

MAGIC DIGITAL INFRACTION PROCEDURE GUIDE

Effective November 15, 2021

Introduction

The **Magic™** Digital Infraction Procedure Guide provides judges the appropriate penalties and procedures to handle violations that occur during a tournament using *MTG Arena*, as well as the underlying philosophy that guides their implementation. It exists to protect players from potential misconduct and to protect the integrity of the tournament itself. Violations usually require a penalty or they are unenforceable.

Framework of this Document

This document is divided into two major parts: General Definitions and Philosophy (section 1), and Infractions (sections 2-4). Infractions are broken down into general classes (Tournament Errors and Unsporting Conduct), and further into subclasses for specific infractions.

See the Magic Digital Tournament Rules for further definitions of terms in this document.

This document is updated periodically. Please obtain the most current version at <https://magic.gg/mtg-arena?section=policy>.

1. General Philosophy

Judges are neutral arbiters and enforcers of policy and rules. A judge shouldn't intervene in a game unless they believe a violation has occurred, a player with a concern or question requests assistance, or the judge wishes to prevent a situation from escalating. Judges don't stop errors from occurring, but instead deal with errors that have occurred, penalize those who violate rules or policy, and promote fair play and sporting conduct by example and diplomacy. Judges may intervene to prevent or preempt errors occurring outside of a game. Knowledge of a player's history or skill does not alter an infraction, but it may be taken into account during an investigation.

The purpose of a penalty is to educate the player not to make similar mistakes in the future. This is done through both an explanation of where the rules or policies were violated and a penalty to reinforce the education. Penalties are also for the deterrence and education of every other player in the event and are also used to track player behavior over time.

Only the Head Judge is authorized to issue penalties that deviate from these guidelines. The Head Judge may not deviate from this guide's procedures except in significant and exceptional circumstances or a situation that has no applicable philosophy for guidance. The Rules Enforcement Level, round of the tournament, age or experience-level of the player, desire to educate the player, and certification level of the judge are NOT exceptional circumstances. If another judge feels deviation is appropriate, they must consult with the Head Judge.

Judges are human and make mistakes. When a judge makes a mistake, they should acknowledge the mistake, apologize to the players, and fix it if it is not too late. If a member of the tournament staff gives a player erroneous information that causes them to commit a violation, the Head Judge is authorized to downgrade the penalty. For example, a player asks a judge whether a card is legal for a format and is told yes. When that player's deck is found to be illegal because of these cards, the Head Judge applies the normal procedure for fixing the decklist but may downgrade the penalty to a Warning because of the direct error of the judge.

1.1. Definition of Penalties

Warning

Warnings are used in situations with minor issues when a small amount of time is needed to implement the corrective procedure. The purpose of a Warning is to alert judges and players involved that a problem has occurred and to keep a permanent record of the infraction.

Game Loss

A game loss immediately ends any game in progress. A player issued a game loss should use the in-game concession function to end the game. If this loss does not end the match, the

players should continue from the current state of the client. If the client is not currently in a game, the match should be restarted, then each player should concede games in order until the match score is correct. Then the player receiving the Game Loss penalty has the option to play or draw in the upcoming game.

If a Game Loss is issued before a match would begin (*due to a player submitting an illegal decklist, for example*), once the match begins the Player who received the Game Loss should concede Game 1 of their match. In this scenario, sideboarding is prohibited prior to Game 2.

Match Loss

A Match Loss is a severe penalty that is usually issued when the match itself has been compromised.

Match Losses are applied to the match during which the offense occurred unless the offender's match has already ended, in which case the penalty will be applied to that player's next match.

Disqualification

A Disqualification is issued for activity that damages the integrity of a tournament as a whole or for severe unsporting conduct.

The recipient of a Disqualification does not need to be a player in the tournament. They may be a spectator or other bystander. If this happens, the Tournament Organizer must report this to Wizards of the Coast via email.

