

Play! Pokémon Tournament Rules Handbook

ENGLISH VERSION

Date of last revision: November 2, 2022

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1 Using This Handbook

The **Play! Pokémon Tournament Rules Handbook** is intended to give a thorough and comprehensive overview of the rules and policies in place at Play! Pokémon events.

By entering or remaining at a Play! Pokémon event, all participants agree to adhere to the rules outlined in this handbook. Those who do not may incur penalties, be removed from any tournament in which they are participating, and/or asked to leave the event venue.

1.1 Supporting Material

This handbook should be read in conjunction with the **Play! Pokémon Standards of Conduct**.

1.2 Recommended Sections & Audiences

Audience	Recommended Sections	Page Number
Pokémon Professors: <i>Judges</i>	Please read and familiarize yourself with the entire document.	–
Pokémon Professors: <i>Organizers & Tournament Administrators</i>	2. Participation Fundamentals 3. Tournament Policies 4. Tournament Operations & Specifics 7. Rules Violations & Penalties	4 10 16 46
Players	2. Participation Fundamentals 3. Tournament Policies 5. Trading Card Game Tournament Rules <i>or</i> 6. Video Game Tournament Rules 7. Rules Violations & Penalties	4 10 27 42 46
Parents of Players	2. Participation Fundamentals 3. Tournament Policies 7. Rules Violations & Penalties	4 10 46
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2 Participation Fundamentals

2.1 Introduction

Everyone who attends Play! Pokémon events, whether as a player, spectator, or Professor, should familiarize themselves with the information in this section. In particular, the following topics are covered:

- Who is allowed to participate?
- Behaviors and items that are not allowed at Play! Pokémon events
- Roles, responsibilities, and expectations of event attendees

2.2 Player IDs

All those who wish to participate in a Play! Pokémon tournament must have their own Player ID number. It is quick and easy to generate a unique, personal Player ID through a Pokémon Trainer Club account on the official Pokémon website.

However, players who haven't done this before arriving at a tournament may be assigned a Player ID by the Organizer instead. In this case, the next time the player logs in to their Trainer Club account, they should link that account to the Player ID number they have been given. They will then be able to benefit from tracking participation at tournaments and earning associated perks and prizes.

Players must use only a single Player ID. It is a violation of the official Pokémon website terms of use to knowingly register multiple Player IDs, and any duplicate IDs may be removed or merged without warning.

2.3 Participation Eligibility

The ability to participate in Play! Pokémon tournaments is open to all who have a Player ID number, with the following exceptions.

2.3.1 All Play! Pokémon tournaments

- Those who have an active suspension from Play! Pokémon events, issued by Pokémon Organized Play.
- Tournament staff members, including the Organizer, judges, and scorekeepers.
 - This includes the store owner where the tournament takes place inside a retail location.

2.3.2 Championship Series events

The following are ineligible to participate in Play! Pokémon tournaments in which Championship Points can be earned.

- Those listed in section 2.3.1.
- Current employees of The Pokémon Company and its subsidiary companies: The Pokémon Company International, The Pokémon Company International Ireland, Pokémon Korea, Pokémon Singapore, and Pokémon Shanghai.
 - This includes former employees of any of these companies, within 60 days of their final day of employment.
- Current employees of GAME FREAK inc. or Creatures Inc.
 - This includes former employees of GAME FREAK inc. or Creatures Inc., within 60 days of their final day of employment.
- Immediate family members of employees of The Pokémon Company and its subsidiary companies: The Pokémon Company International, The Pokémon Company International Ireland, Pokémon Korea, Pokémon Singapore, and Pokémon Shanghai.
- Contractors of any of the aforementioned companies who are involved in the support and implementation of Play! Pokémon programs or whose role affords them early access to products supported by Play! Pokémon programs.
- Employees of companies that are responsible for the operation or coordination of Play! Pokémon programs in their countries.

2.3.2.1 Video Game Championship Series events

- Those listed in section 2.3.1.
- Current employees of Nintendo.
 - This includes former employees of Nintendo, within 60 days of their final day of employment.
- Program members who are selected to review a 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.
 - Where the program member elects to compete in tournaments after this date, they may not use any video game product obtained prior to its official US release date.

2.3.2.2 Pokémon GO Championship Series events

- Those listed in section 2.3.1.
- Current employees of Niantic.
 - This includes former employees of Niantic, within 60 days of their final day of employment.

2.3.2.3 Pokémon UNITE Championship Series events

- Those listed in section 2.3.1.
- Current employees of TiMi Studio Group.

- This includes former employees of TiMi Studio Group, within 60 days of their final day of employment.

2.4 Expectations

Attendees at Play! Pokémon events 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.

All attendees are expected to:

- Meet the registration and/or entry requirements of the event, including the purchase of a pass or badge where necessary.
- Be free from the influence of alcohol and/or other mind-altering substance.
- Refrain from the use of inappropriate language and/or the discussion of inflammatory topics.
- Maintain a socially acceptable level of personal hygiene.
- Follow the direction of event staff.
- Be respectful and courteous to all.

Should any attendee's adherence to any of the above fall under question, it is the responsibility of the Organizer to determine whether that attendee should be permitted to remain at the event.

For more information regarding acceptable behavior at Play! Pokémon events, please refer to the Play! Pokémon Standards of Conduct.

2.4.1 Prohibitions

It is important that all participants are made to feel welcome and comfortable within the environment of a Play! Pokémon event. In support of this, Pokémon Organized Play prohibits the following behaviors:

- The sale or consumption of alcoholic beverages and/or any mind-altering substance.
- Wagering or gambling on the results of a game, portion of a game, match, or number of matches.
- Offering any form of compensation with intent to alter the result of a game, portion of a game, match, or number of matches; bribery.

In addition, the following items are prohibited at Play! Pokémon events:

- All firearms, including mock weapons that could reasonably be mistaken for such.
- Attire and accessories that display inappropriate or inflammatory language, or that are otherwise determined by the Organizer to be unsuitable for such an environment.

Any attendee discovered to be in breach of this policy should be removed from the tournament site, and the incident should be reported to Pokémon Organized Play.

2.4.1.1 During Tournament Play

For players who are participating in tournament play, the following behaviors are also disallowed during matches in progress, unless explicit permission is given by event staff:

- Receiving information from an outside source regarding their match or the matches of others.
- Taking a phone call or using a cellular device.
- Wearing ear/headphones, unless the player is participating in a Pokémon Video Game tournament, and the ear/headphones are visibly jacked into their own game system.

In addition, the following items are prohibited from being brought onto the play surface:

- Food and beverages.
- Pre-written notes and/or written aids.

2.5 Role Definitions & Responsibilities

2.5.1 Players

A player is any active participant in a Play! Pokémon tournament. Players who drop from the tournament become spectators.

2.5.1.1 Player Responsibilities

All players must:

- Present themselves for play in a timely manner.
- Double-check their match record and standings as pairings are posted each round, and report any discrepancies to the appropriate event staff immediately.

Players are also responsible for the provision of the following:

- A valid Player ID.
- A deck or team that meets the format restrictions for the tournament.
- A legible and accurate list of the cards that comprise the player's deck (deck list), or the Pokémon on a player's team (team list).
- Any implements necessary to play, track, and maintain game information. This includes but is not limited to items such as:
 - Damage counters;
 - Special Condition markers;
 - Randomizer;
 - Video game system in good working order;
 - Genuine Game Card or digital game in good working order.

2.5.2 Spectators

Spectators are those who are present at a Play! Pokémon event but who are not actively participating in the tournament. This includes parents, chaperones, and players who have dropped from the tournament.

2.5.2.1 Spectator Responsibilities

All spectators must:

- Not interfere with a match in any way.
- Maintain a reasonable distance from matches in progress to avoid distracting the players.
- Refrain from discussing matches in progress within earshot of the table.

Should a disruptive spectator be responsible for a player currently engaged in tournament play, that player may earn penalties as though they had engaged in disruptive behavior.

This may ultimately result in that player's disqualification from the tournament, should it become necessary to remove the associated spectator from the event.

2.5.3 Organizer

The Organizer of a tournament is the Professor who originally sanctioned that tournament on the official Pokémon website. They are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the tournament is run according to the Play! Pokémon rules and procedures.

2.5.3.1 Organizer Responsibilities

The Organizer is responsible for all aspects of tournament sanctioning and operation, including arranging an appropriate venue, obtaining and distributing any prizes, reporting results, and staffing the event.

The Organizer is also required to notify players of the following information at an appropriate time:

- Tournament type (Swiss, Swiss plus single-elimination top cut, etc.)
- Tournament format (Standard, Expanded, etc.)
- Number of rounds
- Number of minutes per round
- Match format (Single Game or Best of Three)
- Top cut, if applicable
- Tournament staff, especially the Head Judge(s)
- Any breaks during the tournament

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.

2.5.4 Judge

Judges are expected to administer impartial rulings and assist the Organizer and Head Judge in running a fun, fast, and fair tournament. 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.

2.5.4.1 Judge Responsibilities

All judges must:

- Be free from bias toward or against any player.
- Avoid ruling on games where family members or close friends are involved, where possible.
- Exemplify and encourage good sporting behavior.

2.5.4.2 Head Judge Responsibilities

The Head Judge serves as the final arbiter of all rulings and rules interpretations for a tournament, and is ultimately responsible for making sure that all participants abide by the rules set forth in this document.

The Head Judge must:

- Ensure that judges remain active and on task.
- Complete and submit the Penalty Summary form for the tournament.
- Complete and submit a Disqualification Report for each disqualification (with the exception of no-shows).

2.6 Publishing Tournament Information

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

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

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.

2.6.1 Publishing Deck/Team Lists

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.

3 Tournament Policies

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines and explains the standards and policies that Pokémon Organized Play expects Organizers to respect when scheduling and reporting any Play! Pokémon tournament.

- Where tournaments may be held, including scheduling rules and restrictions.
- How results must be reported following a tournament's conclusion.

3.2 Tournament Scheduling

3.2.1 Allowable Venues

Pokémon Organized Play prefers all sanctioned events to be run in a game store. However, we acknowledge that these venues may not always be available, and therefore permit sanctioned events to be run in other public locations, such as community centers, libraries, or rented event halls.

The Organizer must ensure that any potential tournament venue:

- Is clean, safe, and open to the public, and will remain so throughout the duration of the tournament;
- Welcomes attendees of any background, belief, or personal circumstance;
- Satisfies any applicable local laws.

