Pokémon Organized Play Tournament Operation Procedures

Revised: September 20, 2012

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1. Introduction

This document outlines the standard procedures for the operation of a Pokémon TCG tournament. The policies set forth in this document are intended to ensure a fun, consistent experience for as many participants as possible. Please refer to the Pokémon Tournament Rules, Sanctioning Regulations, and Penalty Guidelines for further information on event operation.

2. Pre-Tournament Announcements

The Tournament Organizer must announce the details of a tournament at the beginning of the event. This includes the number of rounds that will be played, the number of players who will participate in the Single Elimination rounds (if the event style is Swiss plus Single Elimination), how many players will receive prizes, and other information pertinent to the operation of the event.

3. Approved Tournament Styles

Sanctioned Pokémon TCG tournaments may only be run as Swiss, Single Elimination, or Swiss plus Single Elimination events. Other tournament styles may be run but may not be sanctioned without prior approval by Pokémon Organized Play.

3.1. Swiss

The intent of the Swiss pairing method is to determine a single winner by pairing players with the same, or similar, match record against each other until there is only one undefeated player. (Please note that, with drops, it is possible for the winner of a Swiss tournament to have lost one or more matches—i.e., if the undefeated player drops.)

Swiss tournaments run as follows:

- Round 1: Players are paired randomly for the first round of play. Players receive 1 Match Point for winning or 0 Match Points for losing.

  - If there is an odd number of participants, the player without an opponent is given a Bye, which counts as a Win but is not included when calculating tiebreakers (see Section 3.1.5.1).

- Round 2: Players in the 1-0 bracket (1 Win, 0 Losses) are randomly paired against each other; players in the 0-1 bracket (0 Wins, 1 Loss) are paired in the same manner.

  - If there is an odd number of players, one of the players in the 1-0 bracket is paired randomly with one of the players in the 0-1 bracket (so long as they did not play each other in a previous round). If this leaves an odd number of players in the 0-1 bracket, one player from this round is assigned a Bye, as above.

- Subsequent rounds: Players continue to be paired randomly by match record until only one player remains undefeated. This player is the winner of the event.

o If there is an odd number of players, pairings continue as in Round 2, pairing down from the highest bracket (most Wins) to the lowest bracket (least Wins), assigning a Bye randomly to one player in the lowest bracket. No player will ever receive more than one Bye over the course of a tournament.

Tournaments run using the Swiss pairing method allow every player attending the tournament to play in every round, regardless of how well they do over the course of the event.

3.1.1. Age Separated (Podded) Swiss

Pokémon Organized Play supports three different age divisions: Junior (born in 2002 or later), Senior (born in 1998, 1999, 1998, or 2000) and Masters (born in 1997 or earlier). If there are at least six (6) players from each age division at the tournament, Age Separated (Podded) Swiss should be used.

Age Separated Swiss is, essentially, three separate tournaments, with players in each age division being paired only against other players from the same age division, though the final results of the event are reported as one tournament.

3.1.2. Age Modified Swiss

Pokémon Organized Play requires Age Modified Swiss to be run for any tournament in which there are one to five players in one or more of the age divisions. This style is a slight variation of the standard Swiss pairing method, allowing players to be matched with opponents in the same age division whenever possible.

When pairing players in an Age Modified Swiss event, the process described in 2.1 is modified slightly. The best pairing is when the player and opponent both have the same match record AND both are in the same age division. If there are no opponents left who meet those criteria, then age division takes precedence over match record. This means that a Masters player with a 2-3 record and no opponents in his/her age division with the same match record will play a Masters player with a 1-4 record before he/she plays a Senior player with a 2-3 record.

At the end of an Age Modified tournament, the highest-placing player in each age division is considered the winner of that group, regardless of final standing.

3.1.3. Determining the Number of Rounds Needed

Use the following guidelines to determine the number of rounds needed to determine a winner in a Swiss tournament:

Players per Age Division (Pod):	Rounds:
6-8	3
9–16	4
17–32	5
33–64	6
65–128	7
129–256	8

If the tournament uses the Age Modified system, use the number of players in the largest age division, instead of the total number of players in the event, to determine the number of rounds needed. For example, if there are 5 Juniors, 11 Seniors, and 16 Masters the tournament should last four rounds, not five, because the number of rounds are based off the largest age division (16 Masters) instead of the total number of players (32 players).

