

A GUIDE TO SCHOLASTIC CHESS

(11th Edition Revised June 26, 2021)

PREFACE

Dear Administrator, Teacher, or Coach

This guide was created to help teachers and scholastic chess organizers who wish to begin, improve, or strengthen their school chess program. It covers how to organize a school chess club, run tournaments, keep interest high, and generate administrative, school district, parental and public support.

I would like to thank the United States Chess Federation Club Development Committee, especially former Chairman Randy Siebert, for allowing us to use the framework of *The Guide to a Successful Chess Club* (1985) as a basis for this book.

In addition, I want to thank FIDE Master Tom Brownscombe (NV), National Tournament Director, and the United States Chess Federation (US Chess) for their continuing help in the preparation of this publication. Scholastic chess, under the guidance of US Chess, has greatly expanded and made it possible for the wide distribution of this Guide. I look forward to working with them on many projects in the future.

The following scholastic organizers reviewed various editions of this work and made many suggestions, which have been included. Thanks go to Jay Blem (CA), Leo Cotter (CA), Stephan Dann (MA), Bob Fischer (IN), Doug Meux (NM), Andy Nowak (NM), Andrew Smith (CA), Brian Bugbee (NY), WIM Beatriz Marinello (NY), WIM Alexey Root (TX), Ernest Schlich (VA), Tim Just (IL), Karis Bellisario and many others too numerous to mention.

Finally, a special thanks to my wife, Susan, who has been patient and understanding.

Dewain R. Barber

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NOTE: For forms referenced within this booklet, check the “Forms” category at the bottom of the homepage of <https://new.uschess.org/home/>. Keeping the forms on the US Chess website and not in this publication will ensure that you have access to the most current version!

LINKS: Links subject to change without notice. A list of [links](#) is in the Appendix.

Editor’s Note: This excellent document will get you started on your own scholastic chess program. Finding a mentor will just add to your success. Mentors can be found at scholastic chess tournaments, other nearby schools, and often on your state chess association web page. Not sure how to contact them, go to http://www.uschess.org/component/option,com_wrapper/Itemid,198/ and select your state. The first listed club will be your state affiliate. Also scroll to find a club near your location; note that clubs are listed alphabetically by city.

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I. WHAT IS A SCHOOL CHESS CLUB?

Chess Clubs and Chess Players

The scholastic chess club combines educational and social activities. Members come to play, learn, teach, and to get together with old friends and make new ones. The players—no matter what their level of skill, experience, or age—speak a common language, and one that is often not understood in other areas of a person’s life. The rivalries are friendly; the friendships are competitive. A club can offer a wide variety of activities. There can be *speed chess* or *rated games*, or both. Club activities can include *simultaneous exhibitions*, lectures, and even formal classes taught by Chess Masters, Experts or other experienced players. Some players who regularly come to a club won’t ever try weekend scholastic tournaments. These avid club players may get their fill of “serious” chess by competing in a *club ladder* or one game per lunch period club tournaments. Ideally, the club will cater to all types of players—recreational players as well as the serious tournament players. ***EVERY member is important to the success of the club.*** Evidence shows that player’s benefits include improvement in literary, math, critical thinking and life skills—including sustained focus, conflict resolution, respect, and more.

Should I Start a Scholastic Chess Club?

Should you become involved in starting a club in your school? Yes! It’s not at all necessary for you to be an “expert” player, or even to know how the pieces move!

Every school in the country has kids likely to have had some exposure to chess from family plus more who would like to learn. “No one at our school plays chess” is not an acceptable excuse. Most of the time kids are interested in learning and only need someone to organize and supervise them.

This guidebook offers the resources and assistance needed in meeting the possible obstacles you might face in starting a club. Along the way you will find that many of your questions will be answered. If you have not already done so, you may want to find out the location of the nearest chess club or scholastic/school club. The United States Chess Federation (abbreviated US Chess) and your state chapter is the best sources of information on officially affiliated club locations, scholastic organizers and coaches in your area. Find affiliate clubs, organized by state, here: http://www.uschess.org/component/option,com_wrapper/Itemid,198/

These contacts can help direct you further in your efforts to organize a club or locate other active scholastic chess programs within your area. Other information sources include local schools, school district offices, newspapers, libraries, chess and game stores, on-line chess stores, your local recreation office, plus Boys and Girls clubs or scout troop leaders. You might also consider contacting your local or state Department of Education.

By all means, you should start a club if you have some support from students and the willingness to expend the moderate amount of energy and leadership it will take to make your club a success. Gain support from the school board, parents, your principal, and other teachers as soon as possible. Their aid will be useful later as the club becomes more active.

The fact that the National Association of Secondary School Principals regularly includes the National High School Chess Championship and the National Scholastic K-12 Grade Chess Championships on its “National Advisory List of Contests and Activities” may be of value in gaining official support for your club. Learn more about these, and other, National events here: <http://www.uschess.org/content/view/10015/95>

II. GETTING READY TO START A CHESS CLUB

Who? What? When and How Often? Where? Why? How?

Reporters know that their stories should answer the basic questions—Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? These are the right questions for other projects too—including school chess clubs.

Who?

Hopefully you are probably not alone in your interest—yet you may have been assigned to the chess club. Fear not, we are here to help you. Finding a couple of students is all it takes to start a successful school club. Together you can attract other students. Consider involving youngsters at your school who are in special programs—people with learning, developmental, or physical challenges, as well as the gifted. Personal growth has no limit. Your school administration will be pleased to see these youngsters taking an active role in your school sponsored activity. Avoid stereotyping who would be interested in chess. We have seen school programs where the top player is also one of the top athletes, or top academic students, as well as the struggling student who benefits from finding his/her niche.

