

Play! Pokémon

Pokemon TCG Judge Manual v10

August 2012

Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a tool to **train judges** for the Pokémon Trading Card game and therefore **improve the consistency of judging** for Organized Play. This manual explains skills and standards for judging, which every judge can aspire to learn.

The qualifications and skills recorded in this manual were collected from Premiere Tournament Organizers (PTO) and Nationals/World level judges at the request of Play! Pokémon.

The Judge Manual is not the only document you will need in order to become an effective and consistent judge. Before continuing to read this document, it is recommended you have online or printed copies of the four following documents at hand:

- **Pokémon Trading Card Game Rule Book**
The basic and expert rules of game play answer many questions you and your players will have in the course of the tournament. These are no longer included in pre-constructed decks. Download from <http://www.pokemon.com/us/play-pokemon/play-pokemon-tournaments/rules/>
- **Rulings Compendium**
(linked from <http://compendium.pokegym.net>)
Team Compendium publishes the Pokemon TCG Rulings Compendium, a compilation of all official The Pokemon Company International (TPCi) rulings on cards and game situations. Your tournament organizer should have a copy available for you to use at your event. You should also have a copy on your computer or PDA for review and study.
- **Tournament Rules**
(linked at <http://www.pokemon.com/us/play-pokemon/play-pokemon-tournaments/rules/>)
This document adds rules to the basic and expert game rules as necessary for tournaments. Many of your rulings will be made on the basis of these rules. You should be familiar with this document and your tournament organizer should have a copy available for you to use at your event.
- **Penalty Guidelines**
(linked at <http://www.pokemon.com/us/play-pokemon/play-pokemon-tournaments/rules/>)
This document is the essential foundation for consistent and fair penalties. To become a top quality judge you'll need to make sure all your penalties have a basis in this document; it is the standard by which your penalties will be judged. Carry a copy on clipboard and reference it during events as often as needed.

Judge Manual

You may enjoy using this manual as a cover-to-cover self-study book, a reference for specific skills and as a training tool for Tournament Organizer judge workshops.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Table of Contents	4
1. Basic Judge Qualifications	6
<i>1.1. Personality</i>	6
1.1.1. Good sport	6
1.1.2. Good fellow	6
1.1.3. Good focus	6
<i>1.2. Knowledge of the game</i>	7
1.2.1. Able to see the big picture	7
1.2.2. Able to grasp the details	7
1.2.3. Able to read and understand rulings or guideline documents	7
2. Event Mission	8
3. Approaches to learning	9
<i>3.1. Playing</i>	9
<i>3.2. Asking questions</i>	9
<i>3.3. Referencing documents</i>	9
<i>3.4. Watching other judges</i>	9
<i>3.5. Online discussions</i>	9
<i>3.6. Receiving and soliciting suggestions</i>	10
4. Making good rulings	10
<i>4.1. Stop and listen to the question</i>	10
<i>4.2. Establish the game state</i>	10
<i>4.3. Read the card</i>	10
<i>4.4. Consult to confirm the ruling</i>	10
4.4.1. Consult your fellow judge, if possible	11
4.4.2. Consult a rulings document, if needed	11
<i>4.5. Reference the penalty guidelines for every penalty</i>	11
5. Basic Skills	12
<i>5.1. What to do when you have to stop a match in progress</i>	12
5.1.1. Make a note of the time!	12
5.1.2. Ask about the play, and then listen.	12
5.1.3. Go through the steps in "Making Good Rulings" above	12
5.1.4. Communicate with the players and implement the ruling/penalty	12
5.1.5. Reset the match for the players	13
<i>5.2. What to do when you're on the tournament floor.</i>	13
5.2.1. Early in the round	13
5.2.2. Mid-round	14
5.2.3. Late in the round	15
5.2.4. Housekeeping	15
<i>5.3. What to do between rounds</i>	16
5.3.1. Close out the previous round!	16

Judge Manual

5.3.2. Participate in any between-rounds Judge Meeting	16
5.3.3. Provide Event Help	16
5.3.4. Rest	17
6. Skills for specific situations	17
6.1. <i>Deck Check</i>	17
6.2. <i>Ruling in advance of a play</i>	17
6.3. <i>Judging younger children</i>	18
6.4. <i>Upset Parent</i>	18
6.5. <i>He said/She said</i>	19
6.6. <i>Time check</i>	19
6.7. <i>Suspected cheating</i>	20
6.8. <i>Spectator Interference</i>	20
6.9. <i>Assessing Stalling/Slow Play</i>	21
6.10. <i>Giving a penalty to a young child or new player</i>	22
6.11. <i>Appeal to the Head Judge</i>	22
6.12. <i>When judges disagree</i>	22
6.13. <i>Rewinding a misplay</i>	23
7. Judging at a BIG event	24
7.1. <i>Chain of command</i>	24
7.2. <i>Coordination</i>	24
7.3. <i>Judging with a translator's assistance</i>	24
Change History	26

1. Basic Judge Qualifications

So, you want to be a judge? Great! Judges are an important factor in making Pokémon TCG events a fantastic experience for the players. Judge is a position that requires a solid personality and good knowledge of the game – plus knowledge of some basic judging skills.

