

# The Good-Bad 2 NT

If we consider modern bidding, one inescapable conclusion is that auctions are becoming more and more competitive. Even new players are "getting in there" with weak two-bids, weak jump overcalls, overcalls on four-card suits, etc., trying to make the opponents guess. Common sense dictates that we need weapons to fight back.

Lebensohl, one of the most popular gadgets of the Seventies, is a good example of a convention which attempts to overcome interference. In exchange for giving up 2 NT as a natural bid, we gain a vehicle for showing both weak and strong hands. Lebensohl also may be played after we make a takeout double of an enemy weak two-bid.

But if the concept behind Lebensohl is a sound one, why restrict ourselves to just these two types of auctions? Aren't there many more occasions where we'd like to let partner know whether we are "good" or "bad?"

For example, have you ever been faced with a decision like this?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♠	Dbl
2♠	3♥	Pass	?

♠ 6 4 3  
♥ A 10 6 4  
♦ J 7  
♣ A 9 6 5

partner is minimum, with, say:

♠ 8 5  
♥ K Q 7 5  
♦ A K 5 3  
♣ 10 7 2

you are quite high enough already. But if partner has a better 3♥ bid:

♠ 8  
♥ K Q 9 3  
♦ K Q 10 6 4  
♣ K 10 3

you will miss a good game if you pass.

Another common type of problem may occur on a hand like:

♠ A 10 8 6 4  
♥ A 7 3  
♦ J 4  
♣ 10 9 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♥	1♠
2♥	3♦	Pass	?

3 NT is tempting, and would be laydown if partner had a nice hand like:

♠ Q 5  
♥ 9 4  
♦ A K Q 10 7 2  
♣ A 3 2.

But if partner were only competing (and who could blame him) with:

♠ Q 3  
♥ 9 2  
♦ K Q 10 8 7 6 2  
♣ A J

you need to stop at 3♦. Is there a solution? Sure! - All you have to do is employ the Lebensohl concept once again.

The following idea was first mentioned to me about five years ago by an expert from Chicago, where it had gained a following. The idea was to bid 2 NT on the good hands. Partner would generally relay with 3♣ (a la Lebensohl) and now we could name the suit in which we wanted to suggest extra values. (This could be thought of as "Reverse Lebensohl," since in the usual version of Lebensohl, 2 NT suggested the weaker type of hand.)

When we first tried this out, however, we found that further competition from the opponents often made life difficult; we were prevented from clarifying the nature of our hand at the three level. Therefore, we eventually defined 2 NT as the *weaker*, competitive bid, with the direct raise or suit rebid promising more. If the opponents might cause us to lose our fit, better we should risk this on our weak hands. We named this the "Good-Bad 2 NT," as opposed

to "Lebensohl #3" or the equivalent.

We set up the following rules to govern Good-Bad 2 NT:

- (1) The auction was at the two level.
- (2) Right-hand opponent must have bid, doubled or redoubled.

When those two conditions were met, a direct bid at the three level would promise extra values (but was not forcing), while 2 NT would show a hand only worth a competitive move. The 2 NT bidder might be planning to compete in any suit, but he could not be about to reverse (since his 2 NT denied extra values). The partner of the Good-Bad 2 NT bidder would usually bid 3♣ as requested, but common sense sometimes would dictate another action. Holding:

♠ A  
♥ K J 9 6  
♦ K Q J 6 4 3  
♣ 5 2

after:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♠	Dbl
Pass	2 NT (1)	Pass	?

South clearly should rebid 3♦, not 3♣, since he can't risk having partner pass 3♣. With:

♠ 8 6 4  
♥ K J 8 5  
♦ K 10 6 2  
♣ J 5

after:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♠	Dbl
2♠	2 NT	Pass	?

South also would bid 3♦, since if partner has a minor two-suiter he wants to play in diamonds. If North was about to bid hearts he can still do so.

