



FREESTYLE CHESS



**Regulations for the
FIDE Freestyle Chess
World Championship
Weissenhaus, Germany
February 11th-16th, 2026**

1. Scope

- 1.1 The governing body of the FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship is the International Chess Federation (FIDE), in collaboration with the Organizer (Freestyle Chess Co., hereinafter referred to as “FCC”).
- 1.2 These Regulations are developed by the Organizer (FCC) and are approved by FIDE under the aegis of the Global Strategy Commission (GSC).
- 1.3 Any circumstance or unforeseen situation not covered by these Regulations shall be referred to the FIDE President for final decision.

2. Qualification

- 2.1 The tournament will feature eight participants, selected as follows:
 - A) The top six players in the Freestyle Chess ranking, based on points earned during the 2025 Freestyle Chess Season.
 - B) One player from the Chess.com Online Qualification, which will be completed by end of January 2026 (Regulations about this Qualification tournament under chess.com).
 - C) One wildcard awarded to GM Hans Niemann, as selected by the Organizer (FCC)

The players qualified under criterion A) are:

- GM Magnus Carlsen (FCC Points 2025: 121)
- GM Levon Aronian (84)
- GM Fabiano Caruana (73)
- GM Vincent Keymer (71)
- GM Arjun Erigaisi (46)
- GM Javokhir Sindarov (46)



FREESTYLE CHESS



- 2.2 A qualified player who does not accept their place in the tournament or who is unable to participate at short notice for any reason, may be replaced by another player. The replacement shall be selected by the FIDE President.

3. Tournament Details

3.1. Day 1: Round Robin Tournament

3.1.1 Format: Round Robin, 8 players, 7 rounds

3.1.2 Time control: 10 minutes per player, with an increment of 5 seconds per move starting from move 1

3.1.3 Default time: 5 minutes

The following regulations apply to the Round Robin Tournament:

3.1.4 No draw offers are allowed before Black's 40th move. This restriction does not apply in the case of a Blitz game or an Armageddon game.

3.1.5 Tie-breaks will be decided in the following order:

1. Result of the direct encounter,
2. Number of wins,
3. Sonneborn-Berger score,
 - 4a. In the case of a tie between two players for 1st place or for 5th place in this Round Robin Tournament: One Armageddon game will be played (see below),
 - 4b. In the case of a tie between three or more players: a mini-tournament with a time control of 5 minutes per player, with an increment of 3 seconds per move starting from move 1 will be played (tie-break criteria reapplied in the same order).

In the case of a tie, involving both the 4th- and the 5th-place finishers, a playoff shall be played among all players involved in the tie. (= Stage I)

- A) a Double Round Robin Tournament (2 to 4 players) or
- B) a Round Robin Tournament (with 5 or more players)

with 5 minutes per player, with an increment of 3 seconds per move starting from move 1. The result of this mini-tournament determines the ranking of the involved players for the final standing of the (Double) Round Robin Tournament.

If players remain tied for 4th place in the overall standings after the (Double) Round Robin Tournament (Stage I), thereby occupying both the 4th and 5th positions, a playoff (Stage II) shall be held to determine the player finishing 4th. Only those players who are still tied for these positions after Stage I shall be eligible to participate.

The playoff shall be played as a knockout tournament consisting of Armageddon games (regulation see below). The seeding numbers and the colors shall be



FREESTYLE CHESS



determined by drawing of lots.

The tournament bracket for the Armageddon knockout shall be announced to the participants prior to the drawing of lots/colors.

3.1.6 The pairings for the Round Robin Tournament are determined by lot. The draw of starting numbers will take place on February 12 at the end of the Technical Meeting. After the drawing of numbers, the pairings are as follows:

Rd 1: 1-8 2-7 3-6 4-5 / Rd 2: 8-5 6-4 7-3 1-2

Rd 3: 2-8 3-1 4-7 5-6 / Rd 4: 8-6 7-5 1-4 2-3

Rd 5: 3-8 4-2 5-1 6-7 / Rd 6: 8-7 1-6 2-5 3-4

Rd 7: 4-8 5-3 6-2 7-1

3.1.7 The players finishing in Places 1 to 4 in the Round Robin stage advance to the Semi Finals. The players finishing in Places 5 to 8 in the Round Robin stage advance to the Lower Bracket Semi Finals.

