

MORRINSVILLE BRIDGE CLUB - CARD PLAY 101

A series of elementary card play tuition sessions at Morrinsville

The 2-way Finesse

"How To Play The Cards Like An Expert Without Being One"

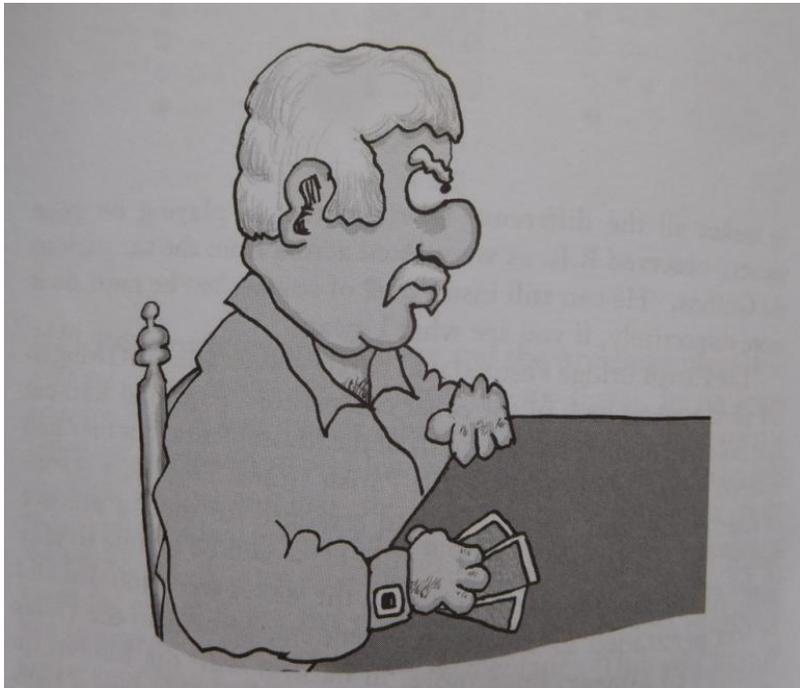
The opponents have the Queen or Jack in a suit

How you can avoid losing a trick to that card if possible, or if not

How you can minimise the damage if you do lose

"The essence of bridge is to see through the backs of the cards"

Themistocles Papadopoulos (aka "Papa the Greek") from "Bridge in the Menagerie" by Victor Mollo



Papa the Greek

Contents:

Page 2: Notes to be handed out (and talked about) at the start of the session

Pages 3-5 Travellers to go with the boards (a set of 9).

Place on top of the board with the bottom folded up so only the bidding can be seen (or optionally, the next line (hint) as well).

Play the hand then open up the travellers and discuss the comments there

Pages 6-8 Hand records with expanded comments to be handed out at the end

CARD PLAY 101: The FINESSE

Definition:

Finesse (noun or verb): *Attempt to win a trick with a card which is not the highest.* It succeeds only if the critical higher card(s) are favourably placed.

A Simple Finesse:

[1] West: ♣ 3 2 East: ♣ A Q

To lead from the West hand and play ♣Q will win that trick (only) if North has ♣K.

Definition: A holding like that ♣AQ is a **tenace**

Other situations:

[2] West: ♦ 4 3 2 East: ♦ A K J

[3] West: ♥ K 5 2 East: ♥ A J 3

East-West make three tricks in both these cases (only) if North has the Queen of that suit.

The “two-way” finesse

You have tenaces in both hands, like this situation:

[4] West: ♠ K 10 5 East: ♠ A J 3

Three tricks can **always** be made **if you know** (or guess correctly) **which opponent has ♠Q.**

There are ways you might be able to do that (other than peek at his hand which is not allowed)

[a] **Count the points:** maybe if the Queen was in one particular hand the bidding would be different

[b] **Count the distribution:** occasionally you may be able to count an opponent’s distribution

[c] **Observe the distribution:** before committing to a critical finesse

An example of the last situation [c]

[5] West: ♣ K Q 9 6 5 East: ♣ A 10 4 2

There is no loser unless one opponent has all four.

