

US CHESS FEDERATION'S

# OFFICIAL

RULES OF CHESS

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**US CHESS**  
FEDERATION

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# Chapter 10: Rules for Online Tournaments and Matches

## 1. Introduction.

### 1A. Purview.

The rules in this chapter supplement the rules for over-the-board (OTB) play found in the seventh edition of the *Official Rules of Chess*. These rules aim to account for the unique playing situations that arise during online play and to ensure a fair playing environment for all participants.

### 1B. Online Tournaments and Matches.

Online tournaments and matches are defined as chess games played for US Chess rating purposes using the internet, a local area network, or equivalent. Players may be in the same location during game play, gathered at several designated local or regional playing sites, or playing from many separate sites including their homes. Games played using voice communication (some examples: radio, cell phone, telephone) or other forms of communication including email are not considered online play.

## 2. The US Chess Online Rating System.

Except as specified below, player rating calculations for online play follow the rules of Chapter 8, The US Chess Rating System.

### 2A. Online Ratings and Over-The-Board (OTB) Ratings.

The rating reports for games played, submitted and accepted by US Chess for rating as online play are rated only as “Online Ratings”. Online game results do not contribute to a player’s over-the-board rating.

### 2B. Ratable Time Controls for Online Play.

US Chess shall maintain three categories of online ratings—Online Regular, Online Quick, and Online Blitz. In non-sudden death time controls, the time unused by a player during one control accumulates and is added to the player’s available time for the next control. In online play no games shall be “dual rated”. The time control formulas mentioned in this chapter conform to the format provided in [Rule 5C, Ratable Time Controls](#) (Chapter 1).

**Online Regular:** Total playing time for each player is 30 or more minutes ( $mm+ss \geq 30$ ).

**Online Quick:** Total playing time for each player is more than 10 and less than 30 minutes ( $10 < mm+ss < 30$ ).

**Online Blitz:** Total playing time for each player is from 5 to 10 minutes inclusive ( $5 \leq mm+ss \leq 10$ ).

*TD TIP: Examples of ratable time controls:*

<i>Total Playing Time</i>	<i>Minutes per Player</i>	<i>Online Time Control</i>
<i>30/75 20/30 SD/15 d10</i>	<i>130 minutes</i>	<i>Regular, 3 components</i>
<i>40/90 SD/30 inc/30</i>	<i>150 minutes</i>	<i>Regular, 2 components</i>
<i>G/120 inc/30</i>	<i>150 minutes</i>	<i>Regular, 1 component</i>
<i>30/90 SD/15 d/10</i>	<i>115 minutes</i>	<i>Regular, 2 components</i>
<i>30/30 SD/30 inc/10</i>	<i>70 minutes</i>	<i>Regular, 2 components</i>
<i>G/45 d/5</i>	<i>50 minutes</i>	<i>Regular, 1 component</i>

<i>Total Playing Time</i>	<i>Minutes per Player</i>	<i>Online Time Control</i>
<i>G/30 d/0</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>	<i>Regular, 1 component</i>
<i>G/25 d/5 or inc/5</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>	<i>Regular, 1 component</i>
<i>15/15 SD/9 d/5 or inc/5</i>	<i>29 minutes</i>	<i>Quick, 2 components</i>
<i>G/25 d/4 or inc/4</i>	<i>29 minutes</i>	<i>Quick, 1 component</i>
<i>G/15 d/5 or inc/5</i>	<i>20 minutes</i>	<i>Quick, 1 component</i>
<i>G/10 d/3 or inc/3</i>	<i>13 minutes</i>	<i>Quick, 1 component</i>
<i>G/10 d/0 or inc/0</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>Blitz</i>
<i>G/8 d/2 or inc/2</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>Blitz</i>
<i>G/5 d/0 or inc/0</i>	<i>5 minutes</i>	<i>Blitz</i>
<i>G/3 d/2 or inc/2</i>	<i>5 minutes</i>	<i>Blitz</i>

## 2C. US Chess Rating System and FIDE Rating System.

Unless FIDE rules change, the US Chess rating reports for online play cannot be submitted to FIDE.

### 2D. Calculating Player Ratings.

For players who already have an online regular, quick or blitz rating US Chess shall apply the same rating formulas to calculate online ratings that are used to generate over-the-board ratings. US Chess procedures for initializing online ratings for regular, quick and blitz are found in a document maintained by the US Chess Ratings Committee and warehoused at this link: <https://new.uschess.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/the-us-chess-rating-system.pdf>.

