



# CCLA Correspondence Chess

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 Note: recent (2019) rules changes are highlighted in bold print.

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## Rules of Play for

### POSTAL and EMAIL CHESS

#### General Conduct of the Game

1) Unless otherwise specified, the term "game" or "games" within these rules refers only to CCLA postal and email games. Except for the rule about touching pieces and other rules inapplicable to correspondence chess, all games shall be governed by the [Laws of Chess](#) (the official code of F.I.D.E. — the International Chess Federation). Players must understand the rules of chess and read/write chess notation before entering CCLA events.

#### 2) Conduct:

a) Entering any CCLA event, whether entry fee required or free entry, constitutes a player's acceptance of and agreement to comply with all CCLA rules of play.

b) During a Traditional chess game, players may consult pgn databases and published works on chess (see 2(i) below), but in the selection of moves may not receive help from another player or any chess software ("chess engines", "table bases" etc.) that generates move recommendations.

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c) This section intentionally blank - applies to server games only.

d) The CCLA Board has created the position(s) of Games Checker. Traditional games will be randomly spot-checked for engine abuse with Top3 (Advanced Chess games are not examined.) Games will also be checked in response to specific complaints alleging engine abuse. In addition, games of anyone claiming any tmt. or section prize, Grand Prix points prize or Best Games contest prize in Traditional chess will be checked prior to awarding of prizes. Games played in Traditional chess events and found to be in violation of Rule 2(i) will not be published in Chess Correspondent magazine or on the CCLA website(s.)

e) In addition to spot checks, if there is a complaint, CCLA will examine that particular game and, if it fails Top3, will examine all that player's games in that section; games may be examined retroactively, providing this does not conflict with (g) below.

f) CCLA members may report opponents' suspected engine use only to CCLA officials. In no instance shall one member directly accuse another member of engine abuse. Violation of this rule is covered under rule 4.

g) Penalties. A first exceeding of the engine-use threshold shall result in a warning and, if the game has been rated, rating points will be reversed. A second violation (any section) shall result in forfeiture of that game and any other games in the section that violate 2(h). A third violation (any section) will result in the player being withdrawn from all his remaining sections / games, and his rating / playing status transferred to the Advanced chess division. Entry fees will not be refunded. Such re-assignment is permanent for the life of the member (dropping out of CCLA and re-joining at a later date does not wipe the slate clean.) Note: this procedure has an effective date of January 1, 2020, established by the Board and will not be applied retroactively. A record of all games checked, pertinent analysis and conclusion/action taken will be maintained by the Games Checker and the TD for administrative purposes only.

h) Examination of games will be done strictly in accordance with a Board-approved methodology, as specified in (i) below. In no case shall the TD or the Games Checker reveal what computer and components were used, which chess engine(s) were used, how many ply depths/ variations were analyzed or whose game(s) were examined to reach a verdict. The TD may include Top3 analysis when communicating a decision to the player affected. Appeals are covered under CCLA Rule 4. CCLA may publish articles about, and aggregate statistics on engine detection, so long as these do not identify CCLA players by name or specific tournament sections.

i) Engine detection methodology (Top3). The traditional cc practice of following Master games in the openings is unaffected, as "book" opening moves are ignored in Top3 analysis. Players may follow any published correspondence game played prior to 1980, and any

published over-the-board game.\* Following correspondence games played after 1980, or any published computer games or analysis, will drive up a Top3 score and likely result in a violation. Top3 also ignores "forced" moves, defined as (1) only legal move, (2) only move to escape checkmate, (3) moves made to avoid immediate loss of material or (4) recaptures during exchanges to maintain material equality (may be deferred one or more moves.)

The remaining moves (excluding "book" opening moves and forced moves) will be analyzed at a minimum 30-ply depth by a chess engine to determine that (1) no more than 70% of a player's moves match an engine's top recommendation, commonly referred to as T1 percentage; no more than 80% of a player's moves match an engine's top two recommendations, the T2 percentage (T1 + T2); no more than 90% of a player's moves match an engine's top three recommendations, commonly referred to as T3 percentage (T1+T2+T3); (2) a player's moves do not contain more than five T1 moves in a row (commonly called a "string,") and (3) a player's moves must contain at least one move that does not agree with an engine's Top 3 recommendations, commonly referred to as an "unranked" move. Note: A player who initiates a forced mate-in-6 or more moves, or a combination of 6 or more moves to win material, is not in violation of the string rule (2) above.