The first section in this manual will help you assess your personality strengths and your basic knowledge of the game. Consider carefully how you would answer the question in italics for each trait or ability. Be ready to discuss your answers with your tournament organizer or judge mentor.

1.1. Personality

Why is personality an important judge qualification? Personality is a more basic and fundamental quality of any person than their knowledge. Knowledge of the game can be acquired. Personality is something built over time. The following three traits are important personality characteristics for a judge.

1.1.1. Good sport

A good judge candidate shows the characteristics of a good sport. In the Pokémon TCG, we call this Spirit of the Game. A good judge is first a person to whom *fun* and *fairness* come naturally. This person *respects* other players and is naturally *honest* with players and tournament officials, even in adverse circumstances. A good judge is a person who exemplifies *sportsmanship* by losing and winning with grace. A good judge candidate especially enjoys the *learning* aspect of this game; this person is active in acquiring and passing on knowledge of how to play within the rules.

Ask yourself: *As I play the Pokémon TCG, how does my behavior match up with fun, fairness, respect, honesty, sportsmanship & learning?*

1.1.2. Good fellow

A good judge candidate is a positive likable person. Make no mistake a good judge is not necessarily a member of a particular “in crowd” or a popularity contest winner! However, a judge should be a person who can work with a wide variety of people and a person that a wide variety of people can approach. A good judge candidate knows the basic skills of being polite and can use them with everyone, friend or foe.

Ask yourself: *Do I get along with great majority of the players and am I able to communicate with all of them?*

1.1.3. Good focus

A judge is focused on serving the players, the event and the staff team over social, gaming and other opportunities that may come up during the event. A good judge candidate is someone who has a history of helping the event, the staff and the players even before having a position as judge. A good judge seeks out opportunities to help at the event during the times when he or she is not actively

judging. A good judge clears family and other responsibilities so that he or she is able to focus on judging and be a reliable staff member for the organizer.

Ask yourself: Do I help out at tournaments, even over opportunities to socialize, or responsibilities to take care of other things?

1.2. Knowledge of the game

What knowledge of the game does a judge need? A good judge knows how to play, of course, but judge knowledge includes understanding rulings.

Understanding includes the ability to grasp the meaning of cards and rules documents. A person might be helpful, friendly and a good sport, but wind up with inconsistent, “creative” rulings and not understand the fundamentals of the game required for consistently good judging. The following three abilities give a judge candidate a good basis for creating a fair and consistent tournament environment.

1.2.1. Able to see the big picture

The Pokémon TCG is carefully designed. Several measures of this are apparent in comparison to other games:

- There are relatively few errata and none related to correcting overpowered cards.
- It has been years since any card needed to be banned to rebalance the competitive environment.

These are observations that show the game is internally consistent and balanced. If the game makes sense to you, it means you see this balance. If the game seems inconsistent and illogical, this is a sign that you are not seeing the fundamental patterns of the game. A good judge candidate can put the pieces of the game rules and rulings together in a way that makes sense.

Ask yourself: *Does the Pokémon TCG make sense to me, or does it seem full of inconsistencies?*

1.2.2. Able to grasp the details

Potential judges have a good opportunity to measure their knowledge of the game as they play the game and as they interact with experienced judges. Are you able to explain accurately why a card does what it does to fellow players? Can you read a newly released card and understand how it plays? A good judge candidate understands and learns how cards work and can explain them to others.

Ask yourself: *Can you read a card and almost always get the game action right?*

1.2.3. Able to read and understand rulings or guideline documents

The Pokémon TCG has a fair number of documents used to support organized play. These are updated yearly or more frequently. Do you seek out and read rulings documents, such as the set release FAQs or the Rulings Compendium? Have you ever read some of the tournament and penalty guideline

documents from the Pokémon website rules and resources? A good judge candidate has desire to learn from these documents and knows they are necessary beyond his or her own tournament experience or training.

Ask yourself: *Have you enjoyed and benefitted from reading rulings documents, rule books or penalty guidelines?*

If your answers above show the personality traits and knowledge abilities required for judging, you're ready to learn and grow as a judge. If not, but you still want to judge, a good approach would be to go to your next tournament and work on those characteristics when you play, as you mix with other players or have contact with the event staff. You might also consider contacting the event organizer to see if you can help with setup/take down or during breaks. Grab some rulings or rules documents and see how you like reading them.

2. Event Mission

The following statement of 'event mission' is an example of what Tournament Organizers (TO) typically expect of their event staff to help create a fair and fun event for the players.

These event mission commitments make a good outline for quick discussion at the start of a judge meeting and you can expect feedback from your tournament organizer on your support for the mission after the event.

As a judge of this event I will be:

- Honorable - acting to preserve the integrity of the event for all players.
- Positive - striving to be positive in my interactions with players, spectators, and other staff members.
- Correct - doing my best to obtain the information to make the correct calls.
- Communicative – seeking to share, listen and report as needed to keep everyone on the “same page”.
- Valuable – doing whatever it takes to make the event better.

Being a judge is a position of power, and a position of responsibility. You will not do everything right, but you can be happy if you do your best to support the event mission and learn from each event.

