

The Rules of Heads & Tails

As Compiled by Captain Bridgewater

Revised version adopted by the Heads and Tails Confederation 1st August 2019

Article 1. The setup of the game

1.1 The start line

- 1.1.1 A horizontal tape or string shall be set up above a table at hand height to provide a line above which the hand is to be held prior to tossing the coin.
- 1.1.2 The start line shall be at least 1.8 m long and between 2mm and 5mm in height.
- 1.1.3 The edge of the table shall protrude 2.5 cm beyond and parallel to the start line
- 1.1.4 The start line shall be clearly visible to players and spectators.

1.2 The fault line

- 1.2.1 The fault line shall be a white line marked or held against the front of the table 80 cm below the start line.
- 1.2.2 The fault line shall be at least 1.8 m long and between 2mm and 5mm in height.

1.3 The coin

- 1.3.1 The coin shall be a fair two-sided metal coin with a portrait on one side ("the head") and a non-portrait picture on the other ("the tail").
- 1.3.2 Both players and the spotter shall examine the coin and it shall be valid for play once they have agreed to it being fair.
- 1.3.3 A coin that becomes damaged shall be replaced as soon as the damage is discovered.
- 1.3.4 Either player may request that the coin be changed at the half way point of a match.

1.4 The floor

- 1.4.1 The floor shall be flat and even and made of or covered with a non-bounce material.
- 1.4.2 There shall be no crevices in the floor which may cause the coin to land in such a way that it is not determinable whether it is a head or a tail.
- 1.4.3 The landing area shall be designated by white lines on the floor and shall be an area of 1.5 m square edging onto the base or legs of the table.

1.5 Lighting

- 1.5.1 The playing area shall be so arranged that artificial lighting or direct sunlight is not in the direct line of sight of either player or the spotter or any participant spectators during any part of the flight of the coin.
- 1.5.2 Windows shall be controlled so that the line of flight does not pass through any sunbeams.

1.6 Clothing and personal possessions

- 1.6.1 Players shall wear subdued non-white clothing and non-marking shoes that do not squeak or clatter.
- 1.6.2 Players shall not have anything in their pockets that jangles or makes any other disturbing noise.
- 1.6.3 Mobile phones must be switched off or set to silent mode.

Article 2. The play of the game

2.1 The toss

- 2.1.1 The spotter shall declare “Ready – Go” to start the play.
- 2.1.2 After Go has been declared the toss shall be made within 30 seconds or a fault shall be declared.
- 2.1.3 The toss shall be made by holding the coin on one hand above the start line and flicking it upwards so that it spins.
- 2.1.4 A toss made below the fault line shall be declared a let.
- 2.1.5 A coin that fails to move upwards shall be declared a let.
- 2.1.6 If any part of the tosser touches the start line the fault line the table or the coin after it has been tossed a let shall be declared.
- 2.1.7 If the coin fails to land on the floor in the designated area a let shall be declared.
- 2.1.8 After a let has been declared the player must make a valid toss or a fault shall be declared.
- 2.1.9 A coin that is poorly tossed or fails to spin but is not a let shall be a valid toss.
- 2.1.10 A coin that touches the table and then lands in the designated area shall be a valid toss.
- 2.1.11 A coin that touches any part of the referee the opponent or a spectator or their clothing shall be declared invalid and the play shall be remade without penalty.

2.2 The valid call

- 2.2.1 Only “Heads” or “Tails” may be declared as a call.
- 2.2.2 The call must be made after the coin has left the tosser’s hand and before it has descended below the fault line.
- 2.2.3 If the player has not made a call by the time the coin has passed below the fault line a fault shall be declared.
- 2.2.4 A call once completed may not be revoked.

2.3 Scoring

- 2.3.1 If a player makes a call matching the upward facing aspect of the coin he shall score one point and his opponent shall score zero.
- 2.3.2 If a player makes a call that does not match the upward facing aspect of the coin he shall score zero and his opponent shall score one point.
- 2.3.3 If a fault is declared against a player he shall score zero and his opponent shall score one point.
- 2.3.4 At the end of a match the winner shall be the player with the greater number of points.

