Important USCF Rules – 7th Edition USCF Rulebook and Changes
(Updated 10/7/2023)

Article 1: Introduction

1C2a. Standard penalty.
Except where specifically noted in the rules, the standard penalty assessed by the director is to add two minutes to the remaining time of the opponent of the player not following the rules of chess.

Article 5: The Chess Clock

5F2. Standard timer for delay time controls.
A delay capable clock is the standard timer for use with a delay time control.

5F2a. Delay capable clock not available.
If a delay capable (or Bronstein capable) clock is not available, a digital clock that is not delay capable may be used. If a digital clock is not available, an analog clock may be used. In all cases, the clock is set so that each player starts with the base time.

5F4. Digital clock preferred over analog clock.
In all cases, a digital clock is preferred over an analog clock.

5I: Stopping the clock
A player who wishes to make a claim of any sort or see a director for any legitimate reason may stop both sides of the clock before claiming and/or finding a director.

> *Players should be made aware that they should stop the clock on their time and not their opponent's. Stopping the clock to see a director does not complete their move.*

Article 9: Determine and Completion of the Move

9E: Checkmate or stalemate
In the case of a legal move which produces checkmate (**13A**, 4A) or stalemate (**14A**), the move is determined with no possibility of change upon release as described in 9A, 9B, 9C, or 9D, whichever applies. The move is completed simultaneously with its determination.

> *If the final legal move produces a checkmate or stalemate, pressing the clock is not required as either checkmate and stalemate immediately end the game.*
>
> **Determination of the move** – The move is played on the board.
> **Completion of the move** – The move is played and the clock is pressed.

9G1: Player still on move for claims
Claims of triple occurrence of position (14C), the 50-move rule (14F), or insufficient losing chances in sudden death (14H) remain in order during the period between determination and completion of the move. As soon as the player completes the move, it is the opponent's move, and the right to make such claims belongs exclusively to the opponent.

9G3: Draw offers
~~Except for 14H2, resolution of 14H claims,~~ the interval between determination and completion of the move is the proper time to offer a draw.

> *After moving, the player asks their opponent if they would accept a draw and marks the offer on the scoresheet with an equal sign. The player is then to complete their move by pressing the clock. The opponent will either accept or decline the offer.*
>
> *14H claims are no longer accepted, so this portion of the rule pertaining to this has been striked.*

Article 10: The Touched Piece

10B: Touch move rule

Except when adjusting pieces, a player on move who deliberately touches one or more pieces, in a manner that may reasonably be interpreted as the beginning of a move, must move or capture the first piece touched that can be moved or captured.

10C: Touching pieces of both colors

Except when adjusting pieces, a player on the move who deliberately touches one or more pieces of each color, or who moves the player's piece and intentionally displaces an opponent's piece with it, must capture the opponent's piece with the player's piece, or, if this is illegal, must move or capture the first piece touched that can be moved or captured. If it is impossible to establish which piece was touched first, the player's piece shall be considered the touched piece.

10D: Piece touched cannot move

If no piece touched has a legal move, and no opponent's piece touched can legally be captured, the player is free to make any legal move.

10E: Accidental touch of piece

A director who believes a player touched a piece by accident should not require the player to move that piece.

10F: Appearance of adjustment

Sometimes it is clear that a player is adjusting a piece even when that player fails to announce it to his opponent. Players are warned that it is wise to announce it when adjusting to avoid being forced to make an unwanted move.

10G: Accidental release of piece

A player who deliberately touches a piece and then accidentally releases it on an unintended but legal square is required to leave it on that square.

10H: Touched piece off the board

There is no penalty for touching a piece that is off the board. A player who advances a pawn to the last rank and then touches a piece off the board is not obligated to promote the pawn to the piece touched until that piece touches the promotion square.

10I2: Rook touched first when castling

If a player intending to castle touches the rook first, castling is not allowed and the player must move the rook.

Article 11: Illegal Positions

11C: Accidental piece displacement

If, during a game, one or more pieces have been accidentally displaced and incorrectly replaced, then the displacement shall be treated as an illegal move. If, during the course of a move, a player inadvertently knocks over one or more pieces, that player must not press the clock until the position has been reestablished. The opponent may press the clock without moving, if necessary, to force the player who knocked over the piece(s) to restore the position on his or her own time. If possible, clocks with move counters should be readjusted.

