

League rules

Operative from September 2019

Clean copy [see version with amendments for details of changes passed at the 2019 AGM]

1 League structure

1.1 Membership

Membership of the league shall be open to all clubs in Sussex. Member clubs may enter one or more teams in the annual competition, subject to any maximum imposed from time to time on the number permitted.

1.2 Organisation

The league shall be organised in divisions, the size and number of which shall be periodically reviewed at the league AGM with the aspiration that the first division should have 11 teams. This should take into account the impact on other divisions.

1.3 Promotion & relegation

From season to season, promotion and relegation shall operate on a two-up, two-down basis across all divisions. Each team that wins promotion must take their place in the higher division next season, with the exception of the team placed second in the second division, who may decline promotion provided that the next-to-bottom team in the first division agrees not to be relegated. Should this option be exercised, only one team shall be demoted from the first division. Other adjustments may also be made by the Management Committee from time to time as teams enter or withdraw from the League.

1.4 New teams

New teams shall start in one of the lowest two divisions.

2 Arrangements for the playing season

2.1 Season

The season will commence with the distribution of Fixture Lists in accordance with rule 2.5. All matches, other than additional matches [see rule 12], should be completed by 14th May, unless permission has been obtained from the Fixtures Secretary to play the game at a later date.

2.2 Entries

Team applications must be submitted by 14 September. League entry fees must be submitted concurrent with the Team Entry Application in order for teams to be included in the Fixtures List. Clubs must also pay any non-ECF members game fee incurred within 14 days of being invoiced by the League. Payment shall be by cheque unless a BACS transfer is arranged in advance with the Treasurer.

2.3 Venues

Unless otherwise agreed at the AGM, half of each team's matches shall be played at home, and the other half away. If a club does not wish to travel for an away match, it may ask for the match to be played at a "half-way-house" venue and it shall then be responsible for all arrangements and costs.

2.4 Fixtures

Each team shall play one match against every other team in its division. If a club has two or more teams in the same division, then these teams must play the match or matches between them before playing any other matches.

2.5 Fixture lists

The Fixtures Secretary shall circulate to all teams by 28th September the Fixtures List for the season with the initial matches set for mid October. This will take into account up to 15 dates a team does not wish to play on as specified in the Team Application Form.

2.6 Fixture changes

Upon receipt of the fixture lists, clubs should check their viability. Changes may be made (including mutually agreed weekend arrangements):

- by mutual agreement concluded up to 14 days after the date of issue of the fixture lists for matches scheduled to be played in October or November; or
- by mutual agreement concluded 28 days prior to the originally scheduled date for matches scheduled to be played in December or later; or
- under exceptional circumstances.

All fixture changes, and any resulting disputes, must be notified by both clubs within 7 days to the Fixtures Secretary. Failure to do so will incur 4 default points (see 6.1). The Management Committee shall consider the circumstances and may default any team found to have changed or withdrawn from a fixture otherwise than in accordance with this rule.

3 Eligibility of players

3.1 Eligibility for a team

To be eligible to play in a team, a player must comply with at least 2 of the following criteria:

1. Payment of a current season annual subscription to the club
2. Having their main residence or place of work /education within the County of Sussex (East or West)
3. Having their main residence within 20 miles outside of the East / West Sussex county boundary
4. Having played at least one full season in an internal club competition in the previous few years; i.e. played and completed the full schedule
5. Having played at least 40% of matches for the club in two previous MSL seasons in the previous five years
6. Birth in Sussex

A new team member will be deemed ineligible unless the club has furnished to the Tournament Controller proof of which two rules they qualify under before or concurrent with the submission of the match result [rule 10.2]

If it is not the club's first team, restrictions concerning nominated players also apply [rule 4].

3.2 Eligibility after changing clubs

A player may change clubs within the league once during the season provided that he/she has played fewer than five matches for his/her original club.

3.3 Monitoring eligibility

- 3.3.1 The eligibility of a player for a particular team appearance may be formally questioned by the opposing team captain to the Tournament Controller, who will investigate that eligibility, together with the Management Committee, and will communicate their decision to all affected parties.
- 3.3.2 Eligibility may also be questioned by the Tournament Controller or Fixtures Secretary, who shall act as above.
- 3.3.3 The Tournament Controller shall continually monitor the eligibility of all players. If any player plays for two clubs in any season, the Tournament Controller shall inform both clubs of this occurrence within 21 days of his receipt of the relevant match card.

