Pokémon Trading Card Game Tournament Rules and Formats

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Introduction

This section contains tournament rules specific to the Pokémon Trading Card Game. All attendees are expected to comply with the applicable sections of these rules while attending a Play! Pokémon tournament.

1.   Cards

Players may only use cards in their decks that are legal for the tournament format. During Limited tournaments, players may only include cards given to them by the Organizer for the tournament.

Players are responsible for ensuring that their cards are not marked in any way. 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, and so forth. If a player's cards are sleeved, the sleeves are considered part of the cards, so the cards must be examined while in the sleeves to determine if there is a marked card situation.

The Head Judge is the final authority in determining whether a card or sleeve in a player's deck is considered marked.

1.1.   Card Definitions

A card is defined by the English translation of the card.

1.2.   Card Interpretations

The Head Judge is the final authority on card interpretations and tournament rulings. Rulings and questions about text or card functionality for foreign-language cards are made using the English-language translations.

1.3.   New Pokémon TCG Releases

Expansion sets are expected to be released on a regular schedule, averaging four new expansions per calendar year. Cards from each new expansion will become legal on the third Friday of the same month the expansion was released in the US market. Promo cards such as those found in Pokémon TCG Boxes and Collections will be legal on either the first or third Friday of the month after the product is released. This tournament legal date is consistent worldwide and can be confirmed in the Expansion Legality document, which is updated monthly.

1.4.   Reprinted Cards

From time to time, cards printed in previous expansions are reprinted in a new expansion. Unless the card text is functionally identical to the new version of the card, it will not be legal. Cards that have received errata (Potion, Rare Candy, etc.) are also legal.

Please see the Tournament Rules and Resources page for a list of cards that have been reprinted and are legal for play in the Standard Format.

1.5. Unreleased Cards

From time to time, players will acquire cards from a new expansion prior to its regular release date, usually via a Prerelease. These cards may not be used in sanctioned tournaments until the tournament legal date of the expansion, as outlined in [Section 13.1](#), with one exception. Cards that are already tournament legal and have been reprinted in an unreleased expansion may be used if they are easily identifiable as a reprinted card. This is typically only an issue when a reprinted card receives new art, though other factors may create a similar issue.

Players who are unsure whether a card meets the exception above should check with the Head Judge prior to the start of the tournament.

1.6. Fake Cards

Only genuine Pokémon TCG cards may be used in Play! Pokémon events. Any fake, reproduced, or counterfeit cards must be removed from all players' decks before the start of the tournament. Those that are not may be subject to confiscation by the Organizer.

1.7. Proxies

Player-made proxies are considered fake cards and should be treated as such in all ways. Players should ensure that the cards in their decks are in good condition before attending a tournament so as not to create a marked-card situation.

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. The damaged card must be retained to use as a reference when the proxy card is played. 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 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. The damaged card must be retained to use as a reference when the proxy card is played.

1.8. Foreign Cards

The use of foreign-language cards has been known to create time delays and confusion at high-level Premier Events, where significant prizes are on the line. However, as the Pokémon TCG is an international game, concessions must be made to help accommodate markets where multiple languages are more common. Players are restricted on which language cards they can use, based on the country where they are playing. The list of countries and regions below defines which languages are considered local. Any other languages are considered foreign in that country or region.

Canada
Local—English and French

Europe
Local—English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish

Japan
Local—Japanese

Korea
Local—Korean

Mexico
Local—English and Spanish

Russia
Local—Russian

South America
Local—English, Portuguese, and Spanish

United States, Asia Pacific, and South Africa
Local—English

Players are not permitted to use foreign cards at Premier Events unless the exception below applies.

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 their home markets.

1.9.   Autographed Cards
Cards marked by pen, marker, etc., are not permitted for use in a sanctioned tournament. This includes autographed cards.

1.10. Alternate-Backed Cards
Only cards printed with the standard local language Pokémon TCG card back may be used in Play! Pokémon tournaments, and all cards in a deck should have the same card back. Cards printed with any other back may not be used in a Play! Pokémon tournament, even if sleeved with opaque card sleeves.

1.11. Cards Listed as Not Legal
Some cards appear with "NOT TOURNAMENT LEGAL" on the card. These cards are not legal in Play! Pokémon tournaments.

2.   Card Sleeves
Card sleeves can be used at Play! Pokémon tournaments, if they meet the following requirements:

- All the sleeves of a deck must be the same color, condition, size, and texture.
- The fronts of the sleeves are clear, clean, and free of designs, holograms, and emblems that may obscure card information.

- The sleeves completely cover the entire card, leaving no portion sticking out of the open end.
- The sleeves are not reflective enough to be used to clearly determine the faces of cards that remain in the deck.
    - A reasonable degree of glossy finish on a sleeve is acceptable. For example, if a player can identify the card type, due to the contrast in card frames between Pokémon, Energy, and Trainer cards, the sleeves are permitted for use. However, players and judges should take extra precautions to ensure that no advantage is gained by this reflection.
    - Sleeves that create a mirror-like surface, where the exact card above it is clearly distinguishable, are not permitted. For example, if the player can identify the exact card using the reflection from the sleeve below it, those sleeves are not permitted.
- Each card sleeve contains only one card.
- The use of sleeves with any form of pattern or artwork on the back of the sleeve is strictly prohibited at all Premier Events, unless the sleeve is an official Pokémon sleeve, where the color along all four edges of the sleeve is identical.
- The Head Judge of a non-Premier Event has the final say over whether art-backed sleeves may be used at that tournament. Inappropriate sleeve images (as determined by the Head Judge) are strictly prohibited.
- Players may use inner sleeves inside their normal sleeves if they follow all other sleeve rules and they do not create a marked card situation.

