



ACBL ALERT REGULATIONS



Effective March 1, 2002

ALERTS—When partner makes any of the calls listed below, say “Alert” clearly & tap or display the Alert card if in use. Don’t explain the call until asked (“Please explain” is the way to ask), whereupon the Alerter must give a full explanation of the call, not just the name of a convention. A common error is to Announce the meaning of a call instead of Alerting it. A notrump (NT) rebid following a strong artificial opening is treated as a NT opening with regard to Alert and Announcement requirements for subsequent bids by either partner.

When an Alert is given, ASK, don’t ASSUME.

- All conventions that are not exempted on the next page (see *Do Not Alert or Announce*)
- A bid whose forcing or non-forcing nature is unusual, or one that has an unusual strength, length, distribution, or range requirement; e.g., a direct NT overcall based on fewer than 14 high-card points (HCP) or more than 19 HCPs; a weak two bid with a range greater than 7 HCP or not showing at least five cards in the suit; a 3-level suit opening not weak
- Any opening bid meant as Blackwood, Gerber, or something similar
- 2♣ opening that is natural and non-forcing
- 2♦/2♥/2♠ opening that is not a natural weak two bid, or is weak but promises another suit
- 3NT opening based by partnership agreement on a six-card or longer suit, whether “gambling” or not
- In response to a one-level suit opening, a weak single jump raise or weak jump shift, over a pass
- Strong single raise of a natural one-level suit opening, even if only “constructive” with something like 7-10 HCP
- 1♦ response to 1♣ that denies a four-card major regardless of hand strength
- Non-forcing non-game new-suit response by an unpassed hand (UPH) to an opening suit bid at any level
- Non-forcing 2NT, conventional response other than 2NT, or invitational raise, in response to a weak two bid
- Unusual response to an artificial 2♣ opening (e.g., controls, HCP, 2♥ bust, 2♦ shows values, negative double)
- 1NT response that by partnership agreement may be based on more than 10 HCP, but is not even semi-forcing
- 1NT rebid by opener that by partnership agreement may be stronger than 15 HCP, unless the opening is strong
- Artificial checkback rebid (e.g., Checkback Stayman, New Minor Forcing) after a natural opener’s NT rebid
- Unusual Stayman usage (e.g., Two-Way, Puppet), and an unusual or conventional response to Stayman other than a minimum bid in diamonds to deny a four-card major
- Subsequent call by a Stayman bidder that does not promise four or more cards in a major suit
- Next-level club response to a natural NT opening (or overcall) that does not ask for a four-card major
- Natural 2♦/2♥/2♠ response to a 1NT opening or 1NT overcall, unless it is intended as a signoff
- Gerber 4♣ in the absence of a previous NT bid, or other unusual ace or control-asking bid
- Strong or intermediate jump overcall of one-level suit openings and responses, except in balancing seat
- Weak jump shift as an advance of partner’s overcall
- Jump in a new suit that promises support for partner’s suit, even if natural (“Fit Jump”)
- Unusual NT by an UPH hand if a non-jump 1NT/2NT/3NT bid, or a jump to 3NT, or does not definitely show either both minors or the lower two unbid suits (as indicated on the convention card)
- Penalty(ish) double of a natural bid when non-penalty is expected, including: double of an overcall of a non-weak opening bid, through 4♥; double of a non-forcing opening bid in a suit (including 1♣ or 1♦ that “may be short”); double of a natural new-suit response to an opening bid, through 4♥
- Non-penalty double when penalty is expected, including: negative double of 4♠ or higher overcall, double showing support, takeout double of 4♠ or higher opening bid, double of an overcall of a weak opening bid, double of a NT bid (except 1x-P-1NT-Dbl), double of a conventional bid (or cue bid) that shows strength in another suit or merely denies strength in the suit, e.g., 1♠-P-2♣-2♠-Dbl = “I don’t want a spade lead”
- Negative double that does not imply an unbid major suit (e.g., 1♣-1♥-Dbl denying, or not implying, four spades)
- Conventional redouble (e.g., showing 3-card support), except one obviously asking for a rescue (“S.O.S.”)
- Passes with highly unusual or unexpected meanings; e.g., 1♦-Dbl-Rdbl-Pass showing a desire to defend 1♦ redoubled; 2♣ (strong, artificial)-2♠-Pass showing values; 1♠-2♣-Pass semi-forcing, 1♠-P-2♣-2♠-Pass = “I want spades led”
- Most negative inferences; e.g., 4♥/4♠ opening that can’t be strong (NAMYATS), jump raise of 1♥/1♠ to 4♥/4♠ that might be strong (Big Club system), calls made in lieu of a support double or redouble, thereby denying exactly three-card support; negative double when playing a new suit not forcing by UPH (doubler’s hand is likely quite different from what might be expected), strong three-level bid when playing Lebensohl (a weak hand bids 2NT)

