



COMPREHENSIVE RULES OF BUGHOUSE

(aka Transfer Chess aka Siamese Chess)

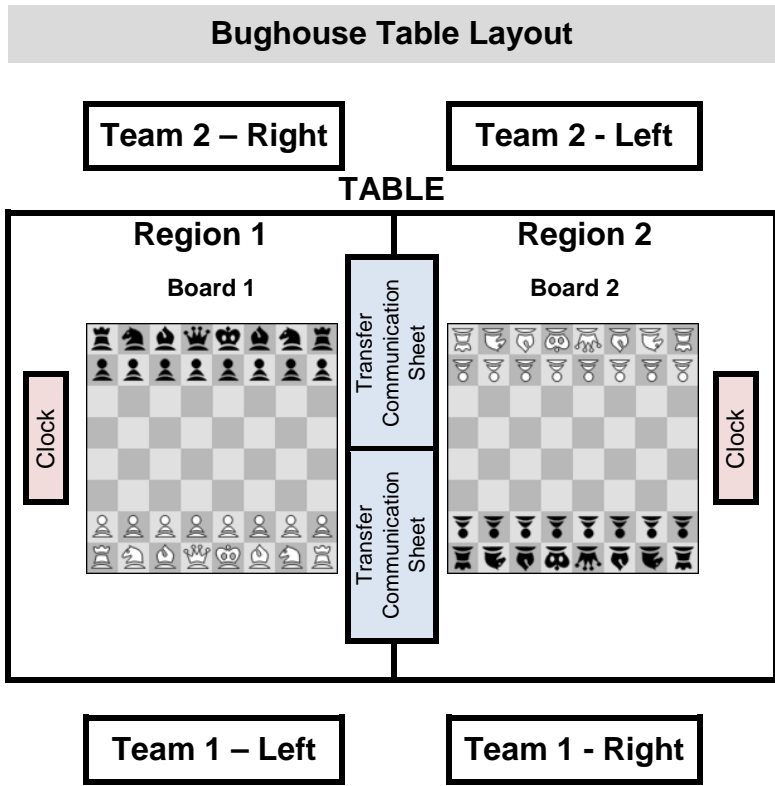
1. What is Bughouse?

Bughouse is a variation of chess played by a team of two players against an opposing team. While one teammate plays white on one board, the other plays black on a second board. Teammates are seated side by side, across from their respective opponents. The two games are played simultaneously. As one player captures an opponent's pieces, they are put beside his teammate, who can place one on his board as a move, with certain limitations. Non-placing moves follow standard chess rules, e.g., castling and *en passant*. The game is typically played at a very fast time control using speed chess rules. Two clocks are used to keep track of time, one clock for each board. Whichever game ends first determines the team's result; the other game is not finished. As in chess, the object of the game is to checkmate your opponent. Either teammate delivering a checkmate ends the game on both boards and scores a win for his team.

2. Getting started

The following items are needed to play bughouse: one table long enough to accommodate two chessboards side by side with ample margins around each board, four chairs, two chess sets, two boards, two chess clocks, four players, and two Transfer Communication Sheets ("TCS"), which include the symbols of each piece and messages for communicating needs or directions between team members. The last item is required to enable the players to play bughouse without talking, which both keeps the tournament hall quiet and prevents any player from controlling his teammate's moves (known as "coaching"). To set up, the boards should be placed next to each other, oriented in opposite directions and far enough apart to allow the TCS to be placed between

them. Both chess clocks are placed on the outside facing in, so all four participants can see the times. For each team, the player with the white pieces sits on the left side and the teammate playing black sits on the right.



Before beginning the game, all players should inspect the position of the pieces and the setting of the clocks, because once each side has completed a move all claims for correcting either are null and void. It is very important to start both chess clocks at the same time to prevent any time imbalances, which become magnified later in the game. Both persons playing black should hit their clocks simultaneously, after which the players with white will be “on move” for each team.

3. How Bughouse works

Until pieces are captured, play on both boards resembles a regular chess game. Beginning with the first capture, however, the contest truly becomes a team game, and captured pieces can return to action. When any player captures a piece, he passes it to his teammate. (All captured pieces are of the same color as his teammate’s pieces on the other board.) The teammate receiving the captured piece has the option of placing the piece on his board as a move. The method of transferring pieces from one player to another is a matter of preference: some players put captured pieces directly in the teammate’s hands, but more often players will just place captured pieces next to or directly in front of the teammate, who will benefit by “dropping” them later. A move made with a piece already on the board, in contrast to placing a transferred piece, is called a “chess move” and follows standard chess rules. Once a player wins by checkmate or time expiration on either board, his team wins the game.

