

“Starter Lebensohl”

“Oh, I’ll never play Lebensohl; it’s just too complicated.” If you have ever said this, you’re right. “Lebensohl,” if you learn and play the entire system, is complex and beyond most bridge players.

OK, what about this. Has partner ever opened 1NT, the next player makes a bid and all you have is a long minor, not enough points for game, and you want to play it at 3 of your minor? If you bid your minor at the 3 level, is that a good hand, or not?

Or this. An opponent opens a weak 2 on your left, partner doubles and the next person passes. Again, all you have is a long minor and not enough points for game. If you bid your minor at the 3 level is that a good hand, or not?

Consider playing the “2NT Relay” portion of Lebensohl.

Playing Lebensohl, in either of the above scenarios, your bid of 2NT is *not* an invitational 2NT bid; it is a relay (transfer) to 3C. After partner’s forced bid of 3C you pass with a club suit or bid 3D with a diamond suit, and partner must pass. That’s it.

If you have a good hand of 10+ pts and a 5+ card suit below the opponents interfering suit, bid your suit at the 3-level direct, by-passing the 2NT relay. This is invitational and partner may pass without game support for your suit and with at most 1 stopper in their suit.

There are many more aspects to Lebensohl but here I am suggesting playing only the 2NT Relay portion of the system, what I call “Starter Lebensohl.”

More on their interference over partner’s 1NT

There are systems we use over partner’s 1NT to arrive at a major fit: Stayman and Jacoby Transfers. How do these come into play if your right-hand opponent (RHO) interferes over partner’s 1NT opening bid?

Here’s a system to use that combines stolen bids, transfers (if available), and the Lebensohl 2NT Relay. Partner opens 1NT and RHO makes a bid. Your action and its meaning are shown.

<u>RHO’s bid</u>	<u>Your bid</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
2C	2NT	Lebensohl Relay; Partner must bid 3C
	X	Your double means “Stolen bid” (they stole your 2C Stayman bid)
	2D	Jacoby xfer to hearts
	2H	Jacoby xfer to spades
	2S	This bid is gone and has no meaning. We are using Lebensohl 2NT to xfer the hand to our minor.

2D	2NT	Lebensolf Relay to 3C
	X	The double says they stole your 2D Jacoby xfer to hearts
	2H	Jacoby xfer to spades
	2S	No meaning. We use Lebensohl 2NT to xfer the hand to our minor.
2H	2NT	Lebensohl Relay to 3C
	X	This double is <i>penalty</i> ! Your typical hand: xx KJT _x Jxx Axxx. With a 10+ pt hand and the same hearts, you could jump to 3NT depending on vulnerability.
	2S	To play. 5+ spades and no game interest.
2S	2NT	Lebensohl Relay to 3C. Here our long suit could be a minor or hearts. (More on this below.)
	X	This double is penalty.

Again, this is only a suggested system to use over their interference over our 1NT opener.

Can “Starter Lebensohl” work if my suit is hearts? Yes.

Say it goes a weak 2S on your left, partner doubles and RHO passes. You hold:
 x QJTxxx Qxx Txx. Bid 2NT and after partner’s forced bid of 3C, bid 3H ... non-forcing and to play.

Same if they interfere with 2S spades over partner’s 1NT opener: You hold:
 x KJ9xxx JTxx xx. Bid 2NT and after partner’s forced bid of 3C, bid 3H Non-forcing and to play.

Note both hands contain a 6 card heart suit, 5 hcp, and no interest in game.