



American Contract Bridge League

Alert Pamphlet

Natural Calls Not Specifically Noted

NO ALERT

- Expected strength and shape.

ALERT

- Highly unusual strength, shape, etc.

Most natural calls do not require an Alert. If the call promises about the expected strength and shape, no Alert is necessary. Treatments that show unusual strength or shape should be Alerted.

As to length, ACBL accepts as NATURAL any offer to play in a suit for the first time that shows:

- Three or more cards in a minor suit.
- Four or more cards in a major suit.
- Four or more cards for an overcall in a suit.
- Five or more cards for a weak two-bid.
- Six or more cards for a three-level preempt.

NOTE: Partnerships whose systems include extremely aggressive methods, such as frequent use of four-card overcalls at the two level or higher, weak two-bids with bad five-card suits or three-level preempts with bad six-card and/or mostly five-card suits must pre-Alert the opponents before the round begins.

A treatment is a natural call that carries a specific message about the suit bid or the general strength of the hand. Agreeing to open five-card majors is a treatment – when you open 1♥, partner "knows" you have five or more. This is indeed a message but not an unexpected one, so no Alert is required. Weak jump shifts, on the other hand, are unexpected and therefore Alertable.

EXAMPLE: 1♣-P-2♠

If the 2♠ bid promises a spade suit of five or more cards, it is a natural call. The treatment involves the strength that the bid promises. If the call is forcing to game, no Alert is required. If it is weak or invitational, then it must be Alerted.

Natural bids that convey an unexpected meaning must be Alerted. This includes strong bids that sound weak, weak bids that sound strong, and all other bids that, by agreement, convey meanings different from, or in addition to, the expected meaning ascribed to them.

EXAMPLE: 1♠-P-2♣

If 2♣ is natural and forcing, promising three or more clubs and 10 or more HCP (including those that are forcing to game), it requires no Alert. This is the expected strength and shape of such a bid. If 2♣ is non-forcing, it must be Alerted.

In general, when the use of conventions leads to unexpected understandings about suit length by negative inference, a natural call becomes Alertable. Some such agreements have become expected and are fairly common, therefore no Alert is required.

EXAMPLES:

1♥-P-1♠: If 1♠ promises a five-card suit (when playing an opening 2♦ bid as five hearts and four spades), no Alert is required.

1♣/♦/♥-P-1NT: If the 1NT bidder could or could not have four cards in one or both majors, again no Alert.

1♣-P-1♥/♠ If the major-suit bidder could be passing up a four-card or longer diamond suit, no Alert is required.

If, however, your 1NT response on an auction of 1♣/♦/♥-P-1NT shows a hand of 10-12 HCP, for example, an Alert is required.

CONVENTIONAL/ARTIFICIAL CALLS:

ALMOST ALL CONVENTIONS MUST BE ALERTED.

In general, conventional calls require an Alert. In ACBL-sponsored events, however, there are some common conventions that do not require an Alert during the auction: Stayman, ace-asking bids, most meanings of cue bids, strong

artificial 2C openings and most doubles, redoubles and passes. Some Alerts are delayed until the auction is completed.

NO ALERT

- Stayman (next higher level of clubs over a NT opening bid).
- Blackwood (4NT) and expected responses.
- Gerber (4♣).
- Conventional 2NT response to an opening two-level suit bid.
- 2♦ response to strong artificial 2♣ opening.

ALERT

- All other conventional and/or artificial bids

A convention is defined as any call which, by partnership agreement, conveys a meaning not necessarily related to the denomination named or, in the case of a pass, double or redouble, the last denomination named.

Examples of calls deemed to be conventional are: showing support for a previously bid suit and shortness in the bid suit (such as a splinter bid) and bidding your worst suit for takeout.

Notrump Openings

ALERT

- Conventional (See Below)*

ANNOUNCE

- State range, if natural for all 1NT openings.

Natural 1NT opening bids require an Announcement.

EXAMPLE: 1NT (showing 12-14 HCP)

Partner says immediately, "Twelve to fourteen."

EXAMPLE: 1NT (showing 15-17 HCP)

Partner says immediately, "Fifteen to seventeen."

EXAMPLE: 1NT (showing 14 HCP with a five-card suit to 17-
without a five-card suit)

Partner says immediately, "Fourteen plus to seventeen minus."

**Conventional notrump openings and overcalls require an Alert. Systemically unbalanced or conventional 1NT openings or overcalls by an un-passed hand require an Alert.*

EXAMPLE: 1♣-P-1♠-1NT

If this shows the other two suits, an Alert is required. However, after P-1♣-P-1♠-1NT no Alert is required.

