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**"Bridge Bidding: When to (1) Open the Bidding,  
(2) Overcall or DOUBLE, Make  
(3) a '*Weaponized PASS*',  
or (4) a '*Plain-Vanilla PASS*' "**

**Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>1</sup>**

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

Whenever within an auction it is your turn to bid you obviously must decide when to (1) open the bidding, (2) Overcall or DOUBLE, make (3) a '*Weaponized PASS*', or (4) a "*Plain-Vanilla PASS*". Obviously, if you have an opportunity to open the bidding and you hold 0-9 HCPs, unless you hold *massive* length in a Suit, you will PASS.<sup>2</sup>

### **When to Open the Bidding**

1. When you are the Dealer, or all previous players have PASSED at each turn during the auction, and you hold ~13 or more HCPs, you should bid. If you also hold a 5-card Major, bid your Major. If you hold ~13 or more HCPs and 2 5-card Majors, bid Spades unless your Hearts have massively better Suit Quality. If you hold ~13 or more HCPs and a 4-card Major, less than 4 Diamonds, and 3 Clubs,<sup>3</sup> open 1C to ask Partner to show a 4 or more card Major. If you hold ~13 or

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<sup>1</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](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>2</sup> An *exception* is when Partner opens with a 1NT or 2NT bid and you hold as few as 0-3 HCPs but a "long" Suit with 5 or 6 cards, particularly if your long Suit is a Major, you will want to execute a "Jacoby transfer".

<sup>3</sup> Some Partnership agree to open 1C with as few as 2 Clubs, but this should be Alerted!

more HCPs and a 4-card Major, and 4+ Diamonds with good Suit Quality, open 1D to ask Partner to show a 4 or more card Major. If you hold ~13 or more HCPs, do not hold a 4-card Major, but you hold 5+ Clubs or Diamonds, open your Minor.

2. If you hold (a) **15-18** HCPs,<sup>4</sup> (b) no void, (c) no singleton, and no more than 1 doubleton, but (d) you may hold a 5-card Major, open 1NT.
3. If you hold (a) **9-11** HCPs, (b) a **6**-card Suit with either **2** of the top **3** Honors, or **3** of the top **5** Honors, and (c) not a 4-card Major "side" Suit, open a 2-level "preempt" bid.
4. If you hold (a) **<13** HCPs, but the sum of the HCPs you hold plus the number of cards you hold in your longest 2 Suits = **20** or more, follow Marty Bergen's "Rule of 20"<sup>5</sup> and open by making a Suit bid, guided by Suit Quality, and bid your Major or higher Major first if you have reasonable Suit Quality.
5. Sitting **3<sup>rd</sup>** within the auction, with 2 PASSES to you, you may open with a Suit bid **iff** (if and only if) you hold **11+** HCPs and a reasonably "long" Suit including Honors. If you are sitting **1<sup>st</sup>** in the auction and Partner opens in the **3<sup>rd</sup>** position after 2 PASSES to him, you must remember that Partner may hold as few as **11** HCPs.
6. Sitting **4<sup>th</sup>** within the auction, with 3 PASSES to you, you are in the "balancing" position, because if you PASS, the Board will be "PASSEd out". Do not bid if you hold less than "opening" points and you do not meet the requirements of Marty Bergen's "Rule of 20", which says you can and *should* open with a Suit contract bid if the sum of (1) your HCPs and (2) the number of cards in your longest 2 Suits is **20** or more. In this situation only bid **iff** (if and only if) you then meet the requirements of the "Rule of 15",<sup>6</sup> which says you can open 1S **iff** the sum of (1) your HCPs **and** (2) the number of Spades you hold is **15** or more.

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<sup>4</sup> Some Partners play different HCP ranges for opening 1NT, such as **15-17**.