A Games Checker may analyze to any ply depth necessary to break tie rankings and/or any multi-PV setting to fully investigate suspect moves / move sequences. The Games Checker will forward any adverse findings to the appropriate TD for administration of penalties under section (g). A TD may not ignore or otherwise overrule the Games Checker's Top3 analysis and conclusion; the affected player may appeal an adverse ruling, per CCLA Rule 4. Top3 analysis is not applied to short games which do not have at least 10 rate-able moves.

\*A game between two human players, played under the auspices of a real chess organization, has a date (year) and location (or event) played, appears in a publicly available source such as commercial book, magazine, cd/dvd, website or blog, and is considered a "published game." Informal club games, "skittles" games, internet games between players using aliases, computer vs computer and computer vs human games, etc. do not qualify as legitimate sources in Traditional chess. For example, a player appealing the number of "book" moves identified by the Games Checker may not cite such games to improve his Top3 score.

3) The Tournament Director for each tournament shall be specified in *The Chess Correspondent*.

4) Unless otherwise specified in these rules, disputes between players shall be referred to the Tournament Director. Any ruling may be appealed to the General Manager, if not the same person, but otherwise to the President.

#### Chess Moves

5) The player who has dispatched the record

of his move must abide by that record so dispatched; no alteration may be made except to correct an illegal move, and no subsequent change by faster mail or any other method of communication shall be allowed. In email-only events, all moves are transmitted by email, except as described in Rule 15. For all other events, postal is used unless both players agree to email or fax, and either player may void the agreement at any time and return the game to postal play.

6) All ambiguous moves must be clarified before play continues. All moves must be legal moves, and an illegal move may be replaced by any legal move. Moves erased or otherwise visibly altered must be dealt with at once as illegal moves, unless also initialed by the sender. If a card includes both a written move and a diagram of the position after that move, the move shall be considered ambiguous only if the diagram does not show the piece moved to the square indicated by the written move. Verifying the balance of the diagram is not required, but is encouraged as a means of detecting errors and thereby avoiding future conflicts and delays. If claimed by the opponent, the sending of an impossible, ambiguous, illegal or missing move is an automatic five-day penalty under the 10/30 time control, with each additional offense a ten-day penalty. The incorrect omission or addition of chess indications (such as "check", "captures", "mate", or "en passant") does not cause a move to be impossible or illegal.

7) If a player assumes that his opponent will make certain moves and sends hypothetical replies, ("if" moves) they shall not be binding until or unless accepted by the adversary. A player accepting an "if" move must accept his opponent's proposed next move and reply to it. If more than one "if" move is offered, the mandatory response applies only to the first "if" move.

8) A player sending a reply must specify (a) the correct move and its number to which he is replying, including any accepted "if" moves not already acknowledged, and (b) the correct number of his own move.

9) Players must use standard (long or short form) Algebraic notation in sending moves, unless both players agree upon another unequivocal notation, such as International Numeric or English Descriptive notation, at the beginning of the game. Descriptive has preference over Algebraic only in events labeled Descriptive.

#### **Time Limits**

10) The time limit is based on the Date of Receipt and the Date of Dispatch for each move. The Date of Receipt is the date a player is first able to receive the opponent's move, or the assignment sheet. If a move may have reached its address more than two days prior to the Date of Receipt, the reply move should be accompanied by an explanation for the delay in the Date of Receipt, unless previously given (e.g., an unexpected business trip.) The Date of Dispatch is the date the player loses control over the move, usually by placing it in an official mailbox slot or giving it to the postman. A discrepancy of more than one day, between dispatch and postmark dates, may be considered as evidence of an incorrect Date of Dispatch, and may be corrected by the receiver. The Date of Dispatch and the Date of Receipt for email and fax are the dates given in the heading of the email message as

stamped by the internet server or fax machine. The email or fax Date of Receipt is adjusted if necessary to reflect the local time zone of the recipient, and any time beyond 8 PM local time is treated as being received the following day. If a move may have reached its address more than one day prior to the Date of Receipt, the reply move should be accompanied by an explanation for the delay in the Date of Receipt.

