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# General Event Rules

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*NOTE: In the case of a discrepancy between the content of the English-language version of this document and that of any other version of this document, the English-language version shall take priority.*

# Play! Pokémon General Event Rules

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# 1. Introduction

The Play! Pokémon 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 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 the Rules & Resources page of [the official Pokémon website](#).

For Trading Card Game (TCG), Video Game (VG), and *Pokkén Tournament*-specific rulings, please also refer to the rules documents for each individual game. Any rules in those documents that contradict with rules in this document take precedence over this document.

## 2. 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 Play! 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 Play! Pokémon tournament, have an enjoyable experience. This spirit should guide the conduct of players as well as Pokémon Professors as they interpret and enforce the rules.

The Spirit of the Game comprises 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 their opponent or a judge does, 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.

- 🕒 **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.
- 🕒 **Learning:** Players should strive to help each other increase their Pokémon play skills. It is not a player's responsibility to make their opponent's plays for that opponent. However, discussing strategies, offering tips, or constructively critiquing gameplay decisions after the match has been completed helps both participants to become better players.

## 3. Membership and Eligibility

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

### 3.1. Member Eligibility

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By participating in a Play! Pokémon tournament, all Play! Pokémon members agree to abide by the tournament rules outlined in this document.

Anyone can participate in sanctioned Play! Pokémon tournaments except for the following:

- 🕒 The tournament staff for that event, including but not limited to the Professor organizing the event, Professors judging the event, score runners, scorekeepers, and, where applicable, the store owner of the venue hosting the event.
- 🕒 Current employees of The Pokémon Company International and their family members.
- 🕒 Employees of GAME FREAK inc. or Creatures Inc.
- 🕒 Employees of Nintendo (with respect to Play! Pokémon Video Game tournaments only).
- 🕒 Employees of companies that are responsible for the operation or coordination of the Play! Pokémon program 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 who do not have invitations to play in special invitation-only tournaments, such as the Pokémon World Championships.
- ⦿ Community members who are selected to review Pokémon video game product prior to its official US release date are prohibited from participating in Play! Pokémon Video Game tournaments for 60 days following that product's official US release date.

## 3.2. Player ID Numbers

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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 an Organizer to maintain a list of players from previous tournaments and their Player IDs, provided access to such information is restricted to the Organizer.

### 3.2.1. *Pokémon Trainer Club Accounts*

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Any player who has not added their Player ID to an accurate Pokémon Trainer Club account and accepted the Play! Pokémon Terms of Use will not be eligible to participate or claim prizes at certain Play! Pokémon events. Players under 13 years of age will require a parent or legal guardian to complete this process and consent to the [Terms of Use](#).

### 3.2.2. *Player ID Merging*

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

Members who wish to inform Pokémon Organized Play of duplicate accounts should contact us via our [Customer Support Portal](#) with the key details for each account.

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

### 3.3. New Players

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When a new player arrives at their first tournament or League, the Organizer will issue the player a Player ID. The Organizer should retain the player's name and date of birth for their own records. The Player ID printouts should be completed with the player's name and retained by the player.

If the player is under the age of 13, the player's parent will also need to go to [the official Pokémon website](#) to give their consent to activate that child's account. If the parent does not already have an account, they will need to create at least a basic account to grant parental consent. A parent does not need a Player ID to create a basic account.

If the player is 13 or older, they should simply use the instructions at the link above to create their own Pokémon Trainer Club account.

### 3.4. Suspended Members

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Pokémon Organized Play may, from time to time, issue a suspension to a Play! Pokémon member for failure to comply with Play! Pokémon rules and/or procedures. Additionally, Pokémon Organized Play reserves the right to suspend any member at its discretion. While suspended, an individual is unable to attend, spectate at, or participate in Play! Pokémon events.

## 4. 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 for the 2018 season are as follows:

- 🕒 Junior Division: Born in 2007 or later
- 🕒 Senior Division: Born in 2003, 2004, 2005, or 2006
- 🕒 Masters Division: Born in 2002 or earlier

## 5. Wagering and Sales

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 Pokémon Organized Play.

Selling any goods or service in a venue reserved or rented for a Pokémon event without the express permission of the Organizer is strictly prohibited. Anyone attempting a sales transaction at a Play! Pokémon tournament may be asked to leave the tournament site, and the incident should be reported to Pokémon Organized Play.

## 6. Publishing Tournament Information

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.

The contents of any player's deck or team may be published by the Organizer at any time once the event has begun, provided that this information is publicly accessible, and that the publication of such data is part of an initiative that provides additional value to those attending or watching the event. For example, this includes broadcasting a match via live stream or publishing an article about the event. Otherwise, this data should be kept confidential throughout the duration of the tournament.

