

# Think and Play

Session 2

Finesses and Percentage Plays

# Finessing

Simple Finesses (xs are inconsequential rags):

e.g. Leading towards a tenace

AQ for 2 tricks      KJx for three tricks

x

Ax

*There is no defence if your honour lies under the tenace.*

Leading towards a lone honour

Kx for one trick      Ax for 2 tricks

x

Qxx

*There is no defence if your honour lies in front of declarer's honour.*

# Finessing

## Simple Finesses (xs are inconsequential rags):

Leading from a sequence

Axx for three tricks    A10x for three tricks

QJ10                      QJx

*There is no defence if your King lies under the Ace.*

Leading from a broken sequence

Axx for 3 tricks    or    A98 for three tricks

QJ9                      QJx

*There is still a defence if your King lies under the Ace and your partner's 10 under the QJ9. What is it?*

*There is still a defence if your King lies under the Ace and your partner's 10 over the 98. What is it?*

# Finessing

Leading from a broken sequence

Axx for 3 tricks    or    A98 for three tricks

QJ9

QJx

*There is still a defence if your King lies under the Ace and your partner's 10 under the QJ9. What is it? There is still a defence if your King lies under the Ace and your partner's 10 over the 98. What is it?*

*As a defender, against these combinations, you should always cover with the K when the second honour (Q or J) is led by declarer. If you cover the first time an honour is led then declarer can finesse your partner's 10.....*

*....but there is an exception. Can you think of it?*

# Pseudo (simple) finesses

e.g. (a)  $AX$  for two tricks  
           $Qx$

(b)  $AQx$  for three tricks  
           $Jx$

(c)  $Axx$  for three tricks  
           $QJx$

(a) is not a finesse at all and will yield only one trick if the defence covers the Q with the K. Running the J in (b) will also only yield two tricks if the defence covers the J. Covering the Q or J in (c) will also lead to only two tricks for declarer. These combinations do not yield the desired number of tricks ***because the honour being led is not sufficiently supported.*** (a) needs the J, (b) and (c) the 10.

When do you cover in a sequence finesse situation?

*A defender should cover when there is a card (or cards) to promote in either partner's or her own hand.*

Sometimes you will have to make a judgement whether partner holds a card that can be promoted by you covering.

# To cover or not to cover, that is the question?

You hold Kxx and can see these cards in the dummy on your left:

- (a) AQx and the J is led by declarer
- (b) Axx and the J is led by declarer
- (c) Ax and the J is led by declarer
- (d) AQxx in a major and the J is led by declarer who made an opening bid in this suit.

# To cover or not to cover, that is the question?

You hold Kxx and can see these cards in the dummy:

- (a) AQx and the J is led by declarer
- (b) Axx and the J is led by declarer
- (c) Ax and the J is led by declarer
- (d) AQxx in a major and the J is led by declarer who made an opening bid in this suit.

- (a) Cover to promote a possible 10 in partner's hand. (Can you think of any unusual exception?)
- (b) Duck first round and cover the Q or 10. Partner may have the Q9x(x) and declarer J10x or partner may have the 10 and declarer the Q
- (c) Don't cover. Your K cannot be caught. Your partner may have Qx and covering will lead to one less trick for you.
- (d) Don't cover. You can't promote a card in your partner's hand because she has a singleton (10 at best)



# Compound Finesses:

(1a) Double Finesse:

AQ10 for two or possibly three tricks

xx (xxx)

Assuming you can afford to lose the lead, to maximise the chance of winning two tricks, finesse the 10 and if this loses to the J, finesse the Q. The chance of both the K and J sitting over the A, is low. There is also a small chance of winning all three tricks but only if the 10 is finessed first.

(1b) Double Finesse:

AJ10 for two tricks

xx(xxx)

You finesse the 10 and if it loses to the Q or K you return to hand and finesse the J playing for split honours. You must lose one trick in this case.

# Compound Finesses:

(3) Deep Finesse:

AJ9

xx(xxx)

In order to make two tricks, the on-side defender has to hold **either K or Q and 10.**

Declarer finesses the 9 on the first occasion and if that draws the K or Q, declarer repeats the finesse by playing the J.

(4) Two-way Finesse:

A109

KJX or similar.

*Note: All things being equal, finesses are only 50% chances and it is better to make the opponents open up the suit, from a disadvantaged position, if you can.*

*Elimination plays enable declarer to do this.*

If declarer believes the Q lies over the J, she could run the 10 intending to play the K if the 10 is not covered and to finesse the 9. Declarer has already made a call but there is no harm giving herself a little extra chance.

# Percentage and Safety Plays:

*“ When there is an even number of cards outstanding, they tend to break unevenly. When there is an odd number of cards outstanding, they tend to break evenly.” ( see [http://www.bridgehands.com/P/Probability\\_of\\_Card\\_Distribution.htm](http://www.bridgehands.com/P/Probability_of_Card_Distribution.htm) )*

Your combined holding	Opponents combined holding	Distribution of opponents cards
6 cards	7 cards	4-3 60% of time 5-2 30% of time
7 cards	6 cards	3-3 35% of time 4-2 50% of time
8 cards	5 cards	3-2 70% of time 4-1 30% of time
9 cards	4 cards	2-2 40% of time 3-1 50% of time

## Percentage and Safety Plays: How do you play?

- (a) AKQxx      for four tricks in NT where there is no outside  
    XX            entry to this suit.
- (b) AQxx        for three tricks if entries are not a problem.  
    XXXX
- (c) Axxx        if you must try to avoid letting the defender sitting  
    K10xx        over the A get on lead.
- (d) AQxxx      to maximise the chance of four tricks.  
    XXXX

## Discussion Time:

Kxx

Axx

KQx

AJxx

Ax

QJxx

Axx

KQxx

(xs are inconsequential rags)

How do you play this hand in 6NT with a spade lead ?  
Is 6C a better contract?

