# Callouts

## Using Callouts

### The “I see someone” callout

*[Special] - Location - [Number / Weapon] - [Details]*

Location before weapon means the important information is *front-loaded*, and your team can act upon that information quickly. It’ll take some practice, so make sure you know the callouts first. Since knowing a special is in play is often more important than knowing where it is, putting that first can be a good idea. Any extra details can be added on at the end.

Examples:

“Wing ttek, carbon”

“Court brush, going alley”

“Got two pit”

“Inkjet mid, heading to plat”

Note that this callout should be when you *spot* someone, not *after you’ve fought* them. In the former case, someone can help you out with some team firing.

### Responding to Location Calls

In general, you shouldn’t need to give verbal responses to callouts (“ok”, “got it”, whatever). Saying something in response to a call should involve some new piece of information.

The main way you respond to a callout is through your actions in-game. This will depend on context. **Your responses to callouts are far and away the most important part of your communication skill.** Shouting out position names is easy, and most people pick it up quickly enough. Taking those position calls, processing them, and adding them to the information the game gives you takes a lot of experience, attention, and practice.

As an example, let’s say you’re top mid on Warehouse with a Tentatek, and your teammate calls “one right box”. You look right and your teammate has them more or less boxed in at the corner, so you throw a splat bomb next to the box to cut off that player’s movement.

In this case, you had a few options; you could have jumped down to help your teammate directly, or you could have pushed forward into the enemy base, or you could have just done nothing (which is a valid response in many cases; a common mistake is having everyone commit too hard on callouts, leaving the objective or a key part of the map exposed).

There’s no “right” response to a callout; in the end, the right play might not work out because of some bad luck or poor execution, while a bad idea might work out because the enemy screws up.

Let’s say that bomb you threw got the kill; that’s when you respond with “Got right box”, letting your teammate know they can move on. You might also say “nading right box” if your team is used to communicating small plays like that.

What you should end up with is a nice flow, where a location callout is responded to, with that response giving the entire team information about the state of the map, which then lets the other players on your team move up and find information in other parts of the map.

Going back to the Walleye example, think about how that little exchange might tell your team what’s going on.

“One right box” - we’ve got someone in a fight on the right side.  
“Nading right box” - we’ve got two people looking at the right side, which should be enough to handle the one enemy player over there.

“Got right box” - right box is clear and we haven’t said anything else about the right side, so we need to look around mid or left to see what they’re doing now.

Having good responses to callouts across your whole team will in turn give you a strong intuitive foundation for organising your team. Consistently responding to calls can be enough to win a lot of your games, because it naturally puts your team in good positions. But the most straightforward way to organise aggressive plays with your team is to call strats.

### Strategic Callouts

While location callouts can structure your plays a little better and put you in advantageous positions, at the end of the day, they’re reactionary; if all you do is react, you aren’t going to have an effective offense.

The idea with strat calls is that you and your team organise *proactive* plays; which direction to push, when and how to use specials, where to group up, how to move out of spawn, where to focus on the initial rollout to mid, and so on.

Whereas location calls are often open-ended (“here’s where they are, do what you will”), strat calls entail telling the team what to do.

A good structure for a strat call is:

* Location - where to push
* Timing - when to execute
* Advantage - how you’re winning your fight

A location is, naturally, some callout - but it could be something like “push through plat” or “take top mid” and so on, so it’s also about *how* you intend to take that position.

A timing could be a countdown (“go in 5”) or some kind of trigger (“go on armour”, “go at 3:25”). You shouldn’t call dry instant pushes (“go right now!” in an even situation); the point of a timing is that you give your team time to get set up or heal or recover ink, and if you just say “go now”, people will often not be ready and trickle in one at a time.

An advantage could be just about anything. It’s usually a special (“we’ll use stingray”), but it could be catching the enemy team with a numbers advantage (“two caught drawbridge, pincer them”).

In order to make the most of your strat calls, here are a few info calls you can make leading up to an execute:

**Calling specials:** “I have [special]” / “I’m close to [special]”

Co-ordinated specials aren’t difficult so long as everyone knows a special is available. Make sure not to drown out other people’s calls, though; if someone’s calling, they should be able to see the glowing icon at the top of the screen when you have special.