Win the first round in **the hand with two top honours** (West in this case).

If one opponent discards *you know the other one has* ♣ J 8 7 3 and the ♣10 **OR** ♣9 can be finessed.

But if you had one less card:

[6] West: ♣ K Q 9 5 East: ♣ A 10 4 2

Again win in the West hand first but when both follow suit you still have to guess who is more likely to have started with four clubs.

If you guess it is North lead ♣Q next preparing to finesse ♣10 if South discards. If you guess it is South lead to ♣A next preparing to finesse ♣9 if North discards.

An Important Situation:

Often you can afford to lose a trick in a suit but **not to one particular opponent.**

One opponent (but not the other) is **dangerous** if:

[a] (in notrumps) he has too many winners in a suit you won’t be able to stop, or

[b] (in any contract) he can lead through a holding like K J when the opponent playing next holds A Q

For example: You need three heart tricks (but not four) so you can afford to lose to the ♥Q.

[7] West: ♥ A J 9 4 East: ♥ K 10 6

If **North** is dangerous finesse the ♥10; if **South** is dangerous finesse the ♥J. In either case the finesse will lose (if at all) only to the safe opponent.

Best of All

If you have a “2-way finesse” holding such as:

[8] West: ♣ K 10 5 East: ♣ A J 3

You won’t lose any tricks in the suit if you can arrange for the opponents to lead the suit first.

For example: You bid 6♠ and the ♥K is led

♠ A Q 9 7 5	♠ K J 8 4 2
♥ 7 3	♥ A 4
♦ A K Q	♦ 9 5 3
♣ K 10 5	♣ A J 3

Win ♥A, draw trumps, lead ♦AKQ, and then lead your other heart.

An opponent is now on lead and will have to either lead clubs, giving you three club tricks, or lead a red suit which can be trumped in one hand and a club discarded from the other.

Board 1 Dealer N Vul none
 N E S W
 1♥ p 3NT all pass

Take two-way finesse the safe way

On the likely ♦K lead East discards so West is identified as dangerous. Because if West gets the lead he can cash five more diamond tricks. Declarer can afford to lose one heart trick so he must finesse the hearts so it will lose (if at all) to East, the opponent who has no diamonds. That means lead to North's ♥J not to South's ♥10.

1		♠ K64	Dir: N				
		♥ AJ94	Vul: None				
		♦ 7632					
		♣ AK					
♠ T92		♠ QJ85					
♥ Q32		♥ 875					
♦ KQJT85		♦					
♣ T		♣ J98743					
15	♠ A73	♣♦♥♠ NT					
8	♥ KT6	N	3	2	4	3	4
	♦ A94	S	3	2	4	2	4
13	♣ Q652	E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 2 Dealer E Vul NS
 E S W N
 1♠ p 2♣ p
 4♣ p 6♣ all pass

Retain two-way finesse option

The correct play with this club combination is to win the first round in the hand with **two** top honours (that is West with ♣KQ). If North or South discards on that trick the other opponent's ♣J873 can be picked up without losing a trick by finessing ♣9 or ♣10 respectively.

2		♠ 863	Dir: E				
		♥ T97	Vul: N-S				
		♦ Q82					
		♣ J873					
♠ Q		♠ AK742					
♥ AJ5		♥ KQ8					
♦ K743		♦ 6					
♣ KQ965		♣ AT42					
3	♠ JT95	♣♦♥♠ NT					
15	♥ 6432	N	-	-	-	-	
	♦ AJT95	S	-	-	-	-	
8	♣	E	8	2	5	5	8
		W	8	2	5	5	8

Board 3 Dealer S Vul EW
 S W N E
 p 1NT p 2NT
 all pass

Count opponents' points

North is likely to lead a heart giving North-South four tricks and marking South with ♥AK. Declarer then tries the diamond finesse but that loses to ♦K. As South passed as dealer he can't have ♠Q as well as ♥AK and ♦K as that would give him 12 points. So declarer can confidently finesse East's ♠J for his eighth trick.

