

**Esther "Pop" Quiz #0109:  
"Playing for the Drop vs. the Finesse  
as Bridge Declarer:  
Ron Klinger's 'Even Suit Break Test' "**

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

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>

**Ron Klinger** (1941- ) is an Australian contract bridge player who has written more than **70** bridge books including his 1990 book, Guide to Better Card Play, which won the "American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Bridge Book of the Year Award." His book, Right Through the Pack Again, won the 2010 "International Bridge Press Association Book of the Year Award." He was Editor of Australian Bridge for 13 years (1972-1985). For many years he has written, and still currently writes, a weekly bridge column for both the Sydney Morning Herald and The Sun-Herald.

Klinger is also the inventor of the Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score**". The "**SQT Score**" is computed by adding together (1) the number of cards you hold in a Suit plus (2) the number of Honors (including the Ten) that you hold in the Suit. *Suit contracts* set no higher than "**SQT Score**" - 6 are generally pretty "safe".

The present discussion is drawn from **Tip #56** (pp. 86-87) from Ron Klinger's 2003 book, 100 WINNING BRIDGE TIPS for the Improving Player. The examples have been slightly modified by Esther.

**Ron Klinger's "Even Suit Break Test"**

When as Declarer you are missing an Honor either in your Trump Suit or when playing a **NT** contract you must make a decision about whether to play for a "drop" of the missing Honor or to finesse to "shorten" Opponents' holdings so that a later "drop" is assured.

© Copyright, Bruce Thompson, 2024. All rights reserved.

---

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

If Opponents bid during the auction then their bidding may inform your judgment about who may hold your "missing" Honor and about whom you should finesse through. But if both Opponents PASSED at every turn you have no information to guide your play.

Klinger proposed his "**Even Suit Break Test**" for just such a situation. The "**Even Suit Break Test**" involves the Declarer performing **3** steps:

1. Start by assuming that the Opponents' Suit holdings "split" as evenly as possible. In fact, when Opponents hold an odd number of cards a near-equal "split" is the most likely "split" (e.g., **5** cards "out": 3-2: **67.8%**, 4-1: 28.3%; **3** cards "out" 2-1: **78.0%**, 3-0: 22.0%). In fact, when Opponents hold an even number of cards an even "split" is *almost* the most likely "split" (e.g., **6** cards "out": 3-3: 35.5%, 4-2: **48.4%**; **4** cards "out" 2-2: 40.7%, 3-1: **49.7%**). Nevertheless, assume an equal or the most almost-equal "split."
2. If there is an odd number of cards "out", assume that the "missing" Honor is held by the Opponent possessing the "longer" holding. As Klinger (2003) explained, "If the even-break is 3-2, place the missing key card with the 3-card holding; if the even-break is 2-1, assume the missing card is doubleton, not singleton" (p. 86).
3. First, estimate whether the "missing" Honor you "placed" with an Opponent holding more cards will likely "drop" or you should instead try the finesse.

### **Example #1: Missing 4 Cards Including the King**

**DUMMY**

9 5 4 2

**DECLARER**

A Q 8 7 3

1. Assuming a **2-2** "split", how will you Play as Declarer?

**Example #2: Missing 3 Cards Including the King**

**DUMMY**

9 6 5 4 2

**DECLARER**

A Q 8 7 3

2. Assuming a **2-1** "split", how will you Play as Declarer?

**Example #3: Missing 2 Cards Including the King**

**DUMMY**

9 6 5 4 2

**DECLARER**

A Q J 8 7 3

To see Esther's **suggested answers**, CLICK:  
[https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0109\\_a1.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0109_a1.pdf)