

Reference in these rules to counties shall be construed as applying to counties admitted to membership in accordance with Article 5.2 of the ECF Articles.

Section A: The Competitions & Financial Arrangements

A1. The Championship shall have the following sections:

- (i) Open, having no upper grade limit.
- (ii) Minor Counties: mean grade a maximum of 180 (see C4)
- (iii) Under 180 grade
- (iv) Under 160 grade
- (v) Under 140 grade
- (vi) Under 120 grade
- (vii) Under 100 grade

The Championship shall be held each year under the direction of the Director of Home Chess who shall appoint a Controller.

A2. Each section of the Championship shall be divided into two stages: the Union Stage and the Final Stage. Entry to the Final Stage is by nomination from the Unions as provided by Section B.

A3. In the Union Stage, each team shall pay an entry fee, which shall be decided by the Board, to the ECF, and any games played will be charged according to the normal ECF regulations for leagues.

For this season, the entry fee is £24 for A1.(i) to A1.(v) inclusive, and £18 otherwise.

A4. In the Final Stage all players must be ECF members at bronze level or above. Non-members shall be subject to a fine of £10 per game played in the Final Stage.

Section B: The Union Stage

B1. The Union Stage shall be conducted by the Unions and shall be run by them according to their own rules. It may, but need not, include qualifying competitions for one or more sections of the Final Stage.

B2. Each union may nominate two counties for the Final Stage of any section, whether or not it has conducted a qualifying competition for that section.

B3. If a Union conducts a qualifying competition for a section of the Championship, and in the qualifying competition five or more teams complete their fixtures without defaulting a match, the Union may nominate three counties for the Final Stage of that section. The National Controller may give a dispensation if the last round of fixtures could not be completed because of inclement weather.

B4. Counties nominated for, or declining nomination for, the Final Stage of the Open section may not be nominated for the Minor section.

B5. The Secretary or County Match Controller of each Union shall, not later than 31st March, send to the National Controller the name(s) of the nominated team(s) of that Union in each section of the Championship, stating that the teams so named have accepted nomination.

Section C: Eligibility

C1. Competition Season and Grading Lists

C1.1. For the purposes of these rules, a season shall start on 1st September and shall end on the date of the Final Round of the current Championship.

C1.2.

(a) Grading limits shall be based on the published ECF standardplay Grading List current at the start of the season. A captain may use either this list, or that season's January Grading List for the purposes of board order (see E2.3).

(b) A player who has no grade in the list current at the start of the season may play in the Final Stage if:

(i) the player acquires a grade in the ECF standardplay Grading List in January, in which case this grade will be used, or

(ii) permission has been previously obtained from the Controller. Requests for permission must be submitted to the Controller so as to arrive at least seven days before the player is due to play. The team captain must submit evidence from the local grader or master list or other source. Such a player shall be declared ineligible (or no longer eligible) if the Controller is not (or has ceased to be) entirely convinced that the player's strength is clearly below the relevant grading limits. The Controller shall, as soon as practical, assign the player a grading for the purposes of the Championship only.

C2. Counties Entitled to Participate

All nominated Counties are eligible to compete in the Final Stage of the Championship provided that they have paid the entry fee and that neither they nor the nominating Union are in arrears with any other monies due to the ECF.

C3. Players Entitled to Participate

C3.1. The qualifications for a player to represent a County in the Championship shall be one of the following:-

(i) Birth in that county.

(ii) Five years' residence in that county at any time.

(iii) Two months immediate previous and present membership of a club either in or affiliated to that County.

(iv) One month's immediately previous and present residence in that County.

(v) Present attendance as a student at a school, college or university in that County.

C3.2. In the course of a season no player may represent more than one county, and no player may represent more than one team in the same section of the Championship.

C3.3. The penalty for playing an ineligible player in any match shall be the loss of the game for that player and a win for the opponent, provided the opponent is present and eligible; plus a deduction of one penalty point for each ineligible player from the resulting total score made by the County in that match. The game(s) will still be graded according to the result of the game as played. The Controller may impose an additional penalty if he is satisfied that the inclusion of an ineligible player was deliberate or wilful.

C4. Eligibility of Minor Counties Teams

C4.1. Each team must have an average grade not exceeding 180. For every point, or part thereof, by which the average grade exceeds the limit, 1 penalty game point will be deducted from the team's total score in the match.

Section D: The Final Stage: Administrative Arrangements

D1. The Role of the Controller

D1.1. The Final Stage of each section shall be conducted by the Controller. Any decision of the Controller can be appealed against by direct reference to the Director of Home Chess, in writing and made within 48 hours of that decision. Such an appeal shall be accompanied by a deposit of £20 which will be returned if the appeal succeeds. The Director of Home Chess or his representative shall then reply within a further 48 hours with his decision which is final.

D1.2. The Controller will ask the Union Controller to specify the number of nominations made under Rules B2 and B3 that the Union wishes to make for each section of the Final Stage in December. The draw for the Final Stage will be based upon these numbers. A Union requesting more nominations for the draw than it is able to fill at the end of the Union Stage will be fined £100 for each unfilled nomination.