3		♠ Q96	Dir: S				
		♥ QT86	Vul: E-W				
		♦ 972					
		♣ QJ8					
♠ KT5		♠ AJ3					
♥ 973		♥ J4					
♦ QT84		♦ AJ53					
♣ AK4		♣ 7632					
7	♠ 8742	♣♦♥♠ NT					
12	♥ AK52	N	-	-	1	-	
	♦ K6	S	-	-	1	-	
10	♣ T95	E	3	3	-	1	2
		W	3	3	-	1	2

Board 4 Dealer W Vul all
 W N E S
 p p p 1♠
 p 2♠ all pass

Board 5 Dealer N Vul NS
 N E S W
 3♥ p p 3♠
 p 4♠ all pass

Board 6 Dealer E Vul EW
 E S W N
 1NT p 3NT all pass

Take finesse the safe way

Avoid leading tricky suit

Declarer has just four spades and ♥A so he needs three club tricks.

He should get the opponents to lead clubs first by leading any red card after drawing trumps.

After cashing their red-suit winners the opponents have to lead either a club, giving declarer three club tricks, or a red suit, allowing a club to be discarded from one hand while it is trumped in the other.

4		♠ KJ75	Dir: W
		♥ 862	Vul: Both
		♦ 875	
		♣ KT2	
♠ 942	♠ T3		
♥ K94	♥ QJT5		
♦ KQJT	♦ A63		
♣ Q75	♣ 9864		
7	♠ AQ86	♣♦♥♠NT	
11	♥ A73	N 1 - - 2 2	
15	♦ 942	S 1 - - 2 2	
	♣ AJ3	E - 1 1 - -	
		W - 1 1 - -	

Count suit distribution.

North is likely to lead ♣2 and trump the third club.

When North later discards on the first round of trumps South is known to have started with only three red cards.

Declarer sees those three red cards when he plays ♥AK and to the ♦A. Then he knows the finesse of the ♦J must win.

5		♠ 3	Dir: N
		♥ QJT9642	Vul: N-S
		♦ Q983	
		♣ 2	
♠ AKQ42	♠ J65		
♥ 75	♥ AK		
♦ AT4	♦ KJ652		
♣ QJ6	♣ T53		
5	♠ T987	♣♦♥♠NT	
10	♥ 83	N - - 1 - -	
7	♦ 7	S - - 1 - -	
	♣ AK9874	E 2 4 - 4 5	
		W 2 4 - 4 5	

South is likely to lead a heart with North's ♥Q taken by declarer's ♥A.

That makes North dangerous.

A heart lead from North will give South four tricks with his ♥K1073 sitting over declarer's ♥J4.

Declarer's ♥J4 can stop the hearts running if South leads them.

Declarer needs four diamond tricks (not five) so he must finesse the ♦J which will lose (if at all) only to South.

6		♠ QJT84	Dir: E
		♥ Q92	Vul: E-W
		♦ Q95	
		♣ J9	
♠ AK5	♠ 763		
♥ 86	♥ AJ4		
♦ AT3	♦ KJ642		
♣ K7642	♣ A5		
8	♠ 92	♣♦♥♠NT	
14	♥ KT753	N - - - - -	
5	♦ 87	S - - - - -	
	♣ QT83	E 4 5 2 3 4	
		W 4 5 2 3 4	

Board 7 Dealer S Vul all
 S W N E
 1♠ 2♥ 2♠ p
 3♣ p 4♠ all pass

Take finesse the safe way

East should lead diamonds and declarer trumps the second one. The danger of a heart lead by East through declarer's ♥K is apparent from the bidding so declarer needs to draw trumps without East getting the lead. That means lead to ♠K then finesse ♠J on the second round. If West wins he can cash one heart trick but not two.