Disqualification can occur without proof of action so long as the Head Judge determines sufficient information exists to believe the tournament's integrity may have been compromised. It is recommended that the Head Judge's report reflect this fact.

When this penalty is applied, the player loses their current match and is dropped from the tournament. If a player has already received prizes at the time they are disqualified, that player may keep those prizes but does not receive any additional prizes or awards they may be due. If the player is in a double-elimination bracket, assign a match loss to that player until they would be eliminated from the bracket.

When a player is disqualified during a tournament, they are removed from the tournament and do not take up a place in the standings. This means that all players below that player will advance one spot in the standings and are entitled to any prizes the new standing would offer. If the Disqualification takes place after a cut is made, no additional players advance in place of the disqualified player although they do move up a spot in the standings.

Example: if a player is disqualified during the quarterfinal round of a Championship event, the former 9th place finisher does not advance into the Top 8 playoff, but they do move into 8th place in the standings.

More information about the Disqualification process may be found at <https://wpn.wizards.com/en/article/disqualification-reports-moved-wpnwizardscom>

1.2. Applying Penalties

Penalties are included with the tournament report so that a permanent record can be kept in the Penalty Database. Additionally, any penalty of Game Loss or higher should be reported to the Head Judge, and it is recommended that only the Head Judge issue penalties of this nature (*with the exception of Tardiness (3.1) and Decklist Problems (3.4)*).

Being enrolled in the tournament is not a requirement to receive a penalty. If a spectator, staff, or judge should receive a penalty, the Tournament Organizer should email Wizards of the Coast. Penalties are still issued even if a player drops from the tournament before it would take effect.

Any time a penalty is issued, the judge must explain the infraction, the procedure for fixing the situation, and the penalty to all players involved. If the Head Judge chooses to deviate from the Infraction Procedure Guide, the Head Judge is expected to explain the standard penalty and the reason for deviation. Some infractions include remedies to handle the offense beyond the base penalty. These procedures exist to protect officials from accusations of unfairness, bias, or favoritism. If a judge makes a ruling that is consistent with quoted text, then the complaints of a player shift from accusation of unfairness by the judge to accusations of unfair policy. Deviations from these procedures may raise accusations against the judge from the player(s) involved, or from those who hear about it. These procedures do not, and should not, take into account the game being played, the current situation that the game is in, or who will benefit strategically from the procedure associated with a penalty. While it is tempting to try to “fix” situations, the danger of missing a subtle detail or showing favoritism to a player (even unintentionally) makes it a bad idea.

If an error leads to multiple related infractions, only issue one with the most severe penalty.

2. Tournament Errors

Tournament errors are violations of the Magic Tournament Rules. If the judge believes that the error was intentional, they should consider Unsporting Conduct — Cheating.

If a player violates the Magic Tournament Rules in a way that is not covered by one of the infractions listed below, the judge should explain the appropriate procedure to the player, but not issue a penalty. Continued or willful disregard of these rules may require further investigation.

A Warning for a Tournament Error offense is upgraded to a Game Loss if the player has already received a Warning for an offense in the same category. For multi-day tournaments, the penalty count for these infractions resets between days.

2.1. Tournament Error — Late Arrival to Match (Warning)

Definition

A player has not made a reasonable effort to make contact with their opponent or a tournament admin at the start of the round or has not completed tasks assigned within the time allocated. If a round begins before the previous round would have ended (due to all players finishing early), a player is not expected to be available for their next match until the scheduled end of the previous round.

If, before or during a match, a player requests and receives permission from a judge for a delay for a legitimate task, such as a bathroom break, that player has up to 5 minutes to perform that task before they are considered tardy. If the player takes more than 5 minutes, a Match Loss will be applied. Otherwise, no penalty will be applied.

Examples

- A. A player does not respond to their opponent or a tournament official within the first 5 minutes of the round.

Philosophy

Players are responsible for being on time and in the correct seat for their matches, and for completing registrations in a timely manner. The Tournament Organizer may announce that they are giving the players some additional time before a penalty is issued. Otherwise, the penalty is issued as soon as the round begins.

