

**"Some of Rhoda Walsh's
'Rhoda's Rules' for Bridge Bidding"**

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

To return to the "Esther Bridge Lessons," CLICK:

<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

To return to the "Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quizzes", CLICK:

<https://esther-bridge.com/quiz.html>

Bruce: Today, we are honored to have with us Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will talk us through "**Some of Rhoda Walsh's 'Rhoda's Rules' for Bridge Bidding**". Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, thanks for taking the time to be with us today!

Esther: D**n it, Bruce! How many times do I have to tell you to **NEVER, ever** call me Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Esther, because I am such a "warm and caring" person!

Bruce: Errr, well, in any case, Esther, at the start would you tell us a little bit about who this **Rhoda Walsh** person is?

Esther: Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, I will certainly try to help you.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Are you actually being *nice* to me?

Esther: Well, my *studious salamander*, of course I am being "nice" to you! Why wouldn't I be "nice" to you?

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther...

Esther: Well, my *salacious salamandar*, Rhoda Walsh (1933 -) is an American bridge player who resides in Los Angeles.

© Copyright, Bruce Thompson, 2026. All rights reserved.

¹ 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, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by **Bruce Thompson**.

She is an attorney. She has won **12** North American Bridge Championships and was Runner-up in **6** North American Bridge Championships. She is now currently inactive in curating her "Rhoda's Rules" bridge website: <https://rhodasrules.com>

However, her website is still online and includes numerous "Rhoda's Rules" as well as numerous "Bridge Stories".

Rhoda's website includes **300** "Rhoda's Rules". I am not going to summarize even *only* all her "Rules" dealing *only* with bridge *bidding*. But I will highlight several partly as an attempt to familiarize you with her general thinking and her website.

Bruce: Well, Esther, what is the 1st "Rhoda's Rule" that you wish to present?

Esther: Well, Bruce, here is her "Rhoda's Rules #19":

**Rule #19: Your Opponents Stop Low.
Should You Balance?**

"Rule: When your opponents stop at the *two level*, you should give thought to balancing [by Overcalling], particularly *if* they have shown a fit. To balance, you need proper shape for the balance (a five or more card suit or support for any suit partner may bid). Your high card point count is *immaterial*.

Rationale: When your opponents stop at the two level, your side invariably has half the deck, which is eighteen to twenty-two high card points. Due to your combined strength, you are quite likely to make your contract *or* push your opponents to venture too high." (italics added)

Of course, this "Rhoda's Rule" is entirely consistent with my own "Esther Bridge Dialogue 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

Bruce: Errr, well, thanks so much! That was very important! Do you have another "Rhoda's Rule" that you wish to share?

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, I will certainly try to help you!

Rule #21: When Can You Make a Takeout Double with 4-3-3-3²?

“**Rule:** Best to have *fifteen or more* high card points to make a takeout double with the ‘worst of all shapes’ [4-3-3-3]. Holding a stopper in the opponent’s suit, it is better to overcall one notrump.

Rationale: For the takeout double, the extra high card points make up for the lack of shortness in the opponent’s suit. When available, the notrump overcall is given preference inasmuch as it is *more descriptive* [of your ‘flat’ hand shape]”. [italics added]

Bruce: Well, WOW! Do you have another “Rhoda’s Rule” to share with us?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you.

Rule #70: When to Super Accept

“**Rule:** You have opened 1NT or 2NT and partner transfers to a major. Simply accept the transfer with a typical hand, with or without a three or more-card fit for your partner’s major. Super-accept by jumping *one level* in your partner’s major *if* you have [1] four or more trumps, [2] sixteen or more high-card points *and* [3] a side doubleton that does not contain a queen or a jack.

