

The Finesse

The finesse is an important technique in card play; it allows you to win a trick with a card that is not the highest card in the suit played. In each example below, your holding as declarer is shown in North with dummy in South.

Sequence #1



Lead the two and, if the king does not appear, play the jack. If this wins, lead a *different* suit to reach dummy and repeat the procedure. You will win three tricks if West has the king.

Sequence #2



Lead the two and, if no honor appears, play the 10. This is likely to lose to the king or queen. Later lead the three and, if no honor appears, play the jack. You will win two tricks if West has the king or queen.

Sequence #3



Lead the two and, if no ace or queen appears, play the jack. If this wins or loses to the queen, later lead up to the king. You will win two tricks if West has both the ace and queen; one trick if he has either.

Sequence #4

K 10 5 4



Q 3 2

Lead the four and, if the ace does not appear, play the queen. Whether it wins or loses, next time lead the two and, if the jack does not appear, play the 10. You will win at least one and possibly three tricks.

Sequence #5

K J 6 5 4



A 3 2

Win the ace first (you might drop a singleton queen) then lead the two and, if the queen does not appear, play the jack. If West has the queen and the missing cards split 3-2, you will win *five* tricks.

Sequence #6

K J 5 4



A 10 3 2

This is a *two-way* finesse. If you think West has the queen, win the ace first then lead toward your jack. If you think East has the queen, win the king then lead toward dummy's 10. Are you a good guesser? Can the bidding help? Is there an advantage to the finesse losing to a particular defender?