Upgrade: A player not responsive 10 minutes into the round will receive a Match Loss and will be dropped from the tournament unless they report to the Head Judge or Lead Admin before the end of the round.

2.2. Tournament Error — Outside Assistance (Match Loss)

Definition

A player unintentionally does any of the following:

- Seeks private information about their match while the match is in progress.
- Solicits, acts on, or does not report directly receiving play advice from any persons outside the match.

Additionally, a player, spectator, or other tournament participant in a live event unintentionally does any of the following:

- In events where notes are not allowed, references any notes taken outside of their match.
- Gives play advice or private information to players who have begun their match.
- Uses any third-party websites, resources, or software that gives access to Information that cannot be derived by information available in the Game Client, unless that resource is approved by the organizer and announced before the beginning of the event.

In an Open Decklist event, decklists are considered public information, and may be referenced at any time.

Examples

- A. A player opens their opponent's livestream or official coverage of the event to see what cards their opponent has in their hand.
- B. A player receives an unsolicited private message about the cards in their opponent's hand and does not report it to tournament officials.
- C. A player, in a live event, uses a third-party deck tracking app that has not been approved by the Tournament Organizer.

Philosophy

Tournaments test the skill of a player, not their ability to follow external advice or directions. Any strategy advice, play advice, or construction advice from an external source is considered outside assistance.

Spectators who commit this infraction may be asked to leave the venue if they are not enrolled in the tournament.

If the player was aware that what they were doing was against the rules, the infraction is Unsporting Conduct — Cheating.

2.3. Tournament Error — Slow Play (Warning)

Definition

In a Challenge Match a player takes longer than is reasonable to complete game actions. In any match, if a Judge or other Tournament Official believes a player is intentionally playing slowly to take advantage of a time limit, the infraction is Unsporting Conduct - Stalling.

Examples

- A. A player spends an excessive amount of time to perform game actions.
- B. A player spends an excessive amount of time submitting their deck after sideboarding between games.

Philosophy

For most matches, players play using the Tournament Match feature which has a timer that will limit the time each player can take to make choices. However, some non-Premier events will use the Challenge Match, which does not have a timer in-client. In these cases, all players still have the responsibility to play at a reasonable pace.

2.4. Tournament Error — Deck Submission Issue (Game Loss)

Definition

A player submits a decklist after the stated deadline, or the decklist doesn't match what the player is playing.

Examples

- A. A player misses the decklist submission deadline by 5 minutes.
- B. A player submits a 59-card decklist and does not correct it prior to the submission deadline.

- C. In a Direct Challenge match, a player accidentally submits the wrong deck (an older version of the submitted deck with last changes unapplied) .

Philosophy

Decklists are used to ensure that decks are not altered in the course of a tournament. Judges and other tournament officials should be vigilant about reminding players before the event begins of the importance of submitting a legal decklist and playing with a legal deck. A player normally receives a Game Loss if their decklist is altered after tournament play has begun. Penalties for decklist errors discovered outside the context of the match and its procedures are issued at the start of the next match.

Companions affect what the player intended to play and may produce a situation in which the deck and decklist match but violate the restriction on the intended companion. In these situations, it is acceptable to alter the deck and sideboard configuration to meet the restriction.

Remedy

If the decklist contains too few cards, the player chooses to add any combination of cards named Plains, Island, Swamp, Mountain or Forest to reach the minimum number. The deck must be corrected and re-submitted to match the decklist.

If the decklist is being adjusted to allow for an intended companion, the player exchanges cards between the deck and sideboard until the restriction is met.

2.5. Tournament Error — Disconnection

Definition

A player loses connection to the game client in the middle of a game, or a player who has made contact with their opponent at the beginning of the round loses contact for a significant period of time. If a Tournament Official reaches out and does not get a response from a player, that player may be considered Disconnected.

