

# Pokémon Organized Play Tournament Rules

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## GENERAL TOURNAMENT RULES

The Pokémon Organized Play Tournament Rules are designed to ensure that all POP-sanctioned tournaments adhere to the same standards. This section contains rules that apply to all POP-supported games. Further sections detail rules specific to each POP-supported game. All attendees are expected to comply with the applicable sections of these rules while attending a POP-sanctioned tournament. Companion documents covering sanctioning, penalties, and tournament operation can be found at <http://www.go-pokemon.com/op/tournaments/rulesandresources.html>.

### 1. The Spirit of the Game

As a game of skill, Pokémon is enjoyed for its complex strategies, entertaining characters, and atmosphere of friendly competition. While the objective of a Pokémon tournament is to determine the skill level of each player involved, our ultimate goal is to ensure that every participant has fun. It is this attitude that Pokémon Organized Play wishes to emphasize during Pokémon tournaments.

Regardless of the size of the prizes on the line, adherence to the Spirit of the Game helps to ensure that all participants, including players, spectators, and event staff at a Pokémon tournament, have an enjoyable experience. This spirit should guide the conduct of players as well as the tournament judges as they interpret and enforce the rules.

The Spirit of the Game is composed of the following tenets:

- **Fun:** Pokémon is a game, and games are meant to be fun for all parties involved. When a game ceases to be fun, players find other things to do.
- **Fairness:** Games cease to be fun when players break the rules to achieve victory. A player should prefer to lose a game than to win by cheating.
- **Honesty:** Players of any game should strive to act honestly while playing that game. If a player inadvertently breaks a rule during a game and becomes aware of the error before his or her opponent or a judge, that player should make the opponent and the judge aware of the misplay.
- **Respect:** Players, spectators, and staff should be treated with the same respect that players would expect for themselves. Distracting an opponent or a judge to gain advantage shows disrespect to everyone involved in a Pokémon tournament.
- **Sportsmanship:** Winning or losing with grace is vital to the enjoyment of a game. The desire to continue playing a game can be soured by players who berate their opponents after winning or losing a match. Likewise, a player who plays the clock, rather than the game, shows poor sportsmanship and should be discouraged from doing so whenever possible.
- **Learning:** Players should strive to help each other increase their Pokémon play skills. It is not a player's responsibility to make his or her opponent's plays for that opponent. However, discussing strategies, offering tips, or constructively critiquing game play decisions after the match has been completed helps both participants to become better players.

## 2. Membership and Eligibility

A Pokémon Organized Play member is defined as a person who is any of the following: Player, Tournament Organizer, League Owner, League Leader or Professor, or any additional member designation that may be added by POP in the future.

### 2.1. Member Eligibility

By participating in a POP-sanctioned tournament, all POP members agree to abide by the tournament rules outlined in this document.

Anyone is allowed to participate in sanctioned Pokémon Organized Play tournaments except for the following:

- The tournament staff for that event, including but not limited to the Tournament Organizer, judges, score runners, and scorekeepers.
- Current employees and family members of The Pokémon Company International.
- Employees of Nintendo, GAME FREAK inc., or Creatures Inc.
- Employees of companies that are responsible for Pokémon Organized Play in the operation or coordination of Organized Play in their countries
- Former employees of any of the above companies within 60 days of their final date of employment
- Any player who has been suspended from participating in Pokémon Organized Play events by Pokémon Organized Play
- Players without invitations to play in special invite-only tournaments, such as the Pokémon World Championships

### 2.2. POP ID Numbers

All players who participate in Pokémon Organized Play tournaments must have a POP ID number. Players who have played in previous tournaments are instructed to bring their POP IDs with them to all tournaments. It is permissible for a Tournament Organizer to maintain a list of players from previous tournaments and their POP IDs, provided that access to such information is restricted to the Tournament Organizer.

#### 2.2.1. POP ID Merging

Players who play under multiple POP IDs are in violation of POP rules. As POP discovers duplicate accounts, POP will merge these accounts, preserving and combining all match results into the player's rating.

Members who wish to inform POP of duplicate accounts should email [organizedplay@go-pokemon.com](mailto:organizedplay@go-pokemon.com) with the key details for each account.

POP members found to have deliberately created duplicate accounts or provided false information in their account may be subject to suspension.

### **2.3. New Players**

When a new player arrives at his or her first tournament, the Tournament Organizer will issue the player a POP ID. The Tournament Organizer should write the player's name on the POP ID card, remove it from the attached parental consent form, and give it to the player.

If the player is under the age of 13, the parental consent form should be given to the player's parent. This form should be filled out completely and returned to TPCi so that a "My Pokémon" account can be created for the player. If the Tournament Organizer wishes, he or she can collect completed parental consent forms and return them to TPCi on the parent's behalf. Incomplete forms will not be processed.

If the player is 13 or older, the player should be encouraged to visit [www.go-pokemon.com](http://www.go-pokemon.com) to register for a "My Pokémon" account online. Parental consent forms that are mailed in for players 13 or older are not processed and are destroyed instead.

Tournament Organizers should be aware that a player cannot create a "My Pokémon" account until the Tournament Organizer uploads the POP ID as part of reporting the tournament that the player participated in.

### **2.4. Suspended Members**

POP may from time to time issue a suspension to a POP member for failure to comply with POP rules and/or procedures. POP reserves the right to suspend any member at its discretion.

