

General Regulations – Rulings & Appeals in Matches Played Privately Online

Updated December 2020 – Effective from 1 January 2021

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1 Introduction

The greater part of the [General Regulations for EBU Knockout Events](#) were revised in 2020, to include regulations for matches played online. The section relating to Rulings and Appeals for matches played face-to-face was revised in August 2021. This document are regulations and procedures for Ruling and Appeals for matches played privately online.

See:

- [EBU Knockout Events – General Regulations](#) : Section F – Online Match Regulations
- [Blue Book](#) : Section 9 – Online
- [White Book](#) : throughout – reference to ‘online’

These regulations are aimed at online knockout matches and online league matches (e.g. the EBU lockdown league). The concept of league matches played privately does introduce some further issues – because the outcome of the match is a victory-point score not just win/loss.

The numbering is new and does not match the General Regulations. If this document is incorporated into the General Regulations, or the White Book, the numbering will change.

Any enquiries should be addressed to:

The Competitions Department

The English Bridge Union

Broadfields, Bicester Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8AZ.

Telephone: 01296 317203

E-mail: knockout@ebu.co.uk or comps@ebu.co.uk

2 Rulings in Matches Played Privately Online

In a match played privately, the regulations and directives of the EBU Laws & Ethics Committee shall apply as contained in the current 'Blue Book', where compatible with the online environment. In any respects not specifically covered by these regulations, the current regulations and directives of the EBU shall apply. The following clarification of the factors affecting the application of law and regulations is issued in the light of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge, Law 9B1(a) and Law 92B, with respect to matches played privately.

2.1 'End of Round' (Law 8B)

A 'round' in a match played privately comprises a number of boards played without an interval in which scores may be compared. A pair who have completed the boards in a round and have accessed the results (and comparisons) from the other table have completed the round for the purposes of this law.

2.2 'Calling the Director' (Law 9B)

The equivalent of summoning the Director in accordance with Law 9B1 is to inform one's opponents at the table that one wishes to have a ruling. The request for a ruling must be specific and should be made before the protesting side calls on the next board, or the end of the round, whichever is the sooner.

2.3 Drawing attention to a possible irregularity

Any comment at the table which points to the possibility of an irregularity draws attention to the irregularity within the meaning of Law 9B1(a). If no request for a ruling is then stated, the players are in the position generally of players when attention is drawn to an irregularity and the Director is not immediately summoned.

Reservation of Rights under Law 16A1 does not override this condition if the request for a ruling is not then made within the specified time limit.

2.4 Use of online TD from other EBU events

Online matches on BBO (in particular, EBU lockdown league) will often be played when there are EBU TDs online for the EBU online pairs games. An EBU TD may be willing to rule (or otherwise assist) but will not always be available to do so and these matches are 'played privately' for purposes of these and other regulations.

3 Calling for a Ruling

Problems often arise in matches played privately when there is a dispute that involves more than just the reading and application of the law. Playing online the players will have little option but to accept whatever the platform allows and complete the play of the board.

If you think an irregularity has occurred which has damaged your side, you should proceed as follows:

- a) Raise the matter (by, say, reserving your rights) at the time, preferably before the board has finished, but certainly before you make a call on the next board.
- b) Confirm your wish to have a ruling before the end of that set of boards; if after scoring you withdraw your request that would be an end of the matter.
- c) If it is not possible to communicate with the table opponents, the team who may want to request a ruling, should communicate with the opposing captain as quickly as possible by messaging via the platform or by email or telephone.

A failure to take these steps puts you in the same position as a player in a public competition who fails to call the Tournament Director at the appropriate time.

You may still request a ruling as long as you do it within sixty minutes of the end of the match. However, the longer the time lapse, the more difficult it is to establish the facts and Directors, like Tournament Directors in public competitions, may be less inclined to find damage which the player did not appear to be aware of at the time. However, a player who could not have known an irregularity had occurred will be in a stronger position than one who could or should have noticed but did not mention it at the time.