The Head Judge has the final say regarding whether a player's card sleeves may be used in a tournament.

Players should keep in mind that card sleeves are not a requirement at Play! Pokémon tournaments or events. Should a judge inform a player that their sleeves may not be used at an event, the player has the option of replacing the sleeves with more suitable sleeves or playing without sleeves.

Players are responsible for ensuring that their cards and/or card sleeves are not marked in any way. 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, and so forth. Players must ensure that their sleeves remain legal throughout the course of the event, not just during initial deck checks.

If a player's cards are sleeved, the sleeves are considered part of the cards, so the cards must be examined while in the sleeves to determine if there is a marked-card situation.

The Head Judge is the final authority in determining whether a card or sleeve in a player's deck is considered marked.

3.   Game Area Management

In an effort to keep game play as clear as possible, Pokémon Organized Play (POP) has set forth the following rules regarding management of the play surface.

3.1.   Cards in Play

Cards in play should be managed in such a way that they are organized and neat and easy for opponents and judges to interpret. The following are some guidelines for card organization:

- 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.
- Each player may only have one discard pile, though certain cards in the discard pile may be rotated slightly to make them more visible.
- 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.
- While playing in Unlimited format events, 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.
- Keep all Energy cards aligned in the same direction under the Pokémon in play, and make sure each card is visible at all times.
- Make sure Benched Pokémon are separated far enough apart from each other and from Active Pokémon that it's clear which Pokémon have cards attached to them.
- Attach Pokémon Tool cards to Pokémon that they are being played on and discard them as directed by the card text.
- Put Stadium cards between both players' Active Pokémon so that the card is visible to all players.
- Arrange damage counters primarily over the picture of a card so as not to obstruct the view of the card text.

3.2. Hand Elevation

To avoid the perception of impropriety, players should keep both hands above the level of the playing surface at all times. A player's cards should never go below the level of the playing surface during a match.

3.3. Turned Cards

If a card must be turned as a part of game rules to indicate a specific effect, that card must be turned so that it is either 90 or 180 degrees, whichever is more appropriate according to the rules.

3.4. Tokens and Counters

Players are required to provide their own counters to mark damage to Pokémon in play and markers to represent Special Conditions and other game effects. A judge may disallow the use of markers that cause confusion with regard to the state of the game or that are offensive in some manner.

3.5. 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. A head judge may choose to disallow any randomizer if there is reason to believe that the randomizer is unsuitable based on the criteria below.

3.5.1. Coins

- Any coin released with any Pokémon TCG product from *EX Ruby & Sapphire* on should be considered fair and impartial.
- Any other coin (such as local currency) brought by a player to be used as a randomizer must be approved by both players. Players should consider if the coin in question is light enough not to damage or mark cards it lands on and whether or not heads or tails can be determined at a glance.
- 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.
- Coin flips that land outside the playing area (off the table or in another game's playing area) are considered invalid and must be flipped again.
- Once players have agreed on the result of a coin flip, it cannot be redone.
- Once a judge has ruled that a result is conclusive, it cannot be redone.

3.5.2. Dice

- 6-sided dice are permitted for use as randomizers, so long as each die is a cube, where each side has the same surface area.
- 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 of 6). A custom-etched side uses the number replaced when determining if the opposite sides add up to 7.
- Dice used as randomizers must be transparent or translucent.
- When rolling a die, the player should shake the die in an open, cupped palm so that both players can see the die bouncing around in the player's hand. The die should then be rolled along the table in a manner that forces it to bounce several times before stopping. Alternately, the die can be flipped into the air from shoulder height, so that it spins at least three times before landing.
- Dice used as randomizers must be clearly distinguishable, either in size, color, or marking, from dice being used as damage counters by either player.

3.6. Rock/Paper/Scissors

Some cards may require players to determine results of the card's action by playing Rock/Paper/Scissors. To provide a uniform experience, players must use the following method of determining the winner of Rock/Paper/Scissors:

- Players must look each other in the eyes to reduce the likelihood that an early result will be seen by the opponent.

- Both players make a fist with one hand, and hold the other hand open, palm up. Both players tap their fists on their open palms simultaneously, four times, displaying their choice of Rock, Paper, or Scissors on the fourth tap.
- Rock beats Scissors, Paper beats Rock, and Scissors beats Paper.
- Both players must agree on the result of the hand motions before the hand motions are withdrawn.
- In the case of a tie, both players repeat this process until there is a winner.

