

BRIDGE PLAYERS DO IT WITH *FINESSE!* By Maritha Pottenger

Standard finessing situations:

A South leads a low card (x) toward the A Q x in dummy.

Q If West plays low, play the Queen.

x If West has the King, you make 2 tricks.

If East has the King, you make only 1 trick.

50% of the time, you will get that extra trick.

x

x (South's cards)

x

Assuming that South always has low cards and plenty of entries to the South hand, here are some other finessing situations & how you should play them.

AKJ xx opposite xxx Play the Ace or King. Then return to South and play low toward the Jack (unless the Queen appears). Half the time, you win.

However, if you have 9 cards between the two hands, do NOT finesse. (With 9 or more cards in the two hands, the odds favor dropping the Queen with your AK.)

A J 10 9 opposite x x x x Play low to the 9 the first time. Play low to the 10 the second time. 75% of the time you will lose only one trick. 25% of the time you will lose two tricks.

A Q 10 9 opposite x x x x Play low to the 9 the first time. Play low to the 10 the second time. 50% of the time, you will lose only one trick. 25% of the time you will lose two tricks, and 25% of the time you will lose ZERO tricks.

K x opposite x x Play low toward the King. If the Ace is in front of the King (1/2 the time), you'll get one trick. Otherwise, you get no trick.

K J x x opposite x x x x Play low toward the Jack first (finessing for the Queen onside). If that loses to the Ace, you at least get your King (and probably one of your small x's if the suit breaks 3-2). If the Jack loses to the Queen, play low to the King next. If everything is onside (with a 3-2 break), you'll get three tricks. If everything is offside, (with a 3-2 break), you'll lose three tricks.

K J 10 9 opposite x x x x. Play low to the 9 (or Jack or 10) first time. If that forces the Ace, the queen is onside and you can continue finessing her forever & get 3 tricks. If the 9 loses to the Queen, you can force out the Ace and still get 2 tricks.

A K x x opposite J 10 9 8 Play the Ace. Then return to the south hand and play the Jack. If West has the Queen, west can cover the Jack with the Queen, and your King will kill the Queen, leaving your 10 and 9 still good cards. If East has the Queen, you lose one trick. 50% of the time, you'll get all 4 tricks.

A x x x opposite Q J 10 9 Play the Q toward the Ace. If the King covers, kill the King with the Ace and you get all 4 tricks. If the King is offside, you only get 3 tricks.

NOTE: Never play a lower honor toward a higher honor unless you have the next lower honor as well. If you have A x x x opposite Q x x x, do NOT play the Queen toward the Ace. Wherever the King is, the King will kill your Queen, and you have no Jack to promote.

With "unsupported honors" (honors that are NOT in a sequence), the best you can do is play low toward the unsupported honor and hope that the honor that can kill it is in front of it. For

example, with A x x x opposite Q x x x, play the Ace, and then play *low toward the Queen*. If the King is in front of the Queen, that player will have to take his/her King (and then your Queen takes the NEXT trick). If the King is behind the Queen, you lose, but you were losing it anyway.