Rationale: By meeting the above-stated [3] requirements for a super-accept, you will often reach excellent games that you would otherwise have failed to bid. Occasionally, your partner will have transferred with a true ‘dog’,³ and you will go down one due to your jump bid! Ugh! However, bridge is a percentage game! Thus, you want to invariably make the bids and plays that succeed *most of the time*. Super-accepting has proven to be the *percentage winner* over time.” [italics added]

Bruce: Well, Esther, what is the next “Rhoda’s Rule” that you wish to present?

² This “shape” involves holding **4** cards in any **1** Suit and **3** cards in the other **3** Suits.

³ It is perfectly reasonable for you as Responder to execute a Jacoby Transfer with as few as **0** HCPs!

Esther: Well, Bruce, here is her "Rhoda's Rules #74":

Rule #74: The Rule of 2, 3, & 4!

“Rule: Holding [1] a long, strong suit and [2] limited strength, you preempt, regardless of whether you are [a] an opening bidder, [b] an overcaller, or [c] a responder to partner's opening bid. **Note:** Your goal is to make it difficult for your opponents to bid accurately, while you [at the same time] *properly describe* your hand to your partner. The Rule of 2, 3, 4 tells you precisely how high: Vul vs [opponents] nonvul: Bid *two* more tricks than you have. Equal vul: Bid *three* more tricks than you have. Nonvul vs [opponents] vul: Bid *four* more tricks than you have. **Note:** This useful Rule is applicable to all preemptive bidding **except** for Weak Two Bids, which have unique rules.

Rationale: ...Basically, when you preempt you want to take care to *not* go for more than the value of the opponents' potential game or slam. Unless you take vulnerability into consideration, there is no way to make this distinction.” (italics added)

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther, would now tell us how to count singleton Honors when you are computing the HCPs in your Hand?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you.

Rule #186: How Do You Evaluate a Singleton Honor?

“Rule: It depends. High card points: [Singleton] A = 4 HCP; K = 2 HCP; Q = 1 HCP; J = 0 HCP. *If* partner has bid the suit: *Full* HCP value for all four Honors. *If* an opponent has bid the suit: A = 4 HCP; K = 1 HCP; Q or J = 0 HCP. *Playing strength points:* (Note. *Distributional points* are counted *only* after you and partner have found a major suit fit, *or* a minor suit fit [only] when you are sure you will be playing in the minor): 3 PSP for any side singleton *in addition* to its HCP value.

Rationale: Singletons do *not* carry full weight in HCP valuation (other than the ace), since they may be smothered by the opponents' higher honors. Thus, you must lower the HCP's you assign them. However, *after* you find a suit fit,

singletons are definitely worth distributional point values, thereby increasing the PSP value of your hand.” (italics added)

Bruce: Well, Esther, you have long advocated using Marty Bergen’s “**Rule of 20**”.⁴ Does Rhoda have anything to say regarding using Bergen’s “**Rule of 20**” when bidding Majors as against Minors?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes indeed!

Rule #254: When Does the Rule of 20 Convert to the Rule of 21?

“**Rule:** When the opener’s two longest suits are *both* minors, the [R]ule of 21 takes precedence over the Rule of 20. I.e., add [1] the number of cards in your minors to [2] your usable high-card points (HCPs in your two minor suits plus outside [a] aces and [b] guarded kings). *If* the number arrived at is 21 or higher, it is O.K. to open in *any* seat.

Rationale: When the opener lacks a four-card major, the odds are that his partnership will typically land in notrump rather than in a suit contract. Thus, one extra high-card point is needed for the opening bid, since *distributional points* will *not* be as valuable as they would be in a suit contract.” (italics added)

Bruce: Well, Esther, thanks so much indeed for presenting some of “Rhoda’s Rules”!

Esther: Well, Bruce, you are indeed welcome! My pleasure!

You may also be interested in “Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson #169”: “Some of Rhoda Walsh’s *Rhoda’s Rules*’ for Bridge Leading on Defense”:

https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/RR_lead.pdf

⁴ See the “Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson” at:

https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/Ru_20_22_15.pdf