3.1.4. Late Player Registration

If a player arrives to the tournament late, that player will receive losses for all of the rounds that have already started. It is at the Tournament Organizer's discretion to wait to add the player until the round starts if the pairings are already up. If the Tournament Organizer feels that the addition of a late player will create a disruption to the integrity of the event, he or she may choose to refuse event entry to that player.

The Tournament Organizer must inform the player of how many losses he or she will receive and that, by arriving late, that player will be ranked below players with the same match record who arrived on time.

3.1.5. Determining Final Placement

After the final round of Swiss, the only undefeated player or player with the best match record and tiebreakers is the winner of the tournament. All other players are ranked based on their final records at the event. Because players will have similar records, Pokémon Organized Play uses tiebreakers to determine the final ranking of each player.

3.1.5.1. Determining Tiebreakers

Tiebreakers allow a Tournament Organizer to order all of the players by how well they performed in the tournament. After players are ranked by final match record, tiebreakers are applied in the following order:

Tardiness:
Players who arrived to the tournament late are ranked below players who arrived on time.

If there is still a tie between two or more players, the next tiebreaker is applied.

Opponents' Win Percentage:
A player's Opponents' Win Percentage (Op Win %) is the average of the win percentages of all of that player's opponents. Whether an opponent completed the event or dropped before the event ended can have an affect on how their win percentage is calculated.

- If a player completed the event, then that player's win percentage will be the number of wins divided by the total number of rounds in the tournament. However, the minimum win percentage that ANY player can have is 25%.
  - *For example, if a player wins 3 matches in a 5-round tournament, that player's win percentage is 3/5, or 60%.*
  - *If a player wins no matches in a 5-round tournament, that player's win percentage is 25%, not 0/5 or 0%.*

- If a player dropped from the event before it was completed, then that player's win percentage is the number of wins divided by the number of rounds that player participated in, with a minimum win percentage of 25%, and a maximum win percentage of 75%.
    - *For example, if a player loses the first match of a 5-round tournament and then drops from the tournament, his win percentage is 0/1, or 0%. Because this is below the minimum win percentage, that player's win percentage is increased to 25%.*
    - *If another player wins the first match of a 5-round tournament and then drops from the tournament, his win percentage is 1/1, or 100%. Because this is higher than the maximum win percentage, that player's win percentage is reduced to 75%.*

Once a player's opponents' win percentages are calculated, they are averaged. This average is the player's Op Win %. Players who are tied in the final standings are then ranked in order of Op Win %, from highest to lowest.

If there is still a tie between two or more players, the next tiebreaker is applied.

Opponents' Opponents' Win Percentage:
A player's Opponents' Opponents' Win Percentage (Op Op Win %) is the average of the Op Win % of all of that player's opponents.

If there is still a tie between two or more players, the next tiebreaker is applied.

Head to Head:
If two players are tied in the final standings and played each other during the tournament, then the winner of that match is ranked higher than the loser.

If the two players did not play each other, the next tiebreaker is applied.

Standing of Last Opponent:
If all of the other tiebreakers are equal or cannot be used, the standing of the last opponents of each tied player is used. This will guarantee that every player is always ranked in order since this tiebreaker goes through all of the previous tiebreakers for the last opponents.

3.2. Single Elimination

Single Elimination tournaments determine the winner of the event by removing players from the tournament after they lose one match. The number of players in each round will be half of the number of players in the previous round, with the possible exception of the first round. The tournament ends when only one player has not lost any matches. That player is the winner of the tournament. At the beginning of the tournament, make sure to inform players if there will be a playoff between the 3rd and 4th ranked players during the last round of the tournament.

