

LEAGUE RULES 2026-27

GENERAL

1. The Leicestershire and Rutland Chess League is administered by the **General Committee (GC)**, represented by its Secretary, Chairman or authorised official, whose decisions may be reviewed by the Committee. The "League" in these rules refers to this management structure, "Association" refers to the LRCA, **GC** refers to the **General Committee**, and "**Secretary**" to the **League Secretary**. These rules cannot be changed unless the change is authorised by a majority of the **GC**. Any changes must be circulated with the annual invitation to clubs to enter the league for the forthcoming season. Clubs can suggest adjustments for the **GC** to consider but once the season commences no further changes can be made during that season.

2. These League rules are designed to help the smooth running of the League. Queries should be directed at the **Secretary**.

LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP

3. Membership of the League is open to all the clubs that are members of LRCA who agree to pay the League subscriptions. A player can register for one club only and cannot play in more than one league match per day (including one in which s/he wins by default). Playing for a club is evidence of registration. A player wishing to change clubs after playing for part of a season must obtain written permission from the first club unless it has left the League. Permission should not be withheld unreasonably: disputes are referred to the Disputes **GC**.

Players should be ECF bronze members and above if they play more than 3 games for the club in LRCA competitions (including the league) throughout the year. Teams will not be penalised for playing non-ECF members. However, if subsequently the ECF charges LRCA for game fees in LRCA competitions relating to a player who is not an ECF member then the treasurer will charge the player's club the game fee + 25%.

4. Clubs are required to apply to the **GC** for inclusion into the League competition annually by a previously announced date in July/August, giving their preferences for divisions, and special requirements. When entering the League, clubs must specify (for inclusion on the LRCA website):

- Contacts (secretary and team captains)
- The address of the venue at which they will play their home matches
- The night(s) of the week on which they will play their home matches (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday)
- The time at which they will start play (between 7:15pm and 7:45pm inclusive)
- The time control (75 minutes plus 10 seconds per move, or 70 minutes plus 5 seconds per move)

To comply with GDPR (Data Privacy) Club Secretaries must obtain explicit agreement from their club officials that their contact details can be displayed in the LRCA website. The fixtures for the League will start in September. Trophies will be awarded to League winners. Their acceptance by a club is conditional on an agreement that the club will return them complete and in good condition before September 1st in the following year. The agreement requires the club to accept the full financial responsibility if a trophy is lost or damaged.

5. LEAGUE ORGANISATION

5.1 The League is divided into divisions of 7-9 teams depending on the team entries received

5.2 Team Allocation to Divisions

- a. In each Division below Division 1 the two highest scoring teams (in match points) in the previous season will be promoted to the next higher Division. In all Divisions except the lowest the two lowest scoring teams will be relegated. These rules represent the right to claim a place in a Division automatically but may be varied when teams are allocated to Divisions by the **GC**.
- b. In the event that additional place(s) becomes available in a division (e.g. due to a team dropping out) the place(s) should be filled in the following order:

- (i) The higher placed team that was relegated from that division in the previous season (e.g. the team finishing 7th out of 8).
- (ii) The team finishing one place below the promotion places from the division below in the previous season.
- (iii) The lower placed team that was relegated from that division in the previous season (e.g. the team finishing 8th out of 8).
- (iv) The team finishing two places below the promotion places from the division below in the previous season.
- c. If a club enters a new team, this will normally be in the lowest division. They can request a different division which may be granted at the discretion of the **GC** or additionally the **GC** may place the new team in a higher division if the playing strength of the new team is considered too high for the lowest division.
- d. If a club withdraws a team, they can decide which one it is provided they can justify the choice to the League Secretary. For example, if a club has teams in divisions 1,2,3,4 but then loses a number of 2nd team players then they could choose to drop the team in division 2 and retain teams in divisions 1,3,4.

5.3 Tiebreaks

Ties for championships, promotion and relegation will be settled as follows. If two teams are tied on match points, they are separated *first* using the results of the two matches between them. If these two results are equal, i.e. if both the matches were drawn or each team won one match by the same score, then *second* the results of the two teams against all the other teams in the Division, assessed in terms of games won minus games lost, will be used to break the tie. In the unlikely event of three (or more) teams being involved in a tie the same principles will be applied in a step-wise fashion. For example, if three teams are tied at the top of a Division, the results of the six matches between them will be used first to identify the weakest team of the three. That weakest team will then be eliminated as a contender for promotion, and the positions of the two remaining teams will be decided by applying the tie-break rules afresh, as above. If there are 3 teams tied for a relegation place, the strongest team of the three will first be eliminated, etc. In assessing the results between tied teams, the number of *match* points scored from matches between these teams is considered first.

