

This is how to get to No Trumps *safely*...

e.g 1D-----1H
 1S-----?
 AJx
 AQxx
 Jxx
 Jxx

Responder should now bid 2Cl { the 4th suit* }.
 This bid of the 4th suit has this special meaning : " *I have the values for game but am uncertain which game to bid; I doubt if my holding in the 4th suit is sufficiently strong enough for me to risk bidding No Trumps on my own. What do you think partner ?*"

Quite a chatty bid.

Some people say that the 4th suit bid specifically says that the bidder has half a guard in the 4th suit and asks opener if they can help to stop this suit. { thats broadly correct so will do for a working definition}.

In essence it asks partner to examine their holding in the 4th suit and to bid accordingly.

e.g	Qx	AKxxx	e.g	AJxxx	Kx
	Qxxxx	Ax		KJxx	Axx
	AKJx	Qxx		Qxx	Jxx
	Qx	Jxx		x	AQxxx
	1H-----1S			1S-----2C	
	2D-----3C*			2H-----3D*	
	3NT			3NT.	

Perhaps these No Trump auctions are something of a scramble but at least you end up in a playable contract that will not be off the first 4 tricks in the led suit. The bid of the 4th suit checks back that both players have some sort of stop in unbid suit.

Up to now the bid of the 4th suit has been *successful* in the sense that partner has been able to bid No Trumps when asked. For the sake of completeness we better look what happens when the 4th suit bid fails to find a safe No Trump haven.

e.g	Qxx	AKxxx	e.g	Jxxx	AKx
	Qxxxx	Ax		KJx	Axxx
	AKJx	Qxx		AKxxx	Jxx
	x	Jxx		x	Qxx
	1H-----1S			1D-----1H	
	2D-----3C*			1S-----2C*	
	3Sp-----4Sp.			2H-----4H.	

And yes both hands have been carefully constructed and you may not land on your feet so comfortably always. Nonetheless you can see that the 4th suit bid, whatever the final contract , is a useful tool to avoid bad No Trump games.

- 4th suit forcing is game forcing showing the values for game
- 4th suit forcing asks partner to bid N.T.s with a stop in the 4th suit.