As noted in “[Chess Clubs and Chess Players](#)” (see page 5) the school chess club is both an educational and social activity. It provides those who know how to play and those interested in learning the game a place to meet, play, learn, teach, and develop friendships. However, a club should not be a place to “hang out,” “kill time,” or avoid academic work. The chess club at a school can and should be fun, but it is a learning experience above all else.

What?

Your students, and your enthusiasm, will draw in others. Students or community volunteers can assist you in deciding what kinds of activities you should have, but it will be useful for you to have a plan for the first several meetings.

The folks at Chess Kid have designed an extensive chess curriculum that any teacher can use, even those unfamiliar with chess. It meets the learning objectives that will please administrators and parents alike. It is nicely organized and laid out. The lessons are incremental, and as long as you are a couple lessons ahead of the students, you will be able to share the information effectively. You can find your free copy here:

<https://www.chesskid.com/article/view/chesskidcoms-curriculum>. For those who prefer a simple over view of lessons plans, without the details of a curriculum, will find this at-a-glance topic list helpful: https://www.chessmagnetschool.com/lesson_guide.php

Also, set goals with your students; decide what you and the players wish to accomplish by the end of the first three months. Before announcing the get-acquainted organizational meeting in the student bulletin and posted fliers, plan a specific agenda. Don’t forget to play some chess too! Most students attracted to chess have a need for structure and rules. Experiment with various activities to determine what is successful in your club.

When and How Often?

The answer(s) to this apparently simple question can have a major effect on the success of your school club. Some school clubs have the question answered by outside forces, such as classroom or library availability. If early busses are available, your club may be able to meet before school. Otherwise, after school may be better, though some students have after-school jobs, chores or competing extra-curricular activities and may not be able to attend in the afternoon. Keep in mind the other activities of your potential members, as well as the school bus schedule, when planning your meeting time.

You might be surprised to learn that lunch period is a good time for a meeting. The administration will appreciate seeing students using their lunch period in a supervised, productive manner. And because students can bring a sack lunch with them, they can have more time to play. One committed chess teacher used a special lanyard that allowed the chess students to receive their lunch trays from the cafeteria first, and they brought their trays to the meeting room. While they ate lunch, she did the chess lesson, and then after stacking their trays, they were ready for playing. In any case, you probably want to allow at least 30 minutes at lunch for a club session, or up to one hour after school. Meet at least once a week (or daily if your schedule permits).

Where?

Find a room with chairs and tables. Your classroom may be big enough for your first organizational meeting and may become the club's permanent meeting place. If the room is not suitable, see if the library is available at the time your club meets. For example, the library may be busy with other students during lunch, so check things out. Keep storage needs in mind as you scout for a site at the school. You'll need a place to keep equipment, tournament stationery, club records, and so forth. A secure closet or the possibility of a locked cabinet is a definite advantage, but you can start simply with a plastic tub that holds your pieces in zip lock bags (quart size for each color set, with the two quart bags together in one gallon bag) and a small, clean plastic wastebasket is ideal for storing a dozen rolled boards.

Why?

One of your reasons for starting a chess club is to have a place for students to play chess or to create an alternative to the existing activities at school. In addition, you recognize the educational value (critical and abstract thinking, planning, logic, analysis, even enhanced literary and math skill connections) that comes from chess. Your students will improve their ability to concentrate, and you, through chess, can teach the value of good sportsmanship, respect, and stress management. Studies have also shown that chess can help kids improve their school grades. Whatever other reason there may be for a club, the excitement in the eyes of your students when they win their first game or team match may be reason enough.

How?

Most of the rest of this book is devoted to how to do things in a chess club. The best way to describe the non-technical side of “how” is “friendly.” Treat your club members as you would guests in your home. Greet them; introduce them around; make sure they feel that this is their club too. One concrete way to get off to a good start with a newcomer is to make sure you have some extra sets and boards handy. That way, no visitor will be disappointed. Almost any set will do, but consider standardizing as soon as possible. Other very important parts of “how” are club structure and funding. These areas are so important that they are treated in separate sections elsewhere in this publication. You’re now ready to get started with your club. It may require a bit of work, but it will be well worth the effort!

III. GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

The First Few Meetings

Everyone is nervous at the beginning of something, and your new “members” are apt to be as apprehensive as you are! Be as friendly and relaxed as you can. Prepare a single page handout of club guidelines that states the club’s goals in advance of the first meeting. It may be too early to elect officers, but not too early to instill the idea that there should be a division of authority. Next, be sure to get some basic information about everyone—name, grade, phone number, e-mail, and chess experience. See the [contact card](#) in the Appendix. You may want participants to fill out a simple survey, a membership form, or a commitment form (see [Glossary](#)) within the first couple of weeks. For the first time or two, it’s probably enough to pair up people randomly. If you’re playing, you might want to abandon your seat and game to make room for the next student who walks in the door. You may have some experienced players who want to get serious right away. Don’t keep them waiting too many weeks! As soon as possible, determine if you will need two or more groups (Division A, Division B, Division C, etc.). Your top division will be composed of those players with some tournament experience or those who have played in the club at school last year. You might have to keep everyone together if you lack enough experienced players to form a Division A. You might prefer to name your groups something like Knights, Bishops, Pawns, etc. Avoid the temptation to group the students by grade, instead group them by skill/experience.

Once you have covered the basics of how the pieces move, and rules of play, one of the best early activities is a *round-robin tournament*, in which everyone plays each other. (Form is available at <http://www.uschess.org/docs/forms/RoundRobinReportForm.pdf>) This might also help you identify student’s skills more easily to make appropriate placement in later divisions. You might give this event an interesting name like *Pawn Pushers Special*. Division or section sizes should be from 8 to 12 players. (If the size of the division is in excess of 12, the tournament takes too long to finish. You want the tournament to last about three weeks.) After all players in each section play each other to determine the best two or three players in each section, you can organize the next tournament (*the Bishop’s Bash*), in which you’ll pair in Division A the top three from each section of the previous tournament. As you find new students, simply add to the bottom division and allow them to work their way up. If by chance you encounter a new student at mid-year who already has some experience, you may wish to insert him or her directly into the appropriate section. Sometimes students will arrive who tell you they know how to play, but upon further evaluation, you discover that some foundational information is unknown—maybe en passant or castling for example.

