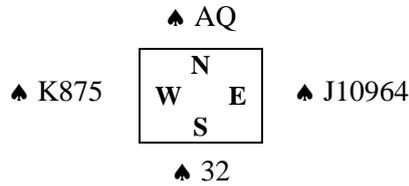




First Steps in Declarer Play

*Taking tricks with aces requires no more skill than kicking a football into an empty net.
Making tricks with small cards is the mark of the real bridge player.*

The Finesse

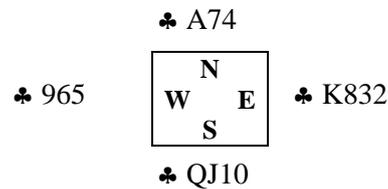
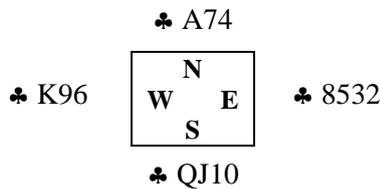


South is on lead. He cannot see the cards held by East and West. He plays ♠2 and West follows with ♠5. Which card should he play from dummy - ♠Q or ♠A? If he plays ♠Q he makes two tricks in spades. If he plays ♠A he makes only one. Because West has the king.

This manoeuvre is called a finesse. We finesse against the king, which sits in the jaws of the ace and queen.

Another example. The contract is no-trump, and this is the club suit.

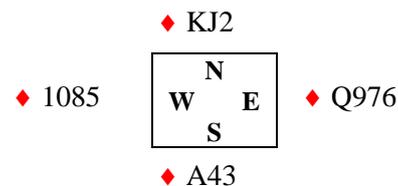
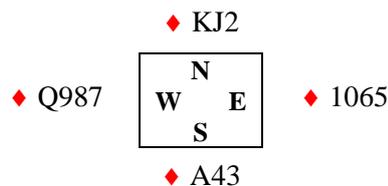
The king is the only missing honour card, and that is the only card with which defenders might win a trick. The king is either in the West hand or the East hand. It is 50-50 which opponent holds the king.



South starts with ♣Q. West can either play ♣K or not. If he plays ♣K North wins the trick with ♣A. Later South makes 2 more tricks with ♣J and ♣10. If West does not play ♣K the order of winning tricks changes: South plays ♣Q, West ♣6, and North ♣4. South has *run* ♣Q. East follows with ♣2 and ♣Q wins. South continues with ♣J. Again, West can play ♣K or not. Either way, South makes three tricks by finessing against the king.

What happens when East has ♣K? Again, South starts with ♣Q, West and North play small clubs and East wins with ♣K. Later when North or South get back on lead declarer makes two tricks in clubs. When West has ♣K South makes an extra trick.

We can finesse against a queen as well as a king.



In this example the queen sits in the jaws of the king-jack. South leads ♦A, West plays ♦7, dummy ♦2, East ♦5. Then South leads ♦3, West plays ♦8 (obviously not ♦Q). If South plays ♦J from dummy it wins the trick. Once again the finesse gives a 50% chance of an extra trick.

In this lay-out South wins the first diamond trick with the ace, then leads low to ♦J, taken by East with ♦Q: the finesse *fails*. But ♦K is still good for a second trick later.

We call two or more honours with one missing to make up a sequence - such as ace-queen (missing the king); king-jack (missing the queen); or queen-ten (missing the jack) - a *tenace*.

When you lead towards a tenace and play the lower card you *take a finesse*: the finesse *works* when the missing honour is in the hand in front of the tenace.

Lead towards your high cards. A finesse will work half the time.

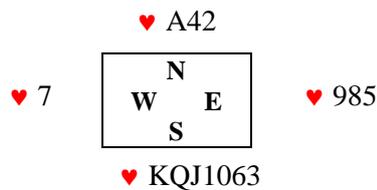


First Steps in Declarer Play

Drawing Trump

When playing with trump the declarer will often start by *Drawing Trump*. (leading trump till the defenders have none left.) He must keep careful count of how many trump have been played, so that he knows when they have all been drawn. Then he can start work on another suit.

(**Note:** There are some boards where declarer has other work to do before he draws trump.
We shall examine this sort of board later)



Hearts are trump, and we see only the trump suit.
South is declarer, and on lead. No hearts have yet been played
 South has 6 trump, North 3. The defenders have the remaining 4
 South leads ♥3, West ♥7, North ♥A and East ♥5.
 Now there are just 2 trump “out”, ie in the defenders’ hands.
 South calls for ♥2 from dummy, East plays ♥8 and South ♥K.
 West has no trump left, so he makes a discard.

South knows that there is one trump left in the East hand, and that it will take one more round of trump to draw it. So he plays ♥Q, West discards again, North plays ♥4 and East ♥9.

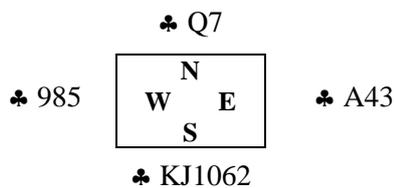
Now the defenders have no trump left, and we say that all the trump have been drawn.

**It is important to keep track of your trump suit by noting how many cards have been played.
 This is difficult at first, but it will become easier if you keep trying.**

Counting is important

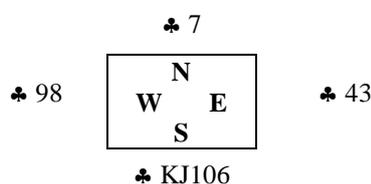
Suit establishment at no-trump

In a no-trump game the correct technique for declarer is to play the suit where he needs to establish tricks. The *work suit* is one in which declarer and dummy have many cards between them, but one or more of the high cards are missing, so that tricks have to be *established*.



The club suit in this diagram is a typical work suit.
 The contract is no-trump, and South is on lead
South leads ♣2 towards ♣Q with the aim of getting rid of ♣A
 East takes ♣Q with ♣A and wins the trick.

That leaves:



When declarer gets on lead by taking a trick in another suit he can play out ♣K, ♣J, ♣10 and ♣6. The work suit has become worth four tricks

Once again, you must keep count of your work suit. If you notice when a defender fails to follow suit you will know whether your winners are established or not.

Counting is very important!