

BOXING OFFICIALS TRAINING CHANNEL

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Understanding the Boxing Rules Matrix

While the world organizations differ in bout format, procedures, and certain terms, many fundamental rules are enforced consistently across the board. To aid understanding, this matrix identifies where the major organizations, the WBA, WBC, WBO, IBF, and the ABC, fully agree, generally agree with slight variation, or are silent. Further clarification is provided in the table legend and notes below.

Where a rule is not explicitly stated by a world organization, local boxing authority regulations generally apply. Officials should know and understand the rules that govern the specific bout they are working.

This matrix highlights a selection of rules for comparison across the world organizations, but it is not all-inclusive. Other rules, such as permitted handwrap lengths and tape widths, ring dimensions and equipment, female protective equipment requirements, use of instant replay, and approved cut treatment methods, are discussed in detail in other sections of this manual.

Boxing Rules Matrix

Rules	WBA	WBC	WBO	IBF	ABC
Number of Rounds - Female	10R or 12R *1	No >10R	10R or 12R *1	10R or 12R *1	No >10R
Number of Rounds - Male (No >12 Rounds)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 Round Rule	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5 Minute Rule (Low Blow only)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accidental Foul - Boxer can continue after Round 4 (Technical Decision to the boxer ahead)	✓	✓ (R5)	✓	✓	✓
Accidental Injury (not foul related)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Accidental Foul - Boxer can't continue before completion of Round 4 (No Decision)	✓	✓ (R5)	✓	✓	✓
Accidental Foul - Boxer can't continue after Round 4, scorecards tied (Technical Draw)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Rules	WBA	WBC	WBO	IBF	ABC
Accidental Low Blow - Recovery up to 5 minutes; can't continue, loses by Technical Knockout	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Boxer knocked out of the ring - 20 Count, without assistance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Double Knockdowns	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Fair Blow - Can't continue, TKO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Female - Breast Protector Required	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Female - Pre-Bout Negative Pregnancy Test Required	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Female Rounds - 2/3 Mins	✓ (*5)	2 Mins	✓ (*5)	✓ (*5)	2 Mins
Instant Replay	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Intentional Foul - Can continue, 2 Point Mandatory Deduction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Intentional Foul - Can continue, but bout later stopped after Round 4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Male Rounds - 3 Mins	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mandatory 8 Count after Legal Knockdown	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mouthpiece - Dislodged	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Open Scoring - After Round 4 and Round 8	✗	✓ (*2)	✗	✗	✗
Suspension of the Bout for Unforeseen Reasons - 4 Round Rule Applied	✓	✓ (*4)	✗	✗	✗
Three (3) Knockdown Rule	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Unsportsmanlike Behavior - Disqualification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Referee - Sole Arbiter of the Bout	✓	✓	✓ (*3)	✓	✓ (*3)

Rules	WBA	WBC	WBO	IBF	ABC
(No) Saving by the Bell in Any Round	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scoring System - 10 Point Must	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Self-Injury	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Standing 8 Count	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes

✓ Yes, the organization follows this rule.

✗ No, the organization does not follow this rule.

✗ Indicates that the organization is either silent on the rule or does not list it in its regulations. When a rule is not explicitly stated by a sanctioning body, local commission regulations, often based on the ABC Unified Rules, generally apply. Officials should confirm these rules in advance when preparing for a sanctioned contest.

With some exceptions in the United States, the WBO and IBF follow the ABC Rules and Guidelines.

*1 - With special permission.

*2 - WBC Rule 25 Open Scoring - When approved by the boxing authority, the scores after the 4th and 8th rounds may also be announced during the bout.

*3 - The WBO, IBF and the ABC may overrule a referee in some situations.

ABC Unified Rule No. 2 - The referee is the sole arbiter of a bout and is the only individual authorized to stop a contest. This rule shall not preclude a video or another review of a decision under the procedures of the applicable regulatory authority if a protest is filed claiming a clear rule violation.

*4 - WBC Rule 17 - Unexpected events: If it becomes impossible to continue the bout at the discretion of the referee due to unforeseen events or events beyond the control of the commission/promoter, the bout will be judged as a Technical Draw or a Technical Decision depending on the round of the stoppage.

*5 - With special prior permission on a case by case basis.

Sole Arbiter - Unless specified otherwise in the rules governing the bout, the referee is the sole authority.

Disclaimer

The rules shown in this matrix were gathered from the published regulations and official websites of the listed organizations. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy; however, rules may be updated or interpreted differently over time. While no source is perfect, this review reflects one of the most detailed comparisons available and is as accurate as any reference currently published on the subject.