**Location calls:** “I’m at [location]”

Calling your own location can lead to a heads-up pincer or a push across to your position that your team might have missed otherwise. Naturally, you only call locations that are important for scoring points, such as left plat on Skatepark TC.

**Continuation plays:** “Push [location]!”

When you’re executing and you need to decide where to go next, your team is already together and presumably covering each other, so calling the next play can be much faster. In other words, if your initial execute worked, you can then just call locations to use your momentum from the original push to keep moving through the map.

**Commitment calls:** “I’m in [location]” (emphasis on “in”, i.e. “I am committed at [location]”)

Commitment calls are useful when your team isn’t in a position to set up an execute. Maybe it’s a scrappy situation, maybe it’s just too fast-paced of a game to really set up at all, maybe your team prefers a loose style.

While calling commitments might not result in the most elegant of executes, the advantage is that it doesn’t disrupt your team’s comms at all; you just call that you’re in and your team takes that as their cue to move in themselves, much like a clean response to a location callout.

You can also call the enemy team’s commitments (“tentatek in plat”) in the same manner and for the same effect. In this case, you might call that they’ve committed somewhere as a short-hand for “everyone shoot this guy, he can’t do anything”.

*N.B.:* Commitment calls are scrappy and act as a substitute for a proper strat call when you’re just trying to get your team to do *something* aggressive; maybe you’ve planned something out in advance, or maybe you have an idea of what to do that just requires your team to take fights.

A potential problem with these calls, though, is that you aren’t telling your team what you want them to do when you go in. Once your team is more experienced, you can and should start replacing these kinds of calls with direct requests (“[player], rush top mid in 5 seconds”) so that you get exactly what you want out of your team rather than *just something*.

**Others:** It’s not like every callout you make has to fall into one of these categories; this is just a starting point. What I’m getting at with all this is that your callouts need to be clear and concise. Don’t say “watch out for the guy top mid” when “care top mid” says the same thing in fewer, clearer words.

### Things to Avoid

**Lazy callouts:** “On my X”/”On my booyah”

A lazy callout is one where you tell your team that something’s happened, but rely on them to do the hard work (in this case, looking around to find your ping, or remembering where you said you were going, or whatever). Run-on callouts (below) also somewhat fall into this category.

For this callout in particular, it’s tricky to keep track of nametags in this game, since they fade out after a short time. Tell people where the enemy player got you so that your team isn’t distracted looking around for where you died. Using the “Booyah”/”Ouch” ping after dying can help a little, but it’s much better to not need to use this callout to begin with.

Note that there’s a difference between a *lazy* callout (“something happened, hope you’re paying attention”) and an *open-ended* callout (“here’s some information, do with it what you will”).

**Empty callouts:** “I died”/”[weapon] killed me”

Using this callout is somewhat useful for newer teams whose players aren’t as good with situational awareness (in this case, using the UI to see when their team is down). Otherwise, focus on telling the team the location first (“I died” would fall under “details” in the general callout, e.g. “Mid ttek, has special, I’m down”).

Empty callouts are callouts with not much useful information in them. While, yes, it’s nice to tell your team when you’ve died, it’s far more important that they know where the guy shot you from so that they can get the trade kill in response.

Other empty callouts include things like “I’m painting/Paint up” (where?), “He’s so laggy” (who?), “He has inkjet” (who, and where?), and so on. It’s not that there is *no* information, just that it’s not very *helpful*.

**Run-on callouts:** “Guy in mid… heading plat… he’s got special… he’s running toward maze… he’s trying to spawn camp” (over the course of about 10 seconds)

The problem with this is that for any of the later parts of a callout to be understood, the first part needed to be heard; if you miss the “guy in mid” callout (maybe someone else shouted “splashdown on my ouch!!!” over it), the rest of the callout makes no sense.

It’s often tempting to do this when you can see the player who killed you in your death cam; after all, you can tell your team exactly where the enemy is for a whole five seconds or so (give or take). Don’t fall for this temptation. You need to be keeping your comms clear for strat calls when you’re starting to lose players. When there are three people giving running commentary on their respective death cams, it’s very distracting for the last player left.

**Predictive callouts:** “He’ll probably head top mid”

In this case, you’re giving potentially bad information to people. While this isn’t a bad callout in itself, it’s far better to say something like “care top mid” or something (which better describes both your certainty and what the appropriate response would be).

