

New South Wales Chess
Association

**Arbiters Training
Manual**

Version 1.2

Name: _____

Preface

Welcome to the first edition of the New South Wales Chess Association's Arbiters Training Manual! We would first like to thank you for joining us on the journey into becoming an experienced chess arbiter and hope that you'll find this manual useful in your training. This manual aims to cover several key aspects to the running of chess tournaments of all sizes, ranging from your weekly club events to major tournaments attracting hundreds of players from across Australia and even the world. This manual will be divided into **9 Chapters**.

Part 1: Fundamentals to the Operation of Chess Tournaments

Chapter 1: The Laws of Chess and the Duties of the Arbiter

Chapter 2: Handling Time Controls and Clocks

Chapter 3: Common Situations in Chess Tournaments

Chapter 4: Player Conduct and Fair Play

Chapter 5: Reporting Results and Managing Data

Chapter 6: Tournament Formats and Pairings Systems

Part 2: Advanced Roles and Responsibilities

Chapter 7: Conflict Resolution and Appeals Process

Chapter 8: Dealing with Cheating and Anti-Cheating Measures

Chapter 9: Inclusivity in Chess Tournaments

Credits:

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Chapter 1: The Laws of Chess and Duties of the Arbiter

All events organised by the NSWCA are played to the FIDE Laws of Chess, regardless of if the event itself is FIDE rated or not. During your National Arbiters Course, you should have thoroughly covered these laws, so they will not be repeated in this manual. The FIDE Laws of Chess are updated once every four years, with the exception of the changes in 2014, 2017 and 2018. The most recent set of rules came into effect on the 1st of January 2023. For a copy of the most recent laws of chess, please refer to the FIDE Handbook. Alternatively, you can reference the FIDE Arbiters Handbook.

<https://handbook.fide.com/chapter/E012023>

As per the preface of the Laws of Chess, they “cannot cover all possible situations that may arise during a game, nor can they regulate all administrative questions.” As a result of this, you will come across a situation in your career as a chess arbiter that is not directly stated in the handbook. Thus, you’ll need to rely on prior experience and a thorough understanding of the laws to make the correct decision that is fair and equitable to both players. If you are event in doubt, do not be afraid to refer to matter to the Chief Arbiter! They’re there to help you and are very experienced arbiters.

Article 12 of the Laws of Chess state that the role of the arbiter is to:

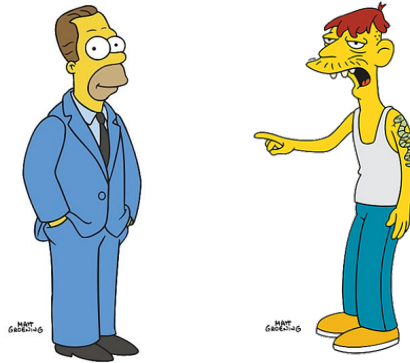
- Ensure the Laws of Chess are observed,
- Ensure fair play and follow anti-cheating regulations,
- Ensure that a good playing environment is maintained and players are not disturbed,
- To act in the best interest of the competition and;
- To observe the games, especially when players are in time trouble, enforcing penalties and making decisions where appropriate.

The NSWCA has a guideline where one arbiter is appointed per 70 players, per event.

However, this number may alter depending on the conditions of the tournament and is made at the discretion of the Tournament Officer and the rest of the NSWCA Council.

Additionally, if you are appointed as the arbiter of a NSWCA event, you’re on display to all players in the event, and by extension, the public. Players will talk about those who are responsible for the organisation and operation of these events, especially considering the NSWCA is the governing body of chess in the state. As a result, it is not just a bad look on yourself but also the association if something goes wrong! If in doubt, ask the Chief Arbiter.

You are also expected to be dressed appropriately as an arbiter. Whilst there is no exact dress code for our events, have a think regarding what looks right for someone who is assigned to run some of the largest chess tournaments in Australia.



(You don't need to be in a suit, but dress appropriately!)

As an arbiter, you should aim to arrive at least 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the round. Depending on the event, you may be expected to arrive earlier, but as most of our events are based at the Sydney Academy of Chess, there is very little needed to set up.

