

Chapter 11: Blitz Chess

Blitz Chess (also known as Speed Chess, 5-minute Chess, Lightning Chess (2-minute), and Bullet Chess (1-minute)) is a variant defined as a single, sudden death time control from 1 to 10 minutes. Blitz games typically are set at five minutes and do not use time delay. Since each game takes only about 10 minutes, it has long been popular for fun games where time is limited, such as lunch breaks or between rounds of other tournaments. Some clubs will host Blitz events that may have as many as 20 rounds in a single evening.

Information regarding FIDE Blitz chess can be found in the FIDE Handbook: <https://handbook.fide.com/>

Take note that Blitz is not Quick Chess with a 5 minute time control (which follows standard sudden death rules.)

Editor’s Note: Most of the US Chess rules for regular and quick chess also apply to blitz chess. This chapter covers the rules that are different for blitz and also restates some of the fundamental rules that apply to all three forms of chess and that are important to blitz.

Blitz rating system: Blitz has its own rating system. To be rated, the time controls require from 5 to 10 minutes total playing time, and have a minimum primary time control of 3 minutes. All rounds must use the same time control. Hence G/3 inc/2 is rated under the Blitz system. Currently, Lightning and Bullet are not included in any rating system. *See also 5C. Ratable time controls.*

US Chess Blitz Rules

1.) Each player must make all his moves in the time specified for the game.

1a.) Standard time control (TC) for blitz is G/5 with no delay.

1b.) Time controls, including the use of delay or increment, are to be stated in any advance publicity and must also be announced or posted at the site.

TD TIP: *Non-standard time controls should be set keeping in mind the spirit and intent of Blitz Chess (rapid play, quick, fun chess). Total game time should not exceed 10 minutes per player per game.*

2.) All the clocks must have a special device, usually called a “flag,” either a regular flag or some device on a digital clock that indicates a flag fall.

Standard timer for Blitz chess:

2a.) Whatever timer is used (analog or digital), a standard timer must continue to run for both sides even if one side’s time has expired (See 8c).

2b.) A digital timer (given it meets the requirements of 2a) is preferred over an analog timer due to the precision of setting and the accuracy of timing. If no digital timer is available, then an analog timer may be considered standard.

2c.) The player with the black pieces chooses the standard timer.

3.) Before play begins, both players should inspect the position of the pieces and the setting of the clock, since once each side has completed a move the position on the board and the time on the clock remain as set.

3a.) If the king and queen are set up incorrectly, it is legal to castle short on the queenside and long on the kingside.

3b.) If an illegal position is created or an illegal move made without the opponent making a claim, the position stands and a claim not allowed when the opponent has determined a next move.

4.) Each player must press the clock with the same hand that moves the pieces, using one hand to both move the pieces and to press the clock.

TD TIP: *This rule, the use of one hand in all blitz moves, also applies to castling, captures and promotions.*

5.) The tournament director may state at the start of the event the direction the clocks are to face, and the player with the black pieces then chooses the side of the table on which to sit.

6.) Except for pressing the clock, neither player should touch the clock except:

6a.) To straighten it.

6b.) If a player knocks over the clock a penalty may be assessed.

6c.) If your opponent's clock does not tick you may press his side down and re-press your side; however, if this procedure is unsatisfactory, please call for a director.

6d.) Each player must always be allowed to press the clock after their move is made.

6e.) A player should not keep a hand on or hover over the clock.

7.)

Defining a win: A game is won by the player:

7a.) Who has legally mated his opponent's king.

7b.) Whose opponent resigns.

7c.) Who correctly points out that the opponent's flag has fallen first, at any time before the game is otherwise ended, provided the player has mating material. Mating Material consists of (at a minimum) two minor pieces, a pawn, a rook, or a queen provided it isn't a position where one could claim a draw under rule 8. If a player who claims a time forfeit states the claim with claimant's flag still up, but then fails to stop the clock in time to avoid also exceeding the time limit, the claim will be void, unless the flag fall was observed by a director or independent witness.

7d.) Who, after an illegal move is completed by the opponent, takes the king (if the king is in check) or claims the win and stops the clock, before the player determines a move and provided the player has sufficient mating material as defined in rule 7c. A player who moves his king adjacent to the opponent's king and then attempts to claim a win under this rule based on the opponent's failure to notice the check shall lose the game.