The problem with this callout arises when you put a bit too much confidence in your own prediction (“he’s going top mid!” when all you saw was a tri-slosher flick in the general direction of their base), causing your team to commit for a kill on someone who may have just gone the opposite direction.

**Excessively-detailed callouts:** “Tentatek is bottom lights… top lights… bottom choke… top choke… ramp… (and so on)”

This ties into what I mentioned in the readme about callout levels and how too much detail is detrimental. It’s also the reason why a lot of top teams focus on a small number of callouts corresponding to large areas of the map, rather than using detail.

In this game, movement is very fast and weapons are generally close-ranged. As such, players are almost never sitting still.

The correct way to handle callouts on short-ranged weapons is to call a *general area* (plat, street, whatever) and let your team decide for themselves what to do.

**Irrelevant and redundant callouts:** “Two their ramp” (when your entire team is on the other side of the map, or are all looking at their ramp)

This is a very common mistake at all levels of play, and it ties into location responses and strat calls.

This includes calling out things that someone else has already said (“two plat!” … “yeah, two plat!”), calling that someone’s “weak” (it takes 2 seconds to heal back to full when swimming; call the location first!), and calling locations that are irrelevant for whatever reason.

What makes this such an easy trap to fall into is that location callouts can quickly become irrelevant or redundant. A symptom of one such case is where everyone’s talking at once.

If three people each call three locations, that’s nine callouts for four people on the map; in other words, more than half of your callouts were served no purpose but to make it harder to hear the original calls.

While this isn’t a *critical* mistake, it’s a symptom of a lack of practice in communication. It could tell you that your team isn’t listening to each other well (thus repeating callouts because they didn’t hear them to begin with), or that your players are panicking due to a lack of direction in what to do in response.

**Others:** As with the good callouts I mentioned, this isn’t an exhaustive list. The general theme with bad callouts is *lowering the signal to noise ratio*. Ambiguity, long sentences, and so on are all ways that the information contained in your calls might become harder to interpret.

## Practising Callouts

### Map Reviews

You should be learning callouts as a team. Even though I have attempted to create a set of callouts that can be standardised for all players, teams often have specialised callouts or different takes on things.

As a team, you need to conduct map reviews. These entail walking through each part of the map and talking through the callouts. This should happen multiple times per map until everyone is comfortable with them.

If you have trouble with certain callouts, you can consolidate a few nearby callouts into one that your team can remember (such as using “wing” and “attic” to include the parts of “grate” adjacent on Mainstage, or calling the entire lower section of Reef “tree” instead of using “ramp” and “sneaky”).

### Ideal Communication

The goal with all callouts (and, indeed, all communication between human beings) is to convey information. Conveying information is not just a matter of making words with your mouth; it’s choosing the right words so that your audience (your team, in this case) understands the information you’re conveying.

To put it another way, if your team isn’t responding to your calls, or if people are finding your jokes annoying, or if people think you’re being aggressive, it’s often on **you** to fix that problem. Don’t blame your team for not listening, not realising it’s a joke, or taking your shouting too seriously. In the majority of cases, misunderstandings and misinterpretations ought to be addressed by the speaker, not the listener.

This is why it’s important to get to know your team. By doing so, you can learn how to communicate with them better: what kind of team atmosphere they prefer, what weapons and positions they like playing, and so on. From there, you can start to adjust how you fit in your team such that you enable them to perform well.

If you find that your team is very vocal but still not cohesive, the main thing I’d recommend is to focus on better *listening skills*, not *more callouts*. Less communication is often more effective, especially if you’re still learning how to handle being in voice chat. Crowded comms are like trying to have a conversation at a crowded bar; it’s loud, so people shout over the noise, which makes the noise worse and people have to shout louder, and even then you’re lucky to make out half of what’s said.

### Exercises

**Muting exercise:** Have two or three people muting their microphones in a league session so that only one or two people are speaking *for the whole game,* and rotate muted/unmuted players as you see fit.

This can help you in several ways.

First, it helps develop listening skills, because if you *can’t* respond and you *can’t* be calling positions the whole time, then you have no choice but to listen and act accordingly.