Equipment & Supplies

Most clubs will provide equipment for members. Club-owned equipment makes the club seem more “real”, and it can lend a desirable sense of uniformity and unity to the chess activities. If you haven’t done so already, now is the time to contact US Chess for a “scholastic packet.” It’s free, and it contains helpful information on scholastic chess. Right from the start, there are a few inexpensive items that are virtually essential:

Chess Pieces

Go for a standard size (3½” to 4” King), solid plastic set in the traditional Staunton design. For this purpose the “Club Special” set fits the bill. Stay away from cheap, hollow plastic pieces if possible—they tend to break and are simply less pleasant to handle than solid plastic pieces. Kids can sometimes be rough on equipment, so it’s important to have sets which are as “kid proof” as possible. While pricier, silicon pieces are virtually indestructible. A onetime investment will last for years as these do not chip or break even if dropped onto tile floors. The age of your students, and the flooring in the room you are using might also be a factor in your choice, as well as budget. You can further protect chess pieces by placing them in a wood box or vinyl or plastic bag. Perhaps your school’s home economics class can prepare cloth bags with drawstrings or the shop class can make wooden boxes.

Chess Boards

Use boards proportioned to your pieces—or get tournament-sized boards (2” to 2 1/4” squares). Cardboard boards may wear out too fast. Vinyl roll-up boards are excellent. Be sure to get the ones with the algebraic notation (letters and numbers) on the sides so you can teach notation faster to your students. If student desks are too small for the vinyl roll-up board, you will want to use rigid material under the roll-up board so that it can be placed on the desk or reduce the size of the board from a 20” (2 1/4” squares) to a 17” (1 7/8” squares). If there is an experienced chess teacher available or a large number of students who wish to learn, a demonstration board or a computer hooked up to a digital projector is very handy. If you wish to purchase a demonstration chessboard for your classroom, check with U.S. Chess or American Chess Equipment, Inc. A slotted or magnetic style demonstration board may also be available so you can show moves and puzzles to a large group easily. And don’t forget there are computer programs that can be projected onto a screen that work also work well; however, that method can be expensive.

Score Sheets

Many club players like to keep a record of their games. You will, of course, have to teach your students how to take notation, but after one lesson they will probably be ready to use any score sheet or scorebook that is available. You can make your own. US Chess or American Chess Equipment, Inc. are also inexpensive and reliable sources. From this bare minimum, the sky’s the limit on equipment and supplies. Your particular needs will determine exactly what you should get—and what kind of revenue or school funding program you will need to develop. Perhaps you can find a local business or PTA that will support chess in your school.

Scorebooks

A scorebook is absolutely essential for any serious player of the game. A paper scorebook is a very inexpensive way to keep a record of all of your games in one place. You should encourage each of your students to purchase one. A paper scorebook should contain at least one diagram on the back of each page for adjournments, with ample space for notes. It’s also helpful to keep on hand some blank diagrams, in case the bell rings during the chess period. Then, the students can quickly record the position of a game and be able to resume it the next day or the next time the club meets. Another option is to snap a quick photo of the board position before putting the pieces away. The photo will allow you to reset the board and resume play where you left off. Some players have difficulty writing chess notation. Electronic score keeping devices are

expensive but have a graphical input that students may find easier. The only US Chess authorized electronic score keeping devices are: Monroi (<http://monroi.com/>), E-Notate (no longer available), and PlyCounter (no longer available). Learning notation is important however, as it is the language of chess spoken in chess puzzles, books, online apps, chess magazines, at community clubs, etc.

Notebook

Size and style don't matter much, but you need some place to write down various notes. It's an excellent idea to keep a written record of all club proceedings, because it's easy to forget things later. Some people prefer to dispense with hand written notes and keep their records on a computer. Either way works.

Computer Information

You can keep the club roster on your computer. Computers also give you plenty of room for expanding information about your students—like all-important telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. (Phone numbers and e-mail addresses must remain confidential).

Software

There are two types of software that you may wish to acquire: management software and instructional software. A good software package is a valuable tool that can help you run your chess club more effectively. A complete software package includes templates for a variety of forms and certificates that you will wish to use. Your management software can also help you establish a club rating system.

Interactive instructional software is an excellent teaching tool that allows kids to learn at their own pace. Your students may resist suggestions to read chess books, but they will jump at the opportunity to use instructional software! ChessKid Gold is not free but it is a deeply discounted service for schools. The Gold membership with ChessKid (fees may apply) opens up a vast array of learning tools: 600+ videos, lessons, 50,000 tactics puzzles, numerous articles and more, all in a kid-friendly, safe online program. You, as the teacher/coach, receive a free ChessKid Gold membership so you can see what your students are doing, which lessons they have watched, puzzles completed, how many online games they have played and how they did. You can also learn and enhance your skills alongside them. Additionally, interested parents can also get a free account with the paid student account, which then allows them to learn also, making chess a family activity. ChessKid Gold is geared toward motivating and growing your elementary, middle school and junior high chess students. High School students might feel they are too cool for the animation, but players up to about 1500-1600 US Chess rating strength can still learn from the program.

Digital Chess Clocks

These are not essential at the start, but will be needed when your club is ready to enter tournament competition or league play, where time is controlled. If you decide to supply them for student use, mark them with the school name or initials and take good care of them. Sadly, these are the items most likely to “grow legs and walk.” Caution students that clocks are delicate instruments which should NOT be pounded upon, especially during speed chess games. That fact should be emphasized or you will soon be replacing or repairing them. Digital chess clocks are necessary for modern time controls. We recommend against purchase of mechanical (analog) clocks. And using digital chess clock apps on a phone needs both the opponent and tournament director approval. Phones may also have apps for a chess playing program, but that leads to the appearance of impropriety.