3.2.2 Sanctioning

Pokémon Organized Play encourages Professors to sanction their tournaments no later than 14 days prior to the date on which the event is scheduled to take place. This ensures that players have adequate opportunity to find the tournament using the Event Locator tool.

3.2.2.1 Premier Events

A Premier Event is a special type of sanctioned Play! Pokémon tournament that occurs as part of the Play! Pokémon Championship Series, and awards Championship Points to those who place high in the final standings.

Some Premier Events may not be sanctioned without the use of a special tool that Organizers must be granted access to use. Sanctioning these tournaments without the use of this tool is likely to result in the invalidation of that tournament.

In addition to this document, Organizers should also pay close attention to any supplementary guidelines they receive when they become eligible to run each type of Premier Event.

3.3 Tournament Entry

Play! Pokémon tournaments should be open to all who meet the Participation Eligibility requirements set out by Pokémon Organized Play, though the following exceptions may be made:

- Organizers may choose to offer prioritized registration to players who regularly attend Pokémon League sessions at an associated League location.
- Organizers may choose to completely disallow entry to any player they feel to be a threat to the safety or enjoyment of others, or whose presence has previously proven detrimental to the event location for any other reason.

3.3.1 Entry Fees

Organizers may charge a fee to participate in tournaments.

Pokémon Organized Play makes no recommendation regarding entry fees beyond the stipulation that Organizers must follow all local legal requirements that may apply when deciding if, how, and what to charge.

3.4 Tournament Integrity

It is imperative that Premier Events are operated to the highest standard, and every effort should be taken to avoid all possible threats to tournament integrity. Although every sanctioned Play! Pokémon tournament is recommended to consider the below, the information described in this section is compulsory for all Premier Events.

3.4.1 Legality Checks

Deck lists or team lists must always be collected at Premier Events, and checks for legality should be performed at any time the tournament progresses from Swiss to Single Elimination, as well as randomly throughout Swiss rounds.

Pokémon Organized Play expects that legality checks will be performed on at least 10% of decks or teams, but recommends that tournament staff strive to complete as many as is reasonable.

3.4.2 Staffing

3.4.2.1 Organizer Presence

The Organizer is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the tournament is run according to the rules and procedures laid out in this and other core rules documentation. Because of this, the Organizer must usually be present at the tournament while it is taking place.

In exceptional circumstances, Pokémon Organized Play may allow for the responsibility of a tournament to be passed from one Organizer to another. Should these circumstances apply, the current Organizer should submit a request through the Play! Pokémon Customer Service team.

Each request is considered individually on a case-by-case basis.

3.4.2.2 Judges

Pokémon Organized Play strongly recommends that all tournaments—but particularly Premier Events—are attended by Professors who hold a TCG or VG Judge certification. A judge presence helps to ensure that ruling queries are resolved as well as possible, and, if multiple judges are present, that players do not have to wait for an extended period before receiving attention.

Having judges assist at tournaments also makes it easier for legality checks to be conducted.

3.4.2.3 Remuneration of Staff

Pokémon Organized Play makes no recommendation regarding the remuneration of tournament staff, beyond the reminder that judges and other volunteers contribute an added value to the tournament experience and should be made to feel appreciated.

3.4.3 Paper Records

Paper records, such as standings, pairings, and match slips, may be retained until the end of a tournament to aid with solving any potential discrepancies that may arise. They should then be immediately destroyed.

3.4.3.1 Match Slips

A match slip serves as a written record of the result from any one match. Match slips must always be used at Premier Events.

At the end of each match, the players should record the result as appropriate on the slip. Then, both players should initial the slip to indicate that they agree with the result.

Once a match slip has been signed, that result is considered final. It is then the responsibility of the winner of the match to turn in the slip as directed by the Organizer.

3.5 Reporting Tournament Results

Tournament results are due to be received by Pokémon Organized Play within 7 days of that tournament's conclusion, and are to be reported online at the official Pokémon website.

Any tournaments that do not have results submitted by this time are considered delinquent and may jeopardize the Organizer's eligibility to host future Premier Events.

3.5.1 Player ID Discrepancies

Should they discover that their Player ID has been incorrectly recorded, a player should reach out to the Organizer of the relevant tournament. Erroneous Player IDs may be corrected by the Organizer directly, using the “Replace Player ID” tool, for up to 3 months following the upload date.

Any issues discovered after this time should be reported by the Organizer to the Play! Pokémon Customer Service team.

3.6 Streamed Matches

While attending a Play! Pokémon tournament, some players may be instructed to play a match that will be featured, projected, or broadcast (streamed) live 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.

3.6.1 Participating in Streamed Matches

Players are reminded that, by entering or remaining at a sanctioned Play! Pokémon event, they agree to abide by the information stipulated under the [Publishing Tournament Information](#) section (2.6.) of this document. Players are not permitted to voluntarily decline participating in a streamed match.

In exceptional circumstances, the Organizer may at their own discretion decide that it is in the best interests of all involved that the chosen match not be streamed. However, it should be noted that this consideration is reserved for truly uncommon circumstances, wherein a serious detriment may occur to the players’ ability to participate fully in that match.

Where players believe that their individual circumstances may make it prohibitively difficult for them to appear on stream, they should make every effort to inform the Organizer prior to the day of the event.

3.6.2 Rules Infractions in Streamed Matches

Rules infractions committed during streamed matches that are not immediately addressed may be identified and penalized upon subsequent review of match footage.

Additionally, certain kinds of penalties, especially those related to unacceptable behavior or language, may be escalated when the infraction occurs during a streamed match.

3.7 Prizing

All prizes provided for use at specific Play! Pokémon tournaments must be used as stipulated wherever possible. Unless otherwise specified, Organizers are always free to supplement any prize support provided by Pokémon Organized Play.

Pokémon Organized Play makes no recommendation regarding this supplemental prizing beyond the stipulation that Organizers must follow all local legal requirements that may apply.

3.7.1 Earning Prizes

To be eligible to receive certain prizes, players must ensure that they have indicated their intention to participate in Play! Pokémon—thereby accepting all conditions of participation as noted in this document—via their Pokémon Trainer Club account. This option is found under the “Play! Pokémon Settings” heading, located in the left-hand navigation bar underneath “My Profile.”

Players who have not selected the option to participate in Play! Pokémon will be ineligible to receive prizes including Championship Points, event invitations, or awards for travel.

3.7.2 Effects of Player Disqualification on Prize Distribution

Players are ineligible to receive prizes from any Play! Pokémon event from which they have been disqualified.

After any disqualified players are removed from standings, other players’ placements may adjust accordingly. This may mean that new players become eligible for prizes.

Should an adjustment like this occur after any physical prizing has been awarded, those players with amended final standings will not receive further physical prizing, but will be eligible for any increase in Championship Points, awards for travel, and similar non-physical prizes that may be awarded after the tournament’s completion.

3.7.3 Promotional Product

Promotional product intended for use at Play! Pokémon events, including as part of the Pokémon League program, must be distributed as directed wherever possible.

Beginning 30 days after the event or final League session at which this material was intended to be distributed, the remainder may be used in conjunction with additional Play! Pokémon events at the Organizer’s discretion. Otherwise, it must be destroyed.

Such promotional material may not be sold by any Organizer, in any capacity.

3.7.4 Unclaimed Prizes

Promotional product or other prizing that remains unclaimed after the conclusion of a tournament is considered forfeited by the player. Players should not expect that they will remain entitled to any prizes should they not be present at the tournament to receive them.

4 Tournament Operations & Specifics

4.1 Introduction

This section outlines and explains the specifics of tournament play. You should read this section if you are interested in:

- Basic rules for all Play! Pokémon tournaments
- Different types of tournament structures
- How players are paired and ranked
- How a player's final placement is calculated

4.1.1 Definitions

4.1.1.1 Match

A match is defined as a game or series of games played against a single opponent as part of a tournament.

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 before the first round begins.

4.1.1.2 Round

The group of matches being played at any one time during a tournament is referred to as a round. The number of rounds that will be played depends on the number of players in attendance as well as the style of tournament that is being run.

4.2 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.

2023 Championship Season Age Divisions

Junior Division	Players born in 2011 or later
Senior Division	Players born in 2007–2010 , inclusive
Masters Division	Players born in 2006 or earlier

4.3 Player Requirements

4.3.1.1 Minimum Number of Players

A sanctioned Play! Pokémon tournament must have at least 4 participating players. Of those players, at least 4 must complete 2 or more rounds.

If fewer than 4 players participate in the tournament, the Organizer should report the tournament as “Canceled.”

4.3.1.2 Late Arrivals

If the Organizer feels that the addition of a late player creates a threat to the integrity of the event, they may choose to refuse event entry to that player. Otherwise, the player may be added to the tournament and will be paired in the following round. That player will receive losses for the current round and any round that has already completed.

Players who are added to a tournament after the first round has been paired will always be ranked below players with the same match record who arrived on time, and are denoted on tournament documentation by an asterisk (*) appearing next to their name.

Players who are added to a tournament after the first round has been paired will not contribute to the number of rounds that tournament will feature.

4.3.1.3 Late Arrivals at Premier Events

Players should not be added to Premier Events after the third round is completed.

4.4 Match Records & Ranking

4.4.1 Match Record

A player’s match record is the representation of the number of matches they have won, lost, or tied during the tournament. It is presented as a ratio in the format “W/L/T.” For example, a player who has won 4 games, lost 3 games, and tied 1 game will have a match record of 4/3/1.

Match records are printed and displayed each round on the pairings and match slips alongside each player’s name, and should be checked for accuracy by players as soon as they are made available.

4.4.1.1 Match Record Errors

It is at the Organizer’s discretion to re-pair a round if a player’s match record is found to be incorrect.

The Organizer can fix the error before the round starts and re-pair the minimum number of players to have a valid pairing, or wait until the round starts before fixing the match record. In either case, the player’s pairing in the next round will be correct.

Match records cannot be altered after the second subsequent round is paired. For example, match records for round 1 cannot be altered after round 3 is paired.

Changing a match record one round after the mistake has occurred affects the tournament similarly to a random pair-up or pair-down. However, changing a match record many rounds later has a much greater effect on the tournament, and can result in a player facing opponents with lower match records for much of the tournament before a change in their own match record places them in the top standings.

4.4.2 Match Points

Match points are accumulated as players progress through a tournament. The number of match points a player has at any one time is determined by their match record.