3.2. Days 2-3: Knockout Stage

3.2.1 Format: Knockout, 8 players, 4-game matches (2-game matches for the 5th and 7th place Finals)

Day 2: There will be 2 matches for Places 1 to 4 (Semi Finals) and 2 matches for Places 5 to 8 (Lower Bracket Semi Finals).

Day 3: There will be 4 matches. A match for 1st place, a match for 3rd place, a match for 5th place and a match for 7th place.

3.2.2 Time control: 25 minutes per player, with an increment of 10 seconds per move starting from move 1

3.2.3 Default time: 5 minutes

The following regulations apply to the Knockout Stage:

3.2.4 No draw offers are allowed before Black's 40th move. This restriction does not apply in the case of an Armageddon game.

3.2.5 Semi Finals: The player ranked 1st in the Round Robin Tournament will choose an opponent from among the players ranked 3rd and 4th. The player ranked 2nd in the Round Robin Tournament will play the other Semi Final against the remaining player.

3.2.6 Lower Bracket Semi Finals: The player ranked 5th in the Round Robin Tournament will choose an opponent from among the players ranked 7th and 8th. The player ranked 6th in the Round Robin Tournament will play the other Lower Bracket Semi Final against the remaining player.

3.2.7 The winners of the Semi Finals will face each other in the Grand Final ("Final 1") to determine 1st and 2nd place. The two Semi Final losers will play for 3rd and 4th place ("Final 3").



FREESTYLE CHESS



- 3.2.8 The winners of the Lower Bracket Semi Finals will play each other in the match for 5th place ("Final 5"), determining 5th and 6th place. The two Lower Bracket Semi Final losers will play for 7th and 8th place ("Final 7").
- 3.2.9 Each match on day 2, as well as Final 1 and Final 3 on day 3, will be best-of-four games. Final 5 and Final 7 will be played as best-of-two matches.



FREESTYLE CHESS



- 3.2.10 During day 2, as well as in Final 1 and Final 3 on day 3, each player will play two games with White and two with Black. The color sequence will be White-Black-Black-White for one player and Black-White-White-Black for the opponent.
- 3.2.11 In Final 5 and Final 7 on day 3 each player will play one game with White and one with Black.
- 3.2.12 The player ranked higher in the Round Robin Tournament will choose their color for the first game of the Semi Finals and Lower Bracket Semi Finals. This selection will take place immediately after the determination of the pairings (time to be announced by the Organizer). In the subsequent round, the higher-ranked player from the Round Robin stage will get their color for the first game, alternating from their starting color in the previous round.
- 3.2.13 If the match is tied after the regular four games on day 2 and in Final 1 and Final 3 on day 3, or after the regular two games in Final 5 and Final 7 on day 3, a single Armageddon game will be played to determine the winner.
- 3.2.14 For all Armageddon games (see 3.1.5 and 3.2.13), both players submit a secret bid indicating the amount of time they wish to start with. The player who submits the lower bid receives Black and only needs a draw to win the match, while White receives the standard time, see below and must win. If both players bid the same time, the higher-ranked player from the Round Robin Tournament will draw lots to determine the colors. The bidding takes place before the starting position number is drawn. In all Armageddon games, an increment of 1 second per move begins from move 61 onward.

Day 1:

Players may bid any time up to 4 minutes and 59 seconds. White receives 5 minutes; Black receives the bid time. If lots must be drawn after three identical bids, White plays with 5 minutes and Black with 4 minutes, plus 1 second increment per move starting from move 61.

Days 2 and 3:

Players may bid any time up to 9 minutes and 59 seconds. White receives 10 minutes; Black receives the bid time. If lots must be drawn after three identical bids, White plays with 10 minutes and Black with 9 minutes, plus 1 second increment per move starting from move 61.