## **3. Wagering**

Wagering or gambling on the results of a game, portion of a game, match, or number of matches by anyone, including players, tournament staff, and spectators, is strictly prohibited. Anyone attempting to wager on a POP tournament should be removed from the tournament site, and the incident should be reported to POP.

## **4. Publishing Tournament Information**

Tournament Organizers, judges, players, and spectators are free to publish details of play, and/or the results of a tournament, subject to local, state, and national laws.

Each player's deck list is considered to be confidential and should not be shared with anyone other than the tournament staff or POP. After a player has finished a tournament, the Tournament Organizer may return the deck list to the player if requested, as long as it does not impact the pace of the tournament. All remaining deck lists must be destroyed after the completion of the tournament, unless POP specifically requests them for internal use.

Pokémon Organized Play reserves the right to publish tournament information including but not limited to the items listed above, transcripts, audio and/or video recordings or other recounts, player penalties, awards, or any other resultant information from the tournament.

## 5. Tournament Responsibilities

Attendants at Pokémon Organized Play tournaments are expected to understand and adhere to the rules outlined in this document, as well as any other accompanying documents that are applicable to their roles at the tournament.

All attendants at Pokémon Organized Play tournaments are expected to be respectful of and courteous to each other. This includes handling disputes calmly, following directions issued by tournament staff, abstaining from the use of profanity, and avoiding the discussion of inflammatory or offensive topics. Attire that is suggestive or contains rude or inappropriate messages is not to be worn at a Pokémon Organized Play tournament. All participants are expected to maintain a socially acceptable level of personal hygiene, as determined by the tournament staff.

Attendants at Pokémon Organized Play tournaments may be asked to leave the event venue if they fail to meet the responsibilities outlined in this section.

### 5.1. Player Responsibilities

While attending a POP tournament, players are expected to abide by the Spirit of the Game. Players are expected to show up to a tournament and its subsequent rounds on time.

Players must bring the following items to participate in a POP-sanctioned tournament:

- A valid POP ID in that player's name. If the player has not been assigned a POP ID at a previous tournament, the tournament staff will provide one for the player.
- A deck or team that meets the format restrictions for the tournament. It is a player's responsibility to ensure that his or her deck or team meets the tournament requirements at all time during the event.
- A legible list of the cards that comprise the player's deck or of the Pokémon on a player's team.
- Any implements necessary to track and maintain game information, such as damage counters, Special Condition markers, and a randomizer for a TCG event.

### 5.2. Spectator Responsibilities

Spectators may watch a match but may not interfere with a match in any way. Spectators should maintain a reasonable distance, as determined by the event staff, from matches in progress to avoid distracting the players. The only way a spectator is to interact with a tournament is through contacting a judge to inquire into the legality of a specific play. Comments and questions regarding games in progress should be made an appropriate distance from the match to prevent players in the active game from gaining an advantage of outside information.

Players who are still participating in a tournament may not watch other games still in progress, as this provides an unfair advantage to those players during later matches.

Any disruption on the part of a spectator not participating in a tournament will result in penalties for the player or players that the spectator is responsible for. Should it become

necessary to remove a spectator from a tournament, players that the spectator is responsible for will be disqualified from the tournament as well.

### **5.3. Judge Responsibilities**

Judges are expected to administer impartial rulings and assist the Tournament Organizer and Head Judge in running a quality tournament. Whenever possible, judges should avoid ruling on games where their own family members are involved, as this creates a perception of impropriety. Judges are expected to encourage good sporting behavior at all times.

POP supports the rulings of its judges, where those rulings were made impartially and are in the best interests of the Spirit of the Game.

#### **5.3.1. Lengthy Rulings**

In the event of a ruling that takes more than three minutes, the judge may extend the match time. As game rulings are a standard part of tournament play, these extensions rarely need to be on a one-for-one basis, and only need be applied as the result of a complicated ruling, or when it takes longer than normal for a judge to reach a match. The extra time allotted must be clearly communicated to both players and recorded immediately by the judge.

### **5.4. Head Judge Responsibilities**

The Head Judge serves as the final arbiter of all rulings and rules interpretations for a particular tournament. The Head Judge is chosen by the Tournament Organizer prior to the tournament and is ultimately responsible for making sure that all participants abide by the rules set forth in this document. The Head Judge is also responsible for reporting all penalties higher than a Caution to POP.

#### **5.4.1. Appeals to the Head Judge**

A player may appeal any ruling made by a judge to the Head Judge of the tournament. Should a player appeal a ruling, the Head Judge must hear from all parties involved, including both players and the judge that issued the original ruling, before making a final ruling. The Head Judge is the final authority on all rulings and tournament rules interpretations for that tournament.

### **5.5. Tournament Organizer Responsibilities**

The Tournament Organizer is the backbone of a tournament. He or she is responsible for all of the details of the tournament, such as securing the location, advertising, selecting the tournament format, establishing the structure of the tournament, reporting the results of the tournament, and much more.

The Tournament Organizer is required to notify players of the following information:

- Tournament type (Swiss, Swiss plus Single Elimination, etc.)
- Tournament format (Modified or Unlimited)
- Number of rounds



- Number of minutes per round
- Top cut, if applicable
- Tournament staff (Head Judge, judges, scorekeepers, etc.)
- Any breaks during the tournament

This information should be conveyed at an appropriate time. The tournament format and type should be announced far enough in advance of the tournament that players can prepare for the tournament before arriving. The number of rounds, minutes per round, top cut, tournament staff, and breaks should be announced prior to the start of the first round.

