

## 4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

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### **4 A**      **General**

- 4 A 1      The purpose of alerting and announcing is to draw to the opponents' attention a call by partner that may have a special meaning.
- 4 A 2      Announcements: instead of an alert in the traditional manner, the partner of a player who makes an announceable bid makes a specified statement about the bidder's hand.
- 4 A 3      Alerting and announcing are compulsory; a player may not ask opponents not to alert or announce.
- 4 A 4      Alert or announce only your partner's calls, never your own. (Special regulations apply when playing online or with screens.)
- 4 A 5      Even if you cannot explain the meaning of partner's call, you should still alert (or announce) it if you believe that *it may be* required.
- 4 A 6      If there is no alert and no announcement, opponents can assume that the call does not fall within an alertable or announceable category, through either explicit or implicit understanding. *See also 2D2*
- 4 A 7      Do not alert or announce any play of the cards.
- 4 A 8      The alerting player must make all reasonable efforts to ensure that **both** opponents are aware of the alert.

### **4 B**      **Basic alerting rules**

#### 4 B 1      *Passes and bids*

Unless it is announceable (*see 4D, 4E, 4F and 4G*), a pass or bid must be alerted if it:

- (a) is not natural; or
- (b) is natural but has a potentially unexpected meaning.

#### 4 B 2      *Doubles*

The rules for alerting doubles are:

- (a) Suit bids that show the suit bid  
Alert, unless the double is for take-out.
- (b) Minor suit openings which may be shorter than three cards but which may be natural and which do not promise a strong hand  
Alert, unless the double is for take-out.
- (c) No trump bids  
Alert, unless the double is for penalties.
- (d) Suit bids that do not show the suit bid  
Alert, unless the double shows the suit bid.

Doubles are also alertable if they convey a potentially unexpected meaning in addition to take-out or penalties (*see 3H2 and 3H3*).

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In 4B2(a) and (d) the word 'show' is defined as follows:

'it is natural, or shows willingness, in the context of the auction, to play in the suit, or it has been followed by two passes'.

### 4 B 3 *Redoubles*

A redouble to show general strength which partner will normally pass if the next hand passes is not alertable. All other redoubles are alertable.

### 4 B 4 *Calls above 3NT*

Once the auction is **above** the level of 3NT, no calls are to be alerted except for:

- (a) Artificial suit bids above 3NT made before the opening bidder's second turn to call (i.e. the **first bid** and the next three calls)  
e.g. 1♠ – pass – 4♣ (splinter) or pass – pass – 1♠ – pass – 4♣ (splinter). In both cases 4♣ is alerted
- (b) Lead-directing passes
- (c) Doubles or redoubles that are lead-directing but ask for the lead of a suit other than the suit doubled (or redoubled)
- (d) Doubles and redoubles of no trump contracts that call for a specific suit to be led.

### 4 C *'Natural' bids and passes*

4 C 1 The following are considered 'natural' for the purposes of alerting and regulation of partnership understandings (*see also 3E1*):

- (a) A bid of a suit which shows that suit (4+ cards for an opening bid of 1♥ or higher or any overcall, otherwise 3+ cards) and does not show any other suit; preference bids, completion of transfer bids and raises may be on shorter suits
- (b) A bid of no trumps which shows a preparedness to play in no trumps, and which conveys no unusual information about suit holdings; it must not be forcing unless a forcing auction has already been created. Note that ~~certain~~ ostensibly natural no trump bids are permitted to allow a shortage by agreement
- (c) A pass which does not unexpectedly convey values or specify suit holdings.

### 4D *Alerts and announcements – 1♣ and 1♦ openings*

4 D 1 Prepared or short 1♣ and 1♦ openings (which are non-forcing but may be made on two cards or fewer) are announced as "may be" followed by the minimum number e.g. "May be two". Where the opening could have a different five-card (or longer) suit in a balanced or semi-balanced hand, the announcement is extended as appropriate, such as 'May be two, and may have another five card suit'. The detail of the announcement may be altered in line with the partnership understanding. For example, if the only possible five-card side suit in a 1♣ opening is diamonds the announcement may be 'May be two and may have five diamonds'. Both members of the partnership must always make the same announcement. Do not announce the possibility of a five card side suit if it only occurs where the opening bidder has at least five cards in the minor opened.

