



Bridge on Sundays

Making a Claim

Making a claim is an integral part of the play process. It speeds up playing and keeps the opponents interested rather than having to play out to the end a contract where the result is obvious. The declarer or either defender may claim. Frequently we know that we have to concede a trick or more but can make the rest. Both defenders must agree with one another or a declarer's claim cannot proceed but a defender would have to show good cause for disagreeing with his partner.

When claiming, do so with a precise statement of how you intend to make the tricks. A claim need not mean all the tricks but say clearly how many tricks you are claiming. Be very careful to state the line of play, especially if there are outstanding trumps or it involves a finesse.

When a claim is made then all play used to have to cease. It is a very common misconception that you can ask *to play it out*. This can now happen if all players agree. Do not accept an invitation to do so. It is better to let the Tournament Director decide if the claim is valid. If you decide to play on, then the right to let the TD adjudicate is forfeited.

The TD would then ask to hear the exact wording of the claim and attempt to find out what has happened in the play before the claim, looking at the remaining cards in all the hands if necessary. That is why you need care in your statement of claim. The TD would not expect you to take a line of play that a reasonable player would not make. Your opponents cannot suggest any lines of play but can point out to the TD any play that might invalidate the claim.

If there are choices as to a line of play (such as playing for the drop or finessing) the TD is likely to rule in favour of the non claimant. Forgetting an outstanding trump often leads to an adjusted claim but the claimant would not have been expected to make a careless play.

When running off a suit, then from the top is expected unless stated otherwise. If only small non-sequential cards are left in a suit, then it is deemed that any card can be equally likely as the first played.

If you have accepted the claim, you can change your mind later but do so before your side has played to the next board. The benefit of doubt will shift to the claimant.