Second, it helps to identify your team’s best strat calls and strat callers. Don’t be afraid of talking to each other about what you liked and didn’t like about each caller’s strats; you should have a default strat caller for your team whom everyone knows to listen for in game.

Third, it helps to separate important or emergency location calls with potentially redundant calls. If you’re muted, be mindful of what you *would* be calling out if you were able. You’ll find that these calls fall into three categories:

* calls that someone else makes anyway (which would be redundant if you’d spoken up),
* calls that you would have made that didn’t matter (which you might have emphasised too much by accident), and
* calls that would have saved your team from a bad situation if you weren’t muted (which are the the really important ones!).

Fourth, it helps your unmuted players in a similar way to the above; you can’t call everything if you’re the only person saying anything, so you need to be making efficient and well-prioritised calls to get information across.

Finally, it can help you to identify some of the problems your team might have. If, for example, you find your teamwork *improves* when doing this exercise, that could be because you have too many people trying to call strats or too many redundant calls polluting your comms.

**Min-max exercise:** Build a team comp that has only one type of weapon, or one of a few very similar weapons. Prepare for one specific league session with map reviews and plan for how you intend to win your games.

This exercise helps both individual decision-making skills and strat calling. By intentionally using a crazy (but still winnable) team composition, your team’s strengths and weaknesses are exaggerated.

By exaggerating your strengths and weaknesses, you keep them consistent against all teams you play against: quad range blaster, for example, is not likely to have a turf advantage on any reasonable team composition you come across, while quad NZAP will almost certainly have a turf advantage.

By having consistent advantages to work with, your games will tend to follow the same kind of flow, so you can adjust your calls much more easily and get good information on what works.

This is a good way to simplify things by comparison to scrims and tournament play, where these adjustments need to account for different opponents, maps, and modes from game to game.

As you do this exercise more and more, you’ll also find that you build up a stronger and more practical understanding of each weapon, which in turn develops both your individual and team decision-making.

## Summary

If the above is tl;dr, then you might want to re-evaluate your work ethic.

Nonetheless, as a recap:

* The core of all communication is to convey information to other people.
  + If that information does not get through to them, it’s your problem to solve.
  + There’s no “best” way to communicate; it all depends on what your team’s preferences are in both playstyle and communication.
* Location callouts, and callouts in general, should be front-loaded with information.
  + The most important information should receive the greatest emphasis.
  + Importance also includes urgency.
  + By front-loading callouts, you improve the speed at which your team responds to callouts.
  + Location calls are open-ended, in that they only provide information and do not prescribe any action to take.
* Responses to location calls need not be verbal unless something new is happening.
  + Repeating a location call as a way of acknowledging it is a bad habit that you should work to correct if you recognise it.
  + Your primary response to a location call should be a distinct action (which could include consciously doing nothing).
  + If you do act upon a callout, briefly telling your teammate what you’re doing not only gives them confidence in their actions, but also keeps your team up to date on the state of the map as a whole.
* Strategic (strat) calls prescribe some action that the team should take.
  + Where location calls are reactive, strategic calls are proactive. Proactive play is a prerequisite for any kind of decent scoreline.
  + Strat calls should be specific as to the timing, location, and advantage you want your team to use.
  + A timing could be a few seconds’ warning, or an event that is used as a trigger (such as a special pop).
  + Timings ensure that your team has time to get ready before pushing so that you do not trickle in one by one.
  + Locations are self-explanatory, but keep in mind that the manner in which you take a location (whether you’re stopping there or pushing through it, for example) is also important for ensuring your team follows through correctly after a successful execution.
  + An advantage is usually a special usage in a 4v4 scenario, but it could also be that you’ve caught players out of position or otherwise have manoeuvred yourself and your team into a positional advantage.
* To supplement strat calls, provide your team with information about what you’re doing.
  + Telling your team that you’re close to special, or in some forward position uncontested, can directly result in a successful execution; not telling them might be a lost opportunity.
  + For a looser strategic style, you can also call when you’ve committed yourself to some part of the map as a trigger for the rest of your team to move up as well. Just remember that you won’t always know what your team is going to do when they *do* move up.
  + On a successful execution, you can often roll with the momentum you’ve gained by simply calling continuation plays into each successive part of the map; your team is grouped and the numbers advantage is implied, so a location call is all you need from that point on.
* Maintain a high signal-to-noise ratio in your communication.
  + Avoid empty or lazy callouts that provide no direct information to your team.
  + Avoid redundant and irrelevant callouts; they’re a very easy trap to fall into and provide zero information to your team.
  + Avoid predictive callouts. While it feels good to be right on a prediction, you need to frame these kinds of callouts carefully to not bait your team if you’re wrong.
  + Avoid excessive and run-on callouts. If you’re talking about on player for more than about three seconds, especially if you aren’t referring to them by name or weapon, you are probably just making noise.
* Map reviews are your main way of learning callouts.
  + Map reviews are simply piling into a lobby with your team and touring the map, talking through the callouts.
  + You can also do solo map reviews in recon mode.
  + Studying the callout maps is fine, but you should connect names with in-game perspectives where possible.
* You can use league mode with self-imposed restrictions to diagnose problems in your play and practice your teamwork.
  + Restrictions can serve to keep things consistent, which allows you to grind certain parts of your teamwork repeatedly.
  + Make sure you’re looking out for ways to improve your chances of winning in spite of these restrictions. These exercises only work if you actually try to win and take as much as you can from each situation.

