

## *Taking a Finesse from "Play of the Hand in the 21st Century"*

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### **Introduction**

Have the students work with one suit and illustrate how you can take a trick with a card when one of the opponents holds a higher card.

“North is the dummy, and South is the declarer. Put out the following spades:

N — K 4

S — 3 2

“You would like to take a trick with the ♠K. The key to the finesse is that in most cases you lead toward the card you hope will take a trick, the king. Randomly deal out the rest of the spades between East and West (the opponents) and turn them face-up. At some tables, you’ll be able to win a trick with the ♠K and at others you won’t. It depends on where the ♠A is.

“When the ace is the higher card held by an opponent, it’s called finessing against the ace. Lead the ♠2. Look at the cards on your table. 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.”

You might say that a finesse usually works about half the time. If you have four tables, it’s likely that two tables would win a trick with the king and two wouldn’t.

“Sometimes the missing card that the opponents have is the king. This is called finessing against the king. Let’s look at another pattern. Put out these cards:

N — A Q 4

S — 5 3 2

“What card do you hope will take a trick? (♠Q.) You lead toward the queen. Randomly deal the rest of the spades and see what happens. Play the ♠2. Look at the rest of the cards. 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 your 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.

“On the other hand, if East has the ♠K, you can’t win a trick with the queen by leading small from your hand. You’d have to hope that East would lead the suit, and that’s not likely to happen.

“Exchange the ♠Q and ♠5:

N — A 5 4      “You hope to win a trick with the queen, so this time you lead from the dummy toward the queen. Randomly deal the rest of the cards and see if the finesse works.

S — Q 3 2

“Sometimes you’re finessing against the queen — that is, the queen is the card held by the opponents — and you’re trying to win a trick with the jack. Put out this layout:

N — A K J

S — 5 3 2

“You hope to win a trick with the jack, so lead toward the card you hope will take a trick. Lead the ♠2 from declarer’s hand. Randomly deal the rest of the spades to East and West. Your finesse will work if West has the queen. If East has the queen, you made your best effort. Remember that a finesse like this has only a 50% chance of succeeding.

“Let’s look at one last example:

N — J 4

S — A K 6 2

“The ace and king will take tricks. Which card do you hope will also take a trick? The jack. Lead 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. Randomly deal the rest of the spades and test your luck.”

## Instructions

“In the examples in Exercise One, how many sure tricks are there? How might you be able to get an extra trick?”

DUMMY:            1) A Q 3            2) 4 3            3) A K J            4) Q 4 2            5) K J 3

DECLARER:        7 6 5            K 5            7 5 3            A 7 3            A 5

1	0	2	1	2
<u>finesse</u>	<u>finesse</u>	<u>finesse</u>	<u>finesse</u>	<u>finesse</u>
<u>the queen</u>	<u>the king</u>	<u>the jack</u>	<u>the queen</u>	<u>the jack</u>

## Follow-up

There has been a lot of discussion in the introduction, so have a member of one of the groups report the findings of that group. There probably won’t be too much more to talk about.

## Conclusion

“The finesse is a way of trying to take a trick with a card when the opponents have a higher card. It’s often based on the idea of leading toward the card you hope will take a trick. Half the time you’ll be successful. That’s better than accepting that you can’t take a trick with a card when the opponents have one higher.”