



## Intermediate- Lesson 35

### Fourth Suit Forcing

Fourth Suit Forcing (FSF) is one of the most useful conventions in bridge, and fortunately isn't very complicated or difficult to learn. There are some hands that are more or less impossible to bid without it.

If the opening side in an auction bid the 4<sup>th</sup> suit, at any stage in the auction, it is called Fourth Suit Forcing, and is FORCING to at least game. It maximises bidding space to exchange information to give the best chance of reaching the optimum final contract, both players knowing their partner will not pass until at least game has been reached.

- It doesn't matter at what level the suits are bid. Even in the auction 1♣ - Pass - 1♦ - Pass - 1♥ - Pass - 1♠, the 1♠ bid is FSF.
- It doesn't matter if opponents overcall in a suit- that doesn't count for FSF- when all 4 suits are bid by the **opening** side, the bid of the 4<sup>th</sup> suit is FSF.
- Bid of the 4<sup>th</sup> suit is completely artificial. It does not promise (or deny) any length or strength in that 4<sup>th</sup> suit- it could even be bid with a void or small singleton in the suit.
- It is not confined to asking partner "Do you have a stopper in this suit, as then we can play in NT". That is quite common misconception. Though it can serve that purpose, there are other priorities in responding to a FSF bid. The FSF bid merely asks partner for more information.
- To bid the 4<sup>th</sup> suit, you must have at least game-going values along with what partner has shown, as it is 100% forcing to game. This usually means 12+ points.

#### How do you respond when partner has bid the 4<sup>th</sup> suit?

The first objective is to show your SHAPE!!

In priority order:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Show SHAPE | 1. Bid partner's first suit to show 3-card support    |
| Show SHAPE | 2. Repeat your second suit to show a minimum of 5 – 5 |
| Show SHAPE | 3. Repeat your first suit to show 6+ cards            |

Only if your hand doesn't satisfy any of these criteria:

4. Bid NT to show a stopper in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit – very useful (one stopper will do!)

If you can't bid any of these 4 options, you will need to compromise.

5. Support partner's first suit with a good doubleton (Ax, Kx)

And, in the **extremely rare** case where none of these 5 options apply, you're in "last chance saloon", and you will have to fib.

6. Repeat your first suit. Partner will assume you have 6 cards, and you haven't. But so be it. No system perfectly covers all possible hands, and the benefits of FSF far outweigh the rare occurrence when it's not quite accurate.

NB When responding to a bid of the 4th Suit, **jump** in your feature if you hold 16+ points, as long as it doesn't take you beyond 3NT. It's important to show partner your strength, as you might have slam.

Example 1:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠	♠ K32	♠ AQ974
2♣ *	2♦ (FSF)	♥ AK964	♥ 85
2♠ **	4♠	♦ 7	♦ 983
		♣ J652	♣ AK4

\*Opener is best rebidding her second suit, even though it's a poor 4-card suit, rather than repeating the hearts. It provides more information to partner, showing 9 of her cards rather than 5.

\*\* Three cards in partner's first suit.

Example 2:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦	♠ AJ732	♠ 64
2♥	3♣ (FSF)	♥ AJ983	♥ KQ2
3♥ *	4♥	♦ K3	♦ AQJ97
		♣ 4	♣ J83

\*Repeating the second suit guarantees min 5 - 5

Example 3:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣	♠ AJ9852	♠ K7
2♦ *	2♥ (FSF)	♥ 2	♥ KJ84
2♠ **	4♠	♦ AQJ3	♦ K72
		♣ 76	♣ K982

\* Although opener has a 6-card major, it is better to rebid the second suit rather than repeat the spades. It shows more information to partner, showing both her suits.

\*\* 6 cards

Example 4:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣	♠ J9842	♠ K
2♦	2♥ (FSF)	♥ K8	♥ J62
2NT*	3NT	♦ AQJ3	♦ K72
		♣ A5	♣ KQJ843

\* A heart stopper with 12 – 15 points

### Example 5:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠	♠ K2	♠ AQJ74
2♣	2♥ (FSF)	♥ 95	♥ J62
2♠ *	3♠	♦ AQ743	♦ K95
4♠		♣ KJ65	♣ Q2

\* With little else to show, support partner's first suit with a good doubleton

### Example 6:

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠	♠ 42	♠ AK65
2♣	2NT*	♥ AQ532	♥ 64
Pass		♦ Q7	♦ A853
		♣ KQ73	♣ 862

\* Only 11 points, so not enough for a game forcing 2♦ FSF

### If you remember just three things:

1. A bid of the 4th suit shows 12+ points and is forcing to game. It does not promise any length in the suit. FSF is an artificial bid, a convention you must agree with partner.
2. When responding to FSF, showing extra shape is 1st priority
3. The most common response is 2NT, showing a stopper in the 4th suit and 12 – 15 points.

