

ALEX'S BRIDGE TIP # 1

If this is your hand:

S 872
H 54
D QJ10954
C Q6

Your partner opens 1NT. How many tricks are you providing partner if you pass 1NT? Your partner will not have D AK3 !

On a hand this week, you are better off in a trump suit contract. You cannot bid 2D as that is a transfer. You could pass but she won't make 1NT. AND opponents may now get into the auction and bid and make 2H or 3H.

You should bid 2S which is a relay to 3C. Partner is required to now bid 3C and now you bid 3D and she will pass.

S 872
H 5
D 432
C QJ10954

Now your hand is even worse. The fact is: The worse your hand is, the more important it is to rescue your partner. Bid 2S. She will bid 3C and you will pass.

2S is actually not called a transfer; it is called a relay because 2S does not promise a long Club suit.

Now, what will you bid when partner opens 1NT and you have

S 7
H 765
D AKQ762
C J43

Partner opens 1 NT. Now you have tricks for her. Do not rescue her. Do not bid 3D (Forcing) as you do not want to be in 5 of a minor...(only once a year)!! So bid 3NT. Do not worry about your singleton S and three small Hearts because all partner's points are outside the D suit and she has 15-17 HCP. You are not to worry about the other suits; those are partner's problem. And partner has to play this, not you!

Should I lead an honor when I take a finesse?

An excerpt from *Play It Safe*
by Barbara Seagram & David Bird
A new book coming this summer

Suppose you need four spade tricks.

♠ K 4	♠ A Q 6 5 □	♠ 10 9 7
	♠ J 8 3 2	

You should lead a low card to the queen and then cash the ace. Here West's king falls and your jack will win the third round. If instead you mistakenly lead the ♠J on the first round, West will cover with the king and East will win the third round with the ♠10. You will make only three tricks from the suit.

Note also that leading the ♠J would reduce your tricks from three to two when West holds a singleton king.

	♠ A Q 6 5	
♠ K 8 7 4	□	♠ 3
	♠ J 10 9 2	

Here you have more middle cards and can afford to lead the ♠J on the first round. If West covers with the king, you will win with the ace and make the next three tricks with the queen, 10 and 9, even if the suit breaks 4-1.

If instead West followed with the ♠4, you would play low from dummy. Conveniently still in the South hand, you would lead the ♠10 next.

The situation is different here:

	♠ A 7 6	
♠ 9 4	□	♠ K 10 8 5
	♠ Q J 3 2	

You would like to make three tricks from these North-South cards. Because you do not hold the 10, it would be quite wrong to lead the ♠Q on the first round. West would cover if he held the king, You would make two tricks with the ace and jack, but would lose the third round to the 10 or 9. You would make three tricks only when the suit broke 3-3.

Instead, you should play the ♠A and lead towards the honors in the South hand – twice if necessary. You will make three spade tricks whenever East holds the ♠K. You can still think of this as a sort of finesse; you are playing East (instead of West) for the king.

It's an important lesson to learn. Unless you have sufficient middle cards to make the lead of an honor worthwhile, you will do better to lead towards the honor card(s) that you hope will give you an extra trick. i.e in order to lead an honour in a finesse, your side must own the next door neighbours (usually 3). Usually you lead from the weaker side towards the stronger when doing a finesse.

If you are uncertain whether to lead a low card or an honor for a finesse, ask yourself: 'Will I be happy if I lead an honor and it is covered?' In the position above, you would not be happy; it would not help you at all. So, you will generally fare better to lead towards the ♠QJ.

(An exception would be if you needed only two tricks from the suit and did not want to lose the lead to the defenders.)

Now let's see some other positions where you may need to finesse more than once in a suit.

	♥A J 10 5	
♥ K 8 2	□	♥ Q 7
	♥9 6 4 3	

You lead the ♥3 and finesse the ♥J, losing to the queen. Later, you will lead the ♥4 to the ♥10. This second finesse wins and you continue with the ♥A to drop West's king. You make three tricks from the suit.

This is called a **double finesse**, because you are finessing against two missing honors. Note that it would be wrong to lead the ♥9 on the first round. This would cost you if West held a singleton king or queen. You would then lose two tricks to East's ♥Q872 or ♥K872.

Finesse the lower of two honors first

	♠ A Q 10 3	
♠ K J 8 4	□	♠ 9 6
	♠ 7 5 2	

Here you start with a low card to the 10. On this occasion you are lucky, because West holds both missing honors. The 10 wins and you return to the South hand in a different suit to finesse the queen. Three spade tricks are yours. If the suit had broken 3-3 as well, you would score four tricks.

Note that it's important to finesse the lower honor first (the 10 here). If you mistakenly finesse the queen first, West's ♠ KJ will be worth a trick against dummy's remaining ♠ A103.

This is a similar position:

	♠ K J 6 2	
♠ Q 10 4	□	♠ A 9 7 2
	♠ 8 4 3	

You lead low to the jack (again the lower honor). If West held the ace and queen, you would make tricks with both the jack and the king.