



4th Suit Forcing

4th 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 4th 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 **4th 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 **4th 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 **4th suit forcing** 3♦ to get more information.

When does 4th Suit Forcing apply?

- Your side has bid 3 suits naturally, but none has yet been agreed as trumps (exception: if a minor suit has been agreed, we can still use 4th suit forcing to investigate 3NT or 4 of a major instead).
- Then one of you bids the so far unbid (4th) suit at the 1, 2 or 3 level.

How Opener's Rebid affects 4th 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 4th suit forcing; it doesn't apply in this sequence.
2. When Opener **rebids in NT**, it is rare for 4th suit forcing to come up but it may e.g.:
 1♥ p 1♠ p 3♣, being a jump, is game forcing here. Opener is asking for more information to help them choose the best game (3♦ is **not natural** since with e.g. 2-4-4-3 shape they would have an obvious 3NT bid).
 1NT p 3♣ p 3♦
3. When Opener **rebids their first suit** at the 2-level then 4th suit forcing may come up later e.g.:
 1♥ p 2♣ p Responder has reversed into 2♠, showing at least an invitational hand (11+). Opener has a maximum hand for their 2♥ rebid and is asking for more information (**not** making a natural bid).
 2♥ p 2♠ p 3♦
4. When Opener **rebids a new suit** - the commonest place for 4th suit forcing to be used e.g.:
 1♥ p 1♠ p
 2♣ p 2♦



4th Suit Forcing

How forcing is 4th Suit Forcing?

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

1. 4th suit is **game-forcing**

Advantages: -- the simplest version to learn

-- the auction can proceed slowly while players describe their hands

Disadvantages: -- leaves some hands too weak for a game force with no good bid available

2. 4th suit only shows the points you would need to bid NT at this bidding level

So at the 3-level, it is game forcing but at the 2-level you only need a good 10 hcp or more

Advantages: -- can be used with more hands and solves some awkward bidding problems

Disadvantages: -- you need to agree with partner which sequences can be passed (below game)

We recommend you start with version 1. (4th suit forcing is **game-forcing**) and, if you wish, try out version 2. in the future.

Responding to 4th 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 (jumps should show sufficient extra values to want to alert partner to a possible slam). 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.

In most cases, your first duty is to bid NT if you have a stopper in the 4th suit.

<div> <div> <div>♠Q62</div> <div>♥AQ984</div> <div>♦J</div> <div>♣AJ76</div> </div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W E</div> <div>S</div> </div> </div>			
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. Replace the ♠2 with the ♠A and you would jump to 3♠ instead.

<div> <div> <div>♠KQ82</div> <div>♥64</div> <div>♦Q92</div> <div>♣KJ85</div> </div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W E</div> <div>S</div> </div> </div>			
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.

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

You cannot bid NT with only Qx in the 4th 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.