Examples

- A. A player during a game disconnects and reconnects to the game before running out of timeouts.
- B. A player checks in for their match then says nothing to their opponent for 10 minutes
- C. A player loses power in the middle of a combat step.

Remedy

Any turns, parts of a turn, or timeouts lost during the disconnect will not be awarded back to the disconnected player.

If the disconnect causes a player to lose the game in the *MTG Arena* client, that player will be treated as losing the game that was in progress. This will also require the game to be restarted if that game win would not have ended the match.

To restart the game, players should Challenge each other using the same method they did at the start of the round. Players should manually concede games until the match score is correct. The disconnected player should get the choice to play or draw in the next game.

If the event is nearing the end of a round, Admins may reach out to players in a match that has not been reported to confirm they are still playing. If either player responds, the match should be considered active and should resolve appropriately. If neither player responds after a predetermined and published period of time, the match should be considered a double loss.

Upgrade: Any player who is disconnected from their opponent for any reason for 10 or more minutes will be assumed to have forfeited the match and receive a Match Loss.

3. Unsporting Conduct

Unsporting conduct is disruptive behavior that may affect the safety, competitiveness, enjoyment, or integrity of a tournament in a significantly negative fashion.

Unsporting behavior is not the same as a lack of sporting behavior. There is a wide middle ground of “competitive” behavior that is certainly neither “nice” nor “sporting” but still doesn’t qualify as “unsporting.” Failing to converse or reply to pleasantries in chat is never Unsporting Conduct. The Head Judge is the final arbiter on what constitutes unsporting conduct.

Judges should inform the player how their conduct is disruptive. The player is expected to correct the situation and behavior immediately. However, while making sure that the player understands the severity of their actions is important, judges should focus first on calming a situation, and deal with infractions and penalties afterwards.

3.1. Unsporting Conduct — Minor (Warning)

Definition

A player takes action that is disruptive to the tournament or its participants. It may affect the comfort level of those around the individual but determining whether this is the case is not required.

This will usually include conduct that is not directed at one or more individuals and is instead performed in a public space or forum that is part of or related to the event at hand. It may also include active and direct instances of rudeness to particular individuals that does not rise to the levels of Unsporting Conduct - Moderate or Major.

Examples

- A. A player uses vulgar and profane language in an event-wide chat channel.
- B. A player inappropriately demands to a judge that their opponent receive a penalty.
- C. A player appeals to the Head Judge before a judge finishes issuing them a ruling.
- D. A player fails to follow the request of a tournament official to leave the play area at a LAN event.
- E. A player is rude to their opponent via in-game chat or direct message.

Philosophy

All participants should expect a safe and enjoyable environment at a tournament, and a player needs to be made aware if their behavior is unacceptable so that this environment may be maintained.

Additional Remedy

The player must correct the problem immediately. Subsequent Unsporting Conduct — Minor infractions, even for different offenses, will result in a Game Loss. If a Game Loss is issued for repeated infractions, and it occurs at the end of a game, it is acceptable for the judge to apply the penalty to the next game instead.

3.2. Unsporting Conduct — Moderate (Game Loss)

Definition

A player takes directed action that disrupts the experience of an individual or targeted group of individuals in the tournament.

This includes insults that are not based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, disability, or sexual orientation but may be otherwise directed at one or more individuals. This may also include attempts to bait or provoke an opponent into other negative behaviors in order to cause them to earn a penalty.

Examples

- A. After losing a match, a player wishes harm on their opponent without threatening them
- B. A player repeatedly insults an opponent in an attempt to provoke them into retaliation or distract them from gameplay.
- C. A player complains excessively and at length in post-match or event-wide chat about their opponent's luck and lack of playskill.

Philosophy

Directed negative behavior, especially in online events, can be extremely distressing to participants. Regardless of the reason behind the behavior, it is inappropriate and should be discouraged.

