

LEBENSOHL OVER REVERSES by Maritha Pottenger Revised 10/2020

When Opener reverses (bidding a 2nd suit that is higher denomination than his/her first suit at the 2 level), s/he is showing 17 or more HCP and at least 5-4 in the two suits. Responder needs to distinguish between hands that are minimum and would like to get out of the bidding right away, hands that are game-going, and hands that have slam potential. Hands with fewer than 8 HCP use the (Lebensohl) 2NT relay to warn of weakness.

The general Lebensohl guidelines are that 2NT is a relay bid, forcing Opener to bid 3C. A very weak Responder might pass 3C, or take a preference to one of Opener's suits, or rebid Responder's own suit. All of these bids are NON-forcing and show weak hands, asking partner to pass unless OPENER has a huge, huge hand. When Opener has game in his/her own hand, must NOT accept the relay, but bid something else to force to game.

In addition to using the 2NT relay, Responder can take several other options. Here are the choices:

- 1) **Taking a preference to the 1st suit bid by Opener** shows at least 3-card support, 8/9 or more support points. It is game forcing.
- 2) **Raising the 2nd suit bid by Opener** shows at least 8/9 support points, 4-card support, and is forcing to game. [Leaves room to explore for slam if appropriate.]
- 3) **Rebidding his/her original suit shows 5 cards, at least 8 HCP, and is forcing one round.** (With fewer HCP, have to go through the relay.) [Some people play that an immediate 2S shows only 5-7 HCP and at least 5 spades. Potential slow down, but descriptive. Leaves room for Opener to "grab" the NT if appropriate. [DISCUSS WITH PARTNER.]
- 4) If Responder **jumps in own suit, promises a good 6-card suit** (usually 2 of top 3 or 3 of top 5 honors) with at least 8 HCP. Denies support for either of Opener's suits. If a fit is not possible, Opener can bid 3NT with 4th suit stopped and the appropriate hand.
- 5) If Responder jumps to game in own suit, **this shows a solid 6 or 7 card suit**, but nothing else of significance. Asks Opener to pass unless s/he has extra values and great controls in all the side suits.
- 6) **If Responder bids the 4th (unbid) suit, this promises at least 8 HCP and 5 cards in the first suit** bid by Responder. It denies a fit for either of Opener's suits and tends to deny a stopper for NT. One round forcing.
- 7) **Special Note: if Opener reversed into 2D, Responder bidding 4th suit is a WEAK response—to avoid "wrong siding" the NT in case Opener wants to rebid 2NT or 3NT with big hand. If Opener accepts "relay" of 4th suit and bid 3C, any subsequent bid by Responder is sign-off. Over a reverse into 2D, Responder's bid of 2NT is game forcing.**
- 8) **If Responder jumps in the unbid suit, that is a splinter.** It shows either a singleton or a void in that 4th suit, 4-card support for Opener's second suit and 11+ HCP or more. It is highly invitational to slam.
- 9) **If Responder bids 3NT, shows about 9-11 HCP, stoppers in 4th suit, and no fit for either of Opener's suits. *Fast Arrival.***
- 10) **If Responder bids 2NT (relaying to 3C) and then follows with 3NT, shows extra values, about 12 to a bad 15 HCP, but no fit with partner. Opener can decide if slam is an option.**

Remember, going through the relay BEFORE taking a preference, raising 2nd suit, or rebidding your suit shows great weakness and asks partner to pass your last bid.

There is a complete book on Lebensohl by Ron Anderson which discusses all of the above, in detail, with examples.