Single Elimination tournaments are run as follows:

- Round 1: Players are assigned seeds at random and then paired up based on the standard Single Elimination brackets. Single Elimination brackets for up to 32 players can be found at http://www. pokemon.com. The winner of each match moves on to the next round, while the loser is eliminated from the tournament.
    - If the number of players in the event is not a power of 2 (8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, etc.), then the highest-seeded players receive Byes. The number of players that receive Byes is based on the difference between the actual attendance and closest power of 2 that is greater than the actual attendance.
        - *For example, if the actual attendance is 53, the closet power of 2 that is greater than 53 is 64. The difference between 64 and 53 is 11, so the top 11 seeded players (who were seeded randomly) would receive first-round Byes.*

- Subsequent Rounds: Players continue to be paired along the brackets, with the winner of a match moving on to the next round and the loser being eliminated from the tournament. Ultimately, only two players will remain in a round, with the winner of that match becoming the winner of the tournament.
    - If the Byes were awarded correctly in the first round, the remaining rounds will have a number of players such that no further Byes need to be awarded.

Tournaments run using Single Elimination tend to run more quickly; fewer matches are being played as the tournament progresses. The additional benefit is that as the number of active matches decreases, the demand on the event staff decreases as well.

No player can drop from a Single Elimination tournament. If a player requests to drop or is disqualified, that player is marked as the loser of the game regardless of the actual outcome.

3.2.1. Age Separated and Modified Single Elimination
All Single Elimination tournaments are run without any use of players' age information. No matter how many players are in a Single Elimination tournament and no matter what their ages are all of the players will play in the same Single Elimination bracket.

3.2.2. Determining the Number of Single Elimination Rounds Needed
Use the following guidelines to determine the number of rounds needed to determine a winner in a Single Elimination tournament:

Total Players:	Rounds:
8	3
9–16	4
17–32	5
33–64	6
65–128	7
129–256	8

3.2.3. Late Player Registration

If a player arrives to the tournament once the first round has started, then that player cannot be added to the tournament since he or she would receive a first round loss and be eliminated. If the first round has not started, then the Tournament Organizer can decide to add the player before starting the round; however, all of the matches will be broken and re-paired. If the Tournament Organizer decides to wait, then the late player cannot play in the tournament.

3.2.4. Determining Final Placement

After the final round of Single Elimination, the only remaining player is the winner of the tournament. All other players are ranked based on the final record of the opponent who knocked them out of the event.

- *For example, a player who was eliminated in the first round by the winner of that tournament will be ranked higher than any other player who was eliminated in the first round.*

While not always necessary, a Tournament Organizer may have the players who lose in the Top 4 play off for 3rd and 4th place instead of using tiebreakers to determine the 3rd and 4th place final standings. This information must be communicated to the players before the tournament starts.

3.3.   Swiss plus Single Elimination

The purpose of this format is to run a number of Swiss rounds appropriate for the number of players in attendance, after which the top-ranked players are seeded into Single Elimination brackets and play until only one player remains. That player is the winner of the tournament.

Swiss plus Single Elimination tournaments run as follows:

- The procedures for running the Swiss rounds in a Swiss plus Single Elimination tournament are the same as in Section 2.1.

- Single Elimination: At the end of the Swiss portion of the tournament, players are seeded into Single Elimination brackets, based on their Swiss ranking. Approximately the same percentage of players per age division should make the Single Elimination cut.
  - The number of players that move on to the Single Elimination portion of the event must be a power of 2 (2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc). This ensures that there will be no Byes during this portion of the tournament.

Tournaments run using Swiss plus Single Elimination allow every player attending the tournament to play in every round of Swiss, regardless of how well they do over the course of the event, while giving players without an undefeated record up to that point the opportunity to win the tournament.

3.3.1. Age Separated Swiss plus Single Elimination

The procedures for running the Swiss rounds in an Age Separated Swiss plus Single Elimination tournament are the same as in Section 3.1.1.

3.3.2. Age Modified Swiss plus Single Elimination

The procedures for running the Swiss rounds in an Age Modified Swiss plus Single Elimination tournament are the same as in Section 3.1.2.

