

81.4 Slow play

81.4.1 All events

Bridge competitions can run successfully only if the players maintain a consistent and reasonable speed of play. Normally 15 or 16 minutes for a two board round is appropriate, and proportionately rather less for rounds of more than two boards. For many events the sponsoring organisation prescribes the speed of play, and the actions the TD takes if players play more slowly than prescribed. The remainder of this section is relevant for other events.

The TD should intervene if players play so slowly that the movement is disrupted, or their opponents are pressed into playing too quickly. Usually, on the first occasion the TD will warn the slow pair. For each later instance of slow play by that pair, a fine should usually be imposed, the fine increasing with the number of instances of slow play. If both pairs are to blame for the slow play then each is penalised proportionately to their share of the blame. This is more likely in a teams event. An example may be helpful:

Example A table finishes late, and the prescribed fine is 6 IMPs if only one pair were to blame. If one pair was considered responsible for two-thirds of the delay, and the other for one-third, then the former should be fined 4 IMPs, and the latter 2 IMPs.

81.4.2 Pairs events

If the TD is unable to establish which pair is to blame, then he should award average for each board removed. A non-offending pair is entitled to A+, and an offending pair receives A– (see #12.1.1).

A TD is entitled to be stricter with a pair known to be slow. Inexperienced players, the infirm and the elderly should be treated less strictly.

81.4.3 Teams events

If play in a stanza is proceeding too slowly, then the TD may remove one or more boards from the stanza. These may be replaced if the rate of play has caught up with the standard for the event. A board played at one table in a match must be played at the other, so such removal of boards will usually be before the half-way mark for the stanza. Such removal of boards should not be made unless it is necessary to avoid disruption to the event.

If (for example because of slow play in the second half of a stanza) the play in a match of more than one stanza falls behind the standard for the event, then boards may be removed from a stanza (other than the final stanza) before it starts.

If a pair is persistently slow in a teams event, then, apart from fines and removal of boards as noted above, the TD may prohibit them from playing as a pair in the next stanza, even if this means a change of partnerships in a team of four. This measure would, however, be a last resort.