7		♠ KT42 ♥ 97 ♦ 9753 ♣ KQ2	Dir: S Vul: Both
♠ 8 ♥ AQJT3 ♦ AK84 ♣ 973	♠ Q75 ♥ 8652 ♦ JT62 ♣ 86		
8 14 15	♠ AJ963 ♥ K4 ♦ Q ♣ AJT54	♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ NT N 4 - - 4 - S 4 - - 5 - E - 3 3 - - W - 3 3 - -	

Board 8 Dealer W Vul none
 W N E S
 p 2♠ all pass

Count opponents' points

Declarer has to lose three heart tricks (likely at the start, which will mark West with ♥AK). He also has to lose to ♣A and possibly a diamond and a spade as well. Which way to finesse the spades? Counting West's points (remember he passed as dealer): If he has ♦K as well as ♥AK he can't have ♠Q as that would be 12 points. So declarer should finesse ♠10. If that loses the subsequent finesse of ♦Q will win.

8		♠ AJ9864 ♥ 862 ♦ 73 ♣ KQ	Dir: W Vul: None
♠ 72 ♥ AK3 ♦ K94 ♣ JT984	♠ Q53 ♥ QJT5 ♦ JT6 ♣ A52		
10 11 9	♠ KT ♥ 974 ♦ AQ852 ♣ 763	♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ NT N - - - 2 - S - - - 2 - E 3 - 3 - 1 W 3 - 3 - -	

Board 9 Dealer N Vul EW
 N E S W
 1NT p p 2♠
 all pass

Retain two-way finesse option

After drawing three rounds of trumps declarer must lead ♣K and ♣Q preparing to finesse ♣10 if South discards on the second one. South can't have four clubs as North, having opened 1NT, must have at least two clubs. If North and South both follow suit twice there won't be any club loser.

9		♠ 763 ♥ AT6 ♦ AKQ ♣ J873	Dir: N Vul: E-W
♠ AKQ94 ♥ 8 ♦ T75 ♣ KQ95	♠ 2 ♥ J7542 ♦ J83 ♣ AT42		
14 14 6	♠ JT85 ♥ KQ93 ♦ 9642 ♣ 6	♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ NT N - 2 - - - S - 2 - - - E 3 - - 2 - W 3 - - 2 -	

Board 1 Dealer N Vul none

Board 1 **Dealer N** **Vul none**
N **E** **S** **W**
1♥ **p** **3NT** **all pass**

Board 2 **Dealer E** **Vul NS**
E **S** **W** **N**
1♠ **p** **2♣** **p**
4♣ **p** **6♣** **all pass**

Board 3 **Dealer S** **Vul EW**
S **W** **N** **E**
p **1NT** **p** **2NT**
all pass

Take two-way finesse the safe way

On the likely ♦K lead East discards so West is identified as dangerous.

That is because as soon as he gets the lead West can cash five more diamond tricks.

Declarer has eight top tricks (2 spades, 2 hearts, a diamond and 3 clubs) so only needs one more to make 3NT. That can only come from the hearts, the ♥J 10 providing a sure trick (if not two tricks).

Declarer can safely lose one heart trick so long as he doesn't let West get the lead.

If he finesses North's ♥J (not South's ♥10) it will lose (if at all) to East, the opponent who has no diamonds.

1		♠ K64	Dir: N
		♥ AJ94	Vul: None
		♦ 7632	
		♣ AK	
♠ T92	♠ QJ85		
♥ Q32	♥ 875		
♦ KQJT85	♦		
♣ T	♣ J98743		
15	♠ A73		
8	♥ KT6		
4	♦ A94		
13	♣ Q652		
		♠♥♦♣NT	
		N 3 2 4 3 4	
		S 3 2 4 2 4	
		E - - - - -	
		W - - - - -	

Retain two-way finesse option

Declarer can always avoid losing a trick with a suit combination like these clubs.

The correct play is to win the first round in the hand with **two** top honours. Here that is the West hand which has ♣KQ.

If either North or South discards on that trick the other opponent's ♣J873 can be picked up without loss by finessing ♣9 or ♣10 respectively.

This is an example of a "safety play", one well worth remembering.

If both opponents follow suit to the ♣K there will be no loser as the opponents will then have only two clubs left and declarer still has the two highest ones.

