

Alerting

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Bridge is an open game in that secret understandings between partners are not allowed. The rules of Bridge provide that partnerships must declare:

- A general outline of any system of bidding used
- Details of any conventions or special bids used
- Details of carding methods used.

Playing rubber bridge, this is *all* that is required. No alerting is necessary provided you have given a clear outline of your methods, but you can request that conventions are alerted or not. Those playing in the 'Rubber Bridge Competition' are required to play simple systems, except when both pairs are regular duplicate players and *both* parties agree to allow more complex methods. Alerting is then necessary!

Duplicate Bridge is stricter in its disclosure requirements, and partnerships are required to:

- Have a convention card available for inspection
- Alert any conventional bids and bids where the meaning may not be obvious

A 'convention card' is merely a written statement of the system of bidding used, any conventional bids played, and style of leads and discards. It is not a full statement of partnership understandings. Partners may deviate from the points ranges and length of suits set out on the convention card, provided the other partner is unaware this is happening and it is not done on a regular basis. Bridge on Sundays does not insist on a convention card when duplicate is played, but other clubs may do so, and your opponents may ask to see it. In the event the tournament director is called to the table, failure to produce a convention card can count against you.

Alerting is done in one of two ways. With bidding boxes, show the alert card to both opponents, then put it back. Alternately, tap the table. *It is for the bidder's partner to alert, not the bidder. Do not explain any bid or volunteer any convention name unless asked to do so. Alerting is not to remind partner what the bid means but as an aid to your opponents.*

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You may ask a question about a particular bid when it is your turn to bid, provided you *may* decide to bid, depending on the answer received. You can ask about any bid not just those alerted. Playing rubber bridge you can ask if you feel that the bid may be conventional but the meaning was not previously disclosed. *Do not ask questions if you have no intention of bidding.* If you do this may be thought as drawing attention to the suit, and perhaps giving unauthorised information. Do not ask subsequent questions unless the explanation is insufficient for your needs. Partnerships are obliged to disclose only their understanding, not what they may have deduced from their own hand. If there is no understanding, say so. You may ask for a review of the bidding at the end of the auction, and ask for any explanations, at that time, before leading.

What bids are alertable?

Players should note that bids that are alertable in the UK may not be alertable in other countries, and vice versa. If you play abroad check with local players as to what is expected. The weak 1NT(12-14pts.) is alertable in Spain because a strong NT is the norm. Likewise you will often find that a minor suit is not alerted because the national system is 5 card majors and prepared minor suits. The laws may change from time to time and the EBU is expected to define what should be alertable at duplicate events in England.

In England you should alert:

- All bids where the minimum holding in that suit need not be four cards
- All bids where the points range does not conform to Standard English practice.
- All bids which have a different meaning regarding the suit, to the suit bid.

In practice you need to alert:

- All conventional bids. E.g. 2| over partners 1NT (Stayman), 4| (Gerber), 4NT (Blackwood), red suit transfers e.g. 2~ for 2` and 2` for 2@
- Conventional responses to a conventional bid. E.g. over 4NT, any bid showing a specific number of aces (5~=1 ace etc)

- All opening bids at the 2 level, unless it shows 8 playing tricks with the bid suit as trumps
- Any prepared 1 | bid; as either a strong hand, or showing no other 5-card suit, or no 5-card major suit.
- Any bid that indicates a specific holding in two suits.
- Any 1 level double of a suit that is for penalties (not 'take-out').
Any double of an overcall that is for take-out, not penalties

You need not alert any natural bid that is non- forcing, unless the suit has not previously been bid, or any forcing bid based on a genuine suit. If it is obvious that partner's bid is forcing and unlikely to a genuine suit, even if you are not sure what the bid means, and have no partnership agreement regarding this bid, you should still alert it. If asked, tell the opponents that you have no specific agreement, but you are expected to bid further.

What happens if you forget to alert?

We all forget from time to time. Partner should only draw attention to this fact only after the auction is finished, but you can draw attention to your own omissions as soon as you remember, provided there is a clear understanding with partner on the bid. Be careful in case partner has forgotten too, as you must not jog his memory. The score may be adjusted, by the tournament director, if the failure materially affects either the outcome of the auction, or the result. If you do not alert because you think the bid is natural then no adjustments are necessary unless you have forgotten what has been agreed with partner as part of your system. If you forget to alert Blackwood or Stayman most players will ignore this because they are such used conventions, but you should draw attention to your omission later.

What happens if the explanation is wrong?

If partner has forgotten the system then an adjustment may be made if opponents get a poorer score than other players. The contract can be awarded to the opponents. If however partner has chosen to deviate from the agreed system, but you give a correct explanation, there is no adjustment. Again call the director to assist with the decision.

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Guides to Better Bridge No.18