(OVER)

PRE-ALERTS—Before your side’s cards are taken from the board, disclose to the opponents:

Any Mid-Chart or Super-Chart conventions, unusual general approaches (e.g., canapè, two-system methods; highly aggressive methods or preempts; opening bids (even in third seat) or two-over-one responses that are weaker than usual; overcalls with fewer than 6 HCP; low leads from doubletons. **Normally Alertable calls must also be Alerted later.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS—Explain partner’s bid without being asked, and tap or display the Alert card if in use:

- State the HCP range of a 1NT opening, but not of a higher NT opening or NT overcall (e.g., “14-plus to 17”)
- “Forcing” for a forcing 1NT response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening, but only over a pass (Alertable over a bid or double)
- “Semi-Forcing” for a semi-forcing (opener may pass with no more than a balanced minimum) 1NT response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening. Not required if responder is a passed hand, when semi-forcing is assumed
- “Transfer” for a diamond-to-heart or heart-to-spade transfer response at any level to any natural NT opening or NT overcall. “Transfer” must be Announced even if a later game-forcing bid (Alerted) may cancel the transfer meaning. If a later canceling bid is not game-forcing the transfer must be Alerted, not Announced. Alert all other transfer bids.
- “May be short” for **non-forcing** 1♣ or 1♦ openings that might be based on fewer than three cards. Alert if forcing.

DO NOT ALERT OR ANNOUNCE:

- Non-forcing one-level suit opening with an agreed range of somewhere between 10-21+ HCP
- Artificial strong 2♣ opening and 2♦ negative, “semi-automatic,” or “waiting response” that does not promise values
- 2NT negative response to a natural strong two bid
- Stayman next level of clubs in response to an opening NT bid or NT overcall, asking for a major
- Natural 2♦/2♥/2♠ signoff response (not 2♣, which must be Alerted) to a 1NT opening or overcall
- Possible bypass of one or both majors when bidding NT
- Possible two-card 2♣ rebid after a forcing or semi-forcing 1NT response, if only done with 2-2 minors
- Non-invitational raise of a weak two bid, or a forcing 2NT response even if conventional
- Jump raise, weak or strong, except a weak single jump raise of an opening one bid when RHO passes
- Natural constructive (i.e., not weak) or better jump shift as an advance of an overcall, even if not forcing
- Cue bid (bid of a suit shown by an opponent), regardless of meaning, except for a direct cue bid of a natural opening bid played as natural. 1x-P-1y-2x/2y natural are not Alertable, but 1x-2x natural is Alertable if 1x is not artificial.
- Natural bid in a suit bid artificially by an opponent, a double that shows the suit, or a lead-directing double of the suit
- Jump overcall of any strength over a weak two-level or higher opening bid
- 4NT or higher unusual NT bid, an unusual jump to 2NT, or any unusual NT by a passed hand
- Blackwood 4NT ace or key-card inquiry; but declarer or dummy should explain the response(s) before play starts
- 4♣ Gerber ace-asking after partner has bid NT naturally
- Forcing pass whose forcing nature is not unexpected

DELAYED ALERTS AND FULL DISCLOSURE—Alertable bids above 3NT, starting with opener’s second call, are Alerted after the auction. Before the opening lead, declarer or dummy Alerts such bids made by their side. Although legal, it is better not to explain one’s own bids. Defenders Alert and explain partner’s bids, not their own, when the opening lead is face down, before dummy is tabled. Conventional doubles, redoubles, and passes must be Alerted immediately when made, but forcing passes at this level are not Alertable.

In addition to delayed Alerts, before the opening lead declarer and/or dummy should disclose anything about their auction that might be unknown to the other side because it was not previously disclosed (e.g., major suit bypass possibility, negative inferences, the meaning of bids following 4NT or Gerber 4♣, even those not Alertable). Don’t make them ask.

ALERT MISTAKES—Players who realize their own mistake (failure to Alert, or wrong explanation) must call the Director immediately. If partner has made a mistake, do not make a call that could have been suggested by it if there is a logical alternative, or give any indication of it before the final pass, after which call the Director before the opening lead is made (but a defender must wait until end of play). Players who know that a call is Alertable, but can’t remember the meaning, must Alert it anyway. When asked to explain, do not show doubt if you are going to make a call that assumes a certain meaning. Just state that meaning confidently, and continue. Do not say, “I’m taking it as....,” which tells partner of your doubt. If it turns out you were wrong about the meaning, the Director will straighten things out later.

Compiled unofficially (Feb 2007) by Marvin L. French, mfrench1@san.rr.com, who welcomes questions or comments.

Visit Marvin’s website at www.marvinfrench.com for more on ACBL regulations and bridge laws.