D2. The Draw for the Final Stage

D2.1. If there are less than 8 nominations in total for any championship, the controller may invite extra entries from eligible teams. If a Union is invited to field an extra team in a section in one year, it shall only be asked to fill a vacancy in the next season if all other Unions decline.

D2.2. Should there be more than eight nominations, a preliminary round shall be played before the quarter final. Teams placed in the preliminary round shall, where possible, be the third nominees of Unions. They shall only be first nominees if there is no other legal way to do the draw.

D2.3. The draw for the preliminary round (if required), and for the quarter finals and semi finals, shall be made in January or February by a committee consisting of the Controller, the Director of Home Chess or his or her nominee and one other person nominated by the Board; and shall be published not more than one week after it is made. The Controller shall announce the arrangements for the draw not later than 31st December.

D2.4. The home teams in the Quarter Finals shall be drawn from the first nominees of the Unions. The Controller has the right to adjust the Quarter Final draw or the preliminary round as he deems fit in the light of teams actually nominated by Unions and the need to fill any vacancies.

D2.5. The first and second nominees of a Union in a section will be kept apart in the draw until the Final. The third nominee of a Union in a section will be kept apart from other teams in that Union until the Semi Finals. This shall not apply in respect of any extra nominations accepted by the Controller under rule D2.1.

D3. Arrangements for Final Stage Matches

D3.1. Matches shall be played on, or by mutual agreement before, or on the Sunday immediately following, the dates here listed:

Preliminary Round – Fourth Saturday in April

Quarter Finals- Third Saturday in May
Semi-Finals – Second Saturday in June
Finals – First Saturday in July

These dates may be varied by the Director of Home Chess not later than 31st October in each season and shall be notified within 7 days to Union Controllers. Notwithstanding the date of the Finals, they shall be graded in the same grading list as the rest of the Final Stage Matches.

This season, the default dates are: April 25, May 16, June 13, and the Final will be played on July 4.

D3.2. In the Final of the Championship, the Director of Home Chess may at his discretion nominate a central venue. With this exception all matches shall be arranged by the Counties concerned. The county drawn away may insist on an intermediate venue provided they notify the home county of their decision at least a fortnight before the scheduled date and provided it is prepared to make all the arrangements and that all expenses are shared by the teams concerned. It is the responsibility of the county drawn at home to provide refreshments for the away county. Where a match is played at an intermediate venue, refreshments should be provided for both teams, expenses to be shared.

D3.3. The match captain of the team arranging the venue shall be responsible for advising the other team's match captain in writing of the venue arrangements so they are received 7 days before the date of the match and shall also be responsible for setting up boards, sets and clocks and providing scoresheets.

D3.4. At the request of either match captain, made not less than 7 days before the match takes place, a neutral arbiter shall be appointed at the expense of the County making the request. Upon receiving such a request, the Controller will make a suitable appointment.

D4. Penalties

D4.1. Any County which fails to pay entry fees or any other monies due under rule A3 shall, unless the Director of Home Chess decides otherwise, not be accepted for nomination to the Final Stage of that Championship in the following season.

D4.2. Should any County, having been nominated by its Union for the Final Stage of any of the Championships and having accepted such nomination in accordance with Section B, default any match, or any game in a match, it shall be required to reimburse such of its opponent's reasonable expenses incurred as the Controller shall determine; and unless the Controller decides otherwise shall also pay a fine of £10 per game defaulted or £100 per match defaulted, whichever is less; such fines being payable to the English Chess Federation.

D5. Reporting of Results

D5.1. Results must be reported by both teams on the results server not later than 48 hours after the match was played. If a result is not reported or confirmed within the due time, the Controller may impose a fine of £10 on the offending county or counties. If neither team reports the result, the Controller may eliminate both teams.

D6. Return of Trophies

It is the responsibility of trophy winners to take all reasonable steps to look after the trophies and to return them in a clean condition. The trophy winner shall have the trophy engraved and may claim

the cost from the Director of Home Chess. Trophies must be returned in a secure manner to the Controller or his nominee at least three weeks before the next season's Finals Day. By prior agreement of the Controller, at least one month beforehand, trophies may be returned on Finals Day itself.

Section E: The Final Stage: General Rules

E1. Pre-Match Arrangements

E1.1. Any matter affecting the arrangement of a match on which officials of the counties concerned cannot agree shall be referred to the Controller whose decision shall be final on all points, whether arising under these rules or otherwise.

E2. Number of Boards and Playing Order

E2.1. In any match in the Final Stage of the Championship, each County shall be represented by 16 players except in the Under 120 and Under 100 sections, where the number of players shall be 12.

E2.2. The number of players in any match may be varied by agreement between the team captains and the Controller.

E2.3. If a player plays on a board below another who is graded (or deemed to be graded) more than 10 ECF points lower than the player, then that player shall be deemed to be ineligible, and treated in accordance with C3.3. The captain must use a single Grading List for the purpose of this rule. The penalty shall not apply where the written consent of the opposing captain is obtained prior to the start of play.

