



Fourth-suit forcing

Mr. Norman Squire, 1907-1991, of England introduced this convention for the responder and his rebid. The bid by the responder of the only unbid suit at his second turn is a waiting move and promises nothing about the suit itself. The bid of the fourth suit is considered artificial, communicating nothing about the suit itself.

This bid was originally designated, and perhaps more accurately, as *Fourth Suit Artificial*, but there is practically no bridge player who plays it as non-forcing, and therefore this term has become non-descriptive.

The question, which must be addressed by both partners in their partnership agreement, is whether or not the bid shows length and/or strength in the fourth suit. If the bid is used artificially, the responder usually has 2 or 3 losers in this fourth suit. In this case, the opener should not opt for No Trump unless he indeed has a stopper in this fourth suit.

Fourth-suit forcing is the popular term for the idea that a bid by responder of the only unbid suit at his second turn is an artificial force. Most play that it is forcing to game, although some play it is forcing one round only. The bid is made when responder has doubts about strain or level.

THE PRINCIPLE

You have enough values for game, yet no bid is suitable, how do you show that?

Where should you play the contract?

Who should play the contract?

S	South	1	
♠	K 2		
♥	A K J 4 3		
♦	Q 10 3		
♣	8 6 5		
W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♥
P	1♠	P	??

You have enough values for game, yet no bid is suitable. You cannot bid 3NT with three low clubs. Many players agree that a jump to 3♥ shows a six-card suit and is invitational. If you have that agreement, you cannot rebid 3♥. In other words, you don't have a convenient rebid.

Playing fourth-suit forcing, you should bid 2♣, a conventional waiting bid. Partner's first obligation is to raise hearts with three-card support. His second obligation is to bid 2NT. You don't promise clubs to bid 2♣ — it is an artificial bid. Your partner needs a club stopper, therefore, to bid notrump. Partner can rebid his second suit to show extra length. In the sample auction, for example, 2♠ would show six or more diamonds and at least five spades. If partner has neither heart support nor a club stopper, he should rebid his first suit — 2♠ in the previous auction.

PRACTICE HANDS

S South 2				
♠ K 10 7				
♥ A K 8 7 4				
♦ J 10 4				
♣ A 2				
S	W	N	E	
			1♦	P
1♥	P	2♣	P	
??				

2♠

S South 3				
♠ K 10 7 2				
♥ A K 7 4				
♦ J 10 4				
♣ A 2				
S	W	N	E	
			1♣	P
1♥	P	1♠	P	
??				

4♠

S South 4				
♠ K 10 7 2				
♥ A K 7 4				
♦ J 10 4				
♣ A 2				
S	W	N	E	
			1♦	P
1♥	P	2♣	P	
??				

3N

Layout #2: This one is easy — bid 2♠. You want to see if your partner has three-card heart support. If not, then you will bid 3NT.

Layout #3: Bid 4♠. Do not bid 2♦, fourth-suit forcing. You have four card spade support and values for game — bid it.

Layout #4: Bid 3NT. Partner does not have four of either major. You have values for game and stoppers in the unbid suit. You don't need to bid fourth-suit forcing. It is used when you aren't sure where to play the contract.

OTHER MATTERS to Discuss

4th Suit Forcing is:

1. Not used if one partner is previously a passed hand. (Other agreements are possible.)
2. Not used after a 2/1 response. It is used only when the one player bids one of a suit and the partner responds at the one level.
3. Not used when opponents intervene in the bidding. You can use the cuebid instead as a forcing probe.
4. Fourth-suit forcing is not used after a reverse or after a 2♣ opener. In these cases, you are in a forcing auction, so the artificial bid is not needed.

There are various degrees of concern whether North should, in the above example, bid 3 No Trump on the second bid when holding a single Club stopper or whether it would be more prudent to discover whether partner, by bidding the fourth suit, is able to bid No Trump showing a Club stopper also. This is a matter of partnership agreement.

Note: Fourth Suit Forcing is not employed if one partner is a previously passed hand. This conventional method does not apply under these circumstances. South has not yet limited his holding and has therefore several options open.