If a player is uncomfortable using the standard hand motions for Rock/Paper/Scissors, that player can use three cards as a replacement. Each card must be clearly marked with Rock, Paper, or Scissors in text. Each card can only be marked with one result, and all three results must be present. Players using cards choose Rock, Paper, or Scissors and reveal it at the same time as the opponent reveals his or her choice.

There are no other acceptable replacements for the Rock/Paper/Scissors hand motions.

4. Deck Registration

Before the first round of a tournament, deck registration may occur. This process involves each player listing the exact contents of their deck (and unused cards, in the case of Limited tournaments). To make deck registration easier on the tournament staff, players should sort their decks to match their deck lists prior to registration. 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. Using collector numbers and including each card's full name are great ways to ensure a clear and accurate deck list. Players are not allowed to change their decks at any time during a tournament.

5. Deck Checks

At all Premier Events, deck checks must be performed. For all tournaments, including Premier Events, Pokémon Organized Play (POP) recommends that deck checks be performed to at least 10 percent of decks over the course of the tournament.

Whether checking a deck at the beginning of the tournament or between rounds, players should be required to put the cards in their decks in the same order as the cards on their deck lists to expedite the process. During the deck check, the tournament staff should look for the following:

- **Legibility:** If the deck list is difficult to read, the player may be asked to fill out a new deck list. Special attention should be paid to the legibility of the player's PLAYER ID and date of birth. Obscure abbreviations for cards should be clarified using something like a card's collector number on the deck list.
- **Sleeves:** Players' sleeves should be free of consistent markings. Sleeves with significant wear and tear or consistent markings should be replaced immediately. If this is found to be an issue after the start of the tournament, it may warrant further investigation.
- **Total Number of Cards:** The number of cards in a player's deck should be appropriate for the tournament format. The deck checker should count the total number of cards in the deck before

checking the actual contents of the deck to ensure that the deck contains the proper number of cards.

- **Deck Contents:** The deck checker should verify that the contents of the player's deck match the cards on the deck list. The card title should match the card listed, and the expansion abbreviation and collector number of each of the Pokémon must be correctly listed.
- **Card References:** If a player is using a Head Judge-approved proxy, the deck checker must require the player to present their reference cards where applicable. If the player cannot present reference materials, they must be denied entry to the tournament or given the appropriate penalty.

Players should be strongly encouraged to thoroughly shuffle their decks after deck checks to reduce the likelihood that cards remain clumped in groups due to the deck check.

6.   Shuffling

Each player's deck is expected to be fully randomized at the start of each game and during the game, as card effects require. To achieve randomness, players are to riffle, pile, or otherwise shuffle their decks until they are satisfied that the deck is random. Randomization must be done in the presence of the player's opponent and must be done in a reasonable amount of time. Care should be taken to ensure that the cards in the deck are not harmed or revealed during the shuffle.

After the shuffle, the deck 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. Cutting into more than two stacks is considered a shuffle.

Instead of cutting, the opponent may choose to shuffle the deck. This shuffle should be brief, and when it concludes, the deck's owner is allowed to cut the deck once as described above. Players should take care when shuffling an opponent's deck, as the cards in that deck are not the shuffling player's property. At this point, the deck should be sufficiently randomized to both players' satisfaction.

If either player still does not feel that either deck is sufficiently randomized, 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 is allowed to shuffle or cut after the judge's shuffle.

Any action, other than game actions required by cards played, that places cards in a specific order or reveals the position of any specific card within the deck immediately negates any previous randomization. Players engaging in these or other questionable shuffling methods may be subject to the Unsporting Conduct section of the Penalty Guidelines. Players are strongly encouraged to shuffle their opponents' decks at Premier Events.

7.   Time Limits

Tournament staff is responsible for running a timely event. To assist in this effort, POP has established guidelines for time limits during various portions of the event.

7.1. Pre-game Time Limit

Prior to each game, players have two minutes to shuffle their decks and present them to their opponents for further shuffling or cutting. This two-minute limit includes resolving mulligans. The round should not begin until this two-minute period has expired.

7.2. Mid-game Time Limit

Any mid-game effects, such as deck search effects and shuffling, are to take place in a reasonable amount of time. If a judge feels that a player's searching or shuffling time is unwarranted, that player will be subject to the Game Tempo section of the *Play! Pokémon TCG Penalty Guidelines*. A judge may issue a time extension on a match where a player is playing slowly. The extra time allotted must be clearly communicated to both players and recorded immediately by the judge.

7.3. Match Time Limits

Single-game matches should be a minimum of 30 minutes plus 3 turns for Constructed tournaments or 20 minutes plus 3 turns for Limited tournaments.

Best-of-three matches should have a minimum time limit of 45 minutes plus 3 turns, with no maximum time limit. The specific time limit for each round's matches should be announced by the Organizer at the outset of the tournament.

8. Match Resolution during Swiss Rounds

In the best-case scenario, a winner will be determined before the last turn allocated for the match has finished. However, once the final turn ends, a winner must be determined without delaying the tournament for an unreasonable time.

8.1. Resolution of Match after the Final Turn Ends

If time is called during a player's turn, that player completes the current turn. Between-turns effects resolve, and the next turn is considered turn 1 of 3 to be played after time expires. If the third turn is completed and there is a clear winner, the game is over, and no between-turns effects are resolved.