Also, you must not lazily bid 3♣ with a good hand. After:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	Pass	1♠
2♥	2 NT	Pass	?

bid 3♥ with:

♠ A K 10 6 3  
♥ 9 3  
♦ K 10 4  
♣ K 6 3,

and 3 NT with:

♠ A 10 9 4  
 ♥ K Q 10  
 ♦ 8 3  
 ♣ A 6 4 3

just as you would have if partner had rebid a "standard" three-of-a-minor.

As helpful as Good-Bad rated to be (and was), we found there were auctions where it couldn't be used. For example, after a 1♥ opening and 2♦ overcall, 2 NT by responder must be natural and invitational – otherwise there is no way to handle:

♠ 6 4 3  
 ♥ A 10  
 ♦ K J 6  
 ♣ Q 10 6 4 3.

So we had to come up with a list of Good-Bad 2 NT exceptions. They are:

1. When 2 NT must be natural and invitational
2. When 2 NT clearly would be Unusual
3. When either side opens 1 NT
4. When the opponents open with a strong and forcing 1♣.
5. When either side opens with a weak two-bid
6. When a Good-Bad auction is illogical because the opponents are known to be very strong or our side is known to be very weak.
7. When the opponents make a penalty double.
8. When they use a convention at the two level against which we employ a predetermined defense.
9. When we bid a suit, then raise (possibly with a cuebid, implying a fit). Once a fit has been found, it is easy to distinguish preemptive reraises from invitational bids.
10. When we already are in a game-forcing auction.
11. When we made a preemptive jump.

Note that Good-Bad exceptions arise for either of two reasons: we've already determined which side owns the hand (4, 6, 7, 10, 11), or we must not interfere with agreements (conventional or not) that are already in place (1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9). Of course, the conventional agreement for #3 and #5 may well be Lebensohl itself.

One last thought. Since further enemy competition may cause a suit to be lost after the "Bad" 2 NT bid, when faced with a close decision you should prefer the "Good" three-level suit bid. You may not be sure whether:

♠ 6 4  
 ♥ A Q J 10 7 4  
 ♦ 9 2  
 ♣ 10 5 3

is worth a good 3♥ after: 1♣-2♦-2♣, but you would prefer 3♥ to 2 NT because you might never be able to show hearts if the opponents bid 3♠ over 2 NT.

Before we look at a few examples, let me answer a question which **may** have occurred to some – is 2 NT Good-Bad 100% forcing? Since notrump may be the last thing on partner's mind, I wouldn't advise passing it. However on rare occasions passing may be a reasonable shot. Suppose the auction begins:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♣	Pass	2♣
2 NT	Pass	?	

and you gaze at:

♠ K J 10 8  
 ♥ 8 7 4 3  
 ♦ 9 6 5 4 2  
 ♣ –

Partner must intend to play in clubs, since, as we stated last month, **the** 2 NT bidder can never be planning to reverse. If you'd rather play 2 NT than table this hand as dummy in 3♣, pass and hope for the best.

Recently I held:

♠ K Q 10  
 ♥ –  
 ♦ 10 8 7 4 3  
 ♣ Q 9 6 4 2

and the auction went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	1♥	1♣
Dbl	2♣	2 NT	Pass
?			

I chose to pass (nervously), assuming that partner was planning to **rebid** hearts and not a minor. This went down one while 3♥ would have been down three (possibly doubled). Partner had:

♠ 8 4  
 ♥ A K 10 8 7 4  
 ♦ A Q  
 ♣ 10 7 3

so we survived with an above-average matchpoint score. But partner wouldn't have been too pleased with me if he had held:

♠ 8 4  
 ♥ A Q J 7 4  
 ♦ 2  
 ♣ K J 8 5 3

and we went minus in 2 NT, cold for 4♣.

Try the following examples to test your knowledge of Good-Bad 2 NT.

(A)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	2♦	2♠	?
		♠ A 8 5		
		♥ K 6 3		
		♦ Q 8 4 3		
		♣ 8 7 4		

3♦. This is a good raise. Without the heart king, bid 2 NT.