4 When a ruling of the first instance is required

If a ruling of the first instance is required, one of the procedures outlined below should be followed:

- a) Captains agree upon an outcome.
- b) Captains contact a mutually agreed member of the EBU panel of Tournament Directors¹ of Senior Congress rank or higher.
- c) Captains contact a mutually agreed suitable arbiter including an online EBU TD², any other EBU Tournament Director¹, or a member of the panel of Referees³, or a member of the Laws and Ethics Committee.

If contacting a Referee or for a member of the Laws and Ethics Committee, it must be made clear that this is a request for a ruling of the first instance (rather than an appeal against such a ruling).

- d) Captains submit the case in writing to the EBU as described below.
The captain who wants a ruling should confirm by email to the opposing captain (and copied to the EBU competition organiser) within sixty minutes of the end of the match. At this point, the email need not contain all the details required by the next section.

5 Means of obtaining a ruling of the first instance

Under the above, captains may decide to forward details of the question with the match result for arbitration. In that case, or when it proves impossible to obtain a ruling, please ensure that full details are supplied (along with such statements as the players and captains wish to make).

The result should be endorsed 'Subject to ruling on board ...' and both captains should confirm their agreement with the details forwarded.

For knockout matches, teams should be aware, if they chose to request a ruling (or subsequent appeal) in this way, that a decision based on Law 12C1 (c) could result in a tied match. They should either play additional boards at the time (as prescribed in the General Conditions for Knockout Matches) to cover this eventuality or must be prepared to arrange and play extra boards if necessary.

¹ EBU Tournament Director List: <https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/tournament-director-list>

² See sub-section 2.4. EBU TDs have BBO handles: EBU_ * (where * represents digits)

³ EBU Appeals Referees List: <https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/appeals-referees-list>

6 Effect of a ruling of the first instance

Any decision obtained by the procedures above is a binding ruling to be acted upon (but see also the section below relating to appeals). If a score adjustment is awarded on the board no substitute board is played.

A ruling that a board shall be cancelled and that a substitute board played is unlikely in an online match. Such a ruling, if known by the captains prior to the start of the last set of boards, allows an extra board to be added to the next set to be played – there is no requirement that the extra board has the same dealer/vulnerability of the cancelled board, as the online platform may not permit this. If a ruling to play a single substitute board becomes known later, no substitute board is to be played – Law 86A applies.

7 Appeals Procedures

A ruling made under the provisions of Section 4 (b), (c) or (d) above may be appealed by either captain. Appeals will be dealt with by written communication. Notification of the intention to appeal a ruling already received must be made within 12 hours of receiving the ruling; unless some other deadline for the appeal is given by the tournament director (or other arbiter) when giving the ruling of first instance.

A deposit of £30 (the current standard sum for an appeal in a teams' game) must be lodged before the appeal can be considered. To submit such an appeal, provide, preferably by means of a hyperlink to the relevant board:

- a) Full details of the hand with bidding, and with play if relevant; show dealer, vulnerability
- b) The result on the board (in both rooms) and the amount of the swing on any substitute board, in the event one has been played
- c) Details of the matter protested, with any statements of players involved
- d) The ruling of the first instance, and who gave it
- e) A statement on behalf of each side, signed by its captain

The EBU will make arrangements to determine the appeal, and for altering the match score, if required.

If an appeal is deemed to lack merit, it may be subject to sanction: consisting of both forfeiting the deposit and a score adjustment of the standard penalty. In a league, the score adjustment will be a penalty of 1VP.

8 Non-balancing Match Results in Online League

It is possible for a TD ruling to result in non-balancing scores for the two sides:

- a) If there is some outside agency which prevents a result from being obtained, both sides may be assigned a good score – online this may occur if the platform prevents a board from being completed properly.
- b) If both sides are offending, they may both be assigned a poor score.

In knockout matches any such non-balancing scores are made to balance (Law 12C4) so there is a clear match result. But in a league match, non-balancing scores will remain in the match result, and may lead to non-balancing victory point scores in the final league result.

Non-balancing scores are possible in a league match played privately. However, captains may not agree such a ruling when following option (a) of Section 4 above. In particular:

- a) They may not agree a ruling that is beneficial to both sides.
- b) They are not expected to agree a ruling which treats both sides as offending.

Instead if such a ruling may be required, the captains should follow one of the other procedures in Section 4.