<sup>5</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "Lesson #62: Only 10 HCPs, but a 2-Suited Hand: What's a Dealer to Do?":

[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/10\\_HCPs.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/10_HCPs.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "Lesson #25: 40 or so Bridge Bidding/Play 'Rules'": <https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/rules.pdf>

Consider the following 2 Hands, modelled from Hands presented by Ron Klinger and Harold Schogger (2021) from their excellent little book, The Power of Pass:

Hand #1 (11)	Hand #2 (11)
S: J 9 6	S: Q 8 7 5 3
H: A K 7	H: A K 7
D: J 4	D: J 4
C: Q 9 7 5 3	C: J 7 5

Sitting 4<sup>th</sup> in the "balancing" position with both these Hands holding **11** HCPs, Hand #1 with  $11 + 3 = 14$  warrants a PASS, while Hand #2 with  $11 + 5 = 16$  warrants a bid of **1S**. Klinger and Schogger explain the logic of their recommendation:

**When there are three passes and you have 10-12 points in fourth seat, chances are that the points between the two sides equally divided or close to that. Each side might make a contract at the one-level or two-level, but a side that goes to the three-level is likely to fail...**

**If a part-score becomes competitive here, the side that owns the [S]pades usually prevails. They may be able to bid and make 2♠, forcing their opponents either to pass and face a score of -110 or push on [to] the three-level and go minus there...**

**The benefit from following the Rule of 15 is that it stops an 'Open Door Policy'. It means that by passing in fourth seat you do not give your opponents, who were unable to produce an opening bid originally, the opportunity to compete and maybe win the auction. (p. 38)**

7. A **Cardinal Principle** of bridge is that you should never make a first bid unless you see a *reasonable* second bid that you can make later in the auction.

### **When to Overcall or DOUBLE the Opponents' Bid**

1. If you hold (a) a "flat" Hand, (b) **14-17** HCPs, and (c) "stoppers" in the Opponents' bid Suit(s), and you do not hold a "long" Suit, Overcall **1NT**. All conventions (Stayman and Jacoby transfers) are now "on".
2. If you hold **13+** HCPs and you hold **2** or fewer cards in the Opponent's bid Suit, and you do not hold a 5-card Suit, but you hold 2 4-card Majors if Opponents opened a Minor, or 4

cards in the Major not bid by the Opponents, then bid a "takeout/Demand DOUBLE".<sup>7</sup> The "takeout/Demand DOUBLE" **requires** Partner to bid his "longest and strongest" best-fitting Suit if Partner's RHO PASSes, unless Partner holds a *massive* "Trump stack" in the Opponents' bid Suit.

New Zealanders Lee Asher-Simpson and Dennis Asher in their "Bridge Doctor" website "Standard American Lesson 17: Responses to **Takeout Double**"

<https://bridgedoctor.com/lessons/17-online-bridge-lessons.htm> discuss the "Takeout/**Demand** DOUBLE". In the Lesson it is noted that if the bidding proceeds:

NORTH: 1D, EAST: DOUBLE, SOUTH: PASS,  
and you hold ♠ 9 8 5 2 ♥ 7 3 ♦ 8 6 4 2 ♣ 7 6 4,

"You are **obliged** to respond [1♦] even with **no points**. If you had **8+** HCP you would jump the bidding 1 level so you would have bid 2♠. You **must** bid unless the opposition bids before your turn and thus *cancel*s the [Takeout D]ouble" [or you hold a **massive long** Trump stack in the Opponents' bid Suit.] [emphasis added]

A further word may be in order about why a "**takeout DOUBLE**" is a "**Demand**" Double. When Partner executes a "**takeout DOUBLE**" Partner is saying, "I am 'short' in the Opponents' bid Suit. I do not have a 5-card Suit with good Suit Quality. Because I am 'short' in their bid Suit, Opponents likely are 'long' in their bid Suit, and therefore the '**Law of Total Tricks**' says that Opponents will *kill* us if we let them play their Suit at a low level." For example, if Partner DOUBLES Opponents' 1S bid, the Opponents likely will (1) make their very low 1-level bid along with (2) *doubled scoring* per Trick for every Trick over 6.

3. If you hold **13+** HCPs and a biddable Suit with good Suit Quality, you may wish to Overcall with a Suit bid. With Opponents bidding, you may or may not make a Game contract, but you may make a part-score contract. And if the Opponents set the final contract, your bid in any case has the positive effect of being "lead directing" to Partner.