Additional Remedy

The player must correct the problem immediately. Subsequent Unsporting Conduct — Moderate infractions, even for different offenses, will result in a Match Loss. If a Match Loss is issued for repeated infractions, and it occurs at the end of a game, it is acceptable for the judge to apply the penalty to the next game instead.

The judges, at their discretion, may require all further out-of-game conversations between affected to take place with a judge present in chat. Violations of this directive should be considered Unsporting Conduct - Major.

3.3. Unsporting Conduct — Major (Match Loss)

Definition

A player takes action towards one or more individuals that could reasonably be expected to create a feeling of being harassed, threatened, bullied, or stalked. This may include insults based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. Threats of physical violence should be treated as Unsporting Conduct – Aggressive Behavior.

It is possible for an offender to commit this infraction without intending malice or harm to the subject of the harassment.

Examples

- A. A player uses a racial slur against their opponent.
- B. A player takes inappropriate photos of another player without express permission.
- C. A player asks another participant for a date, is denied, and continues to press the issue.
- D. A player purposefully obstructs another player with the intent of inducing physical contact.
- E. A player uses an event-wide chat channel to bully another player.

Philosophy

A safe environment is a basic expectation of any tournament attendee. Harassment undermines the safety and integrity of a tournament. Players who purposefully create harmful or unwelcoming situations in a tournament are expected to immediately correct the behavior and demonstrate remorse or be removed.

Because of the confrontational nature of this infraction, judges need to end any match in progress and separate the players if applicable. Care should be taken not to escalate the situation if at all possible. The offender will be removed from the area or taken to a private chat channel to receive the penalty and education about why the behavior is unacceptable regardless of excuse. They may need a few moments to cool down afterwards.

Officials must investigate these matters as soon as they are brought to their attention. If they determine that the infraction does not meet the criteria for Unsporting Conduct – Major, it is still recommended that judges evaluate whether or not the behavior fits Unsporting Conduct - Minor or Unsporting Conduct - Moderate instead. At minimum, it is recommended that the players be talked with in order to avoid future misunderstandings.

Additional Remedy

The player must correct the behavior immediately. If the offense occurs at the end of a match, it is acceptable for the judge to apply the penalty to the next match instead.

Upgrade: If the offense was committed with malicious intent, the player displays no remorse, or the offense is repeated at a later time, the penalty is Disqualification and removal from the venue (or online event channel, if applicable.)

3.4. Unsporting Conduct — Improperly Determining a Winner (Match Loss)

Definition

A player uses or offers to use a method that is not part of the current game to determine the outcome of a game or match, or uses language designed to trick someone who may not know it's against the rules to make such an offer.

If the player was aware that what they were doing was against the rules, the infraction is Unsporting Conduct — Cheating.

Examples

- A. As time is called, two players about to draw roll a die to determine the winner.
- B. A player offers to use an online random number generator to determine the winner of a match.
- C. Two players play rock-paper-scissors to decide if they should play the match or draw.
- D. A player says “Oh no, we’re going to draw, that’s terrible for us. If only there were something we could do about it.”

Philosophy

Using an outside-the-game method to determine a winner compromises the integrity of the tournament.

For events using Challenge Matches, pairings that result in a draw due to time are expected to be reported as such and are not excluded from this penalty if the players use an illegal method to determine the outcome.

3.5. Unsporting Conduct— Bribery and Wagering (Match Loss)

Definition

A player offers an incentive to entice an opponent into conceding, drawing, or changing the results of a match, encourages such an offer, or accepts such an offer. Refer to section 5.2 of the Digital **Magic** Tournament Rules for a more detailed description of what constitutes bribery.

Wagering occurs when a player or spectator at a tournament places or offers to place a bet on the outcome of a tournament, match or any portion of a tournament or match. The wager does not need to be monetary, nor is it relevant if a player is not betting on their own match.

If the player was aware that what they were doing was against the rules, the infraction is Unsporting Conduct — Cheating.

