

Responding to 1NT over Interference

By Neil H. Timm

Several bridge conventions have been suggested when partner opens 1NT (15-17) and the opponents interfere with a natural or artificial bid. Which come to mind?

- (1) Stolen Bids
- (2) Lebensohl
- (3) Modified Lebensohl
- (3) Transfer Lebensohl or Advanced Lebensohl
- (4) Rubensohl
- (5) Rumpelsohl

Why so many variations? Every bridge convention has its flaws, I will try to review each and you may then choose the one you like best. I will try to address their limitations.

The most basic is “stolen bids” – used by club players who do not play either negative doubles or the Lebensohl Convention.

Stolen Bids is a convention that takes away the ability to make a penalty or negative double when there is direct interference over an opening 1NT bid. Double shows that you would have made the bid your opponent made (it is not a penalty double); clearly a limited convention and the defense is “Simple Lebensohl”:

1. A double is negative (takeout) at the two or three level.
2. A new suit bid at the 2-level shows a length of five or more is natural and not forcing.
3. A new suit bid at the 3-level shows a length of five or more is natural and forcing.
4. 2NT is a forced relay to 3♣.

(2) Lebensohl

The Lebensohl Convention is applicable whenever the opponents make the natural 2-level bids: 2♦/2♥/2♠. If they bid 2♣ as either natural or make an unknown 2-suited hand, a X is Stayman and 2♦/2♥ are transfers and all other bids do not change with interference. The major flaws of the convention are the bid of 3NT* (which denies a stopper as does a cue bid “Fast Arrival”) and it makes responder as declarer when responder makes a forcing 3-level bid. One may use Modified Lebensohl.

(3) Modified Lebensohl (over natural 2M bids)

2NT* over the majors shows 4-cards in the other major

2NT* relay the Cue bid shows 4-cards in other major and no stopper in their major

2NT* relay the 3NT shows 4-cards in other Major with a stopper in their major

3NT* is to play **WITH** stopper

Cue bid is Western Cue (WC) asking for a stopper

All 3-level bids are invitational/better **TRANSFERS** by passing opponent's bid suit
4-level bid - 4♣ = Geber, 4♦/4♥ = Texas Transfers, 4♠ = Minors

This works well against the majors but then one needs another method for the bids of 2♣/2♦ [e.g. Transfer Lebensohl (TL) and Rubensohl (R)].

For more on Modified Lebensohl see Robert S. Todd "Adventures in Bridge"

There are many variations of TL and R; however,

- Two-level suit bids are to play. A two-level bid is only possible if responder's suit is higher-ranked than the overcall. Therefore, its availability may change the meaning of other bids.
- 2NT* is a relay/transfer to clubs:
 - In TL, 2NT* does not show an intermediate or better hand, and is just a relay to clubs, pass or correct, as in Lebensohl.
 - In R, 2NT* is a transfer to clubs.
- 3♣*(diamonds), and 3♦*(hearts), and 3♥*(spades) are transfers show invitational or better hands when the two-level bid are available.
- 3♠*(balanced hand, GF) either shows or denies a stopper, while 3NT* is the opposite.

(3) Transfer Lebensohl (TL) – Some call this "Advanced Lebensohl"

Negative X is normally/relay to 2NT/Penalty (most play it as take out over 2♣-4♠)

All 2-level bids are natural and to play (opener may raise/ super accept)

Cue-bid of opponent's suit is Stayman

2NT is a transfer to 3♣

Pass shows a hand with long clubs (weak/invitational)

New suit bid is to play

New suit above opponents is natural showing clubs and the suit bid GF

Cue bid is GF Stayman and promises a 4-card major

3NT to play and shows a stopper

All 3-level bids (except 3♠ cue bid) are invitational/better **TRANSFERS** by passing opponent's bid suit **and do not show or deny a stopper**

Some play a transfer into the opponent's Major suit is Stayman and shows 4-cards in the other major with stopper.

3NT* is to play and **denies stopper**

Other Major at 3-level or 3♠ (over 2♦) GF hand with both minors

4-level bid - 4♣ = Geber, 4♦/4♥ = Texas Transfers, 4♠ = Minors

Above is "Basic" Transfer Lebensohl to be played over all interfering bids by the opponent's; you must modify them if you want to play it with Modified Lebensohl. Or if you currently play Lebensohl, continue to play it over the bids of 2♦ and 2♣ = clubs and an unspecified one-suited hand.

