



# TOURNAMENT RULES: Ruling Guide 2019

## Purpose

The Ruling Guide provides greater detail and guidance on the intent and interpretation of the USBGF Tournament Rules and addresses other uncommon situations.

USBGF Rules and Ethics Committee – Richard Munitz Chairman

# U.S. Backgammon Federation Tournament Rules: Ruling Guide

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## 1 GENERAL

### 1.1 INTERPRETATION AND SCOPE

***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.***

The official text of the USBGF Tournament Rules (the “Rules”) appears in fragmented form throughout this document (see: <https://usbgf.org/tournament-rules/> ), within boxes at the beginning of the relevant sections. The remaining text of this Ruling Guide provides guidance related to these Rules, as well as to the general rules of the game of backgammon, provides additional detail and clarifies intent for the Rules and advises how the Rules should be applied in various situations.

Tournament players are presumed to be familiar with the generally accepted rules of play for the game of backgammon, including use of the doubling cube, as described in several print and online publications including, for example, a webpage (<http://www.bkgm.com/rules.html>) from the website “Backgammon Galore!”. The stating of those basic rules of backgammon are beyond the scope of the Tournament Rules, but adherence to them is mandatory for all backgammon tournament play unless specifically superseded by the Tournament Rules.

The Tournament Rules text states the standard rules for tournament backgammon competition that are used when a Tournament Director does not otherwise provide advance notice about any rules variations to be in effect for that tournament. The allowed variations are limited and are detailed in the USBGF Rules Options document. See <https://usbgf.org/tournament-rules/>

Tournament Directors may run special events for variants of the game of backgammon and may establish any rules they wish for such events – because the game being played in such events is not backgammon and is therefore not governed by the Rules.

#### 1.1.1 Terminology

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

The Rules cover a wide spectrum of statements of varying force from absolute requirements to advised best practices to things that are simply permitted. Without carefully chosen, well defined terminology that is applied consistently, it can be difficult for the reader to be sure what level of force applies to a particular rule and what consequences may be faced, if any, for violation. The following terms are used by the Rules, and throughout the Ruling Guide:

- **Must (must not):** Indicates that an action is explicitly required (or prohibited). This is a mandatory rule and intentional or repeated violation is a serious matter that will generally be subject to sanctions.
- **Shall (shall not):**
  1. Indicates the expected manner or flow of events or processes. Often used to make a statement of general fact but that can on occasion have exceptions, particularly when referring to actions by the Tournament Director. This is a mandatory rule and violation may be subject to sanctions.
  2. Used in cases where an action is required (or prohibited) for the protection or benefit of the potentially offending player. In these cases, it is a mandatory rule in the same sense as “must”, however a violation is generally not subject to sanctions because a violation is a mistake that is clearly not to the advantage of the offending player.

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- **Should (should not):** Indicates a best practice – something recommended to be done (not done). Following such a rule will minimize the possibility for dispute, confusion, and ambiguous situations. This is not a mandatory rule; failure to comply is not by itself an infraction that may be subject to sanctions but a player who does not comply is at risk of an unfavorable ruling by creating the confusion that led to the dispute. A player may ask their opponent to follow such a best practice, and a player who fails to comply with such an explicit request should expect to be at a disadvantage in any related ruling. A player who repeatedly creates confusion and thereby disrupts play may be subject to sanctions. The Tournament Director may issue a warning and require subsequent conformance with the best practice as a means of avoiding such sanctions.
- **May –** Indicates something that is allowed or is a matter of choice, but generally carries no connotation of being either recommended, or discouraged by the Rules. This is not a mandatory rule. The word “may” is not used to indicate the simple possibility that something can happen; generally, “might” or “can” is used in such a context.

## 1.1.2 General Intent and Philosophy – Valid Actions

The general intent of the Rules is to avoid disputes, help create an enjoyable tournament experience for the players while minimizing difficulty for the Tournament Director and their staff, and to foster a culture of good sportsmanship.

All players are expected to perform basic validation on all actions taken in play and require the correction of any irregularity regardless of whether it is to their advantage to do so. In general, if it would not be possible for a given action to occur when playing online or against a computer program, players must act to prevent that same action from occurring in live play. Players are responsible for conducting themselves in this manner and validating that all actions taken by both players conform to the rules of the game and match play. There are two equally valid approaches to rules: Valid Actions, and Responsible Actions. There are substantial and strong differences of opinion within the backgammon community on the preferred approach, but one approach must be taken. With the Responsible Actions approach, players are fully responsible for all of their game actions, and their opponent is permitted to condone any invalid action that occurs. These Rules adopt the Valid Actions approach as described above, and consistently apply the obligation for players to perform basic validation of game actions throughout.

## 1.1.3 When Unsure or Uncomfortable, Speak with the Tournament Director

All players are strongly encouraged to speak with the Tournament Director or tournament staff when any situation arises in which they are unsure, uncomfortable, or if something simply doesn't feel right or fair. The Tournament Director would much rather have the opportunity to understand a player's concern, to educate them, to make them feel comfortable, and on occasion, to fix an actual problem, instead of having a player go home with a bad tournament experience. A player must never make their opponent feel intimidated or discouraged about making such an inquiry. Tournament Directors should welcome inquiries about any reasonable player concern.

## 1.1.4 Disputes, Inquiries and Rulings

### 1.1.4.1 Establishing the Facts

***In case of a dispute or inquiry, participants must be truthful and forthcoming when questioned by the tournament director (Director)***

When a ruling is required, everyone's overriding goal should be to get the ruling right. A correct ruling requires the complete set of relevant facts to be accurately established. Revealing the facts is everyone's responsibility, not just the aggrieved player's. Any player (or spectator) questioned by the Tournament Director must always truthfully and completely state what they know and disclose any other information that might be relevant to the decision. A player does not have the right to remain silent, nor to withhold essential information simply because the Tournament Director didn't think to ask the right question. A player having access to any recordings that

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might help establish the facts must note their existence and provide such access upon request by the Tournament Director. A spectator who saw the events in question should inform the Tournament Director that they were a witness but should not speak further until asked to do so by the Tournament Director.

## 1.1.4.2 Circumstances not Covered by the Rules

***[The] tournament 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, ...***

The Rules are a statement of generally accepted principles of best practice for the enjoyment of tournament backgammon in the United States of America by all participants. However, the Rules are not intended to cover every possible situation that might arise in the course of a Tournament and, in any event, should not be considered a substitute for the Tournament Director's judgment and discretion to determine the fair and most appropriate course of action in any particular set of circumstances that are not expressly addressed in these Rules.

A Tournament Director may be called upon to rule in situations where confusing or ambiguous actions or statements made by a player render the facts or intent unclear, leaving the proper ruling in doubt. In such cases, the Tournament Director should tend to rule against the player whose actions or statements created the uncertainty. Players should take care to avoid such confusing or ambiguous actions or statements as a means to avoid dispute and any unfavorable rulings that can result. See section [1.2.2](#).

## 1.1.4.3 Narrowly Tailored Exceptions

***Based on the circumstances of a particular case, the Director may ... make narrowly tailored exceptions.***

It is said that every rule has an exception. There will be times where blind application of a rule as written is the wrong thing to do when considering the special circumstances of a particular case. A fair and just resolution might be possible only by making an exception to the rule in that particular case. This rule is intended to explicitly give the Tournament Director such leeway.

The Tournament Director is authorized to make narrowly tailored exceptions with regard to the enforcement or application of the Rules, meaning that the exception must be limited in scope based on the particular circumstances of the situation and as tightly constrained as possible so as to address the particular problem at hand without broadly undermining the rule at large.

This rule is broadly applicable, in that the power to make a narrowly tailored exception potentially applies to every rule. However, this must not be construed as giving the Tournament Director license to modify or ignore a rule in general. Not liking a rule, or the simple fact that a player complained or requested an exemption is not a valid reason to make an exception. In order for an exception to be made, the Tournament Director must be capable of articulating what facts about the circumstance justify making an exception in that particular case, without which an exception would not be justified in the general case. For example, the Tournament Director may make an exception to accommodate a player with a disability that they would not make for the typical player.

## 1.1.5 Penalties

***The Director may impose penalties for serious or repeated rule violations or for unacceptable behavior.***

The Tournament Director must, as a means for enforcing the Rules and to discourage abuse, have the authority to impose penalties on players that violate the Rules. In certain cases, the Rules may specify penalties for certain infractions. However, in general, the Tournament Director is authorized to impose any penalty believed to be fair and appropriate, given the nature of the infraction(s). In general, a severe violation of the Rules, or egregious

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behavior may warrant an immediate penalty, whereas less serious violations of the Rules or unacceptable behavior may warrant a penalty if those actions are repeated. The Tournament Director may issue a warning to the offending player that repeated violations will result in a penalty but is under no obligation to do so. A director issuing a warning or a penalty should explain the nature of the violation to the offending player, along with an explanation of the rule and the best practices they are expected to follow to avoid further dispute. Penalties are subject to appeal by the sanctioned player in accordance with section 5, both in regard to their applicability or severity.

## 1.1.6 Player Obligation to Point Out Rule Violations

***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.***

While it should be clear that a player who knowingly violates a rule is cheating, it might not be clear that a player is doing something wrong if they notice a rule violation made by their opponent but say nothing. This rule clarifies that both players have an obligation to immediately point out to their opponent all mandatory rule violations that they notice. Furthermore, any such violation must be corrected. The exceptions to the requirement for correction is if the Rules specify a time limit for correction, or specifically allow this particular kind of infraction to be condoned by the opponent of the offending player. However, the passage of the time limit or the right to condone an infraction does not relieve the opponent of the obligation to point out the infraction. In some cases, the repeated failure to point out a type of infraction and then later insisting upon correction only when it is advantageous to do so may be considered entrapment by the Tournament Director, who may rule against such a player in that and future situations as a penalty for their repeated failure to satisfy their obligation to point out all violations under this rule.

The phrase “mandatory rule” is intended to distinguish rules that establish an obligation to comply on players, as contrasting with rules that are more advisory in nature - best practices that should be followed in order to avoid dispute and unfavorable rulings. In general, words like “shall” and “must” convey mandatory rules, while the words “should” or “may” conveys a non-mandatory rule. See section 1.1.1- Terminology for more complete details on the differentiating terms regarding the force of rules. The rules of the game of backgammon (as distinct from these Tournament Rules) are all considered mandatory.

## 1.2 ETIQUETTE

### 1.2.1 General.

***Tournament staff and players must engage in good sportsmanship and fair play and comply with the Standards of Ethical Practice.***

The Tournament Director as defined in section 1.3.1, Tournament staff, and players are expected at all times to behave in the spirit of the game, to show generous sportsmanship and considerate behavior, and otherwise to comport with the USBGF Standards of Ethical Practice (see: <https://usbgf.org/standards-of-ethical-practice/>).

Good sportsmanship includes refraining from actions that are distracting or disturbing to the opponent, such as unwelcome conversation, sounds, or gestures. Players should not hesitate to point out any such unwelcome actions and request that they be discontinued. Players so asked, should comply. Even if a player does not object to conversation in general, specific statements can be unsportsmanlike in isolation – even non-offensive statements such as complaints about dice rolls or luck in general, pointing out errors made by the opponent, etc.

### 1.2.2 Avoid Questionable Actions and Statements

***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.***

During play, players should make every effort to speak and act in a clear, unambiguous manner, and to avoid doing anything that is potentially confusing. Players must be careful when speaking; they may be bound in the

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future to any statement they make, even if it is not their turn, and even if the statement was said in jest. Furthermore, players are advised that any statements or actions that present the mere appearance or possible interpretation of impropriety should be avoided, even if done in jest or in the absence of any such intent. A player who fails to conduct themselves in the manner advised are on notice that any such statements or actions may be used as grounds for a ruling against them in the absence of other evidence to the contrary.

## 1.2.3 Don't be a Distraction

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

Backgammon is a social game, and banter between opponents can add to the enjoyment of the game, both for the players and the spectators. However, conversation that is not necessary for the smooth conduct of the match can be an unwelcome distraction to the other player. Similarly, some non-verbal acts can also be an unwelcome distraction. The key word is "unwelcome". A player has the right to ask their opponent or nearby spectators to limit or stop unnecessary conversation or other distractions. Any reasonable request to cease distracting behavior must be respected. If there is a dispute over the reasonability of any request to cease alleged distracting behavior, or a player's fails to respect such a request, the Tournament Director should be summoned. No player should feel intimidated about asking someone to limit distracting behavior or feel that they are causing trouble by making such a request or summoning the Tournament Director. Any situation that causes a player's tournament experience to be negatively impacted is a situation that should be resolved, and every Tournament Director will want the opportunity to address the matter when it arises.

## 1.2.4 Handling of Equipment

Players must at all times treat the playing equipment in a non-abusive manner.

## 1.2.5 Penalties

A player in breach of the above standards of behavior may be sanctioned in any manner considered just and appropriate by the Tournament Director including, but not limited to, disqualification and exclusion from the Tournament playing area.

## 1.3 STAFF

### 1.3.1 Tournament Directors

Tournaments must be supervised by one or more skilled and impartial tournament directors (each a "Tournament Director").

### 1.3.2 Ruling Committee

***The Director shall convene a ruling committee of qualified and disinterested players...***

A ruling committee (the "Ruling Committee") shall be formed as necessary, pursuant to section 5. The Ruling Committee must consist of knowledgeable and disinterested persons who are readily available at the Tournament and shall be selected at the sole discretion of the Tournament Director. The number of persons comprising the Ruling Committee is entirely at the Tournament Director's discretion and may vary each time that the Ruling Committee is formed; however, by definition, there must be at least two persons on any committee. When selecting members for a Ruling Committee, the Tournament Director must not appoint any person who is serving as either a Director or staff member for that tournament. In the interest of transparency, some Tournament Directors may identify the members of their Ruling Committee in advance via their tournament brochure or website or by announcement at the beginning of the Tournament. If circumstances do not permit one of these individuals to serve, the Tournament Director may freely substitute another qualified individual at any time, without prior notice.

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## 1.3.3 Monitors

***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.***

At the request of a player, or unsolicited, the Tournament Director may appoint a monitor for any match. The monitor will have responsibility and authority to draw attention to illegal actions, including but not limited to illegal moves, and otherwise to ensure that play proceeds in a fair and respectful manner. The monitor may track player break time and may suspend play to summon the Tournament Director. Both players may also, by mutual agreement, appoint a single individual as a monitor for their match. A match monitor may make rulings in any situation that arises. However, players may appeal any such ruling to the Tournament Director, whose judgment shall supersede that of the monitor. The appointment of a match monitor, and the failure of the monitor to observe an irregularity does not relieve the players of their obligation to point out and correct infractions of the rules as required by section 1.1.6.

Uncorrected irregularities are bad for the public perception of the game. The Tournament Director should make a reasonable attempt to find a volunteer to monitor the matches of greatest significance in the Tournament, such as the finals of the main event, especially when those matches are being streamed or otherwise recorded for viewing by the general public.

## 1.4 REGISTRATION

***The Director may bar a player from entering tournament events, or a lower skill division.***

### 1.4.1 Approval

All players who enter a Tournament must be approved by the Tournament Director. A player may be excluded at the Tournament Director's sole discretion with or without explanation, and without any right of the player to appeal.

### 1.4.2 Assignment to Higher Skill Divisions

In Tournaments with more than one skill division, a player may be barred from a lower skill division and be placed in a higher skill division at the sole discretion of the Tournament Director, and without any right of the player to appeal. However, any reassigned player may withdraw from the event in question without obligation.

## 1.5 OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

***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.***

While a match is in progress, players and spectators may speak in an Official Language, but they must not speak in any other language. English shall be an official language at all Tournaments. Other languages may additionally be designated an official language if required by law or if they are the predominant languages in use in the location where the Tournament is held.

Notwithstanding the above, players on a consulting doubles team are explicitly permitted to speak with one another in a language other than an Official Language.

## 1.6 SPECTATORS, SIGNALING, AND OTHER FORMS OF UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

### 1.6.1 Spectators

***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.***

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Spectators must generally observe tournament backgammon as quietly and unobtrusively as reasonably possible. Between games, the requirements for spectator silence are relaxed – for example, spectators may applaud after an exciting game. However, in no case should spectators make comments related to the past or future play of the match itself; they should walk away from the area to have any such conversation.

Spectators must not call attention to mistakes or illegal actions, nor ask questions or make comments related to play during a match except in the following cases: if a dispute arises and either the director or both players ask the spectators to assist in establishing the facts of the situation; between games to point out an error in score or setup of the checkers and doubling cube; or between games to point out that the game clock is still running. Since the current score is an essential part of a backgammon match position, an incorrectly recorded score at the start of a game is effectively an error in setup; therefore, between games, a spectator may point out an error in scoring under this rule – particularly when there is a discrepancy between score sheets. A match that is being played to the wrong match length is considered to have an error in score at all times, even before the first game has started.

