

Fourth Suit Forcing

Etobicoke Bridge Centre

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Modern bidding has put an emphasis on precise, but often **non-forcing** bids, to be able to describe the most common hands. Consider the following auctions (opponents are silent)

1C – 1H – 2C – 3H which is non-forcing, showing 6 hts and about 11 pts

1C – 1H – 1S – 3C which is non-forcing, showing 5+ clubs and about 11 pts

Consider the following hands and how you would bid them

Responder	Opener	Responder
S KQxxx	1D	1S
H Qx	2C	?
D Axx		
C Kx		

? : responder has pts for game, but 2S/3S not forcing and you only have five, not 6. You would love to know if partner has 3 spades (to make an 8-card fit). The way to find out is to bid 4th suit forcing, hence 2H. If partner has 3 spades, they will bid 2S, and you can jump to 4S. If partner bids 2NT, showing a heart stopper, bid 3NT.

Responder	Opener	Responder
S Axx	1C	1H
H KQxxxx	1S	?
D xx		
C Ax		

? : You have a rebiddable heart suit but 2H/3H are not forcing. You cannot jump to 4H as partner may just have a singleton or void. To establish a game forcing auction, bid 2D, fourth suit forcing. Over partner's rebid, now bid 3H, which partner will now take as a 6-card ht suit and a forcing hand. Partner can now raise to 4H with 2 hearts, or do otherwise (3NT with a diamond stopper)

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Responder	Opener	Responder
S QJxx	1D	1S
H xxx	2C	?
D Kxx		
C AKx		

?: You would like to play NT with this balanced hand but you do not have a heart stopper (the unbid suit). Bidding 3NT would be guaranteeing a heart stopper. Perhaps partner has a heart stopper, so you need to make a forcing bid to give him a chance to show this, so bid 2H 4th suit forcing. If partner bids 2NT, raise to 3NT. If partner instead bids anything else, best to raise diamonds, since you cannot afford to play NT.

Remember: Because this is an artificial bid, when the bid is made, partner must either say "Alert" and show the Alert card, alerting your opponents to your partner's non-natural bid.

Also: I recommend you play fourth suit forcing as forcing to game, but note that some players play it as forcing for one round, not necessarily to game.

What a game!!