

BRIDGE TECHNIQUE SERIES

TRICKS WITH FINESSES



David Bird • Marc Smith

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Bridge Technique Series

Entry Management

Tricks with Trumps

Safety Plays

Eliminations and Throw-Ins

Deceptive Card Play

Planning in Suit Contracts

Planning the Play in Notrump

Defensive Signaling

Squeezes made Simple

Planning in Defense

Reading the Cards

Tricks with Finesses



Introduction

You can rarely make your contract simply by cashing top winners. To develop extra tricks, you will need to increase the power of your lesser cards. Often you will employ the finesse, one of the most important of all card play techniques.

Teachers have to fight with beginners to get them to take their first finesse. Once players see how a ‘cheap’ trick can be made, though, they become addicted to finessing. You may think that ‘finessing’ is hardly a worthwhile subject for a serious book on card play. After all, anyone can take a finesse — sometimes they win and sometimes they lose. What more is there to it?

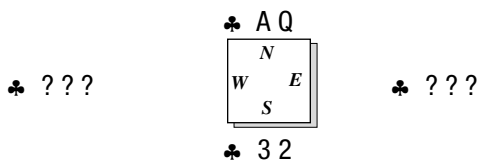
If that is your view, we may have a surprise for you. In this book, you will find out which finesses to take and which ones to reject. You will discover which card should be led when finessing. We will look also at that perennial card play technique, timing. Do you always know when a particular finesse should be taken? And what about those awkward two-way finesses? Do you always guess them right? No — nor does anyone, but some players do so more often than most. Why is that?

Come with us as we explore these topics and many more. We begin with the simple question:

What is a finesse?

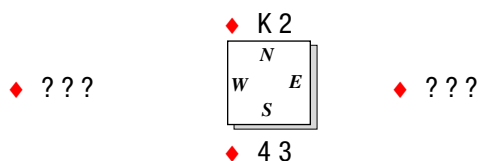
In raw terms, a finesse is an attempt to win a trick with a card that is not the highest remaining card in the suit (for example, the queen in an A-Q holding). The success or failure of a finesse depends on the position of the higher card, or cards, held by the defenders.

There are several common types of finesse. The first involves leading towards the lesser honor that you are hoping to score:



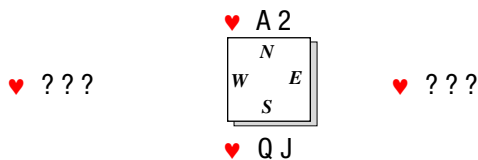
You can always score one club trick with the ace. By leading towards dummy, and playing the queen if the king has not appeared, you can make a second club trick when West holds the king.

This is another example of the first type:



You lead towards the king, the honor you are hoping to score. Once again, success will depend on the location of a particular card held by the defenders (the ace this time, the king in the first layout).

A second type of finesse involves leading a high card rather than a low one. The emphasis is more on ‘trapping’ the enemy high card:

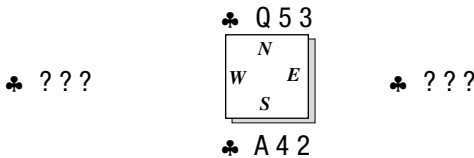


You lead the queen from your hand and West’s king (if he holds that card) is ambushed. You will score two heart tricks without loss.

In the next chapter, we will meet many more finesse positions as we examine how, why and when you should take a finesse. Those of you who had scant respect for the finesse as a technique may — reluctantly — have to change their opinion!

Some Finessing Techniques

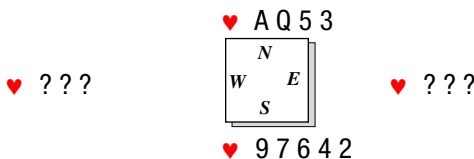
We have already seen that you can score two tricks with small cards opposite an ace-queen combination simply by leading towards the ace-queen. Does it matter if the ace and queen are in separate hands?



Can you still take a finesse? Yes, by cashing the ace and then leading towards the queen you can establish a second club trick if West holds the king. Remember, you do not need to hold the master card in the suit in order to be able to finesse.

Indeed, you do not even have to cash the ace first — you can start by leading a low club towards dummy’s queen. Doing things this way will cost a trick only on the rare occasions when East holds the singleton king of clubs.

However, be warned — the more cards you hold in the suit, the more likely a singleton king becomes. Suppose this is your trump suit:



INTERMEDIATE

The **Bridge Technique Series** is designed to take the reader through the most important aspects of card-play technique at bridge. Each book of the series focuses on a different topic, and wherever possible, the tactics and strategy are considered from the point of view of both declarer and defenders.

TRICKS WITH FINESSES

Many players know little more about the finesse other than how to handle an A-Q combination. This book covers the more complex finessing situations, including double finesses, two-way finesses, and the intra-finesse. *Tricks with Finesses* discusses how declarers can avoid finesses, how to choose among different finesse options as well as offering tips to defenders on how to lead declarer astray.

DAVID BIRD has written more than forty previous books, including the popular 'St Titus Abbey' collections. (*Saints and Sinners*, 2000, with Tim Bourke is the seventh in the series). He writes two newspaper columns in the UK, and his work appears regularly in numerous bridge magazines in the UK and the US.



MARC SMITH's previous instructional books include *Countdown to Winning Bridge* (1999, with Tim Bourke) and *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* (1999 American Bridge Teachers Association Book of the Year, with Barbara Seagram) and *25 Ways to Compete in the Bidding* (2000, with Barbara Seagram).