This rule is generally intended to prevent influences by spectators that relate to and could conceivably affect the match or distract the players. As a social game, friendly banter involving spectators may be tolerated, provided that it is welcome by both players. A spectator must immediately comply with a request by either player to cease conversation or other acts that might be distracting.

In cases of perceived improprieties or other errors in game clock handling, spectators should immediately and privately alert the Tournament Director or another Tournament staff member. However, spectators will not be subject to sanctions under section [1.6.3](#), simply for failing to report suspected improprieties or errors in game clock handling. Even when not watching a match, persons in the tournament playing area should conduct conversations as quietly and unobtrusively as reasonably possible and should take care to have such conversations away from any matches in progress.

Players who are watching the match via live streaming or similar, may communicate any irregularities that they observe to the Tournament Director, the streaming technician, etc. They must not attempt to communicate directly with the players, since that lacks transparency and there might be a delay in the stream.

## 1.6.2 Signaling and Other Forms of Outside Help

***Signaling of any type between a spectator and a player is forbidden.***

While a match is in progress, spectators must not signal or otherwise lend assistance to the players in any way. Spectators should avoid any statement, sound or other action that might convey even the appearance of violating this rule. Even if not directed toward any player in particular, a spectator's perceptible reaction to an event occurring in the match, such as a gasp in reaction to a dice roll, can impart information to a player that they did not otherwise realize.

## 1.6.3 Penalties

Violation of sections [1.6.1](#) or [1.6.2](#) may result in any sanctions that the Tournament Director considers just and appropriate including, but not limited to, disqualification of the spectator(s) involved as well as the player (if the player knowingly sought or received outside assistance to gain an advantage) and expulsion from the Tournament playing area.

## 1.6.4 Requests

***A player may request that the Director bar a spectator from watching their match.***

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A player may at any time during a match ask one or more spectators to stop watching the match. If any spectator refuses, the player may ask the Tournament Director to bar that spectator. The Tournament Director may consent to the player's request, and such consent should not be unreasonably withheld.

## 1.7 DEFINITIONS

### 1.7.1 Preferences for Equipment and Play

**Required:** *use is required, no player choice;*  
**Preferred:** *use if either player insists;*  
**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.*

When playing a match, there are various choices to be made with regard to the usage of equipment and the manner in which play will be conducted. Sometimes players will have different preferences with regard to those choices. In many such cases, the rules will establish a default precedence between such choices as a means to both avoid dispute, as well as to inform players in advance how the tournament will operate.

The following terms are used where applicable throughout the Rules to identify the default precedence for deciding between valid competing preference resolution methods with regard to equipment and play, and by Directors when modifying those defaults. In general, these terms only govern the resolution of preference disputes at the beginning of the match. Absent any other statement to the contrary within the Rules, once that initial choice has been made, it may only be changed thereafter by mutual agreement at the start of a new game, typically in accordance with section [3.5](#).

#### 1.7.1.1 Required

Indicates that use of a particular type of equipment or manner of play is required and that players do not have a choice in the matter. Players must not agree to use any alternative choice at any time during the match unless specifically authorized by the Tournament Director.

#### 1.7.1.2 Preferred

Indicates that a particular type of equipment or manner of play will be used if either player chooses to do so. *Preferred* often indicates that this choice is encouraged; therefore, players should not hesitate to so choose, even if their opponent objects. Similarly, no player should be argumentative with an opponent who exercises an option to which they are entitled; these rules exist to avoid disputes, not to create them. A player who accedes to their opponent's request not to impose their right to a preference at the beginning of the match may do so under the condition that either player may unilaterally impose that preference later. If the opponent agrees to this condition, they are bound to honor it. Players should note any agreement on the score sheet to avoid a dispute.

#### 1.7.1.3 By Roll

Indicates that two (or more) choices regarding equipment or manner of play have equal precedence. If one player prefers one of these choices and the other player prefers the other choice, then the preference dispute will be resolved by rolling the dice in accordance with section [3.3](#). Absent any other statement to the contrary within the Rules, once that initial choice has been made, it may only be changed thereafter by mutual agreement at the start of a new game.

#### 1.7.1.4 If Agreed

Indicates that a particular type of equipment or manner of play will be used only if both players agree to such use. A player may propose conditions to their opponent on such use, including manner of use or variation of settings, which if not agreed by their opponent, the player may decline to agree to use the option. If the opponent agrees to those conditions, they are bound to adhere to that agreement unless the players mutually

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agree to modify the agreement. Players should note the terms of any agreement on the score sheet to avoid a dispute.

## 1.7.1.5 Per Player

Indicates that each player will choose the relevant equipment or manner of play of their preference for their own personal use. This means that there is no need to resolve any preference conflict because the usual expectation that both players will use the same kind of equipment or manner of play is not applicable in this case; the players are authorized to make different choices for themselves.

## 1.7.1.6 Imposed

Regardless of any Preference or Option status in effect, the Tournament Director may impose equipment or a manner of play on a match at any time, including during a game in progress (see section [3.5 - Change of Equipment](#)). Once imposed, players must not agree to use any alternative at any time during the match unless specifically authorized by the Tournament Director.

## 1.8 AIDS AND USE OF OTHER EQUIPMENT OR DEVICES

### 1.8.1 General

***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.***

Except as noted in this section, while a match is in progress and including breaks, players must not use or consult other players, books, articles, computer software programs, mobile phone applications, or any other electronic, mechanical, or written aid relating to backgammon, other than those necessary to keep score and time, or as a dice randomization device if first approved by the Director. However, during scheduled breaks in tournament play such as dinner breaks or overnight, it is understood that players may generally study backgammon, or discuss or review previous cube and checker plays with others, and that is acceptable so long as such activity does not include coaching, advice, or information that is clearly applicable to the rest of any match that is in progress.

A player objecting to the use of any aid or device, should first raise that objection with their opponent, and then if a dispute remains, to the Tournament Director, who shall adjudicate. If the Tournament Director determines that use of the disputed aid or device is normally authorized, they may make an exception to prohibit the use of such aid or device based on the circumstance of the particular case in accordance with the “narrowly tailored exception” clause of section [1.1](#). The director may similarly make an exception to permit the use of any device that is normally not permitted, but determined to be necessary for medical, legal, or other similarly essential reasons.

### 1.8.2 Position or Match Recording

#### 1.8.2.1 Recording Individual Positions

***If in use, a player’s clock must run while they take pictures, except during breaks.***

While a match is in progress and in order to record individual positions or an entire match, a player may use position cards, a camera (in any form), a video camera, or any similar recording aids. However, non-passive recording of positions that delay the normal flow of play should be kept within reason when a game clock is not in use; the Tournament Director may set hard limits or ban future recording if this privilege is abused. In matches played with a game clock, a position may be recorded only during the player’s own time or during a break in between games. The players must not stop the clock for purposes of recording a position. Such recorded positions must not be computer-analyzed or discussed with other players until after the match has concluded.

#### 1.8.2.2 Transcribing the Match

***A player must not self-transcribe unless they use a clock.***

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Transcribing a match by oneself (a third party is not doing the transcribing) using non-passive means for recording, such as with pen and paper, is a time intensive exercise which can potentially result in substantial delays to play. Therefore, any player wishing to self-transcribe their match must use a timed game clock with standard settings. If the opponent is permitted to decline using a timed game clock in that event, then if the player still wishes to self-transcribe, it is permitted to use the game clock for the match such that the transcribing player is timed, but the non-transcribing player is untimed in accordance with section 3.4.4.3; players should note “timed” and “untimed” on the scoresheet for the respective player. If a player wishes to carry out such a self-transcription by electronic means, their opponent must consent, and that consent may be withdrawn at any time.

The Tournament Director may appoint a third person to record a match by means of written notation, transcription software, video-recording, or a combination. Any such decision is not subject to appeal.

## 1.8.3 Headphones, Earbuds, Etc.

***Listening devices for music or noise cancelling are allowed, subject to Director review.***

While a match is in progress, a player may use listening devices such as headphones, earbuds, or similar for noise cancellation or music listening purposes. However, as with all rules, the Tournament Director has the power under section 1.1.4.3 to make a narrowly tailored exception and limit or disallow the use of such a device based on the circumstances of the particular case; any limitation imposed on listening device use must be in accordance with that section. A player who objects to headphone use by their opponent, and who believes that special circumstances exist in that particular case to justify constraining their use, may request relief from the Tournament Director who shall review and issue a ruling. Such a request may occur before or after the match has started. Examples of some circumstances that would justify making such an exception include: when sound from the device is audible to the opponent or to nearby players; when a player actively engages with the device to an extent that it becomes a distraction to the match; and when the Tournament Director believes that the chance that particular device might be used as an instrument of foul play in that particular match greatly exceeds the chance of foul play in a typical situation. The Tournament Director may initiate such a review regarding the use of any listening device in any match, without requiring an appeal from a player.

## 1.8.4 Mobile Phones

While a match is in progress, a player must not use a mobile phone except for purposes explicitly authorized by the Rules unless the opponent consents in each instance to the player using the mobile phone for another purpose. Notwithstanding such consent, the Tournament Director has discretion to prohibit any player from using a mobile phone at any time. Mobile phones should always be turned off or set to a silent or vibrate mode while in the Tournament playing area, and players should leave the playing area when speaking on the phone.

## 2 REGULATIONS

### 2.1 PLACE

***Matches must ... take place in the tournament playing area (non-smoking Preferred).***

All matches must be played in a tournament area designated by the Tournament Director unless the Tournament Director consents in advance. The choice of playing area is non-smoking Preferred; a match may be played in a designated smoking area only if both players agree to do so.

### 2.2 STARTING TIMES AND BREAKS

#### 2.2.1 Starting Times

***Matches must start, or resume following a scheduled suspension, at the designated time ... Unscheduled matches shall have a designated start time 10 minutes after both preceding matches have been completed.***

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All matches must begin at the scheduled times or as otherwise specified by the Tournament Director. If no starting time is explicitly scheduled or specified, then as a standard the designated starting time shall be 10 minutes after both preceding matches have completed. Note that this standard starting time is measured from the time of completion of the match, not from the time at which the players report the match result. It is recommended that Tournament staff explicitly post this start time next to the relevant match on the draw sheet, once the second preceding match has been completed in order to best ensure that there is no misunderstanding regarding expectations. A Tournament Director who believes that allowing more time between certain matches is warranted, can override the standard starting time at will simply by writing a later starting time for that match on the draw sheet.

Some in-progress matches may be suspended due to a scheduled recess in the tournament playing schedule, such as for meals or overnight. Those matches must resume at the next scheduled time for resumption of play, unless a different resume time for the match is posted.

In general, the tournament schedule should be prepared by the Tournament Director and disseminated in advance via the tournament brochure and/or website, as well as being posted prominently in the playing area. Starting times for individual rounds or matches may also be specified on or near the draw sheet for the applicable event. Special side events may be created and started at will, without an explicit start time being specified, however players registered for such events may be denied entry if they are unavailable to start play when needed.

The Tournament Director has the sole discretion to prioritize matches from different events when there is a scheduling conflict. Players having multiple matches that are ready to start should generally presume that matches from the main event take priority but are responsible for confirming priority with the Tournament Director, and for proactively finding opponents and starting lower priority matches after higher priority matches are completed.

## 2.2.2 Breaks

***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.***

Breaks should generally only be taken between games but, in exceptional circumstances, may be taken during a game. Players must be sensitive to the tournament schedule and are expected to make every attempt to play straight through shorter matches without taking a break, and to avoid taking breaks during the first hour of longer matches, as well as when resuming a match after a scheduled recess in play like a dinner break.

The intent of this rule is to provide each player with a flexible hourly budget of total time to use for breaks in quantity and duration as needed. Each player accrues a reserve of break time at a rate of 6 minutes per hour that has elapsed since either the start time of the match, or the time at which the match resumed after a scheduled recess. Each player's budget for break time therefore equates to approximately 10% of the total elapsed time of the match. This break time reserve accrues continuously, from the moment that the match starts (or resumes), so that for every 10 seconds of wall clock time that passes during the match, each player earns an additional 1 second of break time. A player's break time reserve is reduced by the duration of any break called by that player. If the player's remaining break time reserve goes to zero, that player is causing a match delay for as long as they remain on break. A player can use their break time reserve in any way they choose; they can take a single large break, or many small breaks of varying duration. Only the total break time used matters. When a match in progress is suspended due to a scheduled recess in the tournament's playing schedule, such as a dinner break, the break time reserve of both players is reset to zero when they resume the match; any unused break time from before the recess is lost.

As an example, if a player does not take any break time for the first 90 minutes of their match, they will have accrued a total of 9 minutes of break time. They may then take a 9-minute break without causing any match

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delay. In fact, since break time accrues based on elapsed wall-clock time rather than playing time, break time accrues during breaks themselves; so that player could actually take a 10-minute break after 90 minutes without causing delay since they will earn another minute of break time during that break itself (100 minutes total will have elapsed, during which 10 minutes of break time will have accrued). However, if the player remains on break for a total of 15 minutes instead of 10 minutes, they will have caused 5 minutes of delay to the match.

Both players should indicate on their scoresheet both the wall clock time and any game clock times, and the player requesting the break, at the start of any break. Any situation where a player leaves the board is considered to be a break unless doing so is a necessary part of the game (for example, to replace defective equipment, or to summon the director during a dispute).

Players should, as a courtesy, give their opponent an estimate of how long they expect to be away on break; however, such an estimate is not binding. Absent any statement estimating a shorter break duration, a player may presume that the duration of a break called by their opponent will be 2 minutes in length, after which they should be back at the board, ready to resume play when their opponent returns from break. However, if the non-breaking player leaves and the breaking player returns from their break first, the non-breaking player shall then be considered to have called their own break, beginning at the later of 2 minutes after the initial break began and the time that their opponent returned from their break to the board and was ready to resume play, provided that the opponent remains so located and ready when the player returns.

Players should report instances where they believe that allowed break time has been exceeded to the Tournament Director who will then be in a position to monitor the situation and enforce the rule.

## 2.2.3 Exceptions

The Tournament Director may make an exception to the previous sub-sections: 2.2.1 - Starting Times and 2.2.2 - Breaks, if particular concerns to one or both players warrant doing so or if the match is of special significance. The Director should directly inform both players in advance of any such change. Note that while changing a published start time is an exception needing reasonable justification, changing the standard start time of 10 minutes after the preceding matches are finished is not an exception, since the Rules already permit the director to simply post an explicit start time, which takes precedence over the standard time.

## 2.2.4 Penalties

***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.***

Any breach of the rules for starting times and breaks may result in penalty points assessed by the Tournament Director. Penalty points are assessed to a player based upon the cumulative delay to the match caused by that player, either because they are not present and have not started the match at the starting time or resumed the match at the resume time after a recess in the playing schedule, or because they have exceeded their permitted break time. If a player has caused ten (10) minutes of cumulative delay to their match, then one penalty point will be assessed, after which an additional penalty point will be assessed for each subsequent five-minute delay. When a player is assessed penalty points equal to more than half of the entire match length, automatic match forfeiture will result. Cumulative delay includes time both before the start of the match as well as during breaks, so a player who is 8 minutes late to the start of their match will be assessed the first penalty point after exceeding allowed break time by 2 minutes.

A player who foresees a late arrival to the tournament for a scheduled start or resumption of play should contact the Tournament Director in advance to explain the situation and provide an estimated arrival time. Based on the explanation and the needs and schedule of the tournament, the Tournament Director might have some leeway and may choose to post a later start/resume time for the match; they may also choose to start another match for

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which the opponent is needed. No such accommodation for lateness should be expected, however failure to communicate with the Tournament Director will help ensure that no such accommodation is granted.

Players who fail to promptly report their match result are on notice that the starting time of their next match is based upon when the preceding matches finished play - not the time at which they finally report the result. A player who takes a 20-minute break before reporting their result might discover upon returning that they have already been assessed a penalty point, no differently than if they had taken that same 20-minute break after reporting their result. Furthermore, a player who fails to report their result promptly is in violation of section [4.7 - Reporting Results](#) and may be subject to additional penalties.

***Stricter policies may apply when times are posted in advance.***

Some types of events have rigid or tight playing schedules that cannot tolerate matches starting later than their scheduled time. In such events, if the starting time of the bracket, or of a particular match round is posted in advance, the Tournament Director may establish a stricter policy for the assessment of penalty points or forfeits, provided that the policy is posted and announced in advance. Players must not be assessed any penalty as long as they are ready to play within 5 minutes of the posted start time. Otherwise, penalties are at the Director's discretion; the first penalty may be as severe as immediate forfeit. Typical examples of situations for which this might be applicable are Swiss tournament formats, where each Swiss round has the same scheduled start time for all players, and in elimination formats, for the first round of a non-progressive Last Chance flight.

## 2.2.5 Leaving the Playing Area Between Matches

***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.***

Players not involved in a match who leave the tournament area for more than 10 minutes must first post their name and contact information on a sign-out sheet or, if a sign-out sheet is not in use, obtain the permission of the Tournament Director. Players are ultimately responsible for being reachable when the Tournament Director attempts to contact them at the phone number or room provided. Unreachable players are still at risk of being assessed penalty points for causing delay to a match.

