

ECF Arbiter Exam Syllabus as of May 2021

Candidates will have a knowledge and understanding of the following topics, and be able to demonstrate their ability to apply same to an acceptable standard.

1. The role of the Arbiter
2. Current FIDE Laws of Chess
3. Swiss Pairings
4. Anti-Cheating (Fair Play) Regulations
5. Types of Tournament
6. Knowledge of Tie-break systems
7. The Digital Clock
8. Recording the moves and recording a position
9. Gradings / Ratings
10. Basic arrangements and roles for on-line and hybrid chess
11. Basic Computer Literacy
12. The Arbiter Pathway

The Role of the Arbiter

The candidate should have knowledge of the role and main duties of an arbiter. This includes making the best of the environmental conditions that the organiser has provided (space, lighting, sound, furniture and equipment standards, disabled access and supporting a disabled player).

Other duties include preparation for the beginning of an event, duties during the event and duties after the event. There are [guidelines](#) on the CAA website for all of these duties.

Current FIDE Laws of Chess

A detailed knowledge of the [Laws of Chess](#) is needed. The candidate is **not** expected to be able to quote the law verbatim or reference the article numbers but rather to be able to apply the laws to any given situation. The candidate should be suitably familiar with the current laws such that they would know where to look up a specific point in the document if asked by a player.

Candidates must have a good knowledge of [Anti-Cheating](#) guidelines.

Before the exam it would be advisable to read through the laws several times, read and participate in discussions of the laws with other arbiters and in online forums and participate in as many events with qualified arbiters as possible. This topic would normally be the largest part of any arbiter examination at this level. The [CAA website](#) also has guidance on the laws and has practice questions to try.

Swiss Pairings

The candidate should be able to pair a tournament using a given Swiss pairing system, either CAA or FIDE, recognised by the ECF. Knowledge is needed of the basics of [Swiss pairing rules](#) – points, colours, grades/ratings, floats and byes. It is advisable to practice pairing with experienced arbiters and try out the examples on the CAA website.

Whilst it is understood that the pairings for most tournaments are now computer generated, it is still important that arbiters are able to explain to players why the pairings arrived at are so. Therefore candidates are required to be able to produce accurate pairings manually.

Anti-Cheating (Fair Play) Regulations

The Candidates will be expected to be familiar with the [Fair Play regulations](#) in operation, and to correctly handle procedures, investigations, and complaints.

Types of Tournament

The candidate should have basic knowledge of the main types of tournament and be aware of their differences.

This would include Swiss events, Knockout tournaments, 'Round Robin' events, Jamboree and other team event systems.

Knowledge of Tie-breaks

Candidates are required to know the basic rules of tiebreaks and the suitability of each depending on the event – the main tiebreak systems are:

- Sum of Progressive Scores
- Sum of Opponent's Scores
- Sonneborn-Berger
- Board count
- Board elimination
- TPR

All these systems are outlined in the [course materials](#) on the CAA website and in the FIDE Handbook.

The Digital Clock

Candidates should be able to set, pause and alter digital clocks of at least two different types.

It is advisable to study the manuals of different clocks and their settings, most of which are available as a download from the manufacturers.

Candidates should be able to set a time control with and without increments and be able to adjust clocks, e.g. in the case of a penalty. The guidance for this is that such adjustments should be carried out in less than a minute.

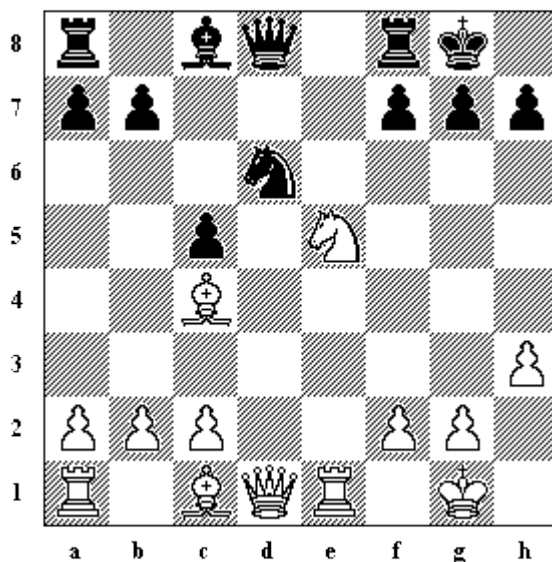
Gradings / Ratings

The candidate should have a basic knowledge of the ECF and FIDE rating systems and how they are calculated. Candidates should know which tournaments can and cannot be [graded](#) and the details needed for a player to get ratings and norms.

Recording the moves and recording a position.

Candidates are expected to know how to correctly score a game in [algebraic notation](#). They should be able to write down what a player would write given a move, or series of moves in a game. They should also know the laws regarding when players must, and when they may choose not to, score their game.

An arbiter should also be able to write down a position quickly and without a diagram. The usual method used is called Forsyth notation.



Thus the above position, using Forsyth notation, would be recorded as:

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r1bq1rk1/pp3ppp/3n4/2p1N3/2B5/7P/PPP2PP1/R1BQR1K1.
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Gradings / Ratings

The candidate should have a basic knowledge of the ECF and FIDE rating systems and how they are calculated. Candidates should know which tournaments can and cannot be [graded](#) and the details needed for a player to get ratings and norms.

Basic arrangements and roles for on-line and hybrid chess

Candidates should be aware of the various main roles for officials during on-line and hybrid events: local chief arbiter, local technical arbiter; chief arbiter; organisers, and of the ECF and FIDE Laws and Regulations covering such events.

Basic Computer Literacy (not covered in the exam)

It is essential that arbiters have a basic computer literacy. They should be able to use email, internet search, spreadsheets and word-processing and have some basic knowledge of at least one of the more commonly used pairing and chess admin programmes ([Swiss Manager](#), [Vega](#), [Swiss Master](#), [Tournament Director](#)).

Suggested ECF Arbiter training course timings:-

Introduction and The role of the Arbiter 1 hr

Current FIDE Laws of Chess 3 hrs

Swiss Pairings 2 hrs

Anti-Cheating (Fair Play) Regulations 1 hr

Types of Tournament and Knowledge of Tie-breaks 1 hr

Gradings / Ratings 1 hr

Remaining topics 3 hrs

Final Revision 2 hrs

Examination 2 hrs

Total 16 hours