# Suit Combinations – Part 2

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 In the previous column you saw how laying out the cases that matter for a suit combination is the way to figure out the best play. An important point was that you should ignore the cases where both plays either succeed or fail and focus on the ones where the outcome is different. If you like numbers, you can add up the percentages, but most of the time that is not necessary.

**Your homework assignment was to work out the best way to play A432 in hand opposite Q10987 for one loser.** If you play ace and another you lose when RHO has either KJx or KJxx. If you want to take the double finesse you should start with the 10; if the 10 loses to the jack you plan to play the queen next and run it if RHO plays low. But this line loses when LHO has KJx, KJxx, or KJ doubleton. So unless you know that RHO is likely to have length in the suit, ace and another is best. Is there a better play?

**What if you lead low towards dummy?** If the ten wins or loses to the king, you can play the ace and back towards the queen. If the ten loses to the jack, you run the queen coming back. Only rarely will you deal with a defender good enough (or inattentive enough) to duck with Kx on the first round, so in real life this play will only lose to Kxx on your left and singleton jack on your right; it should pick up all the KJ to length combinations on either side.

**Did you think of that line?** It does not help to be able to lay out the cases if you do not try all the various ways you might play a suit.

Having nine cards is better than having eight because there are fewer combinations to think about. With only eight cards you would finesse twice with most broken suit holdings such as the one discussed above (the nine card fit). With A432 in your hand opposite Q1098 in the dummy, you should lead the 10 first for the finesse. Why the 10? In case RHO has a singleton king, or either opponent has a void.

**But wait a minute, if your LHO would never duck with the Kx is it better to play towards the 10 as in the nine card combination?** The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge says it is.

*This article was co-authored by Kitty's husband, the late Steve Cooper, and previously appeared in the District 17 newsletter.* ♣