### 2E. Assigning Ratings to Unrated Players.

Under the auspices of Rule 28E, Assigned Ratings for Rated Players (Chapter 2) directors running online events have the option to assign ratings to players for the purposes of pairings and awarding of prizes.

*TD TIP: TDs should remind unrated players that ratings assigned to them by the TD do not initialize or otherwise count toward their rating calculated by US Chess.*

## 3. Tournament Formats.

### 3A. Acceptable Formats.

Any of the formats described in the are allowed—for example. Swiss, Round-Robin, Quads, or Match Play. Team events paired as fixed-roster teams or paired as individual Swiss events also are allowed.

### 3B. Unacceptable Formats.

Other online formats and variants are not ratable. Examples include arena, blindfold chess, Chess-960, computer-assisted chess, odds games (for example: piece, time, or draw odds), one player vs many players (for example: simuls, tandem chess), and variants with partners (like. Bughouse).

### 3C. Match Play Limitations.

The number of match play games shall adhere to the limitations given in Rule 4, Matches (Chapter 8).

## 4. The Chief TD and Assistant TDs.

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TDs for online events are subject to the limitations of Rule 21E, The Playing Director (Chapter 1).

#### **4A. The Standard for TD Presence during Online Play.**

Ideally, a US Chess-certified director (the Chief TD or an Assistant TD) shall be physically present, in person, at every location from which online play originates. TDs must be able to directly witness players' actions for all games and all rounds. This standard not only ensures enforcement of the , but also minimizes potential for violations of fair play.

#### **4B. Authorized Variations from the Standard.**

The variations described below are a hierarchy of preferred options in priority sequence. Their use, alone or in combination, is authorized in lieu of or as a supplement to the standard rule (Rule 4A above). If any variation is used, the organizer and Chief TD shall ensure the pre-event publicity provides specific instructions to players for contacting a member of the TD staff if there is a problem during the event. If the Chief TD cannot fulfill the conditions of Rule 4A (above) or any of the three variations below, then the Chief TD cannot submit the event to US Chess for rating.

##### **4B1. Variation 1: Use of Remote Observation Technologies to Monitor Players and Games.**

The Chief TD, alone or with Assistant TDs, observes all players and their games from an off-site location using video cameras or other player monitoring technologies. This approach may be supplemented by either variation described below.

##### **4B2. Variation 2: Use of Fair Play Algorithms and/or Technology to Monitor Players and Games.**

The Chief TD uses one or more fair play method(s) that are endorsed in writing by US Chess. It relies on the game service provider applying an algorithm to monitor each player's moves during game play or afterwards.

***TD TIP:** These algorithms, which usually are proprietary to the vendor, compare the player's moves to the best moves calculated by well-known chess engines, as well as, player behavior patterns such as time used per move. The process appraises a player's actual move accuracy against the level of precision statistically expected out of a player with the same rating (e.g. whether a 1400-rated player is playing like a 1400 should play). Cameras, microphones and other technologies that monitor and evaluate players' head and eye movements, their cursor activity, and ambient sounds during games are additional technology-based fair play screening methods. Algorithms and technology may be used separately or in parallel.*

##### **4B3. Variation 3: Post-game Analysis by the Director and/or Other Third Parties**

This variation relies exclusively on post-game analysis by the tournament staff or other third parties arranged by the director in advance (e.g. other players or external expertise that are exclusive of the service provider). It is the least preferred variation when used alone because it is labor intensive and often depends on player complaints or TD observations to detect violations of fair play. The result is that this variation has the highest risk of cheating going undetected.

***TD TIP:** In view of the risks a director should use this variation only for match play or for events where the total number of games is 10 or less, or all the players are well-known to the director.*

### **5. The Host System, Software and Hardware for Online Play.**

All games in an online event rated by US Chess shall be played using the same host system or game service provider.

***TD TIP:** This rule exists because allowing the pre-planned use of multiple platforms for a single ratable event complicates the ability of fair play methods to compare the results of multiple games played by a player.*

***TD TIP:** In a situation where Rounds one and two of a five-round event were played on "Host System A" which has crashed for an indefinite period, the director is not forced to cancel Rounds 3-5 just to comply with Rule 5. Rather, in this emergency situation, the director has the authority to apply discretion by moving the remaining rounds to another platform and perhaps adjusting those rounds' start times. **See also** Rule 1C2, Director discretion (Chapter 1) and Rule 17C, Changes in round times (Chapter 1).*

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## 5A. The Game Software Interface.

