



The finesse is a frequently available way to win an extra trick. It's an attempt to win a trick with a card, when one of the opponents holds a higher card. This may seem like an impossible task, but it's all a matter of the position of the cards. Let's see how it works.

A FINESSE WORKS BY LEADING TOWARD HIGH CARDS

There are two types of finesses. A direct finesse is one where, if the finesse works, you will not lose the lead. An indirect finesse is one where even if the finesse works, you may lose the lead. Generally you take finesses early in the play, and usually you will try indirect finesses first.

## Simple Finesses

**Indirect Finesse against the A:** N — K 4  
S — 3 2

You would like to take a trick with the K. The key to the finesse is to lead toward the card you hope will take a trick, the king. Lead the 2. If West has the A, then your K will win a trick. If West plays the A, your K will win the next trick. If West doesn't play the ace, the king will win the present trick. On the other hand, if East has the A, you lose both tricks. This is an example of an indirect finesse, because even if West has the Ace, you may lose the lead.

**Finesse against the K:** N — A Q 4  
S — 5 3 2

By leading a small card from the South hand you hope to take a trick with the Q (if West has the K), your queen will be a winner. Suppose West plays it on the first trick. You'll win the trick with the ace, and the queen is good. If West doesn't play the king, you play (finesse) the queen, and it wins the trick because East doesn't have a higher card (an onside finesse). If East has the K, you can't win a trick with the queen by leading small from your hand (a losing finesse or offside finesse). This is an example of a direct finesse, because if West has the King, you do not have to lose a trick.

**Indirect Finesse against the K:**     **N — A 5 4**  
  **S — Q 3 2**

To win a trick with the Q, lead a low card from the North toward the queen, hoping East has the K. With an indirect finesse even if it wins you may lose the lead!

**Finesse against the Q:**     **N — A K J**  
  **S — 5 3 2**

To win a trick with the jack, lead the 2 from South's hand toward the card you hope will take a trick. Your finesse will work if West has the Q.

**Indirect Finesse against the Q:**   **N — J 2**  
  **S — A K 5 3**

The ace and king will take tricks. Which card do you hope will also take a trick? The jack. Lead small card toward the jack. In this example, you may have to give up a trick, but you can make three tricks if West has the Q.

**Direct Finesse against the J:**   **N — Q T 2**  
  **S — K 5 3**

You must lose to the A, so your modest goal is to try to win 2 tricks. If West holds the J you can succeed with a simple finesse. Lead the 3 from the South hand and when West plays a low card you insert the 10. Either it will win the trick, leaving you and dummy with the K Q combination to drive out the A, or else East will take the 10 with his A, leaving you with two high tricks. Notice that you didn't care who held the A, you just wanted West to hold the J.

Here is an important fact about the simple finesse:

A SIMPLE FINESSE SUCCEEDS HALF THE TIME AND FAILS THE OTHER HALF
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North:	1) A Q 3	2) 4 3	3) A K J	4) Q 4 2	5) K J 3
South:	7 6 5	K 5	7 5 3	A 7 3	A 5

Honor to Finesse	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Location Of Honor (where you want it)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Lead	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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# Tricks If finesse wins	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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## Advanced Finesses

### The Repeat Finesse: Managing Entries

This is the same idea of leading toward the card you hope will take a trick, only you repeat the finesse when you have multiple honors. To do so you need 2 entries to the hand opposite the honors.

**Repeat Finesse against the A:**

N	—	♥K Q 5
S	—	♥4 3 2

Lead the ♥2, if West has the ♥A and plays it, your ♥K and ♥Q are good on the next tricks. If West doesn't play the ♥A, then you will win a trick with ♥Q (or ♥K). Now suppose you can get back to the South hand in another suit. Lead another low heart, this time toward the ♥K. If West has the ♥A, you will take two tricks.

**Repeat Finesse against the K:**    N — A Q J  
     S — 4 3 2

Using the finesse you could win three tricks if the king is held by West. To do so you need two entries in your hand to play a low card toward the dummy twice.

**Leading a High Card to Preserve Entries**

If you don't mind the opponents covering the high card you lead (in other words playing the higher honor you are finessing), it was probably right for you to have led the card so that you stay in the right hand to repeat the finesse. Another way of explaining it is that generally you lead the high card when you have all of the missing high cards but one.



Here you want to win all four ♣ tricks so you will finesse East for the ♣K. But suppose you could only get to dummy one time? No problem, you lead the ♣Q and when East doesn't play the ♣K, you underplay your ♣J. Still in dummy you play your ♣T, and if East plays low again you underplay your ♣9. You get the idea.

**The Double Finesse: 75% chance to win 2 Tricks;**



You play a low card from your hand and finesse the ♠T. If East has to win with the ♠K then you have your two tricks. But even if he wins with the ♠J you still have another chance to get back to your hand and try to finesse West out of his ♠K. If East has both honors you were just unlucky and only win one trick, but if West had both of them you will win 3 tricks!

Here is another Double Finesse situation:

    ♦ A J T  
♦ ?                      ♦ ?  
    ♦ 5 4 3

This one doesn't look as good because dummy has the ♦J instead of the ♦Q, and sure enough, there is zero chance of making all three tricks here. But, when you are only looking to make two tricks you still have a **75% chance** of success.

First finesse the ♦T, and when that loses to the ♦K or ♦Q try another finesse with the ♦J. You will win two tricks whenever West started with the ♦K, the ♦Q, or both of them.

**Double Finesse against the J:**        N — ♥Q T 9  
   S — ♥5 3 2

Things are getting desperate when you need a trick from this combination! Leading a small card with the intention of playing the ♥Q really is desperate - West would have to hold both the ♥A and ♥K (**25% chance**) for this to work. A better finesse would be to play West for the ♥J. So you lead a low card and insert the ♥T, hoping that East must play the ♥A or ♥K to win the trick. Then re-enter the South hand in another suit and lead hearts a second time and insert the ♥9 if West plays low (or plays the ♥A or ♥K). This play gives a **50% chance** of making a trick, i.e. it is twice as good!

### The Deep Finesse:

This is sort of between a simple and a double Finesse:

    ♣ A J 9  
♣ ?                      ♣ ?  
    ♣ 5 4 3

Here you hope to win two tricks. If you finesse the ♣J you would win two tricks only when West started with ♣ K Q (x). The better way to play this combination is to lead low toward the ♣9, hoping that West started with either ♣ K T x or ♣ Q T x.

If you look back at the final example in the Simple Finesse section you will see that it was actually a Deep Finesse. Sometimes the plays overlap the names.

### The Two-way Finesse:

The Two-way Finesse is almost always trying to guess a missing queen.

	♥ A J 2	
♥ ?		♥ ?
	♥ K 10 3	

You want all three tricks and since you can finesse **either opponent** you should think about the bidding (if any), the opening lead, and any other inferences you might discover to help you decide which way to finesse. If you don't have any clues whatsoever, just pick one and finesse in that direction for a 50% chance.

**Barry Crane rule:** The queen is over the jack (meaning it is in the hand to play after the jack) in the minors, and under the jack (meaning in the hand that plays before the jack) in the majors. So if you held Axxx and dummy had the KJT9, you would lay down the ace and lead to the J if the suit was a major, and lead to the King and finesse coming back if the suit was a minor. This rule is really not a rule, but just a way to keep from guessing each time.