

# One handbook to rule them all

Almost every sport in the world has a simplified version for children. Novice tennis players start on half-size courts with smaller nets, and balls that bounce higher and slower. Basketball beginners use smaller balls, lower rings and have modified rules, including a limit on how many points an individual player can score!

But is this needed in chess? A bright 6 year old can learn the basic movements of all the pieces in under an hour, so is there any need for rule modifications?

To answer this question I asked coaches and tournament organisers of beginner and school chess programs about the most confusing rules for new players and what changes they would make. Here's what they had to say:

- En passant is the most confusing rule; players should be able to take back their pawn move if it gets captured e.p. and they didn't know the move was possible
- Castling; players should be able to move either the rook or the king first
- Players in check should not be required to adhere to touch-move
- No draw offers, no resignations; play it out!
- Stalemate is a win, not a draw
- 50-move draw should be used only after one player has a lone king
- 3x repetition is only claimable with repeated consecutive moves
- For very new players capturing the King wins the game (or, allow the capture only after moving into check a second time)

Well, it's an interesting list of ideas. I expect, like me, that most arbiters' skin is crawling just thinking about them.

But then again - does it seem fair to force a player to lose a piece just because they didn't realise they were in check? Isn't it sometimes heartbreaking to explain that castling is not possible, because the player touched a rook? This can mean 'game over' straight away, instead of deciding the result on the chessboard ... and preventing the occasional tear!



If you think about it, it is very unusual in the world of sport for an international organisation to hold an umbrella over all levels of athletes. From beginners, through club amateurs, professionals and all the way to the very top.

Since we have the same rules and rating system for everybody who is interested in chess anywhere in the whole world, maybe it would be worth considering allowing some flexibility for those who are just trying to have fun at their local rated chess event.

And you never know, maybe for some kids this could be the difference between a discouraging experience which gives football the priority, and sticking to chess.

**Text by:**  
**IA Jirina Prokopova**

You never know, for some, even a minor discouragement could be the difference between choosing to play football and sticking to chess. Maybe even progressing to a fancy tournament with stricter rules and becoming a champion!