



# English Chess Federation Tournament Rules

## V03 November 2024

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### Introduction

This document is effective from November 2024.

These Competition Rules will be used in conjunction with the FIDE Laws of Chess and FIDE Regulations for Online Chess. Hereinafter Laws of Chess is taken to include Online Regulations and its equivalent regulations .

The requirements of this document must be complied with in order for an event to be accepted for ECF rating in the online or over the board lists. Please note that the word “event” is used as a catch-all word to cover congresses, leagues, club matches, and any other formats in which ECF rated chess is played. It also includes Standardplay, Rapidplay, and Blitz Chess competitions.

References:

[1] FIDE Laws of Chess – <https://handbook.fide.com/chapter/E012023>

[2] FIDE Online Chess Regulations - <https://handbook.fide.com/chapter/OnlineChessRegulations>

[3] ECF Guidelines on Treatment of Disabled Players - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/guidelines-on-treatment-of-chess-players-with-impairments/>

[4] ECF Privacy and GDPR Guidelines - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-privacy-notice/>

[5] ECF Safeguarding Policy - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Safeguarding-Children-Policy.pdf>

[6] OTB Fair Play Guidelines - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/Anti-Cheating-Document.pdf>

[7] Online and Hybrid Fair Play Guidelines - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ECF-Online-Fair-Play-Version-2.3.pdf>

[8] Fair Play report form - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Post-Tournament-Complaint-Form.pdf>

## **Section A – Compulsory Rules**

1. The organiser must specify a time control within the limits specified by the Laws of Chess. The ECF strongly recommends organisers to use incremental time controls wherever possible.
2. When the time limit is Rapidplay Chess or Blitz, as defined in Appendices A.1/B.1 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, then, in accordance with Appendices A.5/B.3, the regulations of an event shall specify if all aspects of the event shall be played according to the Competition Rules (all appendices from 6 to the 12 of the FIDE Laws of Chess) or whether there will be exceptions as described in Appendices A.4/B.2.
3. When a non-incremental time limit is used the regulation of the event shall specify whether the game is played according to Guidelines III (Quickplay Finishes), as described in Guidelines III.2.1.

If so, then the regulations of an event shall specify the procedure for the player having the move and less than two minutes left on his clock making a draw claim. There are two options:

- according to Guideline III.4 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, an increment of an extra five seconds shall be introduced for both players
- or according to Guideline III.5 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, a draw claim procedure shall follow.

If these matters are not specified, then, for example, king and knight v king and knight can be played on until one flag falls.

4. According to Article 6.7.1 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, the regulations of an event shall specify a default time on the entry form. Should the organizer fail to do so, the default time shall be 30 minutes for a Standard-play game and 10 minutes for a Rapid Chess game. Blitz games shall have no default time – the time shall just be allowed to expire.
5. All moves in OTB Standardplay games must be recorded in accordance with Article 8. The only exception is where a player has less than five minutes left on his/her clock during an allotted period of time and does not have additional time of 30 seconds or more added with each move. Note that it is forbidden to record moves in advance as this is regarded as making notes.
6. There is no requirements to record moves in OTB Rapidplay or Blitz games but where moves are recorded they are again not allowed to be recorded in advance of the move being played.
7. The ECF Guidelines on treatment of disabled players will apply — <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/guidelines-on-treatment-of-chess-players-with-impairments/>
8. GDPR - GDPR requires tournament controllers to be more careful with the data they collect and how they use it. ECF guidelines on GDPR and other privacy issues can be found at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-privacy-notice/>
9. Safeguarding - The ECF has published policy documents on safeguarding and anti-bullying. Tournament organisers and arbiters shall comply with these policies. The documents can be found at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Safeguarding-Children-Policy.pdf> and <http://www.englishchess.org.uk/anti-bullying-policy/>
10. Fair Play - In the event of a case of cheating being detected, the current ECF guidelines will be followed. The guidelines for over the board events can be found at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/Anti-Cheating-Document.pdf> The guidelines for online and hybrid events can be found at: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ECF-Online-Fair-Play-Version-2.3.pdf>