# Map Guides

**Coming eventually.**

# Appendices

## Appendix: Callout Listing

A general guide to what each callout is intended to be:

### Areas

* + *Courtyard (Court) -* Ground-level flat area, usually in a central location
  + *Platform/Plateau (Plat) -* Raised flat area, often overlooking a key area
  + *Battlements (Bats)* - Highly raised flat area, usually a last line of defence.
  + *Perch* - A small platform, slightly raised above a lower area
  + *Snipe* - A small platform, highly raised above a lower area
  + *Bunker* - A platform with walls for cover, with slight elevation
  + *Attic* - A platform with walls for cover, with high elevation
  + *Pit* - A sunken area, enclosed by vantage points; usually not a great idea to be stuck here.
  + *Drop* - The lower part of a one-way drop, usually some sort of dead end. Also not a great idea to get stuck here.
  + *Upper* - Generic callout for the higher of two similar areas
  + *Lower* - Generic callout for the lower of two similar areas
  + *Main* - The main entrance to a key area, usually mid.
  + *Lurk* - An area where people go to hide themselves

### Surfaces

* + *Grate* - A grated area
  + *Scaffold (Scaff)* - A more intricate, higher, or otherwise more impressive grate
  + *Glass* - A glass area

### Thoroughfares

* + *Street -* A two-way straight(ish) path; usually on the way somewhere rather than somewhere people hold out
  + *Alley* - Similar to a street, but usually closed-off on the sides. Callout interchangeable with “Closed”.
  + *Ledge* - Similar to a street, but open on one side and closed on another. Callout interchangeable with “Open”.
  + *Short* - Shorter of two paths to the same or middle location
  + *Long* - Longer of two paths to the same place or middle location
  + *Catwalks (Cats) -* Thin paths over some kind of drop
  + *Elbow* - Right-angled path
  + *Sneaky* - Hidden/obscured side path

### Map Features

* + *Wall* - High, thin path, with some way to climb up and/or stand on it
  + *Screen* - High shield that can’t be traversed
  + *Ramp* - Most prominent graded path
  + *Slope* - Less-prominent graded path
  + *Hill* - Large, graded area
  + *Crest* - Smaller graded area
  + *Pipe* - Quarter/half-pipe ramp
  + *Corner* - Dead-end corner
  + *Maze* - Series of thin corridors
  + *Trench* - Pit with open ends
  + *Spawn* - Spawn area
  + *Window* - Gap in a wall on closed path
  + *Suicide* - A bad idea
  + *Choke* - A choke point for the objective

### Props

* + *Hedge* - Garden feature
  + *Tree* - … a tree
  + *Brick* - White/black bricks used to add paths and perches and whatnot
  + *Box* - Small box or boxes
  + *Crate* - Large boxes, shipping crates, and so on
  + *Stack* - Stack of boxes, planks, etc

### Map-Specific Callouts

* + Many maps will have callouts that are specific to them, usually with some distinctive name that is related to that part of the map. These callouts are for key areas and are chosen to be distinctive and memorable, but without there being so many that it’s hard to remember them.

## Appendix: Terminology