It is a great feeling you get when someone comes up to you and says “Wow, thanks. This was a great tourney.” This is a compliment to the organizer, judges and all of the staff members, and is a great sign of a “Mission Accomplished.”

Think about the times you have been at a tournament where something goes wrong, maybe not seriously, but a controversial call or an upset player or parent. Not everyone will walk away happy. Follow the mission statement, and everyone will walk away with a more positive feeling, including you.

A good judge supports the event mission during smooth events. A great judge upholds it during difficult events.

3. Approaches to learning

There are many ways to learn and grow your judging skills and game knowledge. The ones listed below are ones judges should definitely use regularly.

3.1. Playing

A good player often has the game knowledge needed to make a good judge. A judge can acquire up-to-date game knowledge by playing. As a judge, you are often called on to serve so others can play. However, it is neither necessary nor desirable that you leave behind playing or knowledge of the current game-play trends. Play and compete as often as you are able, for fun and to increase your game awareness.

3.2. Asking questions

Ask questions about real and hypothetical situations and rulings as they occur to you. Seek out the experience of other judges and tournament organizers at events, leagues and online. Interact with other judges at the Play! Pokémon forums and other online sites. If you're wondering about a card or player interaction, ask another judge! Chances are you'll get good perspective and make a friend.

3.3. Referencing documents

As mentioned at the outset of this manual that a good judge has and uses a 'judges library' of documents. Playing and talking to other judges are not enough to make fair and consistent rulings. Not only are these documents necessary to use on the floor, but also they make great resources for answering your own questions or for just studying up on situations or rulings you are likely to encounter.

3.4. Watching other judges

When you work with other judges, watch the good things they do, and adapt those successful strategies as your own. When you play, and need a ruling, think about what you liked about that ruling, how it was given and what you would do improve it.

3.5. Online discussions

The Internet is a great opportunity to broaden your experience and knowledge of rulings. Judges share many tips and experiences online. In addition there are

several sites with continuous discussion of rulings. The Play! Pokémon Professor forums and PokeGym.net 'Ask the Rules Team' forum are great for keeping current.

3.6. Receiving and soliciting suggestions

Be open to receiving constructive suggestions from the Head Judge or Tournament Organizer. As you enter an event or debrief afterward, be ready to listen and reflect upon suggestions for improvement without becoming defensive. A great approach to learning is to ask the organizer, head judge and senior judges, "What did I do well and what can I do better next time?"

4. Making good rulings

Here are some basic steps for getting the ruling and the penalty, if any, right.

4.1. Stop and listen to the question

One thing a judge should be on guard against is hearing what cards are being asked about and jumping ahead by guessing what the player's question is going to be.

For card or game play rulings, make sure you understand what the player is asking.

4.2. Establish the game state

You can't answer the question fully until you know the game state, for example, whose turn it is, what plays have been made to this point, etc.

Ask enough questions to establish the game state to give the proper context for the ruling.

4.3. Read the card

Most card rulings can be handled by reading the card. Even if you play that card regularly, it is best to ask to see the card and review it. Even though you were right about the text, this slows things down and lets you process the events surrounding the ruling. If you have time, consult a fellow judge. If you are not sure, don't proceed until you consult a fellow judge or rulings document.

For card rulings, ask to pick up and read the card before giving your ruling.

4.4. Consult to confirm the ruling

You'll be too busy to do this step every time, especially in very large events or very small ones. However, it's a good habit to acquire because it will keep you from making a mistake when you are tired and you will often learn something.

Consult another judge, as often as practical for the pace of the tourney, and especially when it looks like there will be a penalty.

4.4.1. Consult your fellow judge, if possible

This is not a sign of lack of knowledge. The best judges, who mostly do not need to do this, frequently bounce a ruling off a less experienced colleague, just to protect the players from a judge brain freeze during a ruling. Consulting also helps build camaraderie, knowledge and better staff.

If you're talking with another judge, or the head judge, step back from the table while you explain and discuss the situation.

4.4.2. Consult a rulings document, if needed

Use the Rulebook (from Preconstructed decks), the current Rulings Compendium, and the latest Tournament Rules to help you with your rulings. You'll need to be familiar with each document in advance in order to quickly reference what you need to know.

Know where these documents are at your tournament and use them.

4.5. Reference the penalty guidelines for every penalty

The judge role does not call for imagination or creativity as much as it demands consistency. This judge manual exists to increase the level of judging consistency across our widespread organized play program. **It is the stated position of Play! Pokémon that judges cannot make consistent rulings without basing them on the official penalty guidelines.**

Read through the penalty guidelines document in advance. It may seem complex but the document is actually well organized and prior review will help you reference the right section during a match.

When you need to give a penalty, make sure you can reference the game situation, error and competitive level from the penalty guideline document. Use of a Play! Pokémon-approved penalty-reporting sheet will also help you give the right penalty.

The penalty guidelines are guidelines, and penalties can be escalated or lessened when the situation warrants – if there is a good reason to do so. However, assessing a penalty that isn't in the guidelines, e.g. "loss of hand", is not allowed. Also, all penalties above a Warning level need to be given directly by, or by prior consultation with, the Head Judge. Giving a prize or a game loss penalty, for example, without involving the Head Judge is not allowed.