A useful guide to deciding whether to Overcall with a Suit bid is Ron Klinger's "**Suit Quality Test ('SQT')**"

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<sup>7</sup> Within the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**", see: "Convention #14: 6 Not-for-Penalty Doubles": <https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/double.pdf>

**Score”**.<sup>8</sup> Ron Klinger is the author of more than 70 books on bridge and for many years published columns on bridge in both Australia’s The Sun-Herald and the Sydney Morning Journal. The “**SQT’ Score**” is computed by summing (1) the number of cards held in the Suit plus (2) the number of Honors (including the Ten) held in the Suit. Bids no higher than “**SQT’ Score**” – 6 are generally relatively safe. According to Klinger:

**The Suit Quality Test guide measures how strong a suit you hold. The... “SQT Score” helps you decide] whether the suit is strong enough to bid at a given level. Useful just about *whenever suit quality is a relevant criterion*, it is useful for pre-empts, weak twos and overcalls. The SQ[T Score] determines whether you can afford to insist on your suit as trumps. [italics added]**

Of course, as with other bridge “guidelines” (e.g., the “**Rule of 20**”, the “**Rule of 5**”), the Ron Klinger “**Suit Quality Test (‘SQT’) Score**” should not be used mindlessly or absent sound judgment. As Esther says so frequently, “*Bridge: It’s all about thinking analytically!*”

### **“Weaponized PASSes”**

There are 2 “special” PASSes<sup>9</sup> that are “*weaponized*” in an effort to secure the most favorable bridge score on a Board while playing on Defense. Thus, both these “**Weaponized PASSes**” imply that (1) you are not sitting as Dealer, (2) Opponents open the bidding, and (3) you believe your Partnership will obtain the best bridge score by setting the Opponents’ contract. These situations may be more likely to occur when Opponents are Vulnerable.

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<sup>8</sup> See 2009/2014 web article, “The Suit Quality Test by Ron Klinger”:

<https://csbnews.org/the-suit-quality-test-by-ron-klinger/>

<sup>9</sup> A 3<sup>rd</sup> special PASS, the “**Forcing PASS**”, occurs when both Pairs are competitively bidding and your Partnership must decide whether you wish to raise the bidding to secure a Game contract or let the Opponents play a DOUBLED contract. The “Forcing PASS” grew out of ACBL Bulletin articles written by Edwin “Eddie” Kantar in 1982 and 1983. Kantar published a book, The Forcing Pass, on this topic in 1983, and in 2006 he published a completely reworked edition of his book. The “**Forcing PASS**” is used only by *very Advanced* Players.

## **"Aggressive PASS"**

One thing massively misunderstood by newer bridge players is that not only can you make "positive" Bridge Scores while sitting on Defense, but that you indeed can make *massively* huge scores playing on Defense! You can make *massively* better Bridge Scores when (1) *both* Partnerships are bidding in a "competitive" auction, and thus part score contracts are likely for both Pairs, and your Opponents are Vulnerable, and so your Partnership can rack up BIG "positive" scores even by setting Opponents' unDOUBLED contract. *The largest Bridge Scores I have ever earned have come on Defense!*

You make an **"Aggressive PASS"** when you hold 13+ HCPs, but you expect to set the Opponents' most recent bid, usually "off the top", either because you hold an impressive "Trump stack" against a Suit bid, or against a **NT** contract you expect to be "on lead" and you hold a "long" Suit including "top" Honors. "Esther 'Pop' Bridge Quiz #48: Bidding When Your RHO Opens 1NT, and You Hold 13 HCPs and a 'Long' Major" presents just such a Board and bid from Board #21 at the 2022 World Seniors Teams competition:

[https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0048\\_q.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0048_q.pdf)

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen describes another "real deal" example of an **"Aggressive PASS"** from one of her recent competitions in her Summer, 2024 article, "Esther Discusses Tips on Playing and for Teaching Defense to New and Advancing Bridge Learners",<sup>10</sup> in the Journal of the American Bridge Teachers' Association:

**It is important to tell newer bridge players to "think about your lead during the auction," because thinking about your possible lead can inform your bidding. As an example, I once sat LHO to a Dealer who opened 1NT (15-18 HCPs). I held ♣AKQTx, an outside Ace, and with other Honors, like my RHO I also held a "big" Hand with 17 HCPs. I knew that my RHO and I together held 32-35 HCPs in the deck, and so that Partner at most held 5-8 HCPs.**

**In my Partnership I could DOUBLE my RHO's 1NT opening bid to show Partner that I hold a 1NT opening Hand, but my Hand does not have a NT distribution. I could Overcall with a 2C bid. But I also know that if I PASS my LHO was likely to either PASS or execute a Jacoby transfer. And I knew that I could enter the bidding later if my LHO bid anything other than PASS.**

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<sup>10</sup> See: [https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA\\_3.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_3.pdf)

