

Transfer lebensohl

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lebensohl and "transfer" lebensohl

Responder's bid of 2NT when the opponents interfere after 1NT requests partner to bid 3♣, usually for a sign off. Simple lebensohl (and please don't write in about the failure to capitalize--that is correct as written--don't ask!) works fine in conjunction with the above, but better (ADVANCED!) is to use "Transfer lebensohl." Here is how it works:

We open 1NT, and they overcall. If they bid 2♣, you just ignore it (so if you bid 2NT after their 2♣ overcall, you should treat the auction as if it went 1NT PASS 2NT -- however you play it). If they overcall with 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ I recommend TRANSFER lebensohl (only for very experienced players with strong memories). If we respond with a suit on the 2-level, it is natural, NF. Using Transfer lebensohl, if we bid a suit on the 3-level, starting with 3♣, it is a transfer to the "next" suit. (I'll explain the quote marks in a moment). By transferring, we are showing the suit (5+) transferred to with invitational or better values. (With less than an invitation, we either sign-off on the 2-level, or bid 2NT to relay to 3♣ to sign-off--the old fashioned-lebensohl way). When we show invitational or better, opener can sign-off (just bid the suit transferred to), or he can accept the game try (by doing many things, including 3NT if he wishes). If opener "signs off" and you have the "or better," of course you just bid again (naturally). Some examples:

1NT (2♥) 3♣ = Diamonds, invitational or better (to sign off in ♦, responder would have bid 2NT to relay to 3♣, then bid 3♦)

1NT (2♠) 3♦ = Hearts, invitational or better. (If opener bids 3♥, he rejects your invitation, but you bid again with a GF.)

Remember, if responder wants to sign off, he bids naturally on the 2-level if possible, or uses 2NT to relay to 3♣ to sign off on the 3-level. Using the transfer promises at least a game invite.

Now, what about the "quote marks?" When transferring to your suit on the 3-level, you have to take their suit into account. For example, if 2♥ showed ♥ and a minor, it wouldn't make much sense for you to transfer (via 3♦) into ♥. Accordingly, this is what we do: Transferring into "their suit" (such as 3♦ into their ♥) shows not their suit, but the next higher suit -- i.e., ♠. Are you ready to kill me by now? Sorry, but if you want to be prepared, there is no shortcut. You simply must devote a little time to study and practice this. So, transferring "into their suit," is like transferring "through" their suit. What if you actually bid their suit? (Example, they bid 2♦ to show ♦ and whatever, and you bid 3♦). Cue-bidding their suit means what it means with regular lebensohl, typically "Stayman, no stopper." This assumes "FADS--Fast Always Denies Stopper." If you want to Stayman with a stopper, you go through the 2NT relay, then cue-bid 3♦. OK, no doubt you are ready to just scrap this and wing it, but maybe some examples will help:

After 1NT (2♠ = ♠ and whatever, or just ♠):

2NT = Relay to 3♣ (either to play 3♣, or as a prelude to sign-off in 3♦ or 3♥, or to follow with 3♠ to show Stayman and a ♠ stopper, or to follow with 3NT to just show a ♠ stopper--no Stayman)

3♣ = ♦ Invitational or better (Opener rejects by bidding 3♦, but responder bids on naturally with a GF. Opener pre- accepts by bidding above 3♦)

3♦ = ♥ Invitational or better (Opener rejects by bidding 3♥, but responder bids on naturally with a GF. Opener pre-accepts by bidding above 3♥)

3♥ = ♣ Invitational or better-- This was tricky, but remember: Transfer to "their" suit is "through" their suit to the next highest suit, ♠ in this case.

3♠ = Cue-bid showing "Stayman, no ♠ stopper"

3NT = To play, no 4-card ♥ suit, no ♠ stopper (Fast Denies)

If the transfer lebensohl lost you, you can try plain lebensohl. If that also loses you, I doubt you've read this far. If you've read this far and wish you hadn't, you might consider viewing a "simple version" of how to cope with interference over your 1NT. (At least I didn't call it the "version for dummies.")