11) The Date of Receipt and the Date of Dispatch must be reported along with each move. If a player fails to report either date, the opponent shall have the right to determine the missing date(s) as follows: (a) The Date of Dispatch shall be the postmark, if legible, or else it shall be three days prior to receipt of the opponent's move, and (b) the Date of Receipt shall be three days following the Date of Dispatch of the prior move. If the addresses of the two players are in different countries, or APO's, five days rather than three days shall be used in (a) and (b) above. Each player must also show the cumulative days used by the opponent and himself on each card, in addition to the Date of Receipt and Date of Dispatch. If a player does not dispute his opponent's Date of Receipt, Date of Dispatch and accumulated days immediately (the next move sent,) these stand, and the player must change his record to match his opponent's. If a player fails to report either Date of Receipt or Date of Dispatch for email or fax, the Date of Receipt may be estimated as the Date of Dispatch of the prior move (in the recipient's time zone), and the Date of Dispatch shall be as defined in Article 10. Disputes about accumulated time that cannot be settled between players must be promptly referred to the Tournament Director for a decision. If neither player has shown the accumulated time on the cards immediately preceding the time complaint, the Tournament Director may, at his discretion, refuse to recognize any time limit violation and may warn the player(s) that continued refusal to list received and sent dates, and accumulated times may result in forfeiture of the game(s).

12) The time used for each player's move is the number of days elapsed between the Date of Receipt and the Date of Dispatch, but not including any days of vacation or special leave granted to the player (note: Sundays and holidays count in CCLA time limits.)

13) Each player is entitled to 30 days vacation in each calendar year, but all opponents and the Tournament Director must be informed in advance of vacation days being taken. Violation of this rule may, at the Tournament Director's discretion, result in those days being treated as elapsed time, subject to the penalties contained in rules 15 or 16. When one player goes on vacation, his opponents do not also get this time off, unless they have declared vacation simultaneously. If a player sends moves before going on declared vacation, his opponents are obligated to reply within the applicable time limit.

14) In email-only events, the time limit is 10 moves in 40 days (10/40). In all other events, the time limit is 10/30, regardless of whether moves are sent by postal, email or fax.

15) There may be valid explanations for exceeding the time limit, including (a) illness, documented by a physician's statement, if necessary, or (b) an unexpected business trip. If a player is unable to transmit or receive moves by email in an email-only event, he may notify the Tournament Director and his opponents [showing his latest move(s) and the

latest move(s) received from the opponent(s)] that he is taking downtime. Downtime begins when this notification is sent and ends when the player notifies the Tournament Director and his opponent(s) that he can resume email. Up to 30 days of downtime may be taken during a calendar year; vacation days taken by the player are not included in this count. During downtime, games may be continued by postal mail if both players agree. Otherwise, the game is halted and neither side is charged with elapsed time until the player ends the downtime or the 30 days is exhausted. After the 30 days of downtime are exhausted, the player may either (a) withdraw from all his games in email-only events or (b) be charged with elapsed time until he replies by email to his opponents' moves. If he withdraws, his games will not be rated except by adjudication under Rule 17 or Rule 26.

