

# Play & Learn



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## Dummy's long suit

Cover up the East–West hands and plan the play for South, the declarer in 4♥ on both deals below.

Dir: South ♠ 4 3 2  
Vul: None ♥ Q 6  
♦ 6 5 4  
♣ A K 5 4 2

♠ K 10 7 6		N	♠ J 9 8
♥ 5 4 2		W E	♥ 8 7
♦ A K 7 3	W S		♦ J 10 9 8 2
♣ 8 7			♣ Q J 10

♠ A Q 5  
♥ A K J 10 9 3  
♦ Q  
♣ 9 6 3

West leads the ♦ A and continues diamonds, which you ruff. South's losers are one diamond (fast), one club (slow), and two spades (slow). One loser must be avoided. Does your plan rely on the spade finesse? If so, re-read the title of this article and use it as a clue to make a better plan.

Before finessing, look for better alternatives. We've seen that a long suit in dummy can help declarer avoid losers. Eight clubs between declarer and dummy leave five clubs for the opponents. The missing cards are more likely to split 3–2 than any other way (about 68% of the time) so dummy's last two low clubs might provide tricks.

Consider the order of your plays. Trumps must be drawn, and you need a dummy entry to use the clubs. The entry won't be the ♥ Q because it will take at least three heart leads to draw trumps. Does dummy have another entry? Yes, if you play clubs properly. Do not cash the top clubs and lead a

third club. You must lose a club no matter what, so lose it when it's most convenient for you.

When clubs split 3–2, discard both spade losers on clubs for an overtrick. If clubs split 4–1, you will have to take the spade finesse, and that brings us back to *when* to lose that club trick. It's necessary to lose one of the first two clubs to maintain transportation. Losing the second club is best because you will know exactly what to do when East wins, as on the layout shown. If East switches to a spade, you will have to decide whether to finesse. When clubs split, you can discard both losing spades for an overtrick. No finesse needed. If both opponents follow to two club leads, you know that clubs are splitting so you'll pop the ♠ A if East switches to a spade and claim 11 tricks. Can you still use dummy's long suit for discards on our second deal?

		N	♠ A 3 2
		W E	♥ J 6
♠ K 10 7 6	W S		♦ J 5 4
♥ 5 4 2			♣ K 7 5 4 2
♦ A K Q 3			♠ J 9 8
♣ 10 6			♥ 8 7
			♦ 10 9 8 2
			♣ Q J 9 8
			♠ Q 5 4
			♥ A K Q 10 9 3
			♦ 7 6
			♣ A 3

South's losers are two diamonds (fast) and two spades (slow). Again, one loser must be avoided. You have a possible finesse by leading *toward* South's ♠ Q, but we still prefer not to

finesse if it can be avoided. You have only seven clubs between declarer and dummy, but the opponents' six clubs are more likely to split 4–2 (about 48% of the time) than any other way. Does that mean you need the spade finesse? No, you can ruff out the clubs and discard a spade loser on dummy's last club *provided* you have enough entries to dummy to accomplish this. The tricky part is making the most of entries in the long suit you are setting up (the ♣ K) plus *outside entries* in other suits (the ♠ A and the ♥ J.)

On a 4–2 club split, you must lead clubs five times — four times to deplete both opponents of clubs and a fifth time to use dummy's good low club. First, make the most of the one club entry you do have. Play the ♣ A, the ♣ K and lead a club to ruff high. That's already three club leads. Your two remaining outside entries are just enough for you to set up the fifth club and reach it for a discard. Lead the ♥ 3 to the jack and ruff the last outstanding club high again. Draw the remaining trumps and, finally, use the ♠ A as your entry to dummy's remaining good club. Discard a spade loser. Poof! Making 4♥ with no finesse needed. Played like an expert! □