

Allowable Time Controls



Recommended Time Controls – The USCF has specified minimum time controls as listed starting on Page 2 of this handout, but it does not recommend any particular time control. The time control you use depends on the purpose of your event. For Sunday quads, a relatively fast time control such as G/60 is appropriate. Tournaments with large prize funds are normally played at a slower pace such as 40 moves in 120 minutes followed by SD in 60 minutes. Look at Tournament Life Announcements (TLAs) in *Chess Life* to see what other organizers use. TLAs can be a good source of ideas when you are deciding how to organize your next event. In the end, however, the important thing is to choose the format and time control that will attract players. Some players prefer slow time controls and others prefer faster play. Variety in your time controls is important to help keep your members with different preferences involved in your events.

Quick and Regular Rating Systems – The USCF has two separate rating systems. A player's regular rating is affected if the tournament's primary time control is at least 30 minutes. A player's quick rating may be affected if a tournament has a single sudden-death time control between G/5 and G/60 (5 minutes through 60 minutes inclusive for each player). G/5-G/9 are quick ratable. Check www.uschess.org under "Ratings" or ask the USCF to mail "The USCF Rating flier" for more information on rating systems and how ratings are calculated.

Sudden-Death Controls – Sudden-death time controls (SD) are common for primary, secondary, and tertiary time controls. Games using sudden-death time controls must be completed within the prescribed time, regardless of the number of moves. Sudden-death time controls offer advantages to player and organizer alike because they guarantee a round will finish by a predictable time. Tournaments with a time control of G/30 are often called Action Chess.

Quick Chess – A Quick Chess event is for a person who wishes to play many games in one day and not have the results affect his regular rating. The time controls in a Quick Chess tournament are 5 minutes through 29 minutes per player (Game/5-Game/29, inclusive). Sudden-death rules are used in Quick Chess events, except scorekeeping is not required. G/5-G/9 are quick ratable.

Dual Rating – All events time controls of G/30 to G/60 inclusive will be dual rated. That is Quick and Regular rated. Note 1: Game/60 is **Dual Rated**. If you wish for the games not to be **Quick Rated**, make the time control at least Game in 61 minutes or longer. Game/30 is also **Dual Rated**. If you do not want these games to be **Regular Rated**, make the time control Game in 29 minutes or quicker. Note 2: The TD must indicate what the time control is for all sections of all events. If submitting by disk or paper, the time control is to be indicated. If different sections have different time controls, indicate the time control for each section. If submitting the report on-line, the TD is to enter the time control for all sections and whether it is quick, regular, or dual. Note 3: If a section has different schedules that merge, the slowest control is all that is needed. Example: 3 day schedule is 40/2; Sd/1.2 day schedule plays rounds 1 and 2 at game 60 and then merges with the 3 day schedule for round 3. All that needs to be reported is the 40/2; SD/1 as USCF can not separate the schedules at this point.

Blitz Chess – Blitz chess is rated by the USCF if the time control is no shorter than 5 minutes. Games with time control of less than 10 minutes are considered Blitz chess.

Internet Ratings – Games played at USCL (US Chess Live) are quick rated. These are the only internet events that are regularly rated. A few events, such as the National Collegiate Chess League (NCCL), have been rated in the over-the-board system but have specific requirements.

Official USCF Time Control Regulations

The following are official regulations for USCF-rated tournaments. These regulations are a supplement to the USCF's Official Rules of Chess, and the rule numbers quoted below reference this rule book.

Regular Rating System – The duration of the first time control must be at least 30 minutes for each player. The first period may be sudden death. If a non-sudden-death control is used, the rate of play must be equal to or slower than an average of 40 moves per hour. Suitable minimum controls would be 20/30 or 40/60. Rule 5Fa is an option that allows the TD to shorten the basic time control in minutes by the delay in seconds for games using a digital clock with delay. When this option is mandated the initial control, not the shortened control, will govern under which system the event is rated. A G/30 (five-second delay) with the control shortened to G/25 for the games using a delay will still be rated in the regular system.

Any secondary controls must be at least 30 minutes. The rate of play for any non-sudden-death controls must be equal to or slower than an average of 40 moves per hour. It is recommended that secondary and subsequent controls allow one hour per player (Rule 16U). It is preferable to use a single sudden-death time control if not enough time is available for the one-hour secondary time control. A control of G/90 is preferable to 30/60 followed by SD/30.

