



Finessing



When holding AK in a suit, it's easy to take two tricks. But how do you take two tricks if you hold AQ or KQx?

Finessing comes in different combinations - North is Dummy and South is Declarer:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
North	Kx	KQx	Qxx	Axx	Qx	AQJ	J7654
South	xx	xxx	Axx	KJx	Ax	xxx	AK2

Where do you hope the missing honour sits? Which hand do you lead from and which card do you lead?

1	Lead small to Kx hoping A sits with W and K makes. If A sits with E and K sits before A then K will not make and Declarer fails to make a trick in the suit as the A will cover the K.
2	Lead small to KQx hoping A sits with W and both K and Q win as they sit after A. If A sits with E then only one of KQ will win, you win one trick and lose two.
3	Lead small to A then lead low to Q hoping K sits W – if K takes second trick then Q will win third trick. If K sits after Q in E then you only win one trick and lose two.
4	You want to win the J. Lead low to A then low back to KJ. If Q is played then K takes and makes J good. If E plays low holding onto the Q Declarer must finesse with J and then win K. Three tricks made. If Q sits with W after the J then Declarer takes two tricks.
5	Lead small to Q and hope W holds on to K and plays small.
6	Lead small to Q and hope W holds K. Return to Declarer hand and finesse K a second time by leading low to J. If K played then cover with A and J is good thus making 3 tricks. If K sits after A in E hand then Declarer only makes two tricks rather than three.
7	Declarer could play 2 and try to win the J with the finesse, however, there is a better play. As you are only missing five in the suit, play A then K as Q may fall plus this helps to unblock length in N thus leading high from the shorter holding. If N held J10 then play J from N to finesse the Q.

In these examples Declarer has a 50% chance of winning the finesse.

Another good thing in Duplicate is that your opponents are **not** your competition, the other N/S or E/W pairs are – and if a finesse doesn't work for you then it doesn't work for them either!

However, what if the chance of finesse success could be increased to 100%. This is a Marked Finesse.

AK2	
7	J983
Q10654	

Declarer cashes A then K noticing W discards on second round therefore E holds J9. Lead 2 and finesse J by playing 10 covering E's 9 then play Q capturing E's J. Play the 6 winning five tricks.

Tricky scenario: You are in Dummy North and there are no more entries into Dummy. How can you make five tricks?

Q82	
4	K765
AJ1093	

Lead Q from Dummy, E plays 5, pop J under Q, W plays 4. Lead 8 from Dummy, E plays 6, S plays 3 and W shows out and discards. Still in Dummy so lead 2, E plays 7, Declarer plays 10 finessing K for the third time followed by A which collects E's K then winning the 9 for five tricks.

Whether you make a contract or not, take a deep breath, clear your mind and mentally move onto the next board. Like playing tennis, point over, fresh mind for the next point. Avoid "holding onto" mistakes and allowing them to negatively influence your future bidding and play.