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## Time Complaint Form

CCLA TIME COMPLAINT FORM	
<small>If you wish to make a time complaint against a CCLA opponent, please copy this Form (to self and to your opponent) and complete the form with a copy of the original communication, such as the email or postal mail, which is the subject of the complaint. If you wish to send the Form to email, download it from www.cchess.com (File &gt; Download) and print it out and mail it as an email, complete the form, and send it to <a href="mailto:timecomplaint@cchess.com">timecomplaint@cchess.com</a>.</small>	
<small>THE INFORMATION REQUESTED BELOW IS REQUIRED. YOURS OTHERWISE INDICATED IN ANY OF THE REQUESTED INFORMATION IS NOT MEANT. YOUR TIME COMPLAINT MUST BE ACCEPTED.</small>	
<small>In order to have the adjudicator available on the evening of occurrence, you and your opponent will have to agree to meet in person with each other before 10:00 PM on the first evening the complaint must be accepted.</small>	
NAME OF COMPLAINT (last, first, last)	DATE
<small>Opponent not playing in the event. A complaint must be made within 10 days from the date of the last move in the event (unless the complaint is made by email or postal mail). Complaints made by email or postal mail must be received by the tournament director within 10 days of the date of the last move in the event.</small>	
YOUR NAME	_____
YOUR ADDRESS	_____
EMAIL ADDRESS (optional)	_____
OPPONENT'S NAME	_____
OPPONENT'S ADDRESS	_____
TOURNAMENT SECTION CODE (e.g., G4011)	_____
DATE YOUR OPPOSER'S MOVE SENT (if opponent not mailed)	_____
DATE YOUR LAST MOVE WAS SENT	_____
<small>NUMBER OF MOVES SENT AND TOTAL TIME</small>	
Opponent's time limit	_____
Opponent's actual time	_____
Opponent's actual time	_____
Opponent's actual time	_____
<small>COMMENTS (optional)</small>	
<small>The opponent's actual time is the amount of time he received, and does not include time spent on time control measures of any kind.</small>	

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## Rules for Postal & Email Chess cont'

16) Under the 10 moves in 30 days time limit,  
a) The time limit is exceeded when more than 30 days time of reflection are used for 10 or less moves, 60 days for 20 or less moves, etc. Exceeding the time limit can neither be prevented nor caused by "if" moves. For example, if the 10th move is accepting an "if" move and the 11th move is thus required at the same time under Rule 7, the 30 day time limit is not applicable. b) Claims for exceeding the time limit may be made within seven days of the alleged violation or, at the latest, seven days after receiving the opponent's 10th, 20th, 30th, etc. move. The claim is to be sent to the Tournament Director and must indicate all information required in Rule 18. c) If an official time complaint is not mailed within the time

specified above, a player loses the right to complain about that time control period, e.g., he loses the opportunity for complaint until the next time control is exceeded. That complaint will be treated as a "first complaint," with no penalty being assessed retroactively to a prior control period. d) The Tournament Director shall inform both players when an exceeding of the time limit has been confirmed. When there is a first claim pending, play continues. The time limit of 30 days for another 10 moves begins anew for the guilty player only, and is added to his current total, as determined by the Tournament Director. e) On claiming a second time limit violation against an opponent, play is discontinued, pending disposition of the claim by the Tournament Director. f) Confirmation by the Tournament Director of a second time limit violation shall result in forfeiture of the game(s) by the guilty player. g) It is recommended, but not required, that a player who intends to take more than ten days for a single move so notify his opponent, so that his opponent will not have to send an unnecessary repeat card. The same principles apply under the 10 moves in 40 days limit.

17) If games are forfeited against two opponents in the same section, all uncompleted games in that section shall also be forfeited. If a player withdraws from some of his games, but continues to play in other games or sections, the games he is quitting shall be treated as forfeits. If a player is dropping out of all his games, and there are at least five games, any attempt at a mass resignation of all his games will be treated as a withdrawal instead. If a player resides outside the area of eligibility for CCLA membership for more than four months (plus vacation time used), then his games must be continued by email if possible; if email is not possible the games may continue but either player has the right to demand an adjudication (as described in Rule 26) at any time while the player remains outside the CCLA membership area. If a player dies, or withdraws from all CCLA games and so notifies the Tournament Director and all his opponents, the games he is quitting shall be treated as withdrawals rather than forfeits. Both withdrawals and forfeits shall be treated as losses with respect to the tournament results, and forfeits shall be automatically rated as wins for the opponent. Withdrawals shall not be rated unless the opponent requests an adjudication and sends a gamescore and diagram of the final position; any analysis is optional. Adjudications of games going 15 moves or less shall be considered only if the player can demonstrate an advantage equivalent to at least two pawns, and such games shall be evaluated as a rated win for the opponent or not rated at all. Games going beyond 15 moves shall not be subject to the "two pawns" limitation, and may be evaluated as wins, draws or losses for rating purposes.