During the rounds, you should:

- Note games without players and inform the Chief Arbiter,
- Check the clocks to ensure they are running down and operational,
- Ensure players are recording the moves (in classical events),
- Observe all games, especially when players are in time trouble,
- Monitor noise levels and spectators,
- Ensure results are collected and entered into Vega correctly at the end.

Most of these skills will develop the more events you arbit at events of all sizes. You'll also understand how different events have different requirements and adapt to them based on time control, size and venue!

The NSWCA no longer has a registration process before the start of the first round where players tick their names off. If there are new players who do not have FIDE or ACF IDs, you are still required to determine if they are present. If they are not present on time, then you should remove them from the Vega file before doing the pairings the first round.

Chapter 2: Handling Time Controls and Clocks

The most common time controls at NSWCA events are:

- 90 minutes + 30 seconds per move (NSW Open),
- 60 minutes + 30 seconds per move (Weekenders),
- 15 minutes + 10 seconds per move (Rapid Tournaments), and
- 3 minutes + 2 seconds per move (Blitz Tournaments).

We no longer run events without increments, such as a 5 minute flat time control for a few main reasons:

- It prevents crazy time scrambles when both players are a few seconds and pieces are sent flying across the room,
- It prevents players from flagging the opponent in dead drawn positions, and
- It is easier to manage events with increments, as it allows us to avoid implementing Guideline III at the end of the FIDE Laws of Chess.

All NSWCA events will utilise the new DGT 3000 clocks, and you are expected to know how to set the common time controls as well as manual sets.

At your local club, you may have a different clock so knowledge regarding the operation of various chess clocks is always beneficial.

The faster the time control, the more you need to be on your feet and vigilant regarding potential situations from occurring!

Please note that the 60 + 10 time control cannot be FIDE rated for players over 1800 Standard, and thus are no longer used by the NSWCA. However, smaller NSWCA endorsed events may opt to use this time control.

IMPORTANT:

You must remember to remove any increment added to the chess clock following an illegal move.

i.e. If a player makes an illegal move in a 60+30 event, and they have 33 seconds on the clock. You just remove 30 seconds so when you restart the clock, the player who made the illegal move should only have 3 seconds displayed.

Chapter 3: Common Situations in Chess Tournaments

Here are a list of common situations that occur in chess tournaments in Australia, but this is not an exhaustive list and should not be relied upon during an event. This is simply for your information and what to do in common situations.

Illegal Moves

Illegal moves are one of, if not the, most common things that happen in chess tournaments. They happen most common during blitz tournaments or among those who are new to the game of chess (usually juniors). When you come across an illegal move, there are number of things to check before making a decision.

- Check if the illegal move is still on the board. If the illegal move is not on the board, inform both players to keep it on the board and not to move the piece back to the initial square.
- Check if the clock of the opponent who made the illegal move has been pressed. If the clock has not been pressed, then an illegal move should not be awarded to the player making the claim. (Article 7.5.1)
 - If a player makes an illegal move, but realises its illegal before pressing the clock, they are entitled to retract the move and make a different legal move.
(With touch move applying if necessary)
- If both of the above are satisfied, award the player who made the claim **2 minutes** in a classical tournament or **1 minute** for a rapid or blitz event.
- Once the player is awarded the additional time, remind the player who made the illegal move of any touch move regulations if necessary.
- Restart the clock and inform the players to continue. **Note that the arbiter should start the clock, and not the players.**

The above situation is the most common, with the overwhelming majority of chess players in NSW of being a good sport. However, in the rare case that players disagree on whether an illegal move was made or not, you'll need to step in and make a decision.

- If the situation is a he said/she said issue, you should make a judgement based on what you see at the board when you arrive. For instance, if they've moved the piece back and they don't both agree that an illegal move is made. You should not award an

illegal move if you do not see one on the board. (Which is why they should not move the pieces back!)

- If in doubt, refer the matter to the Chief Arbiter.

Here are a list of common illegal moves/positions that occur, especially in Blitz/Rapid time controls.