Head Judges and TOs acting as backup for rulings or penalties should not only get the facts of the situation from the judge who is seeking help, but should also ask the judge how he or she sees the guidelines applying to the situation. This should be done before providing advice, to make sure the judge is learning to use the guidelines rather than creating a dependence on the backup individual.

Use the penalty guidelines and penalty-reporting sheet when giving penalties.

5. Basic Skills

Use this listing as a reference to help you in various tournament situations. Some are for very unique situations, while others will be used frequently.

5.1. What to do when you have to stop a match in progress

Sometimes you will see a misplay and need to stop a match. Other times players will call you over to a match to get information or to rule on a misplay or card. Here is what to do when this happens:

5.1.1. Make a note of the time!

You don't know if you will need to issue an extension, but you do need to be prepared to accurately issue one, if needed. Look at your timepiece, make note of the time on your penalty sheet or the match slip. In addition to providing the basis for an accurate time extension, this reassures the players that you have the situation in hand and they will be able to relax and give full information to you for the ruling.

5.1.2. Ask about the play, and then listen.

Emotions are usually running high when you are called over to a match or when you stop a match in progress due to an issue you observe. Keep calm. Tell each player they will get their chance to speak and ask them to please not interrupt the judge's questions or the other player. Ask follow-up questions as needed. Keep at this until you get the complete information about the situation.

5.1.3. Go through the steps in "Making Good Rulings" above

5.1.4. Communicate with the players and implement the ruling/penalty

Explain - the ruling and/or penalty to the players and explain the basis of the ruling (Rulebook, Compendium, Tournament Rules, Penalty Guideline). It's best not to say you are "giving" a penalty or ruling. Penalties are earned, not given. Rulings are according to rules. Instead say something like,

Shuffling the hand into the deck without the use of a game effect is a Game Play error - Severe, according to the Penalty Guidelines. The penalty earned in such cases is Game Loss. Since this is what happened in this match, a game loss penalty will be assessed.

Referring to the source of the ruling or penalty guideline in the explanation helps make the player feel your impartiality, even in tough rulings or penalties with a large impact on the game.

Ask - the players if they understand or have any questions about the ruling or penalty.

Perform - Have the players take the game actions or decisions required to implement the ruling or penalty (e.g. decide whether or not to draw a prize card for prize penalty, reversing a misplay, etc.)

5.1.5. Reset the match for the players

You had to stop the match, now you have to re-start it. Make sure, without coaching the players, that they are able to continue the game without making a misplay because they were interrupted. Also, if there is an extension, make sure the players know how long it is and not to scoop.

A good way to do reset is to ask questions:

1. Whose turn is it?
2. What have you done so far in your turn?

A good way to handle any extension is:

1. Record the extension and your name on the FACE of the match slip.
(e.g. "J. Smith +5 min extension")
2. Inform the players about the extension and how to use it.
(e.g. "Don't scoop when time is called, you have a 5 minute extension")

5.2. What to do when you're on the tournament floor

When you are not performing a ruling in specific match, you will observe the tournament floor in your assigned age group or floor area looking for players you can help. This is called *active judging* and is required at all premiere events. How you observe will vary as each round progresses.

5.2.1. Early in the round

You will check for proper game setup. Some TOs have unique ways of making sure prizes are out (e.g. "Raise your hand if your opponent does not have prizes out."), but you also should be checking for prizes before and just after the round starts.

Other things to look for before and early in the round include:

- proper shuffle and an offer to cut
- damage & status markers
- play surface obstructions (a big book pack, herd of Pokémon plushies)
- illegal or problem items (sweating cold beverage, electronics)

5.2.2. Mid-round

Divide your time between observing from the side of your area and doing an overview walk of a table.

From the **side** of your area, observe the players, but focus especially on their faces. Players looking at their cards or opponent are signs that things are going well at the match. Players' faces showing signs of distress or wandering eyes should make you look more closely.

Distressed faces could mean the player...

1. ...needs to use the restroom,
2. ...is upset that current or previous match has gone badly,
3. ...is concerned about the opponent's play practices, or
4. ...is confused about what the opponent is doing.

Wandering eyes could mean the player is checking...

1. ...the clock because they are stalling or concerned they will run out of time to win,
2. ...to see if a judge is watching,
3. ...for a sign from a spectator, or
4. ...if a parent or friend is present.

Not all these things are negative, but these signs should prompt you to observe more closely and possibly talk to the player to see what's up.

After a while observing from the side, do an **overview** of play at a table, perhaps on your way to the other side of your area. Alternating watching from the side with walking a table or row is a good way to keep alert. In your overview, walk the length of a table, observing matches to get a general feel of how things are going. As you walk, follow along with plays, the results of randomizers, move your eyes to the various sections of the play area – prizes, bench active, supporter/stadium, deck, discard, lost zone, etc. Among other things you may observe:

- **Items that need a cleanup:** Prizes askew or piled too tightly to easily count, messy discard pile, a supporter that needs discarding from last turn, prizes on same side as deck or discard.
You can often get a player to fix some of these problems by tapping the item in question; otherwise a soft word may be needed.

