

# What's Standard?

by David Lindop

This series is based on *Grant Standard*, a set of conventions and agreements that are in popular use today, such as 15-17 INT openings, five-card majors, and weak two-bids. A summary chart of *Grant Standard* and the corresponding convention card can be found at [www.AudreyGrant.com](http://www.AudreyGrant.com). The site also has *Grant Basic*, a simpler set of agreements.

Earlier articles in this series appeared in the *Bridge Bulletin* and can also be found under 'Articles' at [www.AudreyGrant.com](http://www.AudreyGrant.com).

**A**s responder, we will usually have enough information to decide both HOW HIGH and WHERE the partnership belongs when it comes time to make our second bid—responder's rebid. We will have heard two bids describing the strength and distribution of opener's hand.

However, there will be times when we still need more help from opener before settling on the best contract. We need to make a forcing call; one that opener won't pass. In this article, we'll look at the situation when the auction has started with three suit bids. For example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

## Fourth Suit

When the partnership has bid three suits, it's generally agreed that responder's bid of the fourth suit is forcing. This follows the principle that a new suit by responder is forcing. Of course, there are always exceptions. If responder has passed initially, for example, a new suit response is no longer forcing.

So, without any special agreement, opener and responder would have little difficulty bidding these two combined hands:

## Fourth Suit Forcing ... to Game

WEST	EAST
♠ —	♠ A 9 7 4 2
♥ J 10 6 2	♥ K Q 7 3
♦ A Q 9 8 3	♦ K 5
♣ K Q 7 3	♣ J 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

East doesn't have to jump in hearts or jump to game in notrump on the rebid since 2♥ is natural and forcing. The partnership reaches the best spot.

However, we can't have things both ways. If a bid of the fourth suit is forcing, we have to be careful when these are the combined hands:

WEST	EAST
♠ 5	♠ A 9 7 4 2
♥ 8 6 2	♥ Q 9 7 3
♦ A Q J 8 3	♦ 10 5
♣ K Q 7 3	♣ J 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

If we bid a forcing 2♥ on this hand, West will have to bid again and the partnership will get too high. Instead, we should simply give preference back to partner's first suit, 2♦, and settle for partscore... wishing partner good luck when we put down the dummy!

## Fourth Suit Artificial

Although there are times we'd like to bid the fourth suit as natural and forcing—as with the East hand at the top of the column—we don't usually need it as a natural bid. When opener has already bid two suits, it's less likely that the partnership belongs in the fourth—unbid—suit. Consider these two hands:

WEST	EAST
♠ 8 3	♠ A Q J 5
♥ 9 5	♥ K Q 10 4
♦ K Q 10 8 3	♦ J 7
♣ A K J 4	♣ 9 5 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

There's no need for East to bid 2♠ at this point. With four spades, West would have rebid 1♠ rather than 2♣. West hasn't shown support for hearts, so East has enough information to decide HOW HIGH and WHERE the partnership belongs. East can simply jump to 3NT.

However, there are many hands where responder is unsure HOW HIGH or WHERE to place the contract and needs a forcing bid. ♠ 9 4  
For example, suppose we have this hand as East and ♡ A J 9 6 5 2  
♦ K 4  
♣ A J 5  
the auction begins:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

With 13 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card heart suit, there is enough combined strength for game, but what game? We don't want to jump to 4♥ since partner may have a singleton or void in hearts. We don't want to jump to 3NT since we have nothing in spades. We may even belong in 5♣ or 5♦ if partner is very distributional.

To handle hands like these, most partnerships agree that responder's bid of the fourth suit is an artificial forcing bid. It is also common to take this a step further and agree that a bid of the fourth suit is forcing to game. Some partnerships play it as only forcing for one round, but the agreement we will use is:

### FOURTH SUIT FORCING

Responder's bid of the fourth suit is artificial and forcing to game.

Let's see how it works.

