

GENERAL TOURNAMENT GUIDELINES

Tournaments are events that rank players based on how many matches or “rounds” they win. A group of at least four players are needed. In general, each match can be 30 minutes for a single game (“best of one”), or 40 – 50 minutes for best two out of three. Tournaments usually have two player games, but multi-player is an option as long as one winner can usually be determined.

Game match – During a tournament, there are often multiple rounds where players are paired off with one or more opponents.

Best of one – Whoever wins one game is the winner of the match. If a game is a draw, then you should play another game. Multi-player games should usually be a “best of one” and require at least 40 minutes for each round.

Best two of three – For the best two out of three match, whoever wins two games finishes their match and can record the results. Technically, if players get a draw one game, then more than three games might be needed before there is a winner. If the players run out of time after one game, then the winner of that game is the winner of the match.

Uneven player count – Sometimes not everyone can have an opponent in a match. The player with the lowest rank (or a random player with a rank equal to the lowest rank) gets a bye – a free win.

1. SWISS-STYLE TOURNAMENTS

Every player gets at least three matches (and therefore play against three opponents, one at a time). Each player should then play against someone else with the same record if possible who they haven’t played against yet – the same number of match wins, match losses, and draws. Each match win is worth 3 points, each draw is worth 1 point, and each loss is worth 0 points. Players are equally ranked who have the same number of points.

The main benefit of the Swiss-style tournament is that players get to play games, even when they lose matches. The main drawback is that it can be more difficult to determine each player’s rank when the event needs a first place winner, second place winner, etc. Tie-breakers can be needed to do so:

Tie-breakers – If a clear winner is needed at the end of the tournament, and the above criteria is insufficient, then tie-breakers are needed to determine the higher ranked player. For tie breakers, earlier wins are worth more points to determine the higher ranked player within each tie. In that case, the final match win is worth 0 additional points, the match win before that is worth 1 additional point, the match win two matches before the final match is worth 2 additional points, etc.

Secondary tie-breakers – If the primary tie breakers still don’t lead to a clear higher ranked player, then more points can be added to determine which player with each tie has a higher rank. Each game win within a match is worth 1 point and each loss within a match is worth -2 points.

Byes are equal to the highest tie breaker regarding secondary tie breakers: 2 points.

If these secondary tie breakers aren’t enough, add points to each player who got a tie equal to the number of points opponents they beat have. Each bye is worth a number of points equal to the highest ranked opponent.

Out of time – If time runs out before players finish their match, they get six more turns (or whatever number works best), and whoever is currently taking a turn counts as “turn 0.” The next player starts “turn 1,” and so on. After turns are finished, the round ends. If one player won the most games, they are the winner of the match. If both players won an equal number of games, then they get a draw.

2. SINGLE-ELIMINATION TOURNAMENTS

Single-elimination events are the easiest to understand. Each player plays against a random opponent for a match. Each player that wins continues in the event and everyone else is dropped out of the event. The event only ends when one player is left. The loser of the final match gets second place. Everyone who lost in the match before the final round are tied for 3rd place. Everyone who lost two matches before the final round are tied for 5th place.

One drawback to single-elimination games is that a winner is needed. Ties (draws) with no winner can’t happen. Therefore, when time ends in a round a game is unfinished, and both players have won an equal number of games so far, then the winner of the unfinished game is the player with the most life. If life is equal, then “sudden death” kicks in—The first player to make progress wins the game, or the first player to lose progress loses the game.

3. DOUBLE-ELIMINATION TOURNAMENTS

The same as the single-elimination event, except the first time a player loses, they are grouped with other players who have lost a match in the “losing bracket” and will play against other players in the losing bracket if possible.

If only two players are left in the event and an undefeated player loses, then there’s a rematch. The same players will play again for the final determination of a first place winner.

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