



U.S. Backgammon Federation



## Tournament Rules Proposed for Public Comment July 1-31, 2017

These Tournament Rules governing live backgammon tournament play are posted below for public comment from July 1 to 31, 2017. An accompanying Tournament Rules Options document indicates Options that directors may employ, including rules with regard to Legal Moves and dice landing on checkers. A Ruling Guide is in preparation and will provide greater detail and guidance for these rules (section numbers cited) and addressing other uncommon situations.

### GENERAL <sup>[1]</sup>

In case of a dispute or inquiry, the tournament director (*Director*) shall determine the most appropriate course of action in circumstances not expressly addressed by the Rules. Based on the circumstances of a particular case, the Director may find the solution as dictated by fairness, or make narrowly tailored exceptions.

### ETIQUETTE <sup>[1.2]</sup>

Tournament staff and players must engage in good sportsmanship and fair play, and comply with the Standards of Ethical Practice. Players should speak and play in a clear and unambiguous manner, and avoid the appearance of impropriety or they will be at a disadvantage if a ruling is needed.

### REGISTRATION <sup>[1.4]</sup>

The Director may allow or bar a player from entering tournament events, and may deny a player entry in a lower skill division.

### LANGUAGE <sup>[1.5]</sup>

Only English or other official tournament language may be spoken by players and spectators while a match is in progress, except between consulting doubles partners.

### SPECTATORS <sup>[1.6]</sup>

Spectators should remain silent during a match, except between games to point out an error in setup or that the game clock is running. Spectators observing other irregularities should immediately notify tournament staff. Signaling of any type between a spectator and a player is forbidden. A player may request that the Director bar a spectator from watching their match.

### AIDS; OTHER EQUIPMENT <sup>[1.7]</sup>

Players may not use aids of any type while a match is in progress, including breaks, except to keep score. Use of personal electronic devices is restricted to recording or

clocking the match, scorekeeping, noise cancelling, and music-listening purposes. If in use, a player's clock must run while they take pictures, except during breaks. In Clocks Preference<sup>[see PREFERENCES]</sup> events, players may not take pictures unless they use a clock.

### START (RESUME) TIMES AND BREAKS <sup>[2.2]</sup>

Matches must begin (resume) at their scheduled time and take place in the tournament playing area. Each player is entitled to breaks between games, in general not to exceed 6 minutes per hour. Breaks during the first hour of any match should be limited to urgent need only.

Penalty points are strictly assessed for failing to start (resume) matches on time and for excessive break time. A player is assessed one penalty point after cumulatively delaying a match by 10 minutes, and an additional penalty point for every 5 minutes delay thereafter. Automatic forfeiture results when total penalty points greater than half the posted match length have been assessed. Stricter policies may apply when times are posted in advance. Matches shall have a start time 10 minutes after both preceding matches have been completed unless another time is posted. Unless a start time is posted for a player's next match, they must have the Director's consent (or provide sign-out sheet information) before leaving the playing area for more than 10 minutes.

### CHANGE OF EQUIPMENT <sup>[3.7]</sup>

The Director may change or impose equipment at any time. Players may change equipment between games by mutual agreement.

### PREFERENCES <sup>[3.6]</sup>

Some preferences are resolved when one of the following terms appear within the rules:

Obligation: use is required, no player choice;  
Preference: either player may insist on use;  
Option: use only if both players agree.

All other preference disputes, including but not limited to seating, direction of play, and choice of game equipment, shall be identified by the players before the start of any match and shall all be resolved in favor of the player obtaining the largest dice roll.

Use of two dice is Preference over four dice.

#### BAFFLE BOXES; OTHER RANDOMIZING DEVICES <sup>[3.4]</sup>

Both players may use a baffle box (Option), or a different reliable dice-randomizing device if first approved by the Director (Option).

#### GAME CLOCKS <sup>[3.5]</sup>

In general, game clocks shall use a reserve time of two minutes times the match length and Simple Delay of 12 seconds per move (2/12). Game clocks are Preference for Open and other unlimited division events; Option for other skill divisions (2/15); Obligation for Doubles (3/15); Option otherwise.

#### VALID ROLLS; DICE LANDING ON CHECKERS <sup>[4.1.1-4]</sup>

Unless using another approved dice randomization device, dice shall be shaken vigorously in a cup and rolled freely on the right-hand side of the bar. Lipped cups are Preference. The dice and other equipment must never be manipulated.

When using a baffle box, both dice are dropped simultaneously from a cup (Preference) or hand into the baffle box. The opening roll is decided either without the baffle box, or with each player selecting a different color die and either player dropping both dice through the box.

To be valid, a die must come to rest on the playing field or checkers on the same side of the bar as rolled. If the die is supported in any way by a vertical surface, balanced on edge or corner, or descends below the top surface between the checkers on which it rests, then a re-roll is required.

#### END OF TURN <sup>[4.1.8]</sup>

When using a game clock, a player ends their turn by activating the opponent's time, even if the opponent can neither make a valid move nor double. If a player fails to activate the opponent's time, their lost reserve time shall be fully restored.

In an untimed game using two dice, players may use a non-expiring game clock (Preference) to end turns. Otherwise, a player ends their turn by tapping the bar.