If time is called between turns, all between-turns effects resolve, and the new turn is considered turn 1 of 3 to be played after time expires. If the third turn is completed and there is a clear winner, the game is over, and no between-turns effects are resolved.

For best-of-three play, each game is considered to have started once the starting player has been determined. This decision is made at the same point during setup that the coin flip would take place.

If a player wins a game after time has been called, no additional games, including Sudden Death games, are started in order to play out any remaining turns. If time is called between the end of one game and the beginning of the next, use the rules in Section 8.3 to determine the appropriate course of action.

8.2. Determining the Outcome of an Unresolved, Single-Game Match

Use the following criteria, in order, to determine the outcome of a game that is unresolved after the final turn has ended. After one of the criteria has been met, none of the others are applied.

(1) If one player was late to the match or was away from the match, without a judge's permission, for any period of time during the round, that player loses the match. The judge must have been made aware of this absence before the end of the match. If both players meet this criterion, ignore this tiebreaker.

(2) If both players were on time to the match and were not away from the match for any period of time, players receive a tie for this match.

8.3. Determining the Outcome of an Unresolved, Best-of-Three Match

Use the following criteria, in order, to determine the outcome of a match that is unresolved after the final turn has ended. After one of the criteria has been met, none of the others are applied.

(1) If one player was late to the match or was away from the match without a judge's permission for any period of time during the round, that player loses the match. The judge must have been made aware of this absence in advance of the end of the match. If both players meet this criterion, ignore this tiebreaker.

(2) If both players were on time to the match and were not away from the match for any period of time, the judge determines the winner of the current game in the following manner:

GAME 1

- If the last turn ends during game 1, the match results in a tie.

- If time is called after the game 1 winner has been determined but before the starting player for game 2 has been determined, the winner of game 1 wins the match.

GAME 2

- If the last turn ends during game 2, the winner of game 1 wins the match.

- If time is called after the game 2 winner has been determined but before the starting player for game 3 has been determined, the match results in a tie.

GAME 3

- If the last turn ends during game 3, the match results in a tie.

- If time is called after game 3 has been resolved but before the starting player for a Sudden Death game has been determined, the match results in a tie.

9.   Match Resolution during Single-Elimination Rounds

In the best-case scenario, a winner will be determined before the last turn allocated for the match has finished. However, once the final turn ends, a winner must be determined without delaying the tournament for an unreasonable time.

9.1.   Resolution of Match after the Final Turn Ends

If time is called during a player's turn, that player completes the current turn. Between-turns effects resolve, and the next turn is considered turn 1 of 3 to be played after time expires. If the third turn is completed and there is a clear winner, the game is over and no between-turns effects are resolved.

If time is called between turns, all between-turns effects resolve, and the new turn is considered turn 1 of 3 to be played after time expires. If the third turn is completed and there is a clear winner, the game is over, and no between-turns effects are resolved.

For best-of-three play, each game is considered to have started once the starting player has been determined. This decision is made at the same point during setup that the coin flip would take place.

If a player wins a game after time has been called, no additional games are started in order to play out any remaining turns. If time is called between the end of one game and the beginning of the next, use the rules in Section 9.3 to determine the appropriate course of action.

9.2.   Determining the Outcome of an Unresolved, Single-Game Match

Use the following criteria, in order, to determine the outcome of a game that is unresolved after the final turn has ended. After one of the criteria has been met, none of the others are applied.

(1) If one player was late to the match or was away from the match, without a judge's permission, for any period of time during the round, that player loses the match. The judge must have been made aware of this absence before the end of the match. If both players meet this criterion, ignore this tiebreaker.

(2) If both players were on time to the match and were not away from the match for any period of time, the judge determines the winner based on the number of Prize cards that each player has remaining. The player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins the match.

(3) If both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, the current game continues, starting with any between-turns effects that take place after the last completed turn, if necessary, until one player has fewer Prize cards remaining than the other. The player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins the match.

9.3.   Determining the Outcome of an Unresolved, Best-of-Three Match

Use the following criteria, in order, to determine the outcome of a match that is unresolved after the final turn has ended. After one of the criteria has been met, none of the others are applied.

(1) If one player was late to the match or was away from the match without a judge's permission for any period of time during the round, that player loses the match. The judge must have been made aware of this absence in advance of the end of the match. If both players meet this criterion, ignore this tiebreaker.

(2) If both players were on time to the match and were not away from the match for any period of time, the judge determines the winner of the current game in the following manner:

GAME 1

- If the last turn ends during game 1, the player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins game 1 and wins the match.

- If both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, the game continues until one player has fewer Prize cards remaining than the other. The player with the fewest Prize cards remaining is considered the winner of game 1, and the match ends.

- If both players draw their last Prize card (or Knock Out their opponent's last Pokémon) at the same time, refer to the "What Happens if Both Players Win at the Same Time?" section of the Pokémon TCG rulebook. If necessary, follow the Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death wins game 1 and wins the match.

- If time is called after the game 1 winner has been determined but before the starting player for game 2 has been determined, the winner of game 1 wins the match.