(B)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	Pass	2♦	1♦
				?
		♠ J		
		♥ K 10		
		♦ A K Q J 7 4 2		
		♣ 6 4 3		

Bid 2 NT. We're not embarrassed about our diamonds, but we certainly don't want to encourage a partner to get involved when he couldn't take any action earlier (unless he had a penalty double of 1♣, of course). With another ace we would bid 3♦, allowing partner to bid 3 NT with:

♠ K 5 4 2  
 ♥ Q 8 6  
 ♦ 10 6  
 ♣ J 7 5 2.

(C)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	Dbl	2♠	1♦
				?
		♠ J		
		♥ K 10		
		♦ A K Q J 7 4 2		
		♣ 6 4 3		

Bid 3♦, since not much is needed to make 3 NT opposite a partner who acted voluntarily.

(D)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	Dbl	2♠	?
		♠ 8 7 4		
		♥ 6 3		
		♦ K 5 4		
		♣ Q J 10 8 5		

Bid 2 NT. You are willing to compete, but you don't want to encourage partner.

(E)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	2♥	2♠	1♦ ?
		♠ 6 3 ♥ A 8 ♦ K Q J 8 6 5 ♣ Q 8 5		

Bid 3♦, not 2 NT. Good-Bad doesn't exist when a game force has been established.

(F)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	2♥	2♠	1♦ ?
		♠ K 6 3 ♥ A 8 ♦ A 9 4 3 ♣ Q 8 7 5		

Don't bid 2 NT even if you think the hand is worth it – 2 NT is not natural. This is a Good-Bad situation.

(G)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	1 NT	2♠	1♣ ?
		♠ 8 ♥ 9 4 ♦ A J 5 2 ♣ A Q 10 7 4 3		

Bid 2 NT, preparing to sign off in clubs. The fact that partner bid notrump earlier is not relevant.

(H)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Dbl	1♦ Pass	Pass 2♥	1 NT ?
		♠ 8 2 ♥ 7 4 ♦ A 5 3 ♣ Q J 9 8 7 4		

Bid 2 NT, preparing a club signoff. Again, the earlier notrump bid is not relevant.

(I)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	2♦ (1)	2♠	1 NT ?
(1) transfer				
		♠ 8 5		
		♥ A K 10 6		
		♦ A 7 4		
		♣ K J 8 5		

Bid 3♥, even if you consider this a minimum. There is no Good-Bad 2 NT after 1 NT openings.

Now try responding to partner's Good-Bad 2 NT.

(A)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	Pass	1 NT
	2♥	2 NT	Pass	?
		♠ 10		
		♥ A J 7 4 3		
		♦ 9 8 5 4 2		
		♣ K 7		

Bid 3♣. Partner has spades and a minor. If his minor is clubs, you hope he has five. If he converts to diamonds, you can raise.

(B)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	1♠	Pass
	2♠	2 NT	Pass	?
		♠ Q 8 5 4 3		
		♥ 8 7 4 3 2		
		♦ 9 5		
		♣ J		

Bid 3♦, not 3♣. Regardless of whether partner has minors or only diamonds, you wish to play in his first suit.

(C)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
				1♦
	Pass	1♥	1♠	Dbl (1)
	2♠	2 NT	Pass	?

(1) support double, showing three hearts

♠ A 6 3 2  
♥ A 7 4  
♦ A 8 6 4  
♣ 8 5

Bid 3♣. 2 NT is Good-Bad, and support doubles aren't on the list of exceptions. Isn't this a logical way to end in 3♣ when partner holds:



♠ 8  
 ♥ J 9 7 3  
 ♦ K 5  
 ♣ Q J 10 9 4 2?

(D)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♣	Pass	1♠
	2♥	2 NT	Pass	?
		♠ K Q J 10 7 4		
		♥ 9 4		
		♦ Q 8 7 4		
		♣ 8		

Bid 3♠, just as you would have done over partner's 3♣ rebid. This is not forcing—you would have to cuebid 3♥ to force.

