

Lebensohl after Partner has reversed.

This page was last updated on 28-Jan-2006

North	East	South	West
1♦	pass	1♠	pass
2♥	pass	?	

Partner has shown a strong hand by reversing. Let's suppose that you play this reverse as a one round force, how can you differentiate between a hand that is very weak, one that is reasonable and one that forces to game? Let's consider a number of situations: -

1. We prefer partner's first bid suit

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	With Hand A we bid 4♦; forcing, and since we have gone past 3NT it shows slam interest and/or shortage in the unbid suit.
♠ K7632	♠ Q632	♠ Q632	With Hand B we bid 3♦; forcing.
♥ KJ	♥ K42	♥ K2	With Hand C we bid 2NT, Lebensohl and then 3♦ over partner's 'forced' 3♣ reply – weak.
♦ KJ752	♦ Q532	♦ J632	
♣ 8	♣ 85	♣ 862	

2. We prefer partner's 2nd bid suit to his 1st bid suit

With a very weak responding hand we could pass (?) but most players play that a reverse is forcing for one bid or one round. So we again use Lebensohl when we have a very weak hand with support for partner's 2nd suit, same bidding sequence as above, 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - ? :-

Hand D	Hand E	With Hand D we bid 3♥; forcing, With Hand E we bid 2NT, Lebensohl and then bid 3♥ over partner's 'forced' 3♣ reply – weak.
♠ K7632	♠ Q632	
♥ KJ73	♥ K72	
♦ KJ	♦ 86	
♣ KJ	♣ J632	

Let's have an example of Lebensohl after a reverse. It's from news-sheet 16.

West, Terry	East, Chuck	West	East	(1) a reverse
♠ A	♠ 109762	1♦	1♠	(2) Lebensohl, West 'must' bid 3♣ and await developments.
♥ AQ74	♥ 8532	2♥ (1)	2NT (2)	(3) 'forced'
♦ AKQJ64	♦ 8	3♣ (3)	3♥ (4)	(4) a very weak hand with ♥'s
♣ 105	♣ A84	4♥ (5)	pass	(5) a very strong hand with ♥'s

I would not argue if you said that this West hand could open 2♣, but if you play a reverse as forcing (obviously Chuck and I do) then this is quite an efficient way to bid the hand. Now I personally do not like to open two suiters with 2♣ if I can avoid it, and with a ♠ singleton it is unlikely that 1♦ will be passed out. If you play 2♥ as negative over 2♣ (we do) then it presumably goes 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♦ - 3♠ - ? and the ♥ fit may get lost.

3. We would prefer to play in our suit

Hand F	Hand G	Hand H	With Hand F we bid 3♠, game forcing and showing a good suit.
♠ KQJ642	♠ KQ862	♠ QJ10862	With Hand G we bid 2♠, forcing. See note 1.
♥ 63	♥ Q3	♥ Q3	With Hand H we bid 2NT; followed by 3♠
♦ AJ	♦ J53	♦ 93	over partner 'forced' 3♣ reply – weak.
♣ K85	♣ 985	♣ 862	

Note 1. Some players play Lebensohl here slightly differently. They play a sequence such as 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ as weak and with a stronger hand responder uses 2NT, Lebensohl, followed by 3♠. This is not standard when playing Lebensohl in this situation and would have to be agreed.

4. We want to play in NT

Partner's reverse is usually around 16-17 points (but could well be a lot more), and if we have a good holding in the unbid suit then we bid NT. Now playing Lebensohl there are options here, as we can bid 3NT directly or else a forcing 2NT. Note that this is different from 'standard' where 2NT would not be forcing but offering 2NT as a final contract. Playing Lebensohl we can never end up in 2NT – it's either a suit contract or 3NT (or more). Same bidding as before, 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - ? :-

Hand J	Hand K	Hand L	With Hand J we bid 3NT, to play.
♠ KJ64	♠ KJ64	♠ AQ64	With Hand K we have slam ambitions (6NT?)
♥ 94	♥ A4	♥ A4	if partner has more than a minimal reverse.
♦ K93	♦ K93	♦ K93	One way to show a hand like this is to bid 2NT
♣ KJ85	♣ AQ85	♣ AQ84	and then 3NT over partner's 3♣ reply – slam interest.
			Hand L definitely wants to go slamming.
			There are various possibilities; you could agree that 2NT
			followed by 4♣ over partner's forced 3♣ response is Gerber (a direct 4♣ after 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ – would be a splinter agreeing ♥'s).

5. We want to play in NT only if partner has a stop in the 4th suit.

Same bidding: 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - ?

Hand M	Hand N	With Hand M we would like to play in 3NT if partner has a ♣ stop. So we bid 3♣, 4 th suit forcing and then pass if partner shows a stop with 3NT.
♠ KJ64	♠ KJ64	With Hand N it's similar but this hand is worth a slam effort and you could try 3♣, 4 th suit forcing and then a quantitative 4NT if partner shows a ♣ stop with 3NT.
♥ K64	♥ AK4	
♦ K63	♦ KJ3	
♣ Q65	♣ K85	

6. 2NT when opener has reversed over a two level response.

North	East	South	West	2NT by South here would not be Lebensohl – even if you do not play 2/1, a reverse after a two level response is best played as game forcing and so 2NT here is natural and game forcing. It's up to you if you would play 3NT as fast arrival.
1♥	pass	2♣	pass	
2♠	pass	?		

7. When opener does not complete the 3♣ puppet.

Now Lebensohl 'forces' the reverser to bid 3♣. But there are situations where the partner of the 2NT Lebensohl bidder knows that game is on and so does not bid 3♣. This is covered fully in 'breaking the Lebensohl puppet' and here is an example where it may occur having reversed. It is the example from news-sheet 16 with the minor suits reversed: -

West	East	West	East	(1) a reverse
				(2) Lebensohl, West 'must' bid 3♣ and await developments.
♠ A	♠ 109762	1♣	1♠	(3) I am not going to risk 3♣ being passed
♥ AQ74	♥ 8532	2♥ (1)	2NT (2)	(4) a very weak hand with ♥'s
♦ 105	♦ A84	3♦ (3)	3♥ (4)	(5) a very strong hand with ♥'s
♣ AKQJ64	♣ 8	4♥ (5)	pass	

West has a game-forcing hand after partner has responded and at (2) East has advertised a weak hand. It would be a mistake for West to 'automatically' bid 3♣ at (3) as it is quite possible that East could pass that. So West has to bid something else and a 'meaningless but forcing' 3♦ is surely best at (3) as 3♥ would imply 5♥'s (and 6♣'s).