E2.4. One game shall be played between each pair of players. No player may play more than one board in any one match.

E3. Time Control

The time control shall be 40 moves in 2 hours, plus a 30-minute quickplay finish; except that the time control of any match may be varied by agreement between the captains and the Controller.

E4. Responsibilities of the Captains

E4.1. Before the time fixed for the start of play the captains shall exchange team lists, with players arranged in board order (see E2.3). Any known defaults shall be placed on the lowest boards. The names of the players, their ECF membership numbers, their ECF grading reference numbers and their grades must be included on the Result Sheet.

E4.2. Upon completion of E4.1, the captains shall toss for colour. The home captain shall toss the coin, and the away captain should call. The captain winning the toss shall choose to take white on either the odd- or the even-numbered boards.

E4.3. At the time fixed for the start of play, the captains shall start the clocks of the players having the move. If a player is absent, a substitute may be put in up to one hour from the start of the clock, and the original game shall be annulled. A new game shall be started between the substitute and his opponent, with the clock of the substitute adjusted such that the elapsed time since the start of clocks shall be deducted from his thinking time. If no substitute is available, then his opponent, if

present, shall score the game a win. If neither player is present nor can be substituted then the game shall be scored as lost by both players.

E4.4. A captain may advise a player if he/she should offer or accept a draw, whether on request from the player or not. In no circumstances may the captain look at any game before giving his/her decision.

E4.5. If, during a game, the players discover a problem which they or their captains cannot resolve, an arbiter should be consulted. Where no neutral arbiter is present in the venue, an external arbiter may be approached. The Director of Home Chess will make available a list of Arbiters who have experience of arbiting at team competitions organised by the ECF.

E5. Result of the Match

E5.1. The match shall be won by the team which has scored more game points. Where game points are equal, the result shall be decided by

- (i) Board Count: the numbers of the boards won by each team shall be added, and the team with the lower total shall win. If the tie is not thereby resolved:
- (ii) Elimination: the lowest board shall be eliminated from the match score. This operation shall be repeated until the scores are unequal. If the tie is not thereby resolved:
- (iii) Colour: the match will be won by the team which had black on board 1.

E6. Mobile Phones and Electronic Communication Devices

E6.1. During play, a player is forbidden to have a mobile phone, electronic means of communication or any device capable of suggesting chess moves on their person in the playing venue. Such devices should be stored in a player's bag, as long as the device is completely switched off.

If it is evident that a player has such a device on their person in the playing venue, the player shall lose the game. The opponent shall win.

Dispensation from this rule may be sought from the Controller.

Section F: The Final Stage: Arrangements for Finals Day

F1. Timing Rules

F1.1. The Director of Home Chess may arrange a Finals Day, on which all Finals are played at a central venue. (see Rule D3.2) The start time for the Finals shall be 1:30pm. The time control will be as specified in Rule E3, which will not be varied.

F2. Captains' Responsibility before Finals Day

F2.1. The captain must submit his team using the form provided, in board order, by e-mail to the Controller or his nominee before 6pm on the day preceding the Final. If a captain fails to submit his team, a £10 fine will be imposed unless the Controller decides otherwise. Captains will still be able to make changes to their team after this point.

F3. Captains' Responsibilities on Finals Day

F3.1. The captain must report to the Controller or his nominee not less than 30 minutes before the start of play. Where the captain is unavailable, one of the players in his team list submitted as in F2 may instead represent the captain.

F3.2. The captain or his representative will be asked for confirmation of their team list submitted as in F2.1. After this point, the team list may not be altered, subject to the provisions of E4.3.

F3.3. The coin toss will be carried out in accordance with Rule E4.2, under supervision of the Controller or his nominee.

F3.4. During play, the captain may act in accordance with Rule E4.4.

F3.5. At the conclusion of the match, both captains should sign the matchcard, and submit it to an Arbiter.

Changes from 2013-4

C1.2.(a) Allows the use of the January grading list for the purposes of board order.

C1.2.(b) Allows the use of the January grading list for the purpose of assigning grades to ungraded players.

C3.1.(v) Teachers are no longer part of the educational eligibility criteria.

D2.5. The first two nominees of a Union will now be kept apart until the Final, rather than Semi Final. Third nominees will be kept apart from Union rivals until the Semi Finals.

D3.2. The requirement for the Board to be involved has been removed.

E2.3. Now that two grading lists are able to be used, only one single list can be used for the 10-point rule. The written consent of the captain in advance can override that, but now the Controller does not need to.

E3. The time control for the Final is now explicitly stated in Section F.

E4. This section is retitled.

E4.2. Coin toss procedure has been clarified.

E6. The section is retitled.

E6.1. Rule rewritten in accordance with the mobile phone Laws in the July 2014 FIDE Laws of Chess, with a subsequent amendment posted on the FIDE website in October 2014.

F. Entirely new section, to provide rules for Finals Day.