11D. Illegal move

If a player completes an illegal move by pressing the clock, in addition to the usual obligation to make a legal move with the touched piece if possible, the standard penalty specified in rule 1C2a applies. If the opponent has completed a move subsequent to the illegal move, the standard penalty shall not apply.

11D1: Illegal move in time pressure
Time pressure is defined as a situation where either player has less than five minutes left in a time control and the time control does not include an increment or delay of 30 seconds or more. A director should not call attention to illegal moves in time pressure, only the players may make that claim. If, during the game, in time pressure, a player's claim that one of either player's last two moves was illegal is upheld by the TD, the position shall be reinstated to what it was before the illegal move.

11F: Incorrect initial position
If, before the completion of Black's 10th move, it is found that the initial position of the pieces was incorrect, or that the game began with the colors reversed, then the game shall be annulled and a new game played. However, the players shall begin the new game with their clocks still reflecting the elapsed time each player used in the annulled game; however, move counters on clocks that have them may be readjusted. If the error is discovered after the completion of Black's 10th move, the game shall continue.

11H: Director corrects illegal move outside of time pressure
Except in a time pressure situation (11D1), a director who witnesses an illegal move being made shall require the player to replace that move with a legal one in accordance with 10B, Touch-move rule. The time on the clocks shall not be adjusted; however, move counters on clocks that have them may be readjusted.

Article 12: Check

12F: Calling check not mandatory
Announcing check is not required. It is the responsibility of the opponent to notice the check.

Article 13: The Decisive Game

13C: Time forfeit

> **b. Sudden Death:** The player who properly claims that the opponent has not completed the game in the allotted time, and has mating material (14E), wins the game. A scoresheet is not required to win on time in a sudden death time control (15C).

13C1: Only players may call flag
Only the players in a game can call attention to the fall of a flag (5G); it is considered to have fallen only when either player points this out. A director must never initiate a time-forfeit claim.

Article 14: The Drawn Game

All draw claims are first draw offers

14B1. Proper timing of draw offer.
Except for a draw claim, which is an implicit draw offer (14), a player should make a proposal of a draw only after determining a move (9G) and before pressing the clock. The opponent may accept the proposal or may reject it either orally or by deliberately touching a piece (10B). In the interim, the player who made the offer cannot withdraw it.

14C: Triple occurrence of position
The game is drawn upon a correct claim by the player on the move when the same position is about to appear for at least the third time, with the same player on move each time. In both cases, the position is considered the same if pieces of the same kind and color occupy the same squares and if the possible moves of all the pieces are the same, including the right to castle or to capture a pawn en passant.

14C2: How to claim
If a move is required to complete the third occurrence of the position, the player claiming the draw under 14C should write this move on the scoresheet but not play the move on the board, stop both clocks (5I), and state the claim. If no move is required to complete the repetition, the player should stop both clocks without moving and state the claim.

In both cases, if the opponent agrees, the game is drawn. If the opponent does not agree, the claimant may make the claim to a director. If a director denies the claim, the claimant is still obligated to play any announced or recorded move. The director awards the opponent two extra minutes.

14C3: Player must be on move
Only a player on move may claim a draw under 14C.

14C8: Sudden death time pressure
In sudden death, a player with less than five minutes remaining may be awarded a draw by triple occurrence of position based on the observation of a director, deputy, or impartial witness(es).

14D: Insufficient material to continue
The game is drawn if one of the following possibilities arise:

14D1: King vs king

14D2: King vs king with bishop or knight

14D3: King and bishop vs king and bishop of the same color

14D4: No legal moves leading to checkmate.

14E: Insufficient material to win on time
The game is drawn even when a player exceeds the time limit if one of the following conditions exists:

14E1: Lone king

14E2: King and bishop or king and knight
Opponent only have a king and bishop or king and knight, and does not have a forced win.

14E3: King and two knights
Opponent has only king and two knights, the player has no pawns, and opponent does not have a forced win.

14F: The 50 move rule
14F1: Explanation
The game is drawn when the player on move claims a draw and demonstrates that the last 50 consecutive moves have been made by each side without any capture or pawn moves.