3.3.3. Using Flights for Large Events

Few tournaments have more than 64 participants in a single age division. However, those that do can create a situation where the time it takes to operate the event exceeds the venue's availability. In an effort to help Tournament Organizers finish these events within the real world time constraints of the venue, the use of flights to reduce the number of Swiss rounds in the event may be appropriate.

Flights allow a Tournament Organizer to reduce the total number of Swiss rounds necessary by splitting an age division into randomly assigned groups. Players in each group, or flight, only play against other players in the same group during the Swiss rounds.

Flights should only be used as a last resort. If a Tournament Organizer chooses to flight an event, the minimum number of flights needed to complete the event within the time constraints should be used. To this end, the number of flights per age division can vary, from no flights in one age division to up to 16 flights in another.

3.3.3.1.   Restrictions in Flighting

A Tournament Organizer may only use flights if the tournament is Swiss plus Single Elimination. There must be enough players in each age division for the tournament to be Age Separated (see Section 3.1.1.). Each age division being split up into flights must have at least 64 players, and each flight cannot contain fewer than 32 players.

3.3.3.2.   Flighting Procedures

If using flights, the number of flights used for a tournament must be 2, 4, 8, or 16. Each successive flight increase reduces the number of Swiss rounds necessary by 1; so 16 flights of 32 players would reduce a 512 person age division from 9 Swiss rounds to 5 Swiss rounds, whereas 8 flights would be 6 Swiss rounds. The Tournament Organizer should determine the number of flights he or she will be using, and randomly assign players to each flight. At the beginning of the event, flight sizes should be as close to identical as possible with only one flight having an odd number of players if the total number of players is odd.

Though flight sizes will fluctuate over the course of the event as players drop, the Tournament Organizer should not attempt to rebalance the flights by removing players from one flight and placing them in another. Players that arrive late to the tournament should be added to a flight, based on the original flight sizes. If all of the flights had the same number of players at the beginning of the event, players arriving late should be assigned to a flight randomly. If one of the flights had fewer players at the beginning of the event, assign the late player to that flight.

The number of players in the Single Elimination portion of the event must be such that an equal number of players from each flight make it into the finals, with a minimum of 2 from each flight. After the final Swiss round, the highest ranked players in each flight are combined into one list and sorted according to their Swiss standing and tie breakers (see Section 3.1.5.1.). They are then seeded into the Single Elimination portion of the event, based on these standings.

For example, a Regional Championship contains 143 players in the Masters division. The Tournament Organizer has announced that there will be a top 16 Single Elimination finals. Due to time constraints, the Masters division is being split into flights. As dictated by the minimum flight size, the Tournament Organizer can select one of two options; 2 flights or 4 flights.

If the Tournament Organizer selects 2 flights:
- Flight 1 will contain 72 players. Flight 2 will contain 71 players.
- Each flight will play 7 rounds of Swiss.
- The top 8 players from each flight will be seeded into the Single Elimination finals.

If the Tournament Organizer selects 4 flights:
- Flights 1, 2 and 3 will contain 36 players. Flight 4 will contain 35 players.
- Each flight will play 6 rounds of Swiss.
- The top 4 players from each flight will be seeded into the Single Elimination finals.

3.3.4. Late Player Registration
The procedures for late player registration are the same as in Section 3.1.4.

3.3.5. Determining the Number of Swiss and Single Elimination Rounds Needed
Use the following guidelines to determine the number of rounds needed to determine a winner in a Swiss plus Single Elimination tournament:

Players per Age division:	Swiss Rounds:	Single Elimination:
6-7	2 or 3	None
8	2 or 3	Top 2
9–15	3 or 4	Top 2
16	3 or 4	Top 4 or 2

Players per Age division:	Swiss Rounds:	Single Elimination:
17–31	4 or 5	Top 4 or 2
32	4 or 5	Top 8, 4 or 2
33–63	5 or 6	Top 8, 4 or 2
64	5 or 6	Top 16, 8, 4, or 2
65–127	6 or 7	Top 16, 8, 4, or 2
128	6 or 7	Top 32, 16, 8, 4, or 2
129–255	7 or 8	Top 32, 16, 8, 4, or 2
256	7 or 8	Top 32, 16, 8, 4, or 2
257-511	8 or 9	Top 32, 16, 8, 4, or 2
512	8 or 9	Top 64, 32, 16, 8, 4, or 2

If the tournament uses the Age Modified system, the total number of players in the largest age division (pod), instead of the number of players per age division, determines the number of Swiss rounds needed.