18) If an opponent fails to reply to a move within 16 days a player must send a repeat move. If another 16 days has elapsed without a reply to the repeat move, file a time complaint with the Tournament Director and send no more repeats. Add another four days for foreign or APO addresses. The complaint must include: (a) The violator's name and address (b) The Tournament Section Code (c) Date of Dispatch of last move sent (d) Date of Dispatch of repeat move sent (e) the number of moves played and total times used for both players since the latest time control was established (e.g., either at the beginning of the game, or when the Tournament Director assigned a new control period in accordance

with Rule 16). Once filed, a valid time complaint may not be withdrawn by a complainant, and must be answered by the alleged violator (see Rule 20). The disposition of time complaints is the responsibility of the Tournament Director, not the players. In email-only events, the repeat move must be sent by email.

19) If a player replies to a move but has apparently violated the time limit under Rule 16, a player must (for the complaint to be valid) send a time complaint to the Tournament Director within seven days of receipt of the offending reply. Declared vacation will not apply to this seven-day period. The complaint must include all information required in Rule 18.

20) Upon receipt of a time complaint, the Tournament Director shall send an official inquiry to the opponent named. Should the Tournament Director receive a valid explanation, he will order the game resumed (if needed) and no action will be taken. If the explanation is not satisfactory, the Tournament Director will impose the appropriate penalty, as provided for in Rules 6 or 16. If no answer is received by the Tournament Director within 16 days from the date the complaint was filed by him, the game(s) will be forfeited. The complainant shall, in all instances, receive written disposition of any valid time complaint filed.

### **Game Results**

21) Drawn games shall count one-half point for each player.

22) The winner of each game, or the player having the White pieces in a drawn game, must report the result of the game to the Tournament Director immediately upon completion of the game. Failure to do so shall result in the loss of any rating points which would have ordinarily accrued thereby.

**23) Postal and email game result reports must include (a) complete and accurate game scores, as well as the following information: (b) the official tournament section code (letter plus 5 digits), (c) full names of each player, (d) result of the game(s) clearly marked, (e) date game was completed, and (f) if two or more games are being played between contestants in that section, the result(s) of any previously completed games against that opponent in that section. Results from email-only events must be sent to the Tournament Director by email. All other results may be sent to the Tournament Director by postal or email. Any player who fails to comply will be withdrawn from the section.**

**The TD for traditional postal and email sections will forward all game scores promptly to the Games Checker (no such procedure is currently required of the Server TD, as server games are publicly available on ICCF's website\*). The Games Checker will forward results to CCLA's database manager (if not the same person). All CCLA games, postal, email and server, played in the Traditional chess division are subject to the same Top3 scrutiny.**

24) A player who withdraws from all CCLA games for any reason or who forfeits more than one game may, at the discretion of the tournament director, be limited in the number of games he is allowed to enter during the



following year.

25) **WARNING!** CCLA Bylaw VII requires current membership in CCLA at all times. Failure to renew membership within 90 days of the expiration date is grounds for termination of membership, which results in forfeiture of all CCLA games in progress and any prizes or advancements earned.

26) Unless otherwise specified on the official tournament section assignment sheet, all games which are unreported at the end of two years (24 months) from the date on the assignment sheet, will be scored as close-out (unrated) draws. (The exceptions to the 24-month close-out are

final rounds of championship events, which have a 30-month close-out.) Either player may request adjudication of the game(s) involved, on or within one week prior to the close-out date, by sending gamescore, diagram of final position and any pertinent analysis, to the Tournament Director. Any such request must be made during the three-week period beginning one week before the close-out date and ending two weeks after the close-out date. Or, extensions in playing time may be granted by the Tournament Director if both players agree to such extension. Extensions are made in 6-month increments, but will not be allowed where the specific tournament rules prohibit them, or where they will delay the awarding of prizes and/or advancements to subsequent rounds of play.

