Lesson 39:
Card Play: Coping with Common Combinations

Aims

To expand our abilities as declarer by

advance preparation

To teach the best way to play some common

card combinations

To remind the class that there are no Absolute Rules

The more interesting combinations take time to learn, but the effort is worthwhile.

Percentage Plays

Rule 1: When the only missing honour card is the **king** we lay down the ace when we have **11 cards** between the hands: with **fewer than 11** cards we finesse.

Rule 2 When the missing honour is the **queen** we play ace and king if we have 9 (or more) cards in the suit. With 8 or fewer we finesse. "*Eight Ever, Nine Never*"

Some card combinations are quite dull

♥A72
♥KQ6

With this holding we will make 3 tricks.
No more and no less. We can cash our tricks in any order we please.

♥KJ2

♥A53

This time we cash the ace, then lead low to the jack, finessing against the queen.
We make 3 tricks 50% of the time, when West has ♥Q.

Percentage Plays
a) ♠J10965
   ♠AQ7432

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b)

♠Q1096

♠AJ872 **Finesse starting with Q ♠**

play for the drop

c) ♠J1062
♠AK943

play for the drop

d)

♠A543
♠KJ76

Lead to ♠A, then back towards ♠KJ7

Eight ever, nine never (finesse)

'Best' Plays

a) ♠J972

♠K103

♠AQ8654

Lead ♠J from dummy, run it if East plays low.

*NB: it is wrong to play low to Q♠ with **10 cards**.*

b) ♠Q876

♠A5432

This time leading the queen is silly
Cash the ace, then lead
Towards ♠Q

c)   ♣J10
     ♣AK96

Run the jack on the first round

d)   ♣43
     ♣AKJ1072

Finesse on the first round

Eight ever, nine never (finesse)

e)   ♣J43

♣AK72

Cash the ace than ***lead towards the unsupported honour***, the jack.

f)   ♣ J4

♣AK72

Here we cannot afford to cash the ace first – lead low towards singleton honour

Combination finesses

a) ♥AJ10
♥543

Start by playing low to ♥10.
If West has ♥KQ he must *split his honours* or
you make 2 tricks at once.
If West plays low and East wins ♥K or ♥Q lead low to ♥J later, making 2 tricks unless East has ♥KQ. (A 75% chance)

b) ♥AJ9
♥543

This time play low to ♥9.
If East has ♥10 you make just 1 trick.
If West has ♥10 and East wins ♥K or ♥Q you can lead low to ♥J making 2 tricks if West has ♥K10x or ♥Q10x.

c) ♥AJ6
♥543

The only hope of 2 tricks is that West has ♥KQ
a 25% shot. Still worth a try!

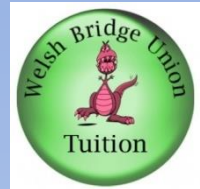d)   ♥KQ10

♥543

Start by playing low to ♥K.
 If East wins ♥A finesse ♥10 next time. If ♥K wins play low to ♥Q.
(Note that East gives you a nasty guess by refusing to take his ace on the first round)

e) ♥K109

♥543

Low to ♥9 will probably lose to ♥Q or ♥J
Later try low to ♥10 - you win a trick whenever West has ♥Q or ♥J.
It does not matter who has ♥A

Some Real Hands where Logic is More Important than Rules.

West leads ♣9 to East's ace.
East cashes ♦A and and returns ♠7 to ♠J.

South has lost 3 tricks and must pick up the trump suit for no losers.

West has shown 7 spades in the bidding and has not been able to ruff anything

He is very likely to hold a singleton heart, so you should finesse.

NS Vul
Dealer
West

♠ 10
♥ AJ96
♦ KQ54
♣ KQ52

♠ AQJ8654
♥ 4
♦ J83
♣ 93

N
W   E
S

♠ 73
♥ Q73
♦ A962
♣ A1074

♠ K92
♥ K10852
♦ 107
♣ J86

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠

NS **Vul**
Dealer
West

♠10
♥AJ96
♦KQ54
♣KQ52

♠AQJ8654
♥4
♦J83
♣93

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠73
♥Q73
♦A962
♣A1074

♠K92
♥K10852
♦107
♣J86

West leads ♣9 to East's ace.
East cashes ♦A and and returns ♠7 to ♠J.

South has lost 3 tricks and must pick up the trump suit for no losers.
West has shown 7 spades in the bidding and has *not been able to ruff anything. He is very likely to hold a singleton heart, so you should finesse*.

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
3♠	Dble	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Quiz

1) How should you play to give yourself the best chance of making as many tricks as possible?.
You may choose whether you wish to lead from the North or the South hand.

a ♠Q10962	b ♠Q10962	c ♥KJ432	d ♦AKJ10
N	N	N	N
W E	W E	W E	W E
S	S	S	S
♠AJ7543	♠AJ754	♥A765	♦7654
Lay down the ace	Finesse by running the queen, ten or nine	Lay down ace and king	Cash ace, then finesse ten

e) ♣KQ107

N

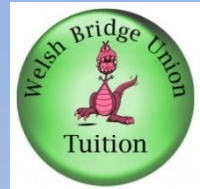W   E

S

♣A9543

Cash king –
if someone
shows out
finesse

f) ♠Q42

N

W   E

S

♠A73

Cash ace, then
lead
towards
queen

g) ♣A52

N

W   E

S

♣J109

Run jack,
later run ten

End of Lesson