Chess Books and Magazines

A few inexpensive beginners’ books will provide new members with a way to improve their game between club meetings. Work with your school librarian and student council to get a series of chess books for the school. Give the librarian a list of both beginner and advanced chess book titles that cover openings, middlegames, endgames, and chess tactics. The list provided on pages 29-30 is a recommended reading list. In addition, your club should have a copy of US Chess *Official Rules of Chess* plus the [rules updates](#). This book will reduce arguments about the rules. If your school club affiliates with US Chess, it will automatically receive a monthly club copy of *Chess Life* magazine and the bi-monthly *Chess Life Kids*. Affiliation offers many benefits for schools. Write, call or e-mail US Chess for more information or check out the website here: <https://new.uschess.org/form/affiliate-new-membership>

However, you need not affiliate in order to receive useful material. Many materials are available from US Chess—free upon request to interested scholastic chess coaches and organizers or simply available as free downloads from the US Chess website (http://www.uschess.org/component/option,com_uscf_dirlist/Itemid,412/ and <http://www.uschess.org/content/blogsection/27/131/>). Scroll to the bottom to find the quick links for downloads and scholastic resources.

Videos

Many instructional chess videos are available for players of all ages. As your library of instructional chess materials grows, don’t forget to include some chess videos. If your students have the ChessKid Gold paid membership, they can access more than 600 videos anytime. [YouTube](#) has free chess videos, which should of course be previewed first.

Tournament Supplies

Eventually you’ll be running tournaments, so you’ll probably want to get a copy of one of the two most popular tournament directing programs: [WinTD](#) or [SwissSys](#). You may also want some paper pairing cards, wall charts, pairing sheets, score sheets, etc. If you have a local community club or Tournament Director in the area, we suggest you ask them which tournament management software they use. That way you have a person to answer your questions as you begin to work with tournament management software—and later you can even offer to assist the

Tournament Director. “How to” SwissSys and WinTD videos are also available for free on [YouTube](#).

Publicity

Publicity is important to your club’s success from the very start. You want your club at school to be popular, so you have to let the students know about it. Word of mouth is one of the best forms of publicity. Encourage students to bring a friend. Publicity is where you find it. Look everywhere! Ask other staff members to be on the look-out for students they think might enjoy trying chess club, and make sure all the staff know when and where your chess club meets.

Fliers

These are usually the keystone of a publicity campaign. Make as many as you can possibly use. Include an attractive chess picture (like a silhouette of a knight or other chess piece) that shouts “Chess!” to a viewer. Use readable lettering and don’t be afraid of white space. Post fliers on bulletin Boards, ask other teachers to put them up in their rooms, and leave some at the library and the main office. To simplify your life, US Chess offers 9½” x 12” posters that show off a promotional chess design and leave you with space to advertise your club. There is a [sample flyer](#) in the Appendix.

Newsletters

The PTA likely has a newsletter (printed or emailed) that goes out to volunteers or all parents. The school Principal may have a publication or letter periodically that goes out to students or parents. Be sure all the appropriate editors have something on the chess club to include so parents are aware. There will be parents who know the value of chess and choose it for their child.

Website / Facebook

A website or a Facebook page is a great way to promote your club’s activities and your players’ achievements. Your website can be updated after every meeting. No information is too trivial to be included on your website. A list of players who won their games (or simply attended the last meeting) can serve as a motivational tool. Many schools already have a website, and your club website should be a part of the school website. If possible, assign one or more students to maintain your club website. These students will receive valuable computer experience while promoting the club. If you are working with younger students, you can also seek parent volunteers to assist with such tasks. Insure your Facebook page meets privacy, safety, and school policy requirements. A closed page where only members can see content is vital.

Press Releases

Write a simple statement on school stationery or club stationery describing what’s going to happen at your school. *Type it!* Try for a local angle and stress the “open door” nature of your school club. Especially emphasize the fact that girls as well as boys are welcome and that students may join halfway through the school year or even later. Deliver the releases in person (if possible) to your local newspapers and school publication. It will make them harder to throw away. And if you include a photo, your odds of being published increase. Get any needed photo releases from parents. Some chess organizers or coaches get a photo release signed at the

beginning of the year, or when a child joins, that covers the full school year. After delivering your news releases, call the recipients to see if they will use it—and when. Offer to answer any questions. Invite a reporter to visit the club. Then, follow up with a thank-you note or call. It will help them remember you! Local, regional, community, as well as school newspapers always like to receive news about kids, so don't be shy about writing them.

School Annuals

School annuals (yearbooks) are a good source of publicity to build momentum for future years. Contact the yearbook advisor or editor and arrange at least one page showing the club. Try to have your team pictured competing against another school, playing a club tournament, posing for a group photo, or playing in a simultaneous exhibition against a Master or other strong player.