All players in an event shall use a software interface provided or authorized by the game service provider. As part of reviewing candidate vendors' systems for hosting online events, organizers and Chief TDs must consider how the game interface allows players or TDs to have appropriate control over the game play.

***TD TIP:** All TDs need to be familiar with the features offered by the service provider's software so they can answer players' questions about features such as: pawn promotion, pre-moves, safe-moves, illegal moves, drawn positions, how to offer a draw or resign, etc. In addition, TDs are reminded that service providers routinely update their software to include new features, or change/remove existing features.*

## 5B. Use of Other Chess Software.

While a game is in progress, other chess playing software or game analysis software shall not be used by either player, regardless of whether the software is resident on the player's device or being accessed through the internet or another external system.

## 5C. Acceptable Game Hardware.

Players may use any hardware they are comfortable using except when the hardware (console, interface, device) is specified by the event rules or is provided by the organizer. When players use their own devices they are responsible for the ramifications of their decisions on what device they choose to use.

***TD TIP:** Organizers and Chief TDs need to carefully consider what devices the players can use in an event and should consider specifying acceptable device types in their event rules. Devices with small screens (e.g. many cell phones) have a limited amount of display space. This can cause unwelcome difficulties for players when entering their moves, trying to read the time remaining on their clocks, and ensuring they see the same information their opponents are seeing.*

### 5C1. Graphical Display Required.

Every players' game platform shall have a graphical display with the screen being of a size the player is comfortable using. Displays may be color or monochrome and can use touch-screen technology. Players may connect multiple displays to the same device.

#### 5C1a. Orientation and Color of the Graphical Chess Board.

The graphical chessboard shall be oriented in the same manner described in Rule 2C, Placement for over-the-board play (Chapter 1). Each player's color shall be at the bottom of the display, with the opponent's color at the top. The names (or User IDs) of both players shall be shown adjacent to the board. The service provider's default settings for the color of the squares shall parallel the specifications of Rule 41B, Color (Chapter 4). It is permitted for the numbers (1-8) and letters (A to H) to appear along the perimeter of the chessboard. If the service provider allows a player to select alternate color schemes or to customize the squares, those options shall not change the opponent's settings.

#### 5C1b. Advertisements and Other Images.

Advertisements or other images are not allowed within the boundaries of the chessboard.

#### 5C1c. Graphical Representation and Color of the Pieces.

It shall be obvious from the colors used for the pieces who is playing White and who is playing Black. The display shall show the pieces in figurine form in a manner similar to Figure 1 and Figure 2 of Chapter 1, Rule 3B. If the service provider allows a player to select alternate pieces or to customize the pieces, those options shall not change the opponent's settings. **See also** 40C, Form (Chapter 4); and 40D, Color (Chapter 4)

### 5C2. Hardware for Making Moves.

To make their moves or select menu options, players may use voice activation, a keyboard, mouse, trackball, stylus, their finger, or a similar pointing device. During play the two players opposing one another, or an authorized game assistant for a player with a disability ([Chapter 10, Rule 14A, Game Assistants](#)), are the only persons permitted to use the move-input hardware except when a TD is summoned or intervenes to resolve a claim or address an issue.

Unless the games are played under conditions specified in Rule 4B, Authorized Variations from the Standard (Chapter 10), Variation 4B1, Variation 1, or as is permitted for players with disabilities under Rule 14A in this chapter, players cannot make their moves using an electronic chess board connected to their primary device.

***TD TIP:** In practice, some directors have been allowing players to use a non-electronic board “on the side” so players can make their moves on that board, then transfer them to the chessboard on the screen. Directors should be cautious when allowing this and consider limiting it to conditions described in Chapter 10 Rules 4B or Variation 4B1.*

### **5C3. Cameras for Game Monitoring.**

Organizers have the option to specify requirements for cameras positioned to monitor every game. These capabilities may be supplied by the organizer (e.g. when the event is held at designated hub sites), or the cameras may be required of players participating from their locations of choice. When the event rules require players to provide any hardware, organizers and Chief TDs shall provide clear and sufficient instructions in pre-event announcements.

***TD TIP:** Using cameras to monitor game play can enhance fair play, but it may impose additional logistical requirements on the organizer and tournament staff (e.g. a separate network, troubleshooting compatibility or other hardware issues, and additional staff to facilitate game monitoring). If this capability can be integrated into the host system’s platform, that may be the best option.*

### **5D. Time for Players to Test their Game Hardware.**

Organizers and Chief TDs shall provide players adequate time before the beginning of play to test their devices with the designated host system/game service provider.

