Cincinnati Scholastic Chess Series
ESSENTIAL RULES OF TOURNAMENT CHESS

This document does not cover the rules of the game itself, with which participating players are expected to be familiar. Instead it describes selected rules that relate specifically to tournament chess. These rules are in effect for all Series tournaments.

1. Sportsmanship

The USCF Code of Ethics (Chapter 6 of the *US Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess*) includes a section on Standards of Conduct, which reads in part:

> The actions and behavior of players, tournament directors, sponsors, and other individuals and entities participating in US Chess activities, or in events sponsored or sanctioned by US Chess, shall be lawful and in accordance with all US Chess rules and regulations, and consistent with the principles of fair play, good sportsmanship, honesty, and respect for the rights of others.

All CSC tournaments qualify as events sanctioned by US Chess. The rules require, and we expect, all players to behave in a courteous and sportsmanlike manner at all times, to refrain from annoying or distracting behavior (Rule 20G), to refrain from discussing games in progress (Rule 20I), and *never to interfere in any way with anyone else's game* (Rule 20E). Following are examples of courteous and sportsmanlike behavior:

a. Except when health concerns and common sense dictate otherwise, shake hands (or fist-bump) with your opponent before and after your game.
b. While your game is in progress, do not talk with anyone unless it is *necessary* to say something to your opponent or a tournament director about your game.
c. When your game is over, do not talk in the playing room except to the tournament director as necessary.
d. Avoid behavior that might distract other players, such as talking loudly and being noisy near where games are being played, whether inside or outside the tournament room.
e. *Do not kibitz — ever!* To kibitz means basically to butt in. It is unsporting and against the rules to meddle in any way with someone else's game. Meddling includes commenting on the game and doing anything that distracts the players. Never comment to anyone, except to a tournament director when he asks you to do so, about a game that is in progress. Commenting includes not only audible verbal remarks but also gestures or facial expressions that could be construed as comments, whether directed to anyone in particular or not. Never call attention to illegal moves, checks, flagfall, etc., observed in anyone else's game. To do so is a very serious rule violation for which you could be forfeited in your own game or even expelled from the tournament.

2. Clock-Related Rules (Rule 16)

You must use a clock regardless of what section you are playing in. You do not have the option, either individually or jointly with your opponent, to choose not to use a clock when a clock is available for you to use. After making your move on the board, push the clock button on your side of the clock to stop your clock and start your opponent's clock. This action is called "pressing the clock." Do this after every move for the entire game.

a. Know how to pause the clock; if you don't know, ask another player or the tournament director. When a clock is paused, its operation is suspended so that neither player's clock is running. The clocks that CSC uses have an obvious pause button.

b. Know why to pause the clock. It is permitted to pause the clock when you have any question, claim or issue that needs the attention of the tournament director. You may not pause the clock for any other reason. For example, you may not pause the clock when you go to the restroom or when you consult your opponent's scoresheet to correct your own. (You may consult your opponent's scoresheet only when your own clock is running.)

c. After each move press the clock with whichever hand you used to move your piece. You may not move your piece with one hand and then press the clock with the other hand.

d. Until your opponent presses his or her clock, it is not your move; *do not make your move while your opponent's clock is running*. (If your opponent obviously forgot to press the clock after a move, it is good sportsmanship to point this out; but the rules do not require you to do so.)

e. After pressing the clock to complete a move, remove your hand entirely from the clock until pressing it again to complete the next move. You may not keep your hand on or in contact with the clock in between moves (see 2.c).

Rules relating to the expiration of time:

f. If your opponent's time expires, you may claim a win (or draw) on time *if you have any time remaining on your own clock*. To make such a claim, pause the clock as soon as you notice that your opponent's time has expired — this will prove that you still have time remaining — and raise your hand to signal a tournament director. In chess terminology, a player's "flag falls" when her or his time expires; the expiration of a player's time is called "flagfall."

g. When claiming a win on time as described above, you will be declared the winner only if you have mating material, which means that with the pieces you have remaining on the board it is possible to checkmate your opponent. If you do not have mating material, the game is a draw. You do not have mating material if you have only a king, a king and a bishop, a king and a knight, or a king and two knights, and cannot force a checkmate.

h. Only the two players who are playing a game and, in some circumstances, a tournament director may call flagfall in that game. For any other person to call attention to flagfall in any game in which he or she is not a player is unsportsmanlike interference in the game and a serious violation of USCF rules (see 1.e).

i. If time expires for both you and your opponent without a claim of flagfall being made by either player, the game is a draw, regardless of the position on the board, unless the last move played was checkmate.

j. A player's flag is considered fallen only when either player in that game calls attention to it. A checkmate or stalemate played on the board *before flagfall is called* determines the result of the game (as a win or draw respectively), even if the flag of the player who played the checkmate or stalemate had fallen before the move was made.