Special Events

One of the most effective special events is a simultaneous exhibition—perhaps during lunch period, after school, or at a shopping mall or park. It doesn't have to be huge—eight or a dozen boards will do just fine, with a new player taking over when someone else is through. You may want to do it yourself—you don't have to be a great player (but you should move quickly). Remember that your opponents like to win, and they'll be more apt to come to your school club (excepting adults at the mall) if they don't think the point is for you to beat them. If you are not a strong enough player, then have your strongest player do it, or rotate this activity among the players or invite a guest from the community. That guest may be someone from a club in the area who will challenge everyone, including your students. It's also a good idea for the person doing the simultaneous to dress up on that day. It lends an air of "class" to the activity. Don't forget to tell the newspaper about your event—both before and after. And put your school simul in a very visible place at lunch. Then, stand back and watch the crowd form. Hand out some inexpensive prizes (posters, chess bumper stickers, pocket magnetic sets, chess keychains or copies of *Chess Life*) for those who win or draw. Students who are the last to stay in the game attract crowds, so they should be eligible to win something too! Another event that is a crowd pleaser is a blitz battle. Watch spectators gather as your club members face off against one another with only 5 minutes on their clock. This is a rapid game that keeps people interested in watching. There are even chess clock apps for smart phones or tablets if your club has not purchased chess clocks yet that will work for this event (chess clock apps need the approval of the opponent and tournament director because phones/tablets can also have apps for chess playing software). Find Blitz rules (chapter 11) here: <https://new.uschess.org/sites/default/files/wp-thumbnails/2018/12/US-Chess-Rule-Book-Online-Only-Edition-v7-chp-11-1-1-20-1.pdf>

Even consider a movie (a chess movie of course; there are several good ones available) and game night as a chess club outreach activity. This worked very well for one school to start and grow a chess club from zero to 300 in a couple of years.

Club Officers and Aides

Officers might not be necessary initially, but a club of even 10-12 students can benefit from some sort of student leadership structure or assignment of duties even for elementary schools. The club officers exist for several reasons:

- 1.) They represent the club at student council meetings or other activities.

- 2.) They serve the interests and goals of the members.
- 3.) They reduce the burden to any one person by sharing responsibilities.

Some school clubs depend on one or two students to do everything, and that's not a good situation. As club advisor, you should be spreading the work around. Then, every student will feel that he or she is a part of the club. In High School programs, student club members, as well as club officers, should be involved in the decision-making process of club activities. The greater their participation, the more they have invested in seeing it succeed. The following are the minimum functions for club officers, though two or more are sometimes performed by one person. More officers and duties can be added as the club grows and new needs arise.

Club President

Oversees smooth functioning of the club, resolves disputes with the aid of the advisor, and is ready to take over for any other officer who is absent or negligent. This person could also be in charge of keeping contact with the student council and the school activities director.

Vice-President

Helps the president and assumes the job of president if the president is absent from school. This person could also work with the publicity or phone committee, or deal with the standings sheet.

Secretary-Treasurer

Processes the club's bills through the required school channels and keeps financial records where appropriate. Keeps club roster (unless this duty is assigned to a separate secretary) and warns when the club is low on funds. Works with the student council in planning projected school club budgets. Depending on the age of the students, it might be necessary to omit this position and do it yourself.

Tournament Director

Plans events in consultation with the advisor and sees to it that they run smoothly. This student can be in charge of the *club ladder* and the club rating system (*see [Glossary](#)*).

Publicity Director

They inform members of upcoming events and issues news releases concerning club news. Some kids have always wanted to be journalists. This is their chance to be your contact with the school newspaper. The school newspaper may also be willing to accept a chess column by a student. Don't forget to put a chess problem in each issue. The publicity director can also write a club newsletter which could include tournament results.

Team Captain

This person will work with the advisor to help prepare the team for upcoming matches.

Webmaster

Maintains the club website and updates it regularly. This can be a big job for young students, so you may want to assign this job to a group of students rather than just one individual. Even if

your students are young, resist the urge to do this work yourself. The experience and skills that your webmasters gain will be of value to them throughout their lives.

Greeters

There should be one or two students who welcome new students to the club, introduce them to other club members, answer questions, and get them into a game as soon as possible. No one is more crucial to a club than its greeters. They should be friendly and not just after a new chess scalp! Select one for September and October and another for November and December. After December, you might want to handle it yourself unless you still have a large influx of new students. As chess club advisor, you must obtain the proper information (name, address, and grade) from newcomers so you can stay in touch with them and encourage them to return. If you wish, you can get their phone number when they first register. *Caution: All student information is confidential!*

Parent Booster Club

You will want to consider forming a parent booster club, which can be your best friend and ally in advancing the school chess club. The parent booster club can lend support whenever you sponsor an event at your school. If you need help with transportation to other schools for matches (when permitted by the district) they may be able to assist. Boosters can take registration, bring and serve refreshments, record results, post pairing and standing sheets, take photographs, assist in passing out awards, and help in countless other ways. The parent booster club can also influence the school board, your principal, other principals, and the activities director as to the importance of the club and district chess programs. Establish this group as soon as you can. Parents will usually be glad to support a positive activity for their son or daughter. We encourage you to help parents learn how to read a basic tournament flyer as entering the chess world can be, for those new to it, like venturing into a foreign land full of abbreviations, and new lingo. But the more parents that understand, see, and are involved, the better.

IV. KEEPING THE CLUB GOING

Building a Base: The First Few Months

You've gathered your first members and held your ice-breaker event. Now what? Keep it rolling!

Formalities

Some clubs start early with electing officers, drafting and approving bylaws and constitutions, and other such organizational matters. Your students probably just want to play chess. Many students are apt to be bored with these formalities, but do try to find volunteer helpers as soon as you can. Get them to be greeters, or whatever you need.

District/School Support

The district and principal are likely to support you when they see you adding a new activity to their extracurricular or after-school program. Some schools are even adding chess to the school day as a subject, which is truly exciting. Consult your principal and teachers' representative about extra pay for the time you spend on chess team activities. The chess team coach should receive supplementary pay for time spent on chess team activities, just as other coaches or yearbook advisors. All coaches work hard and get paid for their time, and *so should chess coaches!*

News Releases

Daily Bulletin

Prepare brief releases directed at your school's daily bulletin from time to time. Announce the successful organizational meeting, accentuating the positive ("Sixteen chess players attended the first meeting.") Announce your champion(s). Announce your elections. Announce your team challenges and results, including award winners. Add a photo when possible. Announce your affiliation with your state organization and US Chess. Keep repeating the room number, time, and the advisor's name to remind everyone that it's *never too late to join!* And don't forget to include any cut-off dates.