## **Section B – Recommended Rules**

1. According to Article 9.1.1 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, the regulations of an event may specify that players cannot offer or agree to a draw, whether in less than a specified number of moves or at all, without the consent of the arbiter. If the draw condition is not specified then, according to article 5.3.2 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, players can offer or agree to a draw when both have made at least one move.
2. According to Article 11.3.2 a player is forbidden from having an electronic device in the playing area unless the device is specifically approved by an arbiter, eg for medical reasons, or otherwise switched off and stored in an agreed way.
3. As per Article 11.3.2.1, the regulations of an event may allow the player to have a general electronic device not specifically approved in the playing venue, provided that this device is stored in a player's bag and the device is completely switched off. This bag must be placed as agreed with the arbiter. Neither player is allowed to open or carry this bag without permission of the arbiter. As an alternative the arbiter may allow players to have an electronic device switched off and placed face down on the table, in view of both players. The electronic device must not be moved from the table for the duration of the game. If approval is not given for one or the other option, then it is forbidden to have a general electronic device in the playing venue.
4. As per Article 11.3.2.2 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, a player must not have an electronic device on their person during a game.

## **Section C – Optional Rules**

1. According to Article 10.1 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, the regulations of an event may specify a different scoring system. For example a player who wins his game, or wins by forfeit, scores three points (3), a player who draws his game scores two points (2), a player who loses his game scores one point (1), a player who loses by default scores zero points (0). If not specified, normal scoring is used (1, ½, 0).

(Please note that normal scoring will be used for rating purposes regardless of the specific scoring system in use for the tournament. Defaulted games must be recorded appropriately, as these are not rated.)

2. Leaving the playing area:- According to Article 11.2.4 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, the regulations of an event may specify that the opponent of the player having the move must report to the arbiter when he wishes to leave the playing area. If this is not specified, there is no obligation for the opponent to communicate his intention to leave.
3. According to Article 11.10 of the FIDE Laws of Chess, the regulations of an event may specify that a player cannot appeal against any decision of the arbiter if he has signed the scoresheet. If not specified, the player may appeal even after signing the scoresheet. It is strongly recommended that an Appeal Committee should be set up in advance.

## **Section D – Optional rules for events that are not FIDE-rated**

1. The FIDE Laws of Chess will apply.

2. FIDE recognises for its own events and matches only one system of notation, the Algebraic System. For events that are not FIDE-rated, organisers may permit the use of descriptive notation.
3. For events that are not FIDE-rated, organisers may use adjudication provided that this has been stated within the regulations for the competition.
4. For Under 11 Rapid Chess events that are not FIDE-rated – i.e. those restricted to players who are under the age of 11, defined by either the calendar year or the academic year – the number of illegal moves that results in the loss of a game may be increased from two so long as it is prescribed in advance in the regulations of the event.
5. Where no arbiter is appointed, e.g. in an evening league match, then the organiser is empowered to make decisions otherwise the responsibility of the arbiter with respect to Article 11.3.2.1. In the case of a team match, the organiser is also empowered to delegate this responsibility to the match captains.

## **Section E – Guidelines for games played under Social Distancing conditions using 2 boards**

(These guidelines are adapted from the rules for games involving visually handicapped players, where moves are announced by both players. For these, socially distanced, matches, the moves will be announced because of the physical separation of the players.)

### **Supplement to the FIDE Rules of Play for use while Social Distancing conditions apply**

These guidelines should be used when applicable government legislation and/ or guidance allows people to meet but sets a limit on how close they can be and the clubs and players involved have agreed that play is possible. They must not be used to force people to play when they consider the conditions to be unsafe.

Competition controllers shall have the power to adapt the following rules according to local circumstances. In competitive chess under socially distanced conditions, either player may demand the use of two boards, one player using a 'master' board, the other player using a 'subsidiary' board. Both boards should conform to the usual standards for competition play and both should be of the same design. Sets should be of the same size and a standard Staunton pattern.

One player shall be designated as the 'operator' and shall use the master board. The opponent shall be designated 'subsidiary' and shall play at the 'subsidiary' board. The clock shall be the responsibility of the 'operator' on the 'master' board. Which player takes the role of 'operator' may be decided by agreement between the players. If no agreement can be reached by the players, then the player that did not demand the use of two boards shall decide whether he or she takes the role of 'operator' or 'subsidiary' player.