Examples

- A. A player offers their opponent \$100 to concede the match.
- B. A player asks for a concession in exchange for a prize split.
- C. Two spectators at a LAN event place a bet on the number of games that will be needed to decide a match.

Philosophy

Bribery and wagering disrupt the integrity of the tournament and are strictly forbidden.

3.6. Unsporting Conduct — Aggressive Behavior (Disqualification)

Definition

A player acts in a threatening way towards others or their property. This may include threats to the network security or online privacy of players, tournament officials, or spectators.

Examples

- A. A player threatens to hit another player.
- B. At a LAN event, a player pulls a chair out from under another player, causing them to fall to the ground.
- C. A player makes threats against an Admin after receiving a ruling.
- D. A player threatens to expose the personal identifying information of another player without their consent.

Philosophy

The safety of all people in a tournament is of paramount importance. There will be no tolerance of abuse or intimidation.

Additional Remedy

The offender should be asked by the organizer to leave the venue, if applicable, or be removed from the event's online channels.

3.7. Unsporting Conduct — Theft of Tournament Material (Disqualification)

Definition

A player steals materials from an in-person tournament, including but not limited to tournament equipment.

Examples

- A. A player steals their opponent's computer, tablet, or phone.
- B. A player steals the table number from a table.

Philosophy

Players enter a tournament expecting that their materials will be protected. This does not absolve the players from their responsibility to keep an eye on their possessions, but they should expect to be able to retain the product they began with or were given for the tournament. Other instances of theft not involving tournament materials are the responsibility of the Tournament Organizer.

Additional Remedy

The offender should be asked by the organizer to leave the venue.

3.8. Unsporting Conduct — Stalling (Disqualification)

Definition

A player intentionally plays slowly in order to take advantage of the tournament's time limit external to the *MTG Arena* match clock. If the slow play is not intentional, please refer to Tournament Error — Slow Play instead.

Examples

- A. A player has 10 minutes left on their match clock with 2 minutes left in the tournament round and intentionally stops play in order to force an advantageous match outcome.
- B. A player appeals a ruling in an attempt to gain an advantage by running down time remaining in the round.
- C. A player intentionally plays slowly in order to gain an advantage by having more time to make a decision in a circumstance where timeouts and match clocks are not being used.

Philosophy

This is most likely to be relevant in the following cases:

- A match restart causes the match clocks to have a larger amount of time remaining than the time allotted in the round by the organizer.
- Players are in an event that does not use Tournament Challenge and therefore does not use match clocks or timeouts.

3.9 Unsporting Conduct — Cheating (Disqualification)

Definition

A person breaks a rule defined by the tournament documents, lies to a tournament official, or notices an offense committed in their (or a teammate's) match and does not call attention to it.

Additionally, the offense must meet the following criteria for it to be considered Cheating:

- The player must be attempting to gain advantage from their action.
- The player must be aware that they are doing something illegal.

If all criteria are not met, the offense is not Cheating and is handled by a different infraction. Cheating will often appear on the surface as another infraction and must be investigated by a judge to make a determination of intent and awareness.

Cheating also includes any intentional use or attempted use of any bugs or exploits in game or tournament software.

Examples

- A. A player improperly alters the results in the tournament client without their opponent's knowledge.
- B. A player lies to a tournament official about what happened in a game to make their case stronger.
- C. A player intentionally exploits a bug in MTG Arena in order to gain an advantage.
- D. A player attempts to tamper with the security of an online tournament platform.
- E. A player intentionally watches official coverage with the intent of gaining access to information typically be hidden by the game client (such as an opponent's hand).

Appendix A — Changes from Previous Versions

Only changes from the current version and the previous version of this document will be displayed in this appendix.

November 15, 2021

- Corrected mis-numbering near top – Section numbers changed accordingly starting with 2
- 2.1 Updated tardiness deadline to 5 minutes
- 2.4 Changed to Deck Submission Issue and upgraded to Game Loss
- Removed most references to tabletop-only issues
- Corrected outdated references