Local Newspapers

You may want to get an article in your city newspaper. If you have a small-to-moderate sized club, "news release" might seem like too fancy a term for what you want to do. But it's the term your newspaper uses, so it's the one you should use too. Prepare this information on school or chess club stationery so that the newspaper will know the source. This makes the release more credible and enhances its effectiveness. A press release tells the school or local newspaper, radio or TV station that you have news and that they have permission to excerpt or rewrite your presentation of that news—although your goal is to get your news presented exactly the way you want. The tactics are to write it so well that a rewrite would be a waste of time. For fundamental strategy, there is nothing better than the old ABC's of good writing: Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity.

Accuracy

It goes without saying that you should get your facts straight. You should also provide a name, telephone number and e-mail address for the paper to use if any further information is needed. You should check out your paper's particular style of reporting local news. For example, do they like to include ages and grades for all students who are prominently named? How many sentences do they typically use in a paragraph? These questions may stretch "accuracy," but they do emphasize your conformity to what this paper considers good writing. Of course, your spelling should be accurate.

Brevity

Get to the point and stay there. Newspapers do not have the time, the space, or the inclination to cope with lots of background and theory. They want news. Sometimes they print "features," longer pieces that do explore the stories behind the facts, but these are most often researched and written by their own staff. These writers will make some mistakes in chess stories, but be grateful for the ink you do get rather than frustrated by errors. Remember that newspapers typically cut "from the bottom," so put your most critical facts and points near the beginning of your piece.

Clarity

Remember the difference between English and chess terminology, and avoid words and concepts that require explanation to those who are not familiar with chess and tournaments. Write relatively short and simple sentences, being especially careful that your pronouns are not confusing.

A Sample News Release:**Rook Elected Chess Club President**

Joe Rook, an 11th-grade student from Madison HS, has been elected president of Mustang school chess club. Rook joined the chess club two years ago. "I'm not a great chess player," said Rook, "but my goal is to show other students how much fun chess can be. Of course, winning is more fun than losing."

The election was at the weekly club meeting last Wednesday after school in Madison's library.

Other officers include Sam King, 10th grade, vice president, and Cathy Bishop, 9th grade, secretary-treasurer. The outgoing president was Paul Pawn, 12th grade.

The Madison High School Chess Club is open to all students and welcomes both beginners and experienced players.

Commentary

The lead (the first sentence) is pretty bland, but it's difficult to write a great "hook" for such a story. Some newspapers are fanatical about "attribution," meaning they want to cite a source for every fact they print. Check your paper's style.

A brief quotation can spark up a flat report and make the piece seem more like a professional news story. You can often sneak in some promotional material through a quotation.

The club meeting time and location on campus might not make it past the editor's red pen. But it doesn't hurt to try. If you put this information at the very end, its odds for survival are even less.

"Names sell papers" is an old saying worth remembering. Take every opportunity to use the names of more students, stopping short of turning your release into a telephone directory. Welcoming newcomers is always a good idea; sometimes a paper will have room for such a plug.

Photos are typically welcome. Send one great photo that compliments the press release topic. Pieces that are published with photos will be seen by more readers than those without, so add the photo to your submission. Be sure to include photo credit (name of the photographer) and identify anyone in the photo in a caption that adds a bit of information. For example: *"Paula Pawn, grade 5, playing the white pieces, has a winning position over Robbie Rook, 4th grader, during this recent match at Edison Elementary Chess Club's monthly quad tournament."*

Club Newsletter

This simple device can be a key to your club's success. Remember, "Names sell papers." In a club newsletter, names make happy members. In its simplest form, your newsletter or bulletin is merely a listing of coming events—a chess schedule for your students. You may want to include items such as team match and weekend tournament activities.

Make sure that all students—and potential members—get a copy. Of course, they should take it home and show their parents. Remember that putting a stack on the table in the room might not be enough, because some students will be absent that day. Consider leaving them with the teacher who has them just before morning break or lunch. Then, they might bring the newsletter with them to the club. Other students will see how special your club members are and might even ask to see the information. Don't forget to leave some in the library and front office.

Beyond the schedule, you can also report on the recent events—from tournaments and ladder standings to someone's new rating. Find ways to include as many names as possible in a positive light. "Joe didn't win any games, but he really scared Jim with some combinations before he lost on time." "Last month's visitors included Tom Knight and Jim Chessman. Both of them are very interested in speed chess." "Pete Wilson has played the most club ladder games this year—keep it up, Pete! Bob Johnson is second in activity." There are a lot of good ways to use names.

The next step might be to include some games from the students. Brief annotations should be permitted. Other games of an instructive nature should be printed. The [recommended chess playing software](#) will export moves, analysis, and diagrams into word processors. Also, don't forget to include anecdotes about chess history or the local scene, news from around the country and the world, chess problems, photos and cartoons, or anything else your imagination and energy suggest. Consider a "did you know" column in each issue. Have students find answers to questions such as: When did chess begin? Where did chess originate? How has the movement of the Queen changed over the years? What time control is considered Blitz? What World

Champion held the title the most times? How many US Presidents played chess? Involving the students in researching answers to questions for upcoming chess newsletters enriches their love of the game, as well as possibly bridging over to other subject areas.

