



## 4<sup>th</sup> Suit Forcing

**4<sup>th</sup> Suit Forcing** is a convention that most bridge players use. It can be used by either responder or opener, where their side have already bid 3 suits naturally, to show extra values and investigate game (or possibly slam) contracts. It is **artificial** and **conventional**, so the partner of the 4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing bidder **cannot pass it**.

♠Q62	N		
♥AQ854	W	E	
♦J4			S
♣A76			
West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦			

You have game values opposite an opening bid from partner but no idea yet what the best game might be. Use a **4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing** 2♦ to set up a game-force and see what partner does to further describe their hand.

♠64	N		
♥AJ2	W	E	
♦KJ92			S
♣AJ85			
West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥			

West can see after 1♣ that 3NT or 5♣ are likely games & 6♣ possible if partner is strong. Start with 1♦, then use **4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing** over a 1♥ or 1♠ rebid to set up a game force. Then support ♣ at 3-level if you can.

♠KQ974	N		
♥AQ85	W	E	
♦QT			S
♣K7			
West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦			

Partner showed 10+ hcp but could only rebid 2♠, so they probably have 10-11 only and 2 or 3 card support (if 3, they are probably very balanced). Use a **4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing** 3♦ to get more information.

### When does 4<sup>th</sup> Suit Forcing apply?

- Your side has bid 3 suits naturally, but none has yet been agreed as trumps
- Then one of you bids the so far unbid (4<sup>th</sup>) suit at the 2 or 3 level.

### How Opener's Rebid affects 4<sup>th</sup> Suit Forcing

1. When Opener **raises Responder's first suit** (e.g. 1♦ p 1♠ p 2♠), there is little need later in the auction for 4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing; it doesn't apply in this sequence.
2. When Opener **rebids their first suit** at the 2-level then 4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing may come up later e.g.:
 

1♥ p 2♣ p	Responder has reversed into 2♠, showing a game forcing hand.
2♥ p 2♠ p	Opener has a maximum hand for their 2♥ rebid and
3♦	is asking for more information ( <b>not</b> making a natural bid).
3. When Opener **rebids a new suit** - the commonest place for 4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing to be used e.g.:
 

1♥ p 1♠ p
2♣ p 2♦



## 4<sup>th</sup> Suit Forcing

### How forcing is 4<sup>th</sup> Suit Forcing?

In the *Acol* bidding system there are two different variations of 4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing when it is used by responder (after a change-of-suit rebid by Opener - number 3 above):

- 4<sup>th</sup> suit is *game-forcing which we recommend*  
 Advantages: -- the simplest version to learn more about the other hand  
                   -- the auction can proceed slowly while players describe their hands  
 Disadvantages: -- a weak responding hand may not be able to bid his 2<sup>nd</sup> suit naturally. Perhaps a NT bid would be an option in this case.
- 4<sup>th</sup> suit is forcing for one round which we don't recommend here.

### Responding to 4<sup>th</sup> Suit Forcing

Make a descriptive bid – *always remembering what you have already told partner about your hand*. There is no need to repeat information that they already have (e.g. if you have already promised 5-4 in two suits, try to describe the remaining features of your hand). Also, remember that the auction is now game forcing, so there is no need to jump unnecessarily. The auction may continue below the game level, both of you making delicate bids to suggest various strains to play the hand in. Even trump fits like 5-2, 6-1 or 4-3 are possible final resting places.

Priorities are:

- Show 3 card support for partner's major
- Rebid 2<sup>nd</sup> suit to show extra length
- Bid NT to show a stopper in fourth suit
- Raise the 4<sup>th</sup> suit with 4 cards in that suit

I

♠Q62	N		
♥AQ984	W	E	
♦J			S
♣AJ76			
West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠			

You didn't raise immediately so Hxx is the most spade support you can have. Note that this does **not** set spades as trump - partner could easily have (say) 4-2-3-4 shape and be looking for 3NT or 5♣ or even 4♥ on a 5-2 or 5-3 fit.

♠KQ82	N		
♥64	W	E	
♦Q92			S
♣KJ85			
West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT			

You could argue that Qxx isn't a great ♦ stopper for 3NT but partner should bear in mind that you didn't bid 2NT last round. With a good holding in ♦ you would have chosen 2NT even with 4-card club support, so this sequence suggests that your ♦ stop may be a fragile one.

♠AJ974	N		
♥Q8	W	E	
♦QT93			S
♣KQ			
West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣			

You cannot bid NT with only Qx in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit. The alternative to 3♣ is 2♠ but that doesn't give partner any extra information. 3♣ should only promise xxx or Hx since partner can continue searching at the 3-level. If East now bids 3NT, they may have only a partial stopper in ♥; you will pass since Qx should help.