

(Effective 1 January 2006)

Introduction

It is an essential principle of the game of bridge that you may not have undisclosed agreements with partner, whether in bidding or play. Your agreements must be fully available and fully disclosed to your opponents.

You should follow the principal of full disclosure in following these Regulations and in explanation of calls. Your principle should be to disclose, not as little as you must, but as much as you can, and as comprehensibly as you can. A careless failure to follow this policy may result in an adjusted score, where opponents have been damaged. If you make a positive effort to meet your obligations under full disclosure, you will rarely, if ever fall foul of these Regulations.

Your agreements include not only specific agreements appearing on your system card but also partnership understandings which have arisen through partnership discussion or experience. The opponents are entitled to know about these understandings. General bridge inferences, like those a new partner could make when there has been no prior discussion, are not alertable, but any inferences that can be drawn from partnership experience must be disclosed.

Definitions and General Principles

Conventional calls defined

Any bid that shows the denomination named and another denomination also, is conventional. All opening bids and overcalls that show two or more suits, even if one of the suits is specified, are by definition conventional.

Opening bids of 1♣ or 1♦ which may contain less than 3 cards in the opened suit are conventional.

Certain calls may not convey any meaning e.g. the enforced 3♣ after Lebensohl 2NT. Such calls are construed as conventional.

Natural calls defined

A bid is natural if it meets any of these criteria:

- Conveys a willingness to play in the denomination named (but does not come under the definition of a conventional call) or;
- Shows high card strength or length (3+ cards) in the suit named

A natural NT bid is defined as one that shows a preparedness to play in NT, and conveys no specific information about your suit holdings.

A natural pass is defined as a pass that does not convey any conventional message about strength or suit holdings.

Natural calls as defined above in general do not require an alert, but there are important exceptions:

The bid is natural, but you have an agreement by which your bid is forcing or non-forcing in a way that your opponents are unlikely to expect. Examples

- Responder's first round jump shift on weak hands
- A non-forcing suit response by an unpassed hand to an opening suit bid

(whether or not after intervention)

The bid is natural, but its meaning is affected by other agreements, which your opponents are unlikely to expect. Examples:

- A natural NT overcall in the direct position, which does not promise a stopper in

the overcalled suit.

- A jump raise of opener's one level bid which may be weak or pre-emptive.
- A single raise of partner's suit which may be strong or forcing e.g. 1♦– 2♦

forcing.

- The rebid in a canape sequence where the second suit may be longer than the

first.

- A 1♥ opening which denies holding 4+ ♠

Cue bids defined

For the purposes of these regulations, a cue bid of an opponent's suit is defined as a bid of any denomination bid by the opponent or of a suit shown by the opponent's bid. Example: If an opponent opens 1♦ showing spades, then 1♠ and 2♦ are both cue bids. Similarly a 2NT overcall of 1NT is also a cue bid.

Self-alerting calls defined

There are four different types of self-alerting calls, viz.

- Doubles
- Redoubles
- Cue bids of an opponent's denomination/suit, and
- All calls at the four level or higher

In addition to the above the following bids are in such common use that they are deemed to be self alerting:

- 2♣ Game Force opening bids (and 2♦ negative responses), alert other uses.

- Simple Stayman 2♣ responses to 1 NT opening bids and the 2♦ response denying a 4 card major (alert all other uses including a natural 2♣ and responses). Stayman after an opponent's double should be alerted.

These calls carry their own alert and should not be alerted. It may be risky to make assumptions as to the meaning of such a call. You are entitled (at your turn to call) to ask for your own protection, but bear in mind that unnecessary questions may be more helpful to the opponents than to your own side, and may convey unauthorised information thereby limiting partners options.

Clarification for overcalls

All of the principles for the definitions of conventional and natural opening bids and responses apply equally to overcalls. For example:

Do Not alert:

- 1NT in the pass out seat which may not contain a stopper in openers suit
- Single suited overcalls showing only the suit named, whether weak, intermediate or strong.