Players who are entered in side-events are responsible for proactively completing their matches in those events. A player who is either eliminated from the main event, or who has a substantial wait before their next match, should proactively check the readiness of any side-event matches and opponents that are dependent on them before leaving the playing area for an extended period of time. Players do not relieve themselves from this responsibility to proactively monitor the status of their dependent matches by using the sign-out sheet. Players who sign out should return to the playing area to check status at least once an hour and should obtain direct permission from the Tournament Director if they have a need for a more extended absence. Similarly, a player who is ready for a match but observes that their opponent has signed out or has otherwise left the playing area should not take this as license to sign out and take an extended break themselves; they should inform tournament staff that they are ready to play and ask that their opponent be summoned to the playing area. Players judged to have abused the sign-out privilege may lose that privilege and/or be penalized accordingly.

## 2.3 SLOW PLAY

### 2.3.1 Mitigation

***The Director may change or impose equipment at any time, including clocks for slow play.***

At any time, if a match not using a game clock is being played at an unreasonably slow pace, the Tournament Director may order that the remainder of the match be played using a game clock, in which case delay time and each player's respective reserve time will be set based on the current match score in accordance with the provisions of section [3.4.4.4](#). Similarly, a clock may be imposed on any match, at any time due to slow play in

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previous matches, or simply because the event has fallen behind schedule. Clocks may be imposed by the Tournament Director on matches in any event, regardless of that event's stated clock policy. Standard clock settings for the particular type of event should apply when imposing clocks (see section [3.4.4](#)). The Tournament Director's decision to impose a clock is not subject to appeal because they have the absolute authority to do so without reason or justification. However, a player may make their case to have the clock settings modified if they believe that special circumstances exist, such as a disability, that warrant an exception being made.

## 2.3.2 Requests

In the event of an opponent's slow play, either player may request that the Tournament Director order that the remainder of the match be played using a game clock under section [2.3.1](#). The Tournament Director should generally grant all such requests that are made within a Clocks Preferred event.

## 3 PREPARATION

### 3.1 PLAYING BOARD

Subject to availability, a player may insist that the playing board, when opened, be a minimum of 44 centimeters (17.3 inches) by 55 centimeters (21.7 inches) and a maximum of 66 centimeters (26 inches) by 88 centimeters (34.6 inches). If such a regulation-sized board is only available after a match has started, a player may insist that the non-regulation sized board be replaced at that time. If the opponent objects, the Tournament Director should impose such equipment under section [3.5](#). The board may only be replaced between games. All dice and doubling cubes not in use should be removed from the board area before the start of the match.

### 3.2 DICE

#### 3.2.1 In General

***Precision dice are Preferred over non-precision.***

Subject to availability, precision dice shall be used instead of non-precision dice unless both players agree to use non-precision dice. For purposes of these Rules, "precision dice" are defined as dice that are manufactured as precise cubes with rounded corners, and equally weighted on all sides so as to maximize the randomness of rolls. If precision dice are not available at the start of a match, a player may insist that the dice in use be replaced as soon as precision dice become available even if that occurs during a game. If the opponent objects, the Tournament Director should impose the precision dice under section [3.5](#).

#### 3.2.2 Selection and Use

***Use of two dice is Preferred over four dice.***

Matches played with a game clock are always played with two dice. Matches played without a game clock may be played with either two dice or four dice. Two dice are Preferred over four dice; two dice are used unless both players agree to play with four dice. There are many advantages for both players to share the same set of dice, most notably the avoidance of disputes when using four dice regarding what the dice roll was; the dispute only becoming apparent after the turn has ended and the dice have been lifted, thus destroying the evidence. Even when no game clock is available, the use of two dice rather than four is encouraged.

At the start of every match, the players shall select four dice for use during the match, except for situations described in section [3.2.1](#), and section [3.5.1](#).

If two dice are to be shared by the players, each player will select one die from among the four. If each player will have two of their own dice, then the players shall take turns selecting their dice, one at a time. If only two of the four dice are in use during a game, the remaining two dice must still be present at the board in case either player demands to mix and re-select dice pursuant to section [4.1.3](#).

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## 3.2.3 Dice randomization devices

***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.***

### 3.2.3.1 General

A dice randomization device must be used at all times; a die must not be cast directly from a hand to the playing surface. The device must be used as designed and intended, exclusively for the purpose of ensuring the production of random rolls of the dice. There are several kinds of dice randomization devices. Cups and baffle boxes are expressly allowed by the Rules. The use of other types of dice randomization devices may be approved by the Tournament Director. The precedence between different types of dice randomization devices are as stated in the rule above. In case of a dispute, the device with the higher precedence (1 is highest) shall be used, if available. However, if each player wishes to use a different type of approved dice-randomizing device to produce their own rolls, they may do so provided that their opponent agrees. For example, if both players agree to the arrangement, one player may roll directly from lipped cups onto the board, while the other player rolls through a baffle box.

### 3.2.3.2 Cups

Subject to availability, a player may insist that cups with an interior lip be used in preference to those without an interior lip. If cups with an interior lip are not available at the start of a match, a player may insist that the non-lipped cups in use be replaced when a dice randomization device of higher precedence becomes available, even if that occurs during a game. If the opponent objects, the Tournament Director should impose such equipment under section [3.5](#).

### 3.2.3.3 Baffle Boxes

***When using a baffle box, the dice are dropped ... from a cup (Preferred) or hand ...***

#### 3.2.3.3.1 General

A baffle box is a device, typically wood or plastic, through which dice are dropped from a player's cup or hand in order to randomize a roll. The dice are deflected repeatedly and thereby randomized as they fall through the baffle box onto the playing surface. The use of cups for dropping the dice into the baffle box is Preferred; if players are unable to agree on whether to permit dropping the dice directly from a hand into the baffle box, then cups shall be used. It is permitted for one player to use a cup and the other player to use their hand if both players agree to allow that.

#### 3.2.3.3.2 Construction and Approval

The baffle box must be properly constructed. If a player requests that the baffle box be approved by the Tournament Director, it must be approved before the match is started or continued.

#### 3.2.3.3.3 Placement

When a baffle box is in use, it should be positioned off the playing surface on the opposite side of the players' home boards. The home boards tend to be more crowded with checkers, so the opposite side should be used for rolling from the baffle box. However, if in accordance with section [3.2.3.1](#), the players have agreed that only one player will use a baffle box while the other player will use a different dice randomization device, then the player using a baffle box must have the baffle box positioned on their right-hand side; the player using the dice randomization device of highest precedence shall then have the choice regarding which side of the board will be setup as the home boards.

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## 3.2.3.4 Other Dice Randomization Devices

The foregoing provisions of section [3.2.3.3](#) shall likewise apply to the extent practicable, to the use of other reliable forms of dice randomizing devices approved for Tournament play by the Tournament Director whether such devices are currently in use or are developed in the future. The Tournament Director may approve the use of a dice randomization device generally throughout the Tournament, or under limited circumstances, including for specific individuals or matches. Approved electronic dice randomization devices will randomize virtual dice rather than physical dice, and that shall not be considered a violation of the rules.

## 3.3 PREFERENCES

***All other preference disputes, including but not limited to seating, direction of play, and choice of game equipment, 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.***

Players will roll high dice to settle all preference disputes before the match starts. There is no specific requirement for how they must do this, as long as both players agree on what disputes any given roll is deciding. However, if the Tournament Director is called to resolve a dispute, they shall require the players to provide a complete enumeration of all preference issues for which a dispute remains. The player who rolls the highest total dice roll (doublets not counting extra) shall be given their choice as to all such identified disputes. If any previously unidentified preference dispute arises after the Tournament Director has mediated a settlement, the Tournament Director has discretion on how to handle the new dispute. In case of any dispute over equipment, it is possible that a player is being unreasonable and the Tournament Director may impose equipment accordingly without requiring a dice roll, pursuant to section [3.5](#).

## 3.4 GAME CLOCKS

***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.***

### 3.4.1 Purpose

A “game clock” consists of a single device containing two adjacent clocks with buttons to stop one clock while starting the other, so that the two clocks never run simultaneously. The game clock’s purpose is two-fold: providing a means for players to signify the end of turns and tracking the amount of time that remains available for each player.

Game clocks serve as a means for players to signify the end of their turn by pressing the button nearest to them. The player whose turn it is to act is always the player whose time is decrementing. Additionally, on some clocks, the physical position of the buttons – whether in an up, down, or neutral state, provides similar visual feedback indicating whose turn it is, even if the clock is turned off.

Game clocks display the remaining discretionary thinking time that a player has available to use for the remainder of the match. This ensures that play occurs at a reasonable pace that is not frustrating to opponents and spectators, maintains a level playing field between opponents, and ensures that neither player overly delays the tournament.

For more information on the proper use of a game clock, and regarding penalties assessed when a player’s time expires, see section [4.3](#).

### 3.4.2 Construction and Approval

The game clock must be properly constructed and properly functioning. If a player requests that the game clock be approved by the Tournament Director, it must be approved before the match starts or resumes. Otherwise,

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play of the match will continue using the game clock in question subject only to a possible change of equipment pursuant to section 3.5.

## 3.4.3 Placement

When a game clock is in use, it should be positioned on the same side as the players' home boards.

## 3.4.4 Preferences and Time Control Settings

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.

### 3.4.4.1 Preferences

The method of determining whether a timed game clock will be used for a match varies with the type of event. In the tournament's main event and major skill divisional side events, the highest skill division (Open, Championship, Masters, etc.) is Clocks Preferred, meaning that either player may insist that a game clock be used for their match. Doubles events are Clocks Required, meaning that game clocks must always be used, regardless of player preference. All other events are Clocks If Agreed, meaning that a game clock is used only if both players agree to do so.

When players agree to use a game clock in a Clocks If Agreed event, they may agree to use the standard clock settings, or any looser setting (more time); they may also agree to use an untimed game clock solely for the purpose of designating end of turn. Players using an untimed game clock should note that on their score sheet (for example "Untimed" or "UT") to avoid a dispute in the event of a time expiration.

Players are generally responsible for bringing a game clock to any tournament in which they will enter an event requiring game clock use or wish to exercise a preference to use one. Game clock apps can be obtained inexpensively for mobile devices and a mobile device may be used during matches for the purpose of serving as a game clock. Players are responsible for arranging to borrow a game clock if they do not have one when required, no differently from players who attend a tournament without bringing a backgammon board and face an opponent who doesn't have one either. If a Tournament Director imposes a clock on a match in an event that does not require clocks, then the Tournament Director is responsible for providing the clock.

### 3.4.4.2 Time Control

All matches played using game clocks must use the time delay method known as 'Simple Delay' which operates as follows: each player is initially allotted a certain amount of discretionary thinking time ("reserve time") for use during the match – typically specified as the fixed number of minutes to be multiplied by the match length to obtain total reserve time; however, the reserve time may also be specified by giving the total number of minutes allotted for the entire match, or as a combination of the two representations (for example 2 minutes per point plus 1 additional minute). Each player is additionally permitted a certain amount of time per move before the player's reserve time will start to decrease ("delay time"). The delay time cannot be accumulated; any delay time that is not used for that move is lost. A player who moves within the delay time therefore consumes no reserve time, and can play indefinitely, without the clock expiring, for as long as they continue to do so.

### 3.4.4.3 Setting the Game Clock at the Beginning of a Match

The major consideration when selecting the delay time to be used for an event is the amount of time within which the players in the given event can comfortably complete the tasks of making a play without deep thinking – they must pick up the dice; shake and roll the dice; scan the board for candidate plays; choose a reasonable play (not necessarily the best play that they might make with unlimited time); move the checkers; and hit the clock. Players

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of lower skill levels will on average scan and filter candidate plays slower than those of higher skill levels, and so it is reasonable to allow them a longer delay time. That players in lower skill divisions are commonly expected to play slower is evidenced by the fact that match lengths in lower skill-level events are almost always shorter than in top skill-level events. In doubles matches, a longer delay time should be selected, since the player moving the checkers has the task of confirming the selected play with their partner, in addition to the normal tasks of making a move.

In singles matches, each player's starting reserve time will be equal to two (2) minutes per point (for example, each player will receive eighteen (18) minutes of reserve time at the start of a 9-point match). In the tournament's main event and major skill divisional side events, for the highest skill division (Open, Championship, Masters, etc.), each player's delay time per move shall be twelve (12) seconds; in other skill divisional events (Advanced, Intermediate, Limited, Novice, Beginner, etc.), each player's delay time per move shall be fifteen (15) seconds. The delay time for all other events shall be set at the Tournament Director's discretion, with twelve (12) seconds being the standard delay time if not otherwise specified.

In doubles matches, each player's starting reserve time will be equal to three (3) minutes per point, and each player's delay time per move shall be fifteen (15) seconds.

In all other side events, including so-called "speed gammon" events, the Tournament Director has discretion to determine the appropriate amount of reserve time and delay time consistent with the best interests of the event and the Tournament as a whole.

As a means of protecting against unnoticed clock expirations, particularly for players who are inexperienced with clock play, the Tournament Director may authorize game clocks to initially be set for a reserve time that is one minute less than the full reserve time applicable to the match, holding the remaining minute in trust in case it is needed. Then upon any expiration, the affected player shall summon the Tournament Director, who shall disburse the held minute of reserve time by adding it to their game clock and warn that player that another expiration will result in the loss of the match.

When players agree to use an untimed game clock solely for the purpose of designating the end of turns, the clock's sole purpose is to visually indicate whose turn it is. The untimed game clock may be used in a non-running state if the buttons physically toggle between an up and down state when pressed. Alternatively, the untimed game clock may be used in a running state, set with an arbitrarily large time control. Any expiration of an untimed game clock is without effect or penalty; the proper response to an expiration is either to add more time, or to reset the game clock, as if to start a new match.

### 3.4.4.4 Setting the Game Clock When Introduced During a Match

If a game clock is introduced in the middle of a match already in progress, whether by mutual agreement, or if imposed by the Tournament Director pursuant to section [3.5](#), the game clock's reserve time is set to the same number of minutes for each player, and is computed as the product of the Partial Match Length that remains to be completed, and the number of Minutes Per Point of match length applicable for clocked matches in this event. The programming of any fractional number of minutes may be avoided by adjusting the calculated reserve time up or down to the next whole number of minutes.

Partial Match Length =  $(RA+RB) / 2$ ,

where RA is the number of points remaining for player A to win the match and RB is the number of points remaining for player B to win the match. Note that at the beginning of the match, Partial Match Length equals the match length. For example, at a 2-away, 7-away score, Partial Match Length =  $(2+7) / 2 = 4.5$ .

Reserve Time = Partial Match Length \* Minutes Per Point

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## 3.5 CHANGE OF EQUIPMENT

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

### 3.5.1 General

The Tournament Director may change the equipment used at any time, without any obligation to provide a reason. Therefore, the imposition of equipment is not subject to appeal. The players are only permitted to change equipment while a match is in progress (a) if the equipment is defective; (b) between games, if the players are in mutual agreement; or (c) pursuant to the provisions of section [3.1](#), section [3.2.1](#), or section [3.2.3.2](#).

### 3.5.2 Game Clocks and Dice Randomization Devices

A game clock may be imposed on a match by the Tournament Director at any time, for any reason (also see section [2.3 - Slow Play](#)). Notwithstanding the general player option (as opposed to player obligation) to replace defective equipment, a game clock or dice randomization device that is clearly operating improperly must be replaced immediately. The Tournament Director shall set the remaining times on the substitute game clock for each player based on all available information or, if such information does not permit individual remaining times, in accordance with the provisions of section [3.4.4.4](#). If a player objects to replacing the defective equipment, the Tournament Director should impose new equipment under section [3.5](#).

## 4 THE GAME

### 4.1 DICE AND ROLLS

#### 4.1.1 Random Dice Rolls

***Dice must not be manipulated.***

Dice must be used solely for purposes of generating uniform random numbers ranging from 1 to 6. Any other use of the dice is a most serious violation of these Rules and the spirit of the game. The word “manipulated” in this context means exerting some level of skillful influence over the dice with the intent to benefit. That is not limited to affecting the numbers on the dice; it can also include influencing whether or not a rolled die is valid. Simple reaction to a flying die that results in contact and alteration of the die’s path, but without accompanying intent to benefit from the outcome is not manipulation.

#### 4.1.2 Handling of Dice

***A player should: ... announce the roll before repositioning dice.  
Without notice of repositioning, ....***

Touching the dice while they are live is discouraged. For purposes of these Rules, the dice are considered “live” when the turn in progress has yet to be completed. When necessary, however, the player on turn may slide the dice across the surface of the board to make room for moving the checkers. The player on turn should notify the opponent of the intent to reposition the dice before doing so. To avoid confusion and dispute, the player repositioning the dice, should announce the dice roll before touching them, and then hold the dice by their side faces while moving them, taking care that the top die face remains in plain view at all times. Failure to follow this protocol might end the offending player’s turn; see section [4.1.7.3 - End of Turn / Playing with Four Dice](#).

