



**Presents:**

***THE FINESSE***

A **FINESSE** is a special card play used to gain tricks with cards that are not clear winners. If certain card combinations present themselves during our play of the hand we can play the cards in a very particular way to gain tricks when the missing cards are favorably placed.

The Finesse is the **most important** card play technique necessary to improve your declarer play.

Let's take a look at the position we see to the right. Here we would love to be able to **take two tricks**. But how can we?

**LearnBridge.nyc Note:**

For Simplicity in this lesson we are going to **assume the following**:

1. We can lead from any hand we want at any time.
2. If the opponents win a trick we will be on lead after the following trick.



On this lay of the cards we can always take two tricks if we lead from the **NORTH** hand first. If we play the 2 from North and East plays the 4 the Queen can take the trick now. If East plays the King then our Ace will take it and the Queen will be a winner for the next trick.

Notice that as long as we play from North first we get to choose what to do **AFTER** the hand with the King (East) chooses what to do. We all only get one turn to play a card to each trick so the Queen will always win a trick on this lay of the cards, as long as we play correctly.

So, what if the Queen was in the other hand on this deal?



### Learn**Bridge.nyc** Rule:

Whenever you see an **AQ** combination opposite small cards,

You should **ALWAYS** play towards the **AQ**

- If the opponent plays low before AQ you play the Queen
- If the opponent plays the King before AQ take it with the Ace

If the King of Clubs is in the West hand there is good news and bad news.

**Bad News:** When we play the correct way and finesse, our Queen will lose to the King.

**Good News:** No matter how we play this hand we **CAN NOT** take more than one trick!

(Try playing the cards one by one with North or South leading first. You will see you can never take 2 tricks if everyone plays normally)

This is the reason why it is always right to finesse in these situations. We actually have **NOTHING TO LOSE.**

Think about it.... If the King is in East we always get to take one **EXTRA** trick. If the King is in West we always get to take the same one trick we started with.(the Ace). Finessing in it's purest form is literally **NO RISK** we **either gain a trick or keep the same number we started with.**



**HINT:** When you are looking at the South cards you should know you need the King to be in East to take two tricks. So you should just, **ASSUME IT IS IN EAST** and play accordingly. Always do this when deciding how to play a card combination. Ask yourself “Where do I need the honor to be?” and assume it is there! Best part is you will only be wrong 50% of the time 😊

# MORE FINESSE CARD COMBINATIONS

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How would you play this suit?



We play the **Jack** from North **towards the South**. Note the main reason we play the Jack is so that if the Jack wins the trick we get to continue to lead from North. (Finesse again)

We play the **Queen** from North **towards the South**. Again we play the Queen so that if it wins the trick we are still leading from North. (Finesse again)



We play the **Queen** from North **towards the South**.

**Note:** In all of these examples if the K is in the east hand we will take 3 tricks. If east plays low, so do we. If east plays the K we play the Ace and our tricks are good.



