

## Defenders' Finesse Against Dummy<sup>1</sup>

When declarer's LHO leads, dummy has an honor, and third hand — declarer's RHO — holds a higher honor, then RHO should often withhold that honor in order to cover dummy's honor later. Here are some examples. Suppose declarer is South, LHO is West, and RHO is East.

### Example 1

	Qxx	
??? <u>3</u>		AJx
	???	

Suppose West leads the 3 and dummy plays low. Should East play the Ace or the Jack? Case 1: South holds the King. If East plays the Ace then NS will win two tricks — the King and Queen. But if East plays the Jack then NS may be able to win only one trick — the King. It depends on where the 9 and 10 are and who leads the suit next. Case 2: West holds the King. If East plays the Ace then NS will later win a trick — the Queen. But if East plays the Jack then NS will not win any tricks because EW will win the Ace, the King, and the Jack. In both cases EW do better if East reserves the Ace to later cover the Queen.

Essentially, East is finessing against the Queen. The difference from an ordinary finesse is that East can see the Queen in dummy, so knows the finesse is going to win.

What if the layout is

	Kxx	
??? <u>3</u>		A <u>J</u> x
	???	

and dummy plays low? East's reasoning should be similar. If South has the Queen, then playing the Ace instead of the Jack gives NS two tricks instead of one. If West has the Queen then playing the Ace

gives NS one trick instead of none. In both cases, East does better by playing the Jack.

Let's look at a few more examples.

### Example 2

	AQ <u>4</u>	
J75 <u>3</u>		K <u>T</u> 2
	986	

Suppose West leads the 3 and dummy plays low. If East finesses against the Queen by playing the 10, then EW will win two tricks. If East instead plays the King, then NS will win two tricks.

### Example 3

	A <u>T</u> 4	
K95 <u>3</u>		J <u>8</u> 2
	Q76	

Suppose West and North play the underlined cards. East can finesse against the 10 by playing the 8. If East takes the finesse, NS can win only two tricks. But if East spurns the finesse and plays the Jack, then NS can win three tricks.

### Example 4

	Q <u>7</u> 3	
J96 <u>2</u>		A <u>T</u> 4
	K85	

When West leads the 2, East can finesse against the Queen by playing the 10. If East takes the finesse, NS will win only one trick. But if East spurns the finesse and plays the Ace, then NS will win two tricks.

## Example 5

T872            J43            K96  
                  AQ5

When West leads the 2, East can finesse against the Jack by playing the 9. If East takes the finesse then NS get only two tricks. But if East spurns the finesse and plays the King, then NS will win three tricks.

All these examples have in common that dummy has an honor and doesn't play it; East has an honor that could be reserved to cover dummy's honor later; and East has a fairly high spot card to play instead of playing third hand high. The fairly high spot card is important because without it, South might be able to win the trick with an otherwise inconsequential spot card of her own.

A general rule that often works is: If East's honor is one step above dummy's honor (examples 2,3), then East should finesse an eight or better. But if East's honor is two steps above dummy's honor (examples 1,4,5), then East should finesse a nine or better.

Even with this rule East may not make the right decision every time. But finessing against dummy is one tool of good defenders.

<sup>1</sup> This material was adapted from <http://rpbridge.net/4k00.htm>