- **Game situations that need a caution or warning:** energy stacked so it is hidden, playing without damage counters or status markers, cards held below the table, misplays, etc.
Follow your 'good rulings' and 'stop match in progress' procedures.
- **Game play that requires further observation:** a hint of slow play that should be evaluated for a pattern of slow play, comments or actions that could indicate possible gamesmanship, stealthy movements that need to be evaluated for cheating.
Observation should be done unobtrusively and perhaps out of the player's view. Consider having a fellow judge switch off observation to confirm your evaluation.

5.2.3. Late in the round

As the round winds down your work will change priority as matches conclude.

- Number one job at this point is to help adjudicate matches when time is called. Refer to the Tournament Rules for how to rule on a match at time.
- Players should be asked to leave the tournament area when their matches are done. Sometimes this is not possible (small store/rainy day), but most of the time you should be ready to remind players of this tournament rule.
- Be alert to items left behind by players. If you see something being left, call that player's attention to it.

5.2.4. Housekeeping

If you can do something quickly to improve the play area or assist a player (answer a quick question, pick up trash, ask a player to move a bag out of the aisle, etc.) then that is a good thing. However, it is difficult for a judge to do active judging, and perform other responsibilities at the same time. If you are one of two floor judges for a 60 person tournament and you are spending your time collecting match slips, your mid-round judge activities are going to be crowded out by housekeeping and you will miss match problems, or be distracted as you work on rulings at specific matches. In general, during rounds, at premiere events, judges should judge and not be responsible for other duties.

5.3. What to do between rounds

5.3.1. Close out the previous round!

It is essential for the event that judges work to conclude the previous round in a timely manner. Until all matches are reported, the organizer is held up from preparing the next round. Delays are not fun for players!

The number one priority for a judge between rounds is to help with matches in time extension or sudden death. Watch matches in progress, and be ready provide timely assistance so that play can keep a lively pace. On completion, get slips for those matches sent to the computer operator(s) as soon as possible. Players often want to pick up their cards before signing their match slip. You will need to present the slip and a pen and politely get the players to mark and initial their results before they clear up.

When all matches are completed, be sure to turn in your penalty sheet per the instructions from the head judge or tournament organizer.

5.3.2. Participate in any between-rounds Judge Meeting

At premiere events your organizer or head judge will let you know whether will have a judge meeting between rounds or not. If so, attend and be on time.

Do:

- Discuss penalties that may impact judging in the next rounds (e.g. caution for slow play, player warned to change sleeve for next round)
- Report players who may need help or watching in the next round: identify the player by name and explain the issue (e.g. a player: has trouble shuffling, is anxious about parent, might be interacting with spectators)

Don't:

- Waste time with a list of all your rulings or interactions.
- Fail to check in with your HJ before taking a break.

5.3.3. Provide Event Help

Judges can be a big help to the TO and HJ between rounds, helping with crowd control, fixing table numbers, straightening tables, posting standings and pairings, doing housekeeping and anything else that needs doing. You will need to be in position (e.g. near the score table or TO) to be available. So, if you don't have an assignment and you're resting or socializing, be where you can be called on, in case you're needed.

5.3.4. Rest

Judging can be physically and mentally demanding work, especially at a big tournament! You might need this time to get a drink of water, use the restroom, check on a child or just take a load off your feet (maybe sit and help at the scorer's desk). If you need to do these things, speak up before accepting an assignment that will prevent them! **Whatever you do, make sure the HJ & TO know where you are at all times between rounds.**

6. Skills for specific situations

6.1. Deck Check

Organized Play has an official deck check checklist for judges. Obtain a copy from the rules and resources section of the Pokémon website and use it to perform your deck check. Grab a couple of your own decks and practice with the deck check sheet before a tournament.

For pre-tournament deck checks, have the players put their cards in the exact order of the list. Deck check testing by PTOs shows that it takes around 2 ½ minutes for a thorough deck and sleeve check when the deck is in exact order, but almost 5 minutes if the deck is moderately out of order. Players whose deck is out of order should be sent to put it in order and return to the end of the line. Particularly at a big event, keeping pre-event checks to a minimum time is critical. It has been observed that it only takes a couple people sent to the back to get 150 players to put their decks in order.

For in-round checks, many PTOs have found that picking up decks from the top tables as they finish is a good way to get in the required spot checks and still keep the event moving. Pull the decklists in advance and keep them at the scorer's table. Have the designated checker near the table without announcing or tipping that a check will take place. When the game finishes watch the cards being handled, and at the appropriate time place each deck in a plastic bag marked with the player's name.

For top cut checks, your TO may ask you to collect all the decks from a certain group of tables at the end of the last round, and place them the plastic bags. Printing an extra set of match slips and cutting them in half, make an efficient way to label the collected decks. Once it is known who will be in the finals, you may be called upon to turn back the decks to players that won't be in the finals.