GAME 2

If the last turn ends during game 2:

- The active player completes their turn. If either player has fewer than 50% of their initial Prize cards remaining (2 in a Constructed format or 1 in a Limited format), the player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins the game. Otherwise the game does not count toward determining the winner of the match, and the winner of game 1 wins the match.

- If both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, the game continues until one player has fewer Prize cards remaining than the other. The player with the fewest Prize cards remaining is considered the winner of game 2.

- If both players draw their last Prize card (or Knock Out their opponent's last Pokémon) at the same time, refer to the "What Happens if Both Players Win at the Same Time?" section of the [Pokémon TCG rulebook](). If necessary, follow the

Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death is the winner of game 2.

- o If this results in one player having won two games in the match, that player wins the match.

- o If this results in both players having won one game in the match, follow the Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death is the winner of the match.

- If both players have won one game in the match but the starting player for game 3 has not yet been determined, follow the Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death is the winner of the match.

GAME 3

- If the last turn ends during game 3, the player with the fewest Prize cards remaining wins game 3 and wins the match.

- If both players have the same number of Prize cards remaining, the game continues until one player has fewer Prize cards remaining than the other. The player with the fewest Prize cards left wins game 3 and wins the match.

- If both players draw their last Prize card (or Knock Out their opponent's last Pokémon) at the same time, refer to the "What Happens if Both Players Win at the Same Time?" section of the Pokémon TCG rulebook. If necessary, follow the Single Prize Sudden Death rules as outlined in the Pokémon TCG rulebook, including flipping a coin again to see who goes first. The winner of this Single Prize Sudden Death wins game 3 and wins the match.

10.   Determining Who Goes First in Best-of-Three Match Play

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.

POKÉMON TRADING CARD GAME TOURNAMENT FORMATS

Play! Pokémon supports a variety of tournament formats for sanctioned play of the Pokémon Trading Card Game (TCG). This document introduces each of the approved formats and their variations. Tournaments that do not use one of the formats below may not be sanctioned.

11. Standard Format Styles

All sanctioned Pokémon TCG tournaments fall into one of two categories: Constructed or Limited. This section outlines the differences between the two categories, as well as any subcategories that may exist.

11.1. Constructed

In a Constructed event, players arrive at the tournament with a 60-card deck. The cards used to build the deck come from each player's personal collection. Decks may not contain more than 4 copies of a single card, as defined by the card's English title, with the standard exception for basic Energy cards. Some cards may have additional construction restrictions on them, which are treated as exceptions to the 4-copy rule. Matches are played for 6 Prize cards.

11.2. Limited

In a Limited event, players construct their decks using only cards provided by the Organizer at the event. Each player's deck must contain exactly 40 cards at all times. Decks may contain more than 4 copies of a single card, as defined by the card's English title, with the exception of cards which are limited to one per deck by card text. An Organizer must announce whether they are providing players with basic Energy cards before the date of the event, as well as at the event before it begins. Matches are played for 4 Prize cards.

11.2.1. Sealed Deck

In a Sealed Deck event, players receive booster packs from the Organizer at the beginning of the event. Players open all of their booster packs at a signal from the Organizer and construct a 40-card deck using only those cards and any basic Energy cards provided by the Organizer. Players have 30 minutes to construct their decks.

Players may not trade the cards from their booster packs with other players until the tournament ends. The Organizer may require players to fill out deck lists, including the cards in their decks and any cards not being used. Once the first round of the tournament begins, players may not alter the contents of their decks.

Booster packs used for a Sealed Deck tournament should come from the same expansion to preserve Evolution chains that may not exist outside of that expansion.

11.2.2. Booster Draft

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

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. 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.

Players may not trade the cards they selected in the draft with other players until the tournament ends. The Organizer may require players to fill out deck lists, including the cards in their decks and any cards not being used. Once the first round of the tournament begins, players may not alter the contents of their decks.

Booster packs used for a Booster Draft tournament should come from the same expansion to preserve Evolution chains that may not exist outside of that expansion.

11.2.3. Rochester Draft
In a Rochester Draft event, players receive booster packs from the Organizer at the beginning of the event. Players split into equal-sized groups, which should not exceed 8 players per group, and are seated in a circle.

At a signal from the Organizer, the player designated as player 1 opens two of their booster packs and lays each card face up on the table so the cards are clearly visible to all players. The players use a snaking draft to select their cards. Player 1 selects the first card and, moving around the circle in a clockwise direction, each player selects one card from the pack, placing it in front of them face up. The last player selects two cards, after which the draft proceeds in a counter-clockwise direction. When the draft gets back to the player 1, that player selects two cards, after which the draft proceeds in a clockwise direction once again. The draft continues in this pattern until the last card has been selected. Once the last card from the opened pack is taken, players may realign the cards they drafted in any manner they choose.

After all the cards from the first two packs have been selected, player 2 (to the left of player 1) opens two booster packs and lays each card face up on the table so that the cards are clearly visible to all players. Starting with player 2 and moving clockwise, players select cards from the opened pack, adding them to their card pools, using the same snaking draft described above. As the cards in opened packs are exhausted, the player to the left of player 2 opens two packs and each of the players takes turns selecting a card, starting with the player who opened the pack.