7e.) An illegal move doesn't negate a player's right to claim on time, provided it is made prior to the opponent's claim of an illegal move. If the claims are simultaneous, the player who made the illegal move loses.

8.) Defining a draw. Except as listed here, draw claims allowed under the regular rules are also allowed under the blitz rules.

A game is a draw:

8a.) If one of the kings is stalemated.

8b.) By agreement between the players.

8c.) If the flag of one player falls after the flag of the other player has already fallen and a win has not been claimed, unless either side mates before noticing that both flags are down.

8d.) If one player has insufficient mating material when the opponent's flag falls or makes an illegal move. "Insufficient Losing Chances" (ILC) claims are not allowed.

TD TIP: Blitz tournaments allowing "Insufficient Losing Chances" (ILC) claims should be advertised and announced in advance. The TD should be aware that common practice has shown that in addition to the official Blitz rules that "Insufficient Losing Chances" claims are upheld only:

- 1.) If both players each have just one identical piece and if neither side can show a forced win.
- 2.) In K+bishop vs. K+bishop of opposite colors, with only 1 pawn on the board, provided there is no forced win.
- 3.) K+rook pawn vs. K can be claimed as a draw once the defender is on the rook file in front of the pawn. K+pawn vs. K can be claimed as a draw once the defender is immediately on the square directly in front of the pawn as long as it's not on the 7th rank.
- 4.) K= + rook+rook pawn vs. K+rook is a draw if the pawn is blockaded by the king and there is no immediate win.
- 5.) The claimant has a significant material and positional advantage.

9.) If a player accidentally displaces one or more pieces, they shall be replaced on the player's own time. If it is necessary, the opponent may press the clock without making a move. If the player presses the clock after displacing pieces, then a penalty may be assessed.

10.) If a player touches one piece, then moves another; and presses the clock, the opponent may press the player's clock to force the player to move the piece touched, or may stop the clock to claim a violation. A penalty may be assessed.

11.) In case of a dispute either player may stop the clock while the tournament director is being summoned. In any unclear situation the tournament director will consider the testimony of both players and any reliable witnesses before rendering a decision.

12.) The tournament director shall not pick up the clock except in the case of a dispute when it is necessary to do so in order to assess penalties or adjust time.

13.) Spectators and players in another game are not to speak or otherwise interfere. If a spectator interferes in any way that may affect the result of the game (e.g., calling attention to a flag fall or an illegal move), the tournament director may cancel the game and rule that a new game be played in its stead and expel the offending party from the playing room. If the offending party is participating in the event, penalties at the discretion of the tournament director may be assessed up to expulsion from the event.

14.) A player who has played an illegal move must retract it and make a legal move with the piece touched prior to pressing the clock. If no legal move exists with that piece, then he may make any legal move. Illegal moves unnoticed by both players cannot be corrected afterwards. An illegal move is completed when the player presses the clock.

15.) A legal move is completed when the hand leaves the piece.

16.) If a player is promoting a pawn and the desired piece is not available, the player may stop both clocks in order to locate the piece and place it on the board. It is improper for the player to press the clock to start the opponent's time with the pawn still on the last rank. If this is done, the opponent may immediately restart the player's clock without moving.

17.) Standard penalty for first offense is to add one minute to the opponent's clock. There may be circumstances where a penalty assessed may not be standard (e.g. repeat offenses, unsporting behavior, etc...) and is left to the discretion of the tournament director.

TD TIP: *A completed illegal move for any reason loses instantly if claimed correctly by an opponent with mating material. If the opponent does not have mating material the game is a draw (see rule 8d). The one-minute penalty does not apply to illegal moves. The standard penalty of one minute applies to other Blitz rules infractions.*

18.) The decision of the tournament director is final.

TD TIP: *This rule's intent stated more accurately could be: "The decision of the chief tournament director is final." Many Blitz events have a staff of TDs. The decision of a floor TD can obviously be appealed to the chief TD. An "appeals committee" or a "special referee" would unnecessarily delay the tournament. Players may appeal directly to US Chess, via their appeals process, after the event is over.*