(E)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	Pass	2♥
	2♠	2NT	Pass	?
		♠ J 7 4		
		♥ Q 10 6		
		♦ A 9 4		
		♣ K 8 5 2		

Bid 3 NT. Good-Bad doesn't apply after a suit is bid and raised.

(F)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
				1♥
	1♠	Dbl	Oass	2♥
	Dbl	2 NT	Pass	?
		♠ A 6 3		
		♥ K Q 10 7 4 3		
		♦ 8 6		
		♣ A 5		

Bid 3♣. Remember that Good-Bad is on over any action by RHO, including doubles (except penalty doubles) and redoubles. West's double on this auction is regarded as takeout. Partner might have:

♠ K 5  
 ♥ -  
 ♦ J 7 4 3 2  
 ♣ Q J 10 8 4 3

(G)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	2♥	Dbl
	Redbl	2 NT	Pass	?
		♠ 6 2		
		♥ A 5		
		♦ K J 10 9 7 4		
		♣ J 4 2		

**Bid 3♦.** 2 NT is Good-Bad, but you intended all along to convert clubs to diamonds.

(H)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	1♠	Pass
	2♣	2 NT	Pass	?
		♠ J 7 4 3 2		
		♥ J 5 3		
		♦ 8 4		
		♣ J 6 3		

**Bid 3♥.** Regardless of what partner has in mind, you want to play in hearts. We'll conclude by responding after partner bids at the three level instead of using Good-Bad 2 NT.

(A)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	1♥	1♠
	2♥	3♦	Pass	?
		♠ A 8 7 4 3		
		♥ K 5		
		♦ Q 3		
		♣ J 6 4 2		

**Bid 3 NT,** secure that partner has a good hand. Standard players would have to guess here.

(B)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	1♠	Dbl
	2♣	3♣	Pass	?
		♠ 8 5 3		
		♥ Q J		
		♦ 10 9 7 3		
		♣ K Q 6 4		

**Bid 4♥!** This feels right, once you know that partner was not merely competing. Game would be cold opposite as little as:

♠ 10 7  
 ♥ A K 9 6 3  
 ♦ Q  
 ♣ A J 10 5 4

(C)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
				1♥
	1♠	1 NT	Pass	2♥
	2♣	3♥	Pass	?
		♠ 8		
		♥ A Q J 10 7 4		
		♦ 9 3		
		♣ K Q 10 6		

Bid 4♥. You weren't thinking about game earlier, but it must be worth a try after North's *encouraging* raise to 3♥.

(D)	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠	Dbl
	2♣	3♥	3♠	?
		♠ 8 4		
		♥ A Q 6		
		♦ A 10 6 4		
		♣ A 10 5 2		

Double. Since partner should have sound values, you can afford to compete. Double must be the most flexible action, with your 3½ Quick Tricks, minimum heart length and maximum number of spades, partner should know whether to sit.

Incidentally, Good-Bad 2 NT should be Alerted just like Lebensohl. Also, one should Alert the negative inferences arising from the failure to use Good-Bad. After:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	1♠	1 NT
2♠	3♣		

South should Alert and, if asked, tell the opponents that North had two ways to bid 3♣ – the way he chose suggests a better hand.

Hopefully, at this point the reader can understand the concepts and mechanics of Good-Bad 2 NT. For these brave souls who are ready to find out even more, this question and answer format may prove enlightening.

**Question:** Can Good-Bad 2 NT also be used when the auction is at the 1-level?

**Answer:** Sure, after 1♦ – Pass – 1♥ – 1♠ wouldn't it be nice to distinguish

♠ 6    ♥ 8 2    ♦ K Q J 10 7 4 2    ♣ A Q 5?

From  
♠ 8 4    ♥ K 7    ♦ A K J 10 7 4    ♣ A Q 5?

