

FESA – Shogi official playing rules

The FESA Laws of Shogi cover over-the-board play.

This version of the Laws of Shogi was adopted by voting by FESA representatives at August 04 2017, and amended by vote of the FESA representatives at September 23 2024.

In these Laws the words 'he', 'him' and 'his' should be taken to mean 'she', 'her' and 'hers' as appropriate.

PREFACE

The FESA Laws of Shogi cannot cover all possible situations that may arise during a game, nor can they regulate all administrative questions. Where cases are not precisely covered by an Article of the Laws, the arbiter should base his decision on analogous situations which are discussed in the Laws, taking into account all considerations of fairness, logic and any special circumstances that may apply. The Laws assume that arbiters have the necessary competence, sound judgement and objectivity. FESA appeals to all shogi players and member federations to accept this view.

A member federation is free to introduce more detailed rules for their own events provided these rules:

- a) do not conflict in any way with the official FESA Laws of Shogi,
- b) are limited to the territory of the federation in question, and
- c) are not used for any FESA championship or FESA rating tournament.

BASIC RULES OF PLAY

Article 1: The nature and objectives of the game of shogi

1.1 The game of shogi is played between two opponents who take turns to make one move each on a rectangular board called a 'shogiboard'. The player who starts the game is said to be 'sente' or black. The other player is called 'gote' or white. A player is said to 'have the move', when his opponent's move has been 'made' and keeps it until his own move is made.

1.2 The objective of each player is to make a legal move which threatens to capture the opponent's king in such a way that the opponent is left with no legal move of his own. Leaving one's king under attack or moving one's king to a square where it could be immediately captured on the next move is not legal. The player who achieves this objective is said to have 'checkmated' the opponent's king and has won the game. Leaving one's own king under attack, exposing one's own king to attack is not allowed. The opponent whose king has been checkmated has lost the game.

1.3 Under certain rare circumstances a game may be drawn (see Article 5). Note that the two players cannot simply agree a draw between themselves unless one of these rare circumstances has occurred.

Article 2: The initial position of the pieces on the shogiboard

2.1 The shogiboard is composed of a 9x9 grid of 81 squares. The shogiboard is placed between the players with the shorter sides of the squares towards the players.

2.2 At the beginning of the game each player has 20 pieces. All of the pieces are the same colour. Each player has: One king (K), one rook (R), one bishop (B), two gold generals (G), two silver generals (S), two knights (N), two lances (L), and nine pawns (P).

2.3 Each player's pieces are placed on the board with the pointed end facing the opponent. In the initial position, each player's own pieces occupy the three ranks closest to that player. The initial position of the pieces on the shogiboard is as follows:

香	桂	銀	金	王	金	銀	桂	香
	飛						角	
歩	歩	歩	歩	歩	歩	歩	歩	歩
歩	歩	歩	歩	歩	歩	歩	歩	歩
	角						飛	
香	桂	銀	金	王	金	銀	桂	香

2.4 The nine vertical columns of squares in the diagram above are called 'files'. The nine horizontal rows are called 'ranks'. A straight line of squares touching corner to corner, is called a 'diagonal'. The three ranks closest to each player's opponent is that player's 'promotion zone'.

Article 3: The moves of the pieces

3.1 It is not permitted to move a piece to a square occupied by one of your own pieces. You can however move a piece to a square occupied by an opponent's piece. Such a move captures the opponent's piece. Captured pieces are said to be in the capturing player's 'hand'. Captured pieces have always to be visible to both opponents, ideally put on small board dedicated to these, named 'komadai'. The pieces should be arranged neatly, with the unpromoted side facing up.

3.2 The rook, bishop, silver general, knight, lance and pawn can all be 'promoted'. If a player moves one of these pieces into, within or out of his promotion zone, he has the right to promote the piece as part of that move by turning it upside down. A player must promote a piece if it is moved to a square from which it could not move again if left unpromoted. Promotion is irreversible until the piece is captured. After capture the piece reverts to its original unpromoted state.

The moves and promoted moves of the pieces are as follows:

3.3 The king may step to any adjacent square not under attack from one or more of the opponent's pieces.

3.4 The rook may slide to any square along the file or along the rank on which it stands. It cannot jump over another piece, friend or foe. The promoted rook may move as an unpromoted rook or instead it may move one step diagonally.

