

ALERTING IN BRIEF

Alerting is about drawing the opponents' attention to your side's unusual bidding. It is controlled by a set of regulations issued by the Australian Bridge Federation. That document runs for 11 pages (!) so I'll save you some reading here.

With written bidding you alert your partner's unusual bid by circling it and saying "Alert". Don't explain anything: wait to be asked.

If using bidding boxes, say "Alert" and optionally fish around in the box in the hope of finding the Alert card.

The definition of an "unusual bid" is somewhat opaque, but the general principle is that, if a bid's meaning is not what it sounds like, then it should be alerted. Usually this involves bidding a suit that does not show length in that suit, or bidding no-trumps when it does not indicate a desire to play in no-trumps. It also includes bids that have an unexpected HCP range. Examples of alertable bids: - Transfer bids - Unusual No-trump or Lebensohl - Multi 2 opening - 'Pass or correct' bids - Weak jump responses - Inverted minor raises.

Self-alerting bids

Some bids are defined as self-alerting, meaning they do not require an actual alert as they are "obviously unusual". These are: - Doubles and redoubles - All bids above 3NT (except unusual high level opening, e.g. NAMYATS) - Cue bid of opponents' suit - 2C response to a 1NT opening bid.

Asking

You can ask about any alerted bid, or unalerted bid for that matter, but only at your turn to bid or play. Most people only ask if the answer may affect their upcoming bid or play, but it is entirely up to you whether or not you ask.

When asking, ask in general terms, not using leading questions. So say: "what does 2C mean?", not "does 2C show clubs?" (which could be interpreted as code for 'I have clubs').

At the end of an auction that had multiple alerts, if on lead you should say: "explain the auction please", rather than asking about one specific alerted bid. If not on lead, wait until partner has led face-down and then ask your question.

Answering

You are required to explain your partnership agreements, nothing more. If you're not sure what partner's bid means or have forgotten your agreements, try not to guess. Just say: "I don't know" or "I don't remember". (The director will adjust the result if your opponents are damaged by this failure of memory.)

If you haven't discussed a bid, say: "it is undiscussed". Again, do not offer a possible explanation, or how you are going to take it.

Partner fails to alert, or mis-alerts, or misexplains

Happens all the time, right? You must stay shtum for the moment. Then ...

At auction's end, with your side declaring: Before the opening lead, draw your opponents' attention to the problem. Explain what you think went wrong.

If your side ends up defending: You can say nothing until the end of play, at which point you should identify the issue.

Pre-alerting

At the start of each round, you should pre-alert your opponents to any unusual convention that they may need to arrange a defence against. Main examples are: - Switched responses to 1C - Very unusual 2-level openings (e.g. 2NT for the minors) ... the Multi scheme does not need a pre-alert, as it's so relevant - A system other than some form of Standard American: e.g. Precision, Acol