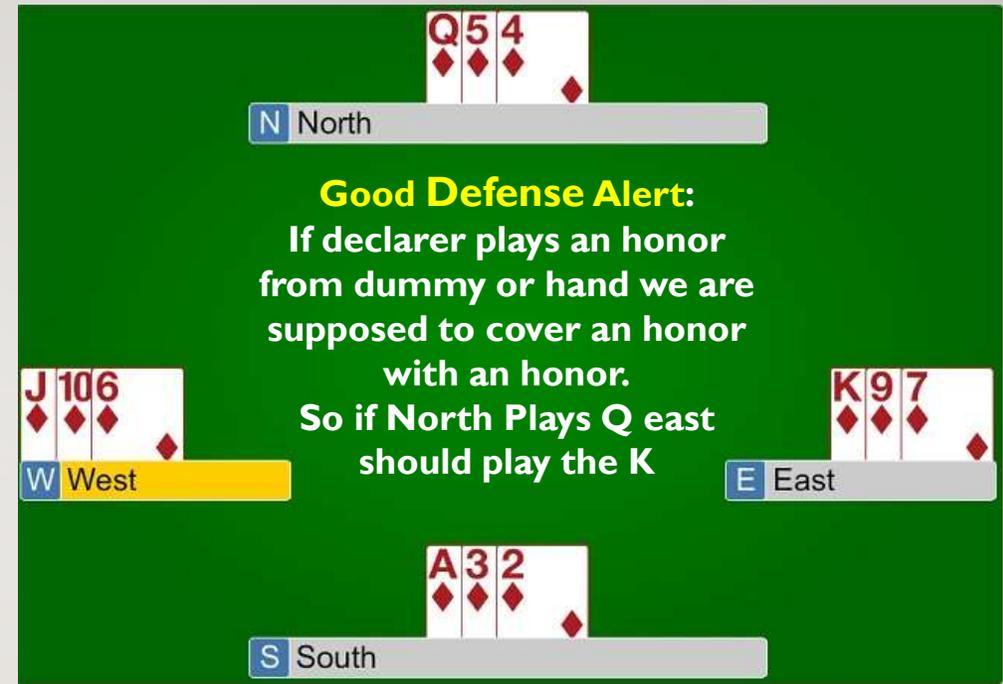
Where do we have to hope the King of Diamonds is on this hand?

How would you play these cards?

**Hint:** Assume your opponents will play their cards perfectly



Here are  
two possible  
Scenarios  
Try to take 2  
Tricks in each



On this lay of the cards it is best to play a **low Diamond from South towards the King**.

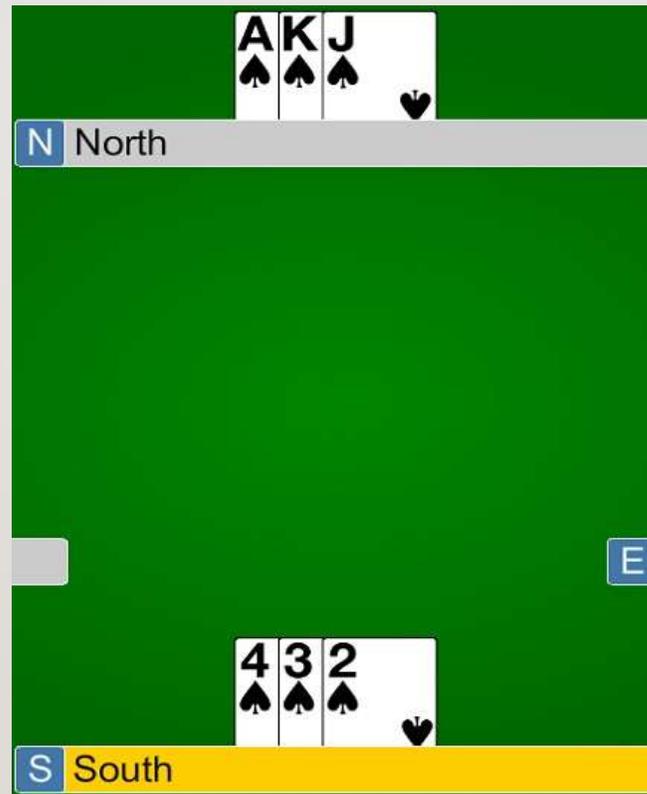
- If West plays low we can win the Queen
- If West plays the King we play low and take the Queen next.

\*We can also take our Ace from South first. This is just in case the King is singleton. Now if the K doesn't drop we can still play low to the Q.