3.4 Penalties for ineligible players

- 3.4.1 If a team plays an ineligible player, then it is deemed to have defaulted on the board.
- 3.4.2 If an ineligible player plays on any board except the lowest, his/her playing will have caused players lower in the team order to have played one board lower than they ought. A penalty shall therefore be deducted and added to the opposing team's score. Penalties are calculated on the basis of the total score obtained by the team on boards below the ineligible player, as follows:

| Total score on | Penalty |
|-----------------------|----------------|
|-----------------------|----------------|

lower boards

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| 0 or ½ | Nil |
| 1, 1½ or 2 | ½ |
| 2½, 3 or 3½ | 1 |
| 4 or more | 1½ |

(E.g. A team loses on boards 1 and 2, wins on boards 3 and 4, and draws on board 5, but plays an ineligible player on board 2. The total score on boards below the ineligible player is 2½, so the match score is adjusted by 1 penalty point, and the original 2½ - 2½ draw becomes a 1½ - 3½ loss.)

3.4.3 If a team plays more than one ineligible player, then a separate penalty as above will be assessed in respect of each such player.

4 Nominated players

4.1 Declaring nominations

Each club entering more than one team shall, at the beginning of the season, and before playing any matches, submit a list of nominated players to the Fixtures Secretary. The Fixtures Secretary shall compile a list of all nominated players and arrange for this to be posted on the league's website.

4.1.1 Each club entering two teams must nominate a minimum of its 4 strongest players for its 1st team.

4.1.2 Each club entering three or more teams must also nominate a minimum of its next 4 strongest players for its 2nd team. If entering four or more teams the club must also nominate a minimum of its next 4 strongest players for its 3rd team, and so on.

4.2 Restrictions on nominated players

4.2.1 A nominated player may not play for a team lower than the one for which he/she has been nominated.

4.2.2 Whether nominated or not, a player from a lower team may appear on a match score card 3 times for higher teams while retaining his eligibility to play for the lower team. Upon appearing on a match score card a 4th time for any higher team the player becomes ineligible to play for the lower team.

4.3 New players

If a club acquires a new member during the season, then the club must advise the Tournament Controller of that player's details in accordance with rule 3.1 within 7 days of his/her first appearance for one of its teams. These details should be sufficient to establish with certainty whether the player is known to the grading system, and should preferably comprise complete name (surname, forename, other initials), sex, date of birth and ECF player code. If the player would have been nominated for a team had he/she been available at the start of the season, then such a player may not play for a lower team. The Fixtures Secretary shall amend the nominations for that club appropriately. If the Tournament Controller considers that this rule has been clearly disregarded, he/she may treat such a player as ineligible, and apply the provisions of rule 3.4.

4.4 Infrequent players

If a club elects not to nominate a player who is available only infrequently, then such a player may not play for a team lower than that for which he/she would normally have been nominated. If the Tournament Controller considers that this rule has been clearly disregarded, he/she may treat such a player as ineligible, and apply the provisions of rule 3.4.

4.5 Nominated players in play-off matches

The only eligibility requirement for a play-off match is that a player must have played two or more times for the team in that season.

5 Teams

5.1 Team size

Five-board matches shall be played in all divisions.

5.2 Team order

In each match, a team must play in descending order of current playing strength. It is recognised that, for many reasons, a player's grading may not be the best guide to current form, and considerable discretion is allowed a team captain in this area. Nevertheless, the Tournament Controller may require a team captain to justify his team order, and, should he/she be satisfied that the provisions of this rule have been clearly disregarded to the detriment of the opposing team, he/she shall refer the matter to the Management Committee who may adjust the match result as seems appropriate.

5.3 Incomplete teams

If a team is unable to raise a full complement of players for a match, it must default on the bottom board or boards. A team that attends a fixture with insufficient players to win it will be deemed to have defaulted the match, and the conditions of rule 6.2 apply.

6 Defaults

6.1 Penalties for defaults

For a team defaulting boards in any match, "default penalty points" (dpts) shall be levied as follows: 5dpts – board 1; 4dpts – board 2; ... 1dpt – board 5. For each 8 default penalty points accumulated in a season, one match point shall be deducted.

6.2 Seriously defaulting teams

A team that postpones or rearranges a match other than in accordance with Rule 2.6 or has insufficient players to win a match by the deadline established under 8.5 will be deemed to have defaulted it. In this circumstance the following procedure shall apply.

- 6.2.1 The team shall have two match points deducted from its total.
- 6.2.2 The match shall be replayed at a date convenient to the team defaulted against. The team defaulted against may also include any player who would have been eligible on the previously scheduled date. In the event of disagreement a date for replaying the match shall be set by the Tournament Controller.
- 6.2.3 If the defaulting team does not replay the match it shall automatically be relegated and all its match results declared void. (Games played by the defaulting team shall be graded as normal.)

