**Summary of differences between the FIDE Laws of Chess (effective July 1, 2014) and the USCF *Official Rules of Chess*, 6th edition**

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Here is a brief summary of differences between the FIDE Laws of Chess and the USCF Official Rules of Chess. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list.

Both the FIDE Laws of Chess and the USCF *Official Rules of Chess* have different sets of rules based on the time control for the game. In the FIDE Laws of Chess:

* *Standard* refers to games where each player has at least 60 minutes for the game, based on 60 moves
* *Rapidplay* refers to games where each player has more than 10 minutes but less than 60 minutes, based on 60 moves
* *Blitz* refers to games where each player has at most 10 minutes, based on 60 moves

In the USCF *Official Rules of Chess:*

* *Regular* refers to games where each player has at least 30 minutes for the game, based on 60 moves
* *Quick* refers to games where each player has more than 10 minutes but less than 30 minutes, based on 60 moves
* *Blitz* refers to games where each player has at least 3 minutes and at most 10 minutes, based on 60 moves

The following tables compare USCF regular rules and FIDE standard rules. FIDE rapidplay and blitz events are still rare in the United States.

There are two sections: "important" differences and "obscure" differences. The differences labeled "important" are more likely to occur in tournament play.

**Important differences**

|  | **FIDE rule** | **USCF rule** |
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| 1. | The arbiter can call fallen flags without a claim by the player or the opponent. | Only the players may call a fallen flag. |
| 2. | The arbiter will correct all observed rules violations (such as illegal moves and "touch move" violations) even if the opponent does not make a claim. (However, the opponent may make a claim if the arbiter does not observe the violation.) | The director will correct illegal moves observed unless either player has less than five minutes remaining in the time control. (On the other hand, variation 11I1 is often used, although not typically announced. Under this variation, the director does not correct illegal moves unless a player makes a claim.) Other rule violations (such as "touch move") require the opponent to make a claim. |
| 3. | The Laws of Chess forbid a player from having a cell phone or other electronic means of communication in the playing venue at all, **even if the device is powered off**. The penalty is loss of the game, but the rules of a competition may specify a lesser penalty. The arbiter may require the player to allow his clothes, bags, or other items to be inspected in private. | USCF rule 20N provides for a time penalty the first time a player's cell phone rings. |
| 4. | You must make your move on the board first and only then record the move **unless** you are claiming a draw by triple occurrence of position **or** by the 50 move rule (or sealing a move). | USCF rule 15A require the player to make the move first and only then record the move. However, a commonly used variation (often unannounced) allows a player using a paper scoresheet to write the move on the scoresheet before making the move on the board. |
| 5. | The penalty for the first illegal move is to add two minutes to the opponent's time. A second illegal move results in **loss of the game.** | The penalty for an illegal move is to add two minutes to the opponent's clock. There is no limit on the number of illegal moves a player may make in a game. |
| 6. | There is no limit how far back in the game an illegal move may be corrected. | If an illegal move is not corrected within ten moves (or within two moves in a sudden death time control in a time pressure situation), the illegal move stands. |
| 7. | You must continue recording moves if you have at least five minutes on the clock, **even if** the opponent has less than five minutes remaining. If the time control has an increment of at least 30 seconds per move, **both players** are required to record moves at all times. | A player may stop recording moves for the rest of the time control if the opponent has less than five minutes remaining. If the time control has an increment of at least 30 seconds per move, **both players** are required to record moves at all times. |
| 8. | If the player moves a pawn to the last rank and presses the clock without replacing the pawn with a promotion piece, the player has completed an illegal move (see item 5 for implications) and **the pawn shall be replaced by a queen of the same color as the pawn**. The player has no choice in the promotion piece, even if promoting the pawn to a queen causes stalemate. | If a player does not replace a pawn on the last rank with a promotion piece and presses the clock, the opponent may immediately press the clock or stop the clock and summon a director (advisable in an increment time control). The player does not lose the right of choice of promotion piece. |
| 9. | It is not necessary to have a complete scoresheet to win on time in a non-sudden death time control. Calling your own flag to prevent the opponent from filling in moves on an incomplete score sheet won't help. | To claim a win on time in a non-sudden death time control, the opponent must have a reasonably complete scoresheet with no more than three missing or incorrect move pairs for the time control. A player may call his own flag as a means of preventing the opponent from filling in missing moves on the scoresheet. (Once the flag has been called, the opponent may not update the scoresheet.) |
| 10. | When castling, the player must touch the king first (or the king and rook at the same time). If the player touches the rook first, castling with that rook is **not allowed,** and the touch move rule is applied to the rook. | When castling, the player may touch either the king or the rook first. |
| 11. | The game is drawn **without either player making a claim** if the same position occurs on the board after five consecutive pairs of moves for each player ("five-fold repetition") or if both players have completed 75 moves without a capture or a pawn move. | This rule does not exist in the *Official Rules of Chess*. Addition of this rule is proposed for the 2014 Delegates' Meeting (August 2-3, 2014). |