5.4 Mid-Season Withdrawals

If a team withdraws *before* completing half its matches, its results will be deleted unless it is replaced, in which case the new team will inherit its predecessor's results. If a team withdraws *after* completing half its fixtures, all its other matches may be counted as losses by default at the **GC's** discretion.

6. RULE BREACHES AND DISPUTES

6.1 Penalties

The **GC** can enforce penalties for breaches of the rules basing its' decisions on the information obtained. Such penalties include:

- (i) default of a game;
- (ii) order replayed game;
- (iii) additional penalty point(s) awarded to an opponent and deducted from the club penalized;
- (iv) default of a match; and
- (iv) suspension of a player for part or whole of a season.

The minimum penalty for board order breaches (see 12. BOARD ORDER) is the default of the lower board on which the higher-rated player played. The minimum penalty for DTS player infringements (see 13. DECLARED TEAM SYSTEM (DTS)) is the default of that board. Any additional penalty should be at the discretion of the **GC**.

6.2 Disputes and Appeals

Any dispute or query over the rules or other complaint may be referred without fee to the **Secretary** (or another **GC member** if the Secretary's club is involved). The Secretary may refer a dispute to a panel of three uninvolved members of the **GC** to act in his place. If a dispute arises during a match, every effort must be made to resolve the issue on the spot. If the dispute remains unresolved the details must be sent to the Secretary at the same time as the result is submitted electronically, and the latter submission should note that the result is subject to the disputes procedure.

If the query/dispute concerns the result submission itself, it must be made within 7 days of the results submission. The Secretary (or his alternate) will base his/her decision on written or e-mail or phone evidence from the club or clubs involved in the dispute and will explain in full his/her decision to those clubs.

A club may appeal against the decision within 12 days of its promulgation, only if it is perverse in view of the known facts, that the penalty imposed is unfair or disproportionate, or that the decision was procedurally defective or involved an unacceptable conflict of interest. No new evidence will be allowed at such an appeal, which will be heard by the **GC** (minus any members with a conflict of interest). A club entering an appeal will be required to pay a financial deposit of £10, but this will be retained by the **GC** only if on hearing the appeal it is felt to be frivolous or unwarranted.

The only parties to the appeal will be the **Secretary** or alternate, who will provide the background information and the reasons for the initial decision, and the appellant club. The three possible results of the appeal are that (a) the appeal is rejected, in which case the appeal decision is final; (b) the appeal is allowed, and the original decision is reversed or appropriately amended, in which case again the decision is final; or (c) the case is referred back for a re-hearing, which will be conducted by three individuals who are not **GC** members and who did not have any conflict of interest. In case (c) the decision of the three individuals is final.

Appeals should be made by e-mail, preferably asking for a receipt acknowledgement. The e-mail should be copied to all interested parties.

6.3 Game Defaults

Where board defaults are notified to the **opposing team captain**, the **League Secretary**, and the **Webmaster at the same time**, and **at least 24 hours before the start of the match**, no additional penalties will apply. Where defaults are not notified the team will be penalized by the loss of match points as set out below unless in the opinion of the secretary exceptional circumstances apply.

Games	0-4	5-7	8-10	11-13	14-16	17-19
Points	0	1	2	3	4	5

A team defaulting more than 19 boards in a season may be disqualified forthwith and all its results are void at the **GC's** discretion. NB: A team defaulting a complete match will suffer game defaults as above as well as the loss of the match points.

PLAY

FIDE Rules of Play apply and are not repeated here. Members should read them, they are found at:

[FIDE Handbook E. Miscellaneous / 01. Laws of Chess / FIDE Laws of Chess taking effect from 1 January 2023 /](#)

Generally, FIDE rules of play apply, except for situations where LRCA League Rules for in-play penalties take precedence over FIDE rules.

7. GENERAL

Teams will score 2 match points for winning a match, with 1 match point for a drawn match.

Matches in all Divisions apart from Division 1 & 2 will be a minimum of 4 boards, however Division 1 & 2 will be a minimum of 5 boards. Matches involving more than the minimum number of players can be played if the two team captains agree on the number of boards before the day of the match: in the event of any dispute on this issue the match result will be decided using the minimum number of boards. All the games in any single match will start on the same day. The home team will have white on the even numbered boards. Scheduled start times will be those shown on the website under the home team.

FIDE 6.7 LRCA override to late arrival rules: Clocks should be started at the **published start time**. Absent players can be replaced with a player eligible to play for that team. After 45 minutes the absent board is defaulted.

If defaults are known at the start, the non-defaulting captain can specify which boards are defaulted.