3. Touch-Move (Rule 10)

In simple terms, the touch-move rules states:

a. If you intentionally touch one of your pieces, you must move that piece if you legally can.

b. If you intentionally touch one of your opponent's pieces, you must capture that piece if you legally can.
c. If you legally move one of your pieces to a square and release it (that is, let go of it so that physical contact between your hand and the piece is broken), it must remain on that square whether or not that is the square to which you intended to move it.
d. If you move a piece that you cannot legally move, you must put that piece back on the square where it was before you moved it and then make a legal move.

The touch-move rule does not apply to any piece touched accidentally or to any piece not on the board. The touch-move rule also does not apply to adjusting a piece as long as a player adjusts the piece in the proper manner, by saying "adjust" audibly before touching the piece.

The touch-move rule is in effect for all tournament games. You do not have the option, either individually or jointly with your opponent, to choose not to abide by the touch-move rule. A player may neither "take back" a move nor permit her or his opponent to do so, unless the move in question was illegal.

4. Castling (Rules 8A2, 10I)

Castling is defined as a king move, and when castling, the player must move the king first and then the rook. (The USCF rulebook includes an optional variation of this rule that allows a player to move the rook first when castling; however, this rule variation is *not* in effect for any Series tournament.)

5. Illegal moves (Rule 11D)

If your opponent makes an illegal move and you wish to claim the applicable penalty (normally, having two minutes added to your time), you must claim the illegal move before you make your next move. If you make a move before making such a claim, you may still claim the illegal move (so as to have it corrected), but you will not receive the penalty time.

6. Taking Notation (Rule 15)

"Taking notation" means recording the moves of a game as it is being played. The rule requires that you record not only your own moves but also your opponent's moves, move by move. However, *both* players are excused from this requirement when *either* player has less than five minutes remaining on the clock. The form (or paper) on which moves are recorded is called a *scoresheet*. The notation system most commonly in use now is the Algebraic system, which is explained in the Appendix.

A player must make the move on the board before recording it on the scoresheet. (The USCF rulebook includes an optional variation of this rule that allows a player to record a move first and then make it on the board; however, this rule variation is *not* in effect for any Series tournament.)

CSC recognizes that many players who are relatively new to chess will not know how to take notation. Accordingly, for Series tournaments, we do not require notation in the U500, U300 and non-rated sections. Players who do not take notation lose the right to make certain claims such as a draw by repetition of position (unless they can demonstrate a forced perpetual check; see 7.d and 9.d), a draw based on the 50-move rule (see 7.d and 9.e), and a

claim of an illegal move when several moves have been played after the alleged illegal move (see 7.c); however, claims of this nature hardly ever arise in these sections.

A player who is required to take notation but does not do so, or stops doing so while both players still have more than five minutes remaining, is subject to a penalty, which is usually a time reduction. However, players should not conclude that this penalty makes taking notation optional, as if they have the choice of taking a time reduction in exchange for being excused from this requirement. A player who repeatedly refuses to notate becomes subject to more severe penalties, including the forfeit of a game and expulsion from the tournament, at the tournament director's discretion. Also, notation requires that the actual move played be recorded. It is not sufficient merely to record an "x" or checkmark or similar mark to signify that a move was played.

A player who forgets to write down one or more moves may borrow the opponent's scoresheet during (or after) the game to correct his or her own scoresheet. This is allowed by the rules, provided that both players have at least five minutes of time remaining, and it is unsportsmanlike for a player to refuse this courtesy to an opponent. However, during a game a player may use the opponent's scoresheet to make corrections only while her or his own clock is running. Alternatively, in the interest of not losing time, a player may simply skip a line on the scoresheet, carry on recording moves from that point, and correct his or her scoresheet (from the opponent's scoresheet) after the game is over. The risk with this, however, is that the player will not be able to make certain claims with an incomplete scoresheet.

7. Player Claims (different rules depending on the situation being claimed)

Some situations warrant making a claim to the tournament director; for example:

a. Claiming a win on time when your opponent's time has expired;
b. Claiming that your opponent made a move in violation of the touch-move rule;
c. Claiming that your opponent made an illegal move, such as failing to get out of check or castling illegally;
d. Claiming a draw on the basis of repetition of position or the 50-move rule;
e. Claiming any activity that is against the rules, such as leaving a hand on the clock in between moves, engaging in any distracting or unsportsmanlike behavior, or using an electronic scoresheet in an unpermitted manner.