1. With a Club stopper South will bid game in No Trump since there is no known fit. **2.** South can infer that North has a 5-card Spade suit and will show support with a 3-card Spade suit. This denies a Club stopper. **3.** If South supports Spades showing only a 3-card Spade suit, North can decide to declare game in Spades with a Moysian fit. However, knowing that there is an 8-card fit in Diamonds, North can opt to play in 4. South, with additional values, can raise to game.

OTHER MATTERS to Discuss

A jump in the fourth suit shows a 5-5 hand and is strongly invitational. Consider this auction:

S	South	5	
♠	5 2		
♥	K Q J 4 3		
♦	5		
♣	A J 10 4 3		
S	W	N	E
		1♦	P
1♥	P	1♠	P
3♣			

North has shown nine of his thirteen cards and both suits in which South has a singleton. South is unable to support either Hearts or Clubs, but must show partner the distribution of at least a 5-5 holding in the other two suits. This action can only occur if South truly has a 5-card suit in the fourth unbid suit since this is not an artificial bid.

This is accomplished by **jumping one level** when bidding the forcing fourth suit. This jump shows not only a 5-5 shape but also game forcing values. If South then has a 3-card Spade suit, North should support South in Spades knowing that there is a 5-3 fit. If North instead has a 3-card support in Diamonds, then North may decide for a Minor suit game in Diamonds. The third option is to try for nine tricks in No Trump.

This Merits Special Discussion!

In this auction, most players treat 1♠ as natural and forcing. A jump to 2♠ denies a four-card spade suit, but promises values for game.

S	W	N	E
		1♣	P
1♦	P	1♥	P
2♠			

Fourth suit forcing (also referred to as **fourth suit artificial**; ^[1] abbreviated as **FSF** or **4SF**) is a contract bridge [convention](#) that allows responder to create, at his second turn to bid, a [forcing](#) auction. A bid by responder in the fourth suit, the only remaining unbid suit, is artificial indicating that responder has no appropriate alternate bid, remains interested in the potential for a game contract and asks opener to bid again to show additional features.

Opener responds to the *fourth suit forcing* by (in prioritized order):

Raising responder's first bid suit with 3-card support, Bidding notrump with values in the fourth suit, Raising the fourth suit with four cards in that suit, Making the most natural rebid possible, lacking any of the above.

Fourth suit forcing is minimally forcing for one round and usually forcing to game - partnership agreement is required. Whether or not the convention is applicable if the fourth-suit bidder is a passed hand is also a matter of partnership agreement; there is no consensus amongst experts on the options as to its use being non-forcing, forcing, or forcing only after a reverse.

It requires an invitational hand with at least 10 [points](#), or 12-13 upwards if it is game-forcing and opener has not shown any extra strength.

The convention was introduced by the British bridge author [Norman Squire](#) and is adopted by the majority of partnerships playing at competitive levels. Useful with strong game-going hands where responder has no natural forcing rebid, it is a type of [game try](#) bid. Corollary to fourth suit forcing

One of the negative inferences of fourth suit forcing is that all other simple jumps by responder at his second turn are invitational and not game forcing. In the unopposed sequence 1 club -- 1 heart -- 1 spade: a jump by responder to two no-trumps, three clubs, three hearts or three spades are all invitational and not forcing. They suggest 10-12 HCP. Conversely, going through 2 diamonds, the fourth suit, lets you make any of those calls at your next turn and have the call be forcing.

Fourth suit by a passed hand

Entirely different considerations apply when the fourth suit bidder is a passed hand. Since the bidder is limited in strength through failure to open, he cannot force his partner to keep bidding, but the fact that opener has rebid at all says that opener is either very shapely or has more than minimum values for an opening bid.

Opener may pass a bid of the fourth suit. If opener continues with 2NT, which will show values, responder is expected to raise to 3NT with nothing more, by way of shape, to show. Opener will generally pass a rebid in responder's second suit, knowing the hand opposite is very shapely and weak. With ill-fitting hands, lacking game going values, a bid in the fourth suit will often allow the partnership to subside in a playable contract in a reasonable fit, at the two-level. See example 3.