4. Placement of pieces, or “drops”

Captured pieces sitting next to or in front of a player are known as that player’s “stock” or “reserves.” A player with pieces in reserve can either place (“drop”) one of them on the board or make a “chess move” with a piece already on the board. There is no drop-capturing since a piece can be placed only on an unoccupied square. Pawns cannot be placed on the first or eighth rank. Drop-promoting is illegal, but pawns can be dropped on the 7th rank on one turn and then promoted on the next turn with a chess move. When a pawn is promoted, it is placed on its side and declared to be a queen (or other piece), but when captured, it reverts back to being a normal pawn.

A pawn placed on the 2nd rank may advance either one or two squares on its first move, and in the latter case it would be subject to *en passant* capture where applicable. Pawns placed on any other rank may advance only one square on their first move. A pawn placed on the 4th rank is *not* deemed to have moved two squares from its home square and is therefore not subject to *en passant* capture.

A rook placed on a home square (a1 or h1 for white, a8 or h8 for black) *is* deemed to have moved for the purposes of castling and therefore may not be castled with its king.

Check can be answered by placing a piece between the checking piece and one’s own king (interposition) except in the case of a “contact check,” where the checking piece is a knight or is on any square adjacent to the king’s square. Perhaps most importantly, any piece *can* be placed on the board to immediately check the opponent and even to deliver checkmate.

5. Communication between team members

Team members shall communicate with each other only by pointing at the TCS. Players cannot communicate with one another verbally. They are free to observe their teammate’s game; however, no player shall point at any piece on the other board. It is illegal for a player to move one of his teammate’s pieces or to intervene in any way physically in his teammate’s game. No player shall move, touch or place any piece on the other board. All players must be as silent as possible so as not to disturb any other playing teams.

6. Time control, “clock-move” and operating the chess clocks

Time control is G/5 (game in five minutes for each player) with no delay. Before the start of the game the tournament director (“TD”) should check that the clocks are set correctly. A player may change a move until pressing the clock, after which his move may not be changed. This is known as the “clock-move” rule, which will govern rather than the “touch-move” rule. A player is not obligated to move or capture any touched piece while his move is in progress; a player may “take back” and change a move any number of times until he presses the clock to complete his move. Once a player presses the clock, the move is final and cannot be changed unless it is an illegal move that is called by the opponent. Pieces are not considered captured until the clock has been pressed, completing the move.

A player may not give a captured piece to his teammate before pressing his clock. The time between making a move on the board and completing the move by pressing the clock should be

as short as possible; however, if the opponent makes a move before the player on move presses his clock, it is called a “pre-move” and can be claimed by the player on move. The players (or TD if required) may then pause both clocks to allow the opponent to return any piece(s) moved to the previous square(s) and the player on move to complete his turn. Because clock-move governs, the player on move may make a move other than the one he played originally, if he so chooses in light of his opponent’s pre-move, before pressing his clock.

It is forbidden for a player to keep his finger on the clock button or to “hover” over it. Players must handle clocks properly: it is prohibited to punch it forcibly, to pick it up, and to knock it over. Improper clock handling can and will be penalized.

When a player allows his clock to run for a significant period of time without moving or placing a piece, it is called “stalling.” Stalling is not illegal: a player may stall for as long as he wishes until his time expires. In cases where both teams are stalling, the TD may be summoned to declare a win if it is certain that one party will eventually lose on time and position, e.g., both parties are stalling in a hopeless position of an imminent forced mate in one.

A player must press his clock with the same hand he used to move his piece. If a player uses both hands to effect his move, he must press his clock with the same hand he used to move his piece to its destination square. This means that a player can capture a piece as follows: with his *left hand* he removes the piece being captured from the board, and with his *right hand* he moves his piece to the square of capture and then presses his clock. He may then use either hand to transfer the captured piece to his teammate’s stock. Similarly, a player may use both hands to castle but may not press his clock with either hand until castling is complete.

7. How to make a claim

If a player wishes to pause the clock and call for a TD, that player should cause both clocks to be paused simultaneously. A player or TD who wishes to resume the clock must cause both clocks to be resumed simultaneously. Any player may summon the TD for purposes of making a claim during the game by raising his hand. A player may communicate to his teammate his act of summoning the TD, and both clocks may be paused until the TD resolves the matter. If an irregularity occurs or the pieces have to be restored to a previous position, the TD shall use his best judgment to determine the correct times for the clocks. Each team member can make a claim on either board, including but not limited to illegal moves, checkmate, “flag fall,” or clearly counting out a three-fold repetition of position to draw. Even though there is no delay in Bughouse, no claims of insufficient losing chances will be considered.

It is forbidden to distract or annoy one’s opponent in any manner, which includes unreasonable claims or repeated offers of a draw. The clocks should be stopped for no purpose other than making a claim.

