

When cashing winners in a suit, keep the tenace and the near tenace intact.

First play the winners opposite the tenace.

Tenace: Non touching honours in the same suit (A-Q, A-J, A-10, K-J, K-10, Q-10), where the opponents hold the card(s) in-between your honours. More broadly any two cards near in rank (such as J-9, Q-9, 10-8, 9-7) where the in-between card(s) are held by the opposition.

A tenace gives you the opportunity to take a finesse. If you have a tenace in a suit where you have winners in dummy and winners in hand, play first the winners where there is no tenace. Retain the tenace as long as you can. This helps to guard against bad breaks.

What is best to play in these holdings?

| | | | |
|----------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Dummy | (1) A J 6 2 | (2) A 9 6 4 2 | (3) A J 9 2 |
| Declarer | K 8 7 5 3 | K J 7 5 3 | K 7 5 4 3 |

Solutions: (1) Play the king first – retain the A-J tenace – guards against Q-10 -9 with LHO. If RHO has Q -10 -9, a loser is inevitable

(2) Play the ace first – retain the K-J tenace – guards against Q-10-9 with RHO. If LHO has Q-10-9, a loser is inevitable.

(3) Play the king first – retain the A-J-9 double tenace. If all follow, play the ace next but if RHO shows out, you can finesse the nine next and the jack later to lose no tricks despite the 4-0 break.

How about these combinations?

| | | | |
|----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Dummy | (4) A 10 6 2 | (5) A Q 4 2 | (6) Q 10 5 4 |
| Declarer | K Q 5 3 | K 10 5 3 | A K 7 3 |

Solutions: (4) Play the K-Q first, retain the A-10 tenace as it guards against J-x-x-x with LHO. If RHO has J-x-x-x, a loser is inevitable

(5) Play the A-Q first – retain the K-10 tenace

(6) Play the A-K first – retain the Q-10 tenace

If there is no obvious tenace there is still a correct order in which winners should be cashed. Check the winners in your hand and dummy and note which hand contains the card closest to a winner. Treat that combination as a “near-tenace” and play first the winners from the other hand. Keep the near-tenace intact as long as possible.

Dummy K Q 3 2

Declarer A 9 5 4

In which order should you play your winners?

The nearest card to winning rank is the 9 – treat A-9 as a near-tenace. Play first the K and Q. If the suit breaks 3-2 your foresight was unnecessary. Your reward comes when the layout is like this:

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

If you play the ace on the first or second round (breaking your tenace) RHO wins a trick with the 10

By playing K-Q, West shows out on the second round and with A-9 over the 10-8 you can finesse the 9 for no loser.

Dummy A 7 3 2

Declarer K 9 5 4

How do you handle this suit to lose only one trick if possible?

The 9 is closer to winning rank than the 7. Therefore, retain the K-9 initially and play the ace first. If only low cards fall, play the king next and hope the suits break 3-2. If LHO drops an honour, lead low next and insert the 9 if east plays low.

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

If the suit breaks 3-2 then the 9 loses but the king captures the missing card on the next round.

Your reward comes on a division like this:

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

If you play the king first (breaking your near-tenace) RHO has 2 tricks. Start with the ace. When the Jack drops, play low towards your K-9. If East plays the 8, your 9 wins and you lose only one trick. If East plays an honour, you take it. When West shows out, cross to dummy in another suit to lead towards your 9-6, restricting RHO's Q-8 to one trick.