The home club is responsible for (1) providing premises, and (2) for providing and setting up the playing

equipment and tidying it away at the end of the match: the latter responsibilities also apply to the listed away team when a match is played by agreement at a neutral venue.

8. POSTPONEMENTS

Inclement weather may require a match to be postponed. In this case, the Secretary should be informed of the postponement and a new date arranged as soon as possible.

Due to the difficulty of finding dates for rescheduled matches, teams are not entitled to postpone on the grounds they are unable to raise at team. However, if the opposing team agree to a postponement this will be permitted provided that all of the following apply:

- A new date has been agreed by both teams, and the league secretary and webmaster notified no later than the date of the original match;
- The date is before the end of the season;
- In the opinion of the Secretary, neither team is getting an unfair competitive advantage from the postponement.

Any postponement without the permission of the **Secretary**, except in the case of inclement weather, will result in the match being treated as a void match for both sides.

9. TIME CONTROLS

All games will be played with Fischer timings on digital clocks. It is essential a member of the home team club is present, who knows how to adjust the digital clocks.

If the home side is not set up for a match start by their published time, then the away team may agree the amount of delayed start time with the home captain and remove this time from the home teams' clocks.

In all divisions, the default time control shall be all moves in 75 minutes, plus a 10-second increment per move. The short time control shall be all moves in 70 minutes, plus a 5-second increment per move.

The short time control is for clubs who must vacate their premises by e.g. 10pm or choose to have a published start time of 19:45, although it may be used for other matches if both captains agree.

If neither player in a game is present at the start of the match, White's clock will be started at that time.

10. RESULTS SUBMISSION

Results must be submitted/approved online using the LRCA results website by at the latest, **11pm on the Monday after the match** else that team shall be deemed to have defaulted a board and will be liable to loss of points as per 6.3. Clubs can appeal against this automated default if it was due to submission/approval fault which was reported (along with the match result) by the result submission deadline.

11. LRCA RATINGS

At the start of the season the rating officer will publish ratings on the Players page of the LRCA website. These will be based on the September ECF rating list but will be updated mid-season to reflect the ECF January rating list published on 1st January.

The Ratings Officer should be consulted about players without a current ECF rating or with an ECF 'P' (Provisional) cat rating and will assign a temporary rating based on the best evidence available.

The league secretary may adjust any player's LRCA league rating at any point of the season if the league secretary feels the rating in use is markedly inaccurate. The adjustment will usually be to the latest monthly ECF rating. However, if such rating is not available, or if the league secretary considers the ECF rating to be inaccurate, then an estimated rating will be used. Clubs may request rating adjustments for individual players at any point of the season subject to league secretary approval.

12. BOARD ORDER

Each team in any match should have a board order corresponding to the ratings listed on the Players page of the LRCA website. However, two players whose ratings do not differ by more than 50 (fifty) points may play in either order. (Example; If players A, B and C have ratings of 1600, 1580 and 1540 respectively, then A must always play above C, but B could play above A, between A and C, or below C). Exceptions to this rule will not normally be allowed, but in extreme circumstances the Ratings Officer may allocate a different rating. The allocated rating will apply in handicap events as well as in the League. The permission of the Ratings Officer for such exceptions must always be obtained in advance. Clubs will be expected to give full justification for such requests.

13. DECLARED TEAM SYSTEM (DTS)

13.1. At the **start** of the season each club arranges its active player list in ratings order (using the 50-point rule if so desired to produce a truer reflection of playing strength) and then allocates a team to each player as follows:

- The first 2 players (1 player in a 4 board division) are designated as 1A ie 1st team category A players.
- The next 3 players are designated as 1B i.e. 1st team category B players.
- The next 2 players (1 player in a 4-board division) are designated as 2A i.e. 2nd team category A players.
- The next 3 players are designated as 2B i.e. 2nd team category B players.
- This process is repeated for the remaining teams.
- Declared teams must be at least the size of a team (4 or 5 depending on division) but clubs may choose to allocate additional players to teams. Keeping Declared teams at the minimum size will give a club the maximum amount of flexibility within the DTS but may mean there are more automatic Declared Team List updates throughout the course of the season. Declaring teams at larger than the minimum size (to give a more realistic impression of who will play for which team) reduces a club's flexibility somewhat in future team selection but will tend to result in fewer future team list updates.
- Inactive players (players who clubs are not sure whether they will actually play or not should be marked as inactive) may be added as additional players on the list according to the rating ordering rules stated above.
- If a club does not submit a DTS list before its first fixture is played, then it will be automatically generated based on the club's active players listed in descending ratings order.

13.2. Players on **boards 1 and 2** in **5 board** teams and **board 1** in **4 board** teams are labelled '**A**' Category players.

The remaining declared team players are labelled '**B**' Category players.