No Trump Overcalls

NO ALERT

- Conventional overcalls by a passed hand
- Jumps to 2NT or any four-level or higher notrump bid that is unusual

ALERT

- Jump to 3NT that is unusual.
- Other conventional notrump overcalls.
- A natural notrump overcall with an expected lower limit of less than 14 HCP and/or upper limit of more than 19 HCP.
- Natural jumps to 2NT, except in balancing seat.

Natural 1NT overcalls in the range of 14 to 19 HCP require neither an Alert nor an Announcement. If the top or bottom limit of the natural notrump direct overcall is out of that range or if the 1NT overcall is conventional by an un-passed hand, an Alert is required.

Responses to Notrump Opening Bids and 1NT Overcalls

NO ALERT

- Stayman (next higher level of clubs) asking for a four-card or longer major. (Also, Stayman after the NT opening has been doubled.)
- Natural signoffs at the next higher level in diamonds, hearts and spades.
- Three-level natural responses whether a jump response or not.

ALERT

- Next level higher of clubs if other than asking for four-card (or longer) major and rebids.
- Transfers, except for those which are announced, and other artificial responses above the next higher level of clubs.

ANNOUNCE

- State transfer anytime a diamond response to a natural notrump bid at any level is a transfer to hearts.
- State transfer anytime a heart response to a natural notrump bid at any level is a transfer to spades.

If the transferer may occasionally hold a Game Forcing hand without the next higher suit, announce, "Transfer" and Alert the subsequent bid which cancels the transfer meaning.

NOTE: ANNOUNCEMENTS OF TRANSFERS AS ABOVE APPLY ONLY AFTER A NATURAL NOTRUMP REBID BY OPENER.

EXAMPLES:

2♣: If it requires partner to bid a four-card or longer major, it is not Alertable; all other uses must be Alerted.

2♦: If natural and non-invitational, it is not Alertable. A transfer to hearts is Announced. All other uses must be Alerted.

2♥: If natural and non-invitational, it is not Alertable. A transfer to spades is Announced. All other uses must be Alerted.

2♠: If natural and non-invitational, it is not Alertable. All other uses must be Alerted.

2NT: If invitational to 3NT, it is not Alertable. All other uses must be Alerted.

3♣/♦/♥/♠: If natural, they are not Alertable. All other uses must be Alerted, or

3♦/♥ & 4♦/♥: If transfers to hearts and spades, respectively, must be Announced.

FAILURE TO ANNOUNCE 1NT RANGE

A player will not be protected by the tournament director if he presumes to know the range of an unannounced 1NT opening bid. Players are expected to protect themselves in this situation because they know by definition that an announcement has been missed. This does not apply when an unannounced range is different from a previously announced or discussed range by a pair using a variable range.

Opening Suit Bids at the One-Level

NO ALERT

- Natural non-forcing openings with an agreed range of somewhere between 10-21+ HCP.

ALERT

- Conventional and/or artificial openings which do not require an Announcement (example, a strong/artificial forcing club).

ALERT with PRE-ALERT

- Frequent very light openings (fewer than 10 HCP by agreement).

ANNOUNCE

- State "may be short" for non-forcing 1♣ and 1♦ calls which may be shorter than three cards.

EXAMPLES:

- 1♣: Not Alertable if natural (three or more cards in minor) and non-forcing. Announceable if fewer than three cards is the only unnatural meaning. Any other meaning must be Alerted (e.g., a Precision opening 1♣).
- 1♦: Not Alertable if natural (three or more cards in minor) and non-forcing. Announceable if fewer than three cards is the only unnatural meaning. Any other meaning must be Alerted.
- 1♥/♠: Not Alertable if natural (four or more cards in major) and non-forcing. (Note that canapé systems must be pre-Alerted and canapé bids must also be Alerted during the auction.) All other meanings are Alertable.
- 2♣: Not Alertable if strong and forcing, whether natural or artificial. All other meanings are Alertable (e.g., natural and weak or intermediate).
- 2♦/♥/♠: Weak, natural, non-conventional uses do not require an Alert. All other natural or conventional meanings are Alertable.

Responses to One-Level Suit Bids

NO ALERT

- Non-forcing 1NT response whether four-card majors are bypassed or not.
- Natural 2NT response that may bypass four-card majors.
- A one-level major- suit response to 1♣ that may bypass longer diamonds.
- 2/1 which shows at least game invitational values.
- All jump raises in or out of competition except a weak jump raise after a pass by RHO (no competition).

ALERT

- Conventional 1NT response which is not announced.
- Non-forcing suit bids by an un-passed hand.
- A weak jump raise after a pass by RHO (no competition).
- A natural, non-forcing jump shift after a pass by RHO (no competition).
- All conventional responses not listed under no alert.

ANNOUNCE

- State "Forcing" if a 1NT response to a major is simply forcing.
- State "Semi-forcing" if a 1NT response is forcing except when opener has a balanced minimum.