## **6. Tardiness**

Players are expected to be present for the start of a tournament and each of its component rounds and matches. Players arriving more than 5 minutes late for any round should receive a match loss for that round. Players who are still not present by the end of that round should be dropped from the tournament.

## **7. Note Taking**

Players are allowed to take notes during a game in respect to actions that have happened during the game. Notes are restricted to game information that is public to both players (*for example, what moves a Pokémon has used during a video game match, or what Pokémon a player put in his or her hand after a Bebe's Search during a TCG match*). Players must be timely with their note taking and may not use devices that may send or receive messages as a note-taking device. A player may not refer to notes taken during previous rounds while the tournament is still in progress. Notes taken during a match may not be given to other players during the course of the tournament.

While a match is in progress, the notes taken by a player are considered public information to that player, his or her opponent, and the tournament staff. As such, the use of codes, ciphers, abbreviations, or any other method of obscuring the meaning of the information is not permitted. Additionally, notes taken by a player may not contain misinformation, intended to deceive an opponent or the tournament staff.

## **8. Electronic Devices**

With the exception of devices necessary to participate in an event, electronic devices, such as cell phones, MP3 players, or text-messaging devices, are not to be used during a match. In some special instances, an electronic device may be allowed by the Tournament Organizer.

## **9. Match Outcome**

Match outcomes should always be the result of game play, except in the case of concession or penalty. Match outcomes determined by random means or by means of bribery harm the Spirit of the Game and are not tolerated by POP.

### **9.1. Conceding a Match**

Players may concede a match to their opponents if they wish, and judges should allow players the opportunity to offer a concession if time is called on an incomplete match but before the players sign their match slip. Once the match slip has been signed by both players, the result of the match cannot be changed.

If a player wishes to concede a match to his or her opponent, a judge or score runner must be called immediately and notified of the concession so that the result can be recorded appropriately.

### **9.2. Random Determination**

Players may never determine the outcome of a match through a random means (flipping a coin, rolling dice, etc).

### **9.3. Bribery**

Any form of compensation offered with the intention of altering the outcome of a match or persuading a player to concede at any point before or during the match is considered a bribe. Pokémon Organized Play believes that the outcome of every match in a tournament should be decided without any outside influences.

## **10. Withdrawing from a Tournament**

Players are allowed to drop from a tournament before it has concluded, regardless of reason. Players should personally inform the tournament's Head Judge, Tournament Organizer, or scorekeeper (if any) that they are dropping from the tournament. Tournament Organizers and scorekeepers should not accept drop reports from other players before double-checking with the withdrawing player in question. Players who choose to drop from a tournament must do so before pairings are posted for a new round. Players who choose to drop after pairings are posted but before playing their match that round will be given a match loss for that round and then dropped from the tournament.

### **10.1. Withdrawing after the Final Swiss Round**

Players may choose to drop from a tournament after the final Swiss round of a Swiss plus Single-Elimination tournament rather than participate in the Single Elimination. If a player would like to drop during the final round of Swiss, he or she must do so before the final standings for that round are posted. Players who do not drop prior to this point will be paired in the Single Elimination portion of the tournament and will be subject to the tardiness rules, outlined in Section 6 should they not show up for their match.

### **10.2. Withdrawing from a Limited-Format Tournament**

The minimum number of rounds that a player must participate in for a Limited tournament is determined by the Tournament Organizer. If the player drops prior to that, that player may be denied any participation prizes he or she would have received had that player continued to play in the event.

## **11. Materials Allowed**

Players are permitted to keep materials necessary to execute game play on the playing surface, such as damage counters, Special Condition markers, references for foreign language cards for TCG matches, or a Type Compatibility Chart for video game matches. A small number of personal trinkets or “good-luck charms” are permitted on the game play surface, but they should be neatly organized and kept out of the way of executing the game. All other items should be kept off the game play surface to reduce distraction and confusion. Players may always request that any unnecessary materials be removed from the play area if they should become distracting or otherwise obstructive to the play of the game.

Food and drinks are not permitted on the play surface. A Tournament Organizer may allow food and/or drinks in the tournament area, but at no time should food or drinks be kept on the play surface.

## **12. Penalties**

Should an issue arise at a POP tournament, players and spectators will be subject to the Pokémon Organized Play Penalty Guidelines. All penalties above Caution level must be reported to POP for further review. Penalties issued to spectators may be assigned to the player or players that they are responsible for, if severe enough. The Head Judge has the final say on all penalties issued at a tournament.

## **13. Tournament Structure**

Pokémon Organized Play tournaments are administered using either a Single-Elimination system or the Swiss-Pairing method. Depending on the size of the event, a tournament may be administered as an Age-Modified Swiss event. At the discretion of the Tournament Organizer, and at more highly competitive tournaments, Single-Elimination rounds may follow the completion of Swiss rounds.

### **13.1. Definition of a Match**

A match is defined as a game or series of games played against a single opponent as part of a tournament. The group of matches being played at any one time during a tournament is referred to as a round.

Most matches consist of a single game, but some may be played as best-of-three games. If best-of-three games are going to be present at any point of a tournament, the Tournament Organizer should state when they will occur at the outset of the tournament. It is recommended that Swiss or Age-Modified Swiss rounds be played as single-game matches.