6.2. Ruling in advance of a play

Judges **MUST** stay away from 'helping' players figure out their next play. For example, a player holds up a card to you and starts with, "What would happen if I attack with..." One approach would be to ask the player "Is that what you're going to do?" If they say, "I don't know" or something like that, tell them, "I cannot offer you advice on your next move. If you'd like assistance in calculating

the damage after you have declared your attack, I'm happy to help." Another approach, when asked about the potential result of a move might be, "If I answer your question, it will mean that this is the action you will take."

Questions about current game state, card rulings/errata on cards in play (e.g., does card X discard two energy or two energy cards), and mandatory game rules (e.g. can I evolve normally on the same turn I played a Pokemon) are OK.

6.3. Judging younger children

Judges need to get down on a child's level, rather than towering above the table. This will mean going to the side of the table of the child who called you and sitting or squatting next to that player to talk.

Never scold any player, but be especially careful to keep an even tone with younger players.

Children should be given a little extra time to think when you ask them questions.

6.4. Upset Parent

When a parent is concerned about a ruling, here is a **basic** communication flow, which in nearly every case can help you address the concern and gain the parent's support:

Listen first, then speak. When you speak, state your understanding of the parent's concern for his or her child (e.g. "Mr. Bones, I think you feel it was unfair that your child's opponent was not given a penalty for failure to discard a supporter"). Then, in a matter of fact manner explain the ruling (e.g. "The penalty guidelines tell us <point> this is a minor game play error and gets only a caution."). If there is a penalty explain how the penalty supports making the game fun and fair for all the players. Ask the parent if he or she has any questions.

In the case that a parent is getting upset try these **advanced** steps:

1. Keep yourself calm, don't get sucked into the "upset" energy.
2. Invite the TO to join (or take over) the conversation
This extra person lends another perspective, experience and a witness to the discussion. If there is an upset parent, your TO deserves to be in on the issue.
("Let's get Mrs. Jones, she is the event organizer.")
3. Gently invite the parent to come aside and talk with the TO.
If they do not want to come with you, then explain calmly that you just want to be able to focus on him and his issue, and not have other players and judges interrupting during your conversation.
4. Have the parent explain the situation again to the new party.
Let him vent (for a time, within reason, and with respect!). And acknowledge what he is

saying. Let him know he is being heard. Validate his feelings not necessarily his conclusion. Don't interrupt. Ask if there is any other point he would like to make.

5. If you are having second thoughts, excuse yourself and review the ruling with the other staffer. Your objective is to get the right ruling, not appease the parent.
6. Present the ruling and the facts of the play one final time.
The HJ should let him know that the decision is final, and that you are both done with the conversation, and need to get back to running the event. Apologize that it didn't turn out the way the parent wished, and give them the Play! Pokemon email for follow-up.
7. If the parent is still being unreasonably upset and demonstrative at this point, give a final warning that he must return to calm behavior and non-interference, or their child will be disqualified.
The HJ or TO should make this statement only when good and ready to enforce it, because quite likely it will escalate things if the parent was calming down. Unless they settle down and become cooperative, the TO or HJ should also tell them they must leave. How to enforce that depends on the venue. You need to get the venue's management involved in the removal.

6.5. He said/She said

In a "He said/She said" case you have game events about which the players disagree and little direct evidence to support either player. Don't give up! Things like number of cards in hand, number of energy in play, and number of Pokémon in the discard pile, can all be used by the judge to assist in finding the facts. (Tip: Get each player's name and use it when asking questions; this will help keep the players from answering each other's questions). Let both players know that they will each get to tell their side. Then, question each player independently about their view of the facts and the sequence of events. Also, be sure to let each player tell their whole story without making conclusions. Then, use follow up questions to explore for inconsistencies in the players statements about the facts and sequence of events. When you think you have the conclusion (or are stuck), if possible, review the situation with another judge. When you rule, you should try to go with the majority of the evidence, if it is sufficient. In the event you cannot arrive at a ruling with sufficient evidence, you may need to make your best decision about the state of the game, issue a caution or warning to both players for failure to properly keep track of game state and tell the players to continue play. Whatever you do, do not use a random method to determine your ruling!

6.6. Time check

Players will frequently ask for the amount of time remaining in a round. The judge staff must handle this question consistently throughout the event. That is, each judge should have the same approach when asked this question in any given set of rounds. If the Head Judge or Tournament Organizer doesn't cover this with you in a judges meeting, but sure to ask and help communicate the approach to the other judges.

6.7. Suspected cheating

Play! Pokémon wants judge staff to catch cheating and apply the appropriate penalty. Do not attempt to halt the suspected behavior by 'judge presence', e.g., standing on top of a match. This will not only be interpreted as 'rude' or 'intimidating' behavior but it does not support the goal of catching cheaters and applying the earned penalty. Being a 'judge presence' merely stops the suspected behavior while you are present.

While investigating suspected cheating:

- Continue with a welcoming, rather than suspicious, demeanor.
- Alert the Head Judge.
- Observe unobtrusively to confirm the behavior.
- Cross check with another judge, if needed.

6.8. Spectator Interference

Judges are aware that players in the tournament are not allowed to become spectators, by Play! Pokémon rule. Players who are finished with their matches are required to leave the play area and not watch other matches.