***TD TIP:** Allowing adequate time for these tests and practice games may require an organizer or Chief TD to select a deadline for entries considerably earlier than the cut-off time most players are accustomed to when entering over-the-board events. Setting a registration deadline that is too close to the event start time, or allowing “walk-ins” after the deadline, may not be practical except for a house player or someone already familiar with the host system. Even when the organizer is providing the players’ game devices, the players still need time to become familiar with them.*

## **6. Event-specific Rules and TLAs for Online Events.**

### **6A. Event Rules.**

Organizers and Chief TDs shall collaborate to create and distribute event-specific rules necessary for all players entering their online tournaments.

***TD TIP:** TLAs for online events can contain considerably different instructions than their over-the-board counterpart announcements. US Chess encourages organizers and Chief TDs to keep online event TLAs as simple as possible by referring interested players to a common web site for detailed instructions.*

***TD TIP:** The examples below are unique to online chess, but they are not all-inclusive. The TD needs to consider not only the format of the event, but also the experience level of the players. Your event’s rules also should address certain topics common to any event (e.g. event format, number of sections, prize structure, required fees, rules regarding unrated players, etc.).*

1. *Thorough registration and tournament access instructions and player eligibility criteria (if any).*
2. *Addresses for any authorized playing sites (if applicable).*
3. *The name of the system that will host all games, and the internet address for the game service provider.*
4. *Allowable hardware and software players can use (if there are any restrictions).*
5. *Instructions that describe how players may “test” their hardware with the host system, including the ability to play practice games before the tournament.*

6. *Deadline for registration and optional byes (to allow time for players to test their equipment and for organizers to verify players' identity, US Chess membership, and online account information).*
7. *Criteria for playoff games to determine certain prizes (if this option is used).*
8. *Describe the method the Chief TD shall use to create each round's pairings (e.g. by using the host system's pairing capability or external pairing software).*
9. *Publish the event schedule including mandatory pre-tournament check-in to officially join the tournament (for example: 1 hour before the start time), the start time for Round 1 and consecutive round times, or asap pairing schedule (round is paired as soon as all the games are finished in the previous round). Base all times on a single time zone—e.g. Eastern Daylight, Central Standard. Time zone of the organizer is recommended.*
10. *Where to find and view a list of all registered participants.*
11. *Where to find and view the pairings, standings and wall charts.*
12. *How a round begins and how a player's game starts—e.g. if you or your opponent must invite one another to play the game, or if the games are paired and begin automatically.*
13. *What tiebreak systems shall be used and in what order of priority. **See also** Rules 34D, Choice of tiebreak methods (Chapter 2) and 34E, Calculating Swiss tiebreaks (Chapter 2).*
14. *Procedures for making a claim during game play, what types of claims will be allowed and will not be allowed.*
15. *Procedures for disruptions in internet connectivity.*
16. *Player identification requirements, especially post-event where the tournament has significant cash or other prizes that may be reportable to the government.*
17. *Instructions for players with disabilities and their needs for a Game Assistant, including any requirements for players to provide the name and contact information for their Game Assistant.*
18. *A statement notifying players, and requiring them to acknowledge, that all games will be monitored for fair play.*
19. *If the host site automatically posts winners, the organizer/director may want to issue a qualifying statement that the results are "tentative" until reviewed and approved by the Chief TD.*

## **6B. Event Rules Available to All Players.**

Organizers and Chief TDs shall ensure their event rules are available to each player at the time they register for the tournament, including players who register at one of the designated playing locations (if this option is offered).

## **7. Event Registration and Identities of the Players.**

### **7A. Registration System and Process.**

The organizer or Chief TD shall ensure players are able to view a list of all registered players and the ratings being used to pair them for the tournament. This service shall be provided either by the host system or the organizer/Chief TD.

***TD TIP:** Make the registration process as easy as possible for your players by using a single site for registration and payment of required fees (entry, US Chess memberships, Vendor fees, etc.). Coordinate with the selected game service provider early to determine what their registration system can (and cannot) do. This will inform your decision on how to design and set up registration for your event.*

### **7B. Player Identification.**

The Chief TD is responsible for verifying the identities of the players, with Assistant TDs helping at their respective locations.

