

Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to jerryhelms@aol.com.

Ask Jerry



Dear Jerry: This was ♠ A Q 4
the first hand I ♥ K 8 7 6 3
picked up playing on ♦ Q J 5
the Internet with a ♣ 7 2
new partner. We agreed to play
Standard American. Partner opened
1♠ and the auction continued:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥
3♥	4♠
Pass	

I jumped to 4♠ to be sure we got to game. Partner took eleven tricks but we got a poor result because most people were in hearts, taking twelve tricks. Should I have bid differently?

N. Iberman
Los Angeles, CA

Dear N.I.: When the partnership has a double fit, it can usually make more tricks than when the hands don't fit as well. Your jump to 4♠ sent the message that the partnership had a fit in both hearts and spades but didn't leave any room to explore for the best contract.

Even in Standard American, where a two-over-one response isn't forcing to game, there's no need to jump to 4♠. 3♠ would be forcing, since you could pass 3♥ with a minimum response. 3♠ lets partner choose between hearts and spades—there could be a nine-card heart fit and only an eight-card spade fit. 3♠ also leaves room to investigate slam.

These might be the combined hands:

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ K J 7 6 3	♠ A Q 4
♥ A 9 5 2	♥ K 8 7 6 3
♦ 6	♦ Q J 5
♣ A 8 4	♣ 7 2

Partner will choose to play in 4♥. If hearts divide 2-2, twelve tricks can be made because responder's club loser is discarded on opener's extra spade winners. Playing in spades, only eleven tricks can be made if hearts divide 2-2 because there's no way to avoid a diamond and a club loser. If opener has a slightly stronger hand—including the ♥Q, for example—a good slam might be reached because there is room for opener to explore over 3♠.

Of course, if the partnership hasn't discussed this auction and you think there is the possibility that partner might think 3♠ is not forcing, then it's probably best to bid what you think you can make and simply jump to game. So, your jump to 4♠ was a good practical choice. —**JH**