

## Tournament rules

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Backgammon is not organized like football (soccer) or chess with national organizations under an international umbrella. There is no international backgammon authority. Tournament organizers set the rules for their tournaments. Nonetheless, there is little difference in the rules sets used at tournaments on the international backgammon circuit.

We might distinguish between (1) rules of play, (2) tournament rules and procedures and (3) tournament format.

Rules of play describe a particular variation of backgammon and on this there is no disagreement among international tournaments. In fact, tournament rules sets do not usually specify these rules but might instead refer, as in the US Rules, to the "commonly accepted rules of backgammon." It is understood that this means backgammon as played at international tournaments, not another variant in its own right such as plakoto, portes, fevka or portos. See [www.bkgm.com](http://www.bkgm.com) or [www.gammonvillage.com](http://www.gammonvillage.com) for the usual rules of play in international backgammon, or [www.chicagopoint.com/links.html](http://www.chicagopoint.com/links.html) for links to descriptions of other variations.

Tournament rules specify procedures that players and directors must follow in tournament match play with regard to equipment, order of play, handling of dice, checkers and cube, scoring, ethics, errors, enforcement and dispute resolution. On these, international tournament rules sets differ. In most cases the differences are minor but tournament players should always be mindful of the peculiarities of any particular set of rules.

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By tournament format I mean such things as entry and registration fees, prizes, divisions (open, intermediate, beginner, etc.) and qualifications for same, number of rounds, match length, awarding of byes, nature of tournament (cup system, monrad, Swiss), qualifying rounds, if any, and consolation and/or last chance brackets, if any. These are tournament-specific and are not codified in any rules set.

A primary source for tournament rules and procedures is the "United States Backgammon Tournament Rules and Procedures," March 1990. These rules (with minor variations) govern all tournaments of the American Backgammon Tour. Many tournament organizers in other countries also use these rules, sometimes with some modification. See [www.chicagopoint.com/usrules.html](http://www.chicagopoint.com/usrules.html).

A second reference point is the rules set of the so-called World Backgammon Federation, which governs tournaments sanctioned by the WBF and has in the past been used here and there as the basis for other rules sets. See [www.wbf.net](http://www.wbf.net).

In some countries, backgammon is well-organized on a national level, and most or all tournaments in these countries are conducted under the rules of their respective national organizations. These include the British Isles Backgammon Association in the UK and the national federations of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The BIBA rules differ in one or two minor but important ways from the US Rules. See <http://www.cottagewebs.co.uk/biba/>. A major revision of the Danish rules, which were largely identical to the US Rules of March 1990, goes into effect in June this year. An English version will be available shortly at the DBgF home page. See [www.dbgf.dk](http://www.dbgf.dk).

The list of countries with active organizations of a national character grows slowly. Recent additions include Ireland, Japan and France. But there are also major international tournaments in some countries with no national organization or where longstanding tournaments are not organized by more recently established organizations, including Monaco, site of the backgammon World

Championship, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Spain, Thailand, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia. At these tournaments, the rules are entirely up to their organizers, who may use the US Rules, WBF Rules, or their own.

Online tournament rules must address procedures for notifying opponents, match completion deadlines, dispute resolution, online-specific errors in play and server crashes. A model for online rules is the rules set of David Escoffery's tournaments on FIBS. See <http://www.escoffery.com/rules.txt>. See also the homepages of GamesGrid and Netgammon or the other 23 sites offering online backgammon.

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Vi ses, og tak for alle fiskene!