

Finesses are Bad

A finesse (with no information) is a coin flip. I envision Javier Bardem in No Country for Old Men, planning on killing us if our finesse fails. When we can, we want to try for other options (or fall back on a finesse as a last resort). Even if this increases our chances only slightly, that little bit can be the difference between life and death.

D

A Finesse is Bad

10 9 8 3 Q J 6 A J 8 7 A 7

♥♥♥♥♠♠♦♦♣♣

North

7 6 5 K 5 4 9 3 Q J 10 9 4

♥♥♥♥♠♠♦♦♣♣

West

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

A 4 8 7 3 2 10 6 5 2 8 6 5

♥♥♠♠♠♠♦♦♣♣

East

K Q J 2 A 10 9 K Q 4 K 3 2

♥♥♥♥♠♠♦♦♣♣

South

6♥ South | NS 0 EW 0

Here we reach 6H and need a finesse in spades to make. This is a coin flip for our lives (others won't bid slam).

D
Two Finesses are...
Good?

North
10 9 8 3 Q J 6 A Q 8 7 K 7

West North East South

	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	6 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West
K 5 8 5 4 9 6 3 Q J 10 9 4

East
7 6 K 7 3 J 10 5 2 8 6 5 3

South
A Q J 4 2 A 10 9 2 K 4 A 2

6 ♥ South | NS 0 EW 0

This contract is much more likely to succeed. We only need 1 out of 2 of our finesses to win. That ups our chances to 75%

nd

Deal 1
Carefully
D

North

- ♠ 65
- ♥ K32
- ♦ A9872
- ♣ K42

West

- ♠ 987
- ♥ Q64
- ♦ Q5
- ♣ J9763

East

- ♠ 102
- ♥ 10987
- ♦ KJ103
- ♣ Q105

South

- ♠ AKQJ43
- ♥ AJ5
- ♦ 64
- ♣ A8

6 ♠ South | NS 0 EW 0

The heart finesse is tempting, but it's better to go and work to set up the diamond suit. Be careful about how you do this. You need to duck a diamond first before playing the ace and another.

Deal 2
D

West	North	East	South
♠ J1098 ♥ Q1064 ♦ K96 ♣ 94	♠ 65 ♥ 83 ♦ QJ432 ♣ AQ102	♠ 743 ♥ 9752 ♦ A10 ♣ KJ87	♠ AKQ2 ♥ AKJ ♦ 875 ♣ 653

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

3NT South | NS 0 EW 0

Those club finesses look promising, but you should work on the diamond suit. Yes, you're missing the A/K/10/9, but you will take three tricks in this suit if you find an honor doubleton or third onside.

Deal 3
D

West	North	East	South
♠ 84 ♥ 1098 ♦ Q73 ♣ 108654	♠ 1063 ♥ 654 ♦ 654 ♣ AJ32	♠ 95 ♥ A732 ♦ 10982 ♣ KQ9	♠ AKQJ72 ♥ KQJ ♦ AKJ ♣ 7

West North East South
 Pass 2♦ Pass 2♣
 Pass 3♠ Pass 2♠
 Pass 5♣ Pass 4NT
 Pass Pass Pass 6♠

6♠ South | NS 0 EW 0

While you can take the diamond finesse eventually, you might as well see if luck is with you in the club suit. You'll need a lot of luck (2-2 spades and KQx of clubs), but increasing your odds is always good. Play ace of clubs and ruff a club high.

High spade and the s7 over to the dummy's 10. This might be your only entry so if spades were 3-1, you'd need to take your diamond finesse now. With spades 2-2, you can ruff another club and voila! The S2 is your last way over to dummy.

Deal 4		West North East South			
West		North		East	
♠ 987 ♥ K42 ♦ KQ10963 ♣ 4		♠ AJ54 ♥ AQ7 ♦ 54 ♣ Q987		♠ 106 ♥ 10986 ♦ 872 ♣ A652	
		South			
		♠ KQ32 ♥ J53 ♦ AJ ♣ KJ103			

We looked all set until the club lead got ruffed. Now things look bleak. Don't rush to take the heart finesse. While West might have started with Kx, that looks unlikely on the play. Instead, you can endplay West by drawing trump and exiting with the DJ.