

Quick guide to Announcing and Alerting for the Next Step Congress

Bridge players like to try out intricate gadgets or conventions when they play. Beginners quickly like to try out different things and for many the first step along the road is to add transfers after their 1NT opening to the list of things they want to play.

We don't play the game in secret, so if you want to play something different to what is considered normal then your opponents are entitled to know what you are doing.

When your partner makes a conventional bid, you tell your opponents by using the Alert Card from the bidding box. You bring the Alert Card out, show it to both your opponents and put it back in the box.

But there are some bids which are so commonly used that, rather than alerting, partner announces what the bid means. Announcing has been around since 2006 so it isn't new but on August 1st the scope of announcing was changed very slightly.

Announcements apply to the following situations only:

- Opening 1NT, Stayman response and simple red suit transfers;
 - When 1NT is opened the partner announces the range (e.g. 12 to 14 or 15 to 17)
 - If responder goes 2♣ Stayman which asks opener to show a 4-card major or bid 2♦ if he hasn't got one, then opener announces 'Stayman'
 - If responder goes 2♥ as a transfer to spades opener says 'spades'
 - or 2♦ as a transfer to hearts, then opener says 'hearts'
- Opening 2NT, Stayman response and simple red suit transfers.
 - When 2NT is opened the partner announces the range (e.g. 20 to 22)
 - If responder goes 3♣ Stayman which asks opener to show a 4-card major or bid 3♦ if he hasn't got one, then opener announces 'Stayman'
 - If responder goes 3♥ as a transfer to spades opener says 'spades'
 - or 3♦ as a transfer to hearts, then opener says 'hearts'
- Opening natural suit bids 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠
 - If you play weak 2s, and you open one of these partner says 'weak'
 - If you play strong Acol 2 openings and you open one of these partner says 'strong'
 - BUT if you play Benjaminised Acol, where 2♦ shows a very strong hand but says nothing about diamonds then this must be Alerted. However 2♥ and 2♠ are usually played as natural and weak so these bids are announced.
- Opening a non-forcing 1♣ and 1♦ which might be a short suit.
 - If you play strong NT and 5-card major suits then your 1♣ and 1♦ bid might have to be opened on a suit that is fewer than four cards. If you play that your 1♣ or 1♦ opening will always be at least a 3-card suit and partner can pass with a poor hand, then you do not need to do anything – no alerting or announcing.
 - BUT if you play that your 1♣ or 1♦ opening might be made on a 2-card suit then partner must announce it as 'May be 2'.
 - Some people play that the opening bid could be on a shorter suit still, so now partner must announce 'May be 1' or even 'May be 0'.
 - If you play that your 1♣ or 1♦ opening is forcing and that partner cannot pass then you must alert and not announce.