



Alerting Rules Summary

Three stages of alerts

Club bridge players don't need to know a lot about the Laws of bridge to play successfully. Once you know the hierarchy of bids and the order of play, all you need to do is call the Director for any (and every) infraction. Alerting is a little more complicated, and many of us have only learnt it from what we've been told around a bridge table.

This summary concentrates on alerts during the auction, but they are only one of three stages of the alert procedure. These stages are:

1. The pre-alert stage before bidding starts.

Before the round starts you should draw the opponents' attention to any unusual agreements you have which might surprise them, or to which they may need to arrange a defence.

2. Alerts during the auction.

Alert all conventional bids and passes below the 4-level. See below for more details.

3. Delayed alerts.

At the end of the auction, the declaring side should draw attention to any unusual features, particularly any unusual self-alerting calls.

Alerts during the auction

Some straightforward rules act as guidance. The primary rule is that you need to alert any bid that conveys a meaning other than a willingness to play in the denomination named or high-card strength or length (three cards or more) there.

But let's start simply, with the bids that need **announcing** i.e. where responder must make a prescribed statement *before* opponent's bid:

- *After a 1♣ opening:*
 - For Natural-type systems, the appropriate minimum length of the club suit (i.e. "1+", "2+", "3+", "4+") should be announced.
 - For Strong Club systems, the word "Strong" together with the minimum HCP holding (i.e. "16+") should be announced.
 - For other system options (e.g. a Polish 1♣, which has multiple meanings) – the word "Unusual" should be used.
- *After a natural 1NT opening:*
 - The appropriate HCP range (e.g. "12-14" or "15-17" etc.) should be announced.
No other information should be included in the announcement.
Whether your 1NT may include a five-card major can be included in a pre-alert, but the regulations specify only the point range is to be announced.

Let's move on to bids that **do** require **alerting** where responder must use the 'Alert' card or circle the bid on a bidding pad. (Technically responder is required to say "Alert" as well).

By definition, there are two cases in which otherwise natural calls must be alerted.

- The first is if the call is either forcing or non-forcing in a way that opponents are unlikely to expect (e.g. Jacoby 2NT, 'splinter', '4th suit forcing', 'new minor forcing' etc)
- The second is natural calls whose meaning is affected by other agreements, which the opponents are unlikely to expect (Bergen raises are a good example)

There are several common examples (which we see at the club every session) where bids that **must be alerted**, are often not

- Responses to a Stayman 2♣. While the 2♣ bid itself is self-alerting (see below), the responses are all conventional and *must be alerted*.
- Transfers in response to NT. The transfer bid is alertable; the response is only alertable if it conveys any meaning relating to hand strength or length in partner's shown suit (e.g. 'super accept' bids)
- Multi 2 bids. Any bid with a multiple meaning is alertable. The responses specified in your system, including correctable bids, are alertable

On top of these basics, there are 5 types of bid that are '**self-alerting**', meaning that they do not require responder to either announce or alert! These are:

- Doubles
- Redoubles
- Cue bids of an opponent's denomination/suit (Michaels cue bid, cue-raise)

- Any calls at the four-level or higher, except opening bids in your system
- Any 2♣ response to a 1NT opening bid in an uncontested auction

At the end of the auction, the declaring side should draw attention to any unusual features in the bidding, especially any unusual unalerted calls. Defenders must not draw attention to their own calls. Remember that the opening leader can request an explanation of the bidding before leading, or his partner may enquire after the opening lead has been made face down.

Finally, a note about explanations.

- partner must offer no other information except the 'Alert' unless asked by an opponent on that opponent's turn to call.
- A full explanation of the call must be given; this includes any partnership agreement, whether the agreement is explicit or based on partnership experience, and explanations may well include distributions and point ranges specifically excluded by a call, as well as those shown directly.
- If a player has alerted a bid but can't remember its specific meaning, the Director should be called who will take partner from the table so that the bidder can explain the bid.

Don't forget, asking for an explanation of a bid during the contract affords your opponents some extra information (though the Law on unauthorised information still applies). Only ask for an explanation if the explanation is likely to change your bid (as may be the case with a multi 2 bid against you).

If you want to understand the bidding for your defence, ask at the conclusion of the auction - if on lead, before you do so, or if not on lead, you may inquire after your partner has selected their lead but before it has been turned face up.

The Australian Bridge Federation Alerting Regulations can be found online at (<https://abfevents.com.au/events/tournregs/ABFAlertRegs2017.pdf>)