The following guidelines shall govern play:

1	<p>The moves shall be announced clearly, repeated by the opponent and executed on his or her board. To make the announcement as clear as possible, the use of the following names is suggested instead of the corresponding letters, algebraic notation to be used:</p> <p>A-Alpha  B-Bravo  C-Charlie  D-Delta  E-Echo  F-Foxtrot  G-Golf  H-Hotel</p> <p>When promoting a pawn, the player must announce which piece is chosen.</p>
2	<p>The normal touch-move applies when the piece is touched on the board of the player whose turn it is to move.</p>
3	<p>A move shall be considered "made" when either:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">the player releases the piece on the board of the player whose turn it is to move; the move has been announced.</p> <p>Only then shall the opponent's clock be started and the move completed.</p>
4	<p>A slip of the tongue in the announcement of a move must be corrected immediately and before the clock of the opponent is started.</p>
5	<p>If during a game different positions should arise on the two boards, the incorrect one must be corrected by consulting both players' game scores. If the two game scores correspond with each other, the player who has written the correct move but executed the wrong one must adjust his position to correspond with the move on the game scores.</p>
6	<p>If, when such differences occur and the two game scores are found to differ, the moves shall be retraced to the point where the two scores agree. The clocks may be set to a mutually agreeable time by the 'operator'. A note of the times made on the scoresheet can be used in this determination. If there is a failure to agree times the clocks should be left at the times shown when the error was discovered with the addition of 30 seconds additional time to a clock for each move retraced.</p>

## **Section F – Additional Guidelines for Hybrid Events**

Hybrid Events are events where two teams play remotely with each team gathered at their 'home' venue with local supervision from designated local organisers and/ or arbiters at each venue. Hybrid Events will be rated within the Over the Board list for the relevant time control provided that the minimum regulations set out in this document are followed.

Hybrid events should in general follow the guidance set out in the FIDE Online Regulations– Annex 6.4 Articles 16 and 20.

Key points to note are as follows with variations from the FIDE regulations in italics:

## Supervision

- Each venue must appoint a designated local organiser and/ or arbiter(s) who will specify and designate the playing venue (playing area, refreshments, restrooms etc) and playing area for the competition.
- The playing venue should be monitored by cameras *for larger and/ or National events*, with arbiters at each venue.
- *Cameras will not however be mandatory for smaller local events provided that the minimum supervision requirements are met and agreed between the opposing team or players.*
- *Detailed supervision arrangements should be set out in in tournament rules.*
- The total number of arbiters required in each playing venue will vary depending on the kind of event, on the system of the games, on the number of participants and on the importance of the event.
- *There will be at least one arbiter at each playing venue for National Events. For large events there should be a Local Chief Arbiter (LCA) and a Local Technical Arbiter (LTA).*
- *A single designated organizer or single arbiter may be sufficient for local or smaller events, subject to tournament rules.*
- *The designated local organisers or arbiters must be made known to players or teams, and registered with the ECF in advance or when the event is submitted for ECF rating.*

## Fair Play Measures

- *In each playing venue, fair play measures must be in force and applied by the local organiser(s) and/ or arbiters in accordance with the ECF Over the Board Fair Play Guidelines and Online Fair Play Guidelines and Regulations. The local organisers/ arbiters shall be responsible for monitoring the playing area to ensure compliance*
- *Use of any form of external assistance including chess analysis software during the course of a game is explicitly prohibited in all circumstances as set out in the Fair Play Guidelines.*
- *It is forbidden for anybody to use a mobile phone or any kind of communication device in the playing venue or any contiguous area designated by the arbiter without the express permission of the local arbiter, who shall inform the Chief Arbiter.*
- *Circumstances where mobile phones may be allowed include smart phones used for the purposes of sharing moves with the opponent as part of the virtual playing zone where this is agreed within the tournament rules.*
- *Where exceptional circumstances mean that a player needs to communicate via phone during the course of a game this should be notified and agreed with the designated organizer or arbiter.*
- Players must not leave the playing venue during the course of a game.

## Logistics

- Each Local Organiser/ Arbiter is responsible for providing an Internet connection in the playing venue.

- In each venue, electronic devices used for conducting online games (playing devices) are provided by the Local Organiser/ Arbiter, *unless physical chessboards are used with supervision where it will be acceptable for players to use their own devices.*
- During the game, each player shall have access to:
- A virtual chessboard, set and clock on his/her playing device to make and communicate the moves with their remote opponent.
- A (video-) communication system, to the extent required by competition regulations.  
(No other website, application or software should be open on the playing device.)