Exceptions to the above limits may be granted by the USCF Office on a case-by-case basis, and when granted, must be announced in all pre-event publicity.

Quick Rating System – Quick Chess events use a single sudden-death time control between G/5 and G/29 as described in rule 5C. Rule 5Fa is an option that allows the TD to shorten the basic time control in minutes by the delay in seconds. When this option is mandated, the initial control, not the shortened control, will govern under which system the event is rated. A G/5(delay = 2 seconds) with the control shortened to G/3 for the games using a delay will still be considered as a G/5 event.

Using digital clocks with delay capability (Delay clocks) – Rule 5F specifies that in tournaments with sudden-death time controls, delay clocks shall be set with a five-second delay for regular, a three-second delay for quick chess and a two second delay for blitz chess. The amount of time that can be deducted from the time is to multiply the delay in seconds by 60 and then subtract it from the time control. Example: A delay of 5 second times 60 yields 300 seconds or 5 minutes. Five minutes can be deducted from the time control. If the delay is three seconds, deduct three minutes, and if the delay is two seconds, deduct 2 minutes. Thus a G/10 would be G/7 + a three second delay while G/5 would be G/3 with a two second delay. Other delays are non-standard and require notice in all advance publicity and must be posted and announced at the tournament. Not using the time delay on delay clocks is also non-standard and also requires notice in all advance publicity and must be posted and announced at the tournament.

FIDE-Rated Events

It is very important that the Chief TD for a FIDE-rated event read and understand the FIDE handbook before organizing or directing a FIDE-rated event.

When a USCF event will be FIDE rated, additional requirements come into play. FIDE has minimum requirements both for rated play and also for events that will grant norms for titles such as GM and IM. FIDE has both a Rapid Chess System and a Regular Rated System. For events rated in FIDE's regular system, the time controls and number of rounds per day must meet the requirements as listed in the FIDE Handbook under B.02.1.0 Rate of Play, and B.02.3.0 Number of Rounds. A summary of what the handbook specifies follows.

The following are excerpts from the FIDE Handbook and incorporate all changes through 7/05. The TD of a FIDE-rated event must be familiar with the FIDE handbook and must not rely on these excerpts as the sole source of information for FIDE regulations.

1.0 Rate of Play (information has been condensed)

1.1 Each player must have the following minimum time assuming a game lasts 60 moves.

1.11 If at least one of the players is 2200 or higher (FIDE) each player must have 120 minutes.

1.12 If all less than 2199 (FIDE) 90 minutes.

1.13 If all less than 1600 (FIDE) 60 minutes.

1.14 Examples for 1.11 (120 Minutes) 40/90 followed by SD/30; Game 90 + 30 second increment per move; 4-/75 followed by Game 15 with a 30 second increment per move. An increment of 30 seconds to the player's clock every time he makes a move. Delay and Bronstein modes are not recognized. The game would have to be a minimum of two hours, with or without delay.

3.0 Number of rounds per day

3.1 No more than three rounds per day and a total playing time of no more than 12 hours.

International Title Regulations of FIDE B.01

1.0 Requirements for the titles designated in 0.31 (GM, WGM, etc.)

1.1 Administration

1.12 There is to be no more than twelve hours play in one day.

1.13 That no more than TWO rounds be played on any one day.

1.14 Without an increment of a minimum of 30 seconds for each move, the minimum tie is 2 hours and thirty minutes. With an increment of a minimum of 30 seconds for each move, the minimum time is 120 minutes to complete all the moves, based upon a game lasting 60 moves.

1.14a Examples of standard chess include: Game 90 + 3 second increment per move; 40/2 followed by SD/1; 40/2 followed by 20/1 followed by G/30; 40/2 followed by 20/1 followed by Game 15 + 30 second per move to finish the game.

Note: In a game with a 30 second increment, scorekeeping is required throughout the game.

FIDE Rapid Play System – FIDE Rapid Chess was established (for events starting on Jan. 1, 1999). This is a separate rating system and has additional rating fees which must be borne by the organizer. The basic time controls are G/15 to G/59. Please see the USCF rating supplement or contact the Technical Director for additional details before running this event.

For more information please contact:



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