7 Timings

7.1 Playing session

Unless otherwise agreed in reasonable advance of the night of the match to be longer, the playing session shall be of duration of exactly 3 hours and 10 minutes.

7.2 Clocks

Digital clocks that permit the use of an increment must be used in all games and are expected to be provided by the club hosting the match. The time controls specified below apply to all games in all matches in all divisions.

7.3 Time controls

Subject to 7.1, all moves in 65 minutes plus a 30-second increment per move from move 1.

The Home team captain shall announce the time the match will start and the time (or, in accordance with another suitable means of timing, how) the session will end. It shall be made clear which single clock or device determines the end of the session.

If, following the end of the session, the players cannot agree a result the game shall be adjudicated [rule 9].

For guidance if considering a longer session clubs should be aware that games could last up to a maximum total time (but only if both players use all their allocation) as shown:

| Mins | Secs | Moves | Max total time |
|------|------|-------|----------------|
| 65 | 30 | 60 | 03:10:00 |
| 65 | 30 | 70 | 03:20:00 |

| | | | |
|----|----|-----|----------|
| 65 | 30 | 80 | 03:30:00 |
| 65 | 30 | 90 | 03:40:00 |
| 65 | 30 | 100 | 03:50:00 |

7.4 Scoring

An accurate scoresheet must be maintained throughout the game.

8 The playing session

8.1 Laws of chess

The FIDE laws apply in general and the Management Committee will utilise the version produced by the Chess Arbiters Association for interpretation of the various aspects of these laws in the context of the League, except as set out in 8.1.1

8.1.1 Mobile phones, other communication devices, tablets and similar equipment are allowed in the playing area. However they must be either switched off or switched to silent mode for the duration of the match. Home team captains must remind players of this requirement. If a player's equipment makes any sound during his game, then: On the first occurrence he will receive a warning. For a second offence by the same player in the same game, the penalty is loss of the game.

8.2 Before play begins

The away team will have the White pieces on the odd numbered boards and Black on the even. Immediately before a match, team captains shall: (1) exchange names of team players; (2) agree and announce to all participants: (a) the time control, (b) the agreed finishing time, (c) any arrangements for interruptions that could involve stopping clocks, and (d) the content of rule 8.1.1

8.3 Start of play

8.3.1 The home team should be ready to play by 7.30pm. An away team whose members are all present shall be entitled to insist that the match commences at or after 7.30pm, even if the home team is incomplete, with any member of the home club and start the clocks thereafter.

8.3.2 The away team should be ready to play by 7.45pm. The home team shall be entitled to insist that the match commences at or after 7.45pm.

8.4 Missing clocks

If no clocks are available at 7.30pm, then time may be deducted from the home team's clocks. e.g. if clocks are not ready for 10 minutes after the away team were ready to start the match, then the home teams will have their available time reduced by 10 minutes.

8.5 Late players

If a player is not present by 8.30pm, or after 45 minutes after the start of his clock, whichever is the later, and his team captain has no reserve available to take his place, then the game is lost by default.

8.6 Refreshments

The home team is normally expected to provide refreshments.

8.7 Mutually agreed changes to playing session.

If two teams agree to play at a time other than an evening, e.g. at a weekend, the match must be played in accordance with Rule 7 except that, upon the agreement of both captains, the session may be of unlimited duration.

9 Adjudication

Note the detailed procedures for submitting an adjudication claim [here](#)

9.1 Submitting games for adjudication

Team captains should make reasonable efforts in the eight days following a match to agree the results of any unfinished games. If agreement on any such game cannot be reached, then each club must submit the position and their claim to the Adjudication Secretary of the Sussex County Chess Association in accordance with SCCA procedures.

9.2 Notification of adjudicated results

The Adjudication Secretary is responsible for reporting all adjudication results to both of the team captains involved and the Tournament Controller.

9.3 Appeals against adjudicated results

If a club wishes to appeal against the result of an adjudication, then the team captain must, within 14 days of receipt of the notification of adjudication (or the last such notification, if more than one game has been submitted in the same match), notify the Tournament Controller and the opposing captain of his club's intention to appeal, and submit forthwith to the Adjudication Secretary of the Sussex County Chess Association in accordance with SCCA procedures.

10 Notification of results

10.1 Completion of results record

It is the home team captain's responsibility to arrange for the completion of an official result card or record [including full initials of all players, the start time, and the length of the playing session] before the match, signature by both captains after the match conclusion and its retention until completion of the season at the AGM. If there are undecided games the submission of the result may be pended and, in accordance with rule 9.1, any games subsequently sent for adjudication then marked with an 'A'.

