




The common finesse from series 721

VB#16 The Finesse Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ QJ4		
	♥ AQ3		
	♦ 942		
	♣ AKQ9		
West		East	
♠ 7632		♠ K95	
♥ J76		♥ KT84	
♦ 86		♦ KQJ75	
♣ T853		♣ 7	
	South		
	♠ AT8		
	♥ 952		
	♦ AT3		
	♣ J642		

This series continues the theme of finesses, but with slightly harder examples.

You should remember what a tenace is and that you should always lead towards one rather than lead away from one.

Hand 1 is not too hard although there's a little twist. First though, let's see if you can find the best contract.

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♦	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ 8

The contract is the familiar 3NT by South after East has wandered into the auction with a ♦ overcall. West (a well-trained partner) dutifully leads his partner's suit.

Careful **planning** – based on **counting** – saves the day. There are seven top tricks in No-trumps (one Spade, one Heart, one Diamond and four Clubs). That needs to be swelled to nine. The way to do that is to try the finesses in the major suits. If the ♠K lies with East we have three Spade tricks – and a total of nine. If West has the ♠K we'll have to fall back on the Heart finesse.

The key is to realise that we have to get to our partner's hand to finesse Spades. That's easy enough to do – we can reach dummy with Clubs and then lead a Spade honour, to make it easy to repeat the finesse. We also have the ♥A, but since it might be needed as part of a later finesse we'll leave that alone for a while.

Let's talk briefly about why it isn't right to play our ♦A right away. What would happen if the Spade finesse failed, and West had the ♠K? He would lead his other Diamond and we would be defeated in 3NT before having a chance to try the Heart finesse.

So... we duck the Diamond, win the second round, cross to dummy with a Club to take the Spade finesse. When that wins (twice) we are home and dry with three Spades, two red Aces and four Clubs.

Flushed with success it may be tempting to play a Heart to the Queen ("See a finesse, take a finesse"). Oops, **No!** Once you can see the harbour you should row for home. Here you would risk your contract – if East were to gain the lead he would have enough Diamonds to defeat you. As the cards lie, a cunning East (and there are plenty of them about) might discard to a singleton ♥K, expecting you to take the Heart finesse. If you fall into such temptation you will fail.


Keep counting your tricks and disregard the lure of overtricks unless you are completely safe to take them. Greed is one of the seven deadly

sins.



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VB#16 The Finesse Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ Q73	
	♥ T32	
	♦ A76	
	♣ 7653	
West		East
♠ KJ8		♠ T9652
♥ 7		♥ K84
♦ KQJT32		♦ 8
♣ QJ4		♣ T982
	South	
	♠ A4	
	♥ AQJ965	
	♦ 954	
	♣ AK	

Entries and Finessing go together like – um – fish and chips. When taking finesses you must be in the right hand at the right time.

Can you see the "point" of this deal?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♥
2♦	2♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ K

You reach 4♥ after West has overcalled 2♦ and the opening lead is the ♦K.

A count of winners and losers (an essential part of all declarer-play strategy) shows there to be four potential losers – one in Spades, one in Hearts and two in Diamonds. The only loser you can make disappear is in Hearts – and to do that you require the trump finesse to work.

You must win the ♦A on the table at trick one (can you see that **not** taking it would be fatal?) and then immediately finesse in Hearts. However, you must lead the ♥10 from dummy and not a low Heart.

So, when should you be thinking about this type of finesse?

1. **Entries** are a problem.
2. You want to be **in the same hand** to repeat the finesse.
3. You've got a lot of **equal cards**.

Notice that the only heart above the ♥9 missing is the ♥K.

That ♥10 in dummy is the perfect card to lead. If East had covered the ♥10 with the ♥K (and why would he? When your King is trapped, you want to make them **work** for it!) then you just reap the harvest by bashing it with the ♥A.


If West had the ♥K, you're going down anyway.

Take a couple of minutes to think about this, because this is a very commonly used (and needed!) technique.