Instruction

Every chess club needs to consider the challenge of helping its members be confident in the basic skills and to continue to improve. This is particularly crucial if your club has hopes of keeping beginners and novices in your club, or players who want to grow in skill and continue to develop their knowledge. Chess Magnet School offers this nicely laid out scope and sequence of chess concepts, by level from the fundamentals to advanced concepts available here for free: https://www.chessmagnetschool.com/lesson_guide.php

Without encouragement, players below 800 strength often become frustrated and lose interest—and that’s something no club wants—while strong players who are unchallenged can become bored and be tempted to quit. **Note:** The above reference to player strength (“800 strength”) refers to a national rating that players receive after they have played in their first national tournament. This number can vary from beginning players (100-800) to more advanced players (1300 and above). It should be stressed to all students that only by competing against stronger players will they improve their game. The loser at chess nearly always learns more than the winner. The loser gains knowledge and even some satisfaction. Encourage younger students that patience will be rewarded. The older students will graduate and, if the younger students continue to practice, they can become one of the school’s top players.

Patience is a virtue. Absolute beginners can be taught by almost any player who is willing and interested. (Emphasize that your club plays “touch move.” It is an important rule to follow from the beginning.) Choose a good beginner’s book or resource and simply present the material to the students. You don’t have to be original—make use of what has already been proven to work. Chesskid.com has an excellent package of teaching materials, which it developed for young beginners, coaches and parents. Teaching time is always short at once-a-week clubs. Encourage all your players to study between meetings but especially the beginners. The quicker they learn the basics the sooner you can teach them how to win. Take advantage of [ChessKid.com’s](https://www.chesskid.com/) teaching material featuring the “for a fee” Gold feature, where a coach can observe the progress of their club members. Or consider the paid service Chess4Life, which has a completely laid out package ideal for schools, with lessons, videos DVDs, posters on life skills chess teaches and other tools. Find out about it here: <https://chess4life.com/>

Be sure that the students are made aware that good chess books do exist. They can be read and understood by anyone who wants to learn. A list of books is included in the Appendix of this publication. You may also seek out a Master, Expert, or experienced teacher of chess to ask for book recommendations.

You should also use the computers at your school to add another learning opportunity. A number of chess software programs are available from US Chess Sales, and there are online videos as well.

Players in the 1300-1700 strength range can also be excellent teachers—not only of beginners, but also of those who have played for years without ever learning the strategies and concepts of the opening and endgame. The latter are often the most frustrated of all club players because they lose so frequently. But they can greatly improve their playing strength after taking just a few friendly, basic lessons. They will often go on to become some of the most avid supporters of your club.

Instruction need not be limited to inexperienced players. If you are blessed with one or more 1700 rated—or higher rated—players, you should be able to provide valuable assistance and guidance to those sub-1500 players who are teaching your beginners. Not surprisingly, these veteran players are often far better teachers for other tournament players than they are for beginners, because they can often express their ideas in chess “jargon” better than they can in non-chess terms. But don’t be afraid to ask a master or expert to assist in your basic instructional efforts. They might surprise you with their willingness to help.

Don’t overlook one of the simplest of all instructional tools, the *post-mortem game analysis*. When you first meet a new student who claims to be a beginner, pair the visitor with a player who will be willing to go over the game after it is done. Imagine how much more welcome he will feel if he is given some tips by the player who has just played him. Finally, you should suggest to every player who plays rated games to go over every one of those games. Your students got into chess to have fun and win a few games, so give them one of the best tools for improvement: *analysis*. Analysis is a great collaborative conversation, and learning tool to identify options, where things went wrong, what could have been played instead, etc. In addition, try to avoid small cliques in your club. Sometimes the more experienced players tend to exclude new and novice players. Break these groups up and keep mixing the players.

Lesson Plan Ideas

Below you will find a checklist for pupils that should be reviewed with all newcomers and those who lack knowledge in certain areas of the game:

1. How to checkmate: (Have them try to do this on you—without advice first—they may already know it, or part of it ...then talk if necessary. Explain what stalemate is, giving examples.)
 - A. With queen & king vs. king
 - B. With two rooks & king vs. king
 - C. With one rook & king vs. king
 - D. Contest: Checkmate in the fewest moves (any of above).
2. Play two or three at a time—discuss questionable moves (don’t say bad moves) and good moves—praise them as often as possible.
3. Teach scorekeeping:
 - A. Name some squares, then point to others for them to name.
 - B. Place a knight on the board—have them name all possible squares for it to move to.
 - C. Have an experienced student show a beginner how to record a game.
4. Set up special situations such as:
 - A. pawn & king vs. king—how to defend; how to advance the pawn.
 - B. Back-rank mates.
 - C. Forks and skewers.
5. Teach them how to castle and why.
6. Teach general opening theory:
 - A. Importance of controlling the center.
 - B. Avoid moving the same piece over and over again.
 - C. Don’t bring out the queen too early.
 - D. Castle early in the game.
 - E. Don’t make too many pawn moves early in the game.

- F. Develop knights and bishops quickly.
- G. Don't make pointless moves just to put your opponent in check.

Try these in any order—review the previous week's lesson, but generally try to concentrate on one of these per week.

Summer Chess Camps

One way for students to keep in shape over the summer is to attend a chess camp. Most camps provide high-quality instruction, tournaments, and other chess-related activities. Some camps also permit teachers and coaches to attend. Current information about chess camps can be found by simply Googleing “chess camp”.

Online Play

Some of your students will want to play chess more often than your club meeting schedule permits. Using the Internet, these students will be able to find willing opponents from all around the world. There are many Internet sites that offer your students the opportunity to play chess online. Check the US Chess website for possible online opponents and Google “free chess play.” **NOTE:** If a chess coach or teacher recommends an online-play site they should alert parents if the site has a “chat room.”

Community Clubs

We already mentioned that community club affiliates can be found for your state. For students desiring more playing time, and new people to play, consider visiting the local community chess club. They often meet at a restaurant, coffee house, library or other public place. The club listing will inform you of when and where they meet, and you can visit to see if you feel the group would welcome some of your students. Most will be encouraging, and your student's skills will improve dramatically when they play adult players in addition to fellow students.