***TD TIP:** Directors and organizers need to be familiar with the federal [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act \(COPPA\)](#) and its implications on registration of players under the age of 13.*

***TD TIP:** Some third-party event registration sites can generate secure codes or "keys" as part of the registration process, providing a copy of the code/key only to the player and the organizer. Such measures help, but cannot ensure, verification of player identity. As a result, some organizers or directors may opt to wait until after the event to verify identities at the time they award prizes.*

## **8. Pairings, Standings, Wall Charts and Bye Requests.**

Every player has the right to know the real names, usernames, and US Chess ID numbers for all other players in the event.

### **8A. Pairing Method, Ratings Used and Tiebreaks.**

Either the game service provider or the TD shall pair the players. All games shall be paired in accordance with the or a close approximation of the rules, including FIDE's pairing rules. Chief TDs shall inform players in their pre-event publicity about the pairing method, ratings and tiebreaks being used for the event (e.g. generated by the service provider using the provider's method, or created by the TD according to US Chess rules).

### **8B. Pairings, Standings and Wall Charts.**

The Chief TD is responsible for ensuring all players have equal ability to see the pairings, standings and wall chart. The preferred option is for the Chief TD to make them available to players on the service provider's system.

### **8C. Bye Requests.**

The rules for an event shall specify if half-point or zero-point byes are allowed. When byes are permitted, the event rules shall instruct players how to request them and the deadline for requests.

### **8D. Games Not Played or Not Completed.**

#### **8D1. Games Not Played (Unplayed Games).**

Games not played, regardless of the reason, shall be scored in accordance with Rule 28P, Unplayed games (Chapter 2). These games shall not affect either player's rating. Event rules should specify how the Chief TD will handle a player who misses a round without having requested a bye.

#### **8D2. Games Not Completed.**

Unless specified otherwise in the event rules, games not completed for any reason shall be scored as losses for players who abandoned their games. Players are responsible for ensuring they have reliable internet connections and that their equipment functions properly when connected to the game service provider. **See also 5D, Time for Players to Test their Game Hardware (Chapter 10); and 11B, Failure of the Player's Hardware or Network Connection (Chapter 10).**

*TD TIP: Organizers and directors are strongly encouraged to include, as part of their event rules, how a director will handle a player who could not complete a game.*

## **9. Online Chess Clock.**

Both players must use the same time control. Any game where the two players did not use the same time control cannot be submitted for rating.

### **9A. Time Keeping.**

The official time (chess clock) for each player shall be the time displayed on each player's screen, console or device as maintained by the host system used for the online event. Players are not allowed to use separate chess clocks at their locations to keep the official time for their games.

### **9B. Time Forfeit.**

The flag fall on the player's screen, console or device, as transmitted by the host site, shall be considered official. Most host systems will automatically award the game result once one of the players' flags has fallen.

## **10. The Drawn Game.**

### **10A. Drawn Positions.**

Many service providers automatically rule games drawn under several game situations, or they alert the player that the position is drawn. Such assistance is allowed in online play because all players are using the same host system/game interface and, as a result, are afforded the same assistance during their games. When a service provider's automatic rulings differ from US Chess rules, organizers and directors shall include these differences in their pre-event publicity.

***TD TIP:** Before playing in an online event, players are strongly advised to ensure they understand the service provider's procedures on drawn positions, especially in those situations where the player is required to claim the draw. See also TD TIP, [Rule 5D, Time for Player's to Test their Game Hardware \(Chapter 10\)](#).*

***TD TIP:** A director or organizer who is concerned about confusion among the players should consider selecting a vendor that closely follows US Chess Rules.*

#### **10A1. Platforms that Adhere to US Chess Rules.**

Automatic rulings or notifications by the host system for stalemate, triple occurrence of position, insufficient material to continue, insufficient material to win on time, and the 50-move rule—as specified in Chapter 1, Rules 14A, 14C, 14D, 14E and 14F—are permitted. These rulings end the game.

Platforms that adhere to FIDE Rules also are permitted. Games played on these systems are ratable as US Chess online play. An automatic ruling on a drawn position made by a FIDE-compliant system shall end the game.

***TD TIP:** FIDE and US Chess rules differ significantly on adjudicating positions with few pieces on the board when one of the player's flag falls. Under FIDE rules, if a player's flag falls the game is drawn if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves.*

#### **10B. Drawn by Agreement.**

Online games may be drawn upon agreement by both players in accordance with Rule 14B, Agreement (Chapter 1).

