

BEGINNING BRIDGE - SPRING 2018 - WEEK 2
NO TRUMP CONTRACTS - PART 1
(Natural Responses and Rebids)

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BIDDING TERMS AND CONCEPTS

There are a number of terms that can be used to describe the attributes of a bid.

NATURAL OR ARTIFICIAL SHAPE

- **Natural Bid** → Specifies a length for the suit that is mentioned in the bid or, in the case of no trump, the absence of a suit long enough to make a suit bid. All of the medium strength opening bids are natural bids because they describe the length of specific suits.
- **Artificial Bid** → Usually does not specify the length of the suit that is mentioned in the bid but it may specify the length(s) of one or more of the other suits. As we will see, a **2♣** response to a **1NT** opening bid is artificial and says nothing about the length of the club suit.

LIMITING OR UNLIMITED STRENGTH

- **Limiting Bid** → Specifies a minimum **and** a maximum point count for the strength of the hand. All of the medium strength opening bids are limiting bids because the opening bid guidelines specify a minimum and maximum point count.
- **Unlimited Bid** → Specifies the minimum point count for the strength of the hand but it does not usually specify the maximum point count. As we will see, a **2♣** response to a **1NT** opening bid is an unlimited bid that only specifies the minimum point count.

INVITATIONAL, FORCING, MARATHON, OR SIGN-OFF

- **Invitational Bid** → Invites partner to bid again but partner can pass after an invitational bid. A limiting bid is invitational because your partner can determine the maximum strength of the partnership which allows your partner to decide if a game (or slam) is still possible.
- **Forcing Bid** → Forces partner to make one more contract bid. Partner can not pass after a forcing bid. Artificial bids are forcing. An unlimited bid is forcing because your partner does not know the maximum strength of the partnership which means your partner can not decide to stop below the game or slam level.
- **Marathon Bid** → Forces partner to keep bidding until at least a game is reached. We will not encounter any marathon bids in this course.
- **Sign-off Bid** → Directs partner to pass. Partner should not make another contract bid after a sign-off bid. Most sign-off bids occur at the game level.

NO TRUMP BIDDING CONVERSATIONS

The no trump opening bids convey the most precise information about the strength and shape of the opener's hand. In particular, **no trump opening bids are natural bids that limit the strength** of the hand to a narrow and well-defined high card point range.

RESPONDER'S GOAL AFTER A NO TRUMP OPENING BID

When your partner (the *opener*) opens the bidding with a no trump bid, you are the *responder* and you have the most information about the strength and shape of the partnership's combined hands. This makes you the *bidding captain*. You must direct the partnership to the final contract and your partner must follow your directions. You must decide if the partnership should stop at a part score, try for a game bonus, or try for a slam bonus.

Since it takes about 25 high card points to make a game and about 33 high card points to make a small slam, the responder can determine the goal by adding his/her points to the opener's point range. After a **1NT** opening bid, responder's goals are:

HIGH CARD POINTS				
Opener	Responder	Partnership	RESPONDER'S GOAL	
15-17	0-7	15-24	Game Unlikely	Part Score
	8-9	23-26	Game Possible	Invite Game
	10-15	25-32	Game Likely	Force Game
	16-17	31-34	Slam Possible	Invite Slam
	18+	33-40	Slam Likely	Force Slam

After a **2NT** opening bid, responder's goals are:

HIGH CARD POINTS				
Opener	Responder	Partnership	RESPONDER'S GOAL	
20-21	0-3	20-24	Game Unlikely	Part Score
	4-10	24-31	Game Likely	Force Game
	11-12	31-33	Slam Possible	Invite Slam
	13+	33-40	Slam Likely	Force Slam

If the partnership can discover an eight-card trump fit in a major suit, it is usually better to play a suit contract rather than a no trump contract, especially if the partnership has an unstopped suit.

RESPONSES TO 1NT OPENING BIDS

The contract bids that respond to a 1NT opening bid are based on the strength and shape goals described on the previous page.

