

Important USCF Rules - 6th Edition USCF Rulebook and Changes (Updated 12/8/2017)

Article 5: The Chess Clock

5E and 5F: Standard timer for sudden death

The standard timer for sudden death time controls are digital clocks with delay or addback capability. Other clocks are acceptable, but less preferred. Delay mode and Bronstein modes are equivalent.

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 his or her opponent's.

Stopping the clock to see a director does not complete his or her move.

Article 9: Determination 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 he or she would accept a draw and marks the offer on the scoresheet with an equal sign. The player is then to complete his or her move by pressing the clock. The opponent will either accept or decline the offer.

14H claims are no longer accepted, so the portion of the rule pertaining to this has been struck.

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 be reasonably considered 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 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 but accidentally releases the piece on an unintentional square is required to leave it on that square, provided the move was legal.

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 touches a piece that is off the board is not obligated to promote the pawn to the piece touched until the piece has been released on the promotion square.

10I2: Rook touched first

If a player intending to castle touches the rook first, castling is not allowed and the player must move the rook as required by rule 10B.

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 the 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 time.

~~*Non-Sudden Death – additional time is added once a prescribed number of moves are made*~~

Sudden Death – time control where all remaining moves must be made (no additional time is added)

11D: Illegal move in sudden death

If, in a sudden death control, 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, two minutes shall be added to the remaining time of the opponent of the player who made the illegal move.

11D1: Illegal move in sudden death time pressure

A director should not call attention to illegal moves in sudden death time pressure. If either player has less than five minutes remaining in a sudden death time control and the illegal move is not corrected:

- a. before the opponent of the player who made the illegal move completes two moves, or
- b. before either player resigns (13B), or
- c. before either player is checkmated with a legal move (13A), or
- d. before either player is stalemated with a legal move (14A), then the illegal move stands and there is no time adjustment if the game is still in progress.

The director can call attention to illegal moves except when either player has less than five minutes remaining.

11F: Incorrect initial position

If, before the completion of Black's tenth move, it is found that the initial position of the pieces was incorrect, or that the game began with 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 has used in the annulled game. If the error is discovered after the completion of Black's tenth move, the game shall continue.

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.

13I: Refusal to obey rules

The director may declare a game lost by a player who refuses to comply with the rules. If both players refuse, the director may declare the game lost by both players.

Ideally use warnings, then penalties such as adding time to the clock for the player's opponent and only then to declare the game lost for the player.

Article 14: The Drawn Game

All draw claims are first draw offers

14B5: Repeated draw offers

Repeated draw offers may be construed as annoying the opponent, and penalties are possible at the discretion of the tournament director.

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 the move on the scoresheet but not play the move on the board, stop both clocks and state the claim. If a director denies a claim, the claimant is still obligated to play any announced or recorded move and the opponent is rewarded 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 less than five minutes remaining and a simplified position in which no more pawn moves or captures seem likely may stop both clocks, declare to the director an intention of invoking the 50 move rule and ask for assistance in counting moves.

14H: Insufficient losing chances in sudden death

14H6: No 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

15B: Scorekeeping in time pressure, non-sudden death time control

If either player has less than five minutes remaining in a non-sudden death time control, both players are excused from the obligation to keep score until the end of the time control period. Doing so, however, may make it impossible to claim a draw by triple occurrence of position (14C), the 50-move rule (14F) or a win on time forfeit (13C). Scorekeeping by both players must resume with the start of the next time control period, and missing moves should be filled in (15F).

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]

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, etc.

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.

16B2c: Players are responsible for setting clock correctly

Players are responsible for knowing how to set their own clocks to conform to rule 16B2. Players should be prepared to explain the clock's operation to the opponent before the start of the game. This includes how the clock indicates a player has run out of time and how to pause both clocks if necessary to summon a director.

16B2 is the rule pertaining to digital clocks, rules regarding explaining the display, setting delay, etc. The three rules above should cover everything that you would encounter in a tournament game.

16D1: Illegal moves in sudden death time pressure

If an illegal move is not corrected before the opponent of the player who made the illegal move completes two more moves, then the illegal move stands, and there is no time adjustment.

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

If both players exceed the time control, no claim of time forfeit is possible. ~~In a non-sudden death control, the game continues.~~ In a sudden death control, 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.