***TD TIP:** Most game platforms automatically start the opponent's clock immediately upon determination of a move. On such platforms, players cannot replicate the over-the-board draw offer procedure given in Rule 14B1, proper timing of draw offer (Chapter 1)—e.g. move, offer your draw, then press the clock. Therefore, online players should become accustomed to extending their draw offer before moving in accordance with Rule 14B3, Draw offer before moving (Chapter 1).*

#### **10C. Game Platform declares Draw due to Lack of Progress.**

Some platforms are programmed to automatically declare a draw in a manner similar to Rule 14K, Director declares draw for lack of progress (Chapter 1) for one or both of the scenarios listed below. Draws adjudicated by these host systems shall be considered valid.

1. The same position has appeared for at least five consecutive alternate moves by each player. **See also** Rule 14C, Triple occurrence of position (Chapter 1).
2. Any consecutive series of 75 moves has been completed by each player without the movement of a pawn and without any capture. If the last move resulted in checkmate, that shall take precedence.

### **11. Interrupted Games.**

Any loss of signal for an ongoing game, regardless of the cause or duration of that break, can frustrate players and undermine their confidence in the tournament or online play in general. Organizers and directors are responsible for selecting a reliable game service provider. In a similar way, players are responsible for minimizing the potential for interruptions by selecting a stable network service and taking advantage of opportunities to test their game hardware on the event service provider's system well before the start of tournaments.

When an interrupted game impacts the start time for the next round, the director shall keep players informed of the revised start time using all reasonably available means (event web site, email, text message, chat or message sent via the host system, etc.).

### **11A. Failure of the Game Service Provider's System.**

The game service provider's server may experience a complete or partial failure. When the director can verify that the service provider is causing the interruption, the interruption shall not cause a player to lose their game. The results of games finished before the system fails shall stand. After the round begins, the director has four options, in the priority shown in Rule 11A1 below, for games that are in progress.

#### **11A1. Allow the Unfinished Games to Continue from the Last Saved Position.**

This is the standard rule during a service interruption. Game clocks and positions on the board shall be restored automatically by the game service provider to the last position saved by the server and indicate which player is on move. If the restored position represents a position earlier in the game, neither player is obligated to make the same moves they had made before the general system failure. If this standard cannot be achieved, the director may use any of the following three variations.

##### **11A1a. Variation 1: Director Restores Position agreed upon by Both Players.**

This variation shall be used only when the service provider allows the director to restore a position, the player and opponent agree to the position, the director is able to adjust clocks, and there are enough directors available to provide this service to all affected players in a timely manner.

##### **11A1b. Variation 2: Last Known Position is not Available for Some Games.**

This variation occurs when all move data for some of the unfinished games has been lost by the server. As soon as possible, the director shall re-start these games from move one, with players given the full time control for the round and not obligated to make the moves they made in the prior game. Games for which all moves have not been lost shall continue in accordance with Rules 11A1 or 11A1a, Variation 1 above.

##### **11A1c. Variation 3: Game or Move Data for All Unfinished Games is not Available.**

As soon as possible, the director shall restart all games from move one with the players paired according to the round's original pairings. All players shall have the full time control and are not obligated to make the moves made in their prior game.

***TD TIP:** In those situations where the director is capable of resetting board positions and adjusting players' clocks, taking such action may only be practical in a very small event, when the ratio of directors to players enables it, and when there is no dispute about the position between a player and opponent.*

***TD TIP:** Unless the service provider's system collects game data so that all moves made by the players have been recorded, Rule 11A1, Variations 1, 2 or 3 above, may not be practical or possible in events with short time controls (e.g. Blitz).*

***TD TIP:** Despite a TD's best efforts to verify the technical cause of a game disruption, it may not be clear whether the disruption was caused by failure of the service provider's or the player's equipment. Also, all platforms may not allow TDs to restart affected games from move one. In such cases, the director should use their discretion when ruling on the outcome of abandoned games, up to and including use of Rule 18G, Adjudications (Chapter 1) which may generate split results.*

### **11B. Failure of the Player's Hardware or Network Connection.**

A game interrupted by a loss of signal on the player's end shall not stop the clock for that player. After the player restores their game signal, the player's clock shall automatically reflect the amount of time remaining. If the game cannot continue before the player's time expires, then the result shall be a loss for that player. Such games shall be rated unless the player's loss of signal occurred before both players completed their first move.

### **11C. General or Partial Failure at a Designated Playing Site.**

If the organizer requires players to play at a designated site (this does not include playing at home), the loss of internet signal shall not cause any player to lose their game. The results of games finished before the site failure shall stand. Once a round begins, the director shall apply the principles and variations shown in Rule 11A above in an effort to allow play to continue in an equitable manner for the affected players.

