

Equal Level Conversion

Improve Your Bidding With More Agreements



By Ron Lien

ronaldlien@aol.com

Most players promise 17+ hcp or support for all three unbid suits when doubling one or two of a suit. Often hands arise when you would like a way to show two suits. Here 1♠ is opened, and you hold ♠xx ♥AJxx ♦KQxxx ♣Kx. Most would overcall 2♦ and not explore a heart fit. A few would overcall 1♥ or bid an aggressive 2♠ Michaels, but these alternatives create other problems.

A convention played by many experts, called Equal Level Conversion (ELC), adds another hand type to the takeout double.

Doubler

Advancer

♠xx ♥KQxx ♦QJxxx ♣Ax ♠xx ♥J10x ♦Kxx ♣Kxxxx

Bidding: 1♠ DBL 2♠ 3♣; P 3♦

With a good four card holding in the highest unbid suit (♥) and a fair five or six card holding in the second highest unbid suit (♦), double. Rebid the second highest unbid suit (♦) if partner bids the lowest unbid suit (♣) or makes a forcing bid. There are some additional 5-4 and 4-4 shapes to consider in the examples that follow.

After 1 of a Suit

An immediate double with an ELC pattern creates action and helps find a major suit fit.

♠xx ♥AJxx ♦KJxxx ♣Kx ♠xxx ♥Kxxx ♦xx ♣Axxx 1♠ DBL P 2♣; P 2♦ P 2♥

Doubler corrects 2♣ to 2♦, which shows hearts and diamonds – not a strong hand with diamonds, but we will cover that later. We found the heart fit.

♠x ♥QJ10x ♦KQxxxx ♣Ax ♠xxx ♥Kxx ♦xxx ♣KJxx 1♠ DBL 2♠ DBL; P 3♦
♠xxx ♥Axxx ♦xx ♣Kxxx 1♠ DBL 2♠ DBL; P 3♦ P 3♥

Advancer's double is responsive, showing two places to play. While 3♦ confirms ELC or 2-4-4-3, Doubler could have bid 3♣ holding a standard takeout with four clubs.

♠xx ♥J10xxx ♦AKxx ♣Ax ♠xx ♥Qx ♦Jxxx ♣KJxxx 1♠ DBL 2♠ 3♣; P 3♦

Most players would not overcall 2♥, so ELC works here with a strong four card diamond suit. Advancer bids 3♣ with five and no other unbid four card suit. Advancer should be careful to not bid too aggressively holding five poor clubs and a minimum hand.

♠Kx ♥QJ10x ♦AKxxx ♣xx ♠xx ♥Ax ♦QJxx ♣KQJxx 1♠ DBL 2♠ DBL; P 3♦ P 3♣; P 5♦

When Advancer asks for spade stoppers, 3♦ confirms ELC leading to a good game. One spade stopper is not enough for 3N. If Doubler held ♠KJx ♥K10xx ♦AKxxx ♣x, 3N is indicated.

After a Weak Two

Using ELC over weak two bids provides more options. Avoid offshape patterns with only 4-4 in the highest unbid suits unless holding 15+ hcp.

♠KQxx ♥QJxxx ♦xx ♣Ax ♠xxxx ♥Ax ♦xx ♣KJxxx 2♦ DBL P 2♠

Playing Lebensohl, Advancer should bid the major instead of a five card minor with less than 10 hcp.

♠KJxx ♥Qxxxx ♦Kxx ♣A ♠Axx ♥xxx ♦x ♣Kxxxxx

2♦ DBL P 2N; P 3♥ P P; P

After Lebensohl, Doubler responds with ELC – not a strong hand. Opener prefers the lower suit with 3-3.

♠KQxx ♥AQJx ♦Kxx ♣xx ♠AJx ♥xx ♦xx ♣Kxxxxx 2♦ DBL P 3♣; P 3♥ P 3♠

With 15 Doubler can use ELC with only 4-4 in the highest suits. With a weaker hand simply pass.

Balancing Double of 1 or 2 of a Suit

Fourth seat doubles of one or two of a suit can also use ELC. Just follow the same guidelines as with the direct doubles.

1♥ P P DBL; 2♥ ?

DBL responsively with the minors, but prefer 2♠ to 3♣ with four spades and five clubs.

2♠ P P DBL; P ?

If you don't play 2N as Lebensohl here, don't use ELC.

Handling the Missing Bid

How do you show a strong single suited hand in the ELC suit?

♠xx ♥AKQ ♦AQxxxx ♣Kx ♠xx ♥J10x ♦Kxx ♣Axxxx 1♠ 2♦ 2♠ 3♦; P 3♠ P 4♣; P 5♦

Plan ahead by underbidding 2♦ as you will probably get more chances to describe your hand. Change the hand to ♠Kx ♥AQx ♦AQxxxx ♣Kx, and you can overcall a heavy 1N, bidding 3♦ if the opponents compete.

ELC is an advanced treatment. Be sure to mark your convention card "Offshape T/O." Discuss suit quality, hand strength, and auctions thoroughly before playing ELC with your regular partner.

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