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VB#16 The Finesse Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ J52	
	♥ 84	
	♦ AKJT	
	♣ KQ64	
West		East
♠ A8		♠ T974
♥ KJ953		♥ QT62
♦ Q532		♦ 97
♣ 93		♣ T82
	South	
	♠ KQ63	
	♥ A7	
	♦ 864	
	♣ AJ75	

"To finesse or not to finesse, that is the question."

This hand presents you with a choice of plays. One leads to a possible victory and the other to certain defeat.

Can you tell the difference?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ 5

West leads a low Heart against your 3NT and you have to count your tricks as declarer. There are seven on top (one Heart, two Diamonds and four Clubs) so two more are necessary to make the requisite nine.

Where do you go? Spades (you only have to knock out the ♠A) or Diamonds?

This hand is all about the decision whether or not to give up the lead to set up the Spades. It is a very seductive choice, because the Spade suit offers all the extra tricks you need. The Diamonds are, after all, fraught with danger... if the finesse were to fail, you would find yourself drowning in Hearts, just like if you try to set up the Spades.

To play on Diamonds requires that West has the ♦Q. If the finesse works then it looks to us like you've used up your good luck for the week!

If you try the Spades, or if the Diamond finesse fails, you would lose four Heart tricks plus the ♠A. There is only one way for you to make this hand, and you must visualise the winning line of play.

Playing to establish the Spades has zero chance of working as the defence will surely take one Spade and (at least) four Hearts. One down before you get back in. The Diamond finesse at least offers a fighting chance. 50-50 is better than zero...


Remember that if you cannot afford to give up the lead, a finesse is often your only chance.



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VB#16 The Finesse Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KT52		
	♥ Q64		
	♦ 632		
	♣ QJ9		
West		East	
♠ 7		♠ 943	
♥ KJ87		♥ T92	
♦ T987		♦ AKQ4	
♣ T543		♣ 862	
	South		
	♠ AQJ86		
	♥ A53		
	♦ J5		
	♣ AK7		

This deal is easy to analyze. You can see too many losers and it is obvious which suit needs playing for extra tricks (and fewer losers).

How do you play the suit, though? Across the world, day after day, many bridge players butcher this simple combination.

Not you, of course. Oh no. Not you.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♠
P	2♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ T

You reach 4♠ and West leads the ♦10. This isn't an easy lead to read. It's probably the top of a Diamond sequence but players have been known to lead from doubletons or *interior sequences* such as ♦Q 10 9 8. Anyway, this is a distraction from the task at hand, which is to **Count** and **Plan**.

There are two sure Diamond losers and two possible Heart losers. The Clubs and Spades are secure (or "solid" as we say). In terms of winners there are just nine (five Spades, one Heart and three Clubs). So we need an extra trick and that can only come from Hearts. When the ♥A and ♥Q are in separate hands we say that we have a *split tenace*.

The correct play in Hearts is to cash the ♥A and play up to the ♥Q, hoping that West has the ♥K. If he does, you score the ♥Q (now or later) and make your contract. If East has His Majesty you go down. *C'est la vie*, as the French say.


The order in which you play the cards is important. Since you can't ruff any losers in dummy, and you didn't have to give up the lead when pulling trumps, you should pull those before trying the Heart "finesse". En route, though, you have to trump the third round of Diamonds. Although it makes no difference on this deal, it is good technique to ruff with a high trump, just in case West were to have a doubleton Diamond.

And finally, this thought: The finesse was (near enough) a **sure thing**. How did you know the ♥K was in the West hand? Think about the first three tricks: East played the ♦A K Q. And yet he didn't open the bidding. If he had also had the ♥K, he would have had enough points to open... Elementary, my dear Watson.



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VB#16 The Finesse Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A7	
	♥ 8642	
	♦ K2	
	♣ AKQJ6	
West		East
♠ JT6		♠ 9843
♥ T5		♥ AJ9
♦ QJT83		♦ A75
♣ 973		♣ T82
	South	
	♠ KQ52	
	♥ KQ73	
	♦ 964	
	♣ 54	

You will hear "wise ones" saying that if the only way to make a contract is to find certain cards in a certain hand, that's the way you have to play it. That's what finesses are all about.

