

Don't get too high.. then take the Finesse :)

**Board 1**  
North Deals  
None Vul

♠ A 4	N	♠ K J 8 3 2
♥ Q 10 9 3	W	♥ 7 2
♦ J 10 5	S	♦ A 8 4 2
♣ Q 7 6 2	E	♣ K 9

♠ 6  
 ♥ J 5  
 ♦ Q 9 7 3  
 ♣ A J 10 8 5 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♠	Pass	1 N
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	3 ♣
All pass			
3 ♣ by South			

**Auction Commentary:** After North's rebid, South has 2 options: (1) a very poor pass, risking a 4/2 fit, or (2) 3 ♣, showing a long suit (6+ pieces) and a weak hand. This is to PLAY. South is far too weak to consider bidding 2NT here, even holding a crummy ♦ stopper. North has shown his hand, and after this (intended for closeout) 3 ♣ call, North must pass.

**Opening Lead:** ♦ J - the unbid suit, and top of touching honors

**Planning the Play:** Counting losers in a suit contract, South finds 1 ♠ loser, 2 or 3 ♦ losers, and ♣ or two, if they behave. Every trick is going to count here. Declarer should go to the dummy and try a trump finesse, which loses to the ♣ Q, and at next opportunity, cash the ♣ A in hopes of dropping the ♣ K. Depending on the line of play, this will make 3 ♣ or be down just one.

**Defensive Commentary:** On the opening lead, East needs to recognize the requirement to PASS, and allow NS to win the ♦ Q. If East hops up with the ♦ A on trick one, they'll give NS an undeserved trick, allowing them to cash both the ♦ K and ♦ Q later.

A better choice than a Finesse

**Board 2**

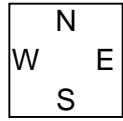
East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 9 6 5	♠ Q J 10 8	♠ A K 7
♥ A 9	♥ J 8 5	♥ K 6 4
♦ J 10 9 7 5	♦ K 6 3	♦ A Q 8
♣ Q 8 6	♣ K 10 5	♣ A 7 4 3

♠ 4 3 2	♠ 4 3 2	♠ A K 7
♥ Q 10 7 3 2	♥ Q 10 7 3 2	♥ K 6 4
♦ 4 2	♦ 4 2	♦ A Q 8
♣ J 9 2	♣ J 9 2	♣ A 7 4 3



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
3 N	All pass	2 N	Pass
3 N by East			

**Auction Commentary:** Even if the West hand held 6 ♦s instead of 5, with enough HCP for a comfortable game after partner's balanced 2 NT call, just bid 3 NT. Count on partner to stop every suit. With an entry to West's hand, the ♦s look tasty.

**Opening Lead:** ♥ 3 (fourth best)

**Planning the Play:** Counting winners in NT, there are 2 ♠ winners, and 2 ♥s, and one each in the minors. The missing tricks will come from that ♦ suit. This is the perfect hand to demonstrate that you need to think about your plan BEFORE you play to trick #1. If you take the ♥ A right now, and then make the plan, you've shot yourself in the foot.

Say you win the ♥ A and lay the ♦ J on the table. North recognizes that the ♦ K is misplaced and won't win a trick. So North must also recognize that they should not cover the ♦ J! You'll win the ♦ J, then win the finesse to the ♦ Q, and play the ♦ A to drop the ♦ K. But... you'll never get back to enjoy the other ♦ tricks.

Instead of a finesse, what if you simply unblock the suit, ensuring success? Win trick #1 in your hand, Play the ♦ A and the ♦ Q ... and if the ♦ K didn't come out yet, force it with a third ♦. Win whatever they return, and now you can count 4 ♦ tricks, 2 ♠s, 2 ♥s and a ♣, making your contract. This choice doesn't care which opponent holds the ♦ K. It just counts on winning all the ♦s except the ♦ K. :)

**Takeway:** There's more than one way to pluck a goose. (I'm a cat lover, in case you hadn't noticed ;) If you know there is a way that MIGHT work, and that there is another way that WILL work, which would you choose? When you have communication issues between the two hands, look for alternate plans. Unblocking came to the rescue this time.