#### 4.1.3 Change of Dice

A player may require that all four dice be mixed before any game of the match. In that case, the player who has made the demand shall shake all four dice simultaneously in a single cup and roll them. The players shall then take turns selecting dice, starting with the player who did not demand the mixing of dice. Once a change of dice has occurred, neither player may require another change of dice until that game is completed.

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## 4.1.4 Valid Rolls

### 4.1.4.1 Producing Rolls Using a Dice Cup (No Baffle Box)

***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”.***

In matches played using dice cups, without a baffle box, the dice must be shaken vigorously in a cup and then rolled together out of the cup onto the playing surface of the board, on the roller's right-hand side of the bar. While rolling, the dice should not touch the roller's hand. The dice must exit the cup at a height that is at least 2.5 cm, or 1 inch above the playing surface. The dice must roll freely out of the cup at or about the same time; specifically, both dice must have emerged from the cup before either die has touched the board or checkers. If any of the foregoing does not occur, the roll shall be deemed invalid and retaken. If in the process of rolling, the dice cup contacts the playing surface (excluding an accidental dropping of the dice cup), then it should be ruled that the roll did not occur from the minimum required height. A roll is not invalidated simply because a die made contact with objects other than game equipment along its path (even if outside of the board), or if the dice cup was accidentally dropped onto the playing surface as part of the natural motion of rolling the dice. If the dice cup (or any other foreign object) is dropped later, after a die has come to rest, and interferes with the resting die, the number on the die prior to this interference shall prevail. A roll is not automatically invalidated if a die makes contact with a person, however, if there is uncertainty about whether the random outcome was affected by such contact, the ruling should tend to be against the player who created the uncertainty.

### 4.1.4.2 Producing Rolls Using a Baffle Box

#### 4.1.4.2.1 Generally

***When using a baffle box, the dice are dropped together from a cup ... or hand into the baffle box.***

In matches played using a baffle box, the dice must be dropped together, either from a cup, or directly from one of the player's hands into the baffle box. Shaking the dice is allowed, but it is not required. The dice must be dropped at or about the same time; specifically, both dice must have entered the baffle box before either die has exited from the baffle box. The dice must come to rest within the playing area of the board, on that side of the bar adjacent to the baffle box. If any of the foregoing does not occur, the roll shall be deemed invalid and retaken.

#### 4.1.4.2.2 The Opening Roll

***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.***

The opening roll shall be handled as a special case in matches using a baffle box. Players must not individually drop a single die through the baffle box; this method is prone to creating disputes. There are two permitted ways to produce the opening roll (method 1 shall be used unless both players agree to use method 2):

1. The players may roll conventionally using dice cups, rolling on opposite sides of the bar, without using a baffle box for the opening roll only.
2. At the beginning of the match, the players shall each preselect a die of a different color that will represent them during all future opening rolls. Then, for the opening roll of each game, one and only one of the two players shall drop both dice through the baffle box. The opening roll is awarded to the player who had preselected the color of the higher numbered die. It is recommended that as a mnemonic, a player chooses a die color to match the color of their checkers to the extent possible. At the beginning of the match, the players should agree upon a method for determining which player will roll the dice for each opening roll. It is recommended that the loser of the prior game rolls in the next game rather than alternating since there is no need to remember who rolled in the prior game.

### 4.1.4.3 Validity of a Dice Roll

***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.***

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The dice must come to rest within the playing area of the board, on the same side of the bar as rolled. In cases of uncertainty, a die has “come to rest” once it has stopped moving for at least two (2) seconds. Each individual die must come to rest either on the playing field, or on top of one or more checkers, but not both. If one die comes to rest on top of the other, it does not meet the requirement of being on the playing field or checkers. This test applies only to the final resting place of the dice; it does not matter where a die had travelled, or what it had contacted along its path, provided that there was no attempt made to manipulate the dice as defined in section [4.1.1](#). If any of the foregoing does not occur, the roll shall be deemed invalid and retaken.

The word “flat” does not appear in the rule because the word is inherently confusing in the context of horizontal surfaces that are not perfect planes. Flatness is therefore not a requirement for validity. Instead, there are three specific tests for invalidity. Given that both dice have validly come to rest as required above, then the roll shall nevertheless be deemed invalid and retaken if any of the following conditions apply to either die:

- The die is **supported by a vertical surface**. The side rails of the board or bear-off tray, the bar, a side face of the other die, and the side face of any checker are vertical surfaces. A die is supported by a vertical surface if the die would drop by even the slightest amount if that vertical surface were suddenly erased from existence. Imperfections and contours of the playing surface or the tops of checkers, or anything else that cause those horizontal surfaces to deviate from a true plane are not considered vertical surfaces. Examples of such imperfections and contours to horizontal surfaces include stitched on points, points that are peeling up, finger dips in checkers, and raised edges of checkers. In cases where a die is in contact with a vertical surface, support is most often indicated visually by the die lifting off of or falling from the horizontal surface. For cases where it is not possible to tell by eye whether vertical support exists, a destructive physical test may be applied as the last resort by the Tournament Director. To test if a die on the playing surface is vertically supported, the die is pushed downward on its top face, near the vertical surface in question. If the die is felt to move downward to a new resting position, then it was vertically supported. To test if a die on top of a checker or checkers is vertically supported, the checker or checkers on which it rests are carefully slid on the playing surface ever so slightly away from the vertical surface in question. If the die is visually observed to drop by any amount, then it was vertically supported. Without convincing evidence of vertical support, the ruling should be that no vertical support exists. A die that is vertically supported is invalid.
- The die is **balanced on its edge or corner**. This refers to a die that is perfectly balanced, with a single edge or corner being its only contact with the playing surface or the top of a checker. Normally, such a die quickly tips over and lands on a face, but it might balance for long enough to be considered at-rest. A die so balanced is invalid.
- The die **descends below the top surface of all checkers on which it rests**. This typically refers to a die that is supported by the tops of two or more checkers but is falling off of the checkers into the space between them. A die might straddle or be supported by the tops of multiple checkers, but if any part of the die has descended below the tops of all of the checkers, then it satisfies this condition and is invalid. A die which is touching both the top edge of a checker and the playing surface satisfies this condition and is invalid. A die which straddles two or more checkers of varying heights, while remaining fully above the top surface of the lowest checker does not satisfy this condition – that height variation is considered to be an imperfection in the plane of the horizontal surface of the checker tops.

## 4.1.5 Equipment changes

As per section [3.5.1](#), the Tournament Director may order that the remainder of a match and/or subsequent matches involving any player(s) be completed using different dice, a baffle box, or other alternative dice randomizing device. No inference of player misconduct should be drawn from the Tournament Director ordering the player(s) to do so.

## 4.1.6 Requests

If a player observes a pattern of improper dice rolling or has concern about dice rolls not being entirely random, the player may request that the Tournament Director (a) order that the remainder of the match be played using a baffle box or other alternative dice randomizing device provided that one is available, or (b) appoint a match

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monitor, or (c) order that the dice used for the match be replaced. Subject to the Tournament Director's duty to investigate and impose sanctions if appropriate, the Tournament Director should undertake to accommodate the player's request for a remedy regardless of whether the Tournament Director believes that a violation of these Rules has actually occurred. No inference of player misconduct should be drawn under such circumstances.

## 4.1.7 End of Turn

### 4.1.7.1 Using a Game Clock

***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.***

When a game clock is in use, even if solely to identify the end of each player's turn, a player signifies the end of their turn by pressing the clock button nearest them. This stops the player's time and activates the opponent's time. If the opponent can neither make a valid move nor double, the player must still hit the clock to signify the end of their turn and wait for the opponent to hit the clock to end their turn. Aside from clearly delineating the turns, this ensures that the player receives a full delay time for each move. The rules of backgammon do not permit a player to pass their turn. If a player can potentially make a valid move but signals the end of their turn prior to rolling the dice, then the turn has not actually occurred as required; the opponent must inform the player of the irregularity, hit the clock to restart the player's time and the player shall then properly begin their turn by rolling the dice.

If a player fails to activate the opponent's time, the affected player's lost reserve time shall be fully restored, upon detection of the clock error (because the original player never validly ended their turn by activating the opponent's clock). Note that while the player is at fault for failing to hit the clock, the opponent is equally at fault for failing to immediately point out the infraction as required by section [1.1](#).

If a player both activates the opponent's time to end their turn and picks up the dice, the game clock shall be stopped, the dice shall be handed to the player on roll, any reserve time lost by the player on roll shall be restored, and the delay time shall be reset to the full amount before reactivating the time of the player on roll.

When restoring lost reserve time, the players may agree upon the size of a fair adjustment and apply the correction to the clock. Otherwise, they shall summon the Tournament Director to adjudicate. While the fair adjustment can only be determined with the knowledge of the facts regarding the number and nature of moves played without hitting the clock, a few generalities apply to any such correction. The lost reserve time is exactly equal to the amount of delay time that would have been used had the players been hitting the clock to end turns. It is reasonable to presume that the average amount of reserve time lost per move will not be less than 7 seconds, nor can it ever be more than the per-move delay time. Moves played during a close-out will tend to be straightforward, without significant thinking time being required, and in the situation at hand, no additional time was consumed to hit the clock. Therefore, it should be estimated that on average, 7 seconds of reserve time was lost per move, if there is no other information to suggest that a larger number is more appropriate for the circumstance. It is also necessary to determine or obtain a best estimate for the number of turns that were not properly ended by hitting the clock. The number of seconds of reserve time to be added back is then the average number of seconds lost per move times the number of turns for which the clock was not hit. For example, if it is believed that 5 moves were played without hitting the clock and the clock was finally hit on move 6, then there would be  $5 * 7 = 35$  seconds added back to the player's reserve time.

For further information regarding errors in game clock management, see section [4.3.3](#).

### 4.1.7.2 Playing with Two Dice (Untimed)

***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.***

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When playing with two dice in an untimed match, the preferred means to signify the end of turns is by using an untimed game clock in accordance with section 3.4.4.3. Subject to availability, an untimed game clock shall be used to signify the end of turns unless both players agree not to do so.

When an untimed game clock is used, turns must be ended as described in section [4.1.7.1 - Using a Game Clock](#), without concern for the actual amount of time displayed. The only concern is to ensure that at all times, the game clock clearly indicates which player is on turn – either by the position of its buttons in an up or down state, or by virtue of which of the two clocks are currently running.

When a game clock is not in use, a player taps the bar to signify the end of their turn. Note that the bar should be tapped to end the turn - not the playing field. Aside from the mechanical difference of tapping the bar instead of hitting the game clock, the same protocol shall be followed as if a game clock were being used to end turns.

The bar should be tapped with the fingers of an open hand, away from the edge of the board to convey the clearest signal of intent to end the turn. The rule specifies tapping the bar instead of the playing field to end the turn because the hand moving the checkers is normally in close proximity to the playing field. Additionally, a player may commonly touch the playing field as an aid to visualization. Thus, there is a greater chance of a dispute occurring due to a touch of the playing field that is not intended to end the turn. There is also a greater chance that an intentional tap of the playing field might not be seen and cause delay. While players might commonly understand and interpret tapping of the playing field as an end of turn, tapping the bar is the best practice that should be followed, and players are encouraged to ask their opponents to do so. Any dispute that arises because a player tapped the playing field after making a legal move should tend to be decided against the player who so tapped if they have often been tapping the playing field to end turns, and in their favor if they have been consistently tapping the bar to end turns. In the case of a dispute over whether a player's contact with the board has signaled the intent to end their turn, the moment at which the player who claims that they did not end their turn had first evidenced an objection to the lifting of the dice by their opponent is key. If a legal play had been made, and the first evidence of objection occurred after the opponent had rolled the dice and either die had hit the playing surface, it should be ruled that the turn had been ended; otherwise, it should be ruled that the turn had not been ended - the original dice roll shall be restored, and the player shall be permitted to complete their turn.

Unless either player objects, a player may end their turn by lifting the dice if and only if their opponent is closed out and has no access to the doubling cube. If the closed-out player has cube access, they may explicitly grant permission to skip the exchange of taps for the duration of the close-out. Neither player should be penalized simply for failing to follow the proper turn-ending protocol; this is commonly accepted practice. But players should consider that this increases the likelihood of a dispute due to an illegal move and creates bad habits for when a timed game clock is in use. If a dispute occurs, a player who failed to follow proper turn-ending protocol will be at a disadvantage.

## 4.1.7.3 Playing with Four Dice

***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.***

When playing with four dice, a player picks up their dice to signify the end of their turn. If a player makes a legal move and then touches either die without first announcing the intent to reposition them, then the turn is signaled as ended at the moment that the first die was touched (see section [4.1.2 - Handling of Dice](#)). If a player makes an illegal move, and then lifts either die, then the turn is signaled as ended at the moment that the first die was lifted, and must subsequently be handled in accordance with section [4.2.3 - Illegal Moves](#).

## 4.1.8 Premature Actions

### 4.1.8.1 Premature Rolling of the Dice (Fast Roll)

***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***

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***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.***

The opponent of the player currently on turn must wait until that player's turn has been signaled as completed before they may roll the dice. If the opponent rolls prematurely, the player on turn must immediately point out the premature roll to the opponent; silently condoning the infraction is not permitted. The player on turn has the option of allowing the opponent's roll to stand and may revise or complete the move based on the foreknowledge of the opponent's premature roll. Alternatively, the player on turn may refuse to accept the player's premature roll and instead require the player to roll again once the current turn has been signaled as completed. This prohibition and handling of premature rolls applies in all circumstances including, for example, if the initial roller's play is forced, if the initial roller rolls a number that prevents a checker on the bar from re-entering the opponent's home board, or if both players are bearing off checkers with no possibility of contact.

If one player repeatedly allows the other to roll prematurely and move without fulfilling their obligation under this rule to comment, warn, or object about the infraction, then, absent reasonable justification for the prior failure to object, that player should be penalized by the Tournament Director with the loss of the right to require a re-roll with respect to the current premature roll, and should be warned that their failure to object to each and every premature roll is a rule violation. Of course, the player rolling prematurely should similarly be warned regarding their infractions. Continued failure to consistently object to future premature rolls may result in the permanent loss of the option to require a re-roll for any later challenged premature roll; that player may still revise their move with the foreknowledge of the premature roll, as a continued disincentive for future premature rolling.

## **4.1.8.2 Premature Lifting of the Dice (Fast Grab)**

In matches using two dice instead of four, the opponent of the player currently on turn must wait until that player's turn has been signaled as completed before they may pick up the dice. If the opponent lifts the dice prematurely (Fast Grab), the player on turn must immediately point out the premature lifting of the dice to the opponent; silently condoning the infraction is not permitted. If the problem repeats, the player on turn may call the Tournament Director for purposes of issuing a warning to the offending player. For matches played with a timed game clock, the Tournament Director should thereafter impose a reserve time penalty of thirty (30) seconds for each subsequent Fast Grab violation committed by the player not on turn. If the time penalty is imposed when the offending player has less than thirty (30) seconds of reserve time remaining, that player's reserve time shall be reduced to one (1) second. If the offending player then commits another Fast Grab, the Tournament Director may declare that player as the match loser by forfeit. Once low on time, the reserve time penalty, particularly in case of a forfeit can be severe. However, the player who committed the Fast Grab may choose to preempt this penalty from being imposed by the Tournament Director simply by rolling their dice prematurely and accepting the consequences of the Fast Roll rule pursuant to section [4.1.8.1](#). If summoned, the Tournament Director should offer this option to the offending player prior to imposing the reserve time penalty. A player preparing to summon the Tournament Director regarding a Fast Grab after the initial warning has been issued may similarly offer this option to their opponent. While players must not knowingly violate any rule, or condone a rule violation, a Fast Grab and Fast Roll are considered to be two forms of the same rule violation – a single premature action. Once a Fast Grab violation has occurred, proceeding to roll does not actually create a second rule violation; it only changes the applicable penalty.

In matches played with two dice that either use an untimed game clock, or no game clock, a time penalty cannot be imposed. The Tournament Director should use their judgment regarding issuing further warnings, but in general has the authority to impose penalties to any player who repeatedly violates the rules. Compelling the offending player to complete the infraction by rolling their dice prematurely, and thus be subject to the consequences of the Fast Roll rule is a suitable penalty if the problem recurs after warnings have been issued. If after being informed of a Fast Grab, the offending player preemptively rolls and accepts the consequences of that action, it is not necessary for their opponent to summon the Tournament Director.

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## 4.1.8.3 Premature Roll That Preempts a Double During a Close-out

When a player has completed a close-out, their opponent can no longer move, but if they have cube access, they may still double. Therefore, it is possible that the rolling player might complete their turn, lift their dice, and then roll for their next turn before their opponent has had the opportunity to double.