The correct way to make a claim is to pause the clock, get the tournament director's attention, and explain the situation to the tournament director when he arrives at the board. The tournament director will then investigate the claim and decide whether to uphold or deny it. *If you are uncertain whether you can make a claim, or simply have a question, bring the matter to the tournament director's attention immediately when the situation arises in the game!* Do not wait until the game is over to raise the issue because then it is too late to investigate or correct it. There is never a penalty for asking the tournament director a question relating to your game.

Only the two players who are playing a game and, in some circumstances, a tournament director may make a claim relating to that game. No other person may make any claim on behalf of a player or indicate in any way that such a claim is possible. Any person who does

so is subject to penalties at the discretion of the tournament director, which may include forfeiture of games and ejection from the tournament (see 1.e).

The usual penalty for most rule violations is either to increase the opponent's remaining time by two minutes, or to reduce the violators time by some amount; however, the tournament director in many cases has the authority to impose a different (harsher or lesser) penalty, or no penalty, at his discretion.

8. Announcing Check (Rule 12F)

Players are not required to say "check" when they put their opponent in check, and most experienced players do not. Every player is responsible for recognizing when he or she is in check.

If your opponent fails to recognize check, makes a move that does not get him or her out of check, and then presses the clock, you have the right to claim an illegal move. However, you may not make a claim until *after* your opponent presses the clock because your opponent has the right to correct the illegal move until he or she presses the clock. You may choose to make a claim or not. If you choose to make a claim, call a tournament director as explained under **7. Player Claims** above. If you choose not to make a claim, you should, without making a move, immediately restart your opponent's clock and point out the check. Whether or not you make a claim, your opponent must "take back" the illegal move and make a legal move, subject to the touch-move rule.

When both you and your opponent fail to recognize a check, any later moves played stand until one player or the other recognizes the check, in which case you should pause the clock and bring the matter to the attention of a tournament director.

9. Rules for Draws (Rule 14)

There are several ways for a game to end in a draw:

a. *Stalemate:* You are stalemated when (1) it is your move, (2) you are not in check, and (3) you have no legal move. This does not mean that you have no legal move for your *king*; it means that you have no legal move for *any piece* that you still have on the board.
b. *Mutual Agreement:* You and your opponent may agree to end the game as a draw. To do this, one of you offers a draw and the other accepts; but there are some rules about how to offer and accept a draw.
    - The correct time to offer a draw is after you move and before you press the clock.
        - If you offer a draw after pressing the clock — that is, when it is your opponent's move — your opponent may accept or reject your offer, or simply to ignore it because you didn't offer it in accordance with the rules.
        - If you offer a draw before making your move, your opponent has the right to have you move before deciding whether to accept or reject your draw offer. The draw offer stands until your opponent makes a decision, regardless of what move you make, unless the move you play gives checkmate.

- If you offer a draw correctly, your opponent must accept or reject it before moving. If your opponent makes a move without verbally accepting or rejecting your draw offer, the act of moving constitutes a rejection.

- Once rejected, a draw offer is null. In this case either you or your opponent must make a new draw offer (on a different move) for the game to end as a draw by mutual agreement.

- Frequently offering draws that your opponent rejects is unsportsmanlike and annoying behavior, and therefore is a rule violation.

c. *Insufficient Mating Material:* The game is drawn if both players have insufficient mating material. In this case both you and your opponent have only a king, a king and a bishop, a king and a knight, or a king and two knights, and neither of you can force a checkmate.

d. *Repetition of Position:* If the identical position occurs for the third time in a game, either you or your opponent may claim a draw. Two positions are identical only if all the *same pieces* occupy precisely the *same squares* and possess the *same rights* with the *same player* to move. "Rights" refers to the ability to castle or to capture *en passant*. The occurrences of the same position do not need to be consecutive or even close together.

   - The correct time to claim a draw by repetition of position is when it is your move and you have not yet moved. Pause the clock and get the tournament director. (If you and your opponent are in agreement that a third occurrence of the position exists or will exist when the next move is played, there is no need to involve the tournament director to rule on a claim. In effect, this is the same as drawing by mutual agreement.)

     - If the third occurrence of the position will come about as a result of your next move, write your move down on your scoresheet but do not make it on the board. Writing the move on your scoresheet signals your intention to play that move.

