



ECF Online Fair play and Anti-Cheating rules

V2.2, November 2020

Changes History

V2.0 – Initial Version, May 2020

V2.1 – Date added

V2.2 – November 2020 - Various amendments including clarification of scope/ applicability.

1. Introduction and Scope

These are the current guidelines and rules for fair play in ECF online events including a summary of anti-cheating arrangements. The rules are reviewed on an ongoing basis and will continue to be updated as appropriate based on experience from ECF online and other events.

The rules and guidelines apply to ECF members or supporters playing in ECF organised online events or for England in International team events where the ECF has organised participation. Two classes of event are considered – Tier 1 and Tier 2 with differing sanctions applicable depending on the nature and profile of the event.

The rules and guidelines are not expected to apply directly to ECF affiliated events organised by a third party whether or not they are ECF online rated. Organisers of such events are responsible for the design and operation of fair play arrangements and sanctions at their events. They may of course wish to adopt the approach set out in the ECF guidelines, and may refer selected cases for consideration by the ECF Fair play team. The ECF reserves the right to apply sanctions as set out in this document in response to a case referred by an organiser of an affiliated ECF online rated event and in consultation with the organiser.

(Affiliated events would include national leagues such as the 4NCL, regional and local leagues event or a local online congress or club competition.) (Affiliated events would include national leagues such as the 4NCL, regional and local leagues event or a local online congress or club competition.)

2. General Fair Play Guidelines

Complying with Provider Fair Play Rules

ECF club members and participants in ECF online rated events are asked to review the chess.com, lichess, or other provider Fair Play rules as relevant, and make sure they comply with these for their games on the platform at all times.

Players in ECF online rated events are required to comply with the ECF's fair play rules and the ECF shall have no liability in relation to its implementation of the rules as set out in this document.

Further details can be found here:



<https://www.chess.com/community>

<https://support.chess.com/article/648-what-do-i-need-to-know-about-fair-play-on-chess-com>

<https://lichess.org/terms-of-service>

Please note that the following are specifically not allowed during play:

- Help from any other person, player, or coach
- Impersonation/ use of other people's account
- Use of chess engines, bots, plugins, analysis tools, tablebases, blunder checks or other best move tools
- Artificially inflating or deflating your rating. (This is where a user purposefully loses, or has arranged with an opponent to win. As a result, the user's rating will artificially increase or decrease).
- Interference with other members games.

Reference to physical opening books and static (ie non-engine based) tablebases are allowed for chess.com 'daily' games or lichess 'correspondence' games only and must not be used during live games.

The above list is not exhaustive and you should refer to the provider terms and conditions and supporting material on their web sites for the full set of rules and guidelines.

Players in ECF online events are encouraged not to have a chess engine or analysis system open during play even if there is no intention of referring to such an engine or system.

Standards of Conduct

In addition to the above please do take note of the provider requirement to comply with platform rules in relation to general standards of conduct, sportsmanship and online behaviour.

Staying Connected

<https://support.chess.com/article/338-how-does-game-abandonment-work>

Players in ECF online rated events should familiarise themselves with the rules on time to make your first move, disconnection and game abandonment.

Please make sure you are ready to start playing when your game is started, and be sure to make your first move within the allowed time which may vary by time control and platform. If you are disconnected for any reason before or during a game you should try to reconnect and log back in as quickly as possible. Failure to make a move within the allowed time or to reconnect following a disconnect will result in the game being recorded as a loss by the provider.

If you were unable to reconnect due to issues with your internet connection, then the provider's result will stand for online rating purposes, with a win for your opponent where you have disconnected and not been able to reconnect in time. Where games are defaulted as a result of the



server going down for both players please speak to the event organisers who should be able to rule on the game result for ECF online rating purposes.

Please also avoid disconnecting in a lost position and do make use of the appropriate resignation button if you wish to concede the game.

3. Anti-cheating Measures

ECF Club members' Member IDs will be known to the ECF but these will not be disclosed without permission and/ or acceptance of entry conditions for relevant events.

It will be a condition of entry to International or ECF tier 1 events that a player must agree to their real names being disclosed so that players will know who they are playing.

A tier 1 event is defined as an International Team Match, the final stages of an ECF National Competition, an ECF organised National league, the ECF Counties Championship, or the National Clubs Championship and in general any events with monetary prizes. A tier 2 event would be the group or early stage of a National competition, ECF weekly club tournaments.

ECF affiliated and online rated events will be covered by the organisers' conditions and fair play arrangements.

