

ACBL ALERT PROCEDURES ONLINE

From the ACBL introduction of Alert Procedures for Jan. 1, 2021:

"Bridge has never been a game of secret agreements. Your opponents are entitled to know just as much about what your bids mean as you do. Alerts have always been about making that process easier."

To announce or alert a bid on BBO, click the Alert button in the Bidding box and type the announcement in the space provided. The player making the bid makes the announcement online; in face-to-face play, partner would have that responsibility.

The announcement will be seen by the bidder and the opponents and can be seen by the director. The partner of the bidder will not see it until play of the hand is completed.

One caution; international bridge organizations each have their own alert procedures. If you find a discussion of them on BBO or online, check to see if it is ACBL procedures being discussed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACBL Alert Procedures specify that the agreed point range is to be announced when opening 1NT, even the very common "15-17" or "16-18". In LBC and Tillsonburg virtual club games, we announce at the start of the game that 1NT openings are 15 to 17 unless alerted otherwise. With this "local rule", you need not announce "15 - 17" when you bid.

If an opening bid of 1 club could be shorter than 3, announce the minimum expected number "could be two".

If a 1NT response to an opening 1H or 1S bid is forcing or semi-forcing, that is to be announced.

Transfers are announced by stating the suit shown; a bid of 2 diamonds as a transfer to hearts is announced as "hearts". On BBO, enter !hs in the field and the message will appear as ♥ s. (Same for !ss, !ds and !cs)

There is no automatic penalty for failure to announce or alert; but if the failure damages the opponents, the director may adjust the score. It also saves time to announce and alert so that opponents do not need to ask about your bid.

ALERTS

Some common alerting situations are described below. In general, bids which are either natural or obviously not natural (like a Michaels cuebid of opponent's suit) are not alerted, while artificial bids or those with conventional meaning generally are alerted. There are some exceptions; Stayman is an example where the 2Club bid is so widely used that it does not need to be alerted if it is Stayman; it does require an alert if it means clubs.

When alerting, try to explain the meaning of the bid rather than just giving its name. If you say "Bergen" or "Capelletti," an opponent who is not familiar with the details of the convention has gained no useful information and may feel intimidated.

The ACBL Alert Chart and Alert Procedures are available on the ACBL website [here](#).

Even if a bid is not alertable, either opponent always has the right to ask whether there is an agreed meaning. If the response will not fit in the small "Explain" box, use the Chat to Opponents function rather than chat to table, so your partner will not see it.

There is often a brief delay after the bid appears on opponents' screens before the alert appears. When you have alerted a bid and get an immediate "please explain" request, it may be that the opponent clicked on your bid before they saw your alert.

Splinters

Alert 4Club response to 1Heart as "4hs,11-15, 0-1 club".

Jacoby Two NoTrump

Alert the 2NT response to 1Heart as "4hs, 12+ pts, asking".

Partner will alert her response as "minimum, no shortage", "0 or 1 club", "17+, no shortage" as appropriate.

Bergen Raises

Alert a Bergen raise of 1Heart as "4 hs, x-y pts" using the point ranges you have agreed.

Cappelletti or DONT

For these bids over the opponents 1 NoTrump opener, alert with a brief description; “single suit” or “Majors” or “hearts + a minor.”

Puppet Stayman

The 3Club bid over 2NT opener is not alertable, whether it is regular Stayman or Puppet Stayman. Responses to regular Stayman are also not alertable, while responses to Puppet Stayman are. So:

2NT – 3 Clubs;

3Diamonds “no 5 crd Major, a 4 card”; 3 Hearts “spades”;

3NT.

Support Doubles

Under the Jan. 1, 2021 Alert Procedures, support doubles and redoubles are no longer alertable.

Gerber, Blackwood, Roman Keycard Blackwood and Responses

The 4 Clubs and 4 NoTrump ace-asking bids are not alertable. In face-to-face bridge, the responses are also not alertable; the declaring side is encouraged to offer an explanation at the end of the auction.

While opponents always have the right to ask, it is suggested that they not ask until the auction is over, UNLESS the meaning may make a difference in the bid that they are about to make. If they do ask about the bid, they need to be careful to do so in simple "please explain" language, so as not to give unauthorized information which might suggest a lead to partner.

In online bridge, to save time you may alert your response to 4NT (for example, 5 spades would be alerted as “2 keycards & Q”). The 4NT bid itself does not have to be alerted, but if asked for an explanation, just say “ace asking” or “RKCB 1430”.

Authorized Information - Consulting your Convention Card

In face-to-face bridge, you may review the opponents' convention card at any time during play, but you may not consult your own or your partner's once either of you have seen your hand until play of that board is finished.

In online play, ACBL treats all information provided by the software as authorized information. On BBO, the blue hamburger has a menu that allows you to view the convention card of either pair, so you may consult your convention card (if it is posted) during play. When playing for masterpoints, you should not consult other written notes. Bridge is a test of memory as well as skill.

You may review the auction during play by clicking on the box that shows the contract. Click again to close the auction box.