Match Point Distribution	
Win	3 Match Points
Loss	0 Match Points
Tie	1 Match Point

Players receive 3 match points for a win, 0 for a loss, and 1 for a tie. So, if a player's match record is 4/3/1, they have 13 match points. This is the same as a player whose match record is 3/1/4.

Match records are printed and displayed each round on the pairings and match slips next to each player's match record. They are shown as a number in parentheses; in this case, (13).

4.4.3 (Opponents') Win Percentage

A player's Opponents' Win Percentage—abbreviated to Op Win % on tournament documentation—is the average of the win percentages of all opponents played during a given set of rounds.

4.4.3.1 Calculating Win Percentage

Whether an opponent completed the tournament or dropped before it ended can affect how their win percentage is calculated.

If a player completed the tournament, their win percentage will be the number of wins divided by the total number of rounds in the tournament, with a minimum win percentage of 25% and a maximum win percentage of 100%. The table below illustrates:

Player completed the tournament		
Minimum win percentage: 25%		Maximum win percentage: 100%
Examples		
Total number of wins	Total number of rounds	Win %
1	5	25%

3	5	60%
5	5	100%

If a player dropped from the event before it was completed, their win percentage is the number of wins divided by the number of rounds in which they participated, with a minimum win percentage of 25% and a maximum win percentage of 75%. The table below illustrates:

Player drops before tournament is complete		
Minimum win percentage: 25%		Maximum win percentage: 75%
Examples		
Total number of wins	Number of rounds completed	Win %
1	5	25%
3	5	60%
5	5	75%

Once a player's opponents' win percentages are calculated, they are averaged, resulting in the final figure that is displayed.

4.4.3.2 Win Percentage & Random Byes

In calculating Opponents' Win Percentage, rounds in which a player received a random bye do not count as a win for that player. Rather, this round is not considered at all for the purposes of this calculation.

4.5 Concessions & Intentional Draws

The result of a match should be decided by gameplay above all else. However, players are permitted to concede to their opponent, or (in the case of TCG tournaments only) to make a single offer to draw the game.

A player may decide to concede for any reason. However, Pokémon Organized Play does not recognize any informal agreements made between players regarding the outcome of a match prior to the signing of the match slip. Players should be aware that any such agreements will not be enforced by tournament staff.

Once a match result has been recorded on a signed match slip, that result is considered final and cannot be changed.

Players may not:

- Ask their opponent to concede.
- Ask again for an intentional draw once their opponent has made it clear that they do not wish to do so.

- Bribe, coerce, or otherwise pressure their opponent into any match result.
- Refer to tournament standings or wait for other matches in progress to resolve before deciding to concede or draw.
- Decide the result of a match through random means, or through any other choosing method.

4.6 Play! Pokémon Tournament Styles

Sanctioned Pokémon TCG/VG tournaments may be run as Swiss, Single Elimination, or Swiss plus Single Elimination events.

Other tournament styles may be used only with express written permission from Pokémon Organized Play.

4.6.1 Swiss

Most Premier Events use this tournament style, either alone or in conjunction with Single Elimination rounds.

The intent of the Swiss pairing method is to determine a single winner by pairing players with the same, or similar, match record against each other until there is only one undefeated player.

Tournaments run using the Swiss pairing method allow every player attending the tournament to play in every round, regardless of how well they do over the course of the event.

Swiss tournaments progress as follows:

Round 1
<p>Players are paired randomly for the first round of play. If there is an odd number of participants, the player without an opponent is given a bye, which counts as a win but is not included when calculating tiebreakers.</p>
Round 2
<p>Players in the 1-0 bracket (1 win, 0 losses) are randomly paired against each other; players in the 0-1 bracket (0 wins, 1 loss) are paired in the same manner.</p> <p>If there is an odd number of players, one of the players in the 1-0 bracket is paired randomly with one of the players in the 0-1 bracket (as long as they did not play each other in a previous round). If this leaves an odd number of players in the 0-1 bracket, one player from this round is assigned a bye, as above.</p>
All subsequent rounds

Players continue to be paired randomly by match record until the specified number of rounds have concluded. The player listed at the top of the standings at this point is the champion.

If there is an odd number of players, pairings continue as in Round 2, pairing down from the highest bracket (most wins) to the lowest bracket (fewest wins), assigning a bye randomly to one player in the lowest bracket.

4.6.1.1 Final Placement in Swiss Standings

After the final round of Swiss, the only undefeated player—or player with the highest number of match points and the best tiebreakers—is the winner of the tournament. All other players are ranked based on their final records at the event.

Because players often have a similar number of match points, Play! Pokémon uses tiebreakers to determine the final ranking of each player. After players are ranked by final match points, tiebreakers are applied in the following order.

Once the criteria for one tiebreaker is met, no further tiebreakers are applied.

First Tiebreaker	Tardiness
Players who arrived at the tournament late are ranked below players who arrived on time.	
Second Tiebreaker	Opponents' Win Percentage
Players who remain tied are now ranked in order of their Op Win %, from highest to lowest.	
Third Tiebreaker	Opponents' Opponents' Win Percentage
<p>Players who remain tied are now ranked in order of their Op Op Win %, from highest to lowest.</p> <p>A player's Opponents' Opponents' Win Percentage (Op Op Win %) is the average of the Op Win % of all of that player's opponents.</p>	
Final Tiebreaker	Head-to-Head
<p>If exactly two players are tied in the final standings, and those players played each other during the tournament, then the winner of that match is ranked higher than the loser.</p> <p>If exactly two players are tied in the final standings, and those players <u>did not</u> play each other during the tournament, then the order in which they appear will be randomly determined.</p> <p>If more than two players are tied in the final standings, then the order in which they appear will be randomly determined.</p>	

4.6.2 Single Elimination

Single Elimination tournaments determine the winner of the event by removing players from the tournament after they lose one match. The number of players in each round will be half of the number of players in the previous round (with the possible exception of the first round).

The tournament ends when only one player remains undefeated. That player is the winner of the tournament.

Single Elimination tournaments progress as follows:

Round 1
Players are assigned seeds at random and then paired based on the standard Single Elimination brackets. The winner of each match moves on to the next round, while the loser is eliminated from the tournament.
All subsequent rounds
Players continue to be paired along the brackets, with the winner of a match moving on to the next round and the loser being eliminated from the tournament. Ultimately, only two players will remain. The winner of that match becomes the winner of the tournament.

4.6.2.1 Single Elimination Brackets

If the number of players in the event is not a power of 2 (8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, etc.), then the highest-seeded players receive byes. The number of players that receive byes is based on the difference between the actual attendance and closest power of 2 that is greater than the actual attendance.

For example, if the actual attendance is 53, the closest power of 2 that is greater than 53 is 64. The difference between 64 and 53 is 11, so the top 11 seeded players (who were seeded randomly) would receive first-round byes.

4.6.2.2 Final Placement in Single Elimination Standings

After the final round of Single Elimination, the only remaining player is the winner of the tournament. All other players are ranked based on the final record of the opponent who knocked them out of the event.

For example, a player who was eliminated in the first round by the winner of that tournament will be ranked higher than any other player who was eliminated in the first round.

4.6.2.3 Placement Play-Offs

The Organizer may have the players who lose in the Top 4 play off for 3rd and 4th place instead of using tiebreakers to determine the 3rd- and 4th-place final standings. If this will be the case, the Organizer must make this clear at the beginning of the tournament.

4.6.3 Swiss + Single Elimination

The purpose of this format is to run a number of Swiss rounds appropriate for the number of players in attendance, after which the top-ranked players are seeded into Single Elimination brackets and play until only one player remains. That player is the winner of the tournament.

Most Premier Events use a variation of this tournament style. The following sections illustrate which Premier Events use which variant, and the details and differences of each of those variants.

Organizers should note that players who are added to a tournament after the first round has been paired will not contribute to the number of rounds that tournament will feature.

4.6.3.1 Premier Event Tournament Structures

Premier Event Tournament Structures			
Game	Premier Event	TOM Tournament Mode	Tournament Structure
VG	Premier Challenge		
VG	Midseason Showdown	VGC Premier Event	Variant #1: VG Single Day
VG	Regional Championships		
VG	International Championships	TCG Two Day Championship	Variant #3: VG & TCG Two Day
TCG	League Cup	TCG One Day Championship	Variant #2: TCG Single Day
TCG	Regional Championships	TCG Two Day Championship	Variant #3: VG & TCG Two Day
TCG	International Championships		

4.6.3.2 Single Day Tournament Structures

The number of players participating in the tournament directly affects how many Swiss and Single Elimination rounds will be played. The below tables illustrate this relationship:

Variant #1: VG Single Day			
Players per Age Division	Swiss Rounds	Single Elimination Rounds	Total Length (in Rounds)
4–7	3	0	3
8	3	1	4
9–16	4	2	6
17–32	5	3	8
33–64	6	3	9
65–128	7	3	10

129–226	8	3	11
227–256	8	4	12
257–409	9	4	13
410–512	9	5	14
513+	10	5	15

Variant #2: TCG Single Day			
Players per Age Division	Swiss Rounds	Single Elimination Rounds	Total Length (in Rounds)
4–8	3	0	3
9–12	4	2	6
13–20	5	2	7
21–32	5	3	8
33–64	6	3	9
65–128	7	3	10
129–226	8	3	11
227–409	9	3	12
410+	10	3	13

4.6.3.3 Two Day Tournament Structure

More prestigious Premier Events may run over two days, with a portion of the highest-ranking players advancing to a second section of Swiss rounds on Day Two.

In this case, every player with 19 or more match points or the Top 32 ranked players (whichever number is greater) will advance to Day Two of Swiss rounds.

In the table below, the red line indicates the point at which a second day of Swiss rounds is required.

Variant #3: VG & TCG Two Day				
Players per Age Division	Swiss Rounds (Day One)	Swiss Rounds (Day Two)	Single Elimination Rounds	Total Length (in Rounds)
4–8	3	0	0	3
9–12	4	0	2	6
13–20	5	0	2	7
21–32	5	0	3	8

33–64	6	0	3	9
65–128	7	0	3	10
129–226	8	0	3	11
227–799	9	5	3	17
800+	9	6	3	18

4.6.3.4 Final Placement in Swiss + Single Elimination Standings

Following the completion of Swiss rounds, players will be ranked based on their performance and Swiss tiebreakers. A number of the highest-ranking players will then be seeded into Single Elimination brackets, equal to the number of slots available in the bracket.