Deck lists and team lists should be retained by the event Organizer for three months unless otherwise instructed by Pokémon Organized Play.

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.

Attendance at a Play! Pokémon event may lead to an attendee's image and likeness being photographed and video-recorded by or on behalf of The Pokémon Company International (TPCi).

By entering or remaining at Play! Pokémon events, attendees grant permission for TPCi, its affiliates, and media organizations to publish their name, image, likeness, team or deck composition, methods of play, and written and oral statements in connection with any still photograph, live or recorded video display, or other transmission or reproduction of the event, in whole or in any part.



## 6.1 Broadcast Match Play

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While attending a Play! Pokémon tournament, some players may be instructed to play a match that will be featured, projected, or broadcast to a large audience and/or to online viewers. Players must comply with the Organizer's directions regarding the location of the match. In addition, these matches may require additional equipment or considerations, such as new card sleeves, playmats, apparel, or the use of noise-canceling headphones. Players are expected to abide by these considerations.

Due to the nature of broadcast matches, players should be aware that penalties earned but not applied during a match may be applied upon subsequent review. Additionally, certain kinds of penalties, especially those related to unacceptable behavior or language, may be escalated when applied to matches that are broadcast.

## 7. Tournament Responsibilities

Attendees 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.

Some events might require an attendee to purchase a ticket or badge in order to gain access to the event hall. In order to participate at an event, a player might be required to register online in advance.

All attendees 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 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. Any inappropriate accessories (playmats, card sleeves, etc.) are not to be used at a Play! Pokémon tournament. All participants are expected to maintain a socially acceptable level of personal hygiene, as determined by the tournament staff.

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

### 7.1. Player Responsibilities

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While attending a Play! Pokémon tournament, players are expected to:

- 🕒 Abide by the Spirit of the Game.

- ⦿ Show up to a tournament and its subsequent rounds on time.
- ⦿ Double-check their win/loss record and standings as pairings are posted each round, and report any discrepancies to the appropriate event staff immediately.
- ⦿ Players must bring the following items to participate in a Play! Pokémon tournament:
  - ⦿ A valid Player ID. If the player has not been assigned a Player ID at a previous tournament, the tournament staff will provide one.
  - ⦿ A deck or team that meets the format restrictions for the tournament. It is a player's responsibility to ensure that their deck or team meets the tournament requirements at all times during the event.
  - ⦿ A legible and accurate list of the cards that comprise the player's deck, or 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 or digital game in good working order for a VG event.

## 7.2. Spectator Responsibilities

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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 event staff (contacting a judge to inquire into the legality of a specific play, for example) or when interacting with other attendees not currently engaged in a match. 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.

Some events might require a spectator to purchase a ticket or badge in order to gain access to the event hall.

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.

## 7.3. Judge Responsibilities

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Judges are expected to administer impartial rulings and assist the 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. For similar reasons, judges who are serving as translators should limit themselves only to translation duties during the match for which they are translating, and should allow other judges to handle the rulings discussion/decisions. Judges are expected to encourage good sporting behavior at all times.

Pokémon Organized Play supports the rulings of its judges, where those rulings are made impartially and are in the best interests of the Spirit of the Game.

### 7.3.1. Lengthy Rulings

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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 the players. The extra time allotted must be clearly communicated to both players and recorded immediately by the judge.

## 7.4. Head Judge Responsibilities

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The Head Judge serves as the final arbiter of all rulings and rules interpretations for a tournament. The Head Judge is chosen by the 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 Pokémon Organized Play.

In the event of a disqualification, it is also the responsibility of the Head Judge to submit a full and thorough report of the incident to Pokémon Organized Play. This report should detail all factors that contributed to the decision to issue this penalty, as well as the names and Player ID numbers of all Professors who were present at the time of the incident.

### 7.4.1. Appeals to the Head Judge

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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 who 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.

## 7.5. Organizer Responsibilities

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The Organizer is the backbone of a tournament. The Organizer is responsible for all 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. With so many event logistics to handle, the Organizer of a tournament should not be available for player appeals unless the Organizer is also the Head Judge.

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

- 🕒 Tournament type (Swiss, Swiss plus single-elimination top cut, etc.)
- 🕒 Tournament format (Standard, Expanded, etc.)
- 🕒 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.

## 8. 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 first game. In best-of-three matches, players who arrive more than 10 minutes late for any round will be considered to have conceded the entire match. Players who are still not present by the end of that round should be dropped from the tournament.

## 9. Note Taking

Players may take written notes during a match and may refer to those notes at any time during that match. 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 a device that can 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. Written notes taken during a match may not be given to other players during 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. Should a judge request clarification, or a translation for notes written in a language not spoken by tournament staff, the player must oblige.

## 10. Electronic Devices

Apart from 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 Organizer.

