

## **"How as Declarer to 'Correctly' Play Various 'Card Combinations' "**

**Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>1</sup>**

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When your Partnership together holds **9, 8, 7** or **6** cards the probabilities<sup>2</sup> of your "dropping" a single **1** "missing" Honor are:

| Cards Your<br>Partnership<br>Holds | Cards Ops<br>Hold | <b>1</b> Card "Missing" |            |            |             |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
|                                    |                   | <b>K</b>                | <b>Q</b>   | <b>J</b>   | <b>T</b>    |
| <b>9</b>                           | 4                 | 12%                     | <b>52%</b> | <b>90%</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <b>8</b>                           | 5                 | 5%                      | 31%        | <b>73%</b> | <b>96%</b>  |
| <b>7</b>                           | 6                 | 3%                      | 19%        | <b>54%</b> | <b>87%</b>  |
| <b>6</b>                           | 7                 | 1%                      | 9%         | 38%        | <b>73%</b>  |

The following discussion focuses on your Partnership "missing" **1** single Honor and holding **6** to **9** cards in a given Suit. This discussion uses ideas and slightly modified examples drawn from Richard Pavlicek's wed posting, "Card Combinations":

<https://www.rpbridge.net/4a00.htm>

This discussion assumes that (1) as Declarer you hold adequate "entries" back and forth between your own Hand and the Dummy,

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<sup>1</sup> As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Journal, [https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA\\_1\\_24.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf), Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, the purported ACBL Double Triple Emerald Gold Platinum LifeMaster with 20+ million ACBL MasterPoints, in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So, this article was really, really written by Bruce Thompson.

<sup>2</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see **"A Comprehensive List of 8 Different Categories of Bridge Probabilities, and How These May Help Guide Your Bidding and Play"**:  
[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8\\_probs.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_probs.pdf)

(2) no Opponent has been identified as a **"Dangerous Opponent"** whom you must avoid gaining the lead, and (3) the Opponents were silent throughout the auction.

This discussion assumes that you may need to finesse in order to "make" your contract or you have decided to pursue an Overtrick. This discussion (unlike Pavlicek's) only covers situations in which your Partnership is "missing" *only* **1** face card.

1. If your Partnership is missing **only** the **Jack** face card.

A. You hold **6** cards in the Suit.

If your Partnership holds **6 or fewer** cards in the Suit *always* finesse *after* you first "cash" **1** "winner".

NORTH  
Dummy  
A Q T 4

**YOU**  
K 3

First, "cash" your own King. Second, finesse toward the NORTH Dummy Ten.

B. You hold **7** cards in the Suit.

If your Partnership holds **7** cards in the Suit *usually* do not finesse.

NORTH  
Dummy  
A Q T 3

**YOU**  
K 4 2

First, "cash" the NORTH Dummy Ace or Queen. Second, "cash" your own King. Third, unless EAST "shows out" of the Suit giving you a **"marked finesse"** through WEST, then "cash" the Queen.

C. You hold **9** cards in the Suit.

NORTH  
Dummy  
A Q 9 6 3

**YOU**  
K T 4 2

First, "cash" the Dummy's Ace or Queen. If EAST "shows" out", second, finesse toward your own Ten. If WEST "shows" out, second, "cross" to your own Hand and then, third, finesse toward the Dummy's 9.

D. You hold **9** cards in the Suit.

NORTH  
Dummy  
A Q 9 6 3

**YOU**  
K 8 4 2

First, "cash" the King to confirm the Opponents do not hold a 4-0 "split". You do not have a finesse.

2. If your Partnership is missing **only** the **Queen** face card.

A. You hold **7** cards in the Suit.

If your Partnership holds **8 or fewer** cards in the Suit *always* finesse *after* you first "cash" **1** "winner".

NORTH  
Dummy  
A J 6 3

**YOU**  
K 5 4

First, "cash" your own King. Second, finesse toward the NORTH Dummy Jack.

B. You hold **7** cards in the Suit.

If your Partnership holds **7** cards in the Suit and as Declarer you hold a doubleton finesse **immediately**.

NORTH  
Dummy  
A K J T 6

**YOU**  
5 4

First, finesse toward the NORTH Dummy Jack or Ten.

C. You hold **8** cards in the Suit.

NORTH

Dummy

A K J T 4

**YOU**

5 3 2

First, "cash" the Dummy's Ace or King. Second, "cross" to your own Hand in another Suit. Third, finesse toward the NORTH Dummy Jack.

D. You hold **8** cards in the Suit.

NORTH

Dummy

T 5 4

**YOU**

A K J 8 3

First, "cash" the Dummy's Ace or King. Second, "cross" to the Dummy in another Suit. Third, finesse by playing the NORTH Dummy's Ten.

E. You hold **8** cards in the Suit.

NORTH

Dummy

K 9 5

**YOU**

A J T 8 3

First, "cash" the Dummy's King. Second, finesse by playing the NORTH Dummy's 9. This allows you to "drop" a singleton Queen held by WEST or deal with EAST holding Q,x,x,x.

F. You hold **10** cards in the Suit.

NORTH

Dummy

A J 9 6 5

**YOU**

K 7 4 3 2

First, "cash" your own King. You do not expect to finesse but EAST may "show out" to offer a "marked finesse" against WEST. Second, "cross" to your own Hand in another Suit. Third, finesse toward the NORTH Dummy Jack.

3. If your Partnership is missing **only** the **King** face card. Do not lead an “unsupported” Honor unless you will benefit if the next player “covers” with the “missing” King.

A. You hold **7** cards in the Suit.

NORTH  
Dummy  
A Q J 3

**YOU**

T 4 2

Do not lead the Ten because you not hold the “touching” 9. First, lead your 2 toward the NORTH Dummy’s Queen (or Jack). Second, if the Dummy’s Queen or Jack “wins”, later lead the 4 toward the Jack (or Queen).

B. You hold **7** cards in the Suit.

NORTH  
Dummy  
A J T 3

**YOU**

Q 9 2

First, lead your 9 in case WEST holds the King and refuses to “cover” so that you can then next lead the Queen.

C. You hold **7** cards in the Suit.

NORTH  
Dummy  
A J T 3

**YOU**

Q 9 2

First, lead your 9 in case WEST holds the King and refuses to “cover” so that you can then next lead the Queen.

D. You hold **8** cards in the Suit.

NORTH

Dummy

Q J 6 5 3

**YOU**

A 4 2

First, "cash" your own Ace. Second, lead to the NORTH Dummy's Q,J. If the Dummy's Queen (or Jack) "wins", later return to your own Hand and again lead toward the Dummy's Jack (or Queen).