Matches are then played according to [Single Elimination](#) rules, with the winner moving on to the next bracket and the loser being eliminated. Eventually, only one player will remain. This player is the winner of the tournament.

The tiebreaker to determine final placement of the players in the Single Elimination portion of the tournament is simply each player’s final Swiss ranking.

After each round of Single Elimination, eliminated players are ranked according to their final Swiss ranking, with the highest-seeded player taking the highest rank available for that bracket, followed by the second-highest-seeded player, and so on.

4.7 Pairings

After each round of the tournament completes, the Organizer should pair the next round and post the pairings. Players should be given a reasonable amount of time to report any errors with their standings and find their seats before a scorekeeper clicks the “Start Round” button in TOM.

Note that once the round is started, no pairings can be changed.

4.7.1 Random Byes

Throughout the course of a tournament, players may be assigned byes. This occurs when there is an odd number of competitors.

A bye counts as a win for that player’s match record, but does not count as a round played when calculating that player’s Win Percentage.

Where byes are inevitable, they will always be awarded to the player with the worst match record if at all possible. However, no player will ever receive more than one bye over the course of a tournament.

4.8 Dropping from Tournament Play

Players who decide that they no longer wish to continue playing a tournament in progress must drop. Players may decide to drop from tournament play for any reason, although players may not drop from a match in progress without first conceding or completing that match.

The Organizer may require players to complete a form or slip to confirm that they wish to drop, or to report this to a specific member of tournament staff. While this may change from event to event, the following information regarding drops remains true for all Play! Pokémon tournaments.

4.8.1 Incomplete Matches

Players who wish to leave the tournament before their current match is complete will receive a loss for all their games that have yet to resolve. If a player wishes to avoid receiving these losses, they should ensure that their match is complete and the result has been recorded before they follow the procedure to drop.

Once the current round is complete, the player will be dropped from the tournament and will not be paired in any subsequent rounds.

4.8.2 Dropped Players' Final Standing

Players who drop from a tournament before it is completed will still be recorded in the final standings.

4.8.3 Disqualified Players' Final Standing

If a player is disqualified from a tournament, they are removed from the standings completely and are ineligible to receive any prizes their match record may otherwise have entitled them to.

5 Trading Card Game Tournament Rules

5.1 Introduction

This section outlines and explains rules that are specific to Pokémon Trading Card Game tournaments. You should read this section if you are interested in:

- Basic rules for all Play! Pokémon TCG tournaments.
- Which cards and randomizers are (not) legal for play.
- Resolutions and tiebreakers for TCG games and matches.

This section assumes readers are familiar with the information presented in the basic Pokémon Trading Card Game Rulebook.

5.2 Trading Card Legality

Only genuine Pokémon Trading Card Game cards may be used at Play! Pokémon events.

Players must ensure that all cards they wish to use during each tournament are:

- Legal for the format in which the tournament is held;
- The correct language with respect to the region in which the tournament is held;
- Not marked or altered in any way.

5.2.1 Disallowed Cards

The card should be in much the same state as it was when obtained from its original Pokémon TCG product. A certain amount of wear is acceptable. However, the following types of cards may not be played at Play! Pokémon tournaments:

- Marked cards;
 - A card is considered marked if some aspect of the card makes it possible to identify it without seeing its face, including scratches, tears, discoloration, bends, etc.
- Cards that have undergone post-production alteration;
 - Examples of alterations include autographs, artwork, or other such amendments to the surface of the card, not including any official stamps applied by TPCi.

5.2.2 Card Sleeves

Card sleeves must satisfy the same criteria as the cards themselves with regards markings and wear. In addition, to be legal for tournament play, all card sleeves within each player's deck must:

- Enclose a single card in its entirety;

- Be the same color/design, condition, size, and texture;
- Have all edges be a single, solid color (i.e., artwork should not extend to the very edge of the sleeve);
- Be either a single, solid color or an officially licenced Pokémon design;
- Not be reflective to the extent that the faces of cards may be clearly determined from looking at their surface.

Players may use inner sleeves or over sleeves provided that the above criteria remain satisfied and that this does not affect the player’s ability to shuffle their deck.

Pokémon Organized Play strongly recommends the use of sleeves with an opaque back. Using clear sleeves, or declining to use sleeves at all, may expose imperfections on the back of the card itself.

5.2.3 Legal Languages

Pokémon Trading Card Game cards are available around the world in a variety of languages.

To ease the linguistic complexity of tournament interactions, Pokémon Organized Play limits which languages are legal for play at Premier Events according to the rating zone in which that Premier Event is held.

For all other tournaments and League sessions, the decision regarding which languages are legal for play is at the discretion of the Organizer or League staff.

5.2.3.1 Legal Languages for Premier Events, by Rating Zone

Rating Zone	Legal Languages
North America	English
Latin America	English, Spanish
Europe	English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish
Oceania	English
Russia	English, Russian
South Africa	English

5.2.3.2 Additional Legal Languages for Premier Events, by Country

Country	Additional Legal Language
Canada	French
Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay, Peru	Portuguese

5.2.3.3 Exceptions

For the Pokémon TCG World Championships, International Championships, and for side events at either of these, regardless of which country they are hosted in, players are always permitted to use English cards as well as cards in any language that is legal in the player's home country.

In exceptional circumstances, the Head Judge or Organizer of any tournament may also choose to make an exception to rules regarding the legal languages. This is at their sole discretion, and should only be considered where there would be no operational detriment to the tournament in doing so.

Players who believe their personal circumstances would make it difficult for them to fully comply with rules regarding legal card languages should make every effort to contact the event Organizer prior to the event itself.

5.2.4 Proxies

If a card becomes damaged during a tournament in such a way that results in the card becoming marked, a judge may create a proxy of that card to act as the damaged card in all ways for the remainder of the tournament.

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 Head 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.

In all cases, the damaged card must be retained to use as a reference when the proxy card is played.

Proxies may not be used at Play! Pokémon tournaments for any other reason, and should be treated as any other counterfeit card if discovered.

5.3 Deck Legality

5.3.1 Deck Registration

All Play! Pokémon Premier Events require that participants complete a deck list detailing the exact contents of the deck they wish to use during the tournament.

These deck lists can later be used by Organizers and judges to verify that a deck has not been altered since the outset of a tournament, so players should take care to ensure the clarity and accuracy of their deck lists.

5.3.2 Deck Checks

Deck checks are required to be performed at all Premier Events. Pokémon Organized Play expects that deck checks will be performed on at least 10% of decks, but recommends that tournament staff strive to complete as many as is reasonable.

Deck checks may happen at any time during a tournament, from registration through the final round.

Although players may be required to put the cards in their decks in the same order as the cards on their deck lists, they should not assume this and should always await direction from tournament staff before reordering their deck.

During a deck check, tournament staff will check the following:

- The list is complete and legible;
- The deck described is legal for tournament play;
- The contents of the deck match the list exactly;
- The cards and sleeves are free of features that could cause them to be classified as marked.

5.4 Constructed Tournament Formats

The deck construction rules for Constructed formats are as follows:

- The deck must contain exactly **60 cards**.
- Decks may not contain more than **4 copies** of a single card, as defined by the card's English language translation, except for basic Energy cards.
- Matches are played for **6 Prize cards**.

Play! Pokémon allows the use of three Constructed formats for its sanctioned tournaments, all of which are detailed below.

5.4.1 Standard Format & Expanded Format

5.4.1.1 Legal Expansions

<i>Legal Regulation Marks</i>			
Legality Date	Regulation Mark	Standard	Expanded
September 10, 2021	<i>D</i>	✓	✓
September 10, 2021	<i>E</i>	✓	✓
March 12, 2022	<i>F</i>	✓	✓

Expanded Format Black & White Expansions

Legality Date	Set Name	Standard	Expanded
	<i>Black & White</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Emerging Powers</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Noble Victories</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Next Destinies</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Dark Explorers</i>		✓
	<i>Dragon Vault</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Dragons Exalted</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Boundaries Crossed</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Plasma Storm</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Plasma Freeze</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Plasma Blast</i>		✓
	<i>Black & White—Legendary Treasures</i>		✓

Expanded Format XY Expansions

Legality Date	Set Name	Standard	Expanded
	<i>XY—Kalos Starter Set</i>		✓
	<i>XY</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Flashfire</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Furious Fists</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Phantom Forces</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Primal Clash</i>		✓
	<i>Double Crisis</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Roaring Skies</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Ancient Origins</i>		✓
	<i>XY—BREAKthrough</i>		✓
	<i>XY—BREAKpoint</i>		✓
	<i>Generations</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Fates Collide</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Steam Siege</i>		✓
	<i>XY—Evolutions</i>		✓

Expanded Format Sun & Moon Expansions

Legality Date	Set Name	Standard	Expanded
	<i>Sun & Moon</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Guardians Rising</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Burning Shadows</i>		✓
	<i>Shining Legends</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Crimson Invasion</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Ultra Prism</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Forbidden Light</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Celestial Storm</i>		✓

	<i>Sun & Moon—Lost Thunder</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Team Up</i>		✓
	<i>Dragon Majesty</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Unbroken Bonds</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Unified Minds</i>		✓
	<i>Hidden Fates</i>		✓
	<i>Sun & Moon—Cosmic Eclipse</i>		✓

Additional Releases		
Product Name	Standard	Expanded
McDonald’s Collection 2011–2021		✓
<i>Black & White</i> Trainer Kit		✓
<i>XY</i> Trainer Kit		✓
<i>XY</i> Trainer Kit—Bisharp and Wigglytuff		✓
<i>XY</i> Trainer Kit—Latias and Latios		✓
<i>XY</i> Trainer Kit—Pikachu Libre and Suicune		✓
<i>Sun & Moon</i> Trainer Kit—Lycanroc & Alolan Raichu		✓
<i>Sun & Moon</i> Trainer Kit—Alolan Sandslash & Alolan Ninetales		✓
<i>Detective Pikachu</i>		✓

“Black Star” Promo Cards			
Prefix	Numbered	Standard	Expanded
BW	01 and higher		✓
XY	01 and higher		✓
SM	158 and higher		✓

5.4.1.2 Release & Legality Schedule

Expansions are expected to be released on a regular schedule, averaging four new expansions per calendar year. Newly released cards will become legal on the second Friday following that product or expansion’s US market release date.

The release and subsequent tournament legal date for promo cards can be confirmed by visiting [the Pokémon TCG Promo Card Legality Status page](#), which is updated monthly.

