

Important USCF Rules - 5th Edition USCF Rulebook

5E and 5F: Standard timer for sudden death

The standard timer for sudden death time controls are digital clocks with delay or add-back 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 their opponent's. Stopping the clock to see a director does not complete their 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.

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 when castling

If a player intending to castle touches the rook first instead of the king, there is no penalty except if castling is illegal, the player must then move the rook if legal.

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.

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.

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.

11H: Director corrects illegal move in non-sudden death

Except in the last five minutes of any time control, a director who notices 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.

12F: Calling check not mandatory

Announcing check is not required. It is the responsibility of the opponent to notice the check.

13C: Time forfeit

a. Non-Sudden Death: The player who properly claims that the opponent has not completed the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time wins the game, provided that the claimant has mating material (14E) and a reasonably complete scoresheet (13C7) when the flag falls. Move counters may not be used as the only evidence in claiming that the prescribed number of moves were not completed in the allotted time.

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.

13C3: Filling in moves with flag down

Once either player points out the fallen flag, neither is permitted to fill in or correct any previous moves missing from the scoresheet.

13C7: Definition of reasonably complete scoresheet

Unless otherwise posted or announced in advance at the site, a reasonably complete scoresheet is one that has no more than three missing or incomplete move pairs (consecutive moves, white and black or black and white). The absence of three consecutive individual moves, e.g. white-black-white, counts as two incomplete move pairs.

Minor ambiguities in scorekeeping or errors involving no more than one symbol are of no consequence. The common error of omitting one move by one player and subsequently putting moves in the wrong columns counts as only one error. Moves that are indecipherable or recorded only with check marks are considered missing.

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.

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).

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.

14H1: Insufficient losing chances in sudden death

This procedure is not available for games in which a clock is being used with time delay, whether the game began with one or not. If one is not being used or is not available, the following procedure is available.

In a sudden death time control, a player on move with less than two minutes remaining time may stop the clock and ask the director to declare a draw based on the grounds that the player has insufficient losing chances.

14H2: Resolution of 14H claim

When ruling, the director should not consider the rating of those playing. A low-rated player who claims a draw vs. a master should obtain the same result as a master with the same position who claims a draw vs. a low-rated player. The director should not consider the times on the clocks.

An incorrect claim may result in up to one minute being deducted from the claimant's remaining time. A time delay clock should be used if possible.

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).

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.

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.

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.