### **13.2. Reporting Match Results**

It is the responsibility of the winner of each match to report its result to the Tournament Organizer or scorekeeper (if present) of the tournament. At the beginning of the tournament, the Tournament Organizer should inform players as to whom they will report their scores.

## **POKÉMON TRADING CARD GAME TOURNAMENT RULES**

This section contains tournament rules specific to the Pokémon Trading Card Game. All attendees are expected to comply with the applicable sections of these rules while attending a POP-sanctioned tournament.

### **14. Age Divisions**

Pokémon Organized Play separates TCG players into three age divisions; Junior, Senior, and Masters. The age division that a player participates in is set at the beginning of the tournament season, based on that player's year of birth, and does not change over the course of that season. This allows players to compete against the same pool of opponents over the course of the season.

The age divisions are as follows:

Junior Division: Born in 1999 or later

Senior Division: Born in 1995, 1996, 1997, or 1998

Masters Division: Born in 1994 or earlier

### **15. Cards**

Players may only use cards in their decks that are legal for the tournament format. During Limited tournaments, players may only include cards given to them by the Tournament Organizer for the tournament.

Players are responsible for ensuring that their cards are not marked in any way. A card is considered marked if it bears something that makes it possible to identify the card without seeing its face, including scratches, tears, discoloration, bends, and so forth. If a player's cards are sleeved, the sleeves are considered to be part of the cards, so the cards must be examined while in the sleeves to determine if there is a marked card situation.

Cards with different backs or a different cut from the other cards in a deck are not considered marked as long as the entire deck is placed in non-marked, completely opaque-backed card sleeves.

The Head Judge is the final authority in determining whether a card or sleeve in a player's deck is considered marked.

#### **15.1. Card Definitions**

A card is defined by the English translation of the name of the card.

#### **15.2. Card Interpretations**

The Head Judge is the final authority on card interpretations and tournament rulings. Rulings on foreign-language cards are made using the English-language translations.

### **15.3. New Pokémon TCG Releases**

Expansion sets are expected to be released on a regular schedule, averaging four new sets per calendar year. Cards from these new releases are made legal for tournament play the day that the set is released for regular retail sale in a rating zone and not before, with the standard exception of Prerelease tournaments.

### **15.4. Reprinted Cards**

From time to time, cards printed in previous sets are reprinted in a new set. In most cases, the mechanics of the card remain unchanged, though the wording may be slightly altered for clarification. However, in a few rare cases, the game play text of a card is significantly modified. In these cases, the player must have an English or local-language version of the card, outside of his or her deck, for reference.

For the 2009–2010 tournament season, players may use a copy of the official Pokémon TCG Card-Dex containing the card's text, which can be downloaded at from the Tournament Rules and Resources page, in lieu of a reference card. The Card-Dex will not be permitted for use in lieu of a reference card after the 2009–2010 tournament season.

Please see the Tournament Rules and Resources page for a list of cards that have been reprinted and are legal for play in the Modified Format.

### **15.5. Unreleased Cards**

From time to time, players will acquire cards from a new set prior to its regular release date, usually via a Prerelease or the Japanese equivalent of the set. These cards may not be used in sanctioned tournaments until the regular release date of the set, as outlined in Section 16, with one exception. Cards that are already tournament legal which have been reprinted in an unreleased set, or the Japanese equivalent, may be used as long they are easily identifiable as a reprinted card. This is typically only an issue when a reprinted card receives new art, though other factors may create a similar issue. These cards should always be played with the most recent wording of the tournament-legal version of the card.

Players who are unsure as to whether an unreleased card meets the exception above should check with the Head Judge prior to the start of the tournament.

### **15.6. Fake Cards**

Only genuine Pokémon TCG cards may be used in Pokémon Organized Play events. Any fake, reproduced, or counterfeited cards must be removed from all players' decks before the start of the tournament. Those that are not may be subject to confiscation by the Tournament Organizer.

### **15.7. Proxies**

Player-made proxies are considered to be fake cards and should be treated as such in all ways. Players should ensure that the cards in their decks are in good condition before attending a tournament so as not to create a marked-card situation.

If a card becomes damaged during a tournament in such a way that results in the card becoming marked, a judge is allowed to create a proxy of that card to act as the damaged card in all ways for the remainder of the tournament. The damaged card must be retained to use as a reference when the proxy card is played. Alternately, if the player has another copy of that card that is available for use, the player can simply replace the damaged card with an undamaged copy.

In some cases, a card is damaged due to a production error. Players should do their best to avoid playing with these cards, though sometimes that is not possible. If the judge feels that this creates a marked-card situation, the judge may create a proxy card to act as the damaged card in all ways for the remainder of the tournament. The damaged card must be retained to use as a reference when the proxy card is played.

### **15.8. Foreign Cards**

The use of foreign-language cards have been known to create time delays and confusion at high-level Premier Events, where significant prizes are on the line. However, as the Pokémon TCG is an international game, concessions must be made to help accommodate markets where multiple languages are more common. Players are restricted on which language cards they can use, based on the country where they are playing. The list of countries and regions below defines which languages are considered local and which are considered foreign in that country or region.