When two dice are in use, the players must each continue to end their turns normally by hitting the clock or tapping the bar. However, if the player who is not closed out breaks from this protocol and ends their turn by lifting the dice, they have committed an infraction; the closed-out player must stop play to point out this infraction. If the player has already rolled, the closed-out player may still consider doubling. If they double, then the roll has preempted the double and is deemed premature; the closed-out player may require a reroll or allow it to stand and must announce that choice before the opponent considers whether to take or drop the cube. However, if they do not double, then the roll stands since it has not preempted any action and is therefore not premature. If the closed-out player fails to point out their opponent's infraction for failing to end their turn in the proper manner on each occurrence, then they are also in violation and lose the right to double after any subsequent roll while they remain closed out, unless they first reestablish proper turn-ending protocol.

When four dice are in use, lifting the dice to end the turn is proper protocol, so no infraction has occurred if the non-closed-out player then proceeds to roll the dice; therefore, no premature roll is considered to have occurred. If the closed-out player wishes to consider doubling at any time during the close-out, they must ask their opponent in advance to hold their next roll or similarly signal intent non-verbally such as by holding their hand out over the board where the opponent would normally roll the dice. Such a request or signal should typically be made as the opponent completes the turn in progress. Any roll that might be made after the opponent has conveyed such notice is void.

## 4.1.8.4 Premature Lifting of a Rolled Die Not Yet at Rest

The test for a roll's validity requires that both dice have come to rest. A player must therefore allow both dice to come to rest before the roll may be declared invalid. Only then may the dice be lifted and rerolled. A player who prematurely lifts a rolled die before both dice have come to rest is in violation. In some cases, the grab of the rolled dice is an attempt by the player to declare "no roll" - for example, if the player notices that an illegal move has occurred. Voiding an unsettled roll for cause is not an infraction. Generally, when an infraction does occur, it is appropriate for the opponent to warn the player, or to summon the Tournament Director, who should issue a warning to the offending player on the first occurrence. Thereafter, a penalty may be appropriate if the infraction occurs while one die has come to rest validly, but the other is not yet at rest. In that case, the appropriate penalty is to give the opponent the choice of whether the valid die should stand. If so, then only the second die is rerolled; otherwise, both dice are rerolled. If neither die has come to rest validly when they are lifted, the roll shall be declared "no roll". However, repeated infractions may still be subject to penalties. Generally, a player who catches a moving die that has escaped the perimeter of the board should not be considered to have committed an infraction; the roll is invalid.

## 4.2 CHECKERS AND MOVES

### 4.2.1 Errors in the Starting Position

***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.***

This rule applies only to errors in the initial placement of the checkers. Errors in initial doubling cube position are addressed in section [4.4.1](#). Errors in scorekeeping are addressed in section [4.6](#).

An error in the starting position must be corrected immediately if the error is noticed before the fifth valid roll of the game. That means, once both players have completed two full turns and the next player rolls the dice validly,

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correction is no longer mandatory. However, later corrections may still be made if both players agree to do so. If the error is detected later and the players do not agree to correct it, then the erroneous starting position and all subsequent play shall stand and the game will continue to completion from the existing position. In such a circumstance, a player starting with fewer than 15 checkers can still lose a gammon or backgammon, with any missing checkers remaining out of play for the remainder of the game – because saving gammon requires legally bearing off a checker, not simply having fewer than 15 checkers on the playing field.

When an error in the starting position is to be corrected, the following sequence of steps shall follow: the clock shall be stopped; the checkers, dice and doubling cube shall be reverted back to the state that existed after the last valid dice roll but before any checkers were moved (even if that player has already ended their turn or a cube action has occurred); the error in the starting position is corrected; the clock's delay time is reset and the clock is restarted; the player on turn completes their play; thereafter, play shall continue normally. It is the intent that if the last player has completed their move, but the next player has not yet validly rolled, that the entire play just completed, along with any intervening cube action is undone.

To correct the error in the starting position, all checkers that were misplaced when the game started must first be identified. Once those checkers have been identified, they are moved to the point or points from which checkers were missing when the game started. Most of the time, this correction will be obvious and straightforward, because the error in starting position will tend to be noticed as soon as a play being made interacts with the error in setup. However, there is the potential for complication and ambiguity otherwise. The process to be followed for making a correction is described in detail below.

It is first necessary to identify which specific checkers were misplaced; that is the set of checkers that began the game at the wrong location. Any checker that started the game either off the board or on the bar is misplaced. For any heavy point, meaning a point that had too many of one player's checkers at the beginning of the game, the extra checkers that started the game on that point are misplaced. The misplaced checkers shall first be selected from among any checkers remaining on that heavy point; a checker that was the last remaining checker on the heavy point when it was hit and sent to the bar shall still be selected under this criterion. If this does not suffice, the remaining misplaced checkers are then selected from among the checkers that have been moved off of the heavy point. The players may mutually agree on this selection from among the moved checkers; otherwise, they are selected in most-recently moved order. If multiple checkers were moved from that point on the same turn, they are considered to have moved simultaneously. Among the checkers that moved simultaneously, the checker having moved the smallest total distance from the heavy point since the start of the game shall be selected with higher precedence over those having moved further, except that any such checker that was subsequently hit and sent to the bar shall be selected with lower precedence over any checker that was not hit.

Once the misplaced checkers have been selected, they are removed from their current location and then restored to the points on the board that were missing checkers at the beginning of the game. If a checker is to be restored to a point that now contains one or more of the opponent's checkers, those opponent's checkers are first removed from that point and are then returned back to the point on which they started the game.

Additionally, if a setup error was such that either the 6, 8, 13 or 24 points started the game having only a single checker properly located on that point which had never been moved, and if that blot had subsequently been hit, then that checker shall also be deemed misplaced and shall be restored to its original point.

### Example 1:

Situation: Player-A accidentally starts the game with 3 checkers on the 9-point instead of on the 8-point and they play the opening roll of 4-1 by playing 9/5, 6/5. Player-B has rolled a 2-1, completed their play and ended their turn. The setup error is noticed before Player-A rolls the dice.

Reverting the position: Since Player-B had the last valid roll, their roll stands, but all checkers that they had moved during their play are undone; the dice are restored to show 2-1.

Correction of the setup error: The 9-point was a heavy point and had 3 more checkers on it than required by proper setup. First it is observed that two checkers remain on the 9-point. Those are selected as two of the three misplaced checkers. Then it is observed that the third misplaced checker had moved to the 5-point. That is

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selected as the third misplaced checker. To correct the error, those three checkers are restored to the 8-point. The resulting position is the original position, except that Player-A's checker that was moved 6/5, having been played from a point unaffected by the setup error remains as a blot on the 5-point.

Resumption of play: Player-B now has a 2-1 to play, and the game shall proceed normally from this point forward.

## Example 2:

Situation: Player-A accidentally starts the game with only one checker on the 24-point; the second back checker is misplaced on the 13-point. Player-A wins the opening roll, 6-1, and makes the bar point: 13/7, 8/7. Player-B then rolls 5-5 and plays 8/3(2), 6/1\*(2), sending the lone checker on the 24-point to the bar. Player-A has rolled a 2-1 and the setup error is noticed before they move any checkers.

Reverting the position: Since Player-A had the last valid roll, their 2-1 roll stands. Since Player-A has not moved any checkers, no checker movements are undone.

Correction: The 13-point was heavy at the start of the game, having one extra checker. This is the only misplaced checker. Since there are still 5 checkers remaining on the 13-point, one of those checkers is selected as the misplaced checker; the checker that moved 13/7 is not selected because remaining checkers take precedence over moved checkers. The misplaced checker is to be returned to the 24-point. However, there are now two of Player-B's checkers on the 24-point; those two checkers must first be returned to their original point: Player-B's 6-point. Player-A's misplaced checker from the 13-point can now be placed back onto the vacated 24-point. Furthermore, since the 24-point started the game with a single checker that had never moved, but that blot was sent to the bar, that checker is also deemed misplaced and is therefore moved from the bar back to the 24-point. The resulting position is the original position, except that Player-A has made their bar point: 13/7, 8/7, and Player-B has only made their 3-point: 8/3(2).

Resumption of play: Player-A now has a 2-1 to play, and the game shall proceed normally from this point forward.

## 4.2.2 Move and Checker Handling Best Practices

Every move must be played legally, and any action that increases the likelihood that an illegal move or a dispute will occur should be avoided. Players should follow best practices when moving and handling their checkers in order to minimize any possibility of a dispute over where the checkers originated (the original position) and what move was actually made. This section enumerates many of these best practices.

Repeated violations of this section that cause confusion or dispute shall result first in a warning from the Tournament Director, and subsequently in any sanctions that the Tournament Director deems just and appropriate.

### 4.2.2.1 Moves

***A player should: move checkers clearly to a specific location, using one and the same hand throughout their turn; ...***

The goal when moving is to avoid causing confusion and for both players to be able to follow the move being made with minimal effort. Some players might believe that as long as the final position at the end of their turn is legal, they have done nothing wrong; they are mistaken. While the end result must be valid, that result must be achieved solely by making a series of discrete checker movements in a specific order, each of which is a valid act according to the rules of the game. The ends do not justify the means.

A player should move checkers clearly to a specific location. This means that each checker movement made should be from its starting position directly to its destination position and correspond exactly to one of the dice to be played. To avoid ambiguity regarding position, checkers should be placed and maintained so that they are centered on their points rather than drifting toward one of the adjacent points. A player should not hold any checker in their hand for an extended period of time while making a move. A checker should promptly be moved to its destination or returned back to its origin.

Players should take care not to disturb any other checkers that are not involved in the move being made, and if a disturbance occurs, it must be promptly rectified.

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A player should use only one and the same hand to move all checkers until the turn is completed. Using two hands gives the players more simultaneous actions to follow, thus creating more opportunity for error, while also clouding intent and creating more ambiguity.

Checkers on the bar must be re-entered into play before any other checker may be moved. Conversely, checkers that have been hit must remain on the bar until they are able to be re-entered into the game in a legal manner. These are rules of the game and therefore doing otherwise automatically creates confusion. A checker that falls off of the bar must promptly be returned to the bar.

## 4.2.2.2 Handling of Checkers

***A player should: ... keep borne off checkers away from the playing surface ... A player should not touch any checkers during the opponent's turn.***

There is enough room for error, accidents, mix-ups, and disputes purely through the complex process of a player making their move in backgammon. So, it is important that effort be taken to avoid any other means of erroneously altering the game's position.

Checkers borne off or erroneously removed from play must be kept away from the playing surface of the board until the end of the game. A player should not hold borne off checkers in their hand for any significant length of time. This helps avoid the accidental reintroduction of checkers into the game. Building high vertical stacks of borne off checkers should be avoided because the stack might topple onto the playing surface.

The only player who should ever touch the checkers while a game is in progress is the player who is currently on turn. The player who is not on turn should not touch any of the checkers. If the player who is not on turn believes that there might be a problem with the position or the move being made, they should inform their opponent, stopping the clock if necessary, until the problem is resolved. If there is any dispute remaining as to a checker's position either before or after a move, or regarding the legality of a move itself, the Tournament Director should be called.

In a consulting doubles match, only one and the same player on a doubles team should ever touch the game equipment for the duration of each game. The team member responsible for handling the game equipment on behalf of a team may be changed between games.

## 4.2.2.3 Checker Shuffling; Testing of Alternative Plays

These Rules do not employ touch-move, because backgammon is a highly visual game. The player on turn may temporarily move the checkers to examine one or more candidate plays before making a final move and signaling the end of their turn. This shuffling of the checkers introduces many opportunities for the position to be erroneously altered, and for an illegal move to be made. Many of those errors can result from the players losing track of what the original position was, not noticing that a moved checker was returned to the wrong location, or that a moved checker was not returned to the original location before another play is made. To minimize the likelihood that any error of position or move is introduced into the game, players should follow the best practices stated in this rule when making their moves, particularly, when testing alternative plays.

### 4.2.2.3.1 Offset Moved Checkers

***While testing a play, a moved checker should be offset above its intended destination.***

When making a move that is still under consideration rather than being final, the player should place the checkers being moved at least 1 centimeter (1/2 inch) above any checkers that are already on the intended point or an equal distance from the base of the intended point if the intended point is empty. Offsetting all moved checkers in this manner clearly differentiates the moved checkers from the unmoved checkers, and therefore leaves no question about which checkers must be moved back in order to restore the original position, if another play is to be tested. Only when the player is ready to signal the end of their turn should the offset checkers be shifted to their final position against the rail or the other checkers on the same point.

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## 4.2.2.3.2 Restore the Original Position Between Alternative Plays

***The original position should be restored before testing another play.***

The player should test possible plays slowly and otherwise in a manner that minimizes difficulty for the opponent to understand what is taking place. If a player wishes to look at a different play, all checkers should first be returned to their original location, then the checkers may be moved for the alternative play. Even if the player is certain about the move for one die and all alternatives being considered are variations of moves for the other die, all checkers should still be restored to their original position for the sake of clarity and consistency. Every move should therefore come about legally - directly from the original position.

## 4.2.2.3.3 Do Not Move Hit Checkers to the Bar

***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.***

If a contemplated move involves hitting an opponent's checker, the hit checker should not initially be moved to the bar, since doing so risks losing track of where the hit checker originated; the hit checker should remain on or near its point of origin. Instead of moving the hit checker to the bar, the hitting checker may temporarily be placed on top of the hit checker. Alternatively, and necessarily in cases where the hitting checker will continue moving to another point, the hit checker may be temporarily moved to the tip of the point it is on. Either of these alternatives allow the resulting position to be visualized without the loss of information about where the hit checker originated. Only when the player is ready to signal the end of their turn should the hit checker(s) be moved to the bar. Even if the player fails to move a hit checker so positioned to the bar before ending their turn, the hit checker is considered to have been hit; it is not an illegal move, but rather it is considered equivalent to a hit checker that had actually been placed on the bar, but that had fallen off of the bar without having been noticed before the turn was ended. In such a situation, the hit checker belongs on the bar and it must be placed on the bar as soon as it is noticed that it is not on the bar. The intent of this rule is to indemnify the player who follows this best practice from the risk of forgetting to move the checker to the bar, so that nobody is discouraged from following the best practice.

## 4.2.2.3.4 Disputes

If a dispute arises as to the original checker location due to checker handling inconsistent with the above requirements, then, absent additional information, the Tournament Director should resolve any uncertainty against the player who moved the checkers.

## 4.2.3 Illegal Moves

A move is illegal if, given the dice roll, the position at the end of the turn cannot be reached from the position at the beginning of the turn by adhering to the rules of the game of backgammon; that includes a failure to make any move when a legal move is possible. An illegal move is also considered to have been made if the dice are not rolled at all when a dice roll exists that would require a move to be made.

Only the players, the Tournament Director, or a designated match monitor may point out an illegal move. A third-party match monitor or transcriber may be designated if both players agree, or if imposed by the Tournament Director. Pursuant to section [1.6.1](#), spectators are required to remain silent unless asked to assist on a specific move by both players or by the Tournament Director. Ethical play should be presumed, but players and spectators can and should privately bring suspected irregularities and other concerns to the attention of the Tournament Director or, if the Tournament Director is unavailable, a Tournament staff member.

### 4.2.3.1 Obligation to Point Out and Correct Illegal Moves

***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***

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***corrected if noticed before the offending player has made their next valid roll. ... Players may make later corrections by mutual agreement.***

- (a) Players are obligated to immediately point out any move made by themselves or by their opponent that does not conform to the rules of backgammon. Except as noted in sub-sections (b) and (c), below, such “illegal moves” must be corrected before the offending player’s opponent has completed a valid roll for the next turn. Otherwise, the illegal move will stand and the game will continue without correction. When playing with a game clock, if the offending player’s dice have not yet been lifted, the offending player’s time shall immediately be restarted, and the illegal move shall be pointed out; otherwise, the game clock shall be stopped. To be clear, this time limit on correction does not permit the opponent to condone an illegal move by rolling the dice; the intent is only to establish a statute of limitations for cases where the illegal move is not noticed right away. The offending player must also point out their own illegal move as soon as they notice it; however, there can be a race against time for a player to point out their own illegal move before their opponent rolls the dice, which ends the notice period. As long as the offending player demonstrates the intent to point out the illegal move during the notice period, the notice shall be deemed timely and any roll that the non-offending player might have subsequently made shall be void. For example, if they say words to the effect of “illegal”, “stop”, or “no roll”, attempt to stop the game clock or restart their own time, reach their hand over the playing surface so as to stop the roll, or to call attention, then they have demonstrated such intent. Any player who is uncertain but thinks that there is a reasonable possibility that the play just made was illegal should clarify the facts with their opponent before proceeding, pausing the game clock if necessary.
- (b) When a player makes an “illegal move” that is unrelated to the dice numbers rolled or the number of pips moved, correction is required if noticed at any time before the offending player validly rolls to start their next turn. This provision extends the time limit established for correction in sub-section (a) for a limited class of illegal moves. An occurrence of this class of illegal move is often referred to as an “impossible move” because it involves a specific action that can never be legal. Typically, such an illegality can be judged without knowledge of the dice roll simply by witnessing the improper movement of a single checker rather than the totality of the move. Some examples of this class of illegal moves are: placing one’s own checker on the bar; moving an opponent’s checker to a location other than the bar; moving a checker that is on the playing field while a checker is on the bar awaiting reentry; bearing off a checker while all checkers in play are not in the home board; moving the checkers in the wrong direction around the board (this does not include errors made while restoring the original position when testing different plays). Additionally, when a player illegally passes their turn by signaling the end of their turn without rolling their dice while having the potential for a legal play, that irregularity must also be corrected as if it were an illegal move belonging to this special class; this case is explicitly listed in the rule to eliminate any ambiguity over whether this “didn’t-move” irregularity shall be handled the same as an illegal move. An illegal move in which a player moves too many or too few checkers (including zero) does not qualify as part of this special class. An illegal move in which a player moves their checker over a 6-point prime, or a total distance of 13 pips does not qualify as part of this special class because although such moves can never be legal with any position and dice roll, the illegality of these plays are still related to the number of pips moved. The reason for the extended time limit is that these kinds of illegal moves – being illegal on their face independently of the dice rolled or the pips moved - require far less attention to detail in order to be noticed, and therefore it is reasonable to say that the non-offending player should have noticed such an illegal move and so they must be accepting of the fact that their entire turn must be undone. Additionally, these types of illegal moves tend to have an exceptionally large impact on the game if not corrected, warranting the greater opportunity to get it right.
- (c) When an “illegal move” results in an impossible position that prevents game completion, that position must always be corrected whenever it is detected, without any time limitation on correction. If the players are unable to agree on a suitable correction, the Tournament Director shall take appropriate corrective action. While this class of illegal move is not specifically addressed by the rule, it is clear that upon discovery of such a condition, the impossible position must never be condoned, and that the position must be altered so that it is both valid and playable. Some examples of impossible positions are: both players have checkers on the same point; a checker is on the playing field, but it is not clearly positioned on any specific point; both players have a checker on the bar against mutually closed boards.