BID	YOU TELL YOUR PARTNER AND YOUR OPPONENTS		AGREEMENT OR CONVENTION
	POINTS	SHAPE OF HAND	
??	16+	<i>Described in the Bidding Conversations course.</i>	
3NT	10-15 HCP	<i>Natural, limiting, sign-off. I have a balanced hand without a four card or longer major suit. I have enough points to ensure a game even if you opened with only 15 HCPs. You must pass!</i>	
3♦	8-9 HCP	<i>Natural, limiting, invitational. I have at least six diamonds with two of the top four honors. I have enough points to think that a game is possible if you opened with (16)17 HCPs. You must decide if we should try for a game!</i>	
3♣	8-9 HCP	<i>Natural, limiting, invitational. I have at least six clubs with two of the top four honors. I have enough points to think that a game is possible if you opened with (16)17 HCPs. You must decide if we should try for a game!</i>	
2NT	8-9 HCP	<i>Natural, limiting, invitational. I have a balanced hand without a four card or longer major suit. I have enough points to think that a game is possible if you opened with (16)17 HCPs. You must decide if we should try for a game!</i>	
2♥ ¹	0+	<i>Artificial, unlimited, forcing. I have at least five spades. Please say "transfer" and bid 2♠ to accept a transfer to spades!</i>	Major Suit Jacoby Transfer
2♦ ¹	0+	<i>Artificial, unlimited, forcing. I have at least five hearts. Please say "transfer" and bid 2♥ to accept a transfer to hearts!</i>	
2♣ ¹	8+ HCP	<i>Artificial, unlimited, forcing. I have at least one four card major. Please bid a four card major or bid an artificial 2♦ to tell me you do not have a four card major!</i>	Major Suit Stayman
Pass	0-7 HCP	<i>Limiting. I do not have any combination of HCPs and suit length that allows me to respond to your bid.</i>	

¹ Bidding conversations that include an artificial response will be discussed in Week 5.

Note the following:

- ✓ The natural responses convey information about the responder's high card points that correspond to the goals shown on the second page.
- ✓ The majority of the artificial responses focus on the shape of a major suit in the responder's hand. There are two reasons for this:
 - It is usually easier to make a game of three no trump or four in a major suit than it is to make a game of five in a minor suit.
 - If the partnership has an eight-card trump fit in a major suit, it is usually better to play a major suit contract rather than a no trump contract.

RESPONSES TO 2NT OPENING BIDS

Except for the point range and trick level, the responses to a 2NT opening bid are very similar to the responses to a 1NT opening bid.

BID	YOU TELL YOUR PARTNER AND YOUR OPPONENTS		AGREEMENT OR CONVENTION
	POINTS	SHAPE OF HAND	
??	11+	<i>Described in the Bidding Conversations course.</i>	
3NT	4-10 HCP	<i>Natural, limiting, sign-off.</i> I have a balanced hand without a four card or longer major suit. I have enough points to ensure a game even if you opened with only 20 HCPs. <i>You must pass!</i>	
3♥ ¹	0+	<i>Artificial, unlimited, forcing.</i> I have at least five spades. <i>Please say "transfer" and bid 3♠ to accept a transfer to spades!</i>	Major Suit Jacoby Transfer
3♦ ¹	0+	<i>Artificial, unlimited, forcing.</i> I have at least five hearts. <i>Please say "transfer" and bid 3♥ to accept a transfer to hearts!</i>	
3♣ ¹	4+ HCP	<i>Artificial, unlimited, forcing.</i> I have at least one four card major. <i>Please bid a four card major or bid an artificial 3♦ to tell me you do not have a four card major!</i>	Major Suit Stayman
Pass	0-3 HCP	<i>Limiting.</i> I do not have any combination of HCPs and suit length that allows me to respond to your bid.	

¹ Bidding conversations that include an artificial response will be discussed in Week 5.

THE BIDDING CAPTAIN

A partnership should continue to bid as long as it is possible that they have enough strength (total points) to try for a game (or a slam). The partner that has the most information about the upper limit of the partnership's strength is called the *bidding captain*. The bidding captain can force partner to make another bid, invite partner to make another bid, or pass to end the bidding.

