

Chinese Finesse

In bridge a Chinese Finesse is a fake finesse that, based on the actual card layout, would not work; however, due to a defender's confusion of partner's holdings, an otherwise non-winning trick is allowed to slide by the defender (also called a Pseudo Finesse)

There are several oddities about a Chinese finesse. It is not a finesse, it is not Chinese and Deng Xiaoping, Peking's senior Deputy Prime Minister and the only known Chinese bridge player, has probably never heard of it.

If you lead an unsupported queen toward an ace in the dummy, the queen cannot, in theory, win the trick. But in practice, it will do so occasionally, because your left-hand opponent withholds his king in the belief that you have the jack.

In this crude form, the Chinese finesse rarely succeeds. But when smaller cards are involved, a shrewd declarer can sometimes take advantage of an unwary defender!

	Dummy	
	♠A5	
West		East
♠K643		♠JT92
	South	
	♠Q87	

In this layout, South is in hand and has decided that West likely has the ♠K. The normal play of a spade to the dummy's ace, followed by a spade toward the queen, will therefore fail. So South tries a Chinese finesse instead.

The ♠Q is led from hand. West might duck out of fear of blowing a trick if the actual layout is:

	Dummy	
	♠A5	
West		East
♠K643		♠9872
	South	
	♠QJT	

Another example:

	Dummy	
	♥K53	
West		East
♥Q86		♥AT97
	South	
	♥J42	

South is on lead and needs a heart trick. This is impossible double-dummy, but a Chinese finesse might work. South can lead the ♥J toward dummy, intending to play low if West fails to cover. From West's perspective, the layout might be:

	Dummy	
	♥K53	
West		East
♥Q86		♥9742
	South	
	♥AJT	

In that case, West must duck to leave South guessing the whereabouts of the ♥Q.

In this deceptive play declarer is attempting to win a trick with an unsupported honour, hoping West has the high card, and has no other high cards so has limited chance of success but sometimes is the only way to try for that elusive winning trick!