

# Slow Play

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# Definition of Slow Play

- Players who take longer than is reasonably required to complete game actions are engaging in Slow Play.

[MIPG 4.3 – Tournament Error – Slow Play]

- Some Math: appr. 15 turns per game x 3 games in a match = 45 turns in a match → 45 minutes for turns – time for SB & shuffling → ~ 1 minute per turn → ~ 30 seconds per turn per player

# Indicators for Slow Play

- A player repeatedly reviews his opponent's graveyard without any significant change in game state.
- A player spends time writing down the contents of an opponent's deck while resolving Thought Hemorrhage.
- After 3 minutes into a round at a Pro Tour Qualifier, a player has not completed his shuffling.
- A player gets up from his seat to look at standings, or goes to the bathroom without permission of an official.
- „When you think that a player should speed up, you should probably have been given a Warning for Slow Play 2 minutes ago.“ (Sheldon Menery)

# What to do when it happens?

- Rule of thumb “30 seconds from Untap”  
(less and less time for each action)
- it's OK to interrupt thought process
- after 30 seconds: “I need you to make a play”
- Warning if verbal reminder not sufficient
- (when in extra turns) "Before you were on your own time, now you are on mine"  
(Sheldon Menery)

# Penalty

- Warning at all levels of REL
- Additional remedy: An extra turn is awarded for each player, to be applied if the match exceeds the time limit. This turn extension occurs before any end-of-match procedure can begin and after any time extensions that may have been issued.
- No extra turns are awarded if the match is already in extra turns, though the Warning still applies.
- If Slow Play has significantly affected the result of the match, the Head Judge may upgrade the penalty.

# Common Players' excuses

- “I’m playing a control deck.”
- “It’s a complex board situation.” (“It did not fall from the sky” (Andy Heckt) ... hard for a judge to figure out the game state – much easier for players)
- “My opponent is also playing slowly.” (in such a situation both players receive the penalty; and why didn't you use the time to think?)
- “The board just changed a lot.” (no, Day of Judgment from your U/W Opponent doesn't count)
- “I borrowed the deck from a friend.”

# Time for more time

- "cataclysmic change of game state" (Day of Judgment out of Mono-G deck, just drew a lot of cards)
- When time is called (game changes from "How do I win within a time frame" to "How do I win/not lose within two/three turns")

# Tricks to speed up the tournament

- watch matches for Slow Play from the beginning (when you are a FJ)
- keep a list of players that are still playing when time is called – see if players do that more than once



# Stalling

- A player intentionally plays slowly in order to take advantage of the time limit. If the slow play is not intentional, please refer to Tournament Error — Slow Play instead. [MIPG 6.1 – Cheating - Stalling]

## Examples:

- A player has two lands in his hand, no options available to significantly affect the game, and spends excessive time "thinking" about what to do to eat up time on the clock.
- A player is ahead in games and significantly slows down his pace of play so the opponent has little chance to catch up.
- A player playing slowly appeals a warning in an attempt to gain advantage by having more time to make a decision.
- A player intentionally exceeds the pregame time limit before the third game in an attempt to make it harder for his opponent to win in time.
- A player losing a game starts slowing down the pace of play in an attempt to run out the clock.

# Scenarios

For the scenarios a table was set up outside the seminar room. At this table two judges were playing a game of Standard and tried to include as many Slow Play as possible:

- extensive shuffling
- Long thinking
- Shuffling of already random libraries
- The „loop“ (repetitive actions)
- ...

## Scenarios (contd.)

While the players were busy with their game the moderator would ask the spectators what they think, what type of Slow Play is just happening. They were also asked which player in a given moment is currently guilty of the infraction (or both). The audience should be involved at all the time. This lasted for about 25 minutes.