When you make an invitational (limiting) bid your partner becomes the bidding captain because your partner knows the upper limit of the partnership's strength. For example:

- *Suppose you open 1NT.*

This *natural, limiting, invitational* opening bid limits your strength to 15-17 high card points. Your partner now has the most information about the maximum strength of the partnership. This makes your partner the bidding captain and your partner can decide to pass, invite you to bid again, force you to bid again, or sign-off at a game level.

- *Suppose partner responds 2NT.*

This *natural, limiting, invitational* response limits partner's strength to 8-9 high card points. You now have the best information about the maximum strength of the partnership. This makes you the bidding captain. You can decide to pass or bid the game.

- ✓ If you have 15 high card points you know the partnership only has 23-24 (15+8 to 15+9) high card points, not enough to bid a game. You should pass and settle for a part score.
- ✓ If you have 17 high card points you know the partnership has 25-26 (17+8 to 17+9) high card points, enough to bid a game. You should bid a sign-off 3NT to try for the game bonus.

When you make a forcing (unlimited) bid, you retain your role as the bidding captain because you have not specified an upper limit for your strength. For example:

- *Suppose you open 1NT.*

This *natural, limiting, invitational* bid limits your strength to 15-17 high card points and makes your partner the bidding captain.

- *Suppose your partner responds 2♣.*

This *artificial, unlimited, forcing* bid initiates the Major Suit Stayman bidding convention to ask if you have a four-card major. Your partner continues to be the bidding captain.

- *Suppose you have four hearts and reply 2♥.*

- *Suppose your partner rebids 2NT.*

This *natural, limiting, invitational* bid limits your partner's strength to 8-9 high card points and you now become the bidding captain. You may pass or bid a game.

NO TRUMP EXAMPLE 1				
SOUTH - YOU	North	East	South	West
♠ A T 9	1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
♥ A 6 5	Pass	Pass		
♦ Q 9 7 2				
♣ J 6 2				

NO TRUMP EXAMPLE 2				
SOUTH - YOU	East	South	West	North
♠ K 8	Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT
♥ K 7 6 3	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
♦ K 4 3	Pass			
♣ A K 9 5				

EXAMPLE 1

- **Partner opens 1NT** (*natural, limiting, invitational*): Describes a balanced hand with 15-17 HCP and stoppers in at least three suits. *You say "15-17" immediately.*
- **You respond 3NT** (*natural, limiting, sign-off*): You have a balanced hand with 11 HCP and no four card major. You know the partnership has 26-28 HCP, enough for game.

EXAMPLE 2

- **You open 1NT** (*natural, limiting, invitational*): You have a balanced hand with 16 HCP and stoppers in all four suits. *Partner says "15-17" immediately.*
- **Partner responds 2NT**: (*natural, limiting, invitational*): Describes a hand with 8-9 HCP and no four card major. *Partner has invited you to bid a game in no trump.*
- **You bid 3NT** (*natural, limiting, sign-off*): You know the partnership has 24-25 HCP, almost enough for game. Given stoppers in all four suits, you try for a game bonus.

NO TRUMP EXAMPLE 3				
SOUTH - YOU	North	East	South	West
♠ K T 3	2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
♥ 9 4 3	Pass	Pass		
♦ Q T 6 5				
♣ T 7 3				

NO TRUMP EXAMPLE 4				
SOUTH - YOU	East	South	West	North
♠ A 8 6	Pass	1NT	Pass	3♦
♥ K J 3	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
♦ K Q T	Pass			
♣ A 7 4 3				

EXAMPLE 3

- **Partner opens 2NT** (*natural, limiting, invitational*): Describes a balanced hand with 20-21 HCP and stoppers in all four suits.
- **You respond 3NT** (*natural, limiting, sign-off*): Your hand is balanced with 5 HCP and no four card or longer major. The partnership has 25-26 HCP, enough for game.

EXAMPLE 4

- **You open 1NT** (*natural, limiting, invitational*): You have a balanced hand with 17 HCP, stoppers in four suits and no five-card major. *Partner says "15-17" immediately.*
- **Partner responds 3♦** (*natural, limiting, invitational*): Describes an unbalanced hand with 8-9 HCP and at least six diamonds with two honors. *Partner has invited you to bid a game in no trump or diamonds.*
- **You bid 3NT** (*natural, limiting, sign-off*): You know the partnership has 25-26 HCP, enough for game. You have stoppers in all four suits and can use the long diamond suit to take tricks and make a no trump game.

