

Selected differences between The 2019 FIDE Laws of Chess and The US Chess *Official Rules of Chess* (7th Edition)

This document was updated on Sept. 22, 2019 by [Mike Hoffpauir](#), US Chess National Tournament Director and FIDE Arbiter. It was reviewed by NTD and IA Anand Dommalapati. It covers the 2019 FIDE Rules and the 7th Edition of the US Chess *Official Rules of Chess*.

This is a brief summary of differences between the FIDE Laws of Chess and the US Chess Official Rules of Chess. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list. Rather it is what I consider a "top ten" list of important differences most likely to arise during tournament play.

1. Chess Terms

- a. **Referee:** The term "*Tournament Director*" used in US Chess is called the "*Arbiter*" in FIDE.
- b. **Time Control and how Games are Rated:** Both the FIDE Laws of Chess and the US Chess *Official Rules of Chess* have different rules based on the time control for the game. In both systems the "total time" for each player is based on **the base time control**, plus time added due to the use of time delay or time increment *over the course of a 60-move game*. For example, in a time control of G/60, d/5, the "total time" for each player is 60 minutes, plus 300 seconds (e.g. 5 minutes, determined by 60 moves times 5 seconds of delay per move) ... for a total of 65 minutes. Similarly, for a Blitz game with a time control of G/5, d/2, the total game time is 7 minutes (e.g. 5 minutes plus 60x2 seconds).

Time Controls in FIDE and US Chess – Total Time is based on a 60-move game	
FIDE – Total time for each player	US Chess – Total time for each player
"Standard" Game: 60 minutes or more	"Regular" Game: 30 minutes or more
"Rapid Play" Game: more than 10 minutes, but less than 60 minutes	"Quick" Game: more than 10 minutes, but less than 30 minutes
Blitz Game: 10 minutes or less	Blitz Game: 5 or more minutes, up to 10 minutes

2. **Rules Differences:** The following table calls attention to selected and significant differences between US Chess regular rules and FIDE standard rules.

	Topic	What FIDE says ...	What US Chess says ...
1	<i>Pairing against Siblings, Relatives, Friends or Club-mates</i>	FIDE <i>does not allow players to request that they not be paired</i> against each other.	US Chess Rule 28T allows players to request that they not be paired against each other. This is a "request", it is not a mandate.
2	<i>Chess Notation Recording your Moves</i>	You must <i>always</i> write-down your move after you make it. <i>Electronic Notation devices are not allowed</i> unless they are specified in pre-tournament announcements. Scoresheets shall be visible to the Arbiters at all times.	You write-down your move after you make it. When using a US Chess-approved electronic notation device you annotate the move on the device only after making the move on the board. US Chess Rule 15A allows <i>players using paper scoresheets to write-down their move first</i> unless the rules for the event specify otherwise. Also, all scoresheets (paper or electronic) must be visible to the TDs at all times.

	Topic	What FIDE says ...	What US Chess says ...
3	Recording your Move When can you stop taking chess notation??	<p><u>When the time control is less than 30 seconds of increment or delay</u>, then a player with less than 5 minutes of remaining time may suspend his/her notation. The other player (with 5 or more minutes remaining) must continue notation.</p> <p>If the time control has an increment or delay of <u>at least 30 seconds per move</u>, then <u>both players must record their moves at all times</u>.</p>	<p><u>Both players may stop recording</u> moves for the rest of the time control <u>if either player</u> has less than 5 minutes remaining. (US Chess Rules 15B and 15C.)</p> <p>Same as FIDE.</p>
4	Calling the Flag down	The Arbiter can call fallen flags without a claim by the player or the opponent.	Only the players may call a fallen flag.
5	TD or Arbiter calling Illegal Moves or other Infractions	<p><u>Arbiters shall correct all rules violations they observe</u> (e.g. illegal moves and "touch move" violations), <u>even if the opponent does not make a claim</u>. Both players have the right to make claims, even when the problem was not observed directly by an Arbiter.</p> <p>In FIDE, <u>2 Illegal Moves means that player loses</u> if the opponent makes a valid illegal move claim or if the Arbiter observes the illegal moves.</p>	Tournament Directors (TDs) may corrects illegal moves they see except when either player has less than five minutes remaining in the time control. However, <u>in most US Chess tournaments, the TDs wait for players to make claims</u> . In some events, especially scholastic tournaments, the TDs may be restricted from correcting illegal moves until either player makes a valid claim.
6	Illegal Move Penalties	<p>The <u>standard penalty for the first illegal move</u> is to add two minutes to the opponent's time. A second illegal move <u>automatically results in loss of the game</u>, unless the opponent cannot deliver checkmate by any possible move sequence. This rule also applies to FIDE-rated Blitz games.</p> <p><u>In FIDE-rated Blitz</u>, the standard penalty is to add 1 minute to the opponent’s time when the 1st illegal move occurs – Appendix B.2 of FIDE Laws of Chess.</p>	<p>The standard penalty for an illegal move in a US Chess-rated game is to add two minutes to the opponent's time. There is <u>no limit on the number of illegal moves</u> a player may make in a game. The TD can impose increasingly severe penalties, and if the illegal moves continue, the TD can call the game lost.</p> <p><u>In US Chess Blitz</u> a properly claimed illegal move is an instant loss for the claimant’s opponent.</p>
7	Cell Phones or electronic communication devices	Cell phone or other electronic means of communication are not allowed in the playing venue at all, <u>even if the device is powered off</u> . The penalty is loss of the game, but <u>the rules of a competition may specify a lesser penalty</u> . The Arbiter may require the player to allow his clothes, bags, or other items to be inspected in private.	A player is forbidden from having a "mobile phone or other electronic means of communication" in the playing venue <u>unless it is completely switched off</u> . A time penalty (usually 10 minutes) is given for the first time a player's cell phone rings, second time is loss of game. Event rules may specify other rules and penalties.
8	Using two hands to make a move, or pressing the clock without moving	<p><u>Using two hands to make a move is an illegal move</u>.</p> <p><u>Pressing the clock without moving is considered an illegal move</u>. Both of these violations count toward the "second illegal move results in loss of game" rule (see item 5 above).</p>	US Chess rules do not have an explicit rule requiring moves to be made with one hand (except in Blitz). This is implied, however, by rule 16C1. Some players may raise the issue as a form of “annoying behavior” under Rule 20G. This problem is more likely to be handled by the TD via a warning on the first and maybe the second offense.

