

# Play! Pokemon General Event Rules

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## GENERAL TOURNAMENT RULES

The Pokémon Organized Play Tournament Rules are designed to ensure that all Play! Pokémon tournaments adhere to the same standards. This section contains rules that apply to all Play! Pokémon-supported games. Further sections detail rules specific to each Pokémon Organized Play (POP) supported game. All attendees are expected to comply with the applicable sections of these rules while attending a PLAY! Pokémon tournament. Companion documents covering sanctioning, penalties, and tournament operation can be found at: [Rules and Resources](#).

### 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 PLAY! Pokémon 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 PLAY! Pokémon tournament, all PLAY! Pokémon members agree to abide by the tournament rules outlined in this document.

Anyone is allowed to participate in sanctioned PLAY! Pokémon 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 PLAY! Pokémon events by Pokémon Organized Play
- Players without invitations to play in special invite-only tournaments, such as the Pokémon World Championships

### 2.2. Player ID Numbers

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

#### 2.2.1. Player ID Merging

Players who play under multiple Player IDs are in violation of POP rules, and POP will merge duplicate accounts when they are discovered. Because it is a player's responsibility to maintain a single Player ID, POP does not guarantee that match results or points gained under secondary Player IDs will be combined or retained as a result of merging multiple accounts.

Members who wish to inform POP of duplicate accounts should contact us via the site below with the key details for each account.

<http://support.pokemon.com>

PLAY! Pokémon 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 or league, the organizer will issue the player a Player ID. The organizer should write the player's name and date of birth on the top section of the Player ID booklet for their records. The center section with its instructions on how to set up an account and the player's PIN number and bottom section that serves as the player ID card should then be given to the player.

If the player is under the age of 13, the player's parent will also need to go to [www.pokemon.com](http://www.pokemon.com) in order to give his or her child consent to activate that child's account. If the parent does not already have an account, he or she will need to create at least a basic account in order to grant parental consent. A parent does not need to have his or her own Player ID in order to create a base account.

If the player is 13 or older, the player should simply use the instructions and PIN number on the center section in order to create his or her Pokémon Trainer Club account online.

### **2.4. Suspended Members**

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

## **3. Age Divisions**

Pokémon Organized Play separates 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 2002 or later

Senior Division: Born in 1998, 1999, 2000, or 2001

Masters Division: Born in 1997 or earlier

## **4. 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 PLAY! Pokémon tournament should be removed from the tournament site, and the incident should be reported to POP.

## 5. 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 decklist or team data is considered to be confidential both during and after an event. Decklists or team data should not be shared with anyone other than the tournament staff or POP. Decklists or team data should be retained by the Tournament Organizer for two months unless otherwise instructed by POP. Any decklists or team data two months old or older should be immediately destroyed.

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.

## 6. Tournament Responsibilities

Attendants at PLAY! Pokémon 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 PLAY! Pokémon 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 PLAY! Pokémon tournament. All participants are expected to maintain a socially acceptable level of personal hygiene, as determined by the tournament staff.

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

### 6.1. Player Responsibilities

While attending a PLAY! Pokémon 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 PLAY! Pokémon tournament:

- A valid Player ID in that player's name. If the player has not been assigned a Player 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. This includes but is not limited to items such as damage counters, Special Condition markers, and a

randomizer for a TCG event or the appropriate video game system and Game Card in good working order for a VG event.

## **6.2. 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 due to outside information or distraction.

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 or penalties earned 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.

## **6.3. 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.

### **6.3.1. 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.

## **6.4. 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.

#### **6.4.1. 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.

### **6.5. 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.

## **7. Tardiness**

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

## **8. Note Taking**

Players are allowed to take notes during a game in respect to actions that have happened during the game. Players may take notes during a match and refer to those notes. Players may choose not to share these notes with other players, but a judge may ask to see a player's notes and request an explanation if needed. A player's note sheet must be blank at the start of each 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.

Because a judge may ask to see a player's notes while a match is in progress, 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 tournament staff.

## **9. 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.

## **10. 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.

### **10.1. 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.

### **10.2. Random Determination**

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

### **10.3. 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.

## **11. 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.

### **11.1. 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.

### **11.2. 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.

## **12. Materials Allowed**

Players are permitted to keep materials necessary to execute game play on the playing surface, such as damage counters, Special Condition markers, reference cards for TCG matches. Type Compatibility Charts for video games are not permitted. 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.

## **13. Penalties**

Should an issue arise at a PLAY! Pokémon 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.

## **14. Tournament Structure**

PLAY! Pokémon 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.

### **14.1. 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.

### **14.2. 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.

### *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.pokemon.com>.

#### **Changes for November 1, 2012**

Moved to a dedicated document.