

## "Esther Discusses the '3 Over 1' ('3/1') Adjunct to the '2/1' Convention"<sup>1</sup>

**Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>2</sup>**

To return to the "Esther Bridge Lessons," CLICK:  
<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

As noted in the Conventions Sections of the "Esther Bridge Lessons",

**In Esther's (not very) humble opinion, "2 Over 1"<sup>3</sup> ["2/1"] (and "Jacoby 2NT") are vitaly important conventions for newer players to learn **early on even when first learning to play bridge. These are powerful conventions when they are bid, and equally important information is communicated to Partner when these conventions are instead not bid.** [emphasis in original]**

When Partner opens **1D**, **1H**, or **1S**, assuming that my RHO **PASSes**, there are 6 bidding sequences with which I as Responder using the "**2 Over 1**" convention can tell Partner, "Partner, I hold both (1) opening HCPs, and (2) either **4** (or maybe 3) Clubs, or **4+** Diamonds, or **5+** Hearts":

1. Partner: **1D**; Responder: **2C**;
2. Partner: **1H**; Responder: **2C**;
3. Partner: **1H**; Responder: **2D**;
4. Partner: **1S**; Responder: **2C**;
5. Partner: **1S**; Responder: **2D**; or
6. Partner: **1S**; Responder: **2H**.

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the ideas presented here are drawn from the *extraordinary, wonderful* article by Robert S. Todd, "3/1 Invitational Responses", published in the April, 2024 issue of the ACBL Bridge Bulletin.

<sup>2</sup> As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Journal, [https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA\\_1\\_24.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf), Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by Bruce Thompson.

<sup>3</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "Convention #1: '2 Over 1'."

Conventionally, many Partnerships playing "2 Over 1"<sup>4</sup> play such that when Partner opens 1D, 1H, or 1S, assuming that my RHO PASSES, and I "jump-shift"<sup>5</sup> to a Suit different than the Suit my Partner opened, I am showing (1) a very big HCP holding and (2) 5+ cards in the Suit I bid. Or Partners not playing the "strong jump-shift" may play a "jump-shift" bid as "weak" and suggesting that Responder (1) denies Opener's bid Suit and (2) feels the Responder's Suit bid is the best contract that the Partnership can make. However, there is an alternative "jump-shift" convention.

What if Partner and I agree to instead play "3 Over 1" ("3/1")? A "3 Over 1" "jump-shift" bids show (1) "shortness" in Opener's bid Suit, (2) 6 cards in the bid Suit with a good Ron Klinger "Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score"<sup>6</sup> of 8 or more, and (3) 9-11 HCPs. Because the Opener has shown ~11+ HCPs, and the "3/1" Responder shows 9-11 HCPs, the Partnership has shown ~11 + ~10 HCPs = 21+ HCPs, and so the "3 Over 1" response bid is "invitational" to an Opener possibly holding a "big" Hand with a reasonable Trump "fit" in the newly bid Suit. Put differently, while a "2 Over 1" bid "forces" a contract of at least somewhere between 3NT and 4S" (and is not "game forcing", because a 4C or 4D contract may be set), bidding the "3 Over 1" convention is instead "almost game forcing"!

Again, as with "2 Over 1", in "3 Over 1" there are 6 possible "3 Over 1" bidding sequences:

1. 1S; 3C: 6+ Clubs, 9-11 HCPs, *tends* to deny 4 Hearts;
2. 1S; 3D: 6+ Diamonds, 9-11 HCPs, *tends* to deny 4 Hearts;
3. 1S; 3H: 6+ Hearts, 9-11 HCPs;
4. 1H; 3C: 6+ Clubs, 9-11 HCPs, *tends* to deny 4 Spades;
5. 1H; 3D: 6+ Diamonds, 9-11 HCPs, *tends* to deny 4 Spades; or
6. 1D; 3C: 6+ Clubs, 9-11 HCPs, *denies* a 4-card Major.

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<sup>4</sup> And assuming Partners are not playing "Bergen Limit Raises".

<sup>5</sup> See the article "Strong Jump Shifts" on the excellent Jeff Tang "Bridgebum" website:  
[https://www.bridgebum.com/strong\\_jump\\_shifts.php](https://www.bridgebum.com/strong_jump_shifts.php)

<sup>6</sup> The Ron Klinger Klinger "Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score" is computed by adding together (1) the number of cards held in the Suit and (2) the number of Honors, including the Ten, held in the Suit. Generally, a bid at a level no higher than the "SQT Score" - 6 is reasonable.

A Responder holding 9-11 HCPs but not holding a void or a singleton in Opener's bid Suit, but 2 of Opener's bid Major, in "2 Over 1" will respond 1NT to find out whether Opener then shows a 6-card Major, such that the Partners can possibly play a 4H or 4S contract holding 6 + 2 = 8 Trump cards.

For example, let's say Partner opens 1H, and you hold:

S: 9 7 6      H: 8      D: A Q T 7 5 2      C: A 6 3

You cannot support Partner's 1H bid, but your Ron Klinger "Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score" for Diamonds is 6 + 3 = 9, and 9 - 6 = 3, and you hold 10 HCPs, so a "jump-shift" "3 Over 1" response of 3D is reasonable.

### "3 Over 1" in Conjunction with Playing "2 Over 1"

Esther says, "the '3 Over 1' convention plays best when Partners are also playing '2 Over 1'. This is because when in '2 Over 1' your response bid *definitively* shows opening HCPs (e.g., 1S; 2H, or 1H; 2D). But conversely when you are playing '2 Over 1' and Partner opens 1D, 1H, or 1S, and you do not make a '2 Over 1' response bid of 2C, 2D, or 2H, you have *definitively* told Partner, 'Partner, I do not hold opening HCPs!!!' Thus, when Partner opens 1D, 1H or 1S, and you instead respond with a '3 Over 1' 'jump shift' (e.g., 1S; 3H, or 1H; 3D), and not by making a '2 Over 1' 2-level response bid, Partner knows *definitively* that you are not making a 'strong jump shift' bid, and that instead you hold 9-11 HCPs."

### The "3 Over 1" Response Bid "Limits" Your Hand

One feature of the "3 Over 1" response bid is that it "limits" your Hand *quite specifically*. A Hand is said to have been "limited" if your bid shows Partner a very *detailed* picture of both (1) your HCPs and (2) your card distribution. And a **Cardinal Principle of Bridge** is that:

**Once you have "limited" your Hand, you do not ever bid again unless Partner demands a bid or poses a query for you to answer. And once you have "limited" your Hand, your Partner becomes "The Captain" and is responsible for setting the final contract.**

One thing you and Partner must agree when playing "3/1" is whether or not a rebid by the Opener is "forcing for one Round". If Opener has a "minimal" Hand, Opener might well PASS. But Opener

may wish to show (1) an extra card in Opener's bid Suit, or (2) a "strong" side Suit and a "short" holding in Responder's bid new Suit. Partners need to agree about how to handle Opener rebids, especially when a third new Suit is bid, and thus Opener denies support for Responder's bid Suit.