

## Finesse

A finesse is a card play technique that enables a player to win additional tricks if a critical card or cards are favourably placed.



East – West have 7 cards in a suit distributed as shown. One of the opponents has the king. If the queen is led from West and North plays the king then East should play the ace and East-West will make four tricks in the suit. If instead North plays a low card then East also plays low. The queen will win if North has the king and lose if South has it.



This is a similar situation. West should lead a low card and East should play the jack (or queen) unless the king appears from North. Again, this card will win if North has the king and lose if South has the king.

It is important to note that the lead must come from a specific hand. If East were on lead and led the suit then North-South would make a trick with the king regardless of who has it. The player who you hope has the vital card must play second to the trick.

In the absence of additional information (eg from the bidding) the finesses above are a 50-50 proposition.



In this situation a low card is led from West and a lower honour played by East unless of course the king or queen is played by North. If South wins the trick the process should subsequently be repeated – low card from West and a lower honour from East. East-West will make 2 tricks unless South has both the king and the queen, which will occur about 25% of the time.

**Board 1**

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

South becomes declarer in 4 ♠ after opening 1 ♠. There are finesses available in all four suits. Extra tricks can be made if the ♠ king, the ♥ ace, the ♦ queen or the ♣ king are favourably placed. As it happens, only the heart finesse (small from hand towards dummy's king) is successful.

**Board 2**

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

East opens 1 ♦, South overcalls 1 ♠ and North raises to 2 ♠. There is no further bidding. South can play either opponent for the ♠ queen. They can play a spade to the king then low from dummy, playing the jack from hand unless the queen appears from East. Or they can play the jack from hand, playing low from dummy unless the queen appears from West. The person who opened the bidding is more likely to hold a spade honour than their partner who passed.