<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ 8 3	♠ 9 4
♥ Q 8	♥ A J 9 6 5 2
♦ A Q 10 8 3	♦ K 4
♣ K Q 7 3	♣ A J 5

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Since East's 2♠ doesn't promise anything in spades, West can't bid notrump. Instead, West shows some support for hearts. East won't expect too much since West would have raised right away with four-card—or perhaps three-card—support. East can now choose the best game.

<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ A J 10	♠ 9 4
♥ 8	♥ A J 9 6 5 2
♦ A Q 8 5 3	♦ K 4
♣ Q 10 7 3	♣ A J 5

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

With strength in spades, West can suggest notrump after the artificial 2♠ bid. East can rebid the hearts to show the extra length. East's 3♥ bid is forcing, since the fourth suit bid committed the partnership to game. West still prefers notrump, and the best contract is reached.

<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ 8 3	♠ 9 4
♥ —	♥ A J 9 6 5 2
♦ A Q 9 5 3 2	♦ K 4
♣ K Q 10 7 3	♣ A J 5

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♦	Pass	5♣	All Pass

Over the fourth suit bid, West rebids the clubs to show at least five clubs and, by inference, five or more diamonds. East rebids the hearts, hoping to find support. West can't support hearts and has nothing in spades, so West rebids diamonds. East now has enough information to put the partnership in its best game.

## Getting to Slam

Fourth suit forcing sometimes helps the partnership reach a good slam.

<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ 5	♠ A K Q 8 3
♥ Q J 9 7 3	♥ 4
♦ A Q 4	♦ K 7 2
♣ A J 8 3	♣ K Q 10 7

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♣	All Pass

After West rebids 2♣, East is interested in slam, but a raise to 3♣ would not be forcing and a jump to 4♣ or 4NT might take the partnership beyond the best contract of 3NT. So, East bids the fourth suit and follows up with a forcing bid of 3♣. West shows some interest in slam by cue-bidding diamonds, and the partnership is then on its way to the best spot.

## An Exception

Even if the partnership plays fourth suit forcing to game, there are exceptions. One is when responder is a passed hand and presumably doesn't have enough strength to force the partnership to game. Another is that a rebid of 1♠ by responder is forcing, but not forcing to game. To see why, consider these two hands:

<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ Q J 9 4	♠ 10 7 3 2
♥ K Q J 2	♥ 9 5
♦ 6 3	♦ A K J 7 5
♣ A 9 7	♣ 6 4

Suppose the auction begins:

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	?	

In some partnerships, East might bypass diamonds and respond right away in the four-card major. However, this is not the standard approach, especially when the diamonds are longer and stronger than the spades. The typical partnership style is to bid "up the line" looking for a fit.

Having said that, the partnership will miss its spade fit if East doesn't mention the suit now. So, a bid of the fourth suit at the one level, 1♠,

is not game forcing, simply forcing for one round. The auction would go:

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

...and the partnership reaches its best contract. If West doesn't have a fit for spades, the partnership will still reach its best spot:

<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ J 9 4	♠ 10 7 3 2
♥ K Q J 2	♥ 9 5
♦ 6 3	♦ A K J 7 5
♣ A Q 7 2	♣ 6 4

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Of course, responder could have a much stronger hand to bid 1♠:

<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ Q J 9 4	♠ K 10 7 3
♥ K Q J 2	♥ 9 5
♦ 6 3	♦ A K J 7 5
♣ A 9 7	♣ K 4

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

What if the auction begins the same way and responder doesn't have four spades but wants to make a forcing bid? Most partnerships play that a jump to 2♠ is the artificial fourth suit forcing in this situation.

<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ Q J 9 4	♠ 8 2
♥ K Q J 2	♥ A 9 5
♦ 6 3	♦ A K J 7 5
♣ A 9 7	♣ Q 5 4

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

East has enough for game but doesn't want to jump to 3NT with nothing in spades. East makes an artificial 'fourth suit' jump to 2♠. West, knowing this has nothing to do with spades, bids notrump and the partnership again gets to its best spot.

Naturally, both partners have to be on the same wavelength in auctions like this. Otherwise, considerable confusion can set in. ♦