The total number of players per age division, in both Age Separated and Age Modified, determines the Single Elimination cut, which should be a *maximum* of 25% of the total number of players in each age division, with large events having a maximum cut of 12.5%. However, because the number of players can vary, the Single Elimination cut can vary from 25% to as low as 6%.

Pokémon Organized Play limits the maximum Single Elimination cuts at Premier Events to create a more consistent experience worldwide.

3.3.6. Determining Final Placement

After the final round of Swiss, all players are ranked based on their performance at the event. Because players often have similar records, Pokémon Organized Play uses tiebreakers to determine the final ranking of each player. See section 3.1.5.1 for further information on Tiebreakers.

Once standings are determined, players are seeded into the Single Elimination brackets based on their final Swiss ranking, equal to the number of slots available in the bracket.

- *For example, if the Tournament Organizer determines that there will be a Top 8, the eight players ranked highest after the final round of Swiss will be seeded into the Single Elimination brackets.*

Players who do not participate in the Single Elimination portion of the tournament receive their final standing at this time. This standing will not change, regardless of the results of the Single Elimination portion of the tournament.

- *For example, if there is a Top 8 cut, then the player who finished 9th will remain in 9th place even if one of his opponents from the Swiss rounds wins the tournament.*

After the brackets are seeded, matches are played per Single Elimination in Section 3.1., with the winner moving on to the next bracket and the loser being eliminated. Eventually, only one player will remain. This player is the winner of the tournament.

The Single Elimination Finals bracket after Swiss rounds also has the option to play off the 3rd and 4th place players just as in a Single Elimination tournament.

3.3.6.1. Determining Tiebreakers

Tiebreakers allow a Tournament Organizer to order all of the players by how well they performed in the tournament. For the Swiss rounds, after players are ranked by final match record, tiebreakers are applied as described in Section 3.1.5.1.

The tiebreakers to determine final placement of the players in the Single Elimination portion of the tournament are simply each player's final Swiss ranking. After each round

of Single Elimination, eliminated players are ranked according to their final Swiss ranking, with the highest-seeded player taking the highest rank available for that bracket, followed by the second highest-seeded player, and so on.

- *For example, in a Top 16 playoff, the bottom eight ranks are determined after the first round is completed (9th place through 16thplace). If the player who was seeded 1st at the end of the Swiss rounds loses in that first round, he will finish in 9th place, as he is the highest-seeded player eliminated in the Top 16 round.*

While not always necessary, a Tournament Organizer may have the players who lose in the Top 4 play off for 3rd and 4th place instead of using tiebreakers to determine the 3rd and 4th place final standings. This information must be communicated to the players before the tournament starts.

4.   Posting Standings and Pairings

After each round of the tournament completes, the Tournament Organizer should post the current standings and make an announcement that he/she has done so. Posting the standings allows players to check their match record after each round to ensure accuracy. Standings should remain posted for a reasonable amount of time before the next round is paired.

After the standings have been checked for accuracy, the Tournament Organizer should pair the next round and post the pairings. Players should be given a reasonable amount of time to find their seats before starting the next round.

Pokémon Organized Play recommends that all standings and pairings from each round are kept at least until the end of the event.

It is at the Tournament Organizer's discretion to re-pair a round if a player's match record is incorrect. The Tournament Organizer can fix the error before the round starts and re-pair the minimum number of players to have a valid pairing, or the Tournament Organizer can wait until the round starts and the player in question's pairing in the next round will be correct.

Appendix A. Document Updates

Pokémon Organized Play reserves the right to alter these rules, as well as the right to interpret, modify, clarify, or otherwise issue official changes to these rules, with or without prior notice.

Document updates will be made available at http://www.pokemon.com/us/organized-play/tournaments/rules/.

Changes for September 1, 2010
General reformatting of document.