*Each player may also have access (Optionally) to physical chessboard and chess set to replay their moves and their opponents*

- The virtual chessboard, set and clock remain the definitive shared record of the game with all moves made on-screen first and then replayed on the physical board where this is an use.
- *Where a physical chessboard is used players may be allowed to communicate moves via their own device with allowed device including players own laptop, tablet, or mobile phone only as permitted by the tournament regulations.*
- *Where a physical chessboard is used each player is responsible for moving pieces on his/her traditional board. The only allowed action on the traditional board is reproducing the moves played on the virtual board made by each side.*
- No player is allowed to make his/her move on the virtual board (except the first White's move) before they have reproduced their own previous move on the traditional board. The position on the traditional chessboard must always remain the same as on the virtual one; the only allowed difference is the last move's delay
- If the (online) playing zone allows players to move pieces in contradiction with Article 3.3 (illegal moves), the competition regulations must specify how to deal with such irregularities.
- The competition regulations shall specify a default time in advance. If the default time is not specified, then it is zero.
- If the competition regulations specify that the default time is not zero and if neither player is present initially, White shall lose all the time that elapses until he/she arrives, unless the competition regulations specify or the arbiter decides otherwise. 16.12 The playing zone must record the offer of a draw next to the player's move when the draw is offered.

## **Section G – Additional Guidelines for Online Events**

Online events are events where the players take part remotely using an internet chess service or equivalent communication method to provide a virtual playing board, set and clocks. The rules of chess are enforced by the internet chess service with moves rendered on both players board and a shared virtual clock.

For an event to be accepted for online rating in the ECF Online National list it must be played:

- On a recognized internet chess platform with a virtual playing zone, chess board/ pieces and clock as described in the FIDE Online Regulations Annex 6.4, Articles 2 to 4
- Complying with FIDE Online Regulations Annex 6.4, Article 5 on completing the game
- At an accepted time control (ie standard with 60 minutes or more per player, rapid with more than 10 minutes and less than 60 minutes per player or blitz with between 3 and 10 minutes inclusive per player)
- With both players having the same time allowance – ie no time odds or berserk mode

Where increments are used the time available for the game is calculated for rating purposes on the basis of a 60 move game.

In addition players should be required to observe the internet chess provider's terms and conditions and fair play requirements and organisers should have a system in place to ensure fair play at the events and to handle any fair play concerns.

Two types of online events will be accepted for ECF online rating with regulations as indicated:

- Unsupervised Events (as described in Article 6) – which will have an organiser but otherwise be provider managed with regulations based on those in force on the provider platform.
- Supervised Events (as described in Article 6) – which will be managed by an online organiser, arbiter and/ or team in which case the organiser should adopt relevant regulations from Articles 8 to 15.

The following FIDE regulations should be regarded as mandatory for either type of event:

- Use of a players personal account for games
- Time control and method of implementation specified in regulations
- Tournament rules to specify how illegal moves or incorrect draw rulings will be handled where the platform allows these

A number of the supervised event recommendations are non-mandatory and to be used at the organisers discretion based on the tournament regulations including:

- Use of Cameras and Inspection of the playing area
- Prohibition of electronic devices in the playing zone
- Requirement for no other persons in the playing area
- Use of authorized devices only to connect to the playing zone
- Prohibition of smoking on camera
- Prohibition of headphones
- Recording of draw offers in the playing zone

The Online event should be registered for online rating with the ECF including details covering:

- what platform the event is being played on
- time control which will be used
- whether the event is supervised or unsupervised



- any special arrangements

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Request to use alternative rules not covered above**

If an event organiser wants to use rule variations not covered above, then the event may apply to the Director of Home Chess for a dispensation to use those rules, which will be communicated to the director responsible for rating. Reasonable requests will not be rejected and may find their way into future revisions of this document.

## **Questions**

If you have any questions you wish to raise, please contact Nigel Towers, the Director of Home Chess, at [director.homechess@englishchess.org.uk](mailto:director.homechess@englishchess.org.uk)

## **Changes History**

V01 - Adrian Elwin, Director of Home Chess  
Lara Barnes, Chief Arbiter  
David Thomas, Director of Membership  
Brian Valentine, Manager of Rating  
August 2020

V02 – Nigel Towers, Adrian Elwin, Alex Holowczak and Alan Atkinson  
(Amendments to cover OTB and Online Rating, Hybrid Events and Online Events)  
April 2021

V03 – Nigel Towers, Adrian Elwin, Alex Holowczak

Amendments to: update links to latest version of ECF and FIDE documents, clarify guidance on storage of electronic devices and clarify rules for recording of moves.

November 2024