3.5 The bishop may slide to any square along the diagonals on which it stands. It cannot jump over another piece, friend or foe. The promoted bishop may move as an unpromoted bishop or instead it may move one step along the file or the rank on which it stands.

3.6 The gold general may step to any adjacent square except diagonally backwards.

3.7 The silver general may step to any adjacent square except straight backwards or sideways. The promoted silver general may step to any adjacent square except diagonally backwards (i.e. it has the same move as a gold general).

3.8 The knight may jump to either of the two squares located two steps forward and one step sideways. The promoted knight may step to any adjacent square except diagonally backwards (i.e. it has the same move as a gold general).


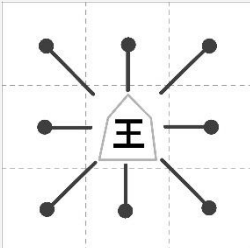

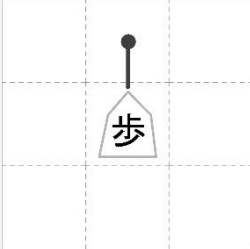
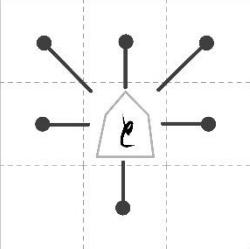

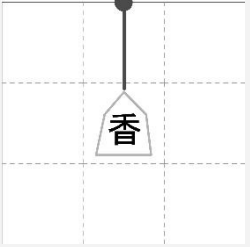
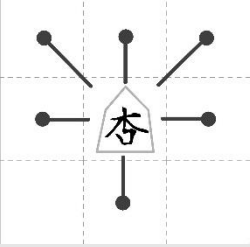

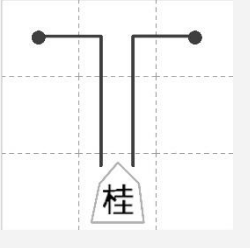
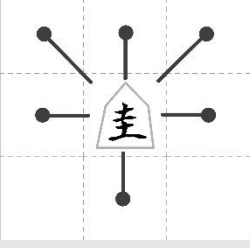

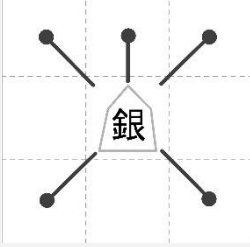
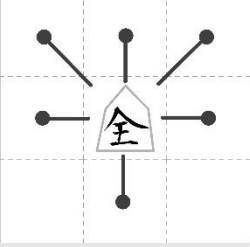
3.9 The lance may slide to any square forwards along the file on which it stands. It cannot jump over another piece, friend or foe. The promoted lance may step to any adjacent square except diagonally backwards (i.e. it has the same move as a gold general).


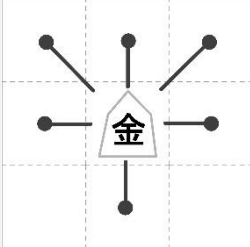

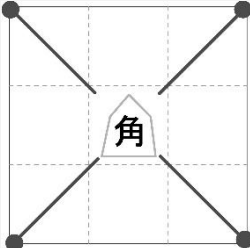
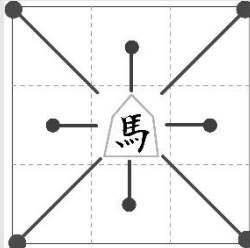

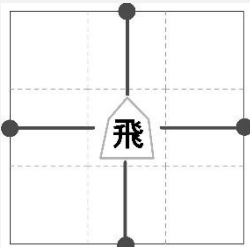
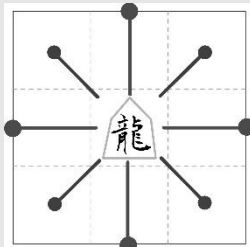
3.10 The pawn may step forward to the square immediately in front of it on the same file. The promoted pawn may step to any adjacent square except diagonally backwards (i.e. it has the same move as a gold general).

3.11 A player with one or more pieces in hand can choose to 'drop' one of these pieces onto an unoccupied square on the board instead of moving one of his pieces already on the board. Pieces are always dropped unpromoted. Note that there are three cases where dropping a piece is illegal:

- (a) A pawn cannot be dropped onto a file where the player already has one or more unpromoted pawns.
- (b) A piece cannot be dropped onto a square from where it can never legally move. Thus a player cannot drop a pawn or a lance onto his opponent's back rank or a knight onto either of his opponent's back two ranks.
- (c) A pawn cannot be dropped to deliver an immediate checkmate.