5.4.1.3 Reprinted Cards in the Standard & Expanded Formats

Cards that have previously existed in the format are occasionally reprinted in newer expansions. In these cases, the older version of the card may be played if:

- The name of the new card is identical to that of the older card;
- All text printed on the new card is functionally identical to that of the older card.

In addition, provided it meets the criteria above, a newer version of a card that is currently playable in the Standard or Expanded format may be played immediately in that format upon its release.

Consider the following examples when determining whether any two cards are functionally identical:

- Copycat (CES, 127) and Copycat (TRR, 83) are functionally identical. Although the wording has been altered, the effect described remains unchanged.
- Rainbow Energy (CES, 151) and Rainbow Energy (TR, 17) are *not* functionally identical, as the former “put[s] 1 damage counter” while the latter “does 10 damage”—damage counters and damage are separate mechanics in the Pokémon TCG, and cannot be referenced interchangeably.

5.4.1.4 Banned Cards

The list of cards banned in tournament play can be found [here](#).

Tournament results and community feedback will continue to be analyzed to maintain a healthy play environment. In particular, the Expanded format will be aggressively monitored because there are so many cards and potential combinations available to use.

5.4.2 Unlimited Format

Unlimited decks may contain cards from any Pokémon Trading Card Game expansions and promotional cards that have been released in the United States.

5.4.2.1 Release & Legality Schedule

Cards from each new expansion will become legal on the second Friday following that expansion’s US market release date. Expansions are expected to be released on a regular schedule, averaging four new expansions per calendar year.

Promo cards such as those found in Pokémon TCG Boxes and Collections will be legal on either the first or third Friday following the expansion’s US market release date. This tournament legal date is consistent worldwide and can be confirmed by visiting the Pokémon TCG Promo Card Legality Status page, which is updated monthly.

5.4.2.2 Reprinted Cards in the Unlimited Format

As there is no restriction on the number of expansions legal for play in the Unlimited format, players will occasionally come across Trainer cards from older expansions that have the same name as newer cards but completely different effects.

Players may still include those older versions of the card in their decks, provided that the wording of the most recent version is used wherever that card is concerned.

5.4.2.3 Banned Cards

There are currently no banned cards in the Unlimited format.

5.5 Limited Tournament Formats

The deck construction rules for Limited formats are as follows:

- The deck must contain exactly **40 cards**.
- There is **no limit** to the number of cards with the same name that can be included, provided there is no restriction detailed in the card text itself.
- Matches are played for **4 Prize cards**.

Play! Pokémon allows the use of three Limited formats for its sanctioned tournaments, all of which are detailed below.

5.5.1 Sealed

In a Sealed event, players receive either a Build & Battle Box or a predetermined number of booster packs (usually between four and six) from the Organizer at the beginning of the event.

5.5.1.1 Deck Construction

Players open their booster packs at a signal from the Organizer and construct a 40-card deck using only those cards (including any cards in their Build & Battle Box) and any basic Energy cards provided by the Organizer.

Players have 30 minutes to construct their decks.

5.5.2 Booster Draft

In a Booster Draft event, players receive booster packs from the Organizer at the beginning of the event (recommended four to six boosters per player). Players split into equal-sized groups, which should not exceed 8 players per group, and are seated in a circle.

5.5.2.1 Drafting Process

At a signal from the Organizer, each player opens one booster pack without revealing its contents to the other players. Each player then selects one card from their booster pack and lays it face down in front of them.

Once a card has been placed in a player's stack, it is considered selected and cannot be returned to the pack in exchange for another card. Players then pass the remaining cards, face down, to the person on their left. The cards selected by each player should remain private knowledge during the drafting process.

Each player continues to select one card from among the cards handed to them until all the cards have been selected. This process repeats for each remaining booster pack, with the passing pattern alternating from left to right as each new pack is opened.

5.5.2.2 Deck Construction

After all the booster packs have been opened and all the cards have been selected, each player constructs a 40-card deck, using only the cards they selected and any basic Energy cards provided by the Organizer.

Players have 30 minutes to construct their decks.

5.5.3 **Build & Battle Draft**

In a Build & Battle Draft event, each player receives a Build & Battle Box from the Organizer at the beginning of the event. Players split into groups of four and are seated in a circle.

At a signal from the Organizer, each player opens their 23-card Evolution pack first, without revealing its contents to the other players. Players can take a few minutes to look through these cards, which can be used to build their deck at the end. When they're finished, the players will put these cards back into their Build & Battle Box.

5.5.3.1 Drafting Process

When everyone is ready, the Organizer will signal the players to begin drafting. Each player opens one booster pack without revealing its contents to the other players. Each player then selects one card from their booster pack and puts it into their box, along with the Pokémon TCG Online code card and the non-foil basic Energy card.

Once a card has been placed in a player's box, it is considered selected and cannot be returned to the pack in exchange for another card. Players then pass the remaining cards, face down, to the person on their left. The cards selected by each player should remain private knowledge during the drafting process.

Each player continues to select one card from among the cards handed to them until all the cards have been selected. After all cards from a booster pack have been taken, players will have one minute to review the cards they have so far. This process repeats for each remaining booster pack, with the passing pattern alternating from left to right as each new pack is opened.

5.5.3.2 Deck Construction

After all the booster packs have been opened and all the cards have been selected, each player constructs a 40-card deck, using only the cards in their box and any basic Energy cards provided by the Organizer.

Players have 20 minutes to construct their decks.

5.6 Game Area Management

5.6.1 The Play Area

Cards in play should be managed in such a way that they are organized, neat, and easy for opponents and judges to interpret.

Cards that are placed into the play area from the hand without the effect of another card, Ability, or effect are considered played at the point the player physically releases the card from their hand. If a player does not wish to play a card, they should not place it into the play area.

The boundaries of the play area are defined according to the image overleaf.



Image A: The Pokémon TCG play area

A: Each deck should be oriented in a north/south direction, with the short sides of the cards facing each player. Card sleeve openings should face the opponent.

B: Each player may have only one discard pile, though certain cards in the discard pile may be rotated slightly to make them more visible.

C: Prize cards must be spaced out in a way that ensures 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.

D: Keep all Energy cards aligned in the same direction under the Pokémon in play, and make sure each card is kept visible.

E: Make sure Benched Pokémon are separated enough from each other and from the Active Pokémon that it is clear which Pokémon have cards attached to them.

F: Put Stadium cards between both players' Active Pokémon so that the card is visible to all players.

5.6.1.1 The Lost Zone

A player's Lost Zone should be located directly above their Prize cards, and should be neatly stacked to ensure that it does not interfere with any other cards in play.

5.6.2 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.

5.6.2.1 Coins

Coins can be obtained from preconstructed theme decks, Trainer Kits, and other special Pokémon TCG products.

Players should consider the following when choosing to use a coin as a randomizer:

- When flipped, a coin should be held at shoulder height, and fully rotate at least three times 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.
 - Once a judge has ruled that a result is conclusive, it cannot be redone.
- Coin flips that land outside the play area are considered invalid and must be flipped again.
 - Everything contained inside the blue and white mat shown in Image A is the play area for your game.

Any coin released with any official Pokémon product from *EX Ruby & Sapphire* on should be considered fair and impartial.

5.6.2.2 Dice

Dice can be obtained from Pokémon TCG Elite Trainer Boxes. Any 6-sided die is permitted for use as randomizers, so long as the die is a cube, where each side has the same surface area.

Players should consider the following when choosing to use a die as a randomizer:

- Dice used as randomizers must be transparent or translucent.
- Dice must have well-rounded corners to ensure that they roll 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.

- One side may have custom-precision etching in place of the 1 or the 6 as long as all custom dice being used by that player have the same side customized and both players approve the use of the die.
- The numbers or pips on the opposite sides of the die must add up to 7 (i.e., 1 must be opposite 6). A custom-etched side uses the number replaced when determining if the opposite sides add up to 7.

5.7 Shuffling & Deck Randomization

Each player's deck is expected to be fully randomized at the start of each game and during the game, as card effects require. Randomization must be done in the presence of the player's opponent and must be done in a reasonable amount of time. Care should also be taken to ensure that the cards in the deck are not harmed or revealed during the shuffle.

Once the deck is shuffled, it 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.

Instead of cutting, the opponent may choose to shuffle the deck. This shuffle should be brief, and when it concludes, the deck's owner may cut the deck once as described above. Cutting into more than two stacks is considered a shuffle.

5.7.1 Judge Intervention

If either player does not feel that either deck is sufficiently randomized immediately following a shuffle, or if a player prefers not to offer their deck to an opponent for randomization, a judge must be called over to shuffle the deck(s) in question. No player may shuffle or cut after the judge's shuffle.

5.7.2 Insufficient Randomization

Insufficiently randomizing the deck is a rules violation that may carry a penalty. It is therefore in the interest of each player to become comfortable with a shuffling technique that is both quick and thorough.

5.8 Tournament Play

5.8.1 Definitions

5.8.1.1 Match

A Pokémon TCG match begins when the time allotted for play begins to count down. The match ends when both players have agreed upon the result and signed the accompanying match slip.

5.8.1.2 Game

A Pokémon TCG game begins at the time the player who will take the first turn is determined.

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 setup that the coin flip would take place.

The game ends when any single player achieves the number of Win Conditions required to be declared the winner.

In best-of-three match play, a game may also end:

- If any single player loses two matches. In this scenario, their opponent will be declared the winner.
- If each player has already lost a match and then receives simultaneous Game Loss penalties:
 - In Swiss formats/rounds, this match will be recorded as a tie.
 - In Single Elimination or in a match that requires a winner, the players must then play a Tiebreaker Game to determine the winner.

5.8.1.3 Turn

A turn in the Pokémon TCG begins when the active player draws a card into their hand as their first action. The turn ends when the active player completes a valid attack, indicates that their opponent may proceed to the turn that follows, or completes any other action that carries the stipulation that the end of that player's turn must immediately follow (*e.g. Steven's Resolve, CES 145*).

5.8.2 Beginning the Game

5.8.2.1 Mulligans

If either player has no Basic Pokémon in their opening hand, that player must take a mulligan.

The opposing player may draw a card for each extra mulligan their opponent took. For example, if both players took 2 mulligans, and then Player A took 3 additional mulligans, Player B may draw up to 3 cards. These cards may be drawn only once Player A has placed an Active Pokémon, and Player B must announce how many cards they will draw before doing so.

