

Alerting and announcements

It is mandatory when playing duplicate bridge to alert any bids where defined in parts (i)-(iv)

- (ii) There need not be at least 4 cards in the suit mentioned
 - (iii) When the bid is natural but conveys a specified holding in another suit
 - (iv) Where the number of points in the hand is markedly different to the same bid in Acol.
- Opening bids of 1NT whatever their range are not alerted

An earlier Bridge on Sundays' publication dealt with alerting in some detail. In Rubber Bridge there is no requirement for alerting provided the main facets of your system have been explained.

There are changes taking place throughout the bridge world, starting in America, and adopted elsewhere. There are three major changes that players should be aware of:

- (i) For some bids announcements will be made instead of an alert
 - (ii) For bids at the four level and above there will be no requirement to alert
 - (iii) Most doubles will not need to be alerted
- In addition bids that show only one suit are classified as natural

Announcements

This is a major departure from previous alerting procedures. For some simple situations the bidder's partner will make a very short statement instead of alerting. Announcement should save some enquiries

The bids when an announcement is to be made are:

- (iv) 1 no-trump
- (v) Stayman and red suit transfers over 1 no-trump
- (vi) Opening bids at the two level.

You will still be able to ask questions following an announcement (or an alert) if you are thinking of bidding, and ask to see a convention card.

1 A 1 no-trump opening bid

Provided the 1NT bid is made on balanced hands, the bidder's partner will now state 'the agreed points range. For example 12-14 or 12-15 or 15-17 etc. If the hand may contain a singleton he will also say 'may contain a singleton. If the no-trump opening bid shows a hand that is markedly unbalanced then it must be alerted and no announcement is made. Previously you had to ascertain the strength of an opening no-trump bid before bidding that hand started.

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2. Responses to a 1NT opening bid.

Most players in the world use 2 | as an asking bid instead of a natural bid of clubs. Many inexperienced players seem to forget this convention even though they have been taught it. 2 | over 1NT goes by the name 'Stayman'. Provided the responses are simple, the responder will now announce the bid by saying 'Stayman'. The 2~ response (no 4-card major suit) will neither be announced nor alerted, nor will responses of 2~ or 2@. Any other responses i.e. a bid to show both major suits will have to be alerted, and for such bids you would *not* announce 'Stayman' as a responder.

The use of transfer bids over an opening bid of 1NT has become widespread. The *simple* red suit transfer bids whereby the responder bids 2~ meaning a 5-card suit, and 2~ meaning a 5-card @ suit is very common amongst club players.

These bids will now be announced. Partner opens 1 NT, and you would bid 2~ and the opener will say 'heart' and likewise if you hold a 5-card @ suit you would bid 2~ and opener adds 'spade'. If the bid is not announced or alerted it is a natural bid in the suit (usually a weakness take-out)

3. Opening bids at the two level

Everybody seems to play 2 | as a game forcing hand, usually 23 + points but not restricted to this points range. In days gone by opening bids of 2~, 2~, and 2@ denoted a strong hand with about 8 playing tricks with the denoted suit as trumps. Nowadays there are such a variety of meanings to these opening bids. Especially popular are 'weak twos' in the major suits, often showing a 6-card suit and 6-10 pts. Many other varieties of weak twos exist and are played. These bids all have to be alerted

Instead of alerts we may soon make announcements for the 'simple', two opening bids, where the suit bid guarantees that suit

- (i) The game force 2 | opening will be *alerted* because it is a conventional bid not promising four cards in the | suit
- (ii) If you play Precision Club where 2 | is a club suit of at least 5 cards and 1-15pts partner will announce: 'intermediate'. If 2 | is a natural bid showing clubs and no specific holding in another suit you do likewise

- (iii) If you play the other suit bids at the two level as 8 playing tricks partner will announce e.g. 'strong forcing' or 'strong non-forcing' depending whether partner must reply.
- (iv) If you play a weak two bid in the majors with a 6 card major suit then partner will announce e.g. 'weak'. If the bid shows another suit of more than 4

cards you *may not* announce, and the bid must be alerted by partner.
(vii) All other two bids are alerted except of course 2NT if it is natural.

3. Doubles
Doubles of natural suit bids are presumed to be for 'take-out' and will not be alerted. This includes doubles of overcalls. If they are for penalties then they need to be alerted.
Doubles of opening bids of 1 NT are presumed to be for penalties and are not alerted. If the double of 1NT is for take-out it must be alerted

4. Short minor suit openings
With so many players playing five card major suits as a system, or opening with a prepared club it is now proposed:
(i) Short minor suit openings **need not** be alerted provided the minimum holding in the named suit is **at least 3 cards**. If the holding in the minor **may be less** than 3 cards it must be alerted.

5. Bids at the four level and above
Apart from opening bids at these levels which by agreement are conventional, all other bids (i.e. rebids or responses) are not to be alerted. This will be a major departure from current practice, so *no more alerting* of cue bids or ace asking bids at the 4 level or above

Watchpoints

- (i) With alerting it is the partner who alerts
- (ii) With announcements it is the partner who announces
- (iii) Strictly speaking these only apply to tournaments where master points are given
- (iv) It does not come into force until August 1st and there will 12 months to get used to it.
- (v) Bridge on Sundays is not affiliated to the EBU, but will adopt the new practice from January 1st 2007, and players are encouraged to use announcements from August 1st
- (vi) You can get more information by visiting the EBU website at www.ebu.co.uk

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Announcements and alerting