DEFENDER PLAY

OPENING LEADS AGAINST NO TRUMP

The three most common opening leads against no trump contracts are:

- **A card from partner's bid suit.**

This is usually your partnership's long suit and you should try to develop the suit.

- ✓ Top of a doubleton: 9 6; K 7; J 2
- ✓ Top of touching honors: Q J 5; T 9 3; J T 7
- ✓ Top of three or four small: 9 6 4 3; 7 4 2; 8 7 3
- ✓ Low from three or four to an honor: K 7 4; J 9 4 2

- **A card from your longest and strongest unbid suit:**

- a. **Top of connecting honors in a three card sequence or broken sequence.**

This lead promises the next lower card in the suit.

- ✓ Top of a sequence: A K Q 6; K Q J 4 3; Q J T 7; J T 9 6
- ✓ Top of a broken sequence: A K J 5 2; K Q T 3; Q J 9 6 4; J T 8 3
- ✓ Top of an interior sequence: A Q J 9; K J T 8 6; Q T 9 7;

The point is to try to establish good tricks in your hand

- b. **Fourth highest card in your longest and strongest suit.**

This lead promises at least one honor.

- ✓ Fourth highest: Q J 8 4; K J 7 5 3; A K 9 4; K T 6 5 2

- **Top of nothing** (usually a 9, 8, or 7).

DECLARER PLAY

MAKING A PLAN

The basic strategy that should be followed to make your no trump contract is:

1. Listen to opponents' bids.
2. Observe the opening lead.
3. Plan your offense:
 - a. Pause to consider the number of tricks you must win.
 - b. Look at the combined hands and count your sure winners.
 - c. Analyze ways to develop extra winners:
 - Promote high cards.
 - Develop long suits.
 - Finesse opponents' high cards.
 - d. Now execute the plan.
4. Watch defenders play.
5. Keep track of cards played.

COUNTING SURE WINNERS

When you are playing a no trump contract, your objective is to take at least the number of tricks that are required to make the contract. Since there is no pesky trump suit to interfere with your winners, the second step in planning your offense is to count the winners in each suit of your combined hands and then add up the counts to get the total number of winners.

A sure winning trick is any trick that you can take without giving up the lead. For example, there are four sure tricks in the left and the middle, but there are no sure tricks on the right because you may have to give up the lead to the missing Ace before you can take a trick in the suit.

4 SURE TRICKS	4 SURE TRICKS	NO SURE TRICKS
<p>A K Q J</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>7 5 3 2</p>	<p>A K 5 2</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>Q J 7 3</p>	<p>K Q J T</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>7 6 4 2</p>

The maximum number of sure winners is the length of the suit on the long side if you can gain entry to the long side. For example:

3 SURE TRICKS	4 or 5 SURE TRICKS	2 or 3 SURE TRICKS
<p>A K 2</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>Q J</p>	<p>A K Q 5 3</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>J T</p>	<p>A K</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>Q 8 7 6</p>

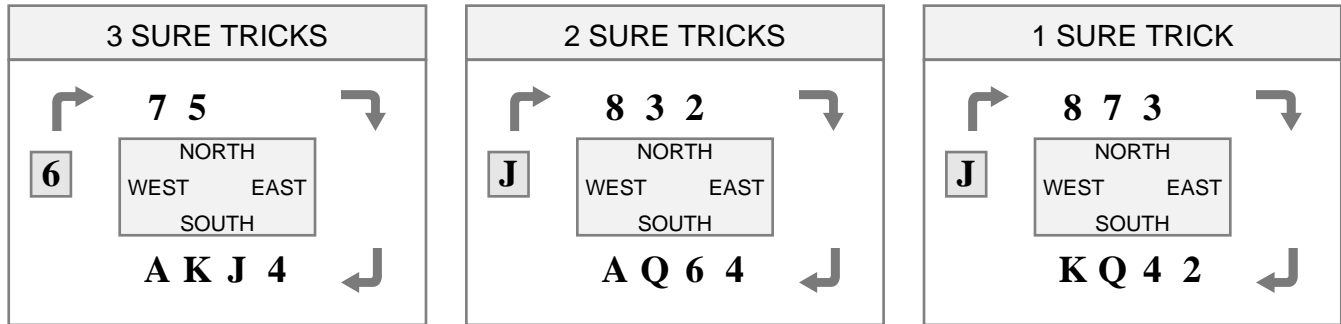
In the example in the middle, you can count five sure tricks only if you have a sure trick in another suit to get to the long side. If not, then you only have four sure tricks because the missing six cards might be split five-one or six-zero. In the example on the right, you can count three sure tricks only if you can get to the long side to play the Queen.