I also knew that we were not Vulnerable, but that the Opponents were, and that we could make a large positive bridge score by setting the Vulnerable Opponents' 1NT contract even undoubled! I would be on lead. I knew that on lead I would take at least 3 Club Tricks, maybe 4 or even 6 Club Tricks "off the top," and at some point on defense also win my outside Ace! And I knew that many Pairs sitting in the same direction as me and Partner would foolishly boom out a DOUBLE or an Overcall bid, and that instead my "aggressive PASS" of the 1NT bid would yield us a Top Board! And it did! By the way, it is also very, very important to teach newer players that not only can you make good bridge scores on offense, but that you can also even make *massive* positive scores playing on defense! (pp. 21-22)

Some Partners with Esther's holdings would have bid, because they love to be Declarer. But you have to decide whether you more desperately want to be Declarer, because you are a "control freak" or you simply enjoy the challenges of being Declarer, or you *instead* want to play duplicate bridge!

### "Trap PASS"

Sometimes you hold a "long" Suit with good Suit Quality, but your RHO bids your Suit *before* you can do so, and so you execute a "Trap PASS" to try to *entice* your Partner to execute a "Takeout/Demand DOUBLE", which you can then sneakily PASS for Penalty. Michael Berkowitz (2019), writing on Larry Cohen's bridge website "The Virtue of Passing",<sup>11</sup> provides an example:

**For instance, with no one vulnerable, you hold**

♠ 5 2   ♥ K 8 4   ♦ 9 5 3   ♣ A Q J 9 8,

**and [P]artner opens 1♠, your RHO, to your surprise, bids 2♣... You know that [P]artner won't have many [C]lubs, and is highly likely to reopen the bidding with a ["Takeout/Demand"] [D]ouble. Let [P]artner do the dirty work by making a takeout [D]ouble which you will happily [P]ass" for Penalty.**

The "Trap PASS" usually occurs when your RHO is Dealer and therefore your Partner is not a PASSEd Hand, and is more likely to hold an "opening" Hand. Because Partner is likely (1) to be "short" in the bid Suit held by both you and your RHO, and (2)

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<sup>11</sup> See:

<https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/actual/the-virtue-of-passing>

may hold an "opening" Hand, Partner is likely to make the "Takeout/Demand DOUBLE" that you are praying for.

### When to Make a "Plain-Vanilla PASS"

Michael Berkowitz in his 2019 article, "The Virtue of Passing" on Larry Cohen's bridge website, notes that, "It took me a long time to like passing. It feels so, for lack of a better word, passive, and I always wanted action." Similarly, Ron Klinger and Harold Schogger (2021) in their little book, The Power of Pass, suggest that:

**Most players beyond the beginner and novice stages bid too much. There is certainly satisfaction in bidding and making a contract. [But t]here can be even great satisfaction in passing and then being rewarded for your discipline by defeating the opposition contract when you would have been defeated if you had bid higher.**

**If you currently have difficulty in passing, we have a remedy for you... Each morning, after you shower and shave or put on makeup, whichever it is that you do, stand in front of the mirror and say 'No bid, No bid, No bid' until you can reproduce it regularly at the bridge table. (p. 7)**

There are numerous situations in which you should make a "Plain-Vanilla PASS":

1. You have virtually no HCPs, and no story to tell Partner.
2. You have a story to tell, but you can't properly describe your Hand immediately, so you wait patiently for more information. For example, Berkowitz (2019) notes that if he held:

♠ A T 9 5 4 3   ♥ A T 7 4   ♦ --   ♣ 9 8 7,

"If I were first seat, I would pass."

Ron Klinger and Harold Schogger (2021) list some other situations in which you should PASS:

3. If Opponents open with a Suit bid and you hold (1) **12-14** HCPs and (2) a "**balanced**" or "**flat**" Hand (e.g., a 4-3-3-3 distribution with your 4-card Suit being any of the 4 Suits), Klinger and Schogger recommend using the "**Rule of 14**" to determine whether you should make a "Takeout/Demand DOUBLE":

**After a 1-[S]uit bid [by Opponents], a good guide is the Rule of 14: If the total of your HCP and your short [S]uits (void = 5, singleton = 3, doubleton = 1) is 14 or more, make a takeout double. (p. 19)**