If any of those cards are Basic Pokémon, they may be put onto the Bench. The Active Pokémon must remain unchanged.

5.8.2.2 Judge-Enforced Progression

On extremely rare occasions, a situation may occur where one player is unable to draw a Basic Pokémon despite completing an unprecedented number of mulligans—for example, this may occur if that player has a very low number of Basic Pokémon in their deck.

In the interest of preserving a lively tempo of play, the following process may be initiated by the Head Judge once any one player has completed 8 mulligans without drawing a Basic Pokémon:

1. Shuffle the player's deck.
2. Reveal cards from the top of the player's deck until a Basic Pokémon is found.
 - a. Place that Basic Pokémon aside.
3. Shuffle the player's deck once more.
4. The player then draws 6 cards from the top of their deck.
 - a. Add the previously revealed Basic Pokémon to create a hand of 7 cards.
5. Indicate that the game may now proceed as normal.
 - a. A time extension should be issued for the time taken to complete this process.

5.8.3 **Game Resolution**

Once time is called, games still in progress do not end immediately. Instead, the active player must complete their turn. Afterwards, the players must play an additional three full turns (+3 turns).

If time is called during Pokémon Checkup, there is no currently active player, so the next turn will be turn one of three.

Depending on the format of the tournament, it may or may not be necessary for each game within a match to resolve with a declared winner. For example, Single Elimination tournaments require each game to have a winner, as only one player from each match may advance to the next round. However, Swiss tournaments have no such requirement, and games may remain unresolved while the match is recorded as a tie.

The following practices are used to help games to resolve when they remain incomplete after time is called, +3 turns have elapsed, and the tournament format demands that a winner must be declared.

5.8.3.1 Tiebreaker Games

If time elapses on an incomplete game that requires a winner, if both players take their last Prize card (or Knock Out their opponent's last Pokémon) at the same time, or both players simultaneously receive their second game loss, and no other win conditions have been met, players must determine the winner of that game by engaging in a Tiebreaker Game.

The players should set up as though they were playing a normal game, including setting up 6 Prize cards and flipping a coin to decide who goes first. The winner of the Tiebreaker Game is the first player to gain a Prize card advantage over their opponent, or to win the game outright by any other method.

When time is called, a Tiebreaker Game should end after +3 turns. If a Tiebreaker Game is unresolved at this time, the game (1, 2, or 3 of the match) remains incomplete.

5.8.3.2 Resolving a Game That Cannot Otherwise Reach a Natural End

On extremely rare occasions, players may encounter a situation in which it is impossible for a game to reach a natural conclusion without outside assistance—for example, when it is impossible for either player's deck to take any further Prize cards.

In these cases, the following process may be initiated by the Head Judge:

1. The match time must have elapsed, +3 turns have been completed, and the Head Judge must be satisfied:
 - a. That the loop entered is infinite and unbreakable by either player;
 - b. That the intention of both players is to avoid their own loss and not simply to prolong the game by not advancing the game state;
 - c. That continuing play without a concession from either player would result in a game without end.
2. From the point at which this decision is made, the Head Judge informs both players of their observation. A further +3 turns will then be played, with the current turn being Turn 0.
3. If the game remains unresolved after this point, the players must play a Tiebreaker Game to determine the winner of that unresolved game.*
4. If the Head Judge observes the situation to repeat during the Tiebreaker Game, then the game is resolved as follows.
 - a. From the point at which this decision is made, the Head Judge informs both players of their observation. A further +3 turns will then be played, with the current turn being Turn 0.
 - b. After this point, the player who was seeded highest in Swiss rounds will be declared the winner of that game.

** If the Head Judge determines that the loop will inevitably reoccur during any Tiebreaker Game played, they should forgo this step and proceed immediately to step 4b.*

5.8.4 Match Resolution

5.8.4.1 Tardiness Clause

To prevent delays to the tournament, players are expected to present themselves for play in a timely manner. The Tardiness Clause serves as the primary tiebreaker for any match that remains unresolved after time has been called, and is applied in addition to any penalties a player may earn for their absence from a match in progress.

If one player was late to the match or was away from the match without a judge’s permission at any time during the round, that player loses the match immediately after time is called and the allowed +3 turns have elapsed.

5.8.4.2 Swiss Tournament Rounds

These results should only be applied if no single player satisfies the Tardiness Clause.

Tournament Type: Swiss Rounds	Match Type: Single Game
Time Called	Match Result
During game 1	Tie

Tournament Type: Swiss Rounds	Match Type: Best of Three
Time Called	Match Result
During game 1	Tie
Between games 1 & 2	Winner of game 1 wins the match
During game 2	Winner of game 1 wins the match
Between games 2 & 3	Tie
During game 3	Tie

5.8.4.3 Single Elimination Tournament Rounds

Matches during Single Elimination tournaments may not result in a tie, and so additional tiebreaker criteria are used to determine the outcome of a match.

Should neither player satisfy the tiebreaker—both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, for example—the game must continue until one player either satisfies this tiebreaker or wins the game outright, whichever occurs first.

These results should only be applied if no single player satisfies the Tardiness Clause.

Tournament Type: Single Elimination	Match Type: Single Game
Time Called	Match Result
During game 1	Player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins the match

Tournament Type: Single Elimination	Match Type: Best of Three
Time Called	Match Result

During game 1	Player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins the match
Between games 1 & 2	Winner of game 1 wins the match
During game 2	Winner of game 1 wins the match
Between games 2 & 3	Winner of Tiebreaker Game wins the match
During game 3	Player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins the match

5.8.5 Tempo of Play

The pace of a Pokémon TCG match should be lively without being excessively fast, and each player should receive approximately half of the allotted time for the game.

Pokémon Organized Play has set forth the below guidelines by which to assess whether a game action is completed in a reasonable time frame.

- Shuffling and setup, game start: 2 minutes
- Shuffling and deck search, mid-game: 15 seconds
- Performing the actions of a card or attack: 15 seconds
- Considering the game position before playing a card: 10 seconds
- Starting the turn after opponent's "end of turn" announcement: 5 seconds

These are guidelines only, and should be considered within the context of normal gameplay.

Players attempting to compartmentalize their turn in order to consistently use every second of the time allowed for these actions will be subject to penalties associated with stalling.

5.8.6 Time Extensions

Judges may issue time extensions of a length corresponding to the time taken to resolve any issue. The extra time allotted must be clearly communicated to both players, and recorded immediately by the judge.

6 Video Game Tournament Rules

The Play! Pokémon Video Game Rules, Formats & Penalty Guidelines is currently separate from this document and can be accessed from the Rules & Resources section of the official Pokémon website.

7 Rules Violations & Penalties

7.1 Introduction

Play! Pokémon protocols and procedures are intended to foster a spirit of friendly competition at all Play! Pokémon tournaments. However, occasional situations arise, whether unintentionally or otherwise, in which attendees fail to abide by tournament rules or standards of conduct. Failure to adhere to these rules may result in a player earning penalties.

Penalties often constitute adjustments made to the circumstances of a player's game in progress or next upcoming game to offset potential advantage gained or disruption caused through rules violations.

Players may not refuse to abide by the conditions of a penalty that their opponent has earned. For example, a player may not choose to concede a game to an opponent who has received a Game Loss penalty for that game.

7.2 Types of Penalty

Though the ways in which penalties may be earned differ upon whether it is the Trading Card Game or Video Game that is being played, the definitions and applications of these penalties remain the same regardless.

The penalties below are presented in order of increasing severity, from a verbal warning (Caution) through to removal from the tournament (Disqualification).

These are the only penalties that should be applied at Play! Pokémon tournaments—judges may not apply any penalty that is not listed below, nor can they modify those that are in any way.

7.2.1 Caution (C)

A Caution is a verbal note to the player that a rules violation has occurred.

7.2.2 Warning (W)

A Warning comprises both a verbal note to the player that a rule violation has occurred and a written record of that note.

Please note: The final word on what penalties should be applied to which players and at what time is up to the Head Judge of the event. While the Organizer and other judges may assign penalties, they should always check with the Head Judge before assigning a penalty more severe than a **Warning**. Additionally, all **Cautions** and **Warnings** assigned by any judge or the Organizer should be reported to the Head Judge of the event.

7.2.3 Double Prize Card (DPC)

7.2.3.1 Definition

The Double Prize Card penalty is exclusive to the Pokémon Trading Card Game and is used when a mistake has been made that significantly affects the game state and there is no clear way to resolve the issue, or when a Warning has been given and a Quad Prize Card penalty would be too harsh.

7.2.3.2 Application

After a player receives a Double Prize Card penalty, the offending player's opponent is informed that in order to win that game, they must take two fewer Prize cards than would normally be necessary according to the format (i.e., they will win the game when they have two Prize cards remaining).

Should the opponent have only one or two Prize cards remaining at the time, the game is over immediately, and the opponent wins the game.

7.2.4 Quadruple Prize Card (QPC)

7.2.4.1 Definition

The Quadruple Prize Card penalty is used when a mistake has been made that has a severe impact on the game state and there is no clear way to resolve the issue, but a Game Loss penalty would be too harsh.

7.2.4.2 Application

After a player receives a Quad Prize Card penalty, the offending player's opponent is informed that in order to win that game, they must take four fewer Prize cards than would normally be necessary according to the format (i.e., they will win the game when they have four Prize cards remaining).

Should the opponent have four or fewer Prize cards remaining at the time, the game is over immediately, and the opponent wins the game.

7.2.5 Game Loss (GL)

7.2.5.1 Definition

The Game Loss penalty is generally used when a mistake has been made that has a severe impact on the game state, to the point where the game is irreparably broken and unable to continue. This penalty is also used for other major procedural errors or problems.

7.2.5.2 Application

When issuing a Game Loss penalty during an active game, the game is recorded as a loss for the player receiving the penalty.

In extreme cases where significant errors have been made by both players in a game, a Game Loss penalty may be issued to both players simultaneously. A single-game match terminated in this manner is not a tie; it is recorded as having no winner.

If this penalty is issued between rounds, the penalty is applied to the player's next game.

7.2.6 Disqualification (DQ)

7.2.6.1 Definition

Disqualification is the most serious penalty that can be issued at a tournament. Its use should be strictly reserved for the most extreme cases, where a player's actions (whether intentional or unintentional) have significantly and negatively impacted the integrity or operation of the entire event.