This process repeats until all remaining booster packs have been opened and all of 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.

Players may not trade the cards they selected in the draft with other players until the tournament ends. The Organizer may require players to fill out deck lists, including the cards in their decks and any cards not being used. Once the first round of the tournament begins, players may not alter the contents of their decks.

Booster packs used for a Rochester Draft tournament should come from the same expansion to preserve Evolution chains, which may not exist outside of that expansion.

11.2.4. Solomon Draft

In a Solomon Draft event, players receive booster packs from the Organizer at the beginning of the event. Players are randomly split into pairs and are seated across the table from each other.

At a signal from the Organizer, both players open all of the packs given to them and briefly review the cards they've received. All of the cards are then shuffled together into a single stack of cards and set face down.

At the beginning of the draft, the players flip a coin to determine drafting priority. The winner of the flip is designated as player 1; the loser is designated as player 2.

Player 1 takes the top 4 cards from the stack and lays them face up on the table. Player 1 selects one card and places it face down in their draft pile. Player 2 selects two cards and places them face down in their draft pile. Player 1 then takes the final card and places it face down in their draft pile.

Player 2 takes the top 4 cards from the stack and lays them face up on the table. Player 2 selects one card and places it face down in their draft pile. Player 1 selects two cards and places them face down in their draft pile. Player 2 then takes the final card and places it face down in their draft pile.

Players continue to alternate drafting order until the stack is depleted. Players may not reference the cards that they have drafted until the stack is depleted. It is up to the Organizer's discretion as to whether players may draft cooperatively, but this must be announced before the draft begins.

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.

The Organizer may choose to have players re-draft against a different opponent in later rounds. If this will occur at any point in the tournament, the Organizer must announce this prior to the start of the tournament. If a re-draft will occur during the tournament,

players are required to keep all of the cards that they drafted for the duration of the event.

Players may not trade the cards they selected in the draft with other players until the tournament ends. The Organizer may require players to fill out deck lists, including the cards in their decks and any cards not being used. Once the first round of the tournament begins, players may not alter the contents of their decks.

Booster packs used for a Solomon Draft tournament should come from the same expansion to preserve Evolution chains, which may not exist outside of that expansion.

12.   Standard Deck Construction Rules

All cards from Pokémon Trading Card Game expansions with the standard Pokémon TCG card back that have been released in the United States, including promotional cards, are legal for tournament play unless listed otherwise. Cards from collector's sets, such as the Pokémon World Championship decks, and cards with the words "NOT TOURNAMENT LEGAL" printed on them, are not allowed in tournaments. Specific formats may include additional rules restricting which card expansions are allowed.

13.   Sanctioned Formats

Play! Pokémon currently supports three formats for sanctioned play: Standard, Expanded, and Unlimited. Sanctioned events are listed on the Play! Pokémon website, and the results are reported to Pokémon Organized Play after the event concludes.

13.1. Standard Format

The Standard format is the standard tournament format for Play! Pokémon events. This format will be used at all Premier Events unless specified otherwise.

The Standard format for the 2017 season will consist of the following expansions:

- *XY—Primal Clash*
- *Double Crisis*
- *XY—Roaring Skies*
- *XY—Ancient Origins*
- *XY—BREAKthrough*
- *XY—BREAKpoint*
- *Generations*
- *XY—Fates Collide*
- *XY—Steam Siege*
- *XY—Evolutions*
- *Sun & Moon*
- *Sun & Moon—Guardians Rising*

Additional Releases

- *XY* Trainer Kit—Latias and Latios
- *XY* Trainer Kit—Pikachu Libre and Suicune
- Mc Donald's Collection 2014
- Mc Donald's Collection 2015
- Black Star Promo Cards: XY36 and higher, SM01 and higher

Additional expansions become legal as described in section 1.3 of this document.

With the exception of basic Energy cards and previously printed cards that appear in Standard-legal expansions, players may not use cards from Pokémon TCG expansions prior to *XY—Primal Clash.* Players using previously printed cards that appear in Standard-legal expansions may play those cards as long as the effect described is functionally identical to that of the most recent printing of the card.

Cards banned in Standard Format:
- None

13.1.1. Constructed
Standard–Constructed events use the standard Constructed rules, as listed in Section 11.1, in addition to the Standard format rules listed in Section 13.1.

13.1.2. Limited
Standard–Limited events use the standard Limited rules, as listed in Section 11.2, in addition to the Standard format rules listed in Section 13.1. Sealed Deck, Booster Draft, Rochester Draft, and Solomon Draft, detailed in Section 11.2, are all appropriate formats for Standard–Limited events.

13.2. Expanded Format
This format will be used at various Premier Events, so be sure to look at the format listed for events as they are announced.