14F4: Director may count moves in sudden death
In sudden death, a player with fewer than five minutes remaining and a simplified position in which no pawn moves or captures seem likely may stop both clocks, declare to a director an intention to invoke the 50-move rule when possible, and ask for assistance in counting moves. A director who agrees this is appropriate may count moves or use a deputy or a clock with a move counter to do so.

a. If the director or the deputy will count moves, the count should begin by crediting moves already made and listed on the scoresheet of the player intending to claim. An opponent who believes a different number of moves have been made should present this case if and when the count reaches 50.

b. The director or deputy may either keep score, make check marks, or combine the two.

c. After the count by the director or deputy begins, neither player has a right to know the count until 50 moves are reached. At that point the game is declared drawn unless the opponent successfully challenges the move count.

d. The opponent may challenge either the moves on the claimant's scoresheet before the director/deputy count, the count itself, or both, but must have a scoresheet adequate (13C7) to support the challenge.

e. If the challenge is upheld, the game shall continue with the director or deputy resuming from the corrected count. If the claimant's scoresheet is responsible for the wrong count, two minutes shall be added to the remaining unused time of the claimant's opponent. If the director/deputy count was wrong, there shall be no time adjustment.

f. The director may insert a clock with a move counter that shows the remaining time of both players, set the move counter to zero, and order play to resume. When the clock indicates that both sides have completed 50 further moves, either player may claim a draw. If this method is used, the director should inform the players that if a move is erroneously not counted or double counted, the players should stop the clock and notify the director.

14H: Claim of insufficient losing chances in sudden death.
No claim of insufficient losing chances in sudden death will be allowed.

All games should use a delay clock if available, and time delay clocks are preferred equipment
No insufficient losing chances claims can be made when using a delay clock. Using the above variation to the rule also means that claims for insufficient losing chances cannot be made for games not using delay clocks. Except for defective clocks requiring a replacement (see 16O) and one other rule that would not apply to match play, the clock and the settings (delay or non-delay) start the game and end the game. Players cannot request a different clock to be used after the start of the game (e.g., both players made a move) unless there is a defect (see 16O). Time delay not being properly set at the beginning of the game is not a defect of the clock.

14K. Director declares draw for lack of progress.
If one or both of the following occur(s) then the TD may declare the game drawn:

1. The same position has appeared, as in 14C, for at least five consecutive alternate moves by each player.

2. Any consecutive series of 75 moves have been completed by each player without the movement of any pawn and without any capture. If the last move resulted in checkmate, that shall take precedence.

Article 15: The Recording of Games

15C: Scorekeeping in time pressure, sudden death time control
If either player has less than five minutes remaining in a sudden death time control, both players are excused from the obligation to keep score. A scoresheet is not required to win on time in a sudden death control (13C).

Article 16: The Use of the Chess Clock

16B2a. Sound.
Digital clocks must be set to produce no sound. This includes, but is not limited to: beeping when a player has run out of time in the final time control; beeping when a player reaches the end of any time control; warning beeps to indicate a player is approaching the end of a time control; and beeping when a player presses the clock. A digital clock that can be set to produce no sound is preferable to a clock that cannot.

16B2b. Clock of player not out of time continues to run.
If possible, digital clocks must be set so that when one player runs out of time in a time control, the opponent's clock continues to run normally. This capability is variously called "halt on end," "claim mode," or "freeze." A digital clock that can be set to satisfy the requirement of this rule is preferable to a clock that cannot.

16O: Defective clocks
Every indication given by a clock is considered to be conclusive in the absence of evident defects. A player who wishes to claim any such defect must do so as soon as aware of it. A clock with an obvious defect should be replaced, and the time used by each player up to that time should be indicated on the new clock as accurately as possible.

Time delay not being properly set at the beginning of the game does not constitute a defective clock.

16S: Priority of agreed result over time-forfeit claim
A resignation or an agreement to draw remains valid even when it is found later that the flag of one side had fallen.

16T: Both players exceed time control
In sudden death, the game is drawn.

Article 20: Conduct of Players and Spectators
20H1: Quitting without resigning
It is rude and unsportsmanlike to abandon a lost position without resigning. Any player with a bad position who is absent without permission for over 15 minutes risks having the game adjudicated.

20M1-6: Behavior of spectators
To summarize, spectators have no special privileges, may not disrupt games in progress, provide any advice of games in progress and may not interfere with games in progress. Spectators are not to point out illegal moves, flag falls or make any other claims of a game they are watching. They may point out irregularities to tournament directors or act as witnesses for events that occur. To minimize claims of illegal assistance, relatives, friends or coaches of a player are recommended to stand behind that player so they are not visible to that player.