- Obvious illegal moves, such as the knight moving like a bishop!
- Pushing the pawn to the 1st or 8th rank and not promoting. If you see this happening, you should intervene immediately.
- Both kings being left in check. (Usually occurs in junior/faster time control events)
 - If you see an illegal position in a Blitz/Rapid event, wait for the next move to be played. If an illegal move is still on the board, declare the game to be drawn.
 - Refer to the Appendix of the Rapid and Blitz Laws of Chess.

IMPORTANT:

You must remember to remove any increment added to the chess clock following an illegal move.

i.e. If a player makes an illegal move in a 60+30 event, and they have 33 seconds on the clock. You just remove 30 seconds so when you restart the clock, the player who made the illegal move should only have 3 seconds displayed.

Touch Move/Touch Take Violations

Refer to Article 4 of the FIDE Laws of Chess. Common situations are:

- Players moving pieces with more than one hand and/or pressing the clock with the other hand.
 - Moving a piece with 2 hands is considered an illegal move.
 - Moving a piece with one hand and pressing the clock with the other is **NOT** an illegal move, but you should give a warning to the player who did so.Repeated offences can be penalised under your discretion under Article 12.9.
- Players not saying “adjusting” when adjusting a piece. Provide a warning to the player who did this and use your judgement as to whether to enforce it. For instance, if it is

the first case of it happening, provide a warning. If it is the second time, enforce the touch move violation.

- Players who attempt to castle but move the rook first. Castling is no longer permitted in this situation, and they must move the rook. **Castling is a king move.**
- If a player touches a piece, but there are no legal moves, then the player is allowed to make any other move.
- Accidental knocking over of pieces is not considered touch move.
- A player forfeits their right to claim a touch move violation once they touch a piece with the intention of moving or capturing it.

Chess Clock Shenanigans

When a player's clock runs out of time, you'll need to check a few conditions before awarding the game. In most cases, it will be straightforward. However, you should nevertheless check:

- If there is any series of legal moves by the opponent to checkmate the player's king. If not, the game is declared as a draw.

Player who runs out of time's material	Opponents Material	Result
K + Q	K + N or K + B	Draw
K + R	K + N	Win for opponent as a mate is possible
K + R	K + B	Draw
K + N	K + N	Win for opponent
K + N	K + B	Win for opponent
K + B	K + N	Win for opponent
K + B	K + B (opposite colours)	Win for opponent
K + B	K + B (same colours)	Draw
K + Q + P	K + N or K + B	Win for opponent. The pawn could be under promoted

- Ensure that an illegal move is not played immediately before flag fall. If an illegal move is played, the opponent should be awarded with the appropriate amount of time based on the time control, and the player is penalised for the illegal move. If you are unsure which occurred first, always look at what's on the board happened before the clock.

Other situations you'll likely come across are:

- Whether checkmate/stalemate occurs before or after flagfall. This is why you need to be observing the games! If you are called to the game after one happens, you look at

what's on the board before the clock, thus checkmate/stalemate is assumed to have occurred.

- **What spectators say is irrelevant to your decision and they should be ignored. This occurs for all cases.**
- In time scrambles, pieces may start to get knocked all over the place and sent flying across the room. If a piece is knocked over and it is not clear where the piece is, you must intervene immediately to prevent more chaos. If the position cannot be determined, you can declare the result of the game depending on your judgement.
- If the clock breaks during the game, or was found to be set incorrectly, you should replace the chess clock with a new one and adjust the times as appropriate.

Spectators

Controlling spectators is vastly more difficult than controlling the players in the tournament. In many cases, spectators do not understand the laws of chess and how tournaments function, resulting in disturbances. Venue constraints may also make it difficult to manage players at chess tournaments. Prior to the start of an event, the Chief Arbiter or Organiser may inform you of your responsibilities regarding spectators. Some events may outright ban spectators in the playing area, whilst others may allow them.

Always remember that once a player is finished with their game, they also become a spectator.

