



U.S. Backgammon Federation



## Tournament Rules (Effective 1/2019)

These Tournament Rules govern live backgammon tournament play. The [Tournament Ruling Guide](#) and the [Tournament Rules Options](#) documents have been prepared for directors and players to consult as may be appropriate. The Ruling Guide provides greater detail and guidance for these rules (section numbers cited) and addresses other uncommon situations. Rules Options govern the variations to these standard rules that directors may employ.

### INTERPRETATION AND SCOPE <sup>[1.1]</sup>

The Ruling Guide defines: *must, shall, should, and may*.

In case of a dispute or inquiry, participants must be truthful and forthcoming when questioned by the tournament director (*Director*), who 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. The Director may impose penalties for serious or repeated rule violations or for unacceptable behavior.

Both players must promptly point out any violation of a mandatory rule and must correct it unless the Rules explicitly allow the opponent to condone the infraction.

### 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. Players must respect a request to limit conversation or distraction.

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

The Director may bar a player from entering tournament events, or 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.

### MONITORS <sup>[1.3.3]</sup>

The Director or both players by mutual agreement may appoint a match monitor who is authorized to point out irregularities during play and to require correction.

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

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

### PREFERENCE RESOLUTION TERMS <sup>[1.7.1]</sup>

Required: use is required, no player choice;  
Preferred: either player may insist on use;  
By Roll: use is settled by the roll of high dice;  
If Agreed: use only if both players agree;  
Per Player: each player may make their own choice.

### AIDS; OTHER EQUIPMENT <sup>[1.8]</sup>

Players must not use any aids during a match, including breaks, except to keep score. Use of personal electronic devices is restricted to recording or clocking the match, and scorekeeping. Listening devices for music or noise cancelling are allowed, subject to Director review. If in use, a player's clock must run while they take pictures, except during breaks. A player must not self-transcribe unless they use a clock.

### START OR RESUME TIMES AND BREAKS <sup>[2.1, 2.2]</sup>

Matches must start, or resume following a scheduled suspension, at the designated time and take place in the tournament playing area (non-smoking Preferred). Unscheduled matches shall have a designated start time 10 minutes after both preceding matches have been completed. Unless a later 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.

Each player is entitled to breaks between games, in general not to exceed 6 minutes per hour elapsed since

the start or resume time. Breaks during the first such hour should be limited to urgent need only.

The Director shall strictly assess penalty points against any player who fails to start or resume a match on time, or who takes excessive break time. A player shall be assessed one penalty point after causing a cumulative match delay of 10 minutes, and one additional penalty point for every 5 minutes delay thereafter. A player shall be forfeited when the total penalty points assessed exceeds half the posted match length. Stricter policies may apply when times are posted in advance.

#### PREFERENCE RESOLUTION <sup>[3.2, 3.3]</sup>

Use of two dice is Preferred over four dice.

Precision dice are Preferred over non-precision.

Precedence for dice-randomizing device is: 1) lipped cups; 2) baffle box; 3) another device if first approved by the Director; 4) non-lipped cups. Players may agree to each use a different type of dice-randomizing device.

All other preference disputes (seating, direction of play, game equipment, etc.) must 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 sum.

#### GAME CLOCKS - PREFERENCE AND SETTINGS <sup>[3.4]</sup>

Event type	Preference	Reserve	Delay
Top skill	Preferred	2 min/pt.	12 sec.
Other skill	If Agreed	2 min/pt.	15 sec.
Doubles	Required	3 min/pt.	15 sec.
All other	If Agreed	2 min/pt.	12 sec.

#### CHANGE OF EQUIPMENT <sup>[3.5]</sup>

The Director may change or impose equipment at any time, including clocks for slow play. Players may change equipment between games by mutual agreement.

#### VALID ROLLS; DICE LANDING ON CHECKERS <sup>[4.1.1,4.1.4]</sup>

When using a cup, the dice must be vigorously shaken at least twice up and down and rolled together freely on the right-hand side of the bar from a minimum height of 2.5cm/1". Dice must not be manipulated.

When using a baffle box, the dice are dropped together from a cup (Preferred) 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 by a vertical surface, balanced on its edge or corner, or descends below the top surface of all checkers on which it rests, then a re-roll is required.

#### END OF TURN <sup>[4.1.7]</sup>

When using a game clock, players must end every turn by activating the opponent's time, even if one player can neither move nor double. If a player fails to do so, their lost reserve time shall be fully restored.

In an untimed game using two dice, players may use a non-expiring game clock (Preferred) 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>[4.1.8]</sup>

If the opponent rolls before the player has completed their turn, the player must 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 the option to require a reroll.

#### ERRORS IN STARTING POSITION <sup>[4.2.1]</sup>

An error in the starting position must be corrected if noticed before the fifth valid roll of the game, or by mutual agreement thereafter, by moving all misplaced checkers to the point from which they were missing at the start of the game. A player starting with fewer than 15 checkers can still lose a gammon.

#### CHECKER AND DICE HANDLING PROPRIETY <sup>[4.1.2,4.2.2]</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 a play, a moved checker should be offset above its intended destination. A hit checker should either be covered by the hitting checker or moved to the tip of the point it is on, rather than to the bar. A hit checker so positioned when the turn is ended must be

placed on the bar. The original position should be restored before testing another play.

#### ILLEGAL 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, or invalidly passes their turn), 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.

#### 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 during a dispute. Players must immediately announce and rectify any instance where the game clock has been set incorrectly, is not paused when required 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 can then validly claim the game and match.

#### DOUBLING CUBE ACTIONS <sup>[4.4.4, 4.4.5]</sup>

If a player touches the cube or makes any statement or gesture that reasonably implies an intention to double, then they must double at that time, or on their next turn if not yet legal. Merely reaching for the cube does not by itself imply an intention to double. A player wishing to move the cube without doubling 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>[4.4.7]</sup>

The doubling cube is removed from play for 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 void.

#### DEAD CUBES <sup>[4.4.8]</sup>

A player shall not double when they would win the match at its current value simply by winning the game. Any such cube action is 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.

#### SCOREKEEPING <sup>[4.6]</sup>

Both players should keep their own running, written match score. In any scoring dispute, if only one player has so maintained a written score, then it shall take precedence absent any undisputed evidence to the contrary.

#### REPORTING RESULTS <sup>[4.7]</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.

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

Both players must verify the posted length of their match and must 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. Clocks may be adjusted by the Director.

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

If a dispute arises, players must pause the game clock and leave all game materials undisturbed 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 qualified and 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.