

**Esther "Pop" Quiz #0063:  
"Can You Handle the 2-Step or 3-Step  
Preempt Opening Bid Dance?:  
Suit Bids Are All About the Shape, Darlin'!"<sup>1</sup>**

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

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

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***Sayeth Esther:***

One of the most informative bridge books for beginning bridge players to own and read is Marty Bergen's (2011) little "pocket book", Pocket Posh: Tips for Bridge Players. Although out of print, this wonderful little book still can be found new or used online from various vendors, including WALMART (\$12):

<https://www.walmart.com/ip/Pocket-Posh-Pocket-Posh-Tips-for-Bridge-Players-Paperback>

Marty Bergen is a 10-time National Bridge Champion, and creator of numerous bridge conventions, including "Bergen Limit Raises", "DONT", and the "Rule of 20", and has had a regular column in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin since 1976! Bergen emphasizes the crucial importance of Suit Distributions when bidding.

For example, Bergen emphasizes that 2-Suited Hands bid better than "flat" Hands when pursuing Suit contracts, because holding 2 "long" Suits *massively* increases the probabilities of finding a Suit "Fit" with Partner<sup>2</sup>! 2-Suited Hands also "play" better in Suit contracts, because "side" Suits can be used to dump "losers", or to ruff if one Hand is "short" in one of the two Suits.

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the ideas in this "Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quiz" are drawn from James Marsh Sternberg's March, 2024 ACBL Bridge Bulletin article, "Consults with the Doctor: Opening Bids of 3H and 3S".

<sup>2</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see the "Some Very Important Bridge Probabilities" Section.

In his *extraordinary* chapter, "Correctly Evaluating Your Hand<sup>3</sup>", Bergen emphasizes that different Hand distributions have a wide range of appeal in Suit contracts. For example, he lists some *very poor* and *very good* Suit distributions for Suit contracts:

"Worst"	"Awesome"
5-3-3-2	5-4-4-0
6-3-2-2	6-4-3-0
7-2-2-2	7-4-2-0

Indeed, a Suit distribution of 7-4-2-0, 4-7-0-2, or 0,2,4,7 may be "awesome" in a Suit contract even if the holdings include just *modest HCPs*, but the "long" Suit includes some Honors, especially if the Honors are "touching". This brings us to the topic of "preempt" opening bids.<sup>4</sup>

An opening Suit preempt bid can be made by a player holding (1) fewer than an opening HCP count, and not meeting the requirements of Marty Bergen's "**Rule of 20**", and (2) a "long" Suit holding either **6** or **7** cards including some Honors. To make a preempt bid most players require that the Hand includes either (1) **2** of the "top" 3 Honors, or (2) **3** of the "top" 5 Honors. When players sometimes make opening preempt bids with fewer Honors than Partner is required to make a call about making a PASS, or bidding **2NT!** asking for a "side" Suit Ace or "protected" "side" Suit King, or responding by bidding Game when the Opener bids **2H**, **2S**, **3H**, or **3S**, without having *unambiguous* information from the Opener about his holdings!

The purposes of "preempt" bids include:

1. Disrupting the Opponents' bidding and communication,
2. Obtaining "part score" makeable contracts that otherwise might not be set, and
3. Setting Game contracts that otherwise might not be found, based on a "long" Suit holding and relying upon the "**Law of Total Tricks**".

An Opener who makes a "preempt" bid "**limits**" his Hand by showing Partner (1) a very *specific* HCP count and (2) a very *specific* card distribution or number of cards, such as by

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of this chapter is posted at:

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

<sup>4</sup> A widely-cited book on bridge preempt bids is Preempts from A-Z by Ron Anderson and Sabine Zinkel (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1996).

opening 1**NT**, 2**S**, or 3**H**. Once an Opener "limits" his Hand the Opener should **never** bid again unless Partner poses a forcing query (e.g., Opener: 2**H**, Responder: 2**NT!**).

And Responder to a "preempt" opening should not make "supportive" response bids requiring Opener to make further decisions *absent the information needed* by the Opener to make those decisions. For example, an Opener's 2**S** opening followed by a 3**S** response tells Opener that Responder has at least 2 Spades, but does not inform Opener whether Responder has more than 2 Spades, or anything about whether Responder has the sufficient "side" Suit honors needed in combination with Opener's "weak" Hand to make a Game contract.

### Questions #1-#4

Hand #1 (8)

**S:** K Q T 9 8 6 4

**H:** K 9 7 3

**D:** 6

**C:** 5

Hand #2 (10)

**S:** A K T 9 8 3

**H:** K 9 7 3

**D:** 5 3

**C:** 6

Hand #3 (6)

**S:** Q J T 8 7 5 3

**H:** 4

**D:** 7 3

**C:** K 9 7

1. As Opener which Hand would you prefer to hold because it is likely to yield the most Tricks in a Suit contract?
2. As Opener how would you bid Hand #1?
3. As Opener how would you bid Hand #2?
4. As Opener how would you bid Hand #3?

To see Esther's **suggested answer**, CLICK:  
[https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0063\\_a1.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0063_a1.pdf)