FREESTYLE CHESS



4. Schedule

February 11	Arrivals (All Day)
February 12	Content Day Technical Meeting at 6:00 pm
February 13	Press conference 2:00 pm Opening Ceremony 2:30 pm Round Robin stage (7 rounds & possible Playoffs) Start round 1 at 3:00 pm
February 14	Semi Final Day (Up to 4 rounds & possible Armageddon) Start round 1 at 3:00 pm
February 15	Final Day (Up to 4 rounds & possible Armageddon) Start round 1 at 3:00 pm Closing Ceremony after the last game finished around 9:00 pm
February 16	Departures (All Day)

5. Prizes

5.1 The prize money will be distributed as follows:

Place	Prize (USD)
1 st	\$ 100,000
2 nd	\$ 60,000
3 rd	\$ 40,000
4 th	\$ 30,000
5 th	\$ 25,000
6 th	\$ 20,000
7 th	\$ 15,000
8 th	\$ 10,000
Total	\$ 300,000



FREESTYLE CHESS



5.2 The top three places will receive trophies and medals provided by the Organizer.

6. Freestyle Chess (Fischer Random) Procedures

6.1 For all games with a new starting position, the initial position of the pieces will be drawn at random by the Organizer. All games that start at the same time will be played from the same starting position.

6.2 The initial position will be presented to the players 10 minutes before the scheduled start time of the game. Players are permitted to use the 10-minute period to seek advice from other players playing that starting position with the same color, but not from an electronic source (e.g., a chess engine).

Only in the case of potential Blitz or Armageddon games to determine final standings in the Round Robin stage, the consultation period will be reduced to 5 minutes.

6.3 Position 518 (classical chess) is excluded from the possible starting positions. All other initial positions remain valid. Once a position has been drawn, it will not be selected again in this tournament.

7. Playing Conditions

7.1 During a game, a player may only communicate with an arbiter or an Organizer.

7.2 Players are not permitted to bring into a playing area a phone, technical or other equipment extraneous to play, which may in any way disturb or upset their opponents. The Chief Arbiter shall decide what constitutes extraneous equipment disturbing the opponent.

7.3 The audience may be allowed near the players, but never closer than two meters. The Organizer will provide players with voluntary noise-cancelling equipment to prevent players being disturbed by the audience.

7.4 All players will wear heart rate sensors in every game as provided by the Organizer. The heart rate can be presented in graphics in the broadcast from the event and the commentators can use the development in heart rate to enhance the broadcast presentation.

7.5 For games with a time control of 25 minutes per player, with an increment of 10 seconds per move, players are encouraged to enter the confessional booth at least once per game and provide a brief on-camera statement about the game so far. This



FREESTYLE CHESS



element is crucial for the audience's experience and players are kindly asked to cooperate.

8. Players' Conduct

- 8.1 Dress code: Wearing the neat shirt and formal jacket to be provided by the Organizer is mandatory. Shoes and long trousers must appear "smart-casual" to match the official upper body attire. Shorts and baseball caps or any other headgear are not allowed. The Organizer will make sure each player's personal sponsor's logos are included on the outfits.
- 8.2 All players must be present at all approved functions, including the Opening and the Closing Ceremonies. In addition, players are expected to attend the Technical Meetings called by the Chief Arbiter and to make themselves available for interviews with the media and/or the Organizer, especially immediately after each game.
- 8.3 Failure to appear at any approved function, such as official receptions, press conferences or interviews, as well as behavior in a manner contrary to the spirit of sporting behavior, may result in penalties, from forfeiture of prize money to disqualification from the current or any future event.
- 8.4 The Organizer will appoint the Chief Arbiter and Deputy Chief Arbiter. During play, either the Chief Arbiter or the Deputy Chief Arbiter must be present in the playing area. The Deputy Chief Arbiter will be responsible for Fair Play Measures.



FREESTYLE CHESS



9. Commercial Issues

9.1 The Organizer holds all commercial and media rights for Freestyle Chess-related events and online content. The players, principals and arbiters as well as any technical staff admitted to the venue understand that they may be captured either by recorded or broadcasted video, or by their images, including photographs, video frames or works of art (referred to as Images) at the venue of the event as well as at the site around it, and provide their irrevocable consent to such capture, recording, and broadcast.

9.2 The FIDE logo is displayed below:



The FIDE logo shall be displayed in a black color on a white background. The text describing any event shall not be larger than twice the size of the word FIDE reproduced in the logo.