The play area should be set up to avoid contact between players and family, friends and other spectators as much as possible. Beyond that, any spectator gallery should be quietly and politely cautioned to avoid actions and speech that may disturb or distract players from their matches. When appropriate, individuals should be reminded that penalties they earn may be applied to players for whom they are responsible, per the penalty guidelines. Unfortunately, this is most common in the Parent-Child relationship but could apply to drivers, siblings, and other friends.

If you keep a moderate and lively pace of play at the tables, as per the penalty guidelines, spectators have less time to become involved with too much match detail and slip into communicating with players. If the pace slows to a crawl or stop, there is more temptation and information available to the spectators

In the event that a member of the gallery communicates by word or gesture to a player:

Be sure. Before taking action, be sure that what you saw or heard was interference. Consult with other judges nearby, if possible, to confirm your observation. If you're sure, stop the match (note the time) and call the Head Judge.

Assess the damage done. Some advice is more damaging, other advice less so. You will want to consult with the Head Judge regarding what to do about

repairing this damage and assessing the penalty earned. Any penalty given, may best be given in the presence of the offending spectator, to discourage further interference. Judges should consider such factors as whether the offered assistance was itself a deceptive action designed to generate a penalty or misplay.

Take action to prevent recurrence. This may include politely and firmly warning the gallery and asking the offending party to leave the venue.

6.9. Assessing Stalling/Slow Play

If a player reports, or you observe, possible slow play or stalling, you are expected to observe the match through several game actions to determine if there is a **pattern** of slow play actions. It is best, if you weren't called over, to observe at a small distance in order to avoid changing a player's behavior by your presence. If you were called over, tell both players to pick up the pace, then walk away. Soon thereafter, circle back to stand at a distance out of direct sight of the "offending" player to observe.

Slow Play. *Slow play is not about intent, nor is it judged by intent.* "A player who takes too long to make decisions about game play runs the risk of putting his or her opponent at a disadvantage due to the round's time limit," says the Penalty Guidelines. This could result from a new player being unsure or an experienced player wanting to weigh every option. Unobtrusively time the player's actions (don't hold up a stopwatch; instead count silently or observe a room clock or wristwatch on folded arms), and if the player shows a pattern of exceeding the "time limits for various game actions" guidelines:

- stop the match at an appropriate moment
- review the time guidelines with the players, using the template, "you have about X seconds to perform Y action"
- report the timings you observed to the player, for example, "you took 45 seconds examining piles and thinking before playing Combee, you played Bebe and searched and researched for 25 seconds, you played the selected card and thought for 20 seconds before deciding what to promote after retreating Jumpluff"
- tell the players what penalty (and any match extension) you intend to issue, then ask for questions

Stalling. Stalling mentioned briefly in the penalty guidelines, as when the player is matching "the time limits for various game actions" on nearly every play or when they are they are performing game actions that have no effect on the game in progress. In practice the player is doing this to run out the clock to solidify an in-game prize advantage, to wait for time to run out on their turn in order to break a tie or to draw out the 2nd game of a match in order to prevent the 3rd game. Watch for the actions described under slow play in the Penalty Guidelines

in these "advantage" situations and be able to support any call of stalling with specific observations. Since penalties earned for stalling should be equal to the "to the Unsporting Conduct: Severe penalties," you will need to discuss this penalty with the Head Judge prior to taking action.

6.10. Giving a penalty to a young child or new player

A judge should never be harsh or scolding in tone when explaining the penalty that any player has earned.

However, when the player is a young child or new player, you should plan to *give step-by-step explanation* of the cause and origin of the penalty (for example, "When <situation happens>, the penalty guidelines (point) tell us to <summarize penalty>"). This way the player, who may not know you or the game that well, is assured that you are not just disliking them or looking down on their level of play. When you ask if they have any questions (see 5.1.4), *give extra time for the player to think of questions* about the ruling. Before moving on from a penalty or lengthy ruling, be sure to help the player reset to play the rest of the game. You don't want to come out of a penalty discussion with a disoriented player who then commits another penalty right away because they don't know where they are in the game.

Remember, a young child or new player's enjoyment of the event will be hurt if they don't understand why they received a penalty.

6.11. Appeal to the Head Judge

If a player appeals to the head judge, don't take offense! Be polite and ask the players to keep play stopped while you get the head judge. Reassure them that you will give the appropriate extension by again referencing the time when this ruling started (see 5.1.1). Excuse yourself and *let the head judge know that a player is "appealing to the head judge"* and wait with the HJ until the HJ can break away and then bring the HJ to the table! You can and should give your view of the facts and situation before you bring the HJ over; however, that does not constitute an appeal. When there is an appeal, never relay your view of events to the HJ expecting to take the ruling back to the table. The HJ must go personally to the appealing player and should also confirm the facts with the players before confirming or issuing a penalty. A player that feels he or she has been heard out will be much more accepting of the result than a player who feels like the judges didn't listen.

6.12. When judges disagree

The main thing to keep in mind is that the judge team should consult and give themselves time to come to agreement, away from the players as much as is practical. Once a decision is reached, **all** the judge staff, including the judges whose opinion did not prevail, need to support the decision. A good Head Judge or sage advice from the tournament organizer should be able to resolve the question to the satisfaction and understanding of all.