#### Canada

Local—English and French

Foreign— German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish

#### Europe

Local—English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish

Foreign – Japanese

#### Mexico and South America

Local—English and Spanish

Foreign—French, German, Italian, and Japanese

#### United States and Asia Pacific

Local—English

Foreign—French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish

Players are permitted to use a limited amount of foreign cards at Premier Events. At a Premier Event, a player's deck cannot contain more than 10% foreign cards (i.e., 6 foreign cards for a 60-card Constructed event). All of the cards in the player's deck must have been released, in English, in the United States and must be legal for use according to the tournament's format restrictions. If a player is using a foreign-language card at an event, the player must have an English or local-language version of the card, outside of his or her deck, for reference.

Players may use a copy of the official Pokémon TCG Card-Dex containing the card's text, which can be downloaded from the Tournament Rules and Resources page, in lieu of a reference card. Card scans are not an acceptable replacement for a reference card.

If a judge determines that a player is using non-local language cards and/or misprinted cards to gain an advantage, that player will be subject to the Cheating section of the POP Penalty Guidelines.

For the Pokémon TCG World Championships and the Last Chance Qualifier, players are permitted to use cards that are legal in their home markets. Reference cards are not required for the Pokémon TCG World Championships or the Last Chance Qualifier.

#### **15.8.1. Reference Cards**

Players are required to keep reference cards, or Card-Dex entries, for every foreign card in their deck accessible at all times during deck checks and game play. The tournament staff is under no obligation to provide reference materials to players. Players who fail to provide suitable reference materials at the beginning of a tournament should be denied entry to the tournament until they can produce those materials. Players who fail to provide suitable reference materials in a timely manner during a match should receive an appropriate penalty, as outlined in the Penalty Guidelines.

### **15.9. Japanese Cards**

Players are permitted to use Japanese cards at Premier Events for the 2009–2010 tournament season. All rules regarding the use of foreign-language cards, as outlined in Section 15.8., must be adhered to. Players will not be permitted to use Japanese cards for Premier Events starting with the 2010–2011 tournament season.

If a player has a single copy of a Japanese card in his or her deck and a local-language reference card, that player should be encouraged, but not required, to replace the Japanese card with the local-language reference card.

Players from Japan are exempt from these restrictions for the Pokémon TCG World Championships and the Last Chance Qualifier.

#### **15.10. Autographed Cards**

Cards marked by pen, marker, etc., are not permitted for use in a sanctioned tournament. This includes autographed cards.

#### **15.11. Alternate-Backed Cards**

Only cards with the English or Japanese Pokémon TCG back may be used in POP-Sanctioned tournaments. Cards printed with any other back may not be used in a POP-Sanctioned tournament, even if sleeved with opaque card sleeves.

Players using Japanese Pokémon TCG cards must use opaque sleeves to create a uniform card back, preventing a marked-card situation.

### **15.12. Cards Listed as Not Legal**

Some cards appear with “NOT TOURNAMENT LEGAL” on the card. These cards are not legal in POP-Sanctioned tournaments.

## **16. Card Sleeves**

Card sleeves are allowed to be used at Pokémon Organized Play tournaments, provided that they meet the following requirements:

- All of the sleeves on a deck must be the same color, condition, size, and texture.
- The fronts of the sleeves are clear, clean, and free of designs, holograms, and emblems that may obscure card information.
- The sleeves completely cover the entire card, leaving no portion sticking out of the open end.
- The sleeves are not reflective enough to be used to clearly determine the faces of cards that remain in the deck.
  - A reasonable degree of glossy finish on a sleeve is acceptable. For example, if a player can identify the card by type, due to the contrast in card frames between Pokémon, Energy, and Trainer cards, the sleeves are permitted for use. However, players and judges should take extra precautions to ensure that no advantage is gained by this reflection.
  - Sleeves that create a mirror-like surface, where the exact card above it is clearly distinguishable, are not permitted. For example, if the player can identify the exact card using the reflection from the sleeve below it, those sleeves are not permitted.
- Each card sleeve contains only one card.
- The use of sleeves with any form of pattern or artwork on the back of the sleeve is strictly prohibited at all Premier Events, unless the sleeve is an official Pokémon sleeve, where the color along all four edges of the sleeve is identical.
- The Head Judge of a non-Premier Event has the final say over whether or not art-backed sleeves may be used at that tournament. Inappropriate sleeve images (as determined by the Head Judge) are strictly prohibited.

The Head Judge has the final say regarding whether a player’s card sleeves may be used in a tournament.

Players should keep in mind that card sleeves are not a requirement at Pokémon Organized Play tournaments or events. Should a judge inform a player that his or her sleeves may not be used at an event, the player has the option of replacing the sleeves with more suitable sleeves or playing without sleeves.

Players are responsible for ensuring that their cards and/or card sleeves are not marked in any way. A card is considered marked if it bears something that makes it possible to identify the card without seeing its face, including scratches, tears, discoloration, bends, and so forth. Players must ensure that their sleeves remain legal throughout the course of the event, not just during initial deck checks.



If a player's cards are sleeved, the sleeves are considered to be part of the cards, so the cards must be examined while in the sleeves to determine if there is a marked-card situation.

Cards with different backs or a different cut from the other cards in a deck are not considered marked as long as the entire deck is placed in non-marked, completely opaque-backed card sleeves.

The Head Judge is the final authority in determining whether a card or sleeve in a player's deck is considered marked.

## **17. Game Area Management**

In an effort to keep game play as clear as possible, POP has set forth the following rules regarding management of the play surface.