How, precisely, are you going to handle this one? Count your losers carefully, mind.

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	P	1♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ Q

You end up in 4♥ after North makes a strong, invitational raise of your suit and West leads the ♦Q.

The **Count** and **Plan** shows you that two Diamonds will have to be lost (no one leads the ♦Q against a suit contract when holding the ♦A – at least no one who has attended our lessons!) so success in 4♥ will come down to **not** losing two trump tricks.

The essence here is to play for two things – firstly that trumps break 3-2 and secondly that East holds the ♥A. This is against the odds but there is nothing in *The Laws of Contract Bridge* against trying and hoping.

Correct play entails leading up to the ♥K Q twice, making use of the entries on the table. The key (as in all finesses) is to lead *through* your victim **towards your tenace**. Here we have no classic tenace but we still need to lead towards the ♥K Q.

Whether you put the ♦K up at trick one or not is irrelevant – whatever you do East-West will take the first two Diamonds and then play a Spade. Best is to take the ♠A and play a small Heart towards the ♥K Q. We would love East to play the ♥A on thin air – does he? No! He has played the game before. Right then – back to dummy with a Club and another Heart, **through** East's remaining ♥A J. Whatever that defender does he is as dead as a dodo. Game set and match to us.

With our careful use of the **repeated finesse**, and our attention to entries, we are able to make the most of an unpromising outlook.

The key to finesses, as you are learning, is to **visualise** the "wish card" in the hand where you need it to be, and then to play the cards that way. Here we must place the ♥A in East, and play him for it.


What if West had held the ♥A (or if trumps had been 4-1)? Then down we would go, with as much dignity and *sangfroid* as we could manage. At least we would know that we gave ourselves the best possible chance and went down fighting.



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VB#16 The Finesse Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 2S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ Q43	
	♥ A93	
	♦ K543	
	♣ 862	
West		East
♠ 9652		♠ 7
♥ T762		♥ KQJ
♦ JT		♦ AQ986
♣ Q75		♣ K943
	South	
	♠ AKJT8	
	♥ 854	
	♦ 72	
	♣ AJT	

So far, our finesses have been in hands where there's only one honour in the suit out against us.

You have only scratched the surface of this topic. Here we are giving you a glimpse of what lies ahead – the murky world of card combinations.

The contract may be modest but that doesn't mean you should switch your brain off.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
P	2♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ J

You enter the fray with a 1♠ overcall and buy the auction in 2♠. West leads the ♦J (his partner's suit) and you have to find a way of scraping eight tricks.

It has been said that two-level contracts are the hardest to make and the hardest to defeat. A **Count** of tricks (an essential part of the planning strategy) shows there to be seven *on top* with five certain losers (the ♦A certainly lies over the ♦K).

With one loser too many and no long suit to develop, we have to try the Club *combination finesse*. This is an extension of the finesse principle in a slightly unfamiliar card combination. Study it – it is a common layout.

The A J 10 holding in a suit will result in two tricks 75% of the time. Why? Because any two missing honours (we are referring to the ♣K Q here) usually *split*. If they are both **behind** you, you will lose, but that only happens 25% of the time.

Again, we need to be aware of our entries. We have our ♠Q and our ♥A as our only entries, and we need both of them. When we make The Pre-Play Plan, entries always have to be considered.

The 4-1 trump-break is also a pain and that has to be catered for, so all-in-all this is a difficult deal.

The defence take two Diamond tricks and switch to a Heart. When you take the ♥A you are burning one of dummy's two entries so it is essential to tackle Clubs immediately. A Club finesse (a low Club to the ♣10) loses to West's ♣Q and a further Heart lead goes to East. When East cashes the ♥K and tries a sneaky low Diamond (hoping you'll ruff low) you wink at him and ruff with the Ace of trumps. Ah, love that show of style....

Three rounds of trumps ending with the ♠Q on table allows a second Club finesse (successful this time) and you are able to pull the last trump and cash the ♣A as the last trick.

Take a deep breath and relax. You've come through a testing set of deals.