EXAMPLES:

- 1♣-P-1♦: Not Alertable if natural, forcing one round and does not deny a four- (or five-) card major. All other uses must be Alerted.
- 1♣-P-1♥/♠: Not Alertable if it shows four or more cards in the suit bid and is forcing for one round. Note: Possibly bypassing a longer diamond suit is NOT Alertable.
- 1♣/♦-P-1NT: Not Alertable if it shows a limited (maximum 11 HCP), balanced hand.
- 1♦-P-1♥/♠: Not Alertable if it is natural (four or more cards in the suit) and forcing one round.
- 1♥-P-1♠: Not Alertable if it is natural and forcing one round. Alertable if it is conventional.
- 1♥-P-1NT: Not Alertable if natural and non-forcing. Announceable if it is forcing or semi-forcing. Alertable if it has some other conventional meaning, for example, if it promises spades (a Mid-Chart agreement so the Mid-Chart has to be in effect).
- 1♠-P-1NT: Not Alertable if natural and non-forcing. Announceable if it is forcing or semi-forcing. Alertable if it has some other conventional meaning.

NOTE: Passed-hand 1NT responses, unless they cannot be passed, do not require an Announcement.

- 2♣-P-2♦ (OR a 2NT response to a natural, strong two-bid):
Not Alertable if negative or temporizing (waiting).
- 2♦/♥/♠-P-2NT: Not Alertable if it asks for further clarification. Natural, non-forcing 2NT responses to opening two-bids must be Alerted.
- 1♥-P-4♥: When playing a forcing club where the 4♥ call may have, by agreement, values for game but not slam.

REMEMBER! A non-forcing suit response to a weak two-bid requires an Alert. A simple raise (for example, 2♥-P-3♥) of a weak two-bid that is invitational or better also requires an Alert.

Game-forcing natural jump shifts are not Alertable. Other jump shifts not in competition (either conventional or natural and weak or intermediate) must be

Alerted. A natural jump shift in competition does not require an Alert regardless of strength.

A natural 2NT response which is invitational or better does not require an Alert.

Two-over-one bids are not Alertable if they are natural and forcing for at least one round.

In general, responses by a passed hand are considered non-forcing and do not require an Alert or Announcement.

Natural jump raises in competition are not Alertable regardless of strength. In the same vein, natural jump shifts in competition do not require an Alert regardless of strength.

Opener's and Responder's Rebids

NO ALERT

- Two of a minor after a forcing NT or semi-forcing 1NT response. (See below.)*
- A 1NT or 2NT rebid that implies a balanced hand (may contain one or two four-card majors).
- Suited game suit tries that, by agreement, show a minimum length of three cards in the suit bid. (Help Suit Game Tries can be xxx, Jxx or xxxx.)

ALERT

- Opener's 1NT rebid, if strong. Responder's artificial third- or fourth-suit hands.
- Responder's "checkback" bids (of two or three clubs or diamonds).
- Suited game tries that, by agreement, may have fewer than three cards in suit bid.

A 1NT rebid if strong (may have 16 or more HCP) requires an Alert.

A rebid in a suit that tends to be longer than the opening bid suit (canapé) requires an Alert.

**Opener's rebid of two of a minor over partner's forcing or semi-forcing notrump response to a major does not require an Alert if it shows three or more of the suit bid*

(4-5-2-2 does not require an Alert as long as responder expects three or more cards in the minor).

Opener's Two-Level Suit Bids and Responses Thereto

NO ALERT

- 2♣ strong, artificial and forcing.
- Weak, natural 2♦/♥/♠.
- Conventional and/or forcing 2NT responses.
- Natural, forcing responses in a suit.

ALERT

- Other conventional and/or artificial bids.
- Natural 2♦/♥/♠ if intermediate or better.
- Natural weak or intermediate 2♣.
- Natural and non-forcing 2NT responses.
- Natural, non-forcing responses in a new suit.

EXAMPLES:

3♣/♦/♥/♠: Natural and preemptive (weak) opening suit bids at the three level are not Alertable. If you commonly preempt at this level with very weak suits (worse than Qxxxx) or suits of fewer than six cards, you must Alert. Intermediate, strong or conventional usage must be Alerted.

3NT: A 3NT opening that promises a strong, balanced hand is not Alertable. Gambling 3NT openings and all other conventional uses must be Alerted.

Natural opening bids at the three level or higher which convey an unusual message regarding HCP range or any other information which might be unexpected to the opponents must be Alerted.

EXAMPLES:

4♥/♠: Openings which are natural but are weaker than might be expected because the partnership has some other method (for example, Namyats) for showing a good four-level opening.