### **17.1. Cards in Play**

Cards in play should be managed in such a way that they are organized and neat and easy for opponents and judges to interpret. The following are some guidelines for card organization:

- Each deck should be oriented in a north/south direction, with the short sides of the cards facing each player.
- Each player may only have one discard pile, though certain cards in the discard pile may be rotated slightly so as to make them more visible.
- Prize cards must be spaced out so that they are separate from each other, ensuring that both players and the tournament staff can see at a glance how many Prize cards each player has remaining. Prize cards must be on the opposite side of the play space from that player's deck and discard pile.
- A player's Lost Zone should be located directly above his or her Prize cards and should be neatly stacked to ensure that it does not interfere with any other cards in play.
- Keep all Energy cards aligned in the same direction under the Pokémon in play, and make sure each card is visible at all times.
- While a Pokémon LV.X is Active, the LV.X card must be placed next to the Pokémon below it. While a Pokémon LV.X is on the Bench, the LV.X card must be placed on top of the Pokémon below it.
- Make sure Benched Pokémon are separated far enough apart from each other and from Active Pokémon that it's clear which Pokémon have cards attached to them.
- Put Supporter cards next to the Active Pokémon when played and discard them after the Attack step of that turn.
- Attach Pokémon Tool cards to Pokémon that they are being played on and discard them as directed by the card text.
- Put Stadium cards between each players' Active Pokémon so that the card is visible to all players.
- Arrange damage counters primarily over the picture of a card so as not to obstruct the view of the card text.

## 17.2. Hand Elevation

To avoid the perception of impropriety, players should keep both hands above the level of the playing surface at all times. A player's cards should never go below the level of the playing surface during a match.

## 17.3. Turned Cards

If a card must be turned as a part of game rules to indicate a specific effect, that card must be turned so that it is either 90 or 180 degrees, whichever is more appropriate according to the rules.

## 17.4. Tokens and Counters

Players are required to provide their own counters to mark damage to Pokémon in play and counters to represent Special Conditions and other game effects. A judge may disallow the use of markers that cause confusion with regard to the state of the game or that are offensive in some manner.

## 17.5. Randomizers

Players are permitted to use two types of randomizers during a Pokémon TCG match: coins or dice. Players are always permitted to use their opponent's randomizer.

### 17.5.1. Coins

- Any coin released with any Pokémon TCG product from *EX Ruby & Sapphire* on should be considered fair and impartial.
- When flipped, a coin should be held at shoulder height, and must flip at least three times in the air before landing on the table.
- Coins should land as flat on the table as possible. If both players cannot agree on the result of the flip, a judge may be called to determine whether the result is conclusive or if the coin must be flipped again.
- Coin flips that land outside the playing area (off of the table or in another game's playing area) are considered invalid and must be flipped again.
- Once players have agreed on the result of a coin flip, it cannot be redone.

### 17.5.2. Dice

- 6-sided dice are permitted for use as randomizers, so long as each die is a cube, where each side has the same surface area.
- Dice must have well-rounded corners to ensure that it rolls on the playing surface.
- Dice should be of an appropriate size that the result can easily be understood by both the players and the judges. This includes size and lettering or numbering on the die.
- The numbers on the opposite sides of the die must add up to 7 (i.e., 1 must be opposite of 6).
- Dice used as randomizers must be transparent or translucent.
- When rolling a die, the player should shake the die in an open, cupped palm so that both players can see the die bouncing around in the player's hand. The die should

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then be rolled along the table in a manner that forces it to bounce several times before stopping. Alternately, the die can be flipped into the air from shoulder height, so that it spins at least three times before landing.

- Dice used as randomizers must be clearly distinguishable, either in size, color, or marking, from dice being used as damage counters by either player.

### **17.6. Rock/Paper/Scissors**

Some cards may require players to determine results of the card's action by playing Rock/Paper/Scissors. To provide a uniform experience, players must use the following method of determining the winner of Rock/Paper/Scissors:

- Players must look each other in the eyes to reduce the likelihood that an early result will be seen by the opponent.
- Both players each make a fist with one hand, and hold the other hand open, palm up. Both players tap their fists on their open palms simultaneously, four times, displaying their choice of Rock, Paper, or Scissors on the 4<sup>th</sup> tap.
- Rock beats Scissors, Paper beats Rock, and Scissors beats Paper.
- Both players must agree on the result of the hand motions before the hand motions are withdrawn.
- In the case of a tie, both players repeat this process until there is a winner.

If a player is uncomfortable using the standard hand motions for Rock/Paper/Scissors, that player can use three cards as a replacement. Each card must be clearly marked with Rock, Paper, or Scissors in text. Each card can only be marked with one result, and all three results must be present. There are no other acceptable replacements for the Rock/Paper/Scissors hand motions.

## **18. Deck Registration**

Before the first round of a tournament, deck registration may occur. This process involves each player listing the exact contents of his or her deck (and unused cards, in the case of Limited tournaments). To make deck registration easier on the tournament staff, players should sort their decks to match their deck lists prior to registration. These deck lists can later be used by Tournament Organizers and judges to verify that a deck has not been altered since the outset of a tournament. Players are not allowed to change their decks at any time during a tournament.

## **19. Deck Checks**

At all Premier Events, deck checks must be performed. For all tournaments, including Premier Events, POP recommends that deck checks be performed to at least 10 percent of decks over the course of the tournament.