**Board 8**  
 West Deals  
 None Vul

Obligatory Finesse

♠ 7 6 ♥ A Q 8 6 3 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ A 5 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	♠ A 9 3 2 ♥ 9 2 ♦ Q J 9 2 ♣ J 9 2	♠ Q J 5 ♥ K 10 7 5 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ K 8 6
		♠ K 10 8 4 ♥ J 4 ♦ 10 8 5 ♣ Q 10 7 4	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	4 ♥	All pass
4 ♥ by West			

**Auction Commentary:** Responder has no 4-card suit to respond to opener and makes a bid at the 2-level in a minor just to hear the opener's rebid. Opener cannot rebid 2 NT without a ♠ stopper, so they raise the ♣ suit to keep the bidding alive. Responder closes out at 4 ♥, knowing that opener has a minimum hand. (if you play Jacoby 2 NT, responder would bid 2 NT promising 4-card trump support and at least game-going values. Partnerships can make agreements about the range if a Jacoby 2 NT response. Some play that responder's range can be unlimited.)

**Opening Lead:** ♦ Q (top of broken sequence). This lead applies in NT as well. When you hold Q-J-10 it's a sequence. When you hold Q-J-9, it's an "almost" sequence, and we treat this as good enough for a top-of-sequence lead.

**Planning the Play:** Losers 2 ♠s, a ♦ and a ♣. One too many, so we need to find a way to eliminate one loser. Win the ♦ K and draw trumps ending in your hand. Play a ♠ towards the ♠ QJ in dummy. (Remember that we lead toward the card that we hope to take the trick.) Here, expect the ♠ AK to be divided one in each hand - a 75% chance. They will win a top honor and return a ♦. You win that, and play a ♣ to your ♣ A so you can play another ♠ towards the ♠ J. Once they win this one, the ♣ K is your entry to dummy, so you can play the winning ♠, discarding the ♣ loser from your hand, and make the contract.

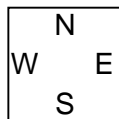
**Takeaway:** We play TOWARDS our honors to create extra tricks. You are **obliged** to play towards those ♠ honors. 75% is a good bet!

**Board 9**  
 North Deals  
 E-W Vul

Deep Finesse

♠ A K Q  
 ♥ K 7  
 ♦ K 10 7 6 4  
 ♣ 8 6 3

♠ 9 6 5 4  
 ♥ A J 9 3  
 ♦ 5 3 2  
 ♣ 9 7



♠ 10 3 2  
 ♥ Q 10 8 4 2  
 ♦ A 9  
 ♣ K J 2

♠ J 8 7  
 ♥ 6 5  
 ♦ Q J 8  
 ♣ A Q 10 5 4

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 NT	Pass	3 NT

All pass  
 3 NT by North

**Auction Commentary:** South should not think twice about that ♣ suit. Minors are still tricks in NT. If all the cards are on the table you can make 5♣ here. But when you are in 3 NT, you get the game bonus by winning just 9 tricks. Any more are just gravy!

**Opening Lead:** ♥ 4

**Planning the Play:** Counting sure winners: 3 ♠ tricks, and one ♣ trick. We need 4 more tricks to make our contract. The ♦ suit looks great if we drive out the ♦ A, but we cannot afford to lose the lead. If we do, they can immediately run 5 tricks: 4 ♥s and a ♦. Therefore we must try the ♣s -- we're placing all the marbles on a double finesse there!

Win the ♥ K and play a ♣ to the ♣ 10, taking what's called a DEEP FINESSE! You're hoping both the ♣ K and ♣ J is with LHO. PHEW, it worked! You'll need to repeat that finesse, so Play a ♠ to the ♠ A and finesse to the ♣ Q. Then play the ♣ A, hoping to drop the ♣ K. This is our only chance to make the contract. This will only work 25% of the time. Wow!

**Takeaway:** When planning, you should always be asking yourself "what if." What if this line of play fails -- how can they hurt me? With this hand, and the killer lead, you're banking on LUCK with the ♣ suit. Stick around the Pros, and you will hear the phrase, "I'd rather be lucky than good" more than once!