3.12 A player is not allowed to continuously check the opponent's king ('perpetual check') such that the same position is repeated more than three times.

Piece	Move	Promoted move
K  King <i>ôshô</i> and <i>gyoku shô</i>		King doesn't promote
P  Pawn <i>fuhyô</i> → <i>tokin</i>		
L  Lance <i>kyôsha</i> → <i>narikyô</i>		
N  Knight <i>keima</i> → <i>narikei</i>		
S  Silver general <i>gin shô</i> → <i>narigin</i>		

Piece	Move	Promoted move
G  Gold general <i>kin shô</i>		Gold general doesn't promote
B  Bishop <i>kakugyô</i> → <i>uma</i>		
R  Rook <i>bisha</i> → <i>ryû</i>		

Article 4: The act of moving the pieces

4.1 Each move should be made entirely using the one single hand. This hand should be also used to stop the clock (with reference to article 8.7.(a)).

4.2 A player having the move may adjust pieces on the board, or touch one of his own pieces in hand without being obliged to move, capture or drop the touched piece. A player not having the move may adjust the pieces on the board and arrange pieces in his hand, as long as it will not disturb the opponent.

4.3 When a piece has been placed on the board and released, it cannot then be picked up again and moved to a different place and the decision regarding the possible promotion may not be changed.

4.4 A capture should be made by first removing the captured piece to hand and then making the capturing move on the shogiboard. In the case of a capture by a similar piece, it is not allowed to first turn the captured piece around and then remove the capturing piece from the shogiboard to hand.

4.5 Captured pieces have always to be visible to both opponents, ideally put on small board dedicated to these, named 'komadai'.

Article 5: The completion of the game

- 5.1 (a) The game is won by the player who checkmates his opponent's king (see Article 1.2). This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the checkmate was legal.
- (b) Assuming that there is not a checkmate position on the board, the game is won by the player whose opponent declares that he resigns.

5.2 The game can be stopped and declared a draw, `sennichite`, if any identical position is about to appear or has appeared on the shogiboard at least four times, including same pieces in hand for each player and same player to have the turn. Note that some of the moves producing the repetition can be checks, but continuous checks by one side are illegal (see Article 3.12).

5.3 For the purposes of finishing of the games, in which there is no realistic prospect of checkmate, a "27-point Declaration System" applies.

The declarer (the player who seeks to declare win), while having the turn to play, first announces his will to declare win before making his next move. And then, he stops the clock and suspends the game.

If the position at that point meets all the requirements listed below, the declarer wins the game.

1. Declarer's King is in the declarer's promotion zone;
2. Declarer has at least 28 points if Sente, 27 points if Gote. For the purposes of the counting:
 - pawns, lances, knights, silvers and golds are worth 1 point each (regardless if they are unpromoted or promoted);
 - rooks and bishops are worth 5 point each;
 - kings are not counted.
3. The pieces to be counted are only those in the opponent's camp, and his hand pieces.
4. Declarer has at least 10 pieces in the opponent's camp other than his King.
5. Declarer has his thinking time or Byo-yomi left.
6. Declarer's King is not in check.

If any of the above requirements is not met, the declarer loses the game.

5.4 The players are not allowed to offer or accept a draw unless the conditions for a draw in accordance with article 5.2 is met.

COMPETITION RULES

Article 6: Playing material

6.1 Competition games shall be played with traditional shogi pieces, i.e. displaying 1 or 2 kanjis written in a usual style. Other kind of pieces might be used only in cases described in Article 6.3. The sole preference of a competition organiser to use a different kind of pieces is not a reason to use it.

6.2 It is the responsibility of the competition organiser to provide appropriate material to the players.

6.3 The competition organiser may provide other material for the purposes of the beginner players (as described in Article 17.2) or if he is not able to provide enough proper material for all players. In those cases, the board and the pieces which are used should be adjusted to the level of players (e.g. any educational pieces with arrows should be put on tables which are used by the beginner players) and should not be confusing for the experienced players (e.g. each piece should display kanji).

6.4 Players are expected to use the provided material. If both players agree to use another type of material, they may do so.

