



The top 10 things Judges can do to move the event along so we can all be done at a decent hour.

(Artikel Julia Hedberg 01/12/2006)

Since the “tie-in” articles seem to work so well, I’m doing it again this week! For the players, I’m listing off the top ten things they do that slow tournaments down. Hopefully this will help us get through events faster, but to improve our chances even more, I’m going to offer a list for the judges as well: ten things judges can do to help things go faster. The more rounds you’ve got to get through, the better “faster” sounds, hmm? As judges we strive to do a fast and accurate job—run through this list and see if there’s anything you could be doing a little better to help move things along.

- **Move players through registration as quickly as possible.**

This requires judges to coordinate their efforts. The head judge and Tournament Organizer can provide a plan of attack and sort out who should do what as the tournament opens to let in registrants. A popular event will usually have a lot of people waiting and the initial stampede towards registration is pretty chaotic. You’ve got parents who’ve never taken a child to an event and don’t know what a UDE tournament number is, players who’ve been up all night drinking soda and playtesting before piling into a car without enough seatbelts and barreling off to the tournament, and other individuals whose sense of order may be somewhat dulled. Putting judges out to manage the line, direct players, and hand out paperwork will get that mob under control and speed the registration process up. The faster you get those players signed up, the sooner the event can begin, so work together to make it happen.

- **Be at your stations ready to go before each round starts.**

Whichever team you’re on, there are things you need to do to get the rounds going as quickly as possible. If you’re on the pairings team, you should be waiting up by the scorekeeper’s area when the previous round is over, so they can get the next round pairings up fast. Match slips team should do the same, ready to cut the slips and hand them around the minute they come off the printer. The deck check team should have a table selected and decklists pulled as soon as that first pairings sheet comes out of the printer. Logistics should get out on the floor and keep a lookout for any problems. Everyone needs to move fast to minimize wait time.

- **Focus on your job!**

When the round gets going, keep focused on what you’re supposed to be doing—and there’s always something you should be doing, right? Get match slips and pairings out as quickly as possible, don’t waste time chatting with each other during the deck checks, and be prepared to constantly clean up the area and police the crowds. It’s hard to be totally focused at some events—players want to talk to you, or maybe you haven’t seen some of your fellow judges for a while, or there might be a really exciting (or noisy) event going on next door, and so forth. But you need to keep your attention firmly fixed on what’s going on at your own event, to make sure things keep moving.

- **Answer rulings questions as quickly as possible!**

Players are entitled to accurate and concise answers to their rulings questions. They also may (and should be encouraged to) appeal if they don't agree with that answer. However, they are not entitled to a super-detailed debate/explanation as to why the ruling is what it is during the match. If a player wants to debate an answer with you, tell him or her civilly but firmly that that is the answer, he or she may appeal if he or she likes, and you will be happy to discuss the reasoning behind it when the match is done if you both have time. The same applies for penalties. The player may appeal, but he or she should not be allowed to take several minutes to argue about it, beyond presenting the information used to evaluate the ruling or penalty. Make sure you have all the relevant info, make your ruling or issue your penalty, get an appeal if requested, and then that should be it. The fact that they can get a time extension often makes players spend a lot of time here, but that can lead to a delayed end of round. Work on your explanation and listening skills (and keep up on rulings and policy!), so you are able to do this quickly and accurately.

- **Keep break times reasonable, and make sure the head judge/team lead knows where you are.**

When there are lots of judges, breaks can be longer and more frequent, but when staffing is tight, you have to just bear with it and keep your "down" time as low as possible. Get your food from someplace close (now's not the time to make a trip to a place several blocks away!), eat it quickly, and get back out on the floor. You also need to clear your breaks with the head judge or team lead—don't just suddenly go, "Hey, it's nacho time!!" and wander off the floor for half an hour. When the staffing is unbalanced, that slows everyone down. If you're working with a team or TO that you haven't worked with before, check and see what the break policy is. Sometimes judges just go ahead and take their habitual breaks, which might conflict with how the new team does it. Find out how long you have before you take off.

- **Be ready to cover for absent team members.**

When break times roll around, be aware who's missing from your team, and get ready to fill in. Team leads should handle shifting around the team members. Remember that you should be able to fill in for judges on other teams as well when needed. Don't complain and say something like, "But I hate doing deck checks!" Do what you need to do as part of a cohesive unit to get the jobs done fast and right.

- **Don't clump, or hide in the judge area!**

If the head judge or TO looks out over the tournament, he or she should not see a mass of players with some isolated chunks of black-and-white. In other words, judges need to be distributed evenly, not forming into clumps. Zoning will help keep the judges spread out, but it's up to you to avoid the temptation to pause and chat with other judges, or wander over to see what's going on when you spy a group of judges. You also shouldn't be hanging about the judge area unless you have a specific job to do there. Once your immediate team duties are done, you should be out patrolling the floor and being useful. I once worked with a newbie judge who thought that after he handed out the slips, he was done until the next round. He actually went back to the judge area, pulled out a gaming device, sat down, and started playing. He wasn't asked back. Anyway, you can't answer questions, watch the players, straighten up tables, and keep the event going if you're huddled in a group chatting with other judges or sitting at the judge station. Don't wait for someone to tell you to split up or get out on the floor: you should be able to take care of that on your own.

- **Keep after players to hand in their slips on time, and be on the lookout for abandoned slips.**

Missing match slips probably cause the most delays at any given event. You'd think players would know this or be able to figure it out, but a lot of them don't. If you see a finished match and the slip is just sitting on the table while the players chat and de-sleeve, remind them to turn it in or take it up yourself. The head judge can remind players between rounds that they need to hand their slips in immediately when their matches are over. Also, watch the tables and ground for abandoned slips, because people do drop them. Look for players standing around, holding slips in their hands. Also, make sure *you* aren't holding any—we have occasionally found missing match slips in judge's pockets! The faster the slips are turned in, the quicker the next round will start. The scorekeeper

doesn't want 500 slips when the alarm sounds for the end of the round—he or she wants them coming in as they are completed. Do whatever you can do make that happen.

- **Watch out for stallers!**

Stalling is a real problem, and a lot of judges are shy about cracking down on it. But apart from being against tournament policy, slow play often forces matches to run over time and that delays the start of the next round. There are a lot of decks that can take advantage of the end-of-match procedure, so judges need to be vigilant. Keep track of slow play complaints from players, and if there are some participants who really seem to be causing a consistent delay, judges should stay near them whenever possible to keep the game moving. Stalling shouldn't be condoned, and players need to realize you'll take it seriously and enforce appropriate measures.

- **Watch for matches that will extend past time and supervise them.**

Matches that go past time should have a judge watching them if possible, to make sure the players resolve the end-of-match procedure correctly. Once the match is over, immediately take the match slip up to the scorekeeper. Most players will just sit there, heedless of the fact that they're holding up the event. It usually just doesn't even occur to them, so you need to remind them. It's best if you just carry the slip up yourself: you'll get it there faster.

Anyone who's judged regularly knows that there's much more that needs to be done to keep the event going smoothly, but these are some of the most important. Whatever your role at the event—head judge, team lead, floor judge—you have an important role to play. If you aren't living up to your duties, then you're throwing things off for everyone else. Tournaments that drag on and on are hard on everyone, so anything you can do to get them over quicker is going to benefit the entire team—and hey, you could actually get out of there before the good restaurants close!