You should always:

- Be vigilant regarding what the spectators are doing. If they interfere with any ongoing games, regardless of how small the matter is, they should be asked to leave the playing area immediately. No exceptions should be made.
- Be vigilant regarding the space players are giving players. The last few games of each round will frequently have a large crowd surrounding the players, so ask spectators to step back if necessary. You'll also need to have a direct view of the board and clock at all times.
- If the noise level increases, ensure that a quiet playing condition is kept to the best of your ability. This can include shushing spectators, separating them from the main playing area in other rooms, as well as removing them from the venue all together.

- At most NSWCA events, this won't be a major concern. However, at NSWJCL events, you'll require a significant amount of effort in controlling juniors who have finished their games.

End of Games

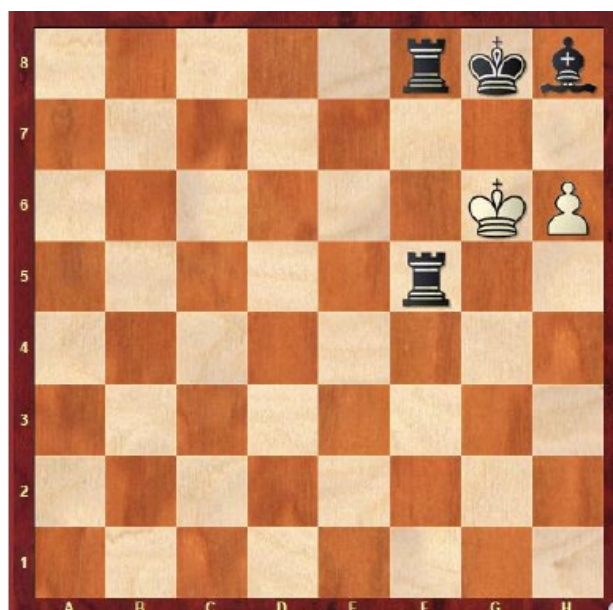
Depending on the event, the Chief Arbiter or Organiser may require the arbiters to check the scoresheets of all games before the results are submitted. This can occur for several reasons:

- Tournament regulations disallow draws by agreements under a certain number of moves
- Tournament regulations require the arbiter's signature on scoresheets and/or result slips before they are submitted to prevent disputes regarding results.
- Satisfying the most recent updates to the 2023 version of the Laws of Chess

In the most recent update to the Laws of Chess, the following phrase (or a variation of) is added regarding a loss of game on two illegal moves, flag-fall or resignation.

- **However, the game is drawn if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves.**

In the following position, if white's clock runs out of time, the result of the game should be declared as a draw. This is because white's only legal move is to play h7#, and thus black has **no series of legal moves to checkmate white.**



Chapter 4: Player Conduct and Fair Play

The conduct of players at NSWCA events are governed by the NSWCA Code of Ethics as well as the Article 11 of the FIDE Laws of Chess.

<https://www.nswca.org.au/codeofethics.php>

If a player would like to appeal your ruling during a game, they are entitled to ask the Chief Arbiter for their decision. Do not take this personally, as it is normal for players wanting to have clarification or a second opinion. In the rare situation that a player wants to appeal the decision to the NSWCA Appeals Panel, they are to submit a written appeal to the Chief Arbiter of the event.

The current NSWCA Appeals Panel is composed of the following members:

- Bill Gletsos
- Charles Zworestine
- Richard Gastineau-Hills
- Peter Cassettari
- Winston Zhao Chen

If a player is found to be breach of the Code of Ethics, you should report the matter to the NSWCA Council as soon as possible. This can include un-sportsman behaviour and cheating during the tournament. Council members of the NSWCA are in most cases some of the most experienced chess administrators, organisers and arbiters in Australia, and can deal with the situation appropriately in line with the Code of Ethics and Constitution.

At NSWCA events, the “playing area” is defined as the table where the game takes place and the area immediately surrounding it within one metre. Thus, players are not permitted to leave their board to go to the bathroom when it is their move.