A canapé 1♣ or 1♦ opening (where the shorter suit may be opened on a two-suited hand) is alerted. Strong and artificial 1♣ and 1♦ openings are alerted as are a two way 1♣ opening such as the Polish Club and any opening which may be short but is **unconditionally forcing**.

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### **4 E Announcements – 1NT Openings and Responses**

- 4 E 1 Natural 1NT openings are announced by stating the range, e.g. by saying “12 to 14”. Where a 1NT opening which is in principle natural may be made by agreement on some hands which contain a singleton, it is announced by stating the range followed by “may contain a singleton”.
- 4 E 2 A Stayman 2♣ bid is announced, but only in response to a natural 1NT opening where there has been no intervention; and only where it is used to ask for a four card major. Opener says “Stayman”. After such a 2♣ response a standard 2♦ rebid by opener is not alerted. Unusual replies such as the opener bidding 2NT or higher or 2♠ showing spades but **not** denying hearts should be alerted. Stayman is announced whether or not it *shows* a four card major.
- 4 E 3 Red suit transfers at the two level i.e. ♦ to ♥ and ♥ to ♠, are announced, but only in response to a natural 1NT opening where there has been no intervention, and where the transfer shows at least five cards in the major suit concerned. Opener says “Hearts” when 2♦ is bid, or “Spades” when 2♥ is bid.

### **4 F Announcements – Two of a Suit Openings**

- 4 F 1 A natural (5+ cards) opening bid of two of a suit is announced by stating its range from the following categories. Partner of the opener says the words shown.
- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) “Strong, forcing” | (b) “Strong, not forcing” |
| (c) “Intermediate”    | (d) “Weak”                |
- 4 F 2 It is possible to play a wide-ranging opening that covers more than one category, in which case the announcement should say so. Examples are:
- |                                       |                               |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (a) “Intermediate to strong, forcing” | or (b) “Weak to Intermediate” |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
- For example, a 6-12 opening would be described as “Weak to intermediate”.
- 4 F 3 Distributional constraints do not stop an opening bid being considered natural. For example, a Precision 2♣ opening is traditionally only made on a 5-card suit when there is a 4-card major, but also may be made with a longer club suit and no major. A Precision 2♣ is considered natural since no other suit is guaranteed and thus is announced as “intermediate”. Some openings **guarantee** another suit so are not natural. For example a Lucas 2♠, showing spades and another suit, is alerted not announced.
- 4 F 4 **All** two of a suit openings are either announced (if natural, 5+ cards) or alerted (if artificial).

### **4 G Announcements – 2NT openings and responses**

- 4 G 1 Natural 2NT openings are announced by stating the range, e.g. by saying “20 to 22”. It is not necessary to add “may contain a singleton”.
- 4 G 2 A Stayman 3♣ bid is announced, but only in response to a natural 2NT opening where there has been no intervention; and only where it is used to ask for a four card major. Opener says “Stayman”. After such a 3♣ response a 3♦ rebid by opener denying a major does not need an alert. Unusual responses such as opener bidding 3NT or higher or 3♠ showing spades but not denying hearts should be alerted. Stayman is announced whether or not it *shows* a four card major.
- 4 G 3 Red suit transfers at the three level, i.e. ♦ to ♥ and ♥ to ♠, are announced, but only in response to a natural 2NT opening where there has been no intervention, and where the

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transfer shows at least five cards in the major suit concerned. Opener says “Hearts” when 3♦ is bid, or “Spades” when 3♥ is bid.

### 4 H Specific Cases

The following are interpretations and examples of the above directives.