2		♠ 863	Dir: E
		♥ T97	Vul: N-S
		♦ Q82	
		♣ J873	
♠ Q	♠ AK742		
♥ AJ5	♥ KQ8		
♦ K743	♦ 6		
♣ KQ965	♣ AT42		
3	♠ JT95		
15	♥ 6432		
18	♦ AJT95		
6	♣		
		♠♥♦♣NT	
		N - - - - -	
		S - - - - -	
		E 6 2 5 5 6	
		W 6 2 5 5 6	

Count opponents' points

North is likely to lead a heart, North-South getting the first four tricks. In the process declarer will observe South has ♥AK.

When declarer tries the diamond finesse it loses to ♦K.

That means declarer now needs three tricks in spades. He will succeed if he guesses correctly who has ♠Q.

If South had ♠Q, as well as the ♥AK and ♦K he is known to hold, he would have 12 points, yet he passed as dealer.

So there is no guess; *North* must have ♠Q and declarer can confidently finesse East's ♠J for his eighth trick.

3		♠ Q96	Dir: S
		♥ QT86	Vul: E-W
		♦ 972	
		♣ QJ8	
♠ KT5	♠ AJ3		
♥ 973	♥ J4		
♦ QT84	♦ AJ53		
♣ AK4	♣ 7632		
7	♠ 8742		
12	♥ AK52		
11	♦ K6		
10	♣ T95		
		♠♥♦♣NT	
		N - - 1 - -	
		S - - 1 - -	
		E 3 3 - 1 2	
		W 3 3 - 1 2	

Board 4		Dealer W		Vul all	
W	N	E	S		
p	p	p	1♠		
p	2♠	all pass			

Board 5		Dealer N		Vul NS	
N	E	S	W		
3♥	p	p	3♠		
p	4♠	all pass			

Board 6		Dealer E		Vul EW	
E	S	W	N		
1NT	p	3NT	all pass		

Avoid leading tricky suit

Declarer has four spades and ♥A so to make 2♠ he needs three club tricks

There is a better way to get these than to try to guess which opponent has ♣Q.

That is to arrange for the opponents to lead clubs first. He should draw trumps then lead any red card, giving the opponents the lead.

After cashing their red-suit winners the opponents have an unhappy choice.

If they lead a club declarer wins three club tricks regardless of who has ♣Q.

If they lead a red suit, declarer can trump in one hand (it doesn't matter which one) and discard a club from the other hand.

4		Dir: W		Vul: Both	
♠ KJ75	♥ 862	♦ 875	♣ KT2	♠ T3	♥ QJT5
♠ 942	♥ K94	♦ KQJT	♠ Q75	♠ A63	♥ 9864
7	♠ AQ86	♠ A73	♥ 942	♠ AJ3	
11	7				
15					
N	1	-	-	2	2
S	1	-	-	2	2
E	-	1	1	-	-
W	-	1	1	-	-

Count suit distribution.

North is likely to lead his singleton ♣2 and trump the third club. That is a blow but it reveals some useful information.

Even more is revealed when North discards on the first round of trumps.

That means South will have started with only three red cards because North, with two black singletons, has eleven of them.

Declarer should draw trumps then lead ♥AK. South follows suit to both.

South is now known to have started with only one diamond (if any) so declarer can now extract that diamond by leading to his ♦A. After that the finesse of the ♦J is guaranteed to win.

5		Dir: N		Vul: N-S	
♠ 3	♥ QJT9642	♦ Q983	♣ 2	♠ J65	♥ AK
♠ AKQ42	♥ 75	♦ AT4	♠ QJ6	♠ KJ652	♥ T53
5	♠ T987	♥ 83	♦ 7	♠ AK9874	
18	12				
7					
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	2	4	-	4	5
W	2	4	-	4	5

Take finesse the safe way

South is likely to lead a heart with North's ♥Q taken by declarer's ♥A.

North is now dangerous.

That is because a heart lead from North will give South four tricks with his ♥K1073 sitting over declarer's ♥J4.