Players who receive this penalty are removed from the tournament and become ineligible to receive any prizes.

7.2.6.2 Application (Swiss)

If a player is disqualified during Swiss rounds while their match is still ongoing, that player should also receive a Game Loss for all games within that match that have yet to complete. The disqualification is then applied.

If a player is disqualified during Swiss rounds while they are not participating in an ongoing match, the disqualification is applied immediately.

7.2.6.3 Application (Single Elimination)

During Single Elimination rounds, players receiving a Disqualification will also receive a Game Loss for all games in their most recent Single Elimination match.

If a player is disqualified while their Single Elimination match is still ongoing, the losses are applied to the current round.

If a player is disqualified during Single Elimination rounds while they are not participating in an ongoing match, the losses are applied to the most recently completed round and the opponent from that match will advance, if eligible.

7.3 Penalty Categories

7.3.1 Player Conduct (Category A)

Infractions that fall under the category of Player Conduct include those that contradict the rules of tournament participation at the most fundamental level.

7.3.1.1 A.1. Procedural Error

Minor: Caution	Major: Warning	Severe: Game Loss
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Procedural errors have an impact on the smooth and uninterrupted progression of the tournament, not just for the player or players involved, but potentially for the staff and for the wider participation group.

a. Minor procedural errors do not cause any substantial delay or inconvenience to tournament proceedings and can be rectified almost immediately.

Examples may include:

- A player accidentally enters a designated “staff only” area.
 - A player forgets to sign a match slip upon leaving the play area, but is called back immediately by a member of staff.
-

b. Major procedural errors have the potential to cause a delay to the tournament or to cause an inconvenience to surrounding players while they are rectified.

Examples may include:

- A player arrives late to their match (by less than 5 minutes).
 - A player cannot provide the appropriate Special Condition markers for the effects of the cards in their deck.
 - A player forgets to sign a match slip upon leaving the play area, causing a delay to tournament proceedings while staff attempt to locate them.
-

c. Severe procedural errors not only cause disruption to the tournament, but have the potential to negatively affect the experience of others.

Examples may include:

- A player arrives late to their match (by more than 5 minutes).
- A player sits at the wrong table and plays the incorrect opponent.
- A player forgets to sign a match slip upon leaving the play area, and cannot be located before the next round begins.

7.3.1.2 A.2. Unsporting Conduct

Minor: Warning	Major: Game Loss	Severe: Disqualification
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Unsporting conduct infractions are caused when poor personal conduct on behalf of a tournament attendee results in a detraction from the experience of others.

a. **Minor Unsporting Conduct** is characterized by mild lapses in judgement that result in a contained incident, or the annoyance of a small group of attendees.

Examples may include:

- A player swears mildly in annoyance, or in conversation with a friend.
- A player disturbs a match in progress.
- A player leaves food wrappers or other detritus in the play area after their match is over.

b. **Major Unsporting Conduct** is characterized by behavior that displays a lack of respect or consideration for fair play, or for the enjoyment of others in attendance.

Examples may include:

- A player attempts to distract or intimidate their opponent into misplay.
- Refusal to cooperate with a tournament policy, such as signing a match slip.
- During a match, a player makes legal plays that have no effect on the game in progress, or plays unreasonably slowly, in order to manipulate the time remaining in that match (*TCG*).
- Attempting to view the opponent's screen to gain an advantage (screen peeking) (*VG*).

c. **Severe Unsporting Conduct** demonstrates a blatant disregard for the Play! Pokémon Standards of Conduct, and actively contributes toward the disruption of a safe and family-friendly environment.

Examples may include:

- The use of profanity, slurs, physical threats, or insults toward any other attendee.
- Assault, theft, or other criminal activity.
- Wilfully lying to tournament staff, such as during an investigation.
- Determining the outcome of a match by random means, through the use of bribery or coercion, or via other disallowed methods.

7.3.1.3 A.3. Cheating

		Severe: Disqualification
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There is simply no place in Play! Pokémon for those who choose to cheat to gain an advantage over their opponent. As such, all instances of cheating are regarded as severe, and merit disqualification.

Examples may include:

- Intentionally drawing extra cards, or taking cards from the discard pile and adding them to the deck or hand (*TCG*).
- Arbitrarily adjusting the Special Conditions or damage counters on Pokémon in play (*TCG*).

- Stacking or deliberately randomizing the deck insufficiently, to engineer greater access to a card or cards (*TCG*).
- Using a game console with custom firmware (*VG*).

7.3.2 Trading Card Game Penalty Guidelines (Category B)

7.3.2.1 B.1. Gameplay Error

Minor: Warning	Major: Double Prize Card	Severe: Game Loss
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TCG gameplay errors are so called because they are infractions committed during the context of a game in progress. They often come about because of missed or ill-executed game mechanics.

a. Minor Gameplay Errors have little to no effect on the progress of the game, and can be fixed or rewind completely with little effort. Many genuine mistakes made during a TCG match begin life as a minor gameplay error, and may be reclassified as major if they are not caught and rectified immediately.

Examples may include:

- Putting a card into the hand without revealing it to the opponent, when an effect specifies you must do so.
 - Declaring an attack without having the required Energy attached.
 - Failing to set up Prize cards at the beginning of the game.
-

b. Major Gameplay Errors result in some irreversible confusion to the game state that cannot be completely rewind or otherwise offset through corrective action. Errors that result in a player gaining illicit access to knowledge or cards, that require a substantial level of involvement by a judge to rectify, or that have remained unnoticed for long enough to have influenced gameplay may be classified as major.

Examples include:

- Drawing an extra card.
 - Taking a Prize card without Knocking Out a Pokémon, or taking too many Prize cards after Knocking Out a Pokémon.
 - Using and completing all effects of an Ability, when a card in play prevents its use.
 - Attaching more than one Energy card in a turn without the use of an effect that allows this.
 - Failing to set up Prize cards at the beginning of the game, resulting in potential access to six additional cards throughout one or two deck searches.
-

c. **Severe Gameplay Errors** result in an irretrievably broken game state, such that a judge cannot reasonably be expected to restore it to a point where it can continue without compromising the integrity of that game to an unacceptable extent.

Examples may include:

- Shuffling the hand, Prize cards, or discard pile into the deck without the use of a card effect.
- Retrieving or putting away cards from a game in progress before the match slip is signed to show that both players agree on the outcome.
- Failing to set up Prize cards at the beginning of the game, resulting in potential access to six additional cards for three or more deck searches.

7.3.2.2 B.2. Deck Legality

Minor: Warning		Severe: Game Loss
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Infractions that fall under the category of deck legality include all problems identified due to cards in the deck that are not legal for tournament play, either for reasons of condition, language, or format restriction. In addition to the penalty assessed, the offending card or cards should be replaced in all cases.

Problems may be caused by the cards themselves, the sleeves, or the corresponding deck list. In cases concerning the latter, the contents of the deck list always take priority over the contents of the physical deck. Any discrepancy between the two should therefore always be rectified by modifying the physical deck.

In the case that a deck list contains fewer than 60 cards, cards that are not legal for play, or cards that cannot be reasonably identified from the information provided, the deck list should be made legal by adding an appropriate number of basic Energy cards of the player's choice. Then, the physical deck should be updated accordingly.

a. **Minor Deck Legality** infractions are so classified because they offer little to no opportunity for a player to gain an advantage as a result.

Examples may include:

- A player's sleeves have standard wear and tear that results in many distinct scratches and markings over all the cards in the deck.
 - A handful of cards in a player's deck have factory defects on the back of the sleeves. However, the combination of cards does not create a pattern that would provide the player with significant advantage.
 - The deck contains 4 copies of Pikachu, but does not list the collector number. However, there is only one card with the name Pikachu in the set, so the intended card remains identifiable.
-

b. Severe Deck Legality infractions result in an opportunity for a player to gain an advantage, usually through ambiguity or discrepancy caused by dissimilarity between the deck list and the physical deck, or by a pattern of marked cards.

Examples include:

- The deck list and/or the deck do not contain 60 cards.
- A player’s deck contains three Ultra Ball cards and two Max Elixir cards, but the deck list contains two Ultra Ball cards and three Max Elixir cards.
- The sleeves on the Special Energy cards in a player’s deck are slightly longer than the rest.
- In a Standard format tournament, the deck list and/or the deck contain five copies of Double Colorless Energy.
- The deck list contains two copies of Electivire (*Sun & Moon—Lost Thunder*, 72/214), but the deck contains two copies of Electivire (*XY—Furious Fists*, 30/111).
- A card in the player’s deck is damaged and has created a visible wear mark on the back of the sleeve along the damaged area, allowing the card to easily be identified while face down.

7.3.2.3 B.3. Pace of Play

Minor: Warning		Severe: Double Prize Card
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Players should take care to play in a manner that keeps the game pace lively, regardless of the complexity of the situation. Pace of Play infractions occur when a player’s actions (or lack thereof) affect the game pace to an extent that puts their opponent at a disadvantage. In addition to the recommended penalty, the judge may issue a time extension to offset this disadvantage.

Refer to the guidelines in [Section 5.8.5](#) to determine what constitutes a reasonable length of time to complete a game action.

a. Minor Pace of Play infractions are isolated incidents that may occur due to slow decision-making or tense, complex scenarios.

Examples include:

- Repeatedly searching the deck, hand, or discard pile while executing a card effect.
- Counting or searching your (or your opponent’s) deck or discard pile more than once in a short time period.
- Taking an unreasonable length of time to decide where to attach an Energy card.
- Rushing through your opponent’s attack step by putting damage on your Pokémon before your opponent announces which attack they are using.

b. Severe Pace of Play infractions may be assessed when there is a sustained or repeated ill effect on the pace of one or more subsequent games.

Examples include:

- Habitual slowness in choosing targets for receiving or resolving effects and/or damage.
- Poor pace of play that does not improve following a prior penalty.

7.3.3 Video Game Penalty Guidelines (Category C)

7.3.3.1 C.1. Gameplay Error

Minor: Warning		Severe: Game Loss
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VG gameplay errors are infractions committed during a game in progress. These infractions are most often caused by a player improperly handling their game system (or other equipment) while playing a game.

a. Minor Gameplay Errors have a brief, reversible effect on the proper progression of a game.

Examples include:

- Holding or moving the game system in a way that results in a fixable frozen game state (resulting in a match delay).
 - Delaying the beginning of a match due to needing to source a charger.
-

b. Severe Gameplay Errors usually lead to the irretrievable loss of a game in progress.