3♣/♦: A natural opening which is stronger than expected because the partnership has agreed to open 2♣ (a Mid-Chart agreement so the Mid-Chart has to be in effect) with weak minor-suit preempts.

Ace-Asking Bids

NO ALERT

- Over suits, 4NT ace-asking and responses.
- Over NT, 4♣ ace-asking and responses.

ALERT

- Ace-asking calls and responses at or below the level of 3NT or any opening ace-asking call and response.

DELAYED ALERT

- Ace-asking calls and responses above the level of 3NT beginning with opener's second call except for those listed under not Alertable.

Doubles, Redoubles and Passes

NO ALERT

- Most doubles and redoubles.

ALERT

- Doubles and redoubles with highly unusual or unexpected meanings.
- Passes with highly unusual or unexpected meanings.

Except for those doubles with highly unusual or unexpected meanings, doubles do not require an Alert.

EXAMPLES:

1♠-P-4♣* -Dbl: If this double asks for the lead of any suit other than clubs, an Alert is required.

1♥-Dbl or 1♦-P-1♠-Dbl: If either double is penalty or lead directing only, an Alert is required.

3♥-Dbl or 3♥-P-P-Dbl: If either double is penalty, an Alert is required.

Passes or redoubles with highly unusual or unexpected meanings require an Alert.

EXAMPLES:

1♣-P-1♠-Dbl-Rdbl: If redouble shows three-card spade support rather than a good hand, an Alert is required.

1♠-P-2♣-2♠- P: If the second Pass says, "I do not want a spade lead on defense," an Alert is required.

NOTE: A Support Double (or Redouble) showing three-card support for partner's bid suit requires an Alert. The four-card support raise or bids that tend to deny three-card support are not alertable.

* Splinter bid

Cue Bids

NO ALERT

- Most cue bids.

ALERT

- Direct cue bid of natural opening bid played as natural.

Most cuebids are not Alertable. However, any cuebid which conveys a very unusual or unexpected meaning still requires an Alert.

EXAMPLES:

1♠-2♥-P-2♠: If the 2♠ bid is a heart raise with values or some constructive hand, no Alert is required. If the 2♠ bid is a transfer to clubs, an Alert is required.

1♦-2♦: If the 2♦ bid shows the majors (Michaels), clubs and spades (top/bottom) or some other two-suiter (not including diamonds), no Alert is required.

CUE-BID COMPILATION

1♥ - 2♥:	Takeout, Alert only if for hearts.
1♠ - 2♠:	Takeout, Alert only if for spades.
1♣ - 2♣:	Takeout, Alert only if for clubs.
1♠ [†] - 2♣:	Takeout, Alert only if for clubs.
1♦ [†] - 2♦:	Takeout, Alert only if for diamonds.
1♣ [‡] - 2♣:	Takeout, Alert only if for clubs.
2♣ [§] - 3♣:	Takeout, Alert only if for clubs.
2♦ ^{**} - 2♥:	Alert only if for hearts.
2♦ ^{**} - 2♠:	Alert only if for spades.

The following are not considered cue bids:

1♣ ^{††} - 2♣:	Clubs, any other meaning requires an Alert.
2♦ ^{**} - 3♦:	Diamonds, any other meaning requires an Alert.
2♦ ^{‡‡} - 2♥/♠ or 3♣/♦:	Natural, no cuebid available. Alert other meanings.
2♣ ^{††} - 3♣:	Clubs. Alert other meanings.
1♦-P-1♥-2♥:	If natural or 2-suited takeout, no Alert.
1♦-P-1♥-2♦:	If natural or 2-suited takeout, no Alert.

[†] Could be short

[‡] Polish Club, could be short, could be strong

[§] Precision-style, 5 plus clubs

^{**} Majors (e.g., Flannery)

^{††} Strong, artificial and forcing

^{‡‡} Any 3-suited hand (e.g., Mini-Roman)

Defensive Bids

NO ALERT

- Weak jump overcalls (two or three level).
- All constructive or better jump-shift advances.
- All natural jump raises of an overcall.

ALERT

- Very light overcalls (fewer than 6 HCP), also requires a **PRE-ALERT**.
- Intermediate or better jump overcalls (two or three level).
- Weak jump shifts after partner's overcall.

A jump to 2NT (Unusual Notrump) to show the minors or the two lowest un-bid suits is not Alertable. A bid of 3NT as unusual must be Alerted. A bid of 4NT is not Alertable so long as the prior bid was by an opponent. Non-jump unusual notrump bids below 4NT, except those made by a passed hand, must be Alerted.

Natural jump overcalls that are weak do not require an Alert. All other natural and conventional meanings are Alertable. Unusual overcalls, including the tendency to overcall at the two level frequently with a suit of fewer than five cards or with less than two-over-one values (approximately 10 HCP), must be Alerted.