

Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to [jeryhelms@aol.com](mailto:jeryhelms@aol.com).

## Ask Jerry



**Dear Jerry:** Partner opened 1♣ and I responded 1♥ with this hand. Partner rebid 1♠. What now?

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♣	1♥
1♠	?

P. Gillman  
Denver, CO

**Dear P.G.:** You have too much to simply raise to 4♠ but not enough to bid a slam. One possibility is to raise to 5♠, inviting partner to bid slam. A more scientific approach is available if the partnership has the agreement that a bid of fourth suit by responder is artificial and forcing to game.

This is a convention I recommend since it provides an easy way to let opener know you are interested in slam. You bid the fourth suit, 2♦ in this case. After opener makes a descriptive bid, such as 2NT, you show spade support at the cheapest level, 3♠. There's no need to jump. The fourth suit bid committed the partnership to game, so there's room left to explore for slam without getting beyond the game level.

With fourth suit available, responder can show a complete range of strength with four-card support for spades in the above auction:

6-10	raise to 2♠
11-12	raise to 3♠

13-15 raise to 4♠  
16+ bid fourth suit then raise  
The last sequence is the one that shows slam interest.

Fourth suit is also used to help responder choose the best game. Suppose you have this hand as responder after the auction begins:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♣	1♥
1♠	?

You have enough strength to put the partnership in game, but which game? A jump to 3♥ is not forcing; a jump to 3NT won't be good if opener has nothing in diamonds; a jump to 4♥ won't work if partner doesn't have support for hearts.

Time to bring out fourth suit, 2♦. That lets partner know you are headed for at least game. Opener's priority is to make another descriptive bid. For example, if opener bids 2NT to show a diamond stopper, raise to 3NT. If opener bids 2♥ to show some support, jump to 4♥. Problem solved! —JH