

# Announcements and Alerts

# NG34Bridge

Why do we have to make announcements and alerts?

An important part of the game of bridge is that you and your partner have agreements as to the meaning of certain conventional bids. For example, you may agree to play the Stayman convention. A bid of 2♣ after your partner has made an opening bid of 1NT does not say anything about your club suit. It asks your partner to bid his or her 4-card major suit(s).

It is only fair that your opponents have the right to know about all the agreements that you and your partner have made. One of the ways in which you disclose these agreements is through announcements and alerts. Other ways are by looking at your convention card (if you have one) or by asking questions.

So although the rules of the game require you to alert or announce your bids correctly, it is also important so that your opponents are not unfairly disadvantaged through lack of knowledge of what your bids mean.

At the same time, your partner is only allowed to gain information about your hand by the bids you choose to make (or not make) or by the cards you play. You need to be careful that by alerting a bid or by explaining it, you do not give any unauthorised information to your partner.

## Announcements

When your partner makes certain bids you have to explain it using a set phrase. You need to remember that you announce your partner's bid – not your own! You only announce opening bids of one of a minor with a short suit, the strength of natural NT opening bids, some responses to NT openings and natural two-level opening bids.

- If your partner makes an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦ and this shows fewer than three cards in that suit, you must announce "May be Two" (or "one" or "none") depending on the number of cards promised in that suit. If it is strong and conventional, e.g. Precision Club it needs to be alerted not announced.
- You announce the point range of a natural 1NT and 2NT opening, e.g. "12 to 14", "16 to 18", "20 to 22", etc. This must be followed by "may contain a singleton" if appropriate. You do not announce 1NT or 2NT overcalls.
- You announce artificial responses to a 1NT or 2NT opening.

Stayman 2♣ (or 3♣ over 2NT): Say "Stayman" if you have agreed to use this convention. It is usual that if your opponents double 1NT then 2♣ is natural

and shows a weak hand and a long-suit. If 2♣ is **not** natural after a double, then you should alert the bid (see next section).

Transfer 2♦ (or 3♦ over 2NT): Say "Hearts" if it promises 5 or more hearts.

Transfer 2♥ (or 3♥ over 2NT): Say "Spades" if it promises 5 or more spades.

If you don't use transfer bids and use natural weak take-outs instead, they do not have to be alerted.

If you use transfer bids, then a 2♠ response over 1NT is usually conventional, maybe showing 11 points or a weak take-out in the minors, or possibly both. This would need to be alerted rather than announced.

- You announce natural two-level openings. You need to say: "strong forcing", "strong non-forcing" or "weak" depending on what your partnership agreement happens to be. If you play a forcing club system, such as Precision Club or Nottingham Club, your 2♣ opening bid may be intermediate, in which case say "intermediate".

Artificial two-level openings such as the Acol 2♣ have to be alerted.

## Alerts

The alert card should be used when your partner makes a call that has an unexpected meaning. The rules are quite complex but, if you follow the following four rules, you are unlikely to go far wrong:

1. Do not alert any bids above the level of 3NT, unless it is an artificial suit bid in the first round of the auction.
2. If you think your opponents will understand your partner's bid to mean something different to what you and your partner understand it to mean, then use the alert card.
3. Unless you need to announce it (as discussed above), if your partner makes any bid (or pass) that is not natural or is natural but has a potentially unexpected meaning, then use the alert card.
4. Doubles do not need to be alerted if they are:
  - A take-out double of a natural suit bid;
  - A penalty double of an artificial suit bid; or
  - A penalty double of a NT bid at any level.

For any other double, you should use the alert card.

## **Asking Questions**

Once you have shown the alert card, the opponents can ask for the meaning of the bid that has been alerted. You must not give an explanation of an alerted bid unless you are asked to do so.

An opponent can only ask a question when it is that person's turn to bid. It is generally advisable (unless you intend to bid) to wait until the end of the auction to ask questions. If you are not on lead it is best not to ask until your partner has selected his or her opening lead and placed it face down. This is because asking questions about a specific call could give your partner unauthorised information about your hand.

It is best not to ask leading questions, such as "is the 2♣ natural?". It is better to ask a neutral question such as "What does the 2♣ bid show?".

## **Answering Questions**

Although it is tempting to try to be helpful by speculating what your partner's bid may mean, you must limit your response to any specific agreement or understanding that you have. If you have not discussed the situation and you are not sure, you are giving your partner information as to your interpretation of the bid which he or she is not entitled to.

If your partner gives a wrong explanation, you must not correct your partner straight away, or give any indication that there has been a wrong explanation (e.g. tutting, sighing or shaking your head). You must not use the information that there may have been a misunderstanding and carry on as if your original understanding was correct. You must call the Director and give the correct explanation:

- If you become declarer or dummy, before the lead to the first trick;
- If you become defender, after the play of the final trick.