Over opponents takeout double, alert:

- Any bid in a new suit which is non-forcing (except by a passed hand)
- Pre-emptive jumps
- Fit showing jumps

Over an opponent's suit overcall, alert:

- Any bid in a new suit which is non-forcing (except by a passed hand)
- Any natural NT bid which does not promise a stopper in the opponents suit

Alert Stages

There are three stages of the alerting process. All are important

- The pre-alert before the round starts
- Alerts during the auction
- Delayed alerts by the declaring side before the opening lead

Pre-alerts

At the start of a round or match, pairs should acquaint each other with their basic system, length of their one level openings and the strength and style of their opening 1NT.

This is the stage where you should draw the opponent's attention to any unusual agreements you have which may surprise them, or to which they may need to arrange a defence. Pay particular attention to unusual self-alerting calls. For example: Transfer pre-empts, Unusual two

level openings, canape style bidding, very unusual doubles, unusual methods over the opponents' 1NT or strong club openings, unusual cue bids of the opponents' suit etc.

Highly unusual carding (e.g. leading low from doubletons) should also be pre-alerted at this stage

Alerts during the auction

You must alert a call if it is conventional unless it is self-alerting

Delayed alerts

At the end of the auction, the declaring side should draw attention to any unusual features, particularly any unusual non-alerted calls. Upon inquiry, you must disclose fully, not only the specific meanings of all calls, but also any inferences you have drawn from the auction based on partnership experience (as distinct from general bridge knowledge). These explanations may occasionally need to include negative inferences, such as hand types partner probably does not have for his bidding. Defenders must not, at this time, draw attention to their own calls, nor voluntarily offer explanations (they must of course fully disclose upon inquiry).

Takeout/negative-type doubles and penalty doubles do not require a delayed alert. If interested, the opening leader should enquire before leading, or his partner may enquire after the opening lead has been made face down.

Alerting Procedure

Any bid, double, redouble or pass which requires an alert must be alerted promptly by the partner of the person making the call using the method described in these regulations. (When using written bidding see *page D31*, for alerts with bidding boxes without screens, see *page D33* and with screens, see *page D34*) or as amended by supplementary regulations for the event.

Alerts are compulsory – you may not ask the opponents not to alert.

Self alerting calls should not be alerted.

Delayed alerts should be indicated by a small plus sign (+) in one corner of the appropriate square of the bidding pad as evident of the delayed alert. (If bidding boxes are in use, the declaring side should verbally indicate which unusual calls require a delayed alert.)

A player may not be sure whether a call should be alerted. This could be because the player has forgotten the agreement, has forgotten whether there is an agreement, or is unsure whether an agreement applies. In such cases it is generally safer to alert the call and, if asked, explain the circumstances. However, the uncertainty about the meaning of the call is unauthorised information to the player's partner.

Do not explain your alerted calls or delayed alerted calls unless a request has been made.

Explanations

Merely to name a convention (e.g. Michaels, Lebensohl, etc.) is not an acceptable explanation. There are many variations of most conventions, and a more specific explanation is normally required. Similarly, the use of “Standard” or “Natural” to describe calls, signals or leads is rarely sufficient – nor the terms “weak”, “strong” or “intermediate” – without appropriate qualification.

Tournament Director’s Responsibility

1. Tournament Directors will not allow players to manipulate these regulations to their advantage. For example, opponents must be allowed enough time to alert; a speedy action out of tempo followed by a claim for a late alert will receive little sympathy. Likewise experienced players claiming damage through a technical failure to alert will need to present a strong case.

2. When players claim damage due to failure to alert (but are likely to be aware of probable alternative meanings of a call), their claim will be unsuccessful if they failed to protect themselves, because they could have enquired as to the meaning of the call before damage occurred (unless they can demonstrate the inability to enquire because, in so doing, they would have conveyed unauthorised information, and/or given opponents information to which they were not entitled).

3. Tournament directors are urged, when giving a ruling at the table, to consider whether the principles of active ethics and full disclosure have been adhered to by the players.