The Expanded format for the 2017 season will consist of the following expansions:

- *Black & White*
- *Black & White—Emerging Powers*
- *Black & White—Noble Victories*
- *Black & White—Next Destinies*
- *Black & White—Dark Explorers*
- *Dragon Vault*
- *Black & White—Dragons Exalted*
- *Black & White—Boundaries Crossed*
- *Black & White—Plasma Storm*
- *Black & White—Plasma Freeze*

- *Black & White—Plasma Blast*
- *Black & White—Legendary Treasures*
- *XY—Kalos Starter Set*
- *XY*
- *XY—Flashfire*
- *XY—Furious Fists*
- *XY—Phantom Forces*
- *XY—Primal Clash*
- *Double Crisis*
- *XY—Roaring Skies*
- *XY—Ancient Origins*
- *XY—BREAKthrough*
- *XY—BREAKpoint*
- *Generations*
- *XY—Fates Collide*
- *XY—Steam Siege*
- *XY—Evolutions*
- *Sun & Moon*
- *Sun & Moon—Guardians Rising*

Additional Releases

- McDonald's Collection 2011
- McDonald's Collection 2012
- McDonald's Collection 2013
- McDonald's Collection 2014
- McDonald's Collection 2015
- *Black & White* Trainer Kit
- *XY* Trainer Kit
- *XY* Trainer Kit—Bisharp and Wigglytuff
- *XY* Trainer Kit—Latias and Latios
- *XY* Trainer Kit—Pikachu Libre and Suicune
- Black Star Promo Cards: BW01 and higher, XY01 and higher, SM01 and higher

    Additional expansions become legal as described in Section 1.3 of this document.

    With the exception of basic Energy cards and previously printed cards that appear in Expanded-legal expansions, players may not use cards from Pokémon TCG expansions prior to *Black & White.* Players using previously printed cards that appear in Expanded-legal expansions may play those cards as long as the effect described is functionally identical to that of the most recent printing of the card.

    Cards banned in Expanded Format:
    - Shiftry (*Black & White—Next Destinies*, 72/99)
    - Lysandre's Trump Card (*XY—Phantom Forces*, 99/119 and 118/119)

13.2.1. Constructed

Expanded–Constructed events use the standard Constructed rules, as listed in Section 11.1, in addition to the Expanded format rules listed in Section 13.2.

13.2.2. Limited

Expanded–Limited events use the standard Limited rules, as listed in Section 11.2, in addition to the Expanded format rules listed in Section 13.2. Sealed Deck, Booster Draft, Rochester Draft, and Solomon Draft, detailed in Section 11.2, are all appropriate formats for Expanded–Limited events.

13.3. Unlimited Format

Unlimited decks may contain cards from all Pokémon Trading Card Game expansions and promotional cards that have been released in the United States. Players using cards that have been reprinted in a later expansion must play those cards using the wording of the most recent printing. New expansions are allowed in all rating zones the third Friday after they are released in the United States.

Cards banned in Unlimited Format:
- None

13.3.1. Constructed

Unlimited–Constructed events use the standard Constructed rules, as listed in Section 11.1, in addition to the Unlimited format rules listed in Section 13.3.

13.3.2. Limited

Unlimited–Limited events use the standard Limited rules, as listed in Section 11.2, in addition to the Unlimited format rules listed in Section 13.3. Sealed Deck, Booster Draft, and Rochester Draft, detailed in Section 11.2, are all appropriate formats for Unlimited–Limited events.

14.   Unsanctioned Fun Formats

The formats listed below are intended as a fun, alternate way to play the Pokémon TCG and may not be sanctioned. These formats are great for Leagues, casual gatherings, or side events. We've included the official rules for these formats to help provide consistency, should your Organizer or League Leader decide to run an unsanctioned event using one of these formats.

14.1. 2-on-2 Battle

The 2-on-2 Battle format allows each player to have 2 Active Pokémon in play at a time. This game is played exactly like a regular game of Pokémon except for a few rules changes.

- Players may put up to 2 Basic Pokémon into play, face down, at the beginning of the game.
- No player may have more than 6 Pokémon in play at any time. If possible, a player must have 2 Active Pokémon in play at all times.
- Only 1 Pokémon may attack each turn. During their turn, a player may choose only 1 Defending Pokémon to attack, unless the text of a Pokémon's attack refers to "each Defending Pokémon."

- When both of a player's Pokémon are Asleep, Burned, Confused, or Poisoned, that player can try to recover or avoid damage in whatever order they would like. When 1 of that player's Active Pokémon becomes Paralyzed, it cannot attack on that player's next turn—though their other Pokémon may still attack if it is not affected by a Special Condition that would prevent it from doing so.
- If a Trainer card has an effect on an Active Pokémon, a player must choose only 1 Active Pokémon for that card's effect, unless that card specifies that it affects more than 1 Pokémon.
- When a player's Pokémon uses an attack on an opponent's Baby Pokémon that requires a flip, that player must flip a coin. However, if 1 of the defending player's Pokémon is a Baby Pokémon that requires a flip and the defending player's other Pokémon is not, the attacking player does not have to flip a coin to attack the non-Baby Pokémon.

14.1.1.   Constructed
2-on-2 Battle–Constructed events use the standard Constructed rules, as listed in Section 11.1, in addition to the 2-on-2 Battle format rules listed in Section 14.1.

14.1.2.   Limited
2-on-2 Battle–Limited events use the standard Limited rules, as listed in Section 11.2, in addition to the 2-on-2 Battle format rules listed in Section 14.1. Sealed Deck, Booster Draft, and Rochester Draft, detailed in Section 11.2, are all appropriate formats for 2-on-2 Battle–Limited events.