As is normal for internet chess providers including chess.com and lichess, the provider's anti-cheating software will be in place to detect instances of cheating in all provider rated (and potentially provider unrated) matches, tournaments and events.

Chess.com's measures are outlined below on their web site.

<https://www.chess.com/article/view/chess-com-fair-play-and-cheat-detection>

There is also a process for users to report anyone suspected of breaching fair play as below:

<https://support.chess.com/article/209-how-do-i-report-someone>

Lichess's anti-cheating measures are also published on their web site as part of their FAQs which can be found here:

<https://lichess.org/faq>

The reporting process and form can be found here:

lichess.org/report

Players in ECF events should not change their provider user name immediately before or during the course of an event and may be asked by the organiser to explain the reason should they need to do this. The Event Organiser may refuse entry or exclude a player from further participation where a user name has been changed without a satisfactory explanation and at the organiser's sole discretion.'



For ECF team events a team captain may ask the Chief Arbiter or Fair Play Controller for the event whether there are any concerns about any players in their squad in relation to the event based on data in their possession as a result of using De Ken Regan's software. The ECF Chief Arbiter or Fair Play Controller may reply in the affirmative or negative only, without revealing the number of players or their identity.

In the event that a player is banned or flagged by the provider, the player should decide whether they wish to contest the ban or flagging, and if so they should make an appeal to the provider in the first instance as soon as is practical after the allegation has been made or sanction applied.

The ECF will have no involvement in this process which is between the player and the platform provider.

Information on the providers' appeals processes can be found here for chess.com:

<https://support.chess.com/article/648-what-do-i-need-to-know-about-fair-play-on-chess-com>

and here for lichess:

lichess.org/contact#help-appeal-cheat

The ECF has considered additional measures for detecting cheating such as asking players to be 'on camera' via a webcam for major events (as FIDE have done with a number of their events).

These measures are expected to provide an additional level of checks for external assistance and will be considered for specific tier 1 ECF events on a case by case basis.

4. ECF Sanctions

A player with a closed or flagged account as a result of cheating or breaching fair play guidelines will be subject to ECF sanctions as set out in the table below, which vary depending on the nature of the offence, the player's circumstances, and the number of occurrences.

Before any sanctions are applied a player's games will be reviewed using Dr. Ken Regan's independent analysis software and / or alternative analysis systems, and the results shared with the player on request.

Sanctions are only applied if the review supports the provider's conclusion that there is a very high probability of cheating in an ECF event based on information from the provider, independent statistical evidence from analysing the game moves as above, and following a review of the specific circumstances of the case.



Offence	Circumstances	Tariff for Tier 1 Events	Tariff for Tier 2 Events
Chess.com or lichess account closure for fair play violations aside from computer or other external assistance.	General	No ECF action unless provider alerts a particular concern.	No ECF action unless provider alerts a particular concern.
	Junior		
Chess.com or lichess account closure for computer or other external assistance, or lichess account flagging as computer assisted.	General	4-6 month Clubs exclusion and delisting for a first occurrence.	3-4 month Clubs exclusion and delisting for a first occurrence.
	Junior (U16)	3 month Clubs exclusion and delisting for first occurrence.	2 month Clubs exclusion and delisting for first occurrence.
Chess.com or lichess account closure for machine or other external assistance, or lichess account flagging as computer assisted.	Second offence	Longer periods of exclusion (up to double the first offence periods).	Longer periods of exclusion (up to double the first offence period).

Bans and rating list exclusions in excess of two months will be reduced by a third if the player recognises the offence and agrees not to do it again.

As above Tier 1 events are major championships, International Events where the ECF has entered a national team, or in general any events with monetary prizes. Tier 2 Events are regular club tournaments or local league events.

Sanctions will apply from two weeks after the closure/ flagging or immediately after an unsuccessful appeal. Exclusion from ECF Online Clubs will apply to ECF Online Clubs on both sites (chess.com and lichess.org). There will be no impact on ECF membership or OTB grades which are completely separate from online ratings. There will also be no explicit ECF publicity of player names.

Players will be informed of the sanction being applied and will have the right of appeal with the appeal being heard before any sanction is applied over and above the provider sanctions.

The Organiser will be asked to manage any changes to results etc in such a way as to avoid or minimise any publicity for the sanctioned player.

The player's games will not be rated in the ECF online rating lists for the period of the sanction during which time there will be no changes to the players' ratings on the list.

