

“4th-Suit-Forcing”

“4th suit forcing” is actually not a convention, it is, rather a necessary mechanism in the array of one’s bidding tools. Usually, with one exception, not dealt with here, **any new suit bid by Responder is forcing for at least one round.** At the 1-Level, as Opener and Responder both bid “Up-the-Ladder,” new suits that are bid by both Partners are all natural, and do not represent 4th suit forcing.

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>	<u>Responder’s Hand</u>
1C	1D	AQXX
1H	1S	KXX
		KXXX
		XX

In the above example, Responder’s 1S re-bid is forcing since, under most circumstances, any new suit bid by a Responder is forcing for one round, but is not “4th suit Forcing.”

A bidding sequence of 1C – 1D – 1H – “2S” would represent “4th Suit Forcing.”

A 4th suit, bid by Responder, is presented at the 2-level or above, and may be artificial *or* natural, but, by Partnership understanding, is, by general consensus, forcing to game.

“4th Suit Forcing” is, therefore, considered somewhat conventional, alertable, and usually artificial in that it, most likely, says nothing about that suit in particular, unless re-bid, and forces the Partnership to game. (Note: Some Partnerships play 4th suit as forcing for 1-round only)

“4th Suit Forcing” can only be used by the Responder, never by the Opener, and it must always be the 4th bid of any auction!

“4th suit Forcing” is typically not used after a “2/1 Game-Forcing” sequence. Any 4th suit bid under these conditions is natural.

A 4th suit bid by a previously, “Passed” hand is natural, and evidences an unbalanced, 2 suited hand.

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
P	1H
1S	2C
2D (5-5 or longer)	

After a 1-NT re-bid by an Opener, “4th Suit Forcing” sequence is never in play. “New Minor Forcing” sequence is used instead.

Purpose of “4th Suit Forcing”: “4th suit Forcing” is necessary because any jump re-bid by Responder in any suit previous bid by either Partner is invitational, not forcing.

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1D	1H
1S	3D/3H/3S (Invitational)

SUMMARY

A bid, by Responder, of the only, as-yet, un-bid, 4th suit, at his/her second turn to bid, presented at the 2-level or above, is usually an artificial bid, and is customarily, by Partnership agreement, forcing to game. It is called “4th-Suit-Forcing”. It is considered to be an “asking-bid” unless that suit is re-bid by the Responder, in which case it is then considered to have been natural.

Because 4th-Suit-Forcing bids are forcing to game, Responder must never invoke “4th-Suit-Forcing” unless he/she holds opening count, or better.

		<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>
Examples: You (South) Hold:	XX	1D	1H
	AXXX	2C	“2S”
	AKQX		
	XXX		

	XX	1C	1D
	KX	1H	“2S”
	AKXXXX		
	QJX		

Under most circumstances, when a 4th suit bid by Responder is presented at the 2-level or beyond, Responder seldom wishes to bid the 4th suit in a natural sense; and had Responder held one or more stoppers in that 4th suit, he/she would have, bid No-Trump himself/herself. The bid, therefore, generally evidences no stoppers in the 4th suit, and Responder is asking Opener to bid No-Trump if the Opener has at least one stopper in that 4th suit, else to bid something else, since the introduction of the 4th suit is forcing to game.

OPENER’S POSSIBLE RE-BIDS FOLLOWING A 4TH-SUIT-FORCING BID BY A RESPONDER

1. Holding at least one stopper in the 4th suit, Opener’s first obligation is to bid “No-Trump” at the cheapest possible level. Remember, the Partnership is in a game-forcing sequence and by bidding slowly, Opener affords Responder the opportunity of re-bidding his/her second suit in case it had been a natural suit holding and not 4th-Suit-Forcing.

Absent a stopper in the 4th suit, thereby obviating any No-Trump call, Opener’s next obligation is to:

2. Infer that Responder holds a 5-card suit in the first suit presented, and Opener, having already denied 4-card support by not supporting previously, can now support it with 3-pieces, or honor-doubleton, in case Responder really holds five. This, of course, denies a stopper in the 4th suit, since bidding No-Trump is Opener’s first obligation as stated above.
3. Re-bid his/her own 5-card or 6-card suit if present, absent any above alternative.

If, alternatively, on Responder’s second re-bid, Responder re-bids his/her 4th suit, Responder then evidences a natural second suit, and denies that it was, previously, a “4th-Suit-Forcing” bid, as seen in the following example:

		<u>South</u>	<u>North</u>
<u>You (North) Hold:</u>	AKXXXX	1D	1S
	AKJXX	2C	“2H”
	X	2-NT	3H Natural)
	X		