13.3. Clubs may play a maximum of one **A** Category player **OR** two '**B**' Category players from the team **above** (e.g. 1st team) in the team **below** (e.g. 2nd team) but no more.

13.4. Players may **not** play any games at all for a team lower than the team below their **declared** team (i.e. 1st team players can never play for the 3rd, 4th, 5th team etc but may play for the 2nd team as permitted by rule 13.3).

13.5. Board orders are determined by the current Board Ordering rules (i.e. descending ratings order with a 50 point tolerance). There is no requirement for board orders to follow the ordering of the **Declared Team List**.

13.6. After an update to the **Declared Team List**, a club is not obliged to apply the revised list for matches played within 7 days of the update.

13.7. Changes to an existing player's LRCA ratings mid-season may require updates to the club's Declared Team List.

If **new** players (since the start of the season) are going to play in the league, clubs must inform the webmaster by the end of the preceding week. A club can stipulate the team/category designations valid within the Declared Team List (according to 13.1) but initially the new player is classified as Inactive until they have played 2 times.

13.8. If a player has not played 2 games for their club by the Sunday on or after 1st December or does not play 2 games for their club between the Sunday on or after 1st December and the Sunday on or after 1st March then they shall be classified as Inactive. Inactive players do not count towards the required number of players in a team. If reclassifying a player as Inactive reduces the number of declared players below the required number for the team then an update to the DTS will occur to ensure the minimum number of 'active' players is maintained in each team. If a club submits a DT list at the start of the season that contains players that haven't played since the Sunday on or after 1st March the previous season, the league secretary may deem them to be classified 'Inactive' until they play

2 times in the new season.

13.9. A club is permitted a DTS update with movement of players down one place in the DT list when a previously inactive player becomes active (by playing 2 games).

14. MATCH CONDITIONS

14.1 It is expected that the home match captain on the night will keep the playing area as quiet as possible. Nobody may use a mobile phone in the playing area.

14.2 All devices capable of communication or running a chess engine (hereafter "devices"), including but not limited to mobile phones, smart watches, Fitbits, etc., must be switched off. They can either be placed on the table in front of a player or in a coat pocket or bag. They must not be on a person when they leave the board during the game.

14.3 A first breach of rule 14.2 will not result in the loss of a game but the opponent will be entitled to claim two extra minutes. **A second breach of 14.2 during the game will result in the loss of the game. A game lost in this way still counts for rating.**

14.4 In exceptional circumstances, with the prior agreement of both match captains, a device may be kept on. No reasonable request should be refused.

14.5 It is expected that captains and players will make inexperienced players aware of the etiquette surrounding over-the-board play, including the use of devices. Inexperienced players should be shown reasonable leniency regarding the above rules, where a quiet word will often suffice.

ADVICE FOR MATCH CAPTAINS

- **Match captains can:**
 - a. indicate flag fall for either player in a game;
 - b. advise players of the match score at any time; and
 - c. in clear hearing and in English, advise a player if consulted on the acceptance of a draw, without commenting on the position itself, or on any other position in the match. **You can tell your players the match score at any time.**
- The home captain should ensure that all sets, boards, and clocks are set up properly and in good time. It is legitimate for the clocks to be started at any time after the home club's start time as listed on the website, whether or not all players from either or both the teams are present. Travelling teams should note that some clubs must start very promptly at [e.g.] 7.15 pm because they have to leave the premises by [e.g.] 10.00 pm
- Before the match starts, exchange team lists with the opposing captain.
- During the match do your best to ensure that the playing area remains quiet, especially if casual games or other matches are in progress at the same time.
- **You should point out a flag fall for any player on either side.**
- When digital clocks are used, ensure that at least one person present knows how to operate them – including how to give a player extra time, in accordance with the Fide laws. (E.g. where one player makes an illegal move and the opponent is awarded 2 extra minutes – Fide Article 7.5.5)
- At the scheduled end of the match, make sure you agree with the opposing captain the match score and submit your results to the website by at the latest, **11pm on the Monday after the match.**
- Do NOT send results directly or via e-mail to the Webmaster. Clubs can be penalised for failing to submit results within this time limit. Team captains should retain the written and signed results sheets in case any problem or dispute arises when or after electronic submission of the results.
- If your team includes a player with a disability, you should notify opponents in good time (at least a week in advance) before travelling to away matches, indicating the nature of the disability. If your club hosts a match which includes a player from either side with a disability, you should make every effort to ensure that the player enjoys conditions as similar as possible to those of the other players. If this might cause significant problems (e.g. because of the nature of the club premises) the opposition should be informed in advance of the match. It would be completely wrong for a player to refuse to play opposite a disabled player in a match.