

The New Normal

Just imagine that you had the following auction 2 months ago:

South	West	North	East
	1H	2S	Pass
3H	Double	4S	Pass
4NT	Pass	5H	Pass
6S	Pass	Pass	Pass

2 months ago none of the bids would have been alerted. The jump overcall as long as it was a relatively normal natural 6 card suit would not be alerted, regardless of the range. 3H would not be alerted because you don't alert cue bids. Double would not be alerted because you don't alert doubles. None of the later bids would be alerted because you don't alert bids higher than 3NT (unless they are an artificial opening bid)

What would happen next is that the opening leader would ask about the strength of the 2S jump overcall and what had been shown by the 5H response to 4NT. Then after the opening lead declarer would ask East how they played the double. That is all very easy when you are talking. However, even if you are adept on the keyboard, it is just a darn nuisance when all the questions and answers have to be typed.

Fortunately the solution to that problem is that alerts are different on the internet. Anything that you opponents might possibly want to ask about should be covered by typing on the 'EXPLAIN' line in the bidding box before making the call. Using this method, when you get to the end of the auction nobody has to ask any questions, because the information is already there in front of them. Using this wonderful method there is no danger of giving you partner information that they are not entitled to. Not only can your partner not see the explanation, they cannot even see that your bid was alerted.

We shall go through the example auction again. The 1H would not be self-alerted by most pairs, but if E/W were playing Precision it would be self-alerted as 11-15 with 5+H." The 2S would be self-alerted regardless of the range so it would be something like 6-10 with 6+S." 3H would be "S support, at least game try." There would be no explanation for 4S (or 6S) by even the most diligent self-

alerter, but the 4NT would be alerted as “RKCB” and the response of 5H would have the explanation of “2 key cards, no QS.”

Nobody should need to ask any questions. Good self-alerting makes the game run much more smoothly.

Finally, I cannot stress enough that self-alerts are done BEFORE making the call. That way the explanation comes up in front of your opponent instantly. Do not make the call and then quickly try to alert it, even if you are very adept on the keyboard and can do it in just 2 or 3 seconds. Sometimes your opponent has an obvious call and they have made that call in 1 second. Look at the following example where you are sitting East. You hold:

KQ1053

6

AJ74

J105

South	West	North	East
1C	Pass	1H	

You have already bid 1S haven't you? It took you a fraction of a second to decide that. Then a moment or two later the explanation comes up for 1H of “4+S.” You don't want to bid 1S now do you? It is just so much better if the information comes up instantly rather than with a few seconds of lag. It does not matter if your opponents say “When we arrived at the table a couple of boards ago our greeting included that we played transfer responses to 1C.” The greeting is polite of them, but even though that has been said it is not your responsibility to remember the opponent's system. That greeting is to remind you that if you haven't discussed what you do over that unusual method you might want to do it now. One of you might say: “Double shows the suit they have bid. Cue bid the suit they show is like a takeout double.” Partner would probably just say “ok” and play would start. It doesn't mean that you have committed yourself to remembering their convention. Your opponents still have to properly self-alert when it actually comes up.