Article 7: Deciding which player to start the game

7.1 Unless the competition rules or the arbiter states otherwise the selection of the player to start the game is decided by tossing pawns (‘furigoma’). For the furigoma the player with the higher rank, or with equal ranks the more senior player, takes five pawns in his hands, shuffles and then drops the pawns either on the shogiboard or beside it. If the majority of pawns land with their unpromoted side showing, the player who tossed the pawns makes the first move in the game (is sente). If the majority of pawns land with their promoted side showing, then the player who did not toss the pawns makes the first move (is sente). Only pieces lying flat are counted. Pieces resting on their edges or leaning on another piece are not counted. Pieces falling off the shogiboard or onto the floor are counted as long as they lie flat. If no majority is obtained, a new furigoma is performed again using all five pawns. Note that if the result of the furigoma is 2-1, 2-0 or 1-0 for either player this counts as a majority and the furigoma is completed.

7.2 If either of the players are not present at the shogiboard when the game is due to start, the arbiter will perform the furigoma.

Article 8: The shogi clock

8.1 A ‘shogi clock’ is a clock with two time displays, connected to each other in such a way that only one of them can run at one time. During a game, the act of stopping one clock causes the other to start. ‘Clock’ in the Laws of Shogi means one of the two time displays. ‘Flag fall’ means the expiration of the allotted time for a player.

8.2. When playing a game using a shogi clock, each player must normally make all of his moves within an allocated period of time. With some types of clock it is possible to allocate a non-accumulative additional amount of time (‘byo-yomi’) for each move after the basic allocated time period has been used up. It is also possible to allocate an additional accumulative amount of time for each move. Whichever system is used, it must be specified in advance.

8.3. Some electronic shogi clocks freeze when the allocated time has been used up. Mechanical clocks have a ‘flag’, which falls when the allocated time has been used. In either case, to claim a win on time, the claimant must stop both clocks and notify the arbiter. For the claim to be successful the claimant’s flag must remain ‘up’ (unfrozen or unfallen) and his opponent’s flag ‘down’ (frozen or fallen) after the clocks have been stopped. If both players flags are down (frozen or fallen) then the game shall be declared a draw.

8.4. As long as the arbiter or an organiser does not decide on which side of the board the shogi clock is placed, this decision is up to gote.

8.5 At the time determined for the start of the game the clock of the player who should make the first move is started, either by the gote player or by the arbiter.

8.6. A player who arrives at the shogiboard after his allocated time has been entirely used up shall lose the game.

8.7 (a) During the game each player, having made his move on the shogiboard, shall stop his own clock and start his opponent's clock without delay, unless the move that was made ends the game (see Articles 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) A player must always be allowed to stop his clock once he has made his move, even if the opponent replies to the move immediately.

The time between making the move on the shogiboard and stopping his own clock and starting his opponent's clock is regarded as part of the time allotted to the player.

(b) A player must stop his clock with the same hand with which he made his move. It is forbidden for a player to keep his finger on the clock button or to `hover` over it. Improper clock handling shall be penalised in accordance with Article 12.4.

(c) The players must handle the shogi clock properly. It is forbidden to punch it forcibly, to pick it up or to knock it over. Improper clock handling shall be penalised in accordance with Article 12.4.

(d) If a player is unable to use the clock, an assistant may be provided by the player to perform this operation, after agreement of the arbiter. If necessary, the player's clock shall be adjusted by the arbiter in an equitable way.

8.8 A flag is considered to have fallen only when either player has made a valid claim to that effect, in accordance with Article 7.3. The arbiter (or anyone else!) shall refrain from signalling a flag fall.

8.9 Except where Articles 5.1, 5.2 or 5.3 apply, if a player's flag fall, the game is lost by the player.

8.10 Every indication given by the clocks is considered to be conclusive in the absence of any evident defect. A shogi clock with an evident defect shall be replaced. The arbiter shall replace the clock and use his best judgement when determining the times to be shown on the replacement.

8.11 Except where Articles 5.1, 5.2 or 5.3 apply, if both flags have fallen and it is impossible to establish which flag fell first, then the game is drawn. In a competition, a drawn game is usually replayed (see Article 11.1).

8.12 Rules regarding the stopping of clocks:

a) If the game needs to be interrupted, the arbiter shall stop the clocks.

b) A player may stop the clocks only in order to seek the arbiter's assistance.

c) The arbiter shall decide if and when the game is to be restarted.

d) If a player stops the clocks in order to seek the arbiter's assistance, the arbiter shall determine if the player had any valid reason for doing so. If it is obvious that the player has no valid reason for stopping the clocks, the player shall be penalised according to Article 13.4.

