

Five Instructive Themes (FIT)

2. Responding to One-of-a-Suit

(e) Using Fourth Suit Forcing to set up a game-force

After the first three partnership bids have been in different suits, a bid of the fourth suit says nothing about the suit itself. It asks opener for more information, and sets up a game-force. The latter facet can be extremely useful.

Say the auction has begun 1♥ from opener, 1♠ from you as responder, 2♣ from opener (you assume they are 5♥-4♣). Consider these three responding hands.

♠AQ10832	♠A963	♠A9842
♥2	♥J3	♥AQ3
♦Q72	♦A104	♦AQ2
♣AQ2	♣AQ72	♣J6

With the first, you want to repeat your spades, thereby showing six cards. However, 2♠ and 3♠ are non-forcing bids, showing 6-9 and 10-12 points respectively. And jumping to 4♠ is precipitate when partner could be void. The solution is to bid 2♦ Fourth Suit Forcing. Whatever partner replies, you can bid your spades at the lowest level, showing your six-card suit and forcing the bidding to game.

With the second, you have a club fit but it is precipitate to jump to 5♣ (and you can't merely raise to 3♣/4♣, or partner may pass). You may belong in 3NT or 4♥ — or perhaps 6♣. Bid 2♦ then, having set up a game-force, follow with (a forcing) 3♣.

With the third, you have a heart fit but are too strong to jump to 4♥. Bid 2♦ to set up a game-force, then bid hearts at the lowest level. Partner

will realise you have slam intent (or you'd have jumped to 4♥).

Dealer: South	♠ 106543		
	♥ 3		
Vul: Neither	♦ AQ2		
	♣ AQJ2		
	♠ KQ7		♠ AJ98
	♥ Q1075		♥ K96
	♦ 10986		♦ 753
	♣ 85		♣ 964
	♠ 2		
	♥ AJ842		
	♦ KJ4		
	♣ K1073		

S	W	N	E
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦(1)	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT(2)	Pass	4♣(3)	Pass
4♥(4)	Pass	6♣	End

(1) Fourth Suit Forcing. North needs to set up a game-force before they supports clubs — otherwise partner may pass.

(2) Diamonds decently stopped and nothing else to say (eg a doubleton in partner's spades).

(3) With partner by now certain to have at most one spade, game or slam in clubs must be superior to 3NT (which indeed has no ninth trick). North's 4♣ is a slam try (with only game aspirations, they'd jump to 5♣).

(4) Ace-showing cue bid (as 4♥ cannot by now be a plausible contract).

On our 6♣ deal, declarer won ♦10 lead with ♦A. They crossed to ♥A and ruffed ♥2 (with ♣2). They then led ♠2 from dummy. East rose with ♠A and switched to ♣4. Winning ♣J, declarer led ♦2 to ♦J and ruffed ♥4 (with ♣Q). They led ♦Q to ♦K and ruffed ♥8 (with ♣A). They ruffed ♠4 (with ♣7), cashed ♣K10 drawing trumps, and won the last trick with ♥J. Slam made (similarly makeable on an opening club lead).

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