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- (d) The players may mutually agree to correct any illegal move that is noticed after the time limits for correction defined above have passed. After the time limit for mandatory correction has passed, players are still obligated to point out any prior illegal move that they notice, even if they have no desire to make a late correction.

## 4.2.3.2 Correcting an Illegal Move

***Correction requires reverting to the original dice roll and position and resuming play from there.***

If the offending player's game clock has been restarted, either player may stop the clock if facts related to the validity of the play or of the original position prior to the illegal move are uncertain or in dispute. The game clock must be stopped whenever the correction will take place after the offending player's dice have been lifted from the board, due to the greater complexity of such a situation.

If the Players agree on the facts, then the illegal move and all subsequent game actions shall be undone. This also applies to the special class of illegal plays that have a later time limit for correction. The checkers, dice, doubling cube, and match score shall revert back to the game and match state that existed after the dice were rolled, but before the illegal move took place. The offending player's time is restarted on the game clock, with a full delay time. The offending player shall then make a legal play and the game shall continue normally. The offending player should not have any expectation that any game clock reserve time that they might have consumed while making the illegal move will be restored. However, the Tournament Director has discretion to make any reserve time adjustment deemed fair given the facts of the circumstance.

If the players have agreed to correct an illegal move after the time limit for mandatory correction has passed, they may either use the "full rollback" method of correction prescribed above for mandatory corrections, or they may mutually agree upon a more targeted correction that repositions the illegally moved checker(s) without disrupting the rest of the position. However, neither player is under any obligation to make a late correction, and any such agreement requires not just consent, but informed consent. A player proposing a late correction to their opponent, and the Tournament Director, if summoned, should ensure that the players understand that the time limit has passed, that the rules no longer require that the illegal move be corrected, and that declining the late correction is not only allowed, but is a perfectly acceptable choice.

## 4.2.3.3 Checker Illegally Removed from Play

There are circumstances when correction of an illegal move is not required, such as when the illegal move is noticed after the time limit for mandatory correction has passed. If a checker is illegally removed from play, and that illegal move is not corrected, then the illegally removed checker is not considered to be borne off; the offending player can still lose a gammon or a backgammon. The illegally removed checker shall remain out of play for the remainder of the game. The handling of this situation is the same as in section 4.2.1 - Errors in the Starting Position when the game begins with one or more checkers off the board and is not noticed on time for correction.

## 4.2.3.4 Penalties

Repeated violations of this section shall result first in a warning from the Tournament Director, and subsequently in any sanctions that the Tournament Director deems just and appropriate. To be clear, and blunt, a player is cheating if they are aware of this rule and notice an illegal move, whether their own or their opponent's, but then choose not to point it out.

## 4.2.4 Settlement Agreements and Time Travel Prohibited

Except as provided in these Rules, all games and matches must be played to completion in strict accordance with the rules of backgammon. Players must not collude or otherwise agree to alter the normal sequence of random dice rolls, legal moves based upon those dice rolls, and positions resulting from those moves that comprise a complete and proper game and match. Players must neither agree to end a game or match, nor alter

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an existing checker and cube position, nor agree on any non-random dice roll based on a negotiated settlement agreement. It is also prohibited, for any moves to be made with the foreknowledge of future events, such as by agreeing that one player is to be given the “best play” of a specific roll where said “best play” would only be determined and made after the other player’s next roll and move are known. Any such agreements are prohibited and shall be considered invalid and unenforceable. While section 4.1.8.1 - Premature Rolling of the Dice (Fast Roll) might seem to contradict this, that actually occurs as a prescribed penalty for a prior unilateral rule violation. This section makes clear that the players must not collude to violate the rule in the first place.

## 4.3 GAME CLOCKS

### 4.3.1 Handling of the Game Clock

Players should stop and start the game clock with the same hand used for moving the checkers. This helps to avoid confusion by making it easier to follow the sequence of events and ensuring that the position is not altered after the turn has been ended.

### 4.3.2 Stopping the Game Clock

***Game clocks should only be stopped in limited circumstances, most notably when a die falls on the floor, between games, and during a dispute.***

In some situations, the game clock might be stopped at the option of the players; in others, stopping the game clock is required. In cases where stopping the game clock is required, the player whose time was improperly running is entitled to a restoration of the lost time. If both players agree on the proper adjustment, they may adjust the clock if they feel capable of doing so. In case of a mishap, it is best to note the clock times before adjusting the clock. Another knowledgeable person may be enlisted by the players to assist with adjusting the clock. Otherwise, to claim this time restoration when uncertainty remains, the Tournament Director must be called immediately. The Tournament Director shall then make a determination regarding how much time is to be restored on the game clock based on all available information from recording devices, the players, and any witnesses, estimating a fair time adjustment if necessary. For the sake of efficiency, the players may agree to defer making the clock adjustment and instead to apply the agreed or determined time adjustment later in the match, only if it turns out that the extra time is needed. Any such agreement should be recorded on the scoresheets. However, players are forewarned that such an agreement is strictly between the players. If a dispute over the time arises later on, the Tournament Director may be called to adjudicate; they may take that agreement into account, but are not obligated to enforce the agreement, and might be particularly reluctant to do so if a time expiration has occurred.

Stopping the game clock is only permitted in the eight circumstances listed below.

- (a) When a game has ended. The game clock must be stopped between games;
- (b) During breaks. The game clock must be stopped during breaks, which can potentially occur mid-game. If one or both players are leaving the game table, both players should write down the game clock times on their scorecards.
- (c) When a die falls on the floor. The game clock may be stopped at the option of the players any time the die escapes the confines of the game board. Once either player leaves their seat to search for the missing die, the game clock must be stopped;
- (d) When there is a dispute, or if the Tournament Director is called. The game clock should be stopped if discussion regarding a dispute by the players continues for more than a few seconds, and must be stopped if the reserve time is decrementing or once it is decided to summon the Tournament Director;
- (e) When a player has picked up the dice and started their opponent’s time in accordance with section 4.1.7.1;

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- (f) When a player has picked up the dice before the opponent has ended their turn in accordance with section 4.1.8.1;
- (g) When a player notifies their opponent of an alleged illegal move that has taken place in accordance with the provisions of section 4.2.3; and
- (h) When a player wishes to resign or claim the game currently in progress in accordance with the provisions of section 4.5.

## 4.3.3 Errors in Clock Management

**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.**

Both players are responsible for properly setting and managing the game clock throughout their match to ensure that it is assessing time against the appropriate player and not operating during any of the circumstances listed in sections 4.1.7 or 4.3.2. Both players are obligated to immediately announce any instance when noticing that the game clock has been set with an incorrect amount of reserve or delay time, is running against a player at a time when the clock is required to be paused or is running against the incorrect player. Any such error must be corrected. If the game clock was incorrectly running against a player, they are entitled to restoration of any lost reserve time. Similarly, a player whose time was not running when required might be subject to an adjustment. The goal is to adjust the clock times and settings to the state that would have existed had no errors in clock management occurred. The Tournament Director should be summoned if the players are unable to agree on a fair time correction. Game clocks are intended primarily to ensure that matches are played on a level playing field and proceed at a suitable pace, not as opportunities for one player to take advantage of another player's faulty clock management. The Tournament Director should sanction any player who intentionally causes or fails to announce any such irregularity.

## 4.3.4 Consequences of Reserve Time Expiration

**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.**

The purpose for using game clocks in backgammon match play is to provide a level playing field via a fixed budget for thinking time, and to keep the tournament on schedule. The purpose is not to provide players with an alternate way to win the match aside from reaching the designated match length first. While players are ultimately responsible for a failure to properly manage the use of their reserve time, it is preferable that whenever a time expiration occurs, that the player was at least aware of the fact that they were low on time. Therefore, as a matter of generous sportsmanship, players noticing that their opponent has less than one minute of reserve time remaining on their clock should provide a one-time warning to their opponent that they are low on time.

Time is deemed to have run out when one of the players, a designated match monitor, or a member of the Tournament staff correctly announces that a player's reserve time has expired. If a player's time has run out, play must cease immediately, and the game clock must be stopped if the non-timed-out player's time is currently active. If a player notices that their own time has expired, this rule becomes applicable and to continue play is a rule violation; therefore, they must announce it. If it is determined that the expiration might have been caused by an error in clock management as covered by section 4.3.3, the Tournament Director must be summoned and shall first apply the rules related to that section. Unless the Tournament Director makes a time adjustment that eliminates the expiration, the timed-out player is first given an opportunity to claim the game according to the provisions of section 4.5. We can assert that any timeout will have occurred while the timed-out player's clock was running; therefore, this claim shall be assessed based upon the board state that existed at the last moment when the timed-out player's time was activated – generally, at the moment of announcement if they are currently on turn, or at the end of their last turn if they are not currently on turn. This means that no dice roll or checker movement by the opponent is relevant to the claim assessment if the opponent is on turn. The Tournament Director has discretion to invalidate the claim if it can be conclusively determined through available evidence that

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the expiration occurred before a valid claim could be made; such evidence constitutes the notice of reserve time expiration referred to by the rule. If the claim is valid, the score shall be updated accordingly. If the updated score decides the match in favor of the timed-out player, then that player is the match winner. Otherwise, the timed-out player loses the match and their opponent is the match winner, regardless of the current score. In summary, a valid claim prevails over a loss on time if both conditions occur simultaneously. If both players' reserve time has expired before anyone announces the expiration of time and it is not possible to determine which of the players' time ran out first, the remainder of the match shall be played with a nominal amount of reserve time reinstated on both players' clocks to be determined by the Tournament Director. The Tournament Director may also impose time or penalty point sanctions against one or both players concerning their next match in the Tournament.

## 4.4 DOUBLING CUBE

### 4.4.1 Initial Position of the Doubling Cube

At the start of every game, a single doubling cube shall be positioned with the '1' or '64' facing up and centered either to the left side or right side of the board, off the playing surface. If both sides of the board are occupied by equipment such as a game clock on one side and a baffle box on the other side, then the doubling cube may initially be placed centered on the bar or to either side of the game clock or baffle box by mutual agreement. If the doubling cube has not been placed in one of those locations between the players, then it must be placed in one of those locations as soon as either player notices the error. There is no time limit for correcting an error in initial doubling cube placement. The initial value of the doubling cube is considered to be '1' and its initial position is considered to be centered and owned by neither player, regardless of where the doubling cube is actually located and what cube face is actually pointing upward, prior to any doubling cube action. As noted in section [1.6.1](#), a spectator may point out an error in initial cube position directly to the players before the opening roll of the game has been played. After that point in time, spectators should inform tournament staff rather than the players regarding any perceived error in initial setup. During the "Crawford" game (see section [4.4.7](#)), the doubling cube is removed entirely from the board area to clarify that it is not in play. No other doubling cubes should be in plain view within the playing area during a match.

### 4.4.2 Proper Time for Doubling and Redoubling

A player may only offer to double the game's current value at the beginning of their turn, prior to their first attempt at rolling the dice. Once the dice have been rolled, even if the resulting roll was invalid, a double is prohibited for the remainder of that turn. An attempt at rolling is deemed to have been made if the dice cup was turned over and at least one die has emerged, or if at least one die touches the baffle box when dropping the dice directly from the hand. If a die emerges from the dice cup during shaking, an attempt to roll has not been made. Either player may offer an initial double of the game's value. Once a player accepts a double, that player takes sole possession of the doubling cube by placing it on the side of the board nearest to them, off the playing surface, but otherwise in plain view with the upper face showing the accepted current cube value. Thereafter, only the player in possession of the cube may offer to redouble the game's current value. Prior to an initial double being made, or when a player is in possession of the cube, that player is said to have access to the cube. When a player's opponent owns the cube, that player is said to not have access to the cube. Only a player who has access to the cube may double. While cube access is a necessary condition for doubling, it is not sufficient – there are other conditions that disallow doubling, as described in sections [4.4.7 - Crawford Rule](#) and [4.4.8 - Dead Cubes](#).

### 4.4.3 Current Cube Value

The correct and current value of the doubling cube is defined to be 2 to the Nth power, where N is the number of times that the doubling cube has been legally offered and accepted during the course of the current game. Only during the time interval between the offer of a double or a redouble, but prior to a take/pass decision shall the value displayed for a non-centered cube be anything other than the current cube value – in that case, the offered value, which is one level higher, shall be displayed. This correct and current cube value holds and is in force, regardless of whatever number is actually displayed on the doubling cube at any moment in time. If it is noticed that the cube value displayed for a non-centered cube is not the same as the current cube value, the

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error must be corrected immediately in accordance with section [4.4.9](#). The correct scoring of the game at its conclusion is based on the current cube value at that time, not any value that is erroneously displayed.

## 4.4.4 Actions that Constitute Doubling and Redoubling

*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.*

### 4.4.4.1 Best Practice

A player should convey that they are making an initial double by placing the doubling cube on the playing surface to the right-hand side of the bar so that the cube shows the value of '2' being offered (the physical act) and by simultaneously saying the words "I double" or similar language (the verbal act). Although it is best practice for a player to perform both the physical act and the verbal act when doubling, either the physical act or the verbal act alone is sufficient to constitute a valid double to which the player is bound. Once made, the verbal act must then be followed by the physical act. Any subsequent redoubles should be handled in the same manner; the cube value currently in effect is increased by a factor of two when placed on the playing surface to show the new value being offered.

In matches using a game clock, the player who has doubled shall immediately hit the clock to activate the opponent's time so that the opponent is "on the clock" while considering whether to accept or reject the offered cube. A player must not knowingly consider an offered cube on their opponent's time, and if aware must instruct their opponent to hit the clock. At a minimum, the doubling player's delay time must be reset when the double is accepted if the accepting player first notices then that their clock was not running. However, in cases where the double and take are nearly instantaneous actions, foregoing the exchange of clock hits may be overlooked.

### 4.4.4.2 Binding Actions, Gestures and Statements

At a time when it is legal for a player to double, if that player touches the cube, or makes any other statement or gesture that reasonably implies an intention to double, then that player must double at that time. Absent accompanying evidence of intent, merely reaching for the cube, without touching it, is insufficient evidence to constitute a double. The intent of this rule is to the greatest extent possible define a clear and non-subjective test for whether or not a player has doubled. The act of touching the cube has been established by this rule as that test; the player has either touched the cube or they have not. If a player wishes to move or reposition the cube without the intention of doubling, then the player must first state "repositioning the cube" (or words to that effect) prior to handling the cube.

### 4.4.4.3 Premature Actions and Statements

If a player who has access to the doubling cube performs the verbal or physical act of doubling before it is legal to do so, or verbally states that they are going to double, or words to that effect, then that player must double at the first legal opportunity to do so. If a player becomes so bound to double on their next turn, the opponent is entitled to first finish their turn, revising their play if desired, with the foreknowledge that the opponent will be doubling on their turn. There is nothing in the rule that precludes the "evidence of intent" regarding a double decision from including conditional statements of intent; such conditional statements of intent are binding if the stated condition is met. For example, if a player states "if you hit me, I will double", then they are bound to double if they are hit but are not bound to double if they are not hit.