Examples include:

- Holding or moving the game system in a way that results in an unfixable frozen game state (and for which one party can be determined responsible).
 - Removal of a Game Card mid-game or a loss of power to the game system.
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7.3.3.2 C.2. Team Legality

Minor: Warning	Major: Game Loss	Severe: Disqualification
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Infractions that fall under the Team Legality category include all problems found with a player's Battle Team. Such problems are usually caused due to a discrepancy between the Pokémon or held items in the Battle Team and those detailed on the team list.

In all cases, the contents of the team list always take priority over the contents of the Battle Team. Any discrepancy between the two should therefore always be rectified by modifying the Battle Team to remove the offending Pokémon or held items from play.

Afterward, if the Pokémon or held items described on the team list are immediately available, the player should then be given the opportunity to add the correct ones to their team. If the player is not able to comply, the slots previously occupied by the offending Pokémon or held items should remain vacant.

If this results in a player having fewer than four usable Pokémon remaining in their Battle Team, the infraction should be escalated.

a. Minor Team Errors are discrepancies that are between the Pokémon or held items in a player's Battle Team and those on the team list and that do *not* give the player a potential advantage.

Examples include:

- The Battle Team contains West Sea Gastrodon, but the team list lists "East Sea Gastrodon."
 - A genderless Pokémon is listed as male or female on the team list.
 - A Pokémon is listed without accurate form information, but other information on the team list makes it apparent which form is being used.
 - Example #1: The Battle Team contains Heat Rotom, but the team list lists simply "Rotom" but with the form-exclusive move Overheat on its move set.
 - Example #2: The Battle Team contains Therian Forme Landorus, but the team list lists simply "Landorus" but with the form-exclusive Ability Intimidate.
-

b. Major Team Errors are discrepancies that are between the Pokémon or held items in a player's Battle Team and those on the team list and that *do* give the player a potential advantage.

Examples include:

- A Pokémon that can be either gender is male in the Battle Team but is listed as female on the team list (or vice versa).
 - A Pokémon in the Battle Team knows the move Thunder Wave, but that move is listed as "Thunder" on the team list.
 - A Pokémon's stat is not listed (or is listed incorrectly) on the team list.
 - A Pokémon is listed without accurate form information, and no other information on the team list makes it apparent which form is being used.
 - Example #1: The Battle Team contains Wash Rotom, but only "Rotom" is listed on the team list, and the event staff cannot determine the correct form by looking at the move set.
 - Example #2: The Battle Team contains Therian Forme Landorus, but only "Landorus" is listed on the team list, and the Ability field on the team list has been left blank or lists "Sheer Force."
-

c. Severe Team Errors occur when either official tools indicate that a Pokémon has been illegally manipulated or a player's team contains too few Pokémon to continue on in the tournament.

Examples include:

- A player has fewer than four usable Pokémon remaining after receiving earlier penalties.
- Any indication via official tools that a Pokémon has been illegally manipulated, such as a player's Battle Team failing an electronic team check.

7.4 Deviation from Recommended Penalties

Pokémon Organized Play acknowledges the myriad different factors at play within each individual ruling, and requests that Professors assess each situation based on its own potential to provide advantage or to confuse the game state. In support, the Play! Pokémon program adopts guidelines rather than rules when it comes to penalties.

The penalties for infractions are simply recommendations, and may be increased or decreased in severity based on the individual circumstances of the situation. This may include the point at which the error was caught and the ease with which the corresponding action may be reversed.

7.4.1 Reversibility

By way of example, consider the act of mistakenly playing two Supporter cards in a single turn. In many such cases, it may not be possible to mitigate that impact without assessing a penalty that offsets any potential advantage gained, as the scenario below illustrates.

Situation: Brendan plays Lillie (UPR, 125). Later in the same turn, Brendan also plays Mars (UPR, 128), and draws two cards. He also discards a random card from his opponent's hand. Brendan then realizes his error and calls a judge.

Game State Correction: The judge, Professor Elm, is able to restore the correct card to the opponent's hand, since this card is known to both players. However, the opponent cannot verify which cards in Brendan's hand were those drawn due to Mars. Therefore, Professor Elm must select two cards at random to return to the deck. After the game state has been restored as far as possible, Mars is returned to Brendan's hand.

Penalty Assessed: Brendan receives a Double Prize Card penalty, to offset the potential advantage gained by having access to two new cards from his deck and having knowledge of one of the cards in his opponent's hand.

However, if the action can be reversed such that the game state mirrors one in which the second Supporter card had never been played, this may be grounds to de-escalate (decrease in severity) the penalty.

Situation: Brendan plays Lillie (UPR, 125). Later in the same turn, Brendan also plays Guzma (BUS, 115), and switches his opponent's Active Pokémon with one of their Benched Pokémon. He then does the same himself. Brendan then realizes his error and calls a judge.

Game State Correction: The judge, Professor Elm, is able to determine which Pokémon were in the Active Spot prior to Guzma being played, and moves them back. After the game state has been restored, Guzma is returned to Brendan's hand.

Penalty Assessed: Brendan receives a Warning to remind him of the requirement to carefully track his play, and to record the incident in the tournament's penalty summary.

Finally, if the action results in a game state that is irreparably broken, the most appropriate course may be to escalate (increase the severity) of the penalty.

Situation: Brendan plays Lillie (UPR, 125). Later in the same turn, Brendan also plays Cynthia (UPR, 119), and shuffles his hand into his deck. Brendan then realizes his error and calls a judge.

Game State Correction: The judge, Professor Elm, is unable to determine which cards were in Brendan's hand prior to Cynthia being played. No corrective action can be taken.

Penalty Assessed: Brendan receives a Game Loss. No other penalty can satisfactorily mitigate the damage done to the game state by his action in playing the second Supporter and shuffling away the cards in his hand.

Further factors that may influence the decision to escalate or de-escalate a penalty include the point at which the mistake is caught. If the action is not yet fully completed, for instance, there may be greater opportunity to reverse any impact made.

7.4.2 Repeated Infractions

One of the purposes of penalties is to educate the player of their mistake, and remind them to take extra care when completing game actions and interacting with others at tournaments. If, however, infractions are repeated, it may be appropriate to escalate the penalty for each subsequent infraction to further reinforce the necessity of adhering to Play! Pokémon tournament rules.

7.4.3 Age & Experience

Consider the age, experience, and current standing of the player. Although these are not always relevant factors, Professors should be aware that mistakes may be made due to lack of experience or the intimidation of playing in a competitive environment.

Players who commit more than one type of infraction during a tournament are often genuinely uninformed. Competitive tournaments can be daunting, and there is much to learn about procedure, etiquette, and fair play. It can also be nerve-wracking to compete for prizes at the age of many of our players, and they should be given every chance to learn about the game and the Play! Pokémon system.

7.5 Penalty Delivery

Play! Pokémon Professors seek to create fun, safe, and non-stressful play experiences for our players. For this reason, the application of penalties should be handled in the most polite and discreet manner possible.

Whenever a penalty is assessed and delivered, that delivery should include the following:

- An explanation of how the player's actions are not allowed;
- How the assessed penalty will impact the player's tournament;
- A reminder that the player may appeal this or any other penalty to the Head Judge.

7.5.1 Discussing Penalties

Due to the nature of some infractions, it is often inevitable that the wider player community will become aware of penalties assessed in some circumstances. It is important, however, that Pokémon Professors treat information pertaining to penalties with sensitivity to prevent any undue embarrassment to those involved.

Penalties discussed publicly for reasons of training should be sufficiently anonymized, and penalty history regarding specific players should be shared between Professors only when relevant.

7.6 Reporting Penalties

Pokémon Organized Play tracks each player's penalty history to differentiate intentional repetition of infractions from unintentional occurrences, and to determine if disciplinary action is necessary.

To aid in this effort, the following documentation must be submitted to Pokémon Organized Play via the Play! Pokémon Customer Support service upon completion of a tournament.

7.6.1 Tournament Penalty Summaries

The Tournament Penalty Summary fully details all penalties assessed during any one tournament.

To create a Tournament Penalty Summary, a .csv format spreadsheet file with the below headers should be created:

Tournament ID	Round of Issue	Judge Player ID	Player Player ID	Category	Severity	Penalty	Notes
XX-XX-XXXXXX	1	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	A	Minor	Warning	

A new row should then be completed for each penalty issued.

Once the file is complete, the file should be attached and submitted via the Play! Pokémon Customer Support service's Tournament Report tool. Select "Penalty Summary" from the relevant drop-down menu. The subject of your submission should be "Penalty Report: XX-XX-XXXXXX", where XX-XX-XXXXXX is the tournament ID.

7.6.2 Disqualification Reports

In the event of a disqualification, it is 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.

Reports may be submitted in .doc or .pdf format.

Once complete, the file should be attached and submitted via the Play! Pokémon Customer Support service's Tournament Report tool. Select "Disqualification Report" from the relevant drop-down menu.

7.7 Disciplinary Action

Should a pattern of rules infractions be observed across multiple tournaments, Pokémon Organized Play may consider taking disciplinary action against the player responsible. Such action may include a suspension from the program. In these cases, the players will be notified, and their names and Player IDs will be made available to Organizers.

A suspended player should not be allowed to participate in or attend any Play! Pokémon events as a spectator, player, or judge, or in any other capacity. If a suspended player disrupts an event by trying to participate and refusing to leave, the incident should be reported to Pokémon Organized Play. An extension to the existing suspension may then be applied.

8 Summary of Changes

Date of previous issue: September 30, 2021

Date of current issue: November 2, 2022

1 Using This Handbook		
Section	Page #	Change

2 Participation Fundamentals		
Section	Page #	Change
2.3	5	Additional specifications added to participation eligibility rules

3 Tournament Policies		
Section	Page #	Change

4 Tournament Operations & Specifics		
Section	Page #	Change
4.2	18	Age divisions updated for 2023 season

5 Trading Card Game Tournament Rules		
Section	Page #	Change
5.4.1	32	Added Legal Regulation Marks to the Legal Expansions list and removed defunct lists
5.4.1.3	35	Clarified that cards may be legal for play immediately upon release within the appropriate format if a functionally identical card that shares the same name is currently legal for play in that format

6 Video Game Tournament Rules		
Section	Page #	Change

7 Rules Violations & Penalties		
Section	Page #	Change
7.6.1	60	Added requirement to conform to naming conventions when submitting penalty summary reports