14.2. 30-Card
The 30-card format allows players to build decks consisting of half as many cards as a standard deck. This tends to reduce the amount of time needed to play a match, allowing players to get in more games in a shorter time frame than a standard game.

14.2.1. Constructed
In a 30-Card–Constructed event, players arrive at the tournament with a 30-card deck. The cards used to build the deck come from each player's personal collection. Decks may not contain more than 2 copies of a single card, as defined by the card's English title, with the exception of cards that are limited to one per deck by card text and the standard exception for basic Energy cards. Matches are played for 3 Prize cards.

14.2.2. Limited
In a 30-Card–Limited event, players construct their decks using only cards provided by the Organizer at the event. Each player's deck must contain exactly 30 cards at all times. Decks may contain more than 2 copies of a single card, as defined by the card's English title, with the exception of cards that are limited to one per deck by card text. An Organizer must announce whether they are providing players with basic Energy cards before the date of the event as well as at the event before it begins. Matches are played for 3 Prize cards.

Aside from the deck construction changes listed above, the standard Limited rules detailed in Section 11.2 apply to 30-Card–Limited events.

14.3. Team Battle

The Team Battle format allows two players to participate on a team, each player having one Active Pokémon. This game is played exactly like a regular game of Pokémon except for a few rule changes.

Set Up:
- Players sit on opposite sides of the table with the teams positioned diagonally to each other, so each player is facing a member of the opposing team.
- One member of each team participates in a coin flip to determine which team goes first. The winning team then chooses which of its players will go first. The turn sequence starts with the chosen player and then proceeds clockwise around the table, the turn order alternating between teams.
- Each player draws seven cards. Each player places one Active Pokémon and up to four Benched Pokémon. Players then place half as many Prize cards as they would for a single-player game, based on the format styles outlined in Section 11.
- Any player who cannot place an Active Pokémon reveals their hand to all players and declares a mulligan. The opponent across the table from the player may draw one card from their deck for the mulligan after both players have placed their Prize cards. If both the player declaring the mulligan and the opponent across the table from that player declare a mulligan, both players shuffle and set up again without their teammates drawing any extra cards.
- The player going first for each team may not attack on their first turn.

Game Play
- Players may not reveal their hands to their teammates or to the opposing team unless a game rule requires them to do so.
- Only the player whose turn it is may initiate conversation with his or her teammate. Conversation should be limited to short "yes" or "no" questions. General strategy or moves should not be discussed.
- If an attack or action on a player's card Knocks Out the opposing player's Pokémon, the acting player takes the appropriate number of Prize cards. If the player does not have enough Prize cards remaining, the player's teammate takes the remainder from their Prize cards.
- If a player's last Pokémon is Knocked Out but the player's teammate still has at least one Pokémon in play, the player is not eliminated from the game and may play Trainer, Supporter, and Stadium cards on their turn. If that player draws a Basic Pokémon, they must play it in the Active position on the first available opportunity. If neither player on a team has any Pokémon in play, the opposing team wins the game.
- If a player cannot draw a card at the beginning of their turn, that player is removed from the game. That player's teammate places Prize cards from the bottom of their deck equal to the eliminated player's remaining Prize cards.

Card References

- Cards which state "you" or "your" refer to the active player or their teammate, as designated by the player.
- Cards which state "your opponent's Pokémon" refer to the opponent that is being attacked, if the player is attacking, or the player's choice of opponent, if the player is not attacking.
- Cards worded for 2-on-2 Battle are applied to both players on a team. For example, cards that refer to "each Defending Pokémon" will affect both teammates' Defending Pokémon.
- Effects and attacks which refer to "all Pokémon in play" affect all Pokémon in play for both teams.

Between Turns

- Between-turns actions are taken before and after the turn of the player that owns the affected card.
- The effects of Special Conditions are checked for before and after the affected player's turn.

14.3.1.   Constructed

Team Battle–Constructed events use the standard Constructed rules, as listed in Section 11.1, with the addition of the Team Battle format rules including the number of Prize cards used, as described in Section 14.3.

14.3.2.   Limited

Team Battle–Limited events use the standard Limited rules, as listed in Section 11.2, with the exception of the number of Prize cards used, in addition to the Team Battle format rules, listed in Section 14.3. Sealed Deck, detailed in Section 11.2.1, is an appropriate format for Team Battle–Limited events, though teammates are permitted to trade cards during the deck-construction process.

Appendix A.   Document Updates

Pokémon Organized Play reserves the right to alter these rules, as well as the right to interpret, modify, clarify, or otherwise issue official changes to these rules, with or without prior notice.

Document updates will be made available at http://www.pokemon.com.

<u>Revisions made for latest publication (May 18, 2017)</u>

- General revision and updating of language for the sake of uniformity and clarity.
- Updated Section 1.3: Now reflects new tournament legal date rules.
- Updated Section 1.8:
  - Added new rules on International Championships card legality.
  - Added Local Language rules for players from Japan and Korea attending Play! Pokémon events.
- Updated Section 13: Formats section revised with currently legal sets for each format, new tournament legal date rules, and reprinted card clarification.