4. "If the opponents are in a contract which you can beat, pass unless you can [also] beat any contract that they might bid if you double." (p. 29) Do not DOUBLE and entice Opponents into abandoning a contract that you will set and bid a different contract which Opponents will instead make. This means that it is usually safer to DOUBLE for Penalty when the Opponents' contract is at a high level when they have little room to run elsewhere.
5. The Opponents have stopped at the 2 level after a "constructive" supportive raise by Responder. Your Partner in the "balancing" position makes a 3-level Suit bid to stop the Opponents from making an easy "positive" Bridge Score. **"Do not punish [P]artner by bidding again! Pass!"** (p. 37)
6. Open light with ~11 HCPs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> seat **only** if your bid has holdings that justify a "lead-directing" bid (e.g, A,K,x,x,x). (pp 46-47)
7. Do not as Responder re-bid a Suit in which you have already "supported" Partner unless you are suggesting *new, untold* information. For example, if the auction proceeds:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1 <b>H</b>	PASS	2 <b>H</b>	2 <b>S</b>
???			

and you hold:

♠ 8 5    ♥ Q 8 6 4    ♦ Q 7 5 3    ♣ A 9 5    (8), or  
 ♠ J 8 5    ♥ 9 8 6 5    ♦ A Q    ♣ K 8 6 5    (10),

You have "limited" your Hand, and you should therefore PASS.

8. If (1) Opponents opened a Suit bid and the Responder "supported" the bid or bids a new Suit, (2) Partner PASSed, and (3) you hold a "big" Hand, PASS. For example, if the auction proceeds:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1 <b>S</b>	PASS	2 <b>S</b>	???,

and you hold:

♠ A 9 6    ♥ K Q T 6    ♦ K Q 7    ♣ A 6 5    (18),

PASS. In auctions such as this, Klinger and Schrogger (2021) note that:

**Not only it is [sic] very risky to bid, but a huge plus for passing with [H]ands like this is that [D]eclarer will not have an easy time placing high cards during the play. Declarer will never expect you to have so much and have passed. (p. 54)**

9. If you hold both "length" and "strength" in a Suit bid by the Opponent sitting to your *right*, PASS. If the Opponents obtain the contract in this Suit, the Declarer on your *right* cannot play "low to high" from Dummy to capture your intermediate or high cards in the Trump Suit. For example, if the auction proceeds:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
PASS	1D	1H	???,

and you hold:

♠ J 9 7 6 3   ♥ A Q T 7 6   ♦ J   ♣ K 4   (11),

PASS.

10. In general, if Opponents bid a 5-level contract during a competitive auction, PASS or Double for Penalty. In the words of Edward Manfield, whose team won the Rosenblum Cup for the 1986 World Team Bridge Championship, "The 5-level belongs to the [O]pponents."



***Esther's Answers to the Esther Lesson #79***  
**"Lagniappe: Some 'Hand Evaluation' Quandaries"**

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

**Esther says:**

1. Which holding in Spades is "better"?

Spade HCPs: **7**

"'SQT' Score":  $5 + 3 = 8$

**S:** A Q J 8 4

Spade HCPs: **7**

"'SQT' Score":  $6 + 2 = 8$

**S:** A K 9 8 5 2

As a general proposition the 2<sup>nd</sup> Hand is "better". The 2<sup>nd</sup> Hand holds both 1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-Round "control", and has an extra 6<sup>th</sup> card.

2. Which holding in Spades is "better"?

Spade HCPs: **6**

"'SQT' Score":  $5 + 3 = 8$

**S:** A Q T 7 5

Spade HCPs: **3**

"'SQT' Score":  $6 + 3 = 9$

**S:** Q J T 9 8 7

Marty Bergen is a 10-time national bridge champion, the inventor of the "**Rule of 20**", and the "DONT" and the "Bergen Limit Raise" conventions, and the author of numerous bridge books, including his 1996 book, Points Schmoints!, which won the Bridge Book of the Year Award from the American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA). In the "Correctly Evaluating Your Hand" chapter<sup>13</sup> in his wonderful little 2011 "pocket book", pocket posh tips for bridge players, Bergen emphasizes several things that "improve" holdings with respect to playing Suit contracts.

First, 2-Suited Hands as against "flat" Hands play very well in Suit contracts. This is what led Bergen to advocate his "**Rule of**

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<sup>13</sup>To read this extraordinary chapter go to:

<https://csbnews.org/correctly-evaluating-your-hand-by-marty-bergen/>

20". Second, Bergen also emphasizes the importance of "touching Honors". He notes that:

**All [H]onors increase in value when combined with other [H]onors in the same [S]uit... All [H]onors become less valuable when isolated... Whether the  $\diamond$  K and  $\diamond$  Q are married or just living together, they are happier now that they are together, and rate to produce extra [T]ricks... A [H]and with **two** strong [S]uits is **upgradeable**. (p. 13) [emphasis added]**

These considerations suggest that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Spade holding is better.

