

Fourth Suit Forcing

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Fourth Suit Forcing occurs when a partnership bids all four suits in the first two bidding rounds. The fourth suit bid is artificial with game-invitational values (10+ points). Although some partnerships play it as game-forcing, this description will explain the more flexible "one-round force" approach.

Example auctions:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2♣	2♥

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	2♦

In each auction, the last bid suit is Fourth Suit Forcing, showing game-invitational values or better. It does not necessarily show or deny an actual suit.

Opener's Rebids

Opener's rebids are natural. However, the priorities are:

- Showing 3-card support for partner's major
- Rebidding a suit to show extra length
- Bidding no-trumps with a stopper in the fourth suit
- Raising the fourth suit with 4 cards in that suit (rare)

If playing Fourth Suit Forcing as a one-round-force (not game-forcing), then opener must make jump bids to show extra values and commit the partnership to game.

1. Showing 3-card support for partner's major

Opener should strive to show 3-card support if partner's FIRST suit was hearts or spades.

Opener	Responder
♠JT3	♠KQ952
♥KQT54	♥A2
♦A	♦J32
♣KJ52	♣A87

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
2♣	2♦ (1)
2♠ (2)	4♠ (3)

- Fourth Suit Forcing.
- Opener shows 3-card support and minimum strength. Note that he could bid 3♣ with 15-17 points.
- Responder jumps to game with 14 points.

2. Rebidding a suit to show extra length

Opener can rebid his first suit to show 6-4 shape, or he can rebid his second suit to show 5-5 or longer.

Opener	Responder
♠KQT7	♠652
♥J	♥AKT98
♦KQT985	♦64
♣K2	♣AT5

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1♠	2♣ (1)
2♦ (2)	2NT (3)
3NT (4)	Pass

- Fourth Suit Forcing.
- Opener shows his 6-card diamond suit. Note that with a stronger hand (15+ points), he could bid 3♦ instead.
- Responder invites game with his balanced hand and club stopper.
- Opener accepts the game invitation with 14 points.

3. Bidding no-trumps with a stopper in the fourth suit

Opener can rebid no-trumps if he lacks 3-card support for partner's major suit.

Opener	Responder
♠7	♠KQ942
♥AJT94	♥63
♦A95	♦K63
♣KQJ3	♣AT2

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
2♣	2♦ (1)
3NT (2)	Pass

- Fourth Suit Forcing.
- Opener jumps to 3NT with a diamond stopper and 15-17 points.

4. Raising the fourth suit with 4 cards in that suit

This occurs when opener holds a 3-suiter which is short in partner's first-bid suit.

Opener	Responder
♠9	♠AQ542
♥AT84	♥KJ9
♦A975	♦K43
♣KQ63	♣87

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2♣	2♥ (1)
3♥ (2)	3NT (3)
Pass	

- Fourth Suit Forcing.
- Opener shows a 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 pattern. Note that he could not have bid hearts at his second turn, because that would have been a reverse promising 17+ points.
- Responder knows that opener has a 3-suiter, but chooses to bid 3NT with a balanced minimum.

When Fourth Suit Forcing Is Off

Fourth Suit Forcing is OFF if any of these conditions apply:

- Responder is a passed hand.
- The opponents overcall or make a **takeout double**.
- The partnership bids all four suits at the 1-level (rare):

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
1♥	1♠

In this auction, responder's 1♠ bid is natural and forcing for one round. However, it is not Fourth Suit Forcing (i.e. artificial).

- Opener has made a reverse, showing 17+ points:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2♥	3♦

In this auction, opener's 2♥ bid was a reverse (forcing), because he bypassed 2♦. Therefore, responder's 3♦ bid is natural.

- Responder makes a **jump-shift** in the fourth suit. This is a natural bid, not Fourth Suit Forcing:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2♣	3♥

Responder is showing a 2-suited hand (at least 5-4).

- Responder makes a 2-over-1 response at his first turn. His second bid (the fourth suit) is natural, not Fourth Suit Forcing:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣
2♦	2♠

Responder is showing a 2-suited hand with longer clubs.

When to Use Fourth Suit Forcing

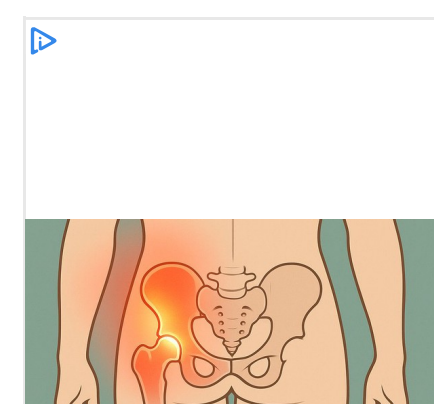
Fourth Suit Forcing should only be used when responder does not have another attractive bid available, such as:

- Rebidding a 6-card suit
- Bidding no-trumps with a stopper in the fourth suit
- Making a delayed 3-card raise of partner's major suit opening bid
- Raising partner's second suit with 4+ card support

See also

New Minor Forcing

An artificial forcing bid used when responder bids 1♥♠ and hears a 1NT rebid by opener.



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Bridgebum began in 1999 and covers a large set of descriptions of bidding conventions, declarer play and defense, and more.

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