For more on “Basic” Transfer Lebensohl see Andrew Garnett (2016), “Variable Strong No Trump and the 2♠ Size Ask”, BridgeCentric’s Publication.

(4) Rubensohl (R) (combines Ruben Advances and Lebensohl)

In Rubensohl all bids 2NT* through 3♠* are transfers as sign-offs or a game force (GF). After the 1NT opener accepts the transfer, responder may either pass or bid again with a GF hand.

*3NT is natural and to play WITH a stopper in the opponent’s bid suit

A transfer into the opponent’s suit is Stayman and shows 4-cards in the major with or without a stopper.

3-level bids are all Transfers with invitational/ better hands (if you define 3NT* as NO STOPPER as in Lebensohl, the 3♠* shows a GF bid with a stopper in the opponent’s suit).

Following the above rules a summary of the bids after a 2-level overcall is:

1NT- 2♠ -? Follow up Bids are:

2NT*-Transfer to Clubs, weak or GF

3♣*-Transfer to Diamonds, weak or GF

3♦*-Transfer to Hearts, weak or GF

3♥*-Stayman, shows 4 hearts, GF

3♠*-Transfer to 3NT, denies 4-card major and no stopper in opponent’s suit

3NT*-To play with spade stopper

1NT- 2♥-? Follow up Bids are:

2♠-Natural, Non-forcing

2NT*-Transfer to Clubs, weak or GF

3♣*-Transfer to Diamonds, weak or GF

3♦*-Stayman, shows 4 spades, GF

3♥*-Transfer to Spades invitational

3♠*-Transfer to 3NT, no stopper, no major

3NT-To play with stopper in Hearts

1NT-2♠-2NT*-3♣-?

3♦-Natural GF with 5+ clubs and 4 diamonds

3♥-Natural GF with 5+ clubs and 4 hearts

3♠/NT-GF with Clubs,

3♠ no stopper

3NT stopper

1NT-2♥-3♦(Stayman)-?

3♥-No heart stopper and no 4-card Spades

3♠-4-card Spade

3N-To play, with Hearts stopped

The basic flaw for this convention is you do not have invitational bids available unless you can bid the suit at the 2-level since now 2NT* may be either a transfer to clubs weak or GF. If the opponent’s overcall is 2♦, the bids 2♥/2♠ are natural. And depending on how you define the 3NT*/3♠* bids it may or may not correct the Lebensohl flaw. In the above summary we used 3NT* as Fast Arrival!

Rubensohl was named by Bruce Neill of Sidney and was described in “The Bridge World” Magazine in May 1983. However, Ira Rubin suggested many of the ideas to also replace Lebensohl, hence its name!

(5) Rumpelsohl is part of the Kaplan-Sheinwold System

This convention combines Lebensohl with the 3-level bids of Rubensohl, which ensures that the opening NT bidder declares. The system is similar to Rubensohl except that 2NT* is not a transfer and 3NT* denies a stopper.

One may also define Rubensohl using 3♠* where Slow Show Stopper (SSS) [similar to Rumpelsohl with 2NT* defined as a transfer] and one may use this “R” system of bids if the opponents’ bid over the 1NT opener to show:

- one specified suit that is not clubs, or
- one specified suit that is not clubs, and an unspecified second suit.

Treat the bid as if it is a natural overcall in the specified suit.

In cases where the bid does not specify any suit, so requires action on the part of the advancer, responder may pass and wait to see a specified suit, and if at that point “R” bids would have been used with the direct bid, they are now on. If responder bids immediately, then “R” does not apply and Systems are on.

The “R” Bids – similar to Rumpelsohl, where 2NT* remains a transfer are:

If the opponents overcall a natural 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠, possibly showing an additional unknown suit, we can show competitive or game-forcing hands, and some invitational hands. Details:

- Pass with a weak hand.
- Two-level suit bids, when available, are competitive only, with 5+ cards in the suit.
- Double for takeout.
- 2NT* transfers to clubs.
- 3♣* transfers to diamonds.
- 3♦* transfers to hearts.
- 3♥* transfers to spades.
- 3♠* shows game values with a stopper (“slow shows”).
- 3NT* shows game values but denies a stopper (“fast denies”).