If opponents will not have any high cards left after you play your high cards, you can count the length of the suit on the long side as winners. Suppose, for example, that you are missing only four cards in a suit:

5 SURE TRICKS	6 SURE TRICKS	5 SURE TRICKS
<p>A K J 3 2</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>Q 6 4 3</p>	<p>A Q 3</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>K J 8 6 4 2</p>	<p>A Q 3</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <p>K 8 6 4 3 2</p>

In the example on the right, you will probably take six tricks but you can only count five sure tricks because the missing **JT97** may all be in one hand.

Every now and then the opening lead "makes the contract" by promoting possible losers into sure winners. For example, if South is the declarer and West leads:



In the example on the left, you can count three sure tricks only if you are prepared to play the **J** on the first trick. In the middle example, you can count two sure tricks only if you are prepared to play the **Q** on the first trick. In the right example, you can count the sure trick only if you are prepared to play the **K** or **Q** if East does not overtake with the Ace.

EXAMPLE - COUNTING WINNERS																																																					
<p style="text-align: center;">OPENING LEAD: ♠J</p> <p>Listen: The bidding is no help.</p> <p>Observe: The ♠J is probably top of connecting honors in a three card (broken) sequence. West should have at least 2 more spades including the ♠T and the ♠9 (you have the ♠8 so the sequence should not be broken). Defenders will probably try to establish their spade suit.</p> <p>Pause: You must take 9 tricks.</p> <p>Look: You have 9 sure winners (3 ♠ + 0 ♥ + 4 ♦ + 2 ♣).</p> <p>Analyze: No extra tricks are needed and there is no way to safely establish an over trick.</p> <p>Execute: Take the nine tricks without giving up the lead. If opponents get the lead and switch to hearts, you might lose five tricks.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td colspan="4">NORTH - DUMMY</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="4">♠ K 8 4</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="4">♥ J 4 3</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="4">♦ K J 9 6</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="4">♣ K T 4</td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">East</td> <td style="width: 25%;">South</td> <td style="width: 25%;">West</td> <td style="width: 25%;">North</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td colspan="4">SOUTH - DECLARER</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="4">♠ A Q 3</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="4">♥ 8 6 5</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="4">♦ A Q T 8</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="4">♣ A 8 7</td></tr> </table>	NORTH - DUMMY				♠ K 8 4				♥ J 4 3				♦ K J 9 6				♣ K T 4				East	South	West	North	Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass		SOUTH - DECLARER				♠ A Q 3				♥ 8 6 5				♦ A Q T 8				♣ A 8 7			
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<p>Note that if the opening lead had been a heart and the missing hearts had been split 5-2, the contract would have been set.</p>																																																					

PROMOTING HIGH CARDS

You can promote high cards that are in a sequence by using the force of your high cards to drive out opponents' higher cards. This is the most common method for developing extra winners. It is also the most certain method when a trump suit can not interfere with your plan. However, your plan must allow for the fact that **you must give up the lead to promote your high cards.**

LOSE 1 • PROMOTE 3
K Q J T <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 7 5 3 2

LOSE 2 • PROMOTE 2
Q T 9 4 <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> J 7 3

LOSE 1 • PROMOTE 4
Q 5 <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> K J T 9 6

In the right hand example you must **play the high card from the short side first**. Then if the Ace does not fall, lead the low card toward the long side. You must also preserve an alternate entry to the long side because an experienced defender will hold up the Ace in an effort to strand your extra winners.