**Obscure differences**

|  | **FIDE rule** | **USCF rule** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | The "zero tolerance" rule (introduced in 2009) that, unless specified otherwise, a player who is late **at all** for the start of the round forfeits the game was modified in 2014. The rules of a competition must specify the "default time" for the tournament. If the rules of the competition allow players to arrive late and both players are late, all the elapsed time comes off **White's clock** | The game is lost by a player who arrives at the chessboard more than one hour late. If both players are late, the elapsed time from the start of the round until the first player arrives is divided in half, and that time is subtracted from **each player's** clock. (So, for instance, if the first player is forty minutes late, twenty minutes should be subtracted from both sides of the clock.) |
| 2. | If claiming a draw by triple occurrence of position or the 50 move rule, you **must** write your move on the score sheet **without** making the move on the board. If you make the move on the board, you are no longer considered to be "on the move" (even if your clock is still running), and a draw claim will be rejected. | If claiming a draw by triple occurrence of position and the player's next move would cause the third occurrence, the correct procedure is to write the move on the scoresheet but **not** to execute the move on the board. However, under USCF rules, a player is considered to be "on the move" until the player presses the clock. So, if the player (incorrectly) makes the move on the board but does not press the clock, the player does not lose the right to claim the draw. Also, to claim a draw by the 50 move rule, the player should make the move on the board (if needed to reach the count of 50 moves by both sides) and must claim the draw before pressing the clock. |
| 3. | Score sheets **must** be brought up to date at the end of a non-sudden death time control. If one player must complete his score sheet, he does so while his clock is running before he makes a move in the new time control. If both players must complete score sheets, the arbiter may assist, and both clocks are stopped during the reconstruction. | The director may waive the requirement to bring scoresheets up to date at the end of a non-sudden death time control. In practice, this requirement is almost never enforced. |
| 4. | When promoting a pawn, the choice of promotion piece is final as soon as the piece touches the promotion square (even if the player has not yet released the promotion piece). | When promoting a pawn, the choice of promotion piece is final when the player releases the promotion piece from his hand. |
| 5. | It is illegal to use an inverted rook to mean "queen" when promoting a pawn. If a promotion piece is not readily available, the player must stop the clocks and ask the arbiter for assistance. (Technically, I think an arbiter would be within his rights to rule that the player had promoted to a rook. I don't see anything in the Laws of Chess that require the **base** of the piece to touch the chess board!) | The USCF rules explicitly state that, when promoting a pawn, an upside-down rook is to be considered to be a queen. |
| 6. | It is considered an illegal move to leave a pawn on the last rank and then to press the clock without replacing the pawn with the intended promotion piece. The opponent will be awarded an additional two minutes in this case. | It is incorrect, but not considered an illegal move, to leave a pawn on the last rank and then to press the clock without replacing the pawn with the intended promotion piece. In this case, the opponent may immediately press the clock to compel the player to replace the pawn with the promotion piece on his own time. |
| 7. | A player with less than two minutes remaining on the clock may claim a draw under Article 10.2 (the vague equivalent of USCF rule 14H, "insufficient losing chances"), even if there is a delay or increment. The player may claim a draw based on the opponent not making any attempt to win the game by normal means. The arbiter's ruling on such a claim is **final** and is not subject to appeal. | USCF rule 14H (insufficient losing chances) does not apply if the game is played with a properly set delay or increment capable clock. |
| 8. | It is possible to lose on time in situations that are a draw under USCF rules. For instance, GM Nakamura lost on time with a king and rook vs. king and knight. Under the FIDE laws of chess, the game is drawn when one player runs out of time only if there is **no legal sequence of moves** by which the opponent could checkmate the player. Since there is a helpmate that allows a king and one knight to checkmate a player with a king and rook, GM Nakamura lost. | USCF rule 14E (insuffient material to win on time) specifies cases where the game is drawn even if one player runs out of time. One of the cases listed in rule 14E is the opponent having only a king and knight (and not having a forced win). |
| 9. | When correcting illegal moves, the arbiter may use his best judgment to determine the time on each clock. | In the case of an illegal move, there is no adjustment of the times shown on the clock. |
| 10. | If the players start the game with the colors reversed, the game continues unless the arbiter rules otherwise. If the game started with the pieces incorrectly set up, the game is canceled and a new game played in its place. (While it is a common fix, it is **incorrect** to fix a reversed king and queen [the most common case of an incorrect initial position] by just swapping the king and queen back to their correct squares.) | Starting the game with the colors reversed is treated as an illegal move at the start of the game, as is starting the game with the pieces set up incorrectly. In both cases, the mistake must be corrected within the first ten moves by both players, or the game will continue as is. (While it is a common fix, it is **incorrect** to fix a reversed king and queen [the most common case of an incorrect initial position] by just swapping the king and queen back to their correct squares.) |

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