## Discussion Time:

- Kxx      You have ten solid tricks off the top and must obtain two more from the heart suit.
- Axx
- KQx      How to play Axx opposite QJxx for **three**
- AJxx      tricks?
- Ax      Running the Q or J will only work if the hearts are 3-3 (35% of the time) because if the K is on-side the defence should cover your Q or J.
- QJxx
- Axx
- KQxx      The correct line is play the A to guard against a singleton K off-side and lead towards the QJ, twice if necessary. This works if hearts are 3-3, or if Kx or Kxxx is on-side or if K is off-side, a significantly higher chance of success.

# Discussion (to finesse or not to finesse that is the question)!

Dir: West  
Vul: All

♠ J3

♥ 743

♦ AJ863

♣ 1062

W	North	E
e	4	a
s	South	s
t		t

♠ AQ975

♥ 86

♦ K107

♣ AQ8

	7	
6		15
	12	

	♠	♥	♦	♣	N
N	1	-	2	-	-
S	1	-	2	-	-
E	-	2	-	1	1
W	-	2	-	1	1

March 2, 2015.

As West, you are in 2NT after the bidding sequence Pass, Pass, 1S, Double, 1NT, 2H, 2NT, passed out. North leads JH from internal sequence and ends up with the lead after the fourth round of hearts both defenders following to the four rounds (you discard 1 x spade and 1 x club from dummy and a club from hand, hoping to set up diamonds). However, North now exits with 4D, South playing 2D and you win (with what and where?). How do you proceed?

# Discussion (to finesse or not to finesse that is the question)!

Dir: West  
Vul: All

4D

♠ J3  
♥ ████  
? ♦ AJ863  
♣ 106█

West

North

East

4

South

♠ AQ97█  
♥ ████  
♦ K107 ←  
♣ AQ█

7	
6	15
12	

	♠	♥	♣	N
N	1	2	-	-
S	1	2	-	-
E	-	2	-	11
W	-	2	-	11

2D

March 2, 2015.

*Hints: By now, you should now be able to build a reasonably accurate model of the North and South hands. South's double indicates opening points and she has shown up with four hearts (including A and Q). South looks very likely to hold a singleton rag diamond (not QD) and must have both black Kings for her bid. Her distribution is probably 3-4-1-5 or 4-4-1-4. (2-4-1-6 seems unlikely).*



# Discussion (to finesse or not to finesse that is the question)!

Dir: West Vul: All	♠ 86																																			
	♥ KJ105																																			
	♦ Q954																																			
	♣ J74																																			
♠ J3		<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">West</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">North</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">East</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">4</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">South</td></tr> </table>	West	North	East	4	South	♠ AQ975																												
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	♥ AQ92																																			
	♦ 2																																			
	♣ K953																																			

March 2, 2015.

North's exit of the 4D almost certainly is from Qxxx and South almost certainly has both the KS and KC. You need to make five diamonds for your contract so you overtake the 7D in dummy with the 8D, finesse the 10D and cash the KD. Now you lead a spade towards your JS, confident that South has the KS. If South ducks you win the JS and cash the other two diamond tricks to make 5 x diamonds, 2 x spades and 1 x club. If South plays the KS, she is end-played to lead another spade or a club and you will make eight tricks.

# Discussion Time Percentage Play for Safety?

Dir: South Vul: E/W	♠ 108
	♥ Q
	♦ AQ106
	♣ AKQ1097
	West North East
	3
	South
	♠ AKQ62
	♥ A
	♦ 743
	♣ 6543

March 24, 2015

Heart led by East against 6C.

- (1) What lines of play can declarer (North) take to make **12 tricks** on this hand?
- (2) Which of these lines do you think has the greatest chance of success?

# Percentage Play for Safety?

Dir: South Vul: E/W	♠ 108 ♥ Q ♦ AQ106 ♣ AKQ1097																																			
♠ J94 ♥ KJ7632 ♦ J98 ♣ 8	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">W</td><td style="background-color: green; color: white;">North</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">e</td><td style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">3</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">a</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">s</td><td style="background-color: green; color: white;">South</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">s</td></tr> </table>	W	North	E	e	3	a	s	South	s	♠ 753 ♥ 109854 ♦ K52 ♣ J2																									
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March 24, 2015

*Note: (1) is the preferred line at Pairs because it still gives a good chance to make 13 tricks.*

- There are several more prospective plays than simply finessing the QD.
- (1) Play for spades to break 3-3 and if not take diamond finesse. (68%)
  - (2) Cross to spade and finesse 10D. If it loses to JD, test the spades for 3-3 break before repeating the diamond finesse. (approx 85%)
  - (3) Duck a spade and play for spades to be not worse than 4-2 (approx 85%) and then fall back on the diamond finesse **if** West has not switched to diamonds when she wins the spade (approx 90%) .