However, when agreement is not reached, every member of the judge team is expected to support the decision reached by the HJ publicly during and after the event. Further discussion of complex rulings and penalty scenarios is welcome between staff and on the Play! Pokémon forums after the event. Online discussions are best reduced to the general case. The correct place for a judge to stow a report about a major problem at an event is with the HJ, the TO and/or Play! Pokémon email.

Sometimes there is disagreement on style or approach to issues. A Judge needs to take his or her cues on how things are to be done from the Head Judge. You may be HJ in your local shop or events, but if you're working for someone else, that person is in charge. As long as what they want done doesn't violate ethics, game rules or tournament rules, make sure that things get done the way they want them, not how you want them.

6.13. Rewinding a misplay

Start with the assumption that you do NOT know what happened and ask lots of questions. Get the story from both players. Figure out 1) what the error(s) was 2) how it happened and finally, once you're sure you've heard everything, 3) make the determination whether the play can be rewound or not. You need to decide if you can put the game state back exactly as it was before the error was made. If you can't rewind the misplay, consult the penalty guidelines before you make your ruling. If you will rewind the play, the way to do this is to lay out for the players everything you are going to do, before you do it. Once you and both players are clear on how the rewind will be conducted, then perform the rewind actions.

6.14. Table Judging

Most judge skills apply to judging while sitting at top-cut tables, but there are a few special circumstances to anticipate. You will be positioned to view every detail of the game – use this vantage to make sure the top-cut matches are fair and fun as they can be.

- Indicate the winner of each game, and then the match, to the crowd.
- Mark match slip with games won as they conclude, e.g. a stroke to the right of the player's name to indicate a win.
- Don't do anything that will give the appearance you are partial to one player over another.

Find a way to keep your concentration when judging the match. There is nothing worse than missing an error or being unable to recall the facts of a disputed play because you are tired and attention wandered. Techniques that several US Nationals and Worlds Judges have found useful:

- Narrate every play of the match in your head.

- Take private notes of every play. If you do this, make sure neither player can ever see your notes. This is more a focus technique than a recording, but if you refer to your notes during a ruling, keep them private rather than displaying them as 'evidence'.

7. Judging at a BIG event

7.1. Chain of command

The head judge is the final say on game play matters in any event, and all of the members need to support the team by accepting the HJ's decision as final. The tournament organizer is responsible for the players' enjoyment of the event, scorekeeping and for other matters pertaining to the venue. TO decisions and directions are likewise to be supported and followed by the judge staff. Examine player/spectator hypothetical questions at the event before answering. Skills include:

- Ask directly if the question pertains to a specific incident. If it pertains to the current event, direct them to the appropriate person, the HJ or TO, at the same time giving the HJ/TO a heads-up.
- Defer the question until after the event, noting that you need to give your attention to current duties, then go do them.

7.2. Coordination

Judges and staff at big events are often the TO or HJ at their local events with responsibility for lots of different aspects of the event. It is important to realize that roles in larger events are more specialized and that coordination of runners, judges, scorekeepers and others through their chain of command is required. An idea to make something run "better" may actually make other things run "worse" if it is not OK'd first by the folks responsible for that part of the event.

7.3. Judging with a translator's assistance

At some large events, a translator will help you communicate with players that do not speak your language(s). The basic judge skill for translation is simple.

This skill involves two steps:

1. Break up your questions or statements into **single** thoughts.
2. Let the translator translate each thought **before** going to the next one.

If the player speaks to the translator, the translator will translate the full reply from the player.

When neither player speaks your language(s) you will end up with two translators. You must wait for both translators to translate. Then you can go on to the next thought.

Follow along with the translator's interaction with the player. You will sense when the translator and player are done with each of your thoughts. Wait for them to finish speaking and watch their faces. They may turn back to you or nod when they are ready.

Do all the normal things you would do when judging. Just break them into small chunks. Mark the time at the start. Greet the player. Ask questions. Give your ruling. Ask if the player understands. Give any extension required. When done, thank the translator.

It is always important to note the start time for a ruling. This notation is critical when translation is involved. You will have longer extensions when working with translators.

Be alert! When a player raises a hand or card for a translator, you have been summoned as well. Go to that table so there is no discussion without the judge present.

Translators are there to translate for you and the player. It is improper for translators to judge or advise players. Following the single thoughts method will cut down the appearance of impropriety.

As always, step away from the table to discuss a ruling with other judges. Only one of the players speaks your language. It is important that neither player can hear the sound of your words during judge conferences.

You may have a question about what a translator is saying. Ask politely but directly. The translators will be under the supervision of a tournament official. Discuss any concerns about translators with that official between rounds. Be sure to know the correct procedures for requesting a translator. Follow those procedures.

Make use of translation books for card translation requests when they are available. This allows the player to read the card in his or her own language directly, precluding unintentional errors in translating from the other language.

Change History

Edits since v9:

1. Fixed and streamlined some wording.
2. Added rewind section, added techniques to table judging, slow play