

Fourth Suit Forcing

bridgebum.com/fourth_suit_forcing.php

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:

1. Showing 3-card support for partner's major
2. Rebidding a suit to show extra length
3. Bidding no-trumps with a stopper in the fourth suit
4. 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

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

1. Fourth Suit Forcing.
2. Opener shows 3-card support and minimum strength. Note that he could bid 3 ♠ with 15-17 points.
3. 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

1. Fourth Suit Forcing.
2. Opener shows his 6-card diamond suit. Note that with a stronger hand (15+ points), he could bid 3 ♦ instead.
3. Responder invites game with his balanced hand and club stopper.
4. 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
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♠ 7	♠ KQ942
♥ AJT94	♥ 63
♦ A95	♦ K63
♣ KQJ3	♣ AT2

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

1. Fourth Suit Forcing.
2. 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 ♦
 2 ♣
 3 ♥ (2) 1 ♠
 2 ♥ (1)
 3NT (3)
 Pass

1. Fourth Suit Forcing.
2. 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.
3. 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

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