships have no defensive strategy following an overcall of partner's opening 1 NT bid. This often ends with poor results because the pair bids too high or stays out of further bidding completely. **Lebensohl** is the answer to this dilemma.

On this next example, not playing **Lebensohl** caused the **N-S** pair to bid too high.

Hand: B
Dealer: N
Vul: E-W

	N		
	♠ J 2		
	♥ A K 10		E
	♦ Q 9 8 7		
	♣ A Q 10 2		
W			
♠ Q 9 6 5			♠ A K 10 8 4 3
♥ J 8 7 5 4			♥ Q 3
♦ 5			♦ K J 10 6
♣ 7 4 3			♣ 5
	S		
	♠ 7		
	♥ 9 6 2		
	♦ A 4 3 2		
	♣ K J 9 8 6		

Bidding:	W	N	E	S
		1 NT	2♠ (1)	3♣ (2)
	Pass	3♠ (3)	Pass	5♣ (4)
	All pass			

Notes:

1. Natural.

2. Natural and **non-forcing** (playing Standard American), but **INVITATIONAL**.
3. **CUEBID RAISE**. This is equivalent to a **LIMIT RAISE** and shows at least 3-card or greater support.
4. Having been forced to the four-level, South chose to go for the minor suit game in clubs. (**Note: The hand now re-evaluates to 11 HVPs opposite what will likely be 16+ or 17 HCPs.**)

Following the interference by East (a natural and good 2 ♠ overcall), South chose to bid 3 ♣. Although this is not a game forcing bid, it is highly **INVITATIONAL**. With a good fit, North showed a positive response and the partnership could not resist bidding the club game for down 3. *Could this result have been avoided? YES.* Let's look at another bidding sequence where **Lebensohl** was used.

Bidding:	W	N	E	S
		1 NT	2 ♠	2 NT
	Pass	3 ♣	Pass	Pass
	Pass			

In this sequence South decides to bid 2 NT, asking partner to bid clubs. With only 8 HCPs and no major suit fit, South **PASSES** this bid feeling game was unlikely. Following poor defense, **N-S** made this contract! Even if the contract had gone down one trick (likely result) the outcome is better than **E-W** making a contract of 2 ♠ or 3 ♠. *Could E-W have bid and made the best contract of 3 ♠? SURE.* This was the result at two tables. However, given the unfavorable vulnerability by **E-W**, this is a tough bid to make. Again, the use of **Lebensohl** is the best approach for **N-S**.

A final note regarding use of Lebensohl: This convention is a complete "system." It is not only the use of a 2 NT bid following an overcall at the two-level by the opponents. Every bid made, whether it be 2 NT or another suit at the two-level or a different suit at the three-level, has a meaning within the "system." Go over the examples given at the beginning of this article to understand how this convention is put together and how it works. The bad news: It can be complex. The good news: It precisely describes your hand in interference situations. This is not in my top 10 conventions for beginners, but it is highly recommended for beginners and intermediates ready to move forward!

LEBENSOHL FOLLOWING NATURAL THREE-LEVEL OVERCALLS

Obviously the standard 2 NT (**Lebensohl**) bid is no longer available. Depending on point count, you may have to improvise. A bid below game (i.e.: three-level) is **FORCING**. Game bids are sign-offs. A direct 3 NT bid **DENIES** a stopper in the overcalled suit, but shows game points. A cuebid of a minor suit is either **STAYMAN** (usually both majors) or a hand with slam interest. The biggest difference with overcalls at the three-level is that **DOUBLE** is **not** for penalty. It is takeout for one of the three unbid suits. (**NOTE: Partner may convert the DOUBLE to PENALTY by passing if he/she has a strong trump holding in the overcalled suit.**)

For most players, **Lebensohl** is a convention used when the opponents overcall partner's opening bid of 1 NT. However, there are two other applications of this convention that may prove useful. I recommend this approach for well-established partnerships or advanced players only, but it should be discussed here.

