

# Developing Tricks — the Finesse

## Deal 1

West Deals  
None Vul

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

14  
13 1  
12

♠ 9 8 7 2  
♥ K 9 6 5  
♦ 9 7  
♣ A K Q

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	2 ♥	Pass	4 ♥

All pass  
4 ♥ by North  
Lead: ♠ 5

## Taking a Finesse

**Bidding.** North holds enough to overcall at the two-level to show a good five-card suit and 13–18 points.

With 13 points in support of hearts, South can just bid game. An alternative is to cue-bid 2 ♠ and then bid 4 ♥ to show a good raise (an immediate 4 ♥ can be bid with five-card support, a weak hand, and a singleton). However, such a sequence invites slam, which is not quite warranted.

**Defense.** Remembering the bidding, East leads partner's suit. West can take the ♠ Q-A-K. Another round of spades is fine as it is *declarer* who will be ruffing and partner may be able to overruff.

Switching to a diamond also has merit.

**Declarer play.** Nine sure tricks, needing one more. The only chance of another is to score the ♦ Q by way of a finesse. Since West opened the bidding, this finesse is very likely to succeed.

Ruff the fourth round of spades *high*, lest East overruff. Now pull trumps, enter dummy with a club, and lead a diamond to the ♦ Q.

**Key point.** The finesse is a good way to get the extra trick you need to make a contract.

# Developing Tricks — the Finesse

## Deal 2

West Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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



♠ 7 6 3 2  
♥ Q 7 6  
♦ 8 6  
♣ 10 8 5 3

16  
12 2  
10

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

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	1 NT	Pass	3 NT
All pass			
3 NT by North			
Lead: ♦ 8			

## A Repeated Finesse

**Bidding.** North overcalls 1 NT to show 15–18 points, balanced, with some strength in opener's suit. South has the option of advancing with Stayman 2 ♣ or a Jacoby transfer, but on this hand has no interest in a major-suit contract so just bids game in notrump.

**Defense.** With nothing more attractive, East leads diamonds — partner's suit — selecting the ♦ 8, highest of a doubleton. Yes, West might hold as few as three diamonds, but probably holds more. Any other lead is purely speculative.

Since the ♦ 9 is in dummy, East's ♦ 8 is as high as any of West's diamonds.

Regardless, West can afford to overtake with the ♦ 10 in case East holds a singleton diamond. If declarer ducks the first trick, West should continue with the ♦ K.

**Declarer play.** Seven sure tricks, needing two more. The only chance is to score the ♠ Q and ♠ J by way of *repeated finesses*. Dummy's clubs will provide the two entries needed.

You could hold up in diamonds, but this runs the risk of a shift to hearts. Just win the ♦ A, play a low club to dummy's ♣ K, then lead a low spade to the ♠ Q. This wins, so play another low club to dummy's ♣ Q to lead a second spade to the ♠ J. Now you have nine tricks.

**Key point.** By leading toward your honors, you can hope to take tricks with them, if the opponents' high cards are favorably placed. In this hand, luck was with the declarer, provided the hand was played carefully.

# Developing Tricks — the Finesse

## Deal 3

West Deals  
N-S Vul

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

13  
13 5  
9

West

1 ♦

All pass

2 ♠ by North

Lead: ♦ Q

♠ A K J 10 8

♥ 8 5 4

♦ 7 2

♣ A J 10



♠ Q 4 3

♥ A 9 3

♦ K 5 4 3

♣ 8 6 2

North

1 ♠

East

Pass

South

2 ♠

♠ 9 6 2  
♥ 10 7 6 2  
♦ Q J 6  
♣ Q 7 5

## Finessing against Two Cards

**Bidding.** South holds enough to overcall at the one-level to show a good five-card suit and 8–18 points.

South advances to 2 ♠ to show 8–10 support points. Raising the overcall obstructs rebids by opener, so might even be risked with fewer points and no chance of game.

Over 2 ♠, West doesn't hold much extra with which to compete. Doubling for takeout is possible, but should promise some extra values lest East-West bid too high.

With 14 points, North is satisfied with a partscore contract.

**Defense.** East leads partner's suit, diamonds, selecting the ♦ Q, highest of touching honors. West signals encouragement with the ♦ 10 (unless the ♦ K is played from dummy), and East continues with the ♦ J and her last diamond.

**Declarer play.** Seven sure tricks, needing one more. The chance that the ♦ K would win a trick has flown. However, if West holds the ♣ K or ♣ Q, then two finesses in clubs will yield an extra trick. You can use the ♠ Q and ♥ A as two entries to dummy to take the finesse.

Ruff the third round of diamonds. Play a spade to the ♠ Q, then a low club to the ♣ J. East wins and shifts to a low heart. You can win this with the ♥ A to lead a second club, this time finessing the ♣ 10. It works, so now pull trumps and take the ♣ A for eight tricks.

**Key point.** Declarer may sometimes have to finesse twice in order to win an extra trick.

# Developing Tricks — the Finesse

## Deal 4

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ 10 9 6 5 2

♥ K 8 4

♦ 8

♣ 10 9 8 2

18

3 13

6

West

Pass

Pass

4 ♥ by North

Lead: ♦ K

♠ A 4

♥ A Q J 9 6 5

♦ 9 5 4

♣ A K



♠ Q 7 3

♥ 10 3 2

♦ A 7 6

♣ 7 6 5 3

North

1 ♥

4 ♥

East

2 ♦

All pass

South

2 ♥

♠ K J 8

♥ 7

♦ K Q J 10 3 2

♣ Q J 4

## Leading a High Card

**Bidding.** East holds enough to overcall at the two-level to show a good five-card suit and 13–18 points.

South can still raise opener to 2 ♥ as she had planned to do before East overcalled. Game is still possible.

Sure enough, North holds a maximum-strength hand and contracts for game, which should have a good chance even if South holds only six points.

**Defense.** East leads the ♦ K, highest of touching honors. West performs the ♦ 8. Considering East's diamond honors, and that the ♦ A is in dummy, this must be a discouraging play from ♦ 9 8, or a

singleton.

**Declarer play.** Only five sure tricks, needing five more.

The ♠ Q might score via a finesse, but East should win the ♠ K immediately to cash two tricks in diamonds. Now you have no entry to dummy and no eventual losers to discard on ♠ Q anyway.

Your best chance is to score five extra winners in the trump suit, hearts. Win the ♦ A immediately lest it get ruffed away. Then lead the ♥ 10. Since you hold so much strength in hearts, you would be pleased if West covered with the ♥ K. If she does not, you are well placed in dummy to lead a second heart for a finesse of the ♥ Q. Now the ♥ A picks up West's last heart.

Notice what happens if you lead a low heart from dummy to finesse the ♥ Q. The finesse wins, but you have no entry to dummy to repeat the finesse. Now you can lose four tricks... and your contract.

**Key point.** Sometimes, when you have enough high cards, you can afford to lead one of them to try to trap one of the defender's cards. This is the case when you don't lead toward the card you hope will take a trick, but lead the high card itself. Before leading a card for a finesse, always ask yourself whether you would be happy if the opponent played a higher card on it. If not, try to lead toward the card you hope will take a trick.