## **12. Special Online Move Situations.**

The chess interface provided by game service providers vary on how they handle the situations defined in this rule. In most cases, a player's move is not transmitted to the opponent until the player makes a legal move on their display chessboard. The definition of when a piece is "touched" can vary based on the capabilities of the host platform (see [Rule 12B](#), below), but the time a move is transmitted by the system defines the time the move is both "determined" and "completed." Move completion shall automatically stop the player's clock and start the opponent's clock. The special online move situations described below in Rules [12C](#), [12D](#) and [12E](#) shall be player settings that can be adjusted.

*TD TIP: When permitted by the game software, players may select their preferred settings. However, the consequences of those choices by players are binding.*

*TD TIP: Organizers and directors should take steps to ensure players are aware of how the host system handles the situations described in this rule. One way is to include this information in pre-event publicity.*

### **12A. Illegal Moves.**

Host systems shall be programmed to not allow players to make illegal moves. A piece picked-up and placed on an illegal square shall be returned automatically by the host software to its square at the start of the move. **See also** [Rule 12B, Touch-Move](#) (Chapter 10).

### **12B. Touch-Move.**

In online games, players are not allowed to claim touch-move violations as defined in Rule 10B, Touch-move rule (Chapter 1).

#### **12B1. Variation: Host Platform Programmed to Enforce Touch-Move.**

If the host platform is programmed to automatically enforce touch move when a player selects a piece, the host shall not allow a player to select and move a different piece.

### **12C. Pre-Moves.**

A pre-move occurs when a player makes a move on the opponent's time before the opponent has completed their previous move. If a player makes a legal pre-move, the host system shall execute it immediately upon completion of the opponent's move. An executed pre-move shall be considered a completed move. If a player's pre-move is not legal under the, the host system shall not allow it to occur.

### **12D. Smart-Moves.**

A smart-move occurs when the player on move has only one possible legal move with a piece and the host system is programmed to automatically execute that move at the time the player selects (clicks-on) that piece.

### **12E. Automatic Promotion.**

Automatic promotion occurs when a player moves a pawn to the last rank and the host system automatically promotes the pawn to a Queen. The player's move is completed when the piece appears on the chessboard.

#### **12E1. Variation: Host System not Programmed for Automatic Promotion.**

If the host system is not programmed for automatic promotion, the system shall present the player a choice of pieces to which the player can legally promote the pawn. The host system shall not allow the player to change the selected piece after it appears on the promotion square.

## 12F. Mouse-Slips.

A mouse slip occurs when a legal move transmitted by the player is not the move the player intended to make. In online play, mouse-slips shall be considered completed moves. **See also Rule 14A, Game Assistants** (Chapter 10).

**TD TIP:** *To help avoid mouse slips players should consider:*

1. Using “two click mode” on their mouse instead of dragging the piece (e.g. click on the piece to move, then click on the destination square).
2. Investing in a quality gaming mouse.
3. Typing their move in algebraic notation on a keyboard (if allowed by the host system).
4. Activating the option to “confirm moves” (if offered by the host system).

## 13. Scorekeeping and .PGN Files.

### 13A. Scorekeeping.

#### 13A1. Host System Automatically Keeps Score.

During a game, the host system shall automatically keep score for both players using one of the notation systems described in Rule 38, Notation Systems (Chapter 3).

#### 13A2. Previous Moves Visible to Both Players.

At a minimum, the host system shall indicate each player’s last move on their display screen. The host system also shall provide each player an option to display all previous moves in the game.

#### 13A3. Manual Notation cannot be used to Make Claims.

Players are allowed to take notation during their games; however, they are not allowed to use their notation to make claims during online play.

### 13B. PGN Files.

The host system shall record the moves for all games played in the event and make them available in .PGN or another format in order to be shareable among the players, directors, and spectators.

## 14. Players with Disabilities.

Rule 35, Rules for Disabled and Assisted Players (Chapter 2) applies to online chess.

**TD TIP:** *The “US Chess Guidelines for Accessible Chess Events”, which is posted on the US Chess website, provides practical advice for organizers and TDs who anticipate having players with disabilities in their events.*

**TD TIP:** *As part of pre-event registration create a free text area on your entry form where players can answer this question, “Do you require any special accommodation to play in the event?”*

### 14A. Game Assistants.

Players with disabilities may participate in online events using a “Game Assistant” (GA) to make their moves. Such players may either observe the on-screen board, or use a separate chessboard, to determine and announce their moves to the GA.