You hold:

Spade HCPs: **1**

"'SQT' Score": **9**

**S:** J T 9 8 7 6 5 4

3. Your RHO is Dealer and opens 1**H**. You hold a Heart singleton and **10** HCPs. What would you bid?

My Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score**" is  $8 + 1 = 9$ , which in theory will support a Spade bid to the  $9 - 6 = 3$  level. I would probably Overcall 1**S** to see if Partner can "support" my Spades. If the Opponents keep bidding Hearts, I might be inclined to bid again, and possibly "jump" to show length, especially if my Partnership is not Vulnerable.

You hold:

Spade HCPs: **1**

"'SQT' Score": **9**

**S:** J T 9 8 7 6 5 4

4. Your LHO is Dealer and opens 1**H**. Partner PASSes. Your RHO bids 2**H**. You hold a Heart singleton and **10** HCPs. What would you bid?

Your LHO holds (1) **~13** HCPs and (2) **5+** Hearts. Your Partner holds **<13** HCPs and/or no "biddable" Suit. Your RHO has shown (1) **3+** Hearts and (2) **8-10** HCPs, so your Opponents together hold (1)  $\sim 13 + 8-10 = 21-23$  HCPs and (2) **8+** Hearts. The "**Law of Total Tricks**" says your Opponents will make a 2**H** part-score contract and thus earn a "positive" Bridge Score.

At most Tables Pairs sitting in the same direction as your Opponents are also likely to bid and make a 2**H** contract. Thus,

both you and your Opponents are likely to earn roughly a 50% Board Percentage, which will effectively not alter your position within the overall competition.

However, if your goal is to *win* the competition, or at least earn MasterPoints, you may wish either capture the contract with a 2S bid, or force Opponents to play at a higher and thus less-attainable level. In general I, Esther, am not a “fan” of letting Opponents play a 2-level bid in a Major when one Opponent opens the Major at the 1 level and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Opponent gives a “constructive supportive raise” if there is a reasonable probability that my Partnership can make an alternative part-score contract. Esther *hammers* this home in her **Lesson #39**: “Esther Goes Berserk!!!: When You Are in the ‘Balancing’ Position, and Opponents Bid a ‘Constructive Raise’ to Either 2H or 2S, Do **NOT** Let Opponents Play This Contract!!!”:

[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/2H2S\\_bal.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/2H2S_bal.pdf)

Remember that when the Opponents have found an 8-card fit, there is a **massive** probability that your Partnership *also* holds an 8+ card “fit”.<sup>14</sup> I would be especially likely to Overcall 2S if I was sitting in the “*balancing position*”<sup>15</sup> within the auction.

Ron Klinger discusses this in his 2014 web posting, “Partscore Competitive Bidding by Ron Klinger”:

<https://csbnews.org/partscore-competitive-bidding-by-ron-klinger/>

In his discussion of what he calls his “**3-over-2 Rule**”, Klinger notes that:

**If the opponents bid and raise a suit and stop at the two-level, be quick to bid in the [“balancing”] pass-out seat. When they have a trump fit and about half the HCP between them, they can usually score eight tricks. If they have about half the HCP, then so does your side. If they have a trump fit, your side does**

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<sup>14</sup> Within the “**Esther Bridge Lessons**”, see: “**A Comprehensive List of 8 Different Categories of Bridge Probabilities, and How These May Help Guide Your Bidding and Play**”:

[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8\\_probs.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_probs.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> You are in the “*balancing position*” in the auction when, if you PASS, the Opponents’ contract will be finalized.

**too (almost always). Your job is to dislodge them from the safety of the two-level and push them to the jeopardy of the three-level.**

**You must be prepared to go the three-level yourself and possibly fail at the three-level. Even if you do not make your contract at the three-level, the cost will usually be less than what they would have scored if you had left them to play in two. Your bonus comes when they push on to the three-level. You have pushed them one higher than they wished to be and perhaps you can now defeat them. Having pushed them to the three-level, pass and defend. Do not push once more.**

**This advice about being prepared to compete applies only if there have been two passes to you. If you also pass, the bidding is over.**