

### Displaying Your Convention Card

Your convention card has three purposes. First, in conjunction with the "alert and announce" procedure, it informs your opponents of your partnership methods. Second, it helps you remember your partnership methods (you *may* review it *between* deals). Third, it documents your partnership methods.

Your opponents must be informed of your partnership methods not only by the laws of bridge but for simple fairness. Private understandings are worse than illegal, they are unethical. Consider an auction that is not uncommon nowadays. Your partner deals and opens 1♥, your right-hand-opponent (RHO) overcalls 1♠, and you jump to 3♦. Among the general principles defining "standard" bidding (which is neither the system and conventions you play with your small circle of friends nor *currently popular* bidding in general): a new-suit response by an unpassed hand is forcing (except over an intervening takeout double or 1NT opening); if a single jump, it is stronger than a non-jump; if a double jump, it is non-forcing, obstructive and weak. So in the *absence of information to the contrary*, your opponents must assume that your 3♦ shows diamonds, is forcing to game, and suggests slam.

If I were making the regulations for the American Contract Bridge League, I would make any other meaning than the standard meaning "alertable," but the ACBL does otherwise. Unlike a 3♦ response to a 1♥ auction in an *uncontested* auction, which the ACBL deems alertable if other than standard, this single jump need not be alerted if played as weak, because the official ACBL Convention Card has a box for "Weak Jump Shifts in Comp." *in black*. Red print means that the call is alertable, blue print means that it is announceable, but black print indicates that the call *need not* be alerted. I can remember what's alertable and what's not, but few others can, and it's unreasonable to expect bridge players to do so. Therefore, I suggest, your partner should alert your 3♦ if (as perhaps a majority of ACBL members do nowadays) you play it as weak. No harm can come if your left-hand opponent (LHO) inquires and your partner replies "weak" accurately.

Of course, there are other ways to play this 3♦ jump than as forcing and as weak. With many partners, I play it as *invitational*, a third natural meaning for the bid. The official ACBL Convention Card has no box to check for this treatment, though strangely it provides three boxes (all in black) for the same jump response over an intervening double. So in the absence of a box to check, I write how I play this and similar single-jump shifts in the space for "OTHER CONV. CALLS" even when they're *treatments* other than *conventions* (as 3♦ would be, for example, if played as some kind of artificial heart raise).

Is an invitational 3♦ jump in competition alertable under current ACBL regulations? I don't know and I don't care, I alert it regardless because it is other than standard. Suppose, however, that you play 3♦ as weak and your partner doesn't alert. Does your LHO have a right to know?

Absolutely! In the absence of an alert, the best and simplest way for him to find out is by looking at your convention card. By displaying it facing him on the corner of the table between the two, your partner can inform your LHO of your methods *without any need for an inquiry*. Inquiries about unalerted bids can be informative (the inquirer has values and is considering a call other than a pass), and the information is unauthorized to the inquirer's partner, but a casual glance at an opponent's convention card does not convey unauthorized information.

So the procedure I suggest, a fully-marked convention card facing your RHO, protects your side against opponents' informative queries while providing opponents with the information they may need.