For events where the Chief TD or an assistant TD is available at every playing location, the tournament staff can help the player with a disability find a GA. When an event is being played from multiple sites without TDs, players with disabilities are responsible for arranging their own GA who is subject to the approval of the Chief TD. In all cases, a player using a GA must agree that the actions of their GA on the game platform are considered the player’s own actions.

**TD TIP:** *Directors should prepare an instruction sheet they can provide to players with disabilities at the time of registration, and to their GA, so it is clear what the assistant is and is not allowed to do during a game.*

**TD TIP:** To help ensure a GA does not make the wrong move, a player using a GA should consider having the GA verbally confirm the move being made to the player before making the move. For example, the player says, “f6.” The GA should respond with, “f6, correct?” The player then answers, “Yes.” In addition, players with disabilities should review the TD TIP to [Rule 12F, Mouse-Slips](#) (Chapter 10) and consider:

1. Ensuring their GA is an experienced chess player and familiar with the playing site.
2. Turning on speech synthesis in order to make moves (if the host system has this option).

## 15. Submitting Event Results to US Chess.

### 15A. Maximum Time to Submit the Rating Report.

A director has up to three weeks to submit the rating reports for an online event.

**TD TIP:** The rules for online play deliberately allow directors more time to submit rating reports compared to over-the-board play for at least two reasons. First, generating the rating report may be more complex, depending on the service provider. Second, the Chief TD needs time to review the output produced by the fair play process for the event, including any claims of fair play violations made by players. In general, the rating reports for small events can be turned in almost as quickly as comparably sized over-the-board events. Larger tournaments, or events with substantial prizes and/or suspected fair play issues, may take more time.

**TD TIP:** Directors are advised to handle accusations of cheating as serious matters and with the greatest discretion.

1. When an accusation arises, the director should take all steps necessary to control the situation. This includes advising the accuser(s) not to mention the allegations to other players or persons via word-of-mouth, phone calls, texting, internet, email or social media, as well as instructing others not to spread rumors.
2. The most likely ways to identify suspected violations of fair play depend on the nature of the tournament. Events with directors at every playing site normally uncover suspected cheating in a manner similar to how it is found at an over-the-board competition—e.g. direct observation by a director, or a claim by another player. However, when directors are not at every site with the players, the ability to detect fair play issues relies almost exclusively on the use of statistical algorithms by the game service provider, remote monitoring technologies specified in the event rules, post-event analysis of suspect games, and/or claims made by opponents of an accused player.
3. Paragraph 6 of the US Chess Code of Ethics, states:
 

**“The actions and behavior of players, tournament directors ... and other individuals ... participating in US Chess activities, or in events sponsored by 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.”** [emphasis added]
4. For an accusation to become a formal Ethics Complaint, the primary accuser must be an active member of the US Chess Federation. When considering whether to file an ethics complaint, one should bear in mind that the burden of proof will be on the complainant and that US Chess does not investigate complaints. The Ethics Committee will rule only on the evidence submitted to the committee by the complainant and will not seek other evidence, even if a complainant includes in their complaint a “witness list” or a description of where to find additional evidence. It is entirely up to the complainant to gather all evidence and submit it with the complaint. When evaluating the quality of the evidence, the fair play standard and variations described in [Rule 4](#) of this chapter represent a hierarchy. In other words, [Rule 4A](#) is better than Variation 4B1, which is better than Variation 4B2, which is better than Variation 4B3. Using these options in combination—e.g. the standard in [Rule 4A](#) supported by Variations 4B1 and 4B3—would add greater weight to the complaint.

### 15B. Prepare and Submit the Rating Report.

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After completing all game reviews, the Chief TD or designated Assistant TD shall prepare the rating report and submit it to US Chess in the same manner used for an over-the-board event. The TD shall indicate that the tournament was conducted online. If the report the director has submitted contains game results that are or may be in dispute, the director shall contact US Chess for guidance on handling the situation.

***TD TIP:** There are different types of “disputed results” including a ratings report with an incorrect game result, to a report with results of one or more games for players involved in an alleged fair play violation. When results were incorrectly reported, the TD should contact US Chess (by email) and ask for guidance on how to best correct the report. By comparison, a rating report containing games in dispute due to alleged violations of fair play is a more serious situation. In such a case, the office may advise the director to file an official complaint to US Chess as explained in the second TD TIP in Rule 15A above.*

### **15C. Certify the Rating Report.**

The Chief TD’s or authorized Assistant TD’s act of submitting the rating report to US Chess means that the director certifies to the best of their knowledge that all games were played according to the rules in this chapter and the *Official Rules of Chess*.