EXAMPLE - COUNTING WINNERS • PROMOTING HIGH CARDS

OPENING LEAD: ♥J

Listen: The bidding is no help.

Observe: The ♥J is probably top of connecting honors in a three card (broken) sequence. West should have at least 2 more hearts including the ♥T. West should also have either the ♥K or ♥8 or both. Opponents will probably try to establish their heart suit. This lead promotes your ♥Q into a sure winner only if the queen is played on the first trick.

Pause: You must take 9 tricks.

Look: You have 7 sure winners (3 ♠ + 2 ♥ + 2 ♦ + 0 ♣).

Analyze: You can promote 2 clubs by losing one trick. You can afford the loss because after you win the first trick, you still have a sure winner in each of the other three suits.

Execute: Take the first trick with the ♥Q (or the ♥A if East plays the ♥K) and then lead a low club. If the ♣J takes the trick, lead another club. When you regain the lead, cash your winners starting with the spades (if they are split 3-3 or the ♠JT falls, you gain an overtrick).

NORTH - DUMMY

♠ A 6 2
 ♥ 9 7 4
 ♦ A K T 2
 ♣ J 6 3

East	South	West	North
------	-------	------	-------

Pass 1NT Pass 3NT
 Pass Pass Pass

SOUTH - DECLARER

♠ K Q 9 7
 ♥ A Q 6
 ♦ 9 6 4
 ♣ K Q 4

LOSING TRICKS

You must lose one or more tricks to promote high cards in a suit. In general, you want to lose these tricks early while you still have stoppers in the other suits.

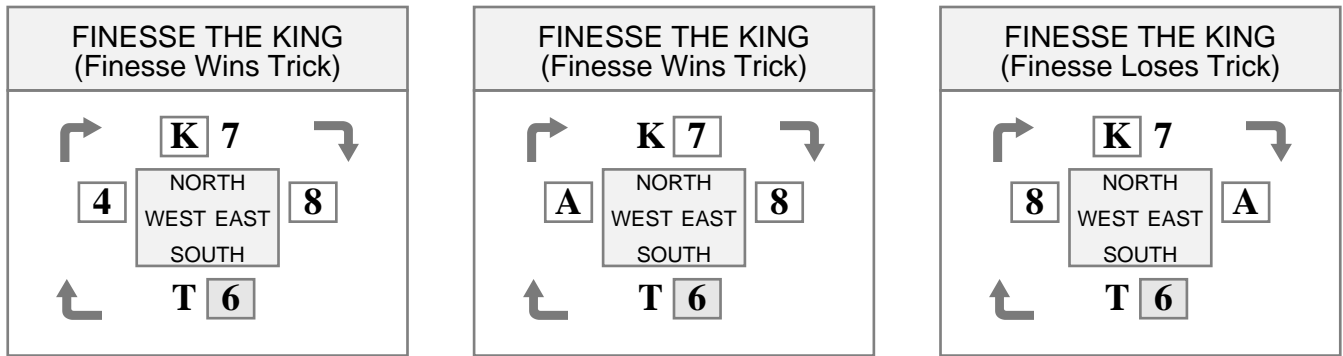
TAKE YOUR LOSSES EARLY

Since opponents are trying to establish their long suit, you may not be able to afford all of the losses. Be sure to consider the number tricks that you can afford to lose when you develop your offensive plan.