## 11. Match Outcome

Match outcomes should always be the result of gameplay, except in the case of concession, intentional draw, or penalty. Match outcomes determined by random means, through the use of bribery or coercion, or via other choosing methods or games harm the Spirit of the Game and are not tolerated by Pokémon Organized Play. It is each player's responsibility to understand the results of any given concession or intentional draw. Once recorded, these results will not be changed by event staff.

### 11.1. Conceding a Match

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If they wish, players may make a single offer to concede a match to their opponent or propose an intentional draw. 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. Players are not permitted to request an opponent's concession. Repeated requests of this nature may be perceived as coercion and penalized as such.

If a player wishes to concede a match to their opponent, or if players agree to an intentional draw, a judge or score runner must be called immediately and notified so the result can be recorded appropriately. Once the match slip has been signed by both players, the result of the match cannot be changed.

Once the match has begun, players may not refer to tournament standings or wait for other matches in progress to resolve before making their decision to concede or agree to an intentional draw.

## 11.2. Random Determination

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Players may never determine the outcome of a match through a random means (flipping a coin, rolling dice, etc.). Other choosing methods or games such as Rock-Paper-Scissors, which arguably have some degree of skill, are treated the same as random determination if used directly to determine the outcome of a match.

## 11.3. Bribery

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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 and will be penalized as such. Pokémon Organized Play believes that the outcome of every match in a tournament should be decided without any outside influences.

# 12. Withdrawing from a Tournament

Players can drop from a tournament before it has concluded, for any reason. Players should follow any instructions provided by the Organizer at the beginning of the tournament regarding dropping from the event. If no such instruction was given, players should personally inform the tournament's Head Judge, Organizer, or scorekeeper (if any) that they are dropping from the tournament. Verbal drop reports should not be accepted from other players. Event staff should double-check with the withdrawing player in question whenever possible. 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 in that round will be given a match loss for that round and then dropped from the tournament.

## 12.1. Withdrawing after the Final Swiss Round

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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 rounds. If a player would like to drop during the final round of Swiss, they 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 7 if they do not show up for their match.

## 12.2. Withdrawing from a Limited-Format Tournament

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The minimum number of rounds that a player must participate in for a Limited tournament to be eligible for participation prizes is determined by the Organizer. If a player drops before reaching that threshold, they may be denied any participation prizes.

## 13. Materials Allowed

Players are permitted to keep materials necessary to execute gameplay on the playing surface, such as damage counters, Special Condition markers, and reference cards for TCG matches. Type charts for video games are not permitted. A small number of personal trinkets or “good-luck charms” are permitted on the gameplay 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 gameplay surface to reduce distraction and confusion. Players may always request that any unnecessary materials be removed from the play area if they become distracting or otherwise obstructive to the play of the game.

Food and drinks are not permitted on the play surface. An 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.

## 14. Penalties

Should an issue arise at a Play! Pokémon tournament, players and spectators will be subject to the Play! Pokémon Penalty Guidelines. All penalties above Caution level must be reported to Pokémon Organized Play 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. Players competing in broadcast matches may be subject to harsher penalties.

## 15. 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 Organizer, and at more highly competitive tournaments, single-elimination rounds may follow the completion of Swiss rounds.

### 15.1. Definition of a Match

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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.

Many matches consist of a single game, but some may be played in a best-of-three format. If best-of-three matches will be present at any point of a tournament, the Organizer should state when they will occur at the outset of the tournament.

### 15.2. Reporting Match Results

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

## 16. Championship Points

The top finishers at Play! Pokémon Premier Events have the opportunity to earn Championship Point awards, provided that the tournaments are reported correctly and completely. Premier Events that do not follow the structure set forth by Pokémon Organized Play may lose their Premier status, and players participating in those tournaments would then lose any Championship Points and Play! Points earned at that tournament.

Pokémon Organized Play divides countries into a number of rating zones. These rating zones typically encompass a single continent or region. Currently supported rating zones are Europe, Latin America, North America, Oceania, Russia, and South Africa.

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 Organizer of the tournament. The Organizer is responsible for working with Pokémon Organized Play to resolve the issue in a timely fashion.



Pokémon Organized Play will still track Elo-based ratings and rankings as a tie-breaking tool, as well as for any players who wish to see how they rank against their friends. These ratings and rankings may also be used in exceptional circumstances to break Championship Point ties—for example, when Pokémon Organized Play is determining Travel Awards. These statistics are otherwise not used. More information can be found in the Ratings and Rankings Explanation document and the K Value Explanation document found at [the official Pokémon website](#).

## 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 [the official Pokémon website](#).

### *Revisions made for latest publication (April 19, 2018)*

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#### Entire Document

- 🌀 General revisions to language or structure for the sake of clarity and uniformity.