

# Transfer Lebensohl

## Upgrade Your Bidding When Opponents Interfere

By Robert S. Todd

[robert@advinbridge.com](mailto:robert@advinbridge.com)



### General

Lebensohl is an excellent system for dealing with interference over our 1NT opening bids. It allows us to show our shape and compete in the bidding or force the auction to game. But Lebensohl has some flaws. One of these flaws is siding. In Lebensohl auctions we will often play the hand from the “wrong” side (Responder’s side.) Another flaw in Lebensohl relates to Responder’s strength. Responder often has three strengths (buckets) that they want to differentiate about their hand: competitive, invitational, and game forcing, but Lebensohl can fail to give Responder the ability to properly describe their hand. In an effort overcome these flaws we will adopt an upgrade to traditional Lebensohl called *Transfer Lebensohl*.

### What is Unchanged?

Let’s first talk about what aspects of Lebensohl are unchanged as we upgrade to Transfer Lebensohl:

- We ignore interference of Dbl and 2♣ and we adopt Transfer Lebensohl vs. 2♦-2♠ interference.
- 2-level bids are natural and competitive.
- 2NT is still a relay to 3♣ to show various hands at the 3-level; often competitive in a suit that we could not show at the 2-level.
- The cuebid is still the cuebid. A direct cuebid of the opponent’s suit is Stayman without a stopper. A delayed cuebid (going through the 2NT relay and then cuebidding the opponent’s suit) is Stayman with a stopper.
- The meaning of Dbl is also unchanged. It is generally “card-showing” and describes a hand which has enough values to take some action, but is not sure what other action to take. Usually this will be a balanced invitational hand with or without a 4-card major.

*Note: Vs. 3-level Interference we play negative doubles and natural bidding. This is not part of our Lebensohl system.*

### What is Changed?

The parts of Transfer Lebensohl that are different from standard Lebensohl are the 3-level bids. We define these 3-level bids as transfers (showing a 5+ card suit) with invitational or better values (8+ points opposite a 15-17 NT Opener.)

Responder’s bid shows the suit just above what they bid, skipping the suit the opponent bid.

*Ex. If the opponent interferes with 2♥, then 3♦ is an invitational+ transfer to ♠.*

### Issues that Still Exist

Though Transfer Lebensohl is an improvement over standard Lebensohl, it does not solve all of our bidding problems. One of the major problems that still exists in Transfer Lebensohl relates to the ♣ suit. Since we are still using 2NT as a relay to 3♣ to show various hand types, we do not have a way to make an invitational+ transfer to ♣ at the 3-level. Thus, when we have an invitational hand with a long ♣ suit we have no way to show this hand type. We must choose whether to treat this as a competitive or a game forcing hand.

### Examples

1NT 2♦ \_\_\_?

- Dbl Card-showing double
- 2♥ Natural, usually 5+ card, competitive
- 2♠ Natural, usually 5+ card, competitive
- 2NT\* Relay to 3♣ (same as Lebensohl)
- 3♣\* 8+ points, 5+ card ♥
- 3♦\* 10+ points, Stayman w/o a ♦ stopper (same as Lebensohl)
- 3♥\* 8+ points, 5+ card ♠
- 3♠\* 10+ points, 5+ card ♣ (game forcing transfer)
- 3NT\* 10-15 points, w/o a ♦ stopper (same as Lebensohl)
- 4♣ Gerber (same as Lebensohl)
- 4♦\* Texas Transfer (same as Lebensohl)
- 4♥\* Texas Transfer (same as Lebensohl)

*Note: A transfer to ♣ takes us past 3♣ and thus is game-forcing.*

1NT 2♥ \_\_\_?

- Dbl Card-showing double
- 2♠ Natural, usually 5+ card, competitive
- 2NT\* Relay to 3♣ (same as Lebensohl)
- 3♣\* 8+ points, 5+ card ♦
- 3♦\* 8+ points, 5+ card ♠
- 3♥\* 10+ points, Stayman w/o a ♥ stopper (same as Lebensohl)
- 3♠\* 10+ points, 5+ card ♣ (game forcing transfer)
- 3NT\* 10-15 points, w/o a ♥ stopper (same as Lebensohl)
- 4♣ Gerber (same as Lebensohl)
- 4♦ Does not make sense in this auction unless 2♥ did not show ♥.
- 4♥\* Texas Transfer (same as Lebensohl)

*Note: A Transfer to ♣ takes us past 3♣ and thus is game forcing.*

1NT 2♠ \_\_\_?

- Dbl Card-showing double
- 2NT\* Relay to 3♣ (same as Lebensohl)
- 3♣\* 8+ points, 5+ card ♦
- 3♦\* 8+ points, 5+ card ♥
- 3♥\* 10+ points, 5+ card ♣ (game forcing transfer)
- 3♠\* 10+ points, Stayman w/o a ♠ stopper (same as Lebensohl)
- 3NT 10-15 points, w/o a ♠ stopper (same as Lebensohl)
- 4♣ Gerber (same as Lebensohl)
- 4♦\* Texas Transfer (same as Lebensohl)
- 4♥ Does not make sense in this auction unless 2♠ did not show ♠.

*Note: A Transfer to ♣ takes us past 3♣ and thus is game forcing.*

### **Opener's Rebid**

When the Responder shows invitational+ values by making a Transfer Lebensohl bid, the Opener's first responsibility is to show a minimum or maximum. With all minimum hands that are declining the invitation, Opener completes the transfer. This is true whether Opener has only 2-card support or a larger fit. With a hand that is going to accept the invite, Opener makes any other call. All of these bids create a game-forcing auction.

Here are some of Opener's options:

#### ***After a Major Suit Transfer***

- **4-Major** Maximum and a fit for Responder's Major.
- **3NT** Maximum, doubleton in Responder's Major and stopper in opponent's suit.
- **Cuebid** Maximum, doubleton in Responder's Major and no stopper in opponent's suit.
- **New Suit** Maximum, doubleton in Responder's Major and 5-card suit.

#### ***After a Minor Suit Transfer***

- **3NT** Maximum, doubleton in Responder's Major and stopper in opponent's suit.
- **Cuebid** Maximum, doubleton in Responder's Major and no stopper in opponent's suit.
- **New Suit** Maximum, doubleton in Responder's Major and 5-card suit.

### **Conclusion**

By adding Transfers to our Lebensohl treatment, we improve our bidding, allowing Responder to show more hand strengths, and take away much of the reason for the opponents to interfere in our Notrump auctions, especially to get us to play the contract from the wrong side. If you are up for adding a sophisticated gadget to your arsenal, give this one a try. ♣