Whether checking a deck at the beginning of the tournament or between rounds, players should be required to put the cards in their decks in the same order as the cards on their deck lists to expedite the process. During the deck check, the tournament staff should look for the following:

- **Legibility:** If the deck list is difficult to read, the player may be asked to fill out a new deck list. Special attention should be paid to the legibility of the player's POP ID and date of birth. Obscure abbreviations for cards should be clarified on the deck list.
- **Sleeves:** Players' sleeves should be free of consistent markings. Sleeves with a significant number of markings or consistent markings should be replaced immediately. If this is found to be an issue after the start of the tournament, it may warrant further investigation.
- **Total Number of Cards:** The number of cards in a player's deck should be appropriate for the tournament format. The deck checker should count the total number of cards in the deck before checking the actual contents of the deck to ensure that the deck contains the proper number of cards.
- **Deck Contents:** The deck checker should verify that the contents of the player's deck matches the cards on the deck list. The card title should match the card listed, and the set abbreviation and collector number of each of the Pokémon should be listed.
- **Card References:** If a player is using foreign cards or reprinted cards that have had significant text changes, the deck checker must require the player to present his or her reference cards or the Card-Dex entries where applicable. If the player cannot present reference materials, the player must be denied entry to the tournament or given the appropriate penalty.

Players should be strongly encouraged to thoroughly shuffle their decks to reduce the likelihood that cards remained clumped in groups due to the deck check.

## 20. Shuffling

Each player's deck is expected to be fully randomized at the start of each game and during the game, as card effects require. In order to achieve randomness, players are allowed to riffle, pile, or otherwise shuffle their decks until they are satisfied that the deck is random. Randomization must be done in the presence of the player's opponent and must be done in a reasonable amount of time. Care should be taken to assure that the cards in the deck are not harmed or revealed during the shuffle.

After the shuffle, the deck must be offered to the player's opponent to be cut once. Cutting the deck consists of creating two separate stacks of cards by removing a portion of the top of the deck, and then placing it under the remaining portion. Players should take care to not reveal any of their opponent's cards while cutting. Cutting into more than two stacks is considered a shuffle.

Instead of cutting, the opponent may choose to shuffle the deck. This shuffle should be brief, and when it concludes, the deck's owner is allowed to cut the deck once as described above. Players should take care when shuffling an opponent's deck, as the cards in that deck are not the shuffling player's property. At this point, the deck should be sufficiently randomized to both players' satisfaction.

If either player still does not feel that either deck is sufficiently randomized, or if a player wishes to not offer his or her deck to an opponent for randomization, a judge must be called over to shuffle the deck(s) in question. No player is allowed to shuffle or cut after the judge's shuffle.

Players engaging in questionable shuffling methods may be subject to the Unsporting Conduct section of the Penalty Guidelines. Players are strongly encouraged to shuffle their opponent's deck at Premier Events.

## **21. Time Limits**

Tournament staff is responsible for running a timely event. To assist in this effort, POP has established guidelines for time limits during various portions of the event.

### **21.1. Pre-game Time Limit**

Prior to each game, players have two minutes to shuffle their decks and present them to their opponents for further shuffling or cutting. This two-minute limit includes resolving mulligans. The round should not begin until this two-minute period has expired.

### **21.2. Mid-game Time Limit**

Any mid-game effects, such as deck search effects and shuffling, are to take place in a reasonable amount of time. If a judge feels that a player's searching or shuffling time is unwarranted, that player will be subject to the Game Tempo section of the POP Penalty Guidelines. A judge may issue a time extension on a match where a player is playing slowly. The extra time allotted must be clearly communicated to both players and recorded immediately by the judge.

### **21.3. Match Time Limits**

Single-game matches should be a minimum of 40 minutes for Constructed tournaments or 20 minutes for Limited tournaments.

Best-of-three matches should have a minimum time limit of 45 minutes, with no maximum time limit. The specific time limit for each round's matches should be announced by the Tournament Organizer at the outset of the tournament.

## **22. Match Resolution**

In the best-case scenario, matches resolve before the round time expires. However, if a match has not ended by the expiration of the round time limit, a winner must be determined without delaying the tournament for an unreasonable time.

### **22.1. Resolution of Match When Time Is Called**

If time is called during a player's turn, he or she completes the current turn. In-between turn effects do not resolve, as there is no new turn starting at this time.

If time is called between turns, all in-between turn effects resolve but a new turn is not started at this time.

For best-of-three play, a new game is considered to have started once the starting player has been determined. If time is called during set-up, use the rules in Section 22.3 to determine the appropriate course of action.

## **22.2. Determining the Outcome of an Unfinished, Single-Game Match**

Use the following criteria, in order, to determine the outcome of a game that is unfinished when time is called. After one of the criteria has been met, none of the others are applied.

- (1) If one player was late to the match or was away from the match, without a judge's permission, for any period of time during the round, that player loses the match. The judge must have been made aware of this absence in advance of the end of the match. If both players meet this criterion, ignore this tiebreaker.
- (2) If both players were on time to the match and were not away from the match for any period of time, the judge determines the winner based on the number of Prize cards that each player has remaining. The player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins the match.
- (3) If both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, the current game continues, starting with any in-between turn effects that take place after the last completed turn, if necessary, until a Prize card is drawn. The player drawing the next Prize card is considered the winner of the match and the match ends.

