



Bridge Cardplay: An Easy Guide

FINESSING

David Bird & Marc Smith

Text © 2021 David Bird & Marc Smith
Cover Image © iStock.com/stock_art

All rights reserved.

Honors eBooks is an imprint of Master Point Press. All contents, editing and design (excluding cover design) are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Master Point Press
214 Merton St. Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4S 1A6
(647) 956-4933

info@masterpointpress.com

www.masterpointpress.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.teachbridge.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

ISBN: 978-1-77140-333-7

Cover Design: Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

1 2 3 4 5 6 24 23 22 21

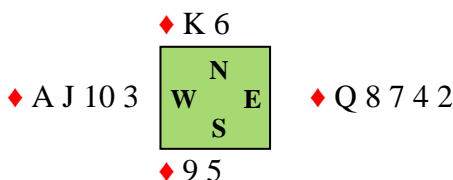
Contents

1. Leading towards honor cards.....	4
Quiz.....	9
2. Repeating a finesse.....	12
Quiz.....	17
3. Leading the right card for a finesse.....	20
Quiz.....	25
4. Double finesses.....	28
Quiz.....	33
5. Other types of finesse.....	36
Quiz.....	41
6. Deals with multiple finesses.....	44
Quiz.....	49

1.

Leading towards honor cards

An important early lesson to learn is that it's generally best to lead **towards** honors that you hope will win a trick for you. Look at the diamond position below. You're the declarer, sitting South with the ♦95. North is the dummy and East/West are the defenders. (This will be true for all the diagrams in this book, and in nearly all bridge books.)



How would you play if you wanted to make a trick with the ♦K?

You lead a low card, the ♦5, **towards the high card** in the dummy. Let's say first that West follows with the ♦3. You play dummy's ♦K and this wins the trick.

Why did it win? Because the only higher card (the ♦♦A) was held by West, rather than East. In other words, you were lucky on this occasion. Next time you are in this situation, East may take the ♦K with the ♦A and you will not make a diamond trick.

You can see how hopeless it would be if you made the first lead from the North hand, away from the king. West would win the first round with the ♦10 and the second round with the ♦A. It is absolutely essential, to give yourself a chance, that you lead towards the high card. This is an example of the play known as a **finesse**. You lead towards a card, hoping that the player sitting over that card cannot beat it.

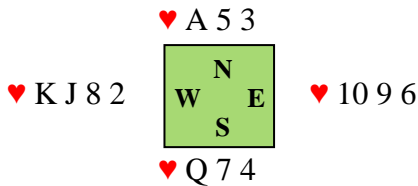


To have a chance of making a second heart trick with the ♥Q, you will need to lead **towards** it. If you happen to be in the South hand, you can cross to dummy by leading the ♥4 to the ♥A. You then lead the ♥3. If East decides to play his ♥K, you play the ♥7 from your hand. Your ♥Q will then make a trick on the third round.

If instead East plays the ♥10, you will play your ♥Q. Luck is with you and West cannot beat this card. You have made a second trick in the suit.

Again, you can see how hopeless it would be to lead the ♥Q instead. When the cards lay as in the diagram, East would win with the ♥K. You would end with just one trick from the ♥A.

Suppose instead that West held the missing king:



If you make the correct play – low to the ace and then lead towards the queen, you will be unlucky. To lead the ♥Q from your hand would be a hopeless prospect, a beginner’s mistake. West would cover with the ♥K and you would still finish with just one trick, from the ♥A.

The same principle applies when you are hoping to make an extra trick with a jack. Let’s see some examples:

Quiz Hands

1.

♠ 5 4 2
♥ 6 4
♦ 9 7 3 2
♣ A 5 4 2

♣Q led

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 3
♥ A K 9 2
♦ A Q 6 5
♣ K 7

You open 2♣ and arrive in 3NT, West leading the ♣Q. You win in the South hand and count seven top tricks. Which suit gives you a chance of increasing this to nine? How will you play the deal?

2.

♠ A J 4
♥ Q 10 5
♦ 9 6 4
♣ A 9 7 4

♦3 led

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 8 5 2
♥ A K 4
♦ A K 5
♣ 6 5 3

The bidding is 1NT–3NT. West leads the ♦3 and East plays the ♦10. What plan will you make?

Answer to Quiz Hand 1

	♠ 5 4 2											
	♥ 6 4											
	♦ 9 7 3 2											
	♣ A 5 4 2											
♠ J 9 7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 10 8 6	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 10 8 5		♥ Q J 7 3										
♦ J 8		♦ K 10 4										
♣ Q J 10 8 3		♣ 9 6										
	♠ A K 3											
	♥ A K 9 2											
	♦ A Q 6 5											
	♣ K 7											

West	North	East	South
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♣Q against 3NT. To make a plan in notrump, you begin by counting your top tricks (tricks that you could take immediately). Here you have two spade tricks, two heart tricks, one diamond trick and two club tricks. That's a total of seven.

There is no real chance of making extra tricks in any suit except diamonds. You must lead **towards** the diamond honors in your hand. You win the first trick with the ♣A and continue with the ♦2, finessing the ♦Q. East has the ♦K and the finesse wins.

You now need to set up one more trick from the diamond suit. You play the ♦A and both defenders follow suit. That's good, their cards are splitting 3-2. You lead another round of diamonds, East winning with the king.

When East returns a club, you win with the king and take a trick with dummy's ♦9. You have a total of nine tricks and make your 3NT.

BRIDGE CARDPLAY EASY GUIDE series

1. Finessing
2. Ruffing losers
3. Discarding losers
4. Drawing trumps
5. Establishing long suits
6. Holding up a stopper
7. Notrump contracts
8. Suit contracts
9. Entries
10. Playing safely

NEWCOMER

Whether you are just setting out to discover the wonderful game of bridge, or have played for some time, your success will be limited without a sound understanding of the basic techniques of cardplay.

In this series, two of the game's top writers explain clearly the various cardplay skills that you will need. Every booklet contains six chapters – each ending with a short Quiz.

The topics covered in this first book, on Finessing, are:

- Leading towards high cards
- Repeating a finesse
- Leading the right card for a finesse
- Double finesses
- Other types of finesse
- Deals with multiple finesses



DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) is the world's most prolific bridge writer, with 145 bridge books to his name. Known for the clarity of his writing and explanations, he has won the American Bridge Teachers' Association Book of the Year Award a record nine times. His celebrated humorous fiction series, featuring the cantankerous Abbot, has run for over 45 years.



MARC SMITH (Southampton, UK) is the author, with Barbara Seagram, of the world's best-selling bridge book in the past sixty years, *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know*. He has written many other bridge books and played successfully in several international championships. He is a popular online bridge teacher, conducting many classes at all levels of play.



AN HONORS BOOK FROM
MASTER POINT PRESS