When playing with four dice, players end their turn by picking up their dice. Without notice of *repositioning*, touching a die after making a legal move ends the turn.

#### PREMATURE ROLLS <sup>[4.1.7]</sup>

If the opponent rolls before the player has completed their turn, the player shall point out the premature roll and state their choice: requiring the roll to stand, or to be redone. They may revise and complete their move on that basis. A player who repeatedly fails to point out premature rolls may lose their option to require a premature roll to stand.

#### CHECKER AND DICE HANDLING PROPRIETY <sup>[4.2]</sup>

A player should: move checkers clearly to a specific location, using one and the same hand throughout their turn; keep borne off checkers away from the playing surface; and announce the roll before repositioning dice. A player should not touch any checkers during the opponent's turn.

While testing possible plays, the player should offset moved checkers above their intended destination. Hit checkers should either be covered by the hitting checker or moved above the point on which they originated, rather than to the bar. The original position shall be restored before testing another play.

If a checker is explicitly hit but not moved to the bar, the play is illegal.

#### LEGAL MOVES <sup>[4.2.3]</sup>

Both players must promptly point out and correct all illegal plays noticed before the opponent has made a valid roll. Any illegality that is unrelated to the dice roll or the number of pips moved (for example, a player places their own checker on the bar), must be corrected if noticed before the offending player has made their next valid roll. Correction requires reverting to the original dice roll and position and resuming play from there. Players may make later corrections by mutual agreement. Repeated instances of a player making illegal moves may result in tournament disqualification or other sanctions.

#### ERRORS IN STARTING POSITION <sup>[4.2.4]</sup>

No correction is made if an error in the starting position is noticed after both players complete their second turns; a player starting with fewer than 15 checkers may still lose a gammon. Otherwise, the error must be corrected by moving all misplaced checkers to the point from which they were missing at the start of the game. Players may make later corrections by mutual agreement.

#### GAME CLOCK PROPRIETY AND EXPIRATION <sup>[4.3]</sup>

Game clocks should only be stopped in limited circumstances, most notably when a die falls on the floor, between games, and in the event of a dispute. Players shall immediately announce and rectify any instance where the game clock has been set incorrectly, is not paused when it should be, or is running against the incorrect player. A player automatically loses the match when it is noticed that their reserve time has expired, unless they may validly claim the game and match at that moment.

#### DOUBLING CUBE ACTIONS <sup>[4.4.3-5]</sup>

A player stating intent to make a valid cube action (double/take/pass) must take that action at the first legal opportunity. If a player touches the cube, or makes any other statement or gesture that reasonably implies an intention to double, then the player must so act at that time; merely reaching for the cube does not by itself imply an intention to double. If a player wishes to move or reposition the cube without the intention of doubling, then the player must first state that intent prior to handling the cube. Absent other evidence of intent, a take or pass occurs when the cube is placed down outside the playing field.

#### CRAWFORD RULE <sup>[4.4.6]</sup>

The doubling cube is removed from play for the first game -- and only the first game -- after either player is exactly one point away from winning the match (the Crawford game). Any cube action during the Crawford game is null and void.

#### DEAD CUBES GENERALLY <sup>[4.4.9]</sup>

A player may not offer a cube when they would win the match at its current value simply by winning the game, or pass a cube that would lose the match. Any such cube action is null and void.

#### COMPLETION <sup>[4.5]</sup>

All moves, games, and matches must be played to completion unless ended either by the pass of a valid double, by the expiration of a player's game clock reserve time, or in non-contact positions by the resignation or valid claim of a single game, gammon, or backgammon. A resignation may be accepted even if continued play could result in a different outcome.

#### REPORTING RESULTS <sup>[4.6]</sup>

Both players are responsible for immediately reporting their match result to the Director or other designated staff, and verifying that the correct result has been posted on the Tournament draw sheet. Notify the Director immediately if an incorrect result is posted; it may be corrected even if the next match has started.

#### SCOREKEEPING <sup>[4.7]</sup>

Both players should keep their own running, written match score in addition to any scoreboard. In resolving any scoring dispute, if only one player has maintained a written score sheet, then their record takes precedence absent any undisputed evidence to the contrary.

#### INCORRECT MATCH LENGTH <sup>[4.8]</sup>

Both players must verify the posted length of their match, and may not knowingly play to another score.

Upon discovery that the match length used is wrong, any game in progress shall be completed. The player having the higher score shall be declared the match winner if they have reached either the correct or wrong match length. If both players so qualify due to a tie, they shall play one more game to decide the match. Otherwise, the match shall continue to the correct match length.

#### DISPUTES; LIMITED RIGHT OF APPEAL <sup>[5]</sup>

If a dispute arises, players shall pause the game clock and leave all game materials untouched until the Director arrives. An aggrieved player may promptly appeal any ruling and intended corrective action by the Director, except for disqualification or expulsion from the tournament area. The Director shall convene a ruling committee of disinterested players to independently consider evidence and argument, and vote to uphold, reverse, or modify the Director's ruling. The Director may then cast a vote, or decline to do so. An absolute majority of votes cast is required to change the Director's ruling.