8.13 Both players have a common responsibility to set up the shogi clocks correctly before the game, both as regards basic and additional allocated thinking time and any sound signals. If an incorrect set-up is noted during the game the arbiter shall correct the set up and use his best judgement when determining the times to be set on the shogi clock.

Article 9: Irregularities

9.1 If, during a game, it is found that the initial position of the pieces was incorrect, the game shall be cancelled and a new game played.

9.2 If a player displaces one or more pieces, he shall re-establish the correct position on his own time. If necessary, either the player or his opponent shall stop the clocks and ask for the arbiter's assistance. The arbiter may penalise the player who displaced the pieces according to Article 13.4.

9.3 A player is not allowed to start his opponent's clock if he has not made a move in accordance with Article 4.3 or if his pieces are displaced. The arbiter may penalize a player who mistakenly starts the opponent's clock according to Article 13.4.

9.4 After having made an illegal move (as variously defined in Articles 1, 3 and 9) then the opponent is entitled to claim the game. He should do this by pointing out the illegal move to his opponent and then, if necessary, he should stop the clocks and inform the arbiter.

A claim regarding an illegal move cannot be made after the claimant has made a move in reply to the illegal move, unless the position still is illegal at the time of the claim. This would be the case if:

- a) The opponent's king is in check while not having the move; or
- b) The opponent has more than one unpromoted pawn on the same file ('nifu'); or
- c) The opponent has an unpromoted piece in a position from where it never will be able to move.

Note that a player can only claim a win based on one of the above illegal positions when that player has the move.

9.5 Capturing a king that has been left in check is not itself an illegal move. This should be considered as a claim against the previous illegal move that left the king in check. The player capturing the king wins the game and this immediately ends the game.

9.6 If the pieces of the opponent do not fulfill conditions described in point 4.5., the player who has the move may ask the opponent to arrange them, or to confirm, which pieces he has on a hand. If – after this request – the opponent is constantly keeping his pieces disarranged, it might be a basis for the penalty from the judge according to Article 13.4

9.7 It is not allowed for an outside party to point out an illegal move or position. Players or spectators doing this shall be penalised according to Articles 13.4 and 13.7.

Article 10: The recording of the moves

10.1 Players are not required to record the moves unless the rules of the competition specify otherwise.

10.2 Players are eligible to use of an electronic device (application) for the purposes of the game notation as long as an opponent does not disagree.

10.3 If player is using of an electronic device for purposes of the game notation, it is his responsibility to ensure, that such device (application) is customised for the notation purposes and that the usage of such device (application) does not violate article 11.2.

Article 11: The conduct of the players

11.1 The players shall take no action that will bring the game of shogi into disrepute.

11.2 During play the players are forbidden to make use of any notes, sources of information, advice, to analyse on another shogiboard or to use any shogi engine.

11.3 No analysis of ongoing games is allowed in the playing area (but it is recommended to quietly analyse the just finished game with an opponent). Players who have finished their games shall be considered to be spectators to the other games rather than players.

11.5 It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever.

11.6 Both players and spectators should turn off the sounds in mobile phones (and other electronic devices).

11.7 People who registered to a tournament and who didn't join his table to play a round of that tournament, are considered as no-show players. Excluded from this definition are players joining a group tournament (like swiss, mac-mahon...) who have informed the referee and the organizer of their absence to a round, before the setup of that said round. By extension, players registered to a knock-out tournament are expected to join every round of that tournament, including play-offs if there are, unless they have informed the organizer early enough before the start of round 1 that they won't be able to join.

11.8 In case of no-show according to the definition of article 11.7, a player will get a loss of ELO points equivalents to that which he would have suffered by losing a game against someone with the same ELO than himself. In case the competition he was expected to join is a major knock-out tournament like for instance European Shogi Championship, the player will be subject of a ban to the next edition of the same tournament as additional penalty for lack of sportsmanship. If the origin of this no-show would be related to a sudden health issue, it will be up to the referee to decide if these sanctions should be lifted exceptionally.

