



**The Association of
British Scrabble® Players**
www.absp.org.uk

TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS' GUIDELINES

Issue 3.1

July 2012

I INTRODUCTION

A Tournament Director (TD) must be designated to control a tournament if it is to be ABSP/WESPA - rated. For tournaments in the UK the director must be a member of the ABSP. This guide has been produced by the ABSP in order to assist tournament directors in the smooth and fair running of Scrabble events under WESPA rules. The ABSP permits the use of remote TDs for small events. Such TDs are only responsible for rules related issues. The tournament organiser must ensure that all other director duties are adequately covered.

The latest set of game rules can be found in the ABSP handbook and are also available on line via the WESPA website (currently <http://www.wespa.org/rules/RulesV2nov11.pdf>). WESPA rules are comprehensive and will cover most situations where players call the TD. However it is impossible to foresee every eventuality and an important part of this guide includes guidelines for decision making in situations not specifically covered by the rules.

The guide is split into sections as follows

- I Introduction
- II Duties of the director
- III Decision Guidelines for Directors
- IV. Sanctions available to Directors
- V Incidents Database (Case Law)
- VI Useful contacts

II DUTIES OF THE DIRECTOR

- The Tournament Director (TD) must be impartial and fair at all times
- The Director should not be a player at the tournament since they must maintain complete objectivity and devote full attention to official duties.
- For larger tournaments the Director may delegate any of the duties to assistants but is not thereby relieved of responsibility for their actions in carrying out these duties
- The Director is the final arbiter on the day in any dispute involving the rules of the game and the conduct of the players and therefore should be fully conversant with the current edition of those rules.
- The TD must have the relevant copy of the Game Rules available at all times for their own use and for any player to check throughout the tournament.
- The TD is responsible for timekeeping during the tournament. If a delay occurs at the start of the tournament the TD must endeavour to return to schedule as quickly as practical.
- The TD must check that all equipment is to an acceptable standard. Any unacceptable equipment must be pointed out to the owner and an alternative found if possible.
- The TD must ensure that there is a complete set of equipment for both players on the table prior to the start of play.
- The TD must ensure that fixtures and standings are accessible to all players at the appropriate time
- The TD must ensure that the level of noise is not excessive during play. Where appropriate individual players may be told that their excessive talking or behaviour is unacceptable.
- The TD must resolve any dispute that may arise between players. The list of possible reasons for disputes is lengthy and the vast majority will be covered directly by the rules. In situations not covered by the rules please refer to section III - Decision Guidelines
- The TD must try to be aware at all times of what is happening within the playing area.

- The TD should be familiar with the distinction between what is considered to be unethical conduct as opposed to cheating. The TD must tell any player guilty of such conduct that they are displaying such behaviour and the sanctions that this may lead to.
- The TD must not leave the playing area until all games have concluded and the result slip handed in. It is permissible to appoint a temporary deputy but the TD remains ultimately responsible for any actions taken.
- The TD must keep a record of all instances where clarification has been sought or warnings have been given so that a report may be made to the ABSP Tournament Co-ordinator.

The TD is NOT directly responsible for the following although may have an input to any related dispute

- Decisions relating to delaying the actual starting time of a tournament to allow for latecomers.
- Decisions relating to the inclusion/exclusion of players who are not present at the programmed event start time. Decisions, both in this category and the one above fall on the Tournament Organiser
- Issues relating to the pairing of players during a tournament. The pairing method to be used should be determined by the Tournament Organiser and implemented by the Computer Operator
- Domestic issues related to the running of an event (eg accommodation problems, ambient conditions in the playing room). These are the TOs responsibility.
- Provision of appropriate equipment/ playing conditions in relation to players with special needs. (TO)

III DECISION GUIDELINES FOR TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS

Although not proscriptive it may be helpful for a director who is called to an incident to adopt the following procedure

1. Ascertain the facts of the incident by allowing both players to (independently) state their view as to what events happened to give rise to the situation under review. Ideally both stories will tally but inevitably there will be situations where the events are seen differently by both parties.
2. TDs must be aware of the possible disruption to other games of a prolonged and/or noisy process to resolve a situation. However if it is possible to do so without unacceptable consequences for other games it may be prudent to check whether anyone else witnessed the event. If other viewpoints are not available, then it may be a case for agreeing that the game is at the point where it is, and take action to rectify the issue from that point, without apportioning blame.
3. If the situation is covered in the prevailing rules under which the game is being played, then any action must be in line with those rules.
4. If the situation is not covered by those rules TDs should refer to the “incidents database” to see if a similar situation has been recorded and follow any precedent set therein
5. If it is a totally new incident to the director and has not been covered in the incidents database then a ruling must be made. Such a decision should have regard to the following guidelines
 - The ruling should be seen to be appropriate in getting the game moved on (to avoid tournament scheduling disruptions), it should be seen to be balanced whereby neither player feels that an undue advantage was gained by the other player as a result of the ruling
 - Any transgression of rules, or etiquette, must not be allowed to result in either an actual or a per-

- ceived advantage to the transgressing party.
 - A decision must not involve moving any tile which is part of a move which has been previously accepted by both players.
 - Any sanction should be appropriate to the level of the transgression.
 - TDs should treat every situation on its own merits. They should not be influenced by the reputation of the player or players involved.
6. In all cases where the situation is not covered in the rule book then the director must include a full description in the tournament report form, with details of how the decision was arrived at. This will provide future directors with the knowledge of how a particular precedent was set. After review it may also be included in the incidents database
 7. Having made the adjudication decision it is important to ensure that both parties accept the decision and understand any implications following on from that point, specifically that as far as that tournament is concerned, then the tournament director's decision is final.

IV SANCTIONS AVAILABLE TO TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS

It is likely that the action taken to address an issue to which the Director has been called will, of itself impose an appropriate penalty if one is deemed necessary. However there will be situations where, merely putting the situation right so that play can continue is not appropriate and a heavier sanction is required.

In these situations the TD has several options at his/her disposal and these are listed below

- Issue a formal warning that further transgressions will result in one of these penalties
- Complete expulsion from the tournament
- Forfeiture of a game with the opponent getting a win
- Cancel a game and rule that it must be replayed (with due consideration for the tournament schedule)
- Declare the game lost by both players
- Make an adjustment to the score/spread
- Make an adjustment to the time remaining
- Report a player to their national association

A player who is dissatisfied by a TD ruling has no right of appeal on the day. However, afterwards they may appeal to their national association.

V INCIDENTS DATABASE

Please refer to https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B9V2e_tGM7cER0V4M25ZQnVxeUU

VI USEFUL CONTACTS

A list of ABSP Committee members and other useful contacts can be found at <http://www.absp.org.uk/absp/committee.shtml>