4 H 1 Because they are not natural, players must alert (unless excepted by 4B4 above):

- (a) Stayman and transfers, except when announceable (*see 4E*). For example:
  - (1) In response to a 1NT overcall
  - (2) Opener’s rebid of 2♦ in response to a 2♣ enquiry or 3♦ in response to a 3♣ enquiry which was not announceable
  - (3) A response of 2♦ to 1NT that usually shows hearts but may have another hand type e.g. strong, balanced included in the 2♦ response
  - (4) Five card Stayman or Puppet Stayman
- (b) Any trial bid in a suit that may contain fewer than three cards
- (c) Any ‘pass or correct’ bids e.g. 1♥ – 2♥ (spades + a minor) – Pass – 3♣ asking partner to pass with clubs or bid with diamonds
- (d) A pass that *may have or* shows unexpected extra values
- (e) Any forcing pass.

4 H 2 Because they have a potentially unexpected meaning, players must alert:

- (a) An opening bid of one of a suit which is forcing
- (b) The first bid in a potential canapé sequence, *where by partnership agreement the shorter suit in a two-suited hand is always bid first*
- (c) Responses to a non-forcing opening bid of one of a suit:
  - (1) If the next hand doubles, a pass that could have 10+ HCP or other defined characteristics
  - (2) If the next hand passes, a pre-emptive raise to three
  - (3) A forcing raise
  - (4) A new suit without a jump that is forcing to game. *Subsequent natural bids below game (e.g. 2NT) which are forcing as a consequence are not alertable.*
- (d) A non-forcing new suit response, *to a non-forcing suit opening at any level*, below game, unless responder has previously passed, bids over a natural NT overcall, or makes a double jump
- (e) A minimum suit response to a take-out double, with the next hand passing, that shows values
- (f) The completion of a transfer that shows a specific holding in the suit bid (e.g. following a 1NT opening, a transfer completion that specifically denies four card support or shows three card support)
- (g) The pass in the specific sequence 1 of a suit – dbl – redbl – pass if it is for penalties: the expected meaning is a request for partner to bid

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- (h) A 1NT response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening which might show more than 10 HCP
- 4 H 3 Players should **not** alert:
- (a) Any announceable call
  - (b) Calls above 3NT unless specified as alertable in *4B4*
  - (c) A non-forcing 1♣ or 1♦ opening bid promising three or more cards (*but see 4H2(b)*)
  - (d) A bid of two of a suit by responder when an opening 1NT has been doubled, if it is ostensibly natural but there is a possibility that responder will remove or redouble for take-out: this is considered general bridge knowledge
  - (e) A minimum rebid in ♦ after an announceable Stayman 2♣ or 3♣ response
  - (f) A pass of a redouble that suggests playing in the redoubled contract (*but see 4H2(g)*).
- 4 H 4 The following doubles and redoubles must be alerted:
- (a) A double in second seat of an opening natural 1NT (11+ HCP) which may have less than the normally accepted strength for a penalty double (i.e. 15 HCP or compensating distribution)
  - (b) A double of a 1NT response which is for take-out of opener's suit
  - (c) Any 'competitive', 'co-operative' or 'optional' double, since these are not take-out doubles
  - (d) A penalty double of a natural 2♦ in the sequence 1♦ – pass – 1♥ – 2♦ – dbl
  - (e) A double of 1♦ in the sequence 1♣ – 1♦ – dbl if it shows one specific suit, since this is a potentially unexpected additional meaning
  - (f) A take-out double which has unusual strength constraints, such as a double of a weak two opening showing 16+ HCP, as this is a potentially unexpected additional meaning
  - (g) A redouble after partner's opening bid is doubled that does not show 9+ HCP (e.g. 1♠ – dbl – redbl), or that shows a specific suit or specific holding in partner's suit, as these are potentially unexpected additional meanings.
- 4 H 5 The following doubles must not be alerted:
- (a) Any 'negative' or 'responsive' double played in a traditional manner, such as 1♣ – 1♠ – dbl showing 4 hearts. 1♣/1♦ – 1♥ – dbl is not alertable if it shows exactly four spades, it may have four spades or if it shows general values without four spades (other meanings, such as 4+ spades, are alertable)
  - (b) A take-out double of a transfer completion such as 1NT – pass – 2♥ – pass – 2♠ – dbl since this is deemed to show the suit bid
  - (c) A take-out double of a 'pass-or-correct' bid such as 2♦ Multi – pass – 2♠ – dbl since this is deemed to show the suit bid.