	Topic	What FIDE says ...	What US Chess says ...
9	Correcting Illegal Moves	There is <u>no limit to how far back in the game an illegal move may be corrected.</u> Arbiters use their best judgement to determine the times to be restored on the clock. (This does not mean the Arbiter must automatically give back all or any time to both players.)	If an illegal move is not corrected <u>within ten moves</u> , the illegal move stands. If an illegal move is corrected, the <u>players do not get back any time</u> they lost after the illegal moves occurred. In Blitz, or in time pressure during a sudden death time control, the illegal move stands after two moves have been made.
10	Pawn Promotion #1	If a player moves a Pawn to the last rank and <u>presses the clock without replacing the Pawn with a promotion piece, the player has completed an illegal move</u> (see Topic 6, above, for implications) and the Pawn shall be replaced by a Queen of the same color as the Pawn. <u>By leaving the Pawn on the last rank and pressing the clock, the player loses the right to choose a different promotion piece</u> , even if promoting the Pawn to a Queen causes stalemate. Because of the illegal move, the Arbiter will award 2 minutes of time to the opponent.	If a player does not replace a Pawn on the last rank with a promotion piece and press the clock, the opponent may immediately press the clock or stop the clock and summon a TD (advisable in an increment time control). The player does not lose the right of choice of promotion piece, and this is <u>not treated as an illegal move.</u>
11	Pawn Promotion #2	When promoting a piece, the piece chosen becomes "official" once the selected piece <u>touches the promotion square.</u>	Same as FIDE. This change took effect in 2018.
12	Using an upside down Rook to represent a Queen	<u>You may not use an inverted Rook</u> to represent a "Queen" when you promote a Pawn. If a promotion piece is not readily available, the player should stop the clock and ask the Arbiter for assistance. <u>An upside-down Rook is treated as promotion to a Rook.</u> Arbiters who see this will turn the Rook right side up and the game continues with the new Rook on the board.	The US Chess rules explicitly state that, when promoting a Pawn, <u>an upside-down Rook is considered a Queen.</u> (US Chess Rule 8F7.) Note, because many US players also play in FIDE events, we strongly urge players to adopt the FIDE practice ... Promote to a Queen using a Queen, not an inverted Rook.
13	Complete Scoresheet & Calling your own Flag	It is <u>not necessary to have a complete scoresheet</u> to win on time in a non-sudden death time control. Calling your own flag to prevent the opponent from filling in moves on an incomplete score sheet won't help.	To claim a win on time in a non-sudden death time control, a player <u>must have a reasonably complete scoresheet</u> with no more than three missing or incorrect move pairs for the time control. (See US Chess Rules 13C and 13C7.) A player may call his/her own flag to prevent their opponent from filling in missing moves on the scoresheet. (Once the flag has been called, the opponent may not update the scoresheet.)
14	Castling	When castling, the player <u>must touch the King first.</u> If the player touches the Rook first, castling with that Rook is not allowed, and the touch move rule is applied to the Rook. Attempting to Castle by moving the Rook first is NOT an Illegal Move, it's simply a touch-move violation.	When castling, the player must touch the King first (or the King and Rook at the same time). However, a variation of rule 10I2 allows the player to touch the Rook first.

	Topic	What FIDE says ...	What US Chess says ...
15	Late Arrival by one or both players	<p>The "zero tolerance" rule says, unless specified otherwise, <u>a player who is late for the start of the round forfeits the game.</u> The <u>rules of a competition may specify a different "default time"</u> for the tournament.</p> <p>If the rules of the competition allow players to arrive late and both players are late, all the elapsed time <u>comes off White's clock</u>—even if Black is not there.</p>	<p>The <u>game is lost by a player who arrives at the chessboard more than one hour late.</u></p> <p>If both players are late, the elapsed time from the start of the round until the first player arrives is divided in half, and that time is subtracted from each player's clock. (So, for instance, if the first player is forty minutes late, twenty minutes should be subtracted from both sides of the clock.)</p>
16	Draws when the Time Control has expired	<p>If a player exceeds the time control the game is a Draw if there is absolutely <u>no possible sequence of legal moves</u> with the pieces on the board that could produce checkmate.</p> <p>In a game where White has mating material, and Black does not, if White's flag falls the game is a draw. If Black's flag falls, White wins because White has mating material. Remember, "mating material" in FIDE rules means mate by any possible sequence of moves, no matter how foolish those moves might be.</p>	<p>In a game where <u>one player has only 2 Knights and a King, and the other has a lone King, the game is a Draw</u>, even if either player has exceeded the time control. The TD, upon seeing such a position, also may immediately intervene and rule the game a Draw.</p> <p>"Mating material" in FIDE and US Chess are not the same.</p>