11.9 Infraction of any part of the above Articles may lead to penalties in accordance with Article 13.4.

Article 12: Scoring

12.1 Unless announced otherwise in advance, a player who wins his game, or wins by forfeit, scores one point (1), and a player who loses his game, or forfeits, scores no points (0).

12.2 Players who draw their game are required to commence a new game immediately, with the gote player from the first game having the first move. The time limit for the new game will be the time remaining on the player's clocks from the first game. This should be treated as a general rule.

12.3 If necessary from a time perspective, the competition organiser (with the agreement of an arbiter) may choose a different time conditions; e.g. if at least one player has more than 10 minutes, the general rule is used, and if both have less than 10 minutes – a blitz game with 8 minutes of time (without byo-yomi) is played. Regardless of the used time conditions, the game should be finished with a winner and loser decided. Any change of the general rule should be announced before the tournament starts (if not, the general rule is used).

Article 13: The role of the arbiter (see Preface)

13.1 The arbiter shall see that the FESA Laws of Shogi are strictly observed.

13.2 The arbiter shall act in the best interest of the competition. He should ensure that a good playing environment is maintained and that the players are not disturbed. He shall supervise the progress of the competition.

13.3 The arbiter shall observe the games, especially when the players are short of time, enforce decisions he has made and impose penalties on players where appropriate.

13.4 The arbiter can apply one or more of the following penalties, as he judges to be appropriate:

- a) a warning,
- b) extra time on the clock of the opponent,
- c) a reduction of the remaining time of the offending player,
- d) loss of the game,
- e) expulsion from the event.

13.5 The arbiter may award either or both players additional time in the event of external disturbance of the game.

13.6 The arbiter is the only person which can intervene in a game, although only in cases described by the FESA Laws of Shogi. The arbiter shall especially refrain from informing a player that his opponent has completed a move or that the player has not pressed his clock, that the player has done an illegal move etc.

13.7 Spectators and players in other games are not permitted to discuss or otherwise disrupt a game. If necessary, the arbiter may expel offenders from the playing venue. In some exceptional cases, it is allowed to speak with a third person, as long as it is not related with the game itself (e.g. to ask for a drink or to record a game) and it is performed in a way which does not distract the opponent.

13.8 If an event is occurring that is not covered by the rules expressed in this document, arbiter's words apply.

Article 14: Tournament pairing

14.1 It is up to the competition organiser to decide which pairing system will be used for his tournament.

14.2 Players have to be informed in advance about pairing system selected. FESA recommends such information to be published when the tournament is announced.

14.3 Tournament arbiter is in charge of setting the pairing unless tournament published rules are different.

14.4 In case a player disagrees with a pairing, he may put a claim to the arbiter before the starting of the round. If such pairing goes against basic pairing rules, the arbiter has to redo the pairing. Basic pairing rules are:

- α) Two players having played already together shall not play again against each other, except in pairing systems obviously implying it (e.g. double round-robin)
- β) A player having received a bye during a previous round shall not get a second one.

Article 15: Game rating

15.1 FESA is maintaining a rating system, named 'panatlantic ELO system' that is common for all FESA country members and US Shogi Federation.

15.2 Definition of the calculation algorithm is published in a separate document named 'the FESA Elo rating system'.

15.3 It is the responsibility of the tournament arbiter to provide tournament results to the FESA rating officer in order to take these results in account. As soon as a tournament has been played according to FESA rules, it has to be submitted as such.

15.4 Any official FESA rated game is subject of time limit. Minimum time limit allocated is 20 minutes for each player + 40 seconds byoyomi (non incremental additional time), or 30 minutes for each player + 30 seconds byoyomi. Any time limit above this minimum is accepted.

Article 16: FESA

16.1 Member federations may ask FESA to give an official decision about problems relating to the FESA Laws of Shogi.

Article 17: Tournament rules for beginners

17.1 A competition organiser, in agreement with an arbiter, may apply some changes in the general rules, which will make the games easier for the beginner players (e.g. so that the beginner player may take back his illegal move once, instead of losing the game instantly, or that the beginner player may look at the basic shogi rules during the game).

17.2 In most cases, the “beginner player” should mean a player, which has not played any FESA rated games or which FESA ranking is below 400. However, an objectively strong player, which has not played any FESA rated games yet (e.g. has experience in Internet games), should not be treated as a beginner player. In such cases, it is a player’s responsibility to confirm with an arbiter, if the changes introduced on the basis of Article 17.1 does apply to him.