Although with each I feel like jumping to the three level. We would like to bid a preemptive, competitive 3♦ with the first hand, while bidding a strong 3♦ with the hand with more high cards. Since the purpose of preemptive jumps is to allow the opponents as little bidding room as possible, we chose to use "inverted Good-Bad" when jumping from the one-level. Therefore, rebid 3♦ with the "weak" hand, while bidding a "good" 2 NT this time with the better hand.

Here are some other examples of "inverted Good-Bad" in action:

1♥ – Pass – 1♠ – Dbl	Bid 3♥ with	
	♠ 8    ♥ Q 10 9 7 5 3 2    ♦ A K J 10    ♣ 8	
	Bid 2 NT with	
	♠ A 7    ♥ A Q J 10 7 4    ♦ A J 7    ♣ 6 2	
1♣ – Pass – Pass – 1♥	Bid 3♣ with	
	♠ A 7    ♥ 9 4    ♦ 10 5    ♣ A Q J 9 7 4 2	
	Bid 2 NT with	
	♠ A 8    ♥ A 7 3    ♦ 8    ♣ A K J 10 7 4 2	

**Question:** Although "Inverted Good-Bad" does seem sensible, particularly for those of us who like to preempt, doesn't that mean that we lose the jump to 2 NT to show a balanced 18-19. How in the world do we cope with that?

**Answer:** It is more of a problem in theory than in practise, it just doesn't seem to occur too often. After 1♣-Pass-1♥-1♠, I would bid 3 NT with

♠ A Q 8    ♥ A 7    ♦ K 5 3    ♣ A Q 10 7 4,

2♦ with

♠ A 7 4    ♥ A 6    ♦ A 7 4 2    ♣ K Q J 10,

and support double holding

♠ A 6    ♥ K 8 2    ♦ K J 5    ♣ A K 8 6 4.

In other words, you can usually find a reasonable alternative. If my hand was

♠ A J 9 2    ♥ A 7    ♦ J 6 4    ♣ A K J 8

I would be unhappy that I couldn't bid a natural 2 NT or a penalty double. So you must choose between a leap to 3 NT or a trap pass. That may seem very extreme, but in practise someone usually finds a bid over one spade. Your partner will try hard to balance with his spade shortness.

**Question:** There must be other times where you would like to bid a natural 2 NT, but can't because of Good-Bad. Can you give us any helpful hints?

**Answer:** This certainly does happen, but if you learn to make the best of your system as opposed to fighting it, you will do just fine. After all, you probably weren't too happy when you picked up

♠ K J 9    ♥ J 7 3    ♦ 9 5 4 2    ♣ K 9 7

after 2♣-Dbl-Pass-? but couldn't bid a natural, non-forcing 2 NT since you were playing Lebensohl. So instead of 2 NT, bid 3♦ after

1♥                      Dbl                      2♥                      ?

with

♠ 9 4    ♥ A Q 6    ♦ K J 10 8    ♣ 8 5 4 3

and 3♣ after

1♣                      Pass                      1♥                      1♠  
Pass                      2♣                      ?

with

♠ A Q    ♥ 10 8 7 6 4    ♦ Q 5    ♣ K 6 5 4

Life will go on. Remember These direct three level auctions are invitational just like a natural 2 NT.

**Question:** Does anything special happen when the action we choose over their two level interference is a jump?

**Answer:** As you would expect, we simply gain a method to provide us with twice as many ways to bid each auction. After

1♣                      Pass                      1 NT                      2♣  
?

bid 3♥ (forcing) with a rock like

♠ A K 8 5 4    ♥ A Q J 9 3    ♦ A 7    ♣ 8.

but holding

♠ K Q 10 8 7 4 3    ♥ 9    ♦ A K 9    ♣ 6 4

you can also "jump" by bidding 2 NT then 3♠.

That way you won't miss a game when all partner has is

♠ 9    ♥ K J 6    ♦ K J 6 4 3    ♣ 10 7 4 2.

Also, after 1♠ - Pass - 1 NT - 2♣, bid a normal 3♠ with

♠ A Q J 10 7 4    ♥ A Q 9    ♦ A 6    ♣ 7 4,