27) In *The Chess Correspondent* announcement of each event, the Tournament Director will state the number of players that will form a round one section, the prizes that will be awarded for each round, what qualifications are needed to advance to subsequent rounds (if any,) the deadline for entry and the entry fee per section. All tournaments with specific start dates will be advertised in *The Chess Correspondent* two months (issues) prior to the entry deadline.

28) The number of players in any one section of a semi-final or a final round will depend on the number of winners in preliminary rounds, and such sections will be established by the Tournament Director.

29) Team matches will be played in accordance with special team rules approved by the Board and stated by the Tournament Director in his announcement of the team event.

30) Players must note all rule changes, game results, prize awards, etc., published in *The Chess Correspondent* magazine, and act responsibly where mistakes occur. Once published in *The Chess Correspondent*, changes in rules, regulations and procedures become official. Players must retain records of their games (including all opponents' cards, letters and email) for at least 60 days following publication of results and awarding of prizes. Otherwise counter-claims may be upheld if submitted.

## **Supplement**

### **Special Team Championship Rules**

1) Except as outlined below, the normal CCLA Rules of Play will govern. The most recent

publication of the CCLA Rules of Play may be found in the January-February *Chess Correspondent* and on the CCLA website ( [www.serverchess.com](http://www.serverchess.com) ). New members have already received a copy of the rules. Extra copies are always available from CCLA

2) WARNING! CCLA ByLaw VII requires current membership at all times. Failure to renew your membership within 90 days of expiration will result in forfeiture of all CCLA games in progress and any prizes or advancements earned. The renewal date is January 1st and is printed on every mailing label of the *Chess Correspondent* magazine - that's six reminders per year!

3) Time allotted for completion of games is two years (24 months) from the date on the official assignment sheet for this event. All games still in progress at the end of two years will be closed-out as draws, unless one of the players has submitted an adjudication request prior to the close-out date. There will be no extensions in playing time for this event. Note: close-out draws are unrated; adjudicated results are rated. A proper adjudication request consists of a complete and accurate game score, diagram of the final position and any pertinent analysis.

4) The time limit is 10 moves in 30 days.

5) Substitutions may be made only during the first 12 months of play, except that substitution between 12 and 22 months is permitted if a player dies. No more than one substitution per game is permitted. The TD will send copies of any time complaints to both the accused player and his team captain, and will wait 20 days (rather than the usual 16) for a response. If the accused player does not respond within the time limit, the game(s) will be forfeited per Rule 20 unless the team captain notifies the TD within the time limit that the player is being replaced and then gives the name of the replacement player to the TD within 20 further days. Substitutions must be given to the CCLA TD, who will notify all captains and players concerned when an official substitution has been approved. Players may not resume games until they receive a revised section assignment from the CCLA Tournament Office. If an unauthorized substitute attempts to begin play, these games will be forfeited as if no substitution was made.

a. Forfeits in the same section against two opponents will result in forfeiture of all remaining games, per Rule 17. If the TD determines that mass resignations of most or all of a player's games in a section constitute a withdrawal from that section, he will so notify the player's team captain and begin the first 20-day period.

b. The player taking over games cannot be rated higher than 100 points below the player he is replacing, unless the withdrawing player is rated CCLA 1600 or under; in that case, the new player may be rated the same or less than the withdrawing player. A substitute assumes games in progress as if he'd started them, with rating points/team results riding on the outcome. If the substitute elects not to assume one or more of these games, such unassumed games will be forfeited and charged to the withdrawing player.

6) The rating list for board number order of

team rosters will be the last one published in *The Chess Correspondent*. The rating list used to determine the eligibility of a substitute player will also be the latest one published in *The Chess Correspondent*.

7) All game reports, time complaints, rules disputes and all other tournament matters must be taken up directly with the CCLA Tournament Director. Other than forming a team and arranging for possible substitutions, team captains do not have any official function in CCLA (players are encouraged to send a duplicate copy of team results to their captains.)

8) No player may play for more than one team in a division, and no team may include more than two players who are participating on more than one team (this restriction also applies to substitute players.)

9) Team Championship awards consist of certificates suitable for framing, awarded to members of winning teams in each division (no ties) plus the board winners in each division, including ties.

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