As an exception, if the verbal or physical act of doubling is performed by a player during their turn, after they have made an invalid dice roll but before they have made a valid roll, that act is null and without effect; they should be told that it is too late to double as per section [4.4.2](#); however if instead of attempting to double during this period, they state that they will double on their next turn, they are bound to do so. As a second exception, if a player prematurely states that they are going to double while the cube is in its initial, centered position, and

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their opponent subsequently doubles, the player is no longer bound by their statement of intent to double, because they did not express the intent to redouble.

## 4.4.5 Actions that Constitute Accepting or Rejecting the Cube

*Absent other evidence of intent, a take or pass occurs when the cube is placed down outside the playing field.*

### 4.4.5.1 Best Practice

A player should convey that they are accepting a double by moving the doubling cube to the side of the board nearest to them, off the playing surface with the new cube value showing face-up (the physical act) and saying "I take" or similar language (the verbal act). A player should convey that they are rejecting a double by returning the cube to its initial, centered position (the physical act) and saying "I pass" or similar language (the verbal act). Although it is best practice for a player to perform both the physical act and verbal act when accepting or passing a double, either one alone is sufficient to constitute a valid take or pass to which the player is bound. Once made, the verbal act must then be followed by the physical act. Any subsequent takes or passes should be handled in the same manner.

In matches played using a game clock, the player after accepting a double shall immediately re-activate the opponent's time so that the opponent is once again "on the clock" for purposes of the game continuing. If the player passes the double, the game clock must immediately be paused until the start of the next game.

### 4.4.5.2 Binding Actions, Gestures and Statements

If a player who is considering accepting or rejecting a double makes any other statement or gesture that reasonably implies an intention to accept or reject the cube, then the player shall be deemed to have so acted. Regarding the physical act, absent accompanying evidence of intent, no take or pass decision is implied by the lifting of the doubling cube, or by moving the doubling cube in any direction. It is the act of placing the doubling cube down outside of the playing field, combined with the location at which that touch-down of the cube occurs that commits the player to either a take or a pass decision. The player deciding whether to take or pass may therefore reposition the cube on the playing surface without notice. The intent of this rule is to the greatest extent possible define a clear and non-subjective test for whether or not a player has taken or passed the cube. The act of placing the cube down outside of the playing field has been established by this rule as that test; the player has either placed the cube down or they have not. Other unambiguous actions in response to a double that convey the intent to begin a new game such as updating the score or starting to reset the checkers are generally interpreted as intent to pass the double.

### 4.4.5.3 Premature Actions and Statements

If a player states the intention to take or drop the cube if they are doubled, then that player is bound by that statement and must so act if the opposing player has cube access and elects to double at their next legal opportunity to do so (but not on subsequent turns). If a player becomes so bound to take or drop on their opponent's next turn, the opponent may consider whether or not to double with the foreknowledge of that player's take/pass decision. There is nothing in the rule that precludes the "evidence of intent" regarding a take/pass decision from including conditional statements of intent that precede and anticipate the act of doubling; such forward-looking statements of intent are binding. For example, if a player states "if I miss the shot, I will drop", then if they miss the shot, they are bound to drop a double if offered on their opponent's next turn but are not bound to any action if they do not miss the shot.

## 4.4.6 Ambiguous and Inappropriate Cube Handling

Players who handle the cube in a capricious, confusing, or careless manner are at risk for unfavorable rulings. If there is any ambiguity in the manner in which a player handles the doubling cube or in their actions, statements, or gestures with regard to offering or accepting a double, then the Tournament Director should resolve any dispute caused by that uncertainty against the player who created it. All actions that relate or that might be

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perceived as relating to the cube should be deliberate and direct, in order to avoid dispute; actions, statements and gestures that are non-committal should be avoided. A player who reaches for the cube or performs any other action with the goal of drawing a reaction from their opponent prior to committing themselves to a cube decision, or who knowingly allows the cube to remain at the wrong level, is acting contrary to the spirit of the game and with bad sportsmanship and may be subject to sanctions by the Tournament Director.

## 4.4.7 Crawford Rule

***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.***

The so-called “Crawford Rule” shall apply to all tournament matches, meaning that the doubling cube will be out of 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”). The doubling cube should be physically removed from the board during the Crawford Game to prevent its accidental introduction into play, but regardless of physical location, the doubling cube is not considered to be part of the game equipment during this game. During the Crawford Game, while neither player has access to the doubling cube, gammons and backgammons will continue to count as two and three points, respectively. After the Crawford Game has ended, the doubling cube shall be returned to play for allowable use in any subsequent “post-Crawford” games. If the Tournament Director concludes that either player has offered or accepted a double with intent to violate its prohibited use during the Crawford Game, then the Tournament Director should sanction the offending player in the form of penalty points, match forfeiture, and/or Tournament disqualification.

### 4.4.7.1 Erroneous Acceptance of Crawford Game Double

If a player erroneously doubles during the Crawford game, and the other player accepts, then the double shall be nullified and the match shall continue as if the erroneous double had never occurred. If the irregularity is detected after the Crawford Game has ended, it shall be treated as an error in scoring; the number of points awarded for the Crawford Game must be corrected to reflect the actual number of points required to be awarded for the game’s outcome using a cube value of ‘1’. For more details on the handling of errors in scoring, refer to section [4.6 - Scorekeeping](#).

### 4.4.7.2 Erroneous Pass of Crawford Game Double

If an erroneous Crawford game double is passed, then the pass will be nullified if detected at any time prior to the start of the next game; the Crawford game will resume based on the checker position that existed when the improper double was made, with any doubts resolved against the player who made the double. If it is not possible to approximate the position, or if another game has already started, then the Tournament Director may consider the following two options for resolving the irregularity but may also consider any other alternative deemed to be fair and just given the circumstance and information available.

1. If the evidence suggests that the drop in the Crawford game was handled as if it were a “free drop” – typically occurring when the trailer needs an even number of points, very early in the game, and in a position with the trailer having only a slight advantage - then the entire game is nullified, as if it had never been played, with the score adjusted accordingly; the current game, if one is in progress, and otherwise, the next game, shall then be played as the Crawford Game, with the cube removed from play.
2. If the evidence suggests that the drop in the Crawford Game was the result of a typical double, usually occurring later in the game with one player holding a sizable advantage, then a cubeless settlement for the Crawford Game shall be determined - noting that the game’s outcome could have been different had the game continued without erroneous interference from the cube. For this purpose, it will be assumed that the dropped cube occurred in a position that was an efficient double, having a cubeless equity of 0.5. To settle the outcome, the players shall roll high dice. If the player who erroneously doubled obtains high dice, they shall score one point for the Crawford Game, and if not, they shall score zero points for the Crawford Game; the running match score is adjusted accordingly. Regardless of the settlement result,

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the Crawford Game is considered to have been played, and all subsequent games shall be post-Crawford.

## 4.4.8 Dead Cubes

***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.***

A player is prohibited from offering the cube when its current value is sufficient to guarantee that they will win the match simply by winning the game. In such a situation, the cube is considered to be “dead”. In the case of an erroneous double when the cube is “dead”, any further cube action shall be deemed invalid and void and dealt with in the same manner as an erroneous double during the Crawford Game (see section [4.4.7](#)), with the prior (dead) cube value determining the number of points scored for the prevailing player. The opponent of a player who offers a “dead” cube must immediately point out the irregularity; the illegal double must never be condoned. For example, if the score is 7-5 in a 9-point match, and the leader is holding a cube having a value of ‘2’, then that player is prohibited from redoubling to ‘4’ because if they simply win the game, they will receive 2 points at the cube’s current value and will thereby win the match 9-5. However, if instead, the trailer is holding the cube at ‘2’, they may freely double because they will not win the match simply by winning the game.

If doubling and taking a “dead cube” were to occur without correction, a subsequent redouble would create a situation where a pass of the redouble would give the redoubling player enough points to win the match. A player cannot lose the match by passing a double. If this situation occurs, then not only is the current double invalid, but so was the previous double, since it will have occurred on a dead cube. The original dead cube double must therefore be corrected as described above.

## 4.4.9 Cube Displayed or Turned to Incorrect Level

If a player doubles when it is legal to do so but presents the cube at an incorrect level (*i.e.*, to a level other than twice the correct previous level), or if the opponent accepts or rejects a double at an incorrect level, then the cube action will be deemed valid but the cube value must be adjusted to the appropriate level and any resulting scoring error must be corrected. Careless handling of the doubling cube or allowing the wrong value to be displayed can result in a dispute and must therefore be avoided. If the players agree on the facts regarding the number of times the doubling cube has been offered and accepted, or if the Tournament Director renders a judgment on that number, then any error in the currently displayed value must be corrected accordingly. Similarly, if a game has ended on the pass of a double, the score must be corrected in accordance with section [4.6.3](#) if the final cube value is determined to be different from what was used for scorekeeping.

## 4.4.10 Automatic Doubles, Beavers, and the Jacoby Rule

Additional doubling rules that sometimes apply in the context of social backgammon play (including but not limited to “automatic doubles,” “beavers,” and the so-called “Jacoby Rule”) are not permitted in tournament backgammon and any such improper change in the cube value shall be nullified and corrected whenever it is noticed that such an irregularity has occurred. Automatic doubles and beavers are cases of cubes turned to the incorrect level and are handled as such in accordance with section [4.4.9](#). Failure to score a gammon or backgammon because the Jacoby Rule was improperly applied is an error in scoring and is handled as such in accordance with section [4.6.3](#).

## 4.5 COMPLETION

***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.***

The rules of backgammon match play must be strictly followed, and in general, all aspects of the match must continue under those rules to their natural and legal conclusion, except as noted below. All moves, games and

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matches must be played to completion unless brought to an end either by the pass of a valid double, the expiration of a player's game clock reserve time, or in non-contact positions the concession or valid claim of a single game, gammon, or backgammon. Otherwise, the players are not permitted to agree on the outcome of a move (see section [4.2.4](#)), a game, or a match.

Collusion between opponents to produce an agreed outcome is a serious matter and may face severe penalties, up to and including the expulsion of both players from the tournament and forfeiture of prizes. Even in the absence of overt collusion with their opponent, a player must always make their best effort to win every match. Deliberately making errors in an attempt to lose, or conceding games while substantial winning chances remain is a serious breach of ethics and should be penalized. A player who cannot complete their match due to time constraints, such as the need to catch a flight, must explain the situation to the tournament director, who may grant an exception and forfeit the match. While between matches, a player wishing to withdraw from future play in the tournament should inform the tournament director.

Except as provided in section [4.7](#), all matches must be played to their designated match length.

## 4.5.1 Conceding the Game

Once contact has been completely broken between the opposing checkers, a player may concede the game as a single game, a gammon, or a backgammon. The concession may be offered by a player at any time during their turn: before rolling, after rolling, or after moving one or more checkers. Except as noted below, a player may accept a concession by their opponent even if future dice rolls could result in a more (or less) favorable outcome for the conceding player. If the concession is accepted, the game shall immediately end and is scored the same as if the game had actually been played to completion and had ended with the conceded result. By implication, and as an exception to the above, a player is prohibited from conceding an outcome that is, according to the rules of backgammon, precluded by the current position – to concede a gammon, the conceding player must not have borne off any checkers; to concede a backgammon, the conceding player must also have at least one checker in their opponent's home board or on the bar. If the player being offered the concession is unsure about whether to accept the offer, they may pause the game clock to consider the offer and may make a counter-offer. If the concession is not accepted, the game clock is restarted and the game continues. A player who has offered to concede may retract that offer, even if the concession has been accepted - as long as there is no dispute over how to continue play. A concession should be viewed as a means of saving time in positions where there is little or no doubt about the outcome – not as an opportunity for one player to gain a sizable advantage over another who has miscounted checkers or cross-overs. Therefore, if a player knows that the chance of a different outcome is not insignificant, they should not accept the concession (for example, a gammon is being conceded and their opponent has at least one roll that saves the gammon). Players are on notice that the Tournament Director may sanction any player judged to be unreasonable and thereby causing delay to the match and the tournament. It is unreasonable to refuse to accept a concession that is instantly obvious as being the most severe outcome possible, and it unreasonable to concede a less severe outcome while knowing that a more severe outcome is possible.

## 4.5.2 Claiming the Game

Once contact has been completely broken between the opposing checkers, a player may claim the game as a single game, a gammon, or a backgammon. The claim may be made by a player at any time during their turn: before rolling, after rolling, or after moving one or more checkers. The claim may also be made by a player when it is noticed that the time on their game clock has expired (see section [4.3.4](#)), even if it is not their turn. If the claim is determined to be valid, the game shall immediately end and is scored the same as if the game had actually been played to completion and had ended with the claimed result. A claim is defined to be valid if the claiming player would achieve the claimed outcome (or better) if the game were to continue with the claiming player rolling 1-2 and their opponent rolling 6-6 on all future rolls. If the opponent disputes the claim, the players should generally continue playing until the outcome becomes clear and the opponent concedes or accepts another claim. However, either player may summon the Tournament Director to adjudicate the dispute. The Tournament Director may make a ruling on the validity of the claim. In the case of a claim made at the time of a game clock expiration, either player may challenge the Tournament Director's ruling, and insist that the claim's

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validity be determined through play, in accordance with its definition, as stated above; given that such a ruling decides the match, the Tournament Director should indulge any such challenge. Players are on notice that the Tournament Director may sanction any player judged to be unreasonable and thereby causing delay to the tournament. It is unreasonable to refuse to accept a claim that is instantly obvious as being the least severe outcome possible, and it unreasonable to claim a more severe outcome while knowing that a less severe outcome is possible.

## 4.6 SCOREKEEPING

***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.***

### 4.6.1 Recording the Match Score

Both players should keep their own running, written score of the match. Players may use a scoreboard, but that should be in addition to, not a replacement of keeping a running, written score. The players should update their individual score sheets after each game and should verbally agree on the score before starting a new game. Before the start of the Crawford Game, the players should announce that fact to one another. To minimize the possibility of dispute, each player should maintain the running score in two columns beginning at the top of the scoresheet, writing their own score in the left column and their opponent's score in the right column, and when announcing the score between games should state their own score first and the opponent's score second. Each line on the scoresheet should show the total number of points accrued by each player during the match – so that the number of points in any individual game is always the difference between the score on that line and the previous line. Scoreboards may also be used in addition to written score sheets at the option of the players or at the request of the Tournament Director. A scoreboard should be positioned to either side of the game board, between the players, with a player's score displayed on the side of the scoreboard nearest to them. The placement of the doubling cube, game clock and baffle box shall take precedence over the placement of a scoreboard.

### 4.6.2 Updating the Score After the Completion of a Game

The ***final game value*** is the number of points associated with the game's final outcome: 1 point for a single game, 2 points for a gammon and 3 points for a backgammon. The ***final cube value*** is the correct cube value in effect at the end of the game, as defined in section 4.4.3. The number of points to be added to the winner's score at the end of a game is the ***final game value*** multiplied by the ***final cube value***.

### 4.6.3 Errors in Scorekeeping

The correct and legally binding record of score is always whatever an infallible scorekeeper would show on their scorecard, and the correct score shall prevail regardless of the record of score that either or both players have written on their scorecards. Just because both players have recorded and confirmed the same, but incorrect score after a game does not make that incorrect score binding going forward; it only makes it unlikely that the mutual error will be discovered.

Errors in scoring must be corrected as soon as noticed. There is no statute of limitations on correcting scoring errors. To correct the score, the game that was scored incorrectly is first adjusted to show the correct number of points scored, and the score recorded for each subsequent game thereafter is adjusted up or down accordingly. When adjusting the scores for subsequent games (and for any game currently in progress), if it is determined that erroneous doubles were unknowingly made in the Crawford Game (section 4.4.7) or in Dead Cube situations (section 4.4.8), then those errors must be corrected as well. The Tournament Director shall resolve all scoring disputes with the proviso that if only one player has maintained an individual score sheet, then the information on that player's score sheet should take precedence absent uncontroverted evidence to the contrary. Some electronic scoreboard applications maintain a running record of the score that is equivalent to a written record and may be consulted by the players or by the Tournament Director in case of a scoring dispute. If the correction to the score results in a player reaching the match length, then that player is declared to be the match winner. If

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the correction causes a player that had previously reached the match length to have fewer points than the match length, then the match is resumed and played to completion from the revised score; however, if the incorrect match result was already reported to Tournament staff, the Tournament Director shall first determine whether to void that reported result in accordance with section [4.7](#) (if not voided, match resumption is moot).

As noted in section [1.6.1](#), spectators may call attention to errors in scoring between games and should bring scoring errors to the attention of the Tournament Director at other times.