Transfers to Suits continuations:

The bids of 2NT* through 3♥* are suit transfers to the next higher bid.

- If the two-level bid of the target suit was not available, opener must complete the transfer. Responder may pass with a competitive hand, or bid again, game forcing.
- If a two-level bid of the target suit was available, the transfer shows invitational or better values. Opener will treat it as invitational at first, completing the transfer to decline the invitation, or making a descriptive bid to force to game. If the opener completes the transfer, responder gets a turn to make the auction game forcing by proceeding. If available, 3♠ shows no stopper for Notrump. For

example, after a heart overcall, a transfer to diamonds followed by 3♠* is a game force, denying a heart stopper but showing game values with 5+ diamonds.

- A cue bid after a transfer to a minor shows a six-card suit and exactly one stopper and is game forcing. Does not apply if the overcalled suit is spades, as the 3♠* bid is needed to ask for a stopper for Notrump.

Game sequences involving minor suit transfers tend to show no four-card major, or a Stayman takeout-double is preferable.

Trying For Notrump

With balanced hands and game-forcing values, responder can affirm or deny a stopper in the overcalled suit:

- 3♠* “transfers” to 3NT, showing a stopper in the overcalled suit. (“Slow Shows Stopper”)
- 3NT* shows game values but denies a stopper (“Fast denies”). If Opener is lacking a stopper as well, he bids a five-card suit or bids suits up the line looking for a fit.

Takeout Doubles

The takeout double serves as Stayman as well. The double requires invitational values; responder bids again with more. The double promises four cards in an un-bid major, and usually two or fewer cards in the overcalled suit. It is nice to have two cards in the overcalled suit, in case opener wishes to convert the double to penalty.

If opener replies 3♣, responder’s 3♦ does not show extras and may be passed. This allows one to make the takeout double with only two clubs. Responder may continue otherwise to force to game. A cue bid can be used as a second bid if nothing else suits.

Opener’s replies when the overcalled suit is a major, in priority:

- The un-bid major suit, with four+ cards; jump if you would accept an invitation.
- 2NT to decline the invitation, or 3NT to accept, showing a stopper.
- 3♣ if no stopper and no major.
- Pass to convert to penalty.

Opener’s replies when the overcalled suit is diamonds are similar. In priority:

- a four-card major; hearts if both are held. If responder had spades but not hearts he must now bid 2♠. Opener would again revert to 3♣ with no stopper and no spades.
- 2NT to decline the invitation, or 3NT to accept, showing a stopper, but no major.
- 3♣ with no stopper and no major, or pass to convert to penalty.

Since responder has presumably at most doubleton in their suit, opener would be lucky to find him with more than a half-stopper and should not reckon on it.

Transfer-Cue Bids

A bid that transfers to the overcalled suit (a “transfer-cue”) is a game-forcing 4441 or 4450 hand with the shortness in the overcalled suit.

The opener may bid a game in a major suit, bid Notrump with a stopper, bid 3♣ to deny either.

Four-Level Bids

Replies to a 1NT opener at or above the four-level are whatever you play now, such as:

- 4♣ is Gerber.
- 4♦* and 4♥* are Texas Transfers to hearts and spades, showing six card suits and values for game only. With a strong hand and a six-card major, transfer first and then bid the suit at the 4-level to show slam interest.
- 4♠ invites opener to pick a minor game.
- 4NT is invitational to 6NT. One note, however: If the responder could have made a bid showing a stopper but did not, then a later 4NT that is quantitative would show at most a poor stopper or a half-stopper. So that is the case with 1N -(2x) - 4NT, as with a stopper responder could bid 1N - (2x) - 3♠ - 3NT - 4NT(quantitative).

Three-Level Overcalls

Over three-level overcalls, use your normal system, such as:

- A double is for takeout, showing support for the other three suits.
- Bids at the three level are natural, one-round forcing, and
- 3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣, and 5♦ are to play.

Recommendations: Play Lebensohl with Modified Lebensohl over Natural 2M bids or Transfer Lebensohl with or without Modified Lebensohl or “R” as reviewed above.

Larry Cohen reviews Transfer Lebensohl visit without Modified Lebensohl on the site:
<https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/transfer-lebensohl>

An overview of some of the above approaches is available on the site:
https://www.bridgewebs.com/dba/Lebensohl_rubensohl.pdf