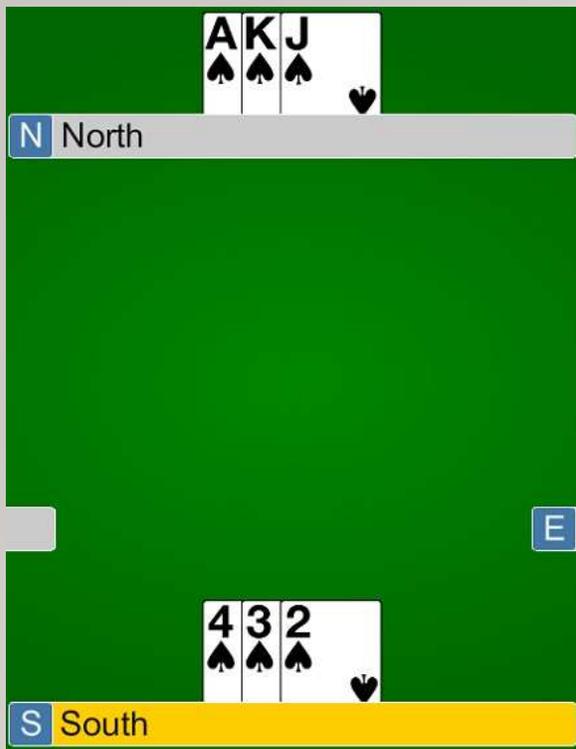
On this lay of the cards there is **nothing** we can do to take 2 tricks. If we play the Q from dummy, East will play their K and we will play our Ace. Now West has all good tricks. If we play the other way East will take there K when we play our Q from dummy. Moral here is that the K must be in West for us to take 2 tricks.

# FINESSING FOR THE QUEEN OF A SUIT

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How would you play this suit?



Here we play from South **towards North**. We play the 2 and if West plays low we play the **Jack**. We need the Q to be in West to take 3 tricks.

Here we play the King from South first.  
*(Just in case the Queen is falling singleton)*  
 Then we lead **towards the AJ** in North and play the J if West plays low.



Here we play the Ace from South first.  
*(Just in case the Queen is falling singleton)*  
 Then we lead **towards the KJ** in North and play the J if West plays low.



This card combination is a special one. Here we can take a finesse in either direction we choose. This is called a

## Two Way Finesse

1. If the Queen is in East we can play the Jack of Diamonds from North first.
  - If East plays the Queen we win our King and the rest
  - If East plays low **we play low** and win 3 tricks
2. If the Queen is in West we can play the 2 of Diamonds from South first
  - If West plays low we play low and win 3 tricks
  - If West plays the Queen we win our Ace and the rest

Note: We can also cash the honor from the hand we don't plan to lead towards (might drop the singleton Q)

**LearnBridge.nyc Tip:** To determine who is more likely to hold the Queen you should:

- Review the bidding (whoever has shown more points is more likely to have the Q)
- Try to **play this suit as late** in the hand **as possible** (So you have the most information before your choice)

# FINESSING MISSING MORE THAN ONE HONOR

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Can you take 2 tricks here?

When we are **missing two honors** we can gain tricks in certain positions by taking two finesses. This is commonly referred to as the

## **DOUBLE FINESSE.**

In the hand to our right we need to **lead towards the North** hand **twice** playing the lowest card in North both times (if we do not see an honor from West).

**Note:** If the West hand produces an honor when we lead towards the AJT we take it with our Ace. We can then develop our 2<sup>nd</sup> trick in this suit by simple promotion. (lead the J or T to drive out the other honor)

This line of play will be produce two total tricks a very respectable

**75% of the time.**

Let's see this play in action on our next slide....





**Step One:**

Lead a low card from South towards North. When West plays low we play the Ten and it loses to East's Queen.

**Good Defense Alert:**

It is usually right, as second hand (wests hand) to play **low** in this spot.

**“2<sup>nd</sup> hand Low”**

**Step Two:**  
Lead another low card from South towards North. When West plays low we play the J and it wins.



**Step Three:**

We can now take our Ace of Spades from North as our second trick in this suit. Well played indeed 😊





N North

On this hand we would:

- I. **Play the Ten from South 1<sup>st</sup>** and the 3 from North (if West plays low)
  - If this loses to an honor in East we come back and play the 2 from South towards the AJ (if West plays low again we play the Jack)

E



S South

## Two more examples of The Double Finesse

**Remember:** If west produces an honor, at any point, we take our Ace and this turns into a simple promotion play



N North

On this hand we would:

- I. **Play the J from South 1<sup>st</sup>** and the 2 from North (if West plays low)
  - If this loses to an honor in East we come back and play the Ten from South towards the A3 (if West plays low again we play the 3)

E



S South

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