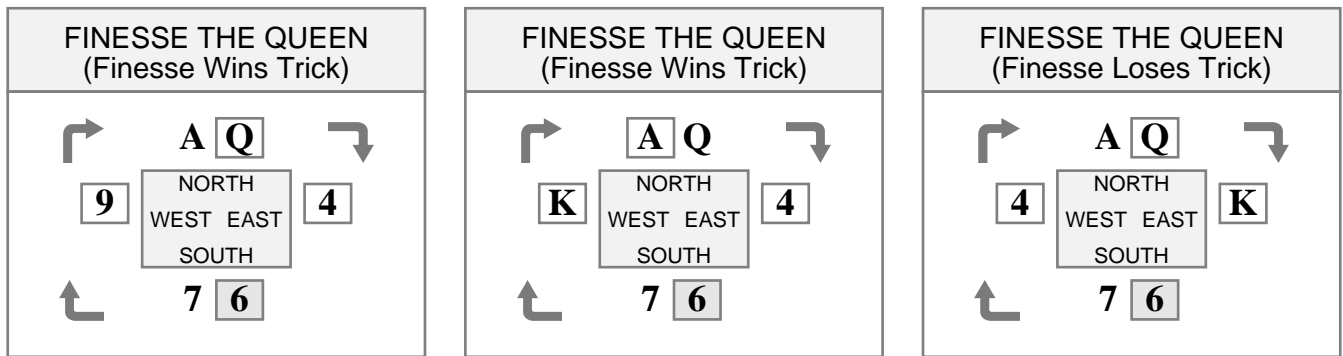
FINESSING OPPONENTS HIGH CARDS

A *finesse* is any play in which you attempt to take a trick with a high card when one of your opponents has a higher card. A successful finesse depends on finding a specific card in a specific place.

The most common attempt to finesse begins with a lead of a low card toward the hand that contains the card you want to finesse. Suppose South is on lead and wants to finesse the King against the Ace. South should lead the 6 to **lead a low card toward the King**:

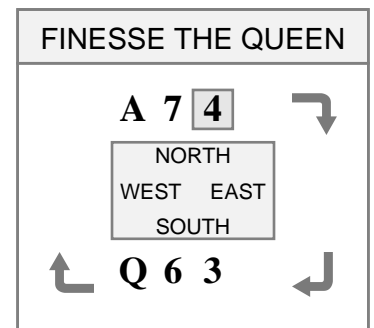


Now suppose South is on lead and wants to finesse the Queen against the King. South should **lead a low card toward the Queen**:



Note that the success of both of these finesses depends on West having the missing high card. If the missing card is in the East, the finesse fails.

In the example on the right, you might be able to take two tricks if you **lead a low card toward the Queen** to finesse against the King. If you try to finesse by leading the Queen toward the Ace you will only be able to take one trick because **either** West will play the King (cover an honor with an honor) to force your Ace **or** East will play the King to take the trick.



COUNTING WINNERS • FINESSING A HIGH CARD

OPENING LEAD: ♣Q

Listen: The bidding is no help.

Observe: The ♣Q is probably top of connecting honors in a three card (broken) sequence. West should have the ♣J and either the ♣T or ♣9. East should have the ♣K. Opponents will probably try to establish their club suit.

Pause: You must win 9 tricks.

Look: You have 8 sure winners (2 ♠ + 1 ♥ + 4 ♦ + 1 ♣).

Analyze: Your only chance to make the contract is to finesse the ♥Q against the ♥K. If the finesse fails (50%) you are down one and if the missing clubs are split 5-2 or worse (38%) you are down more than one. If the missing diamonds are split 3-2 (68%) or 4-1 (28%) you might improve the odds by running the diamonds before attempting the finesse.

Execute: Take the first trick with the ♣A. Run the diamonds (watch for a bad split) and finish in the dummy. Then lead a low heart to start the finesse.

NORTH - DUMMY

♠ A 6 3
♥ 6 4
♦ AK 6 3
♣ 8 7 4 2

North	East	South	West
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Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

SOUTH - DECLARER

♠ K 8 5
♥ A Q 7 5
♦ Q J 8 2
♣ A 3

OPENER OPENS 1NT

HCP
15 — 17
4%

RESPONDER RESPONDS IN PRIORITY ORDER

HIGH CARD POINTS				
0 — 7	8 — 9	10 — 15	16 - 17	18 — +
45%	21%	31%	2%	0%

Artificial 2♦¹ or 2♥¹ (Transfer to 2♥ or 2♠)

5+ Card Major

Forcing

Artificial 2♣¹ (Stayman)

4 Card Major

Invitational

3MIN

6+ Card Minor

Invitational

2NT

Balanced

Signoff

3NT

Balanced

PASS

¹ Make a stolen bid double if opponent overcalled your bid.