

# Alerting

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From Suzanne Goodall



The alerting regulations change from time to time but for the most part they remain the same in principle.

Let's start with why some bids are alertable. If the bid is artificial that is, it does not show the suit implied and or there is a partnership agreement, then that bid is deemed alertable.

There are 3 categories of bids which fit that criteria but are not alerted as they are said to be '**self-alerting**'.

They are:

- 1) ALL **Doubles** and **Redoubles**.
- 2) A bid of the **OPPONENT'S SUIT** (Cue Bid)
- 3) A bid **ABOVE 3NT** with the following exception- A high level **TRANSFER** Pre-empt.

(\*This exception will not affect most of us.)

Let me give some examples of those bids which have special meaning but we do not alert because according to the regulation they 'self alert'.

1) The Opponents open 1NT and your partner X's. The X shows Spades and another suit. While this bid looks like a penalty X you cannot alert it. The opponents can unearth the meaning of the bid by enquiring about it if they intend to take some action.

Similarly your partner opens 1NT and the OPP X. You enquire and learn that this is a penalty X. You now XX to ask partner to bid his better minor. Partner should not alert the XX although he should be forthcoming in giving information regarding your agreement should an opponent make an enquiry.

2) Bidding the Opposition's suit. Say the Opposition open 1D and your partner bids 2D. You do not alert this but if there is an enquiry you must tell your opponents your agreement. Saying it is a **MICHAELS CUE Bid** is not acceptable. You should describe the shape and point range of the bid.

3) Your partner opens 1H and you make a splinter bid of 4C agreeing hearts and showing a club shortage. As this bid is over 3NT it self-alerts and you should not alert it.

To my understanding bids of 3NT that have a special meaning are alertable.

Some examples might be

- a Gambling 3NT Opening
- a 3NT Opening which asks partner about specific aces
- a sequence of 2NT-P-\*3C-P-3NT

Opener here has 20-22 hcp, partner asks if he has a 5 card major and the 3NT replies contains specific information which is that he doesn't have a 5 OR 4 card major.

Also for several years now we have not alerted a 2C bid over our partner's 1NT opener in an uncontested auction.

It does not matter what the 2C means, it should not be alerted. However a response if artificial should be alerted. When this exception was first introduced there was much confusion and occasionally there still is. Some people thought that any 2C BID (say an opening) was not alertable or extended the exception to 3C over 2NT. Having said that, I believe most of us are reasonably comfortable with the concept these days.

Another area here that players occasionally misstep is failing to alert strong bids that look weak. An example of this a 1C-2C sequence where you are playing inverted minors. The 2C response looks weak but is actually strong.

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And even more common error is not drawing attention to weak bids that look strong. An example of this is the Weak Jump Response. Take an auction such as 1C by you followed by a jump to 2S by partner showing 0-5hcp and 6 spades. You must alert this or potentially your opponents may be disadvantaged.

A few other things concerning alerts that should concern us. Presume a bid is natural if it is not alerted. I play a weak two system with partner and invariably if partner opens 2D I will be asked is that a MULTI? If the opponents fail to alert a bid you may be able to prove that you are damaged. Say, you have a partnership agreement where a X of artificial bids is lead-directing. If the opponents fail to alert the bid you have lost your opportunity for the lead-directing X You must be able to present a good case to the Director who should be called. I would suggest that if the opponents failed to alert a negative 2D over a 2C Opening would not prove to be a good case as most players would infer that this is artificial.

I have also noticed that many novice players and some seasoned club players ask about every bid that is alerted. Legally they may do so but it wastes time and interrupts the flow of the auction. So unless you have some intention of bidding, pass and wait until the auction is completed to ask about the entire auction.

Say you are playing some form of MULTI-2's. Your partner opens 2S which you dutifully alert. When the opposition enquires you say the hand shows 5 spades and 5 of another suit and 6-9 hcp. If your partner is known to occasionally bid with 5/4 shapes you must include that information. This is known as full and frank disclosure.

Also for those of you who may be interested there is information available on the BAWA website under **Supplementary Regulations regarding Pre-Alerts and Delayed Alerts.**

So in closing make an effort to know which bids in your system should be alerted and learn how to give a complete explanation.