

Rule 8. General Rules of Pleading

(a) CLAIM FOR RELIEF. A pleading that states a claim for relief must contain:

(1) a short and plain statement of the grounds for the court's jurisdiction, unless the court already has jurisdiction and the claim needs no new jurisdictional support;

(2) a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief;

(3) a demand for the relief sought, which may include relief in the alternative or different types of relief; and

(4) in an action initiated by a debt collector to collect a consumer debt as defined in D.C. Code § 28-3814, any information required by D.C. Code § 28-3814.

(b) DEFENSES; ADMISSIONS AND DENIALS.

(1) *In General*. In responding to a pleading, a party must:

(A) state in short and plain terms its defenses to each claim asserted against it; and

(B) admit or deny the allegations asserted against it by an opposing party.

(2) *Denials—Responding to the Substance*. A denial must fairly respond to the substance of the allegation.

(3) *General and Specific Denials*. A party that intends in good faith to deny all the allegations of a pleading—including the jurisdictional grounds—may do so by a general denial. A party that does not intend to deny all the allegations must either specifically deny designated allegations or generally deny all except those specifically admitted.

(4) *Denying Part of an Allegation*. A party that intends in good faith to deny only part of an allegation must admit the part that is true and deny the rest.

(5) *Lacking Knowledge or Information*. A party that lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of an allegation must so state, and the statement has the effect of a denial.

(6) *Effect of Failing to Deny*. An allegation—other than one relating to the amount of damages—is admitted if a responsive pleading is required and the allegation is not denied. If a responsive pleading is not required, an allegation is considered denied or avoided.

(c) AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES.

(1) *In General*. In responding to a pleading, a party must affirmatively state any avoidance or affirmative defense, including:

- accord and satisfaction;
- arbitration and award;
- assumption of risk;
- contributory negligence;
- duress;
- estoppel;
- failure of consideration;
- fraud;
- illegality;
- injury by fellow servant;
- laches;
- license;
- payment;
- release;
- res judicata;

- statute of frauds;
- statute of limitations; and
- waiver.

(2) *Mistaken Designation*. If a party mistakenly designates a defense as a counterclaim, or a counterclaim as a defense, the court must, if justice so requires, treat the pleading as though it were correctly designated, and may impose terms for doing so.

(d) PLEADING TO BE CONCISE AND DIRECT; ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS; INCONSISTENCY.

(1) *In General*. Each allegation must be simple, concise, and direct. No technical form is required.

(2) *Alternative Statements of a Claim or Defense*. A party may set out 2 or more statements of a claim or defense alternately or hypothetically, either in a single count or defense or in separate ones. If a party makes alternative statements, the pleading is sufficient if any one of them is sufficient.

(3) *Inconsistent Claims or Defenses*. A party may state as many separate claims or defenses as it has, regardless of consistency.

(e) CONSTRUING PLEADINGS. Pleadings must be construed so as to do justice.

COMMENT TO 2022 AMENDMENTS

This rule has been amended to highlight the pleading requirements included in emergency, temporary, and permanent legislation amending D.C. Code § 28-3814.

COMMENT TO 2017 AMENDMENTS

This rule is identical to *Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8*, as amended in 2007 and 2010. In addition to stylistic changes, "discharge in bankruptcy" is deleted from the list of affirmative defenses. As explained in the Advisory Committee Notes to the 2010 federal amendment:

Under 11 U.S.C. § 524 (a)(1) and (2), a discharge voids a judgment to the extent that it determines a personal liability of the debtor with respect to a discharged debt. The discharge also operates as an injunction against commencement or continuation of an action to collect, recover, or offset a discharged debt. For these reasons it is confusing to describe discharge as an affirmative defense. But § 524 (a) applies only to a claim that was actually discharged. Several categories of debt set out in 11 U.S.C. § 523 (a) are excepted from discharge. The issue whether a claim was excepted from discharge may be determined either in the court that entered the discharge or—in most instances—in another court with jurisdiction over the creditor's claim.

COMMENT

Identical to *Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8*.