## **22.3. Determining the Outcome of an Unfinished, Best-of-Three Match**

Use the following criteria, in order, to determine the outcome of a match that is unfinished when time is called. After one of the criteria has been met, none of the others are applied.

- (1) If one player was late to the match or was away from the match without a judge's permission for any period of time during the round, that player loses the match. The judge must have been made aware of this absence in advance of the end of the match. If both players meet this criterion, ignore this tiebreaker.
- (2) If both players were on time to the match and were not away from the match for any period of time, the judge determines the winner of the current game in the following manner:

### **GAME 1**

If time is called during game 1, the player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins game 1 and wins the match.

If both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, the game continues until a Prize card is drawn. The player drawing the next Prize card wins game 1 and wins the match.

If both players draw their last Prize card (or Knock Out their opponent's last Pokémon) at the same time, refer to the "What Happens if Both Players Win at the Same Time?" section of the Pokémon TCG rulebook. If necessary, follow the Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death wins game 1 and wins the match.

### **GAME 2**

If time is called during game 2:

The active player completes his or her turn. If neither player has drawn more than 50% of his or her Prize cards (4 in a Constructed format or 3 in a Limited format), the game does not count toward determining the winner of the match. The winner of game 1 wins the match.

OR

The active player completes his or her turn. If either player has drawn more than 50% of his or her Prize cards, the player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins the game.

If both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, the game continues until a Prize card is drawn. The player drawing the next Prize card wins game 2.

If both players draw their last Prize card (or Knock Out their opponent's last Pokémon) at the same time, refer to the "What Happens if Both Players Win at the Same Time?" section of the Pokémon TCG rulebook. If necessary, follow the Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death is the winner of game 2.

If this results in one player having won two games in the match, that player wins the match.

If this results in both players having won one game in the match, follow the Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death is the winner of the match.

### **GAME 3**

If time is called during game 3, the player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins game 3 and wins the match.

If both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, the game continues until a Prize card is drawn. The player drawing the next Prize card wins game 3 and wins the match.

If both players draw their last Prize card (or Knock Out their opponent's last Pokémon) at the same time, refer to the "What Happens if Both Players Win at the Same Time?" section of the Pokémon TCG rulebook. If necessary, follow the Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death wins game 3 and wins the match.

### **23. Determining Who Goes First in Best-of-Three Match Play**

In best-of-three match play, after a game has been completed, the loser of that game decides who goes first in the next game instead of determining it by a coin flip. This decision is made at the same point during set-up that the coin flip would take place.

### **24. Ratings and Rankings**

Pokémon Organized Play uses ELO-based ratings and rankings for its players. More information can be found in the Ratings and Rankings Explanation document and the K-Value Explanation document found on the <http://www.go-pokemon.com/op/> website.

All matches played as part of a Premier Event will affect the participant's Premier Rating, and thus his or her ranking, provided that the tournaments are reported correctly and completely. Premier Events that do not follow the structure set forth by POP may lose their Premier status, and players participating in those tournaments would then lose any rating points earned at that tournament.

Pokémon Organized Play divides countries into four rating zones. These rating zones typically encompass a single continent or region. Currently supported rating zones are North America, South America, Asia Pacific, and Europe.

Players are responsible for checking their tournament history for accuracy. If there is an issue with a player's tournament history, that player should notify the Tournament Organizer of the tournament. The Tournament Organizer is responsible for working with Pokémon Organized Play to resolve the issue.



## **POKÉMON VIDEO GAME TOURNAMENT RULES**

This section contains tournament rules specific to the Pokémon video games. All attendees are expected to comply with the applicable sections of these rules while attending a POP-sanctioned tournament.

Coming Soon.

## ***Appendix A. Document Updates***

Pokémon Organized Play reserves the right to alter these rules, as well as the right to interpret, modify, clarify, or otherwise issue official changes to these rules, with or without prior notice.

Document updates will be made available at <http://www.go-pokemon.com/op/>.

### Changes for September 1, 2009

General reformatting of document.

Separation of TCG and Video Game Tournament Rules.

Section 2.3. Clarified POP ID requirements for new players.

Section 6. Reduced time before match loss to 5 minutes.

Section 7. Permitted notes to be taken on public information, rather than just game state.

Section 9.1. Changed concession timing.

Section 10.2. Revised rules for withdrawal from a Limited format event.

Section 12. Removed penalty descriptions.

Section 14. Updated age divisions for the 2009–2010 tournament season.

Section 15.8. Foreign-language card use rules adjusted by country.

Section 15.8.1. Added additional rules for reference cards.

Section 15.9. Japanese card use restricted.

Section 15.10. Modified rule to disallow all cards with marking on them, including autographed cards.

Section 16. Further clarified the difference between glossy and reflective sleeves.

Section 16. Requirement for sleeves to remain legal throughout the tournament.

Section 17.1. Additional regulations for cards in play.

Section 17.5. Players permitted to use opponent's randomizer.

Section 17.5.1. Added height regulation.

Section 17.5.1. Replaced 15-degree rule.

Section 17.5.2. Added rules for use of dice as randomizers.

Section 17.6. Added rules for Rock/Paper/Scissors.

Section 19. Added additional rules for reference cards.

Section 22.1. Added game start timing for best-of-three play.

Section 22.3. Clarified Prize card count rules for best-of-three play.