Notes and electronic devices are forbidden during any game. At NSWCA events, scorebooks are not permitted, and players must use the scoresheets provided to them during the event. If a player is found with an electronic device on them, including smart phones, smart watches, etc, they will immediately lose the game regardless of if it is turned on or off. If a players electronic device makes a noise during their game, they immediately lose the game with no exception. If a spectators electronic device makes a noise, they should be removed from the playing hall until the start of the next round.

Electronic devices must be switched off and placed into the player's bag underneath the table. If players wish to access their bag during the event, they should ask permission from the arbiter beforehand, and you must witness this process.

All NSWCA events are non-smoking events, which also includes electronic cigarettes.

Chapter 5: Reporting Results and Managing Data

At NSWCA events, result slips may be used at the Chief Arbiter's discretion. If result slips are used, players are to write down the result of the game on the slip and sign them. Towards the end of the round, the arbiter should record the results of each slip onto a printout of the pairings to input into Vega. Alternatively, some events may require the players to write the results down on the printout of the pairings directly.

Following the end of the round, the pairings arbiter who is usually the Chief Arbiter, will input the results into Vega. An assistant arbiter should help the Chief Arbiter to check the results are inputted correctly, and all byes and withdrawals are noted down.

Whilst you are unlikely to directly encounter personal information from the players, it is still important for you to be made aware of this data. Entries are no longer collected on the day of the event, so you won't need to handle payments and entry forms. The entry form for players collects full names, date of births, addresses and occupations. Thus, this information is sensitive and should be not readily disclosed to anyone.

At the end of a tournament, if you are responsible for the pairings, you should cross check all the results to ensure they are correct. Once this is done, ensure that the schedule, start/end date, arbiter and organiser information is filled out correctly in the Vega file before submitting for rating. When submitting a tournament for rating, email ratings@nswca.org.au with the Vega file.

Board 1 - Example Tournament - Round 1		
Player 1 1758 NSW	Player 2 1827 NSW	
..... white signature	 result	 black signature

Chapter 6: Tournament Formats and Pairings Systems

This section will not aim to cover all the tournament formats and pairings system, as this would have been done during the National Arbiters Course. However, we will cover some common question and formats used in NSW.

FIDE Dutch Swiss

All NSWCA tournaments follow the FIDE Dutch Swiss pairings system, unless otherwise stated. In some situations, the tournament may be accelerated using FIDE Baku Acceleration.

These are separate concepts and should not be confused. A tournament can follow:

- FIDE Dutch Pairings and not be Baku Accelerated
- FIDE Dutch Pairings and be Baku Accelerated
- Alternative Swiss Pairings (such as Dubov) and be Baku Accelerated

Many players who have not previously encountered acceleration may ask what it is. The point of acceleration is used in large tournaments with a limited number of rounds. This way, a clear winner may be determined. It is mostly pointless for a 2300 FIDE player to be paired against a 1500 in Round 1, so acceleration aims to solve this concern.

Round Robin

Currently, the only tournament held by the NSWCA that is a Round Robin is the NSW State Championships.

Tiebreaks

The NSWCA does not use tiebreaks at our events. This is because prize money is shared equally between prize winners, and it avoids situations where players complain why they've received a lower amount of prize money, but they're higher on tiebreak.

This is set in Vega as "User Tiebreak" and displays all tiebreaks as "0".

Forfeits

The forfeit time at NSWCA events for classical tournaments is 30 minutes, unless specified otherwise on the advertisement. Players who turn up after 30 minutes, and have not informed the arbiter, are automatically withdrawn from the event unless a reasonable excuse is provided.

Reasonable excuses include things that are out of the control of the player. For instance, disruptions to public transport, traffic or medical incidents/emergencies. This is not an exhaustive list, and it is up to your judgement if it is a reasonable reason.

Unreasonable excuses include things that are within the player's control. These include sleeping in (such as due to attending a party the night before) and misreading the round start time.

If you are unsure, refer the matter to the Chief Arbiter.

Chapter 7: Conflict Resolution and Appeals Process

As an arbiter, you will almost certainly come across a situation where the player does not like your decision. They may argue with you regarding the facts of the case, aiming to get you to change your mind. Always remember, you are the one in charge and do not let the players dictate your decisions.