10.2 Result submission

The home team captain must arrange for the final result to be submitted via the ECF League Management System (LMS) as soon as possible, but in any case within ten days where rule 9.1 applies. In case of query, the Tournament Controller may request to see the signed record and if not available, make a determination of the match result.

11 League positions

11.1 Scoring system

League positions are determined as follows:

- 11.1.1 For each game in a match, a win shall count as 1 point and a draw as ½ a point.
- 11.1.2 The winning team will be that team which scores most game points, and thereby gains 2 match points. If game points are equal, each team will score 1 match point.
- 11.1.3 League positions are determined by match point score. If two or more teams are level on match points, they shall be placed in order according to the total number of game points they have scored in the division.

11.2 Withdrawal of teams

If a team withdraws during the course of a season all results involving that team are scratched.

12 Additional matches

12.1 Play-off matches for first place

If two or more teams tie for top place in any division, there shall be a play-off if any team involved wishes it. The teams may, however, agree to share the trophy.

12.2 Play-off matches for other places

If two or more teams tie for a promotion or relegation place, there shall be a play-off to resolve the issue. If the two teams have already met in the competition that season then the venue shall be reversed for the play-off.

12.3 Determination of the result in a play-off match

In the event of a drawn play-off match, if all games are drawn the match will be replayed at the away team's venue, otherwise the result will be determined by board-count, and if the board-count is equal, then by board-elimination.

12.3.1 Board-count

Each team totals the board numbers on which it has won and the team with the lower score wins the match.

12.3.2 Board-elimination

The result on the bottom board is eliminated and if the match is still drawn then the next board is eliminated and so on until one team is winning on the remaining boards.

12.4 Champions v The Rest

At the start of each season, there shall be a match between the League Champions and a "Rest" side selected by the Secretary from all other clubs.

13 Trophies & trophies

13.1 Trophies

The following trophies shall be presented at the AGM and held for one year:

13.1.1 Mowatt Cup – League Champions [Division 1 winners]

13.1.2 Gregory Cup – Division 2 winners

13.1.3 Division 3 Cup [older] – Division 3 winners

13.1.4 Division 4 Cup [newer] – Division 4 winners

13.2 Tankards

The following tankards shall be presented at the AGM and held for one year:

13.2.1 Best Match Average Tankard – The individual who, during the season, has the best percentage in all League matches [excluding additional matches], having played in at least eight such matches. Any games played between eligible and ineligible players are treated as defaults for the purposes of Best Match Average calculation. If two or more players have equal best percentages the following tiebreaks apply:

- i) most number of qualifying matches played, and if still equal then:
- ii) highest number of wins, and if still equal then:
- iii) the best individual winning game performance (opponent's grade minus own grade);

And if still equal the trophy shall be shared.

13.2.2 Tankards will also be awarded to the player with the Best Match Average in each Division. To qualify, a player must have played in at least three-quarters of any one of their team's matches in that Division but their performance will be calculated on all their games played in that Division. If two or more players have equal best percentages the tiebreaks as per 13.2.1 shall apply.

14 Meetings

14.1 Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the League will be held in June each year. The Secretary shall circulate the AGM agenda to clubs at least 14 days before the date of the meeting in order that clubs have time to consider proposed rule changes. The business of the meeting shall include reports from league officers, submission of annual accounts and election of officers for the forthcoming season, and may include proposals for rule changes and consideration of other matters of concern to the league.

14.2 Extraordinary General Meeting

An Extraordinary General Meeting may be called at any time by the Chairman or Secretary, or at the written request of six member clubs.

14.3 Voting at meetings

A club may be represented at any general meeting by one member for each team it had in the league in the current season. All matters to be determined shall be decided by a simple majority of such representatives who are present and voting.

15 Officers

15.1 Election of officers

The following league officers shall be elected at the AGM: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Fixtures Secretary, Tournament Controller, Knock-Out Tournament Controller and Auditor. With the exception of the Auditor the officers will comprise the Management Committee.

15.2 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall present the accounts and balance sheet to the auditor by 30th April.

16 Interpretation and amendment of rules

16.1 Interpretation of the rules

Any matter not covered by these rules shall be determined by a majority decision of the Management Committee, subject to the right of any involved club to appeal to the AGM or an EGM under rule 14.2.

16.2 Amendment of the rules

These rules may be amended only by the AGM or by an Extraordinary General Meeting called for that purpose. If a rule change proposal has been rejected at an AGM, a substantially similar proposal may not be raised in the following year unless permission has been sought in advance and approved by leave of the Management Committee.