But if South gets the lead declarer will be playing last on that trick so his ♥J4 can stop the hearts running.

Declarer only needs four diamond tricks for his contract (not five) so he can afford one loser provided North doesn't get the lead.

So he must finesse the ♦J which will lose (if at all) only to South.

6		Dir: E		Vul: E-W	
♠ QJT84	♥ Q92	♦ Q95	♣ J9	♠ 763	♥ AJ4
♠ AK5	♥ 86	♦ AT3	♠ K7642	♠ KJ642	♥ A5
8	♠ 92	♥ KT753	♦ 87	♠ QT83	
14	13				
5					
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	5	2	3	4
W	4	5	2	3	4

Board 7	Dealer S	Vul all	
S	W	N	E
1♠	2♥	2♠	p
3♣	p	4♠	all pass

Take finesse the safe way

East should lead diamonds (not hearts – for two reasons! – see below) and declarer trumps the second one.

The danger of a heart lead by East through declarer’s ♥K is apparent from the bidding so declarer needs to draw trumps without East getting the lead.

That means lead to ♠K then finesse ♠J on the second round. If West wins he can cash one heart trick but not two.

[Why lead diamonds not hearts?

Reason 1: Leading Ace without King might set up King in an opponents hand

Reason 2: Partner knows about your hearts from the bidding]

7	♠ KT42	Dir: S
	♥ 97	Vul: Both
	♦ 9753	
	♣ KQ2	
♠ 8	♠ Q75	
♥ AQJT3	♥ 8652	
♦ AK84	♦ JT62	
♣ 973	♣ 86	
8	♠ AJ963	♠♦♥♣NT
14	♥ K4	N 4 - - 4 -
15	♦ Q	S 4 - - 5 -
	♣ AJT54	E - 3 3 - -
		W - 3 3 - -

Board 8	Dealer W	Vul none	
W	N	E	S
p	2♠	all pass	

Count opponents' points

Declarer has to lose three heart tricks (likely at the start, which will mark West with ♥AK). He also has to lose to ♣A and possibly a diamond and a spade as well.

He can't avoid a diamond loser if West has ♦K but spades can be finessed either way.

So which way should he finesse spades?

The answer is found by counting West's points (remember he passed as dealer). He is known to have ♥AK and, on a bad day, he might also have ♦K.

If he also had ♠Q that would be 12 points and he would have opened.

So declarer should finesse ♠10. If that loses the ♦K must be in the East hand and a subsequent finesse of ♦Q will win.

8	♠ AJ9864	Dir: W
	♥ 862	Vul: None
	♦ 73	
	♣ KQ	
♠ 72	♠ Q53	
♥ AK3	♥ QJT5	
♦ K94	♦ JT6	
♣ JT984	♣ A52	
10	♠ KT	♠♦♥♣NT
11	♥ 974	N - - - 2 -
9	♦ AQ852	S - - - 2 -
	♣ 763	E 3 - 3 - 1
		W 3 - 3 - -

Board 9	Dealer N	Vul EW	
N	E	S	W
1NT	p	p	2♠ all pass

Retain two-way finesse option

After drawing trumps (three rounds only, leaving ♠J at large) declarer should play on clubs in a way which will not lose to an opponent's ♣J.

That means he must win with ♣K and ♣Q first preparing to finesse ♣10 if South discards on the second round.

Although in theory winning ♣K then ♣A preparing to finesse ♣9 is an option *that is not the case in reality*.

South can't have four clubs as North, who opened 1NT, will not have only one club.

If North and South both follow suit to ♣K and ♣Q there won't be any club loser.

9	♠ 763	Dir: N
	♥ AT6	Vul: E-W
	♦ AKQ	
	♣ J873	
♠ AKQ94	♠ 2	
♥ 8	♥ J7542	
♦ T75	♦ J83	
♣ KQ95	♣ AT42	
14	♠ JT85	♠♦♥♣NT
14	♥ KQ93	N - 2 - - -
6	♦ 9642	S - 2 - - -
	♣ 6	E 3 - - 2 -
		W 3 - - 2 -