- 2.3.5 If the number of points at the end of the match is the same for each player the match shall be a tie.

2.4 The behaviour of the players

- 2.4.1 After Go has been declared and until the toss is made the caller may not make any sound or commit any distracting behaviour to the opponent.
- 2.4.2 After the toss has been made and until the coin hits the floor or the toss is declared invalid the tosser may not make any sound or commit any distracting behaviour to the opponent.
- 2.4.3 Neither player may stand or move in a way that blocks the view of the spotter or any participant spectators.

2.5 Spectators

- 2.5.1 Spectators may be classed as either participant or non-participant
- 2.5.2 Non-participant spectators shall act as passive observers and may not make any sound between Go being called and the coin striking the floor or the toss being declared invalid.
- 2.5.3 Participant spectators may make a call of the throw between the time of declaration and the point at which the coin strikes the floor.
- 2.5.4 Alternatively, participant spectators may hold up a card marked “Heads” or “Tails” with the printed side facing out of view of the players, at any time between the toss of the coin and the coin striking the floor.
- 2.5.5 Side bets between spectators are permitted unless competition rules state otherwise.

2.6 The role of the spotter

- 2.6.1 The spotter shall have the sole power to determine whether a throw or call is valid and to award points at the end of a play.
- 2.6.2 The spotter shall ensure that playing conditions are set up as in Article 1.
- 2.6.3 The spotter shall ensure that the conduct of players and spectators is consistent with Articles 2 and 3.
- 2.6.4 The spotter shall keep a record of the match and provide it to each player at the end so they can make their own personal copy.
- 2.6.5 Match records shall be the property of the Heads and Tails Confederation.

2.7 Irregularities

- 2.7.1 Where the caller interferes with the toss the spotter may declare the throw invalid and allow it to be retaken without penalty.
- 2.7.2 Where the tosser interferes with the call the spotter may declare a let.
- 2.7.3 Where a spectator interferes with either a toss or a call the spotter may declare the throw invalid and allow it to be retaken without penalty. The spectator may be barred from the game at the discretion of the spotter.
- 2.7.4 Where an unusual event happens, such as an indeterminate landing (“cleet”) or a coin breaking on impact (“skraggaleon”) the spotter shall declare the throw invalid and allow it to be retaken without penalty once the situation has been rectified.

Article 3. Special rules for tournament play

3.1 Standard Tournaments

- 3.1.1 Tournaments should be played with an even number of games per round.
- 3.1.2 Tournaments may specify a method of tie break, or may allow for tied games.
- 3.1.3 Scoring shall be one point for a won match, zero for a lost match and in cases where a tie is allowed each player scores half a point.
- 3.1.4 Where Swiss pairings are used aggregate score should be used for seeding except in the first round where ratings should be used. Players without ratings should be placed as the bottom seeds in the first round.
- 3.1.5 Tournaments may pool all players' entry fees and divide them between specified placings according to a pre-announced formula.

3.2 Edinburgh Tournaments

- 3.2.1 In Edinburgh style tournaments each match is determined by a single toss.
- 3.2.2 Scoring shall be one point for a win, zero for a loss.
- 3.2.3 Where Swiss pairings are used ratings should be used for seeding. Players without ratings should be placed as the bottom seeds. Players should as far as possible alternate between tosser and caller.
- 3.2.4 Where there is a stake the winner of each round wins the opponent's accumulated prize fund.

Article 4. Special rules for players with disabilities

4.1 Physical impairment

- 4.1.1 A player who is unable to toss may appoint a third person in their place or may ask the spotter to perform this task. The throw is at all times the responsibility of the player.

4.2 Visual impairment

- 4.2.1 A player who cannot see the flight of the coin will be told by the spotter when the coin has been tossed. The spotter shall announce "Call" and the player must make his call during flight or immediately the coin is heard to hit the floor.

4.3 Other impairments

- 4.3.1 A player who cannot announce his call may use visual cards for the purpose.