

## **Declarer Play**

Here are some basic rules to follow when playing hands.

Cashing winners: Always lead the high cards from the hand that is shorter in the number of cards in a suit first so that you can end up in the hand that is longer. Examples:

a) K4     AQ2     If you start by leading the Ace and then the King you will not be able to also take the Queen. Instead lead the King first (or the 2 to the King) then back to the Ace and Queen.

b) AK32     Q54     If you start with the Ace and King and then play to the Queen and both opponents follow to all three leads you will be unable to take the last card in the suit. Instead, start with the Queen and then play the Ace and King. If everyone follows to the third trick, the last card will be good.

### **Start by leading the honors from the short suit first.**

Finesses: A finesse is when you try to win a trick with a card where there is a higher card outstanding. Whether you win the trick depends upon the location of the outstanding high card.

Example:

a) 432     AQJ     You must win 2 tricks in this suit. However, you could win 3 tricks if you play a small card and play the Queen. If the 4<sup>th</sup> hand to play does not have the King, then you will win the Queen. But in order to win all three tricks you must return to the hand with the small cards and finesse a second time with the Jack.

When you have several equal cards, you might want to play one where you can remain in one hand to finesse again. Example:

a) JT2    AQ5    Because you have the Jack and ten if you start by leading the Jack and the next hand has the King and plays it you will win all 3 tricks. If the next hand has it and does not play the King, you will play low and the Jack will win. Now you are in the correct hand to lead the suit again and finesse with the Queen.

**Rule: In order to take a finesse you must always lead from the hand with the lower cards toward the hand with the higher cards.**

Sometimes when the missing high card is the Queen, you have an option of which way to finesse. Example:

a) AT2    KJ3    You are guaranteed 2 winners in the suit. However, if you can guess which opponent has the Queen you can finesse and make all 3 tricks.

Finesse or play for the drop (cash all your high cards without finessing): Is taking your high cards or finessing a better percentage play? The answer depends on the high card that is missing and the number of cards that your side holds in that suit. Most newer players tend to like to take their high cards. But finessing is often much better.

With 10 or fewer cards missing the King- Finesse

With 8 or fewer cards missing the Queen – Finesse

With 6 or fewer cards missing the Jack- Finesse

