

**ALL ABOUT FINESSES
for BEGINNERS
BARBARA SEAGRAM
barbaraseagram.com
bseagram@uniserve.com**

It is a fact that the Bridge Gods do not deal us as many high cards (Aces and Kings) as we would like. So very often, we are dealt lesser cards. We have to make do with these and our challenge is to try to make these smaller cards take tricks.

Whoever has the Diamond suit, would you give these specific Diamonds to the North player please. Lay them down as though they are a dummy.

Diamonds

**A
Q**

And please give to South

Diamonds

**3
2**

Now suppose you are South and you are declarer in 6S. This is your Diamond suit. The opponents have already taken one trick and you cannot afford to let them win any more tricks or you'll be down one.

So let's see...if you play the Diamond Ace from dummy, it will win. If you then play the Diamond Queen, WHOEVER Has the Diamond King will grab it right away, do you agree?

So, if you do this, that will give your Queen a ZERO % chance of winning a trick. ZERO.

Let's see how we can improve the Queen's chances of winning a trick...

Now give West: Diamonds K1054

If you lead the Diamond 2 from the South hand towards the Ace and Queen...

What if the person on your left (sitting in the West chair) had the Diamond King.

When you lead the Diamond 2 towards the Ace and Queen, then if West plays a small Diamond, then you play the Queen and pray. Cross your fingers and hope.

If West has the King, your Queen would win. If East has the King, then the Queen will not win.

And what if when you lead the Diamond 2, West plays the Diamond King instead, then you just play the Ace.

So, is there any point for West to play the King? This will be a bit hard for you at this stage of your bridge career but no, it will not help for West to play the King. He should just play a small Diamond and hope that maybe:

Declarer will be nervous and play the Ace

or

Hope that he (West) will later get to take a trick with the King, if he plays a small one for now.

So, you can now see that playing the cards this way gave your Queen a 50% chance of winning a trick instead of a ZERO % chance of winning a trick the other way.

SO WHAT IS THIS TECHNIQUE CALLED???

This is called a FINESSE.

SPEAK SLOWLY NOW...A *finesse is an attempt to win a trick with a card that is NOT as HIGH as one held by the opponents.*

In the example we just saw, you tried to win a trick with the Queen, even though the bad guys held the King.

In order to make a finesse work, when you are taking a finesse, you always must lead from the **WEAKER SIDE OF THE SUIT TOWARDS THE STRONGER.**

Now let's have a look at another situation:

Give North (dummy) these Diamonds

**K
5**

And please give to South

**3
2**

Now let's say you are in 6S again and you are short one trick. You search frantically but you have no spare Aces kicking around. So now you have to look at that Diamond King and figure out how to get that card to win a trick.

Once again, we have to lead from the weaker side of the suit towards the stronger.

Now give West: Diamonds A1064

If you lead the Diamond 2 towards the King...If West plays the Ace, you play a small one from dummy and your King will win a trick next time. If West plays a small card, you have to play the King and now pray.

If West had the Ace, then your King will win a trick.

If East had the Ace, then your King was NEVER going to win a trick.

Once again, you had a 50% chance of winning a trick with that King.

This too is a finesse. We are trying to win a trick with a card (the King) even though the bad guys own the Ace.

Now give North (dummy) these Diamonds

A
J
10

And give to South

Diamonds

Q
6
2

South is in the contract of 3NT this time. South has to get 3 Diamond tricks in order to make his contract.

When trying to figure out which side is the weakest side, the side with the Ace is always the stronger side.

So South leads the D 2 from the South hand.

Give West the Diamonds K73

When S leads the D 2, West plays the D 3. S calls for the D 10 from dummy. It wins. Hurrah!!!

Now...take a moment to think about this now. It is wonderful to have won this trick but really we would like to win THREE tricks with this suit.

NOTE that you now know who has the Diamond K. **Ask class.**

Yes, West has D King and you know this because if East had it, he would have won the trick.

So, you would like to return to the South hand to repeat the finesse again.

BUT lo and behold, S has no way to get back to the S hand. Shame.

Here is the full hand: North and South

North

S	H	D	C
K	A	A	A
7	K	J	K
6	4	10	4
2			

South

A	8	Q	6
5	5	6	5
2	2	4	4
			2

The contract is 3NT. South is Declarer.

The bidding does not matter at this stage. West leads the Spade Q.

When we are playing hands in NoTrump, we count our sure winners. The ones that are carved in stone in blood.

S = 2, H = 2, D = 1, C = 2. Total = 7. We need 9. Which suit will we make as our project suit?

Diamonds offer some hope of getting two more tricks, IF the D King is in the West hand. So we win Trick # 1 with the S Ace. If we lead a small D (the 4) towards the dummy's AJ10, if the 10 wins, then how will we get back to the South hand to do this again, one more time with feeling? ANSWER: We cannot.

So, what should we have done? Win that S with the Ace. Let's now lead the D Q instead. If West plays the King, you eat it with the Ace. If West plays small instead, you play small from dummy. IF that wins, then YOU ARE STILL IN THE SOUTH HAND, ready to do it again, one more time with feeling!

So, what have we learned?

When we are doing a finesse, it is always right to lead an honor when we have the next door neighbors. You can have them in one hand and the other...i.e. combined hands.

The converse is that if you do not own the next door neighbors, you do not lead an honor in a finesse.

i.e. Never lead a Q unless you own the J and the 10. Never lead a J unless you own the 10 and the 9 or the Q and the 10.

In the above hand, leading the D Queen meant that you could finesse twice from the South hand.

Let students experiment and play around with above cards.

ONE MORE...

Give North Diamonds

**A
5
2**

South Diamonds

**Q
6
4**

Let's say S is in 4H and frantically needs to take one more trick. How will he try to get one more trick with the Diamond Q?

He must NOT lead the Q as he has no neighbors for the Q. If he leads the Q, if W has the K, he will play it (you will learn that later) and now you will have to waste your Ace.

If East has the K, then he will win the Q.

That will give your Q a ZERO % chance to win a trick.

So, to get the Q to win a trick, lead the D4 from your hand towards the Ace (leading once again from the weaker side of the suit towards the stronger). Win the Ace in dummy. Now you lead the D2 towards your Q and pray that E has the K. If she plays the K, you play small and your Q wins a trick later. If E plays small, you play the Q and pray.

At least this gives your Q a 50% chance (once again) of winning a trick.

So remember! If you don't have the next door neighbors, don't lead an honor in a finesse!