8. Illegal moves

Only players may call illegal moves. If a player completes his move without noticing an illegal move, the illegal move stands as played. There will be no time penalty for called illegal moves; however, the player calling the illegal move should start the opponent’s clock again immediately

without moving so that the opponent can repair the illegal move on his own time. There is one major exception to this rule: as in most blitz chess games, one *can* capture the opponent's king if left in check. Doing so ends the game immediately, and even trumps checkmate by the opponent — a player who is checkmated by an opponent whose king is in check can still win by taking the opposing king. For this reason declaring check is neither required nor recommended since it could help the opposing team save their hanging king.

9. Hiding pieces

It is forbidden to hide chess pieces from either member of the opposing team, whether intentionally or not. During the entire game players shall manipulate the pieces in such a way that all players are able to see every piece. Only in the moment when a captured piece is being transferred to a teammate or when a player is dropping a piece on the board can any piece in a player's hand be partially hidden legally. Even then it must still be clear which piece is partially hidden, and this moment should be as short as possible. If a player hides a piece in an improper way, his opponent (or the opponent's teammate) is entitled to warn him to show his pieces, which can be done by saying "hand" (a synonym for reserves/stock, as in your "pieces in hand" to drop) and pointing at the obscured piece(s). When a player is on move and some or all of the opponent's reserves are not visible, he can press the clock and require the opponent to show them. If a player drops a piece which was hidden from view up until the moment of placing it, the opponent may prevent its use by saying "invisible" and immediately starting the player's clock to force him to make another move. If a player repeatedly hides his pieces, the opponent may claim "repeated hiding," and the TD may impose some sanction. If a piece is hidden through no fault of the player yet drastically alters the game, the TD may order a new game.

10. Toppling pieces

If a player displaces any piece(s), he shall reestablish the correct position on his own time. The opponent may restart the player's clock without moving to ensure this happens. The TD may penalize the player who displaces pieces on an opponent's time. If a player having the move topples his own piece, he may immediately restore the position without incurring any penalty.

11. Spectators and outside players

No talking is permitted in the playing area. Kibbitzing and coaching are strictly prohibited. Spectators and players in other games must remain quiet at all times and are not to speak about or interfere in any game. If necessary, the TD may expel offenders from the playing venue.

12. Penalties

Persistent refusal by a player to comply with these rules shall be penalized by loss of the game. Additionally or alternatively, the TD can apply one or more of the following penalties: warning, "running off" 5 to 10 seconds on an offender's clock as a time penalty during which time the offender may not make any chess move or drop, ordering a new game, reducing the points scored in a game by the offending party, declaring the game to be lost, and expulsion from the event. If a team's penalty is forfeiture of the game, the TD shall decide the score of the opposing team.

13. The completion of a game

A victory for any player counts as a victory for his team. The winning team is awarded one point for winning the bughouse game, no points for losing, and a half-point for drawing. If both games finish at the same time, the results on both chessboards are counted: a team winning on both boards wins the game, otherwise the game is drawn. This means if a player checkmates his opponent simultaneously to his opponent's teammate checkmating his own teammate on the other board, the game shall be a draw. If both teams have at least one player who is out of time, or if both flags on either board have fallen, and it is impossible to establish which flag fell first then, the game is drawn. The game is a draw if any identical position appears on one chessboard three times. The game is drawn upon agreement between both sets of players during the game (all four players must agree).

The game is won by the team whose opponents declare they resign. This immediately ends the game. A team is deemed to have resigned if at least one player thereof resigns. If a player leaves his king in check, the opponent may capture it and claim a win for his team. The game is won by the player who has checkmated his opponent's king. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the checkmate position was a legal move and did not hang that player's own king. The opponent is not considered to be checkmated if he could block the check with a piece potentially in his stock. Thus, a checkmate must almost always be given either with a "contact check," a knight check, or with a double check. A player who is checkmated with a non-contact check and has no pieces in hand can stall until his teammate captures a piece and puts it into his reserves, at which point the player can block the checkmate with the newly transferred piece.

14. Other notable (blitz) chess rules that apply to Bughouse

A player wishing to offer a draw should do so after making a move on the board and before pressing his clock. An offer at any other time during play is still valid, however. The offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent either accepts the offer or otherwise ends his move. A claim of a draw shall be considered to be an offer of a draw. The TD should be silent about illegal moves, flag falls, etc., as this is entirely the responsibility of the players. If a player gives check but misses the opponent's failure to get out of check and makes a move other than capturing the opponent's king, then the moves played stand and play continues.

15. Other notes

In these rules the words "she" and "her" are completely interchangeable with "he," "him" and "his" as appropriate to the case with no change of meaning or effect. "Flag fall" means time expiration, including on digital clocks, which do not actually have flags like analog clocks do. Unless otherwise noted, the word "piece" includes pawns. Should a situation arise that is not covered specifically by these bughouse rules, the rules of standard chess will apply, in which case the *US Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess* should be consulted.