

FIDE Laws of Chess 2017

FIDE review the Laws of Chess every 3-4 years. The last set came into effect on 2014 and a new set came into effect from 1st July 2017.

This revision has introduced a few changes some of which are subtle changes but there are a few that bring in some new items. I will set out below the changes. If you wish to see the revised Laws in full they will be posted on the NCCA website (www.norfolkchess.org.uk).

Quickplay Finishes

In the 2014 Laws Quickplay finish rules were moved from the main Laws (they were 10.2 prior to that change) and into the appendices. In the 2017 Laws they are now relegated to Guidance. The reason for this is that FIDE require that for a FIDE rated event digital clocks must be used with an incremental timing (e.g. Fischer timings). Their intention is to remove the Quickplay Finish rules completely when the next set of Laws is published in 2021.

We thus have 4 years to prepare for this change. The County now has 45 digital clocks and I am trying to move our Congresses to Fischer timings. We may need to purchase further clocks to do so at Gt Yarmouth (or borrow some from clubs) but eventually I hope that we will be self-sufficient in this respect.

For the league and cup competitions we do have an alternative time rate using Fischer timings but this is optional. I appreciate that for some clubs the cost of obtaining digital clocks is prohibitive and it may be possible to loan the County clocks to clubs who cannot afford to purchase digital clocks. They would have to be returned when required for our events. There are some cheaper digital clocks, some of which were being used at the British Championships, but they have a drawback in that they can only be used for single time periods and cannot cope with a 2 or 3 period match.

New categories of “illegal” moves

An illegal move is related to the incorrect movement of the pieces and is set out in Articles 3.1 – 3.9 with the penalty and details in 7.5. The penalty is that of two minutes to the opponent for the first illegal move and for the second completed illegal move by the same player the game is lost except where the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player’s king by any possible series of legal moves.

Two new types of “illegal” moves have now been introduced under 7.7.1 & 7.8.1 as follows:

7.7.1 If a player uses two hands to make a single move (in the case of castling, capturing or promotion), it shall be considered as an illegal move.

7.7.2 For the first violation of the rule 7.7.1, the arbiter shall give two minutes extra time to his opponent; for the second violation of the rule 7.7.1 by the same player the arbiter shall declare the game lost by this player. However, the game is drawn if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player’s king by any possible series of legal moves.

7.8.1 If the player presses the clock without making a move, it shall be considered as an illegal move.

7.8.2 For the first violation of the rule 7.8.1, the arbiter shall give two minutes extra time to his opponent; for the second violation of the rule 7.8.1 by the same player the arbiter shall declare the game lost by this player. However, the game is drawn if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves.

For 7.8.1 the new Law is designed to prevent players gaining extra thinking time but also to avoid the adding of time that will arise where incremental timings are being used. Should the player indicate that he thought it was the opponents move then some discretion may have to be applied unless this was a frequent offence by the player.

Note that both refer to "considered as an illegal move" and this is the reason I have used parenthesis above. In effect they are illegal moves but are best described as irregularities which have a set penalty.

It was thought that they could be treated separately but recent clarification from FIDE is that **any** two of the illegal moves in standard play will lead to a forfeit. However, where there are two illegal moves in one move (i.e. illegal castling made by two hands, illegal promotion made by two hands and illegal capturing made by two hands), they count as one illegal move and the player shall not be forfeited at once (in standard play chess).

In Rapidplay and Blitz just one illegal move leads to a forfeit of the game. The practice at this year's British was to take a lenient view of these new illegal moves particularly in the Rapidplay but with time and as players' become more aware of the new illegal moves then they will have to be enforced.

Both 7.7.1 & 7.8.1 have been brought in due to incidents where the arbiter could not exact a penalty. 7.7.1 may be down to the Wesley So incident where in a Rapidplay he castled using two hands, following which there was unjustified criticism of the arbiter's lack of action. The new penalty may be harsh particularly where it is enforced in a Rapidplay game.

Touch move- some subtle changes

4.2.1 Only the player having the move may adjust one or more pieces on their squares, provided that he first expresses his intention (for example by saying "j'adoube" or "I adjust").

4.2.2 Any other physical contact with a piece, except for clearly accidental contact, shall be considered to be intent.

The wording is changed from the previous Laws. Under 4.2.1 I had a junior at the British who kept complaining that his opponents were touching the pieces when it was his move and I had to issue a warning that their actions were distracting their opponent. There are some players, juniors and Adults, who have a habit of adjusting the pieces and for some it is a desire to have all pieces set tidily on the squares. As an arbiter I would only step in if I can see that it is being done persistently and that it was causing concern to the opponent.

4.2.2 states that only accidental contact is allowed so any claim by a player that he meant to touch an adjacent piece will be declined.

Draw- Another subtle change

5.2.3 The game is drawn upon agreement between the two players during the game, provided both players have made at least one move. This immediately ends the game.

The subtle bit is including that at least one move must have been made by both players. It avoids the agreement of a draw beforehand to save attending and ensures that the players must turn up and play.

Maximum Score

10.2 The total score of any game can never exceed the maximum score normally given for that game. Scores given to an individual player must be those normally associated with the game, for example a score of $\frac{3}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ is not allowed.

Previously it could be possible for a score such as 1 – 0.5 where there may have been a disturbance or where the arbiter required discretion to resolve a dispute. This is now not a possible option.

E Cigs

11.3.4 Smoking, including e-cigarettes, is permitted only in the section of the venue designated by the arbiter.

E Cigarettes are now mentioned which is mainly a statement of what all tournaments have been doing in practice.

Draws- Player Co-operation

11.11 Both players must assist the arbiter in any situation requiring reconstruction of the game, including draw claims.

11.12 Checking three times occurrence of the position or 50 moves claim is a duty of the players, under supervision of the arbiter.

This is a statement of what should happen but sometimes an aggrieved player will refuse to cooperate. If that happens then the draw is not awarded without checking but the Player may be in breach of 11.7:

11.7 Persistent refusal by a player to comply with the Laws of Chess shall be penalised by loss of the game. The arbiter shall decide the score of the opponent.

However, this is only applied where there has been persistent refusal to cooperate and would be an exceptional situation.

Finally- Another Penalty

Under Clause 12.9 are the penalties that an arbiter can apply ranging from a warning to expulsion from the competition. These are graded according to the severity of the offence or the number of offences. One new penalty is:

12.9.8 exclusion from one or more rounds,

This is the penultimate one on the list and thus will only be applied in the more serious cases.