



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(483) Competing Over 2-Level Preempts: Lebensohl**

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Level: 8 of 10 (4 of 6)

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#### **General**

When the opponents open the bidding with a 2-level preempt, we can compete in the bidding a variety of different ways. As we discussed recently, we can make simple overcalls. We can also make jump overcalls that show specific types of strong, “trick-oriented” hands. But the most useful tool for competing in these auctions is a takeout double. After we make a takeout double, partner must describe their hand – we have “forced them to bid”. Because of the preempt, partner has less room available to describe their hand. This means we often need a tool to help us communicate with partner in these “jammed up” bidding situations. This tool is *Lebensohl after a 2-level preempt*. Let’s see how it works.

#### **Advancing Partner’s “Normal” Takeout Double**

When partner makes a takeout double of a 1-level opening bid, we generally advance their double by bidding our longest suit.

- With 0 to a bad 8 points we bid cheaply,
- With a good 8 to 11 points we jump,
- With 12+ points we cuebid (do something strong), and will show our shape later.

#### *Example 1*

1♠ X P \_\_\_?

If Advancer has ♥ then:

- 2♥ shows 0 to a bad 8 points with 4+♥ (bad hand)
- 3♥ shows 8 to 11 points with 4+♥ (constructive hand)
- 2♠ shows 12+ points (game forcing, any shape)

But when the opponents preempt the bidding we often no longer have enough space to be able to show our hand this way. We will deal with this problem by implementing *Lebensohl* in this auction as well.



## Lebensohl over 2-level Preemptive Openings

In auctions where the opponents have taken away our bidding space by opening a 2-level preempt, we will use a Lebensohl structure to show our shape and values.

### Example 2

2♠ X P \_\_\_?

If Advancer has ♥ then:

- With 0 to 8- points we bid 2NT\* (as a relay to 3♣), and then show our suit at the 3-level.
- With 8+ to 11 points we bid naturally at the 3-level.
- With 12 or more points we can make a cuebid to show 4-card ♥. We can also just go to game with a 5-card ♥ suit and not a lot of extra values.

By giving up a natural 2NT bid we gain the ability to show all our suits in different values: 0-8, 8-11, or more.

*Note: We can use 2NT followed by 3NT vs. a direct 3NT to show a stopper (or half stopper). Also, we can use 2NT then cuebid vs. direct cuebid to show Stayman with or without a stopper.*

When the opponents preempt 2♦ or 2♥, there may be room to show some of our suits in 3 ways.

- 2-level – small hand (0 to 8 points)
- 2NT relay then 3-level – medium hand (8+ to 11 points)
- 3-level – large hand (12+ points, 5+ card suit, forcing)

### Example 3

2♥ X P \_\_\_?

- With primary ♠
  - 2♠ -- 0 to 8- points, 4+♠
  - 2NT relay to 3♣, then 3♠ -- 8+ to 11 points, 4+♠
  - 3♠ directly -- 5+♠, some play this as GF, others play it as 8+ to 11
    - Discuss this with your partner – 8-11 with an extra ♠ is modern.
  - 3♥ directly – 12+ points, 4c♠, GF, no ♥ stopper
  - 2NT relay to 3♣, then 3♥ -- 12+ points, 4c♠, GF, ♥ stopper
- With primary ♦
  - 2NT relay to 3♣ then 3♦ -- 0 to 8- points, 4+♦
  - 3♦ directly – 8+ to 11 points, 4+♦
  - 2NT relay to 3♣, then 3NT -- 12+ points, could have 4+♦, GF, and a full ♥ stopper. \*\*
  - 3NT directly -- 12+ points, could have 4+♦, GF, and usually partial stopper in ♥. \*\*
- With primary ♣
  - 2NT relay to 3♣, then pass -- 0 to 8- points, 4+♣
  - 3♣ directly -- 8+ to 11 points, 4+♣
  - 2NT relay to 3♣, then 3NT – 12+ points, 4+♣, GF, and a full stopper in ♥. \*\*
  - 3NT directly – 12+ points, GF, and usually partial stopper in ♥. \*\*



*\*\*Note: Some people play that 3NT shows a stopper and the 2NT relay then 3NT shows a partial stopper – or some other variation. This situation is slightly different than when the opponents interfere over our 1NT opener because partner has shown shortness in the opponent’s suit with their takeout double.*

### **Conclusion**

By using 2NT as a convention like Lebensohl, we give up almost nothing because with a good holding in their suit and invitational values, we either upgrade and bid game or pass and turn the double into penalty. With the 2NT Lebensohl convention we gain much more precise bidding and many more ways to describe our hand. This is another way that 2NT is better used as a “convention, not a contract!”