

FOURTH SUIT FORCING

When a partnership has bid three different suits, it is not likely that either would want to bid the fourth suit naturally; if values were held in that suit the probable bid would be in NT's. For this reason it has become common practice that bidding the fourth suit does not promise that suit but is a forcing bid.

So called Fourth Suit Forcing.

E.g:

A ♠ AQ987 ♥ 106 ♦ KJ8 ♣ J65	B ♠ AK965 ♥ 106 ♦ 875 ♣ KJ6	C ♠ AK965 ♥ Q6 ♦ 875 ♣ KJ6
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If partner opened 1H, you replied 1S and partner then said 2C, with hand A you could bid 2NT. With hand B however you have the values for 2NT but no stop in diamonds. It would be very useful to discover more about partner's hand and bidding 2D (FSF) as a forcing bid will achieve this purpose. Partner may re-bid hearts or clubs, bid 2S to show three in your suit or bid NT's.

Any of these bids will help show which denomination to play in.

Note that a FSF bid may force partner to 2NT even though he has no more than an opening bid. This means that you need to hold the values for at least 2NT for this bid. With hand A or B you would raise a reply of 2S to 3S, pass 2NT and also a reply of 2H. With hand C you have the values for game and are checking to see which particular game.

Responding to a FSF bid from partner at the two level you know he has at least invitational values and this must be taken into account, particularly when replying in NT's.

E.g:

D ♠ A1094 ♥ J ♦ K10985 ♣ KJ8	E ♠ AJ94 ♥ Q ♦ KQ1098 ♣ KJ8
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You open 1D, partner replies 1H and you say 1S.

If partner now bids 2C (FSF) you would reply 2NT with hand D but not with hand E because he may pass. You would assume partner must have 11/12 points and bid 3NT.

So bidding FSF at the two level is forcing for one round but bidding FSF at the three level is forcing to game. E.g: 1S – 2C – 2H – 3D*

There is one sequence when fourth suit can be bid at the one level: 1C-1D-1H-1S. Some play that 1S in this sequence is natural, not FSF. Ensure that you and partner have an agreement on this.