## 4.7 REPORTING RESULTS

***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.***

When a match has been completed, the outcome must immediately be reported to the Tournament Director or another designated Tournament staff member. The reported result will then be posted by the Tournament official on the official Tournament draw sheet. Players must not themselves attempt to post any match result on official Tournament documents; only Tournament officials may do so. For some tournament formats, this posting entails recording a 'W' and 'L' (or equivalent) for the respective players. For conventional elimination bracket formats, this posting entails advancing the match winner and, if applicable, the match loser to their next match by writing the player's name on the corresponding line on the draw sheet. Both players, if they remain alive in the event, are responsible for immediately reporting the result of their match, and for verifying that the correct result has been posted on the Tournament draw sheet. It is not necessary for a player to report the result if they have personally verified that the correct result has already been posted. If an incorrect result is posted, it may be corrected within a reasonable amount of time even if one or both players have started their next match in the Tournament, provided that, in the Tournament Director's judgment, the balance of equities for all concerned parties still favors correcting the erroneously-posted result. The failure of players to promptly report a match result might cause tournament delay by preventing the start of the next match in accordance with section [2.2.1](#). A player who fails to uphold their obligation under the Rules to immediately report their match result, may be subject to sanctions by the Tournament Director, even if they are not otherwise subject to penalty points under section [2.2.4](#) for causing explicit delay to the next match. To be clear – a player who takes an otherwise allowed break between matches before reporting their match result is in violation of this rule.

## 4.8 MATCH LENGTH

### 4.8.1 Designated Match Length

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

Match lengths must be posted by Tournament staff on the relevant draw sheet, potentially varying between rounds. Match lengths may also be designated in writing within the official Tournament brochure, or website. Tournament Directors should take care to ensure that the match lengths documented in those official sources are consistent and should announce any necessary deviation to players in advance. To provide additional clarity to players, if the designated match length must be changed from what was published in advance, the Tournament Director should note "revised match lengths" or words to that effect on the draw sheet, in addition to writing the new match length numbers. Absent an express directive by the Tournament Director changing the designated match length based on the needs of the Tournament, the designated written match length shall take precedence over any other instructions given by Tournament staff or other players. The match length written on the draw sheet shall supersede the match length written on any other official source.

#### 4.8.1.1 Obligation to Verify Match Length

Players are responsible for verifying the correct match length from the official sources and must play their match to the designated length. A player who notices a discrepancy between official sources should bring that

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discrepancy to the attention of the Tournament Director, unless it is already clear from an announcement or other posted notice that the Tournament Director is aware of the difference, and that the match length on the draw sheet is correct.

## 4.8.1.2 Player Agreements Prohibited

Players must not intentionally agree to play to a score that is different from the designated match length. If the Tournament Director concludes that the players have done so, then the Tournament Director may impose appropriate sanctions against one or both players. If both players mutually believe that special circumstances exist that could justify changing the designated match length, they may discuss the situation with the Tournament Director, who has the discretion (but not the obligation) to designate a different match length by posting such a revision on the draw sheet; only then shall the match be played to that new match length. An example where such a match length revision might be approved is for a finals match of a side-event in which there are no interested parties other than the two players making the request. Circumstances might also exist where the players wish to have their late-round match declared a draw. Players may similarly request such a declaration from the Tournament Director.

## 4.8.2 Matches Played to the Incorrect Length

***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.***

If a match is being played to the wrong length, the irregularity must be resolved in strict accordance with the rule; players must not agree to complete the match in any other manner. Any player who is aware that they are playing to the incorrect match length and fails to disclose that fact promptly to their opponent and to the Tournament Director has committed a serious violation of these rules and is subject to sanctions. The Tournament Director may impose a remedy that deviates from this rule if they consider it likely that such a violation has occurred.

Particularly when matches are being played to a longer length than has been designated, a failure to correct the irregularity can cause delays to the tournament schedule. By its very nature, a match being played to the incorrect length creates a difficult situation for the players and for the Tournament Director. One player or another will necessarily be harmed to some extent, either by changing the match length or by leaving it at the incorrect length. The best that a rule can hope to achieve in attempting to resolve the situation is to protect the integrity and schedule of the tournament while minimizing the impact and perceived injustice to the players involved. Fortunately, this is a rare occurrence.

### 4.8.2.1 When a Game Is in Progress

No changes are made to resolve a wrong match length situation while a game is in progress. If it is discovered that a match is being played to the wrong length while a game is in progress, that game, and only that game, shall be played to completion with the incorrect match length remaining in effect for the remainder of that game. The Crawford Rule and Dead Cubes rule continue to apply during that game, if applicable, based upon the score relative to the incorrect match length. After the game has been completed and scored, the irregularity is then resolved as described in section 4.8.2.2 - When a Game Is Not in Progress. Although the match length remains unchanged while the current game is played to completion, players may make their moves and doubling cube decisions with the foreknowledge that the match length might be corrected after the game is over; no inference of bad sportsmanship should be made from any such play that might occur.

### 4.8.2.2 When a Game Is Not in Progress

If it is discovered that a completed match had been played to the incorrect match length, then the match result shall stand. In addition, if a match being played to the incorrect length is concluded as a result of the completion of any game in progress when the match length error is detected, then the match result shall also stand. Otherwise, lacking a match result, the length of the match in progress is corrected; the new match length shall

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be the designated match length. If at this point, neither player has reached the corrected match length, then play shall proceed normally to the corrected match length; due to the change, a second Crawford Game in the same match might validly occur. Otherwise, with the corrected match length having been reached by at least one player, the player having the highest score is declared to be the match winner. However, if no winner can be declared because the score is tied, then one additional game shall be played to completion, without the use of the doubling cube, and the winner of that game will be declared the match winner.

Due to the change in match length, it is possible that the game that resulted in a player reaching the corrected match length was won due to the pass of a double. It might be argued in this case that this violates the principle that a player cannot lose the match by passing a double. As unfortunate as this situation is, this argument should not be upheld. That is because the incorrect match length was in effect at the time of the passed double; the double was therefore not on a dead cube, and the pass did not cause the match length then in effect to be reached. It is this Incorrect Match Length rule itself, not the pass of the double that is responsible for deciding the match winner and loser.

### 4.8.3 Adjusted Game Clock Settings

***Clocks may be adjusted by the Director.***

In all instances of match length errors, before play continues, the Tournament Director may make any adjustment to the reserve times on the game clock (including no adjustment at all) to best balance the needs of the tournament and fairness to the players. If the Tournament Director wishes to make a reserve time adjustment, the recommended method for determining the adjusted time is described below.

The ***basic time adjustment*** is the number of minutes of reserve time that corresponds to the number of points by which the match length is being changed. For example, if reserve time is normally allocated at 2 minutes per point of match length, then if the match length is being increased by 4 points (or decreased by 4 points), the ***basic time adjustment*** is 8 minutes.

If the corrected match length is longer than the original match length, then the reserve time of both players should be increased by the ***basic time adjustment***.

If the corrected match length is shorter than the original match length, then the reserve time cannot blindly be reduced; this might cause a player to incur a time expiration, or to be extremely low on time. The Tournament Director should compute two different time values for each player. The ***residual time*** is equal to the player's current reserve time minus the ***basic time adjustment***. The ***prorated time*** is equal to the player's remaining reserve time multiplied by the total of both players' away-points based on the corrected match length divided by the total away-points based on the original match length. Each player's reserve time shall then be adjusted to the larger of that player's ***residual time*** and ***prorated time***.

Example: A match that was being played to 11 points is being corrected and will now be played to 7 points. The corrected match length is shorter. The score is 5-3 and Player-A has 16 minutes remaining, while Player-B has 9 minutes remaining. The match length is being changed by 4 points, so the ***basic time adjustment*** is 8 minutes. The ***residual time*** for Player-A is  $16 - 8 = 8$  minutes. The ***residual time*** for Player-B is  $9 - 8 = 1$  minute. Using the corrected match length of 7 points, the 5-3 score is 2-away, 4-away, for a total of 6 away-points. Using the original match length of 11 points, the 5-3 score is 6-away, 8-away, for a total of 14 away-points. The ***prorated time*** for Player-A is  $16 * 6/14 = 6.85$  minutes. The ***prorated time*** for Player-B is  $9 * 6/14 = 3.85$  minutes. For Player-A, the ***residual time*** of 8 minutes is larger than the ***prorated time*** of 6.85 minutes, so the reserve time for Player-A is adjusted to the ***residual time*** of 8 minutes. For Player-B, the ***residual time*** of 1 minute is smaller than the ***prorated time*** of 3.85 minutes, so the reserve time for Player-B is adjusted to the ***prorated time*** of 3.85 minutes.

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## 5 DUE PROCESS: COMPLAINTS, RULINGS, APPEALS

### 5.1 COMPLAINTS AND RULINGS

***If a dispute arises, players must pause the game clock and leave all game materials undisturbed until the Director arrives.***

If a dispute arises between players, the game clock must be paused; they must not disturb the dice, checkers, doubling cube, scorecards, or any other relevant items while waiting for the Tournament Director to arrive.

The Tournament Director may also intervene in a match without being summoned by either player, and without a dispute existing between the players. This may be done as a result of the observation and report of a potential irregularity or anything else of concern about the match or players involved by any spectator or Tournament staff.

The Tournament Director shall determine the nature of the complaint, hear evidence and argument (see section 5.4), explain any relevant rules and may first attempt to mediate a resolution between the players. If there is uncertainty or a challenge regarding the rules, the Tournament Director should have ready access to the Rules document and/or this Ruling Guide and be able to point the players to the applicable text. If a review of the Rules text by the Tournament Director makes clear beyond any doubt that their initial ruling was incorrect due to a misunderstanding of a rule, then the Tournament Director should articulate the new understanding of the rule to the players and can and should correct their initial ruling.

If the dispute remains unresolved, the Tournament Director shall render a decision, and if applicable – a remedy. As described in section 1.1.5, if the decision relates to a violation of the Rules, the Tournament Director may also impose a penalty.

The Tournament Director, in their role as arbitrator or judge, must be impartial regarding any dispute that they are called upon to settle and should avoid conflicts of interest. If one of the players is also a Tournament Director assigned to the Tournament, then the dispute must be settled by a different Tournament Director assigned to the Tournament. If no other Tournament Director is assigned to the Tournament, then the dispute shall be resolved as soon as reasonably possible by a Ruling Committee, and the Tournament Director shall play no role in making that decision.

### 5.2 RIGHT TO APPEAL TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR RULING

***An aggrieved player may promptly appeal any ruling and intended corrective action by the Director, except for disqualification or expulsion from the tournament area.***

After the Tournament Director has made a ruling and explained any relevant rules to the players, both players may independently decide whether to accept the ruling or to appeal the ruling. It does not matter which player initially summoned the Tournament Director for a decision; either or both players may appeal the ruling, in whole or in part. The Tournament Director may also directly initiate an appeal on any question and may decline to make an initial ruling if doing so. Players are expected to carefully consider any explanation of the Rules and rationale for the decision that the Tournament Director provides. They may then appeal if they truly remain uncertain, unconvinced, feel that the decision is unfair or unjust, or that due to the circumstances, the application of the rule in question is contrary to the spirit or intent of the rule. Players should not appeal simply because the decision hurts their winning chances. A player who establishes a pattern of abusing the appeal process through frivolous appeals may be subject to sanctions for disrupting the Tournament. Conversely, a Tournament Director must not retaliate against a player who legitimately exercises their right to due process under these Rules. That being said, on occasion, a Tournament Director is faced with a situation in which it appears likely that bad sportsmanship is involved and yet the letter of the rule calls for the decision to be made in favor of the player who acted poorly. In such a case, it might be reasonable for the Tournament Director to inform that player that they will be subject to sanctions for their behavior, if they insist that a ruling be made. In this case, the Tournament Director is not retaliating because they were challenged but is acting to defend the integrity of the game.

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No overt action is required by the players to accept the Tournament Director's ruling; they simply implement the decision and resume play. An aggrieved player wishing to appeal any ruling by the Tournament Director must do so promptly. To appeal a ruling, the player must explicitly state that they appeal, and explain which aspect(s) of the ruling that they are appealing if their appeal does not apply to the entire ruling. In most situations, any appeal should be made before any further tournament play that is affected by the ruling has occurred.

As noted in section [1.4.1](#), the Tournament Director has the unconditional authority to determine which players may register for the Tournament, and in that spirit, a player's privilege to continue to participate after the event has started, remains at the sole discretion of the Tournament Director. Therefore, any decision by the Tournament Director to disqualify a player from an event, or to expel a player from the tournament area is not subject to appeal.

## 5.3 RULING COMMITTEE

***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.***

An appeal lodged in accordance with section [5.2](#) shall be heard and decided by a Ruling Committee formed as provided in section [1.3.2](#). The Ruling Committee shall hear the appeal as soon as possible and ideally, before the Tournament Director has imposed any sanctions on affected players for alleged violations of these Rules.

The Ruling Committee will collect evidence, hear argument, and discuss the questions at hand. If the Tournament Director had directly initiated the appeal without making an initial ruling, then notwithstanding any statements to the contrary below, they may fully participate in all activities of the Ruling Committee; otherwise, the activities of the Ruling Committee shall be conducted independently of the Tournament Director. Upon convening the Ruling Committee, it is appropriate for the Tournament Director to provide them with a summary of the known facts about the situation, the ruling that was made, and the aspects of the ruling that are being appealed. This should be done in the presence of both players, who should have an opportunity to comment regarding any perceived inaccuracies or omissions regarding the Tournament Director's summary. This summary is for the purpose of expedience, to quickly bring the Ruling Committee up to speed with what is known. This does not in any way preclude the Ruling Committee from directly gathering the same or new evidence or argument.

Once all evidence and argument has been gathered, the Ruling Committee will discuss the issues at hand in private. Neither the Tournament Director, nor the players are privy to that discussion. The Ruling Committee may uphold, reverse, or modify the Tournament Director's rulings. They may choose to consider and decide various aspects of the ruling separately, or they may consider them collectively. The members of the Ruling Committee should generally feel free and unencumbered when deciding whether to overrule the Tournament Director on questions of interpretation or application of the Rules. However, in situations not covered by the Rules, where the Tournament Director's ruling is a matter of exercising their pure judgment and discretion as allowed under section [1.1.4](#), the Ruling Committee should generally uphold the ruling, except in extreme cases where in their judgment, the decision made was clearly unjust.

The members of the Ruling Committee will vote separately for each decision that they agree to make. The vote will also take place in private. The vote tallies are then reported to the Tournament Director; only the total vote tally is reported for each decision, not how any individual member cast their vote. The Tournament Director, upon hearing the tally, has the option to cast a vote, or may decline to cast a vote. Any vote cast by the Tournament Director is added to the tally. If the Tournament Director chooses not to cast a vote, it is not counted as an abstention; the total number of votes cast is not increased for purposes of determining a majority. If an absolute majority of all votes cast (not a tie) support changing the Tournament Director's original ruling, then the Ruling Committee's decision prevails and must be implemented; otherwise, the original ruling shall stand. This exhausts the player's right to appeal.

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The rationale for not mandating a fixed size for the Ruling Committee is to allow greater flexibility. Under this rule, the Director faces the lowest likelihood of having their ruling overturned on appeal by forming a committee with three members; that has historically been the most common committee size mandated by other rule sets. Therefore, if the Director chooses to convene a larger or smaller committee, we can presume that it is for a good reason, rather than due to any conflict of interest.

The rationale for giving the Tournament Director the option to cast a vote during the appeal process is to get the decision right, and that goal is served by having more qualified opinions participating in the final decision. Since every ruling is subject to appeal, the opinion of the Tournament Director deserves to be included in the final decision in some way. The method historically used has been to require that a super-majority of the Ruling Committee vote to override the original decision. Effectively, requiring a super-majority is the same as having the Tournament Director always cast a vote against overriding the original decision and then requiring an absolute majority. The intent of this rule is actually to give the Tournament Director the option NOT to vote, and thereby defer entirely to the judgment of the Ruling Committee. The Tournament Director might believe on principle that this is the preferred approach. The Tournament Director might have been unsure about their ruling, but felt they had to make one, or upon further consideration during the appeal process, might have come to question the correctness of their own ruling. Therefore, by allowing the Tournament Director the option not to vote, this rule gives them the means to allow their original decision to be overruled if they have come to believe that reversing their original ruling might be the right thing to do. Getting the decision right is the goal.

## **5.4 EVIDENCE COLLECTION AND ARGUMENT**

Before resolving any factual dispute, both the Tournament Director and, if formed, the Ruling Committee may examine all relevant physical evidence such as the game equipment and scoresheets; they may question players, witnesses, the Tournament Director, and staff as to their recollection of relevant events.

Both players should be allowed a reasonable opportunity to be heard. When speaking with the Ruling Committee, the players may introduce new evidence or perspectives that were not previously presented to the Tournament Director prior to the appeal.

The Ruling Committee may also question the Tournament Director to understand the basis for the ruling. During any discussions with the Ruling Committee, the Tournament Director must not attempt to limit their inquiry, influence, or coerce them to support the ruling made, or create the appearance of doing so. The Tournament Director should stick to the facts, the Rules, the relevant text in this Ruling Guide, and the rationale for the ruling, and let that information speak for itself. The Tournament Director may ask to have a private conversation with the Ruling Committee in order to provide additional information that is confidential or might not otherwise be suitable for discussion in public, or with the players involved.