Player identities and related ECF members club removals/ delistings will not be published in any explicit way by the ECF and rating changes will just not appear on the lists for the relevant period.



A player may reapply for ECF online once their provider ban has been lifted and they have an active provider account and following the relevant ban and delisting, at which point they must agree not to use computer assistance or breach the fair play guidelines.

The ECF will take more stringent action for a second or multiple occurrences, with such occurrences handled on a case by case basis.

The removal and delisting will be reviewed by the ECF at the end of the period and generally lifted at that point.

Jurisdiction - Sanctions will only be applied to ECF members taking part in ECF-online rated events or Internationals where participation has been organised by the ECF – eg International team events.

5. ECF Appeals and Practical Considerations

5.1 The Appeals Process

A player may make an appeal against the ECF sanction to an ECF Committee consisting of a technical expert on anti-cheating, a legal expert, and a player not directly involved in the competition(s) where the events have occurred. If the appeal is successful then the player will not be banned from ECF members clubs or removed from the ECF online ratings.

The process will be as follows:

- The player should appeal the platform ban or flagging as soon as practical and within two weeks of the sanction occurring;
- The player should make an ECF appeal within a week of an unsuccessful appeal as above or two weeks of the platform sanction being applied if there has been no appeal to the provider;
- Bringing an ECF appeal involves a financial cost of £25, refundable if the appeal is successful;
- The appellant will be provided with the results of the Regan analysis of their games and any further information relating to the ban which the provider is prepared to provide and have shared;
- At appeal the onus will be on the appellant to show that the decision was wrong or unfair and provide clear grounds for bringing the original suspension into doubt;
- A case will be considered in the first instance by the ECF online manager and/ or ECF event organiser who will advise the player of the proposed sanctions before setting up a panel to hear the case should the player wish to appeal;
- The appeal will be heard by an appeals committee/panel consisting of a technical expert on anti-cheating, a legal expert and a player not directly involved in the competition(s) where the events have occurred;
- The panel of 3 will be drawn from a wider pool of 5-10 people;
- Those in the pool would need to recuse themselves from an appeal if:
 - The event is one of their events;



- They know the person well;
- They could be seen to have a vested interest in the outcome;
- They have taken part in a non-ECF appeals committee for the same offence.
- Grounds for considering an appeal might be:
 - Mistaken identity (eg another player using account without the players knowledge);
 - The player being able to demonstrate recent performances in OTB events significantly higher than grade or ELO rating to an extent that would materially reduce the likelihood of external assistance having been used;
 - Other mitigating circumstances.
- If the appeal is successful then the player will not be banned from ECF Online Clubs or removed from the ECF online ratings.
- There will be no right of further appeal at the national level.

FIDE are currently looking at establishing a cross-federation appeals committee to provide a higher level court of appeal with a small team who would have signed NDAs with the providers including lichess and chess.com. The ECF may wish to consider this as a potential court of appeal for cases where the appellant is not satisfied with the ECF decision and wishes to take the matter further.

5.2. Provider User Names and Ability to Play in ECF Events

Players may play under only one user name in ECF events during a six month period unless:

- They have had a sanction applied under the fair play guidelines and require a new user name to resume playing once the sanction is complete; or
- They have made a successful appeal to the ECF but require a new user name to resume playing.
- They have agreed the change of user name with the ECF

In all cases it is the player’s responsibility to obtain a new user name from the provider and communicate this with the ECF by way of a club membership application or competition entry. The ECF will have no involvement in this process.

A player may not play in ECF events while an appeal is in progress

5.3 Appeals Decision Making Process

Account Flagged by Provider	High Score	Successful Appeal to Provider	Process
Y	Y	N	Sanction remains in place unless a successful appeal is made to the appeals committee to have the sanction rescinded. The burden of proof is on the appellant. If the appeal is successful the player may resume playing under a different username if one can be obtained.
Y	Y	Y	Sanction remains in place unless a successful appeal is made to the appeals committee to have the sanction



			rescinded. The burden of proof is on the appellant.
Y	N	Y	No sanction applied.
Y	N	N	An appeal may be made to the appeals committee. There will be a presumption of innocence unless in the view of the appeals committee there is clear evidence of engine use. If the appeal is successful the player may resume playing under a different user name if one can be obtained.
N	Y	NA	Dr Ken Regan’s findings are reported to the provider for tier 1 and optionally tier 2 events. If the provider decides not to mark/close the account, no sanction is imposed. If the provider decides to mark/close the account, the processes as per rows 1. and 2. above are followed.