

EGCC Bridge Lessons

Notes from Week 3

Finesses - Recap

A Finesse is where you attempt to win a trick with a lower card than the opposition hold through favourable position of the cards.

Finesses are a “shot to nothing”. They do not always succeed, but they are always better than the alternative of playing the cards out from the top.

Missing the Queen

If you are missing the Queen of a suit (but have the **A**, **K** and **J**), then there is a golden rule:

If you have 9 (or more) cards in the suit, play for the “Drop”: play **A** and (unless one player shows out of the suit), play the **K**.

If you have 8 (or less) cards in the suit, play for the “Finesse”: play **A** and (unless one player shows out of the suit), finesse against the **Q**.

Each Way Finesse

Sometimes you have a choice which player to finesse against. If you hold **AJxx** in one hand and **KTxx** in the other, you could play the **K** and then lead towards the **AJ**, playing the **J** if the **Q** does not appear, or you could play the **A** and then lead towards the **KT**, playing the **T** if the **Q** does not appear.

One will succeed where the other fails – but which is which? You don’t know.

So why is this helpful?

- You may have a reason to believe that a particular player is more likely to hold the **Q** (for example if their partner has shown up with a lot of cards in another suit).
- You may want to avoid the danger hand getting the lead.

Danger Hand

A danger hand is one you do not want to get the lead.

Suppose you have **Kx** of Hearts in dummy, and **xx** of hearts in hand. When opponents get the lead, they will almost certainly lead hearts, and you could lose a lot of tricks.

If your left hand opponent (LHO) holds **A** Hearts then you’re OK because your **K** will always win a trick.

If your right hand opponent (RHO) holds **A** Hearts then you could be in trouble. If LHO gains the lead, they will play a heart and you will lose the **K** to the **A** (if you play it) or the **x** to a lower card and then the **K** will fall under the **A**. You are being finessed against!

If, however, RHO gets the lead they cannot lead through you (finesse against your **K**). They can either play a small Heart (your **K** will win) or the **A** (your **K** will win the next trick).

The danger hand is the one with the ability to lead through your **K**.

Once you've identified the danger hand you can play to avoid giving them the lead, for example deciding which way to take a two way finesse, or which of two finesses to take.

Finessing Practice (revisited)

Take a complete suit of cards out of a pack, and arrange them in the finesse positions shown in week 2's notes. Deal out the remaining cards to the defenders at random (put all cards face up).

Assuming you can have the lead in either hand for any trick (using other suits), play the cards and look at when the finesse succeeds and when it fails. Also look at the choice facing defenders (do I play my **K** or not)? This will help you to understand how, when and why finesses work.

Jeremy