LEBENSOHL AFTER AN OPENING WEAK TWO-BID BY THE OPPONENTS

After the opponents have opened the bidding with a weak two-bid, your partner may have a strong hand with no choice but to **DOUBLE** for takeout. In many cases, you have few if any points, but you cannot leave the **DOUBLE** for penalty. You must bid, often at the three-level! Let's look at a common dilemma:

	OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
	2 ♠	DOUBLE	PASS	?
Your Hand:	♠ 9 7	♥ 10 3	♦ 9 8 7	♣ J 10 9 7 5 2

Discussion: Wow! You have one HCP and partner has made a **TAKEOUT DOUBLE**. *Do you see the problem?* You must bid clubs at the three-level and, most likely, partner will be completely in the dark about whether to **PASS** or go to game, thinking you might have 8 HCPs. You definitely would like partner to **PASS**.

This situation comes up frequently and you will often end in the wrong contract (i.e.: too high). Again, **Lebensohl** comes to the rescue! Let's change the bidding and enter into a **Lebensohl** auction.

	OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
	2 ♠	DOUBLE	PASS	2 NT
	PASS	3 ♣	PASS	PASS

Your Hand: ♠ 9 7 ♥ 10 3 ♦ 9 8 7 ♣ J 10 9 7 5 2

Discussion: This is the perfect **Lebensohl** sequence given your hand. You still may not be in the right contract, but you now have a better chance of making a part-score contract than going down in a game bid, possibly in the wrong suit. The 2 NT bid asks your partner (the doubler) to bid clubs. If your long suit happens to be diamonds or hearts, correct the 3 ♣ bid to that suit and partner in most cases should **PASS**.

Lebensohl after a **DOUBLE** of a weak two-bid is primarily used for weak hands as in the example above. With a better hand (i.e.: 6 to 8 HCPs), a non-jump bid in a suit is a constructive bid and lets partner know that you have some values.

LEBENSOHL FOLLOWING A REVERSE BID BY PARTNER

The second application of **Lebensohl** other than following interference over partner's opening 1 NT occurs when partner opens the bidding with a suit bid and makes a **REVERSE** after your response. Again, with a weak hand, you may be faced with a dilemma since the reverse bid requires you to bid one more round.

	OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
	PASS	1 ♣	PASS	1 ♠
	PASS	2 ♥	PASS	?
Your Hand:	♠ Q 7 6 2	♥ 10 6	♦ J 9 4	♣ K 8 6 5

Discussion: Partner's rebid of 2 ♥ is a **REVERSE**, showing 16+ HCPs and a longer club suit (most likely 5-card length) than the heart suit (most likely 4-card length). It is **FORCING** for one round. *Do you see the problem?* You must bid clubs at the three-level and, most likely, partner will again be completely in the dark about whether to **PASS** or go to game. You definitely would like partner to **PASS** a 3 ♣ bid.

So, what is the best approach to this problem? How do you show partner a weak hand (i.e.: 6-7 HCPs)?

OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
PASS	1 ♣	PASS	1 ♠
PASS	2 ♥	PASS	2 NT
PASS	3 ♣	PASS	PASS

Your Hand: ♠ Q 7 6 2 ♥ 10 6 ♦ J 9 4 ♣ K 8 6 5

Discussion: The 2 NT bid by you is **Lebensohl**, asking partner to bid 3 ♣. Since partner accepts the transfer to 3 ♣ without bidding another suit, his/her hand is limited to 16-18 HCPs. With the **PASS**, you are stating, "I have a weak hand (i.e.: 6-7 HCPs) and I think there is no chance for game. A club part-score is likely our best fit."

Similar to using **Lebensohl** over partner's **DOUBLE** of a weak-two bid by the opponents, this convention is used over a **REVERSE** bid by partner holding a weak hand with little or no possibility of game. It is intended to allow the partnership to arrive at an optimum contract without bidding too high.

As stated previously, **Lebensohl** is a complex convention, but it is extremely valuable in modern bidding. If your partnership adopts this convention, and I highly recommend that you do, it would be advised that you and partner obtain one of the reference sources above or go to any one of many online sites for more detailed information. *This lesson has only scratched the surface!*

This ends the year 2023 and I hope my articles during the past twelve months have helped enhance your game. As always, I am open to your comments and feedback. I appreciate the comments that I received in response to my last request in November. That feedback has already guided me to two new topics for 2024!

I wish you the best of holidays in the upcoming month . . . And as always,

HAPPY NEW YEAR and **MAY ALL YOUR SLAMS MAKE!**

Dave

dbsmith939@gmail.com