     - If the third occurrence of the position already exists as a result of the last move played by your opponent, you do not need to make any move. In this case do not write anything down on your scoresheet.

     - If the tournament director confirms the claim, the game ends immediately as a draw; otherwise the game continues. The tournament director can and probably will impose a penalty for an improper claim.

   - When claiming a draw, you must be able to prove the repetition of position by:

     - demonstrating a perpetual check, which is a situation where you can force the repetition of the same moves to keep your opponent in check; or

     - demonstrating the occurrences from your scoresheet. If your scoresheet is incomplete or inaccurate so that the repetition of position cannot be demonstrated, your draw claim will not be upheld. You are not permitted to use your opponent's scoresheet to help prove your claim.

   - A claim for a draw by repetition of position must be made on the move when the third (or later) occurrence of the position actually happens. If, after any occurrence of the

position, a move is made that alters the position, a repetition of position claim cannot be made unless and until the precisely identical position occurs yet again.

e. *50-Move Rule:* If 50 consecutive moves are played without a capture or pawn move, a player may claim a draw, unless the last move played resulted in checkmate. The player making the claim must prove the claim from his or her scoresheet. A player with less than five minutes remaining on the clock (and therefore no longer required to record moves) may notify the tournament director that she or he intends to make a claim under this rule even if the sequence of 50 moves has not yet been completed, and ask the tournament director for assistance in counting moves. The series of 50 moves can begin at any point, but if any capture or pawn move is then played, the count must begin again from that move.

10. Forfeits (Rule 22A)

Players who enter a tournament and then fail to show up to play any part of it ("no-show") will be given a forfeit and withdrawn from the tournament.

Players who did not request a bye for a given round and do not appear at their assigned place for that round before their time expires will forfeit that game and be withdrawn from the tournament. A player who abandons a game in progress likewise forfeits. A player is considered to have abandoned a game if he or she (1) began the game by making one or more moves, (2) left the board and did not return for the duration of the round, and (3) did not resign or accept a draw offer before leaving the board. Any player withdrawn from the tournament because of a forfeit may ask the chief tournament director for readmission, but it is entirely at the chief tournament director's discretion whether to readmit him or her.

Appendix: Algebraic Chess Notation

1. The chessboard is made up of rows of squares. Rows that run from left to right, identified by the numbers 1–8, are called ranks. Rows that run the other way, identified by small letters a–h, are called files. (Rows that are all the same color and touch only at the corners are called diagonals.)

2. Each square is identified by its file followed by its rank: a1, d5.

3. Each big piece has a capital letter: K = king, Q= queen, R = rook, B = bishop, N = knight. The pawn doesn't have a letter; it is identified by the file it sits on.

4. To record a move, write the letter for the piece moved and the square it moved to: Ra8 (a rook moved to square a8), Bf6 (a bishop moved to square f6), e4 (a pawn on the e file moved to square e4).

5. If a move results in a capture, insert an "x" before the destination square: Rxa8 (a rook captured the piece on a8), Bxf6 (a bishop captured the piece on f6), exf6 (a pawn on the e file captured the piece on f6).

   Record a move this way even if it was an *en passant* capture: if White's e pawn captures Black's pawn on f5 *en passant*, write the move as exf6 even though Black's pawn was on f5. Optionally, the move can be recorded as exf6ep to identify it explicitly as an *en passant* capture.

   Players of a minimalist bent often reduce a pawn capture even further; for example, the move "exf6" can be written quite adequately as "ef" with no ambiguity.

6. If a move results in check or double check (check by two pieces at the same time), write "+" or "++" after the move: Rxa8+ (check), Bf6++ (double check).

7. If a move results in checkmate, write "#" after the move: Rxa8#.

8. Record castling as 0-0-0 when done on the queenside (files a–d) and 0-0 when done on the kingside (files e–h).

9. When either of two pieces can move to the destination square, identify the piece moved by its file or rank in addition to its letter: Raa8 or R8a8 (with rooks on a4 and f8, either rook could move to a8), N5xd3 (with knights on c1 and c5, either knight could capture on d3).

10. When promoting a pawn, write the pawn move followed by "=" followed by the letter of the piece to which the pawn is promoted: e8=Q. Add "+" or "++" or "#" as applicable.

Note: An ellipsis (…) before a move designates that a black piece moved. For example, consider a comment such as "knight to g4 was a mistake". If the move is written in notation, "Ng4" indicates that a white piece was moved, whereas "… Ng4" indicates that a black piece was moved.