- Stay calm and impartial when a conflict arises. Gather the facts of the situation and ask both parties to explain their version of events.
- Explain the decision and ruling you have made to the player clearly, and without uncertainty.
- If the player further argues, and you are confident that your decision is correct, assert your authority and inform the player to continue playing and the decision is made. If the player continues to be rowdy, seek the Chief Arbiter for help.

You may also come across situations where players are hostile to each other. Whilst this is extremely uncommon, it has occurred previously at tournaments. You should separate the two players and remove them both from the playing hall. Get the assistance of the Chief Arbiter and they'll manage the situation as appropriate.

To prevent future disputes from occurring, preventative measures can be implemented. This can include announcing before the start of the next round certain rules or fair play behaviour.

If a player wishes to submit an appeal to the NSWCA Appeals Panel, they must inform the Chief Arbiter and they will initiate the process. Note that events not organised by the NSWCA are not eligible to appeal to the Appeals Committee and the ruling of the Chief Arbiter is final.

Chapter 8: Dealing with Cheating and Anti-Cheating Measures.

If a player is caught cheating during the game, they should be declared lost immediately. The result is not a “forfeit”, and the game will be rated. Once cheating is discovered, you and the Chief Arbiter must submit a report to the NSWCA Council as soon as possible regarding the events leading up and how the player was caught. This is because players can be suspended from chess tournaments by FIDE for up to 15 years. In serious cases, players may be banned from participating in a chess tournament for the rest of their life following a report to FIDE.

FIDE details a list of anti-cheating guidelines for chess tournaments, which can be found [here](https://www.fide.com/FIDE/handbook/Anti%20Cheating%20Guidelines.pdf).

<https://www.fide.com/FIDE/handbook/Anti%20Cheating%20Guidelines.pdf>

Because these are guidelines, it may not be possible to follow all of these to the dot so organisers and arbiters should adapt reasonably.

NSWCA events have a strict **no mobile/electronic devices policy**. This includes both powered and non-powered devices such as laptops, mobile phones, smart watches, earbuds, headphones etc. They must be powered off and placed into a bag under the table or a designated spot determined by the arbiter.

Chapter 9: Inclusivity in Chess Tournaments

Chess events draw in a variety of players from all backgrounds, so it is crucial that all players are treated equally with respect and fairness.

It is important to ensure players with disabilities are catered for, by making arrangements for their comfort. For instance, if a player is in a wheelchair, they should ideally be assigned a board that is easy to enter and exit from a wheelchair.

If special arrangements are required for an event, the Chief Arbiter or Organiser will notify you regarding the concern.

Appendix 1: National Arbiter Checklist

Proficiency Requirement	Arbiter Signature	CA Signature
Performs inspection of the playing venue for any concerns before the start of the event. • Adequate number of tables and chairs? • Adequate number of boards, sets and clocks?		
Correctly sets various time controls on the chess clock. • 90 minutes + 30 seconds • 60 minutes + 30 seconds • 15 minutes + 10 seconds • 3 minutes + 2 seconds		
Adequate knowledge and ability to explain to players the rules and regulations of the tournament. • Byes regulations • Tournament Format • Pairing System • Tie-breaks		
Adequate knowledge regarding FIDE rules of chess, including specific niche situations. • Specific case studies to be determined by the Chief Arbiter of the event.		
Adequate knowledge regarding the role of the arbiter for classical, rapid and blitz formats.		
Adequate understanding of anti-cheating rules and procedures. • Mobile phones and electronic devices. • Appeals procedure.		

Adequate knowledge of result reporting and use of the Vega pairing program. • Automatic draws & modifying pairings.		
Effective communication skills. • Voice projection • Informing players regarding decisions without ambiguity		
Adequate ability to handle tasks under pressure • Mostly relevant in blitz events when multiple incidents occur at the same time. • Recognising when additional assistance is required and obtaining it.		
Demonstrates professional conduct, fairness, impartiality at all times during the event. • Dressed appropriately (appearance) • Punctuality • Knowledge • Leadership qualities • Tact and diplomacy		