Club Ladder

The club ladder is a true mainstay of many chess clubs. It takes many different forms, but all are similar in the following ways: They continue through the school year; involve some type of ranking of the students; and allow players to move “up the ladder” by defeating players whom they challenge. To avoid mismatches, allow challenges only within a certain number of available spots (3 or 5) of the player being challenged.

Some ladders can be US Chess-rated, while other ladders have only some or perhaps none of the games rated. Some clubs calculate their own “club ratings” for ranking their players. Whether a club uses its own rating system or US Chess, a rating system will allow players to find their skill level and identify worthy opponents. Medals, trophies, or ribbons could be awarded at the end of the school year, the end of each semester, quarterly or even monthly based on the rating improvement of each player.

There are potential problems in any club ladder. What happens when players refuse challenges or don't attend? You'll have to make that decision when the time comes. So, although there might be some minor problems, a new and growing club would do well to plan having a club ladder. It provides a “safe,” easy-to-run activity that is always available, especially on those

days when illness or a special school activity causes low attendance. It can work for advanced players, newcomers, club regulars, and occasional players.

Club Ratings

Besides the US Chess rating service there are several software products that can be used to maintain a club rating system, including [WinTD](#), [SwissSys](#) and [Chess Club Manager](#). If you do not have access to one of these programs or services, you may opt to do your own rating calculations. Be aware while doing your own rating calculations can be done, it is time consuming.

Do It Yourself Rating Calculations:

Here are some suggestions for making simple rating calculations by hand or writing a simple computer algorithm:

1. If you are just starting at the beginning of the year, and no one has a club rating, everyone starts at the same rating (perhaps 1000 points).
2. In your first school tournament, a player receives 15 points for every win and loses 15 points for every loss.
3. In future tournaments, *higher-rated* players receive 10 points for every win in their section and lose 15 points for every loss. *Lower-rated* players receive 15 points for every win against a *higher-rated* player in their section, but only lose 5 points for a loss.
4. In the case of draws or stalemates, the *higher-rated* player loses 5 points and the *lower-rated* player gains 5 points.
5. When a tournament ends, *bonus points* can be awarded to the top three players in each section. The first-place finisher could receive 25 extra points, second place 15, and third place 10. Bonus points are usually awarded in the first few months of the chess club year, to help players find their level more quickly.

There are many benefits to establishing a club rating system, but doing the calculations by hand can be quite tedious. You may wish to set up a spreadsheet to help you with the calculations, or you may choose to purchase chess club management software. Don't become so engrossed in the details of your rating system that you spend hours on rating updates. The three important features that your club rating system must have are:

1. Players gain rating points when they win games.
2. Players lose rating points when they lose games.
3. Rating calculations can be completed in a reasonable amount of time.

EXAMPLE:

Jim is rated 1250 and loses a game to Bill, who is rated 1100. To calculate the new rating, subtract 15 points from Jim's club rating (because he was the *higher-rated* player and he lost). Bill receives 15 points (he was the *lower-rated* player and he won). Therefore, Jim's new club rating is 1235 and Bill's new club rating is 1115.

This is a very simple system that takes little time to calculate new ratings for the students. Consider giving bonus points for games won at a local tournament. This rewards them for their

participation. However, restrict points to no more than 10 points per won game. *Never* subtract bonus points for losses at an outside school tournament.

A variation of this is to let all players start at 1000 as before, but for each game won add 25 points plus or minus 10% of the difference in ratings, with a maximum of 50 points.

Harkness System

The Harkness System is another method of calculating club ratings. It is more accurate than the simple rating system described above, but the calculations take more time if you are doing them by hand. Check out the following chart:

HARKNESS SYSTEM*

| Opponent Rating Difference | If High Wins , Add to Winner (High) and Deduct from Loser (Low) | If Low Wins , Add to Winner (Low) and Deduct from Loser (High) | If Draw , Add to Low and Deduct from High |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| 0 to 24 | 16 | 16 | 0 |
| 25 to 49 | 15 | 17 | 1 |
| 50 to 74 | 14 | 18 | 2 |
| 75 to 99 | 13 | 19 | 3 |
| 100 to 124 | 12 | 20 | 4 |
| 125 to 149 | 11 | 21 | 5 |
| 150 to 174 | 10 | 22 | 6 |
| 175 to 199 | 9 | 23 | 7 |
| 200 to 224 | 8 | 24 | 8 |
| 225 to 249 | 7 | 25 | 9 |
| 250 to 274 | 6 | 26 | 10 |
| 275 to 299 | 5 | 27 | 11 |
| 300 or more | 4 | 28 | 12 |

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Other Ways to mix-it-up, and Keep Things Fresh:

Theme Tournaments

Non-rated “theme” tournaments require only one day to complete, and they provide a good change of pace. In each game, the players are required to play a certain gambit or other opening sequence with each competitor—once with white and once with black. In minor piece tournaments, knights or bishops are used, with a few pawns added. A fast time control of 10-15 minutes per side can be used to ensure that all games are completed in one club meeting. This type of contest is designed for fun. Often, the opening is announced in advance so that players can prepare for the tournament, but sometimes the opening is “drawn from a hat” at the start of the event.

Minor Piece Tournaments

As for the minor piece tournaments, you can have fun with pawns only plus king, pawns and knight(s) plus king, or no-queen tournaments, etc. This gives students more practice with the endgame and minor pieces and reminds them that the game is more than a “queen move.” These types of tournaments should be considered for mid-year—after the students have some knowledge of the game.

Gambit Tournaments

The reason to choose a gambit is to force players into a type of game different from what they normally play. Gambits tend to produce very exciting positions where imagination and natural skill can be exercised. You might precede the competition with a short lecture on the opening to make sure the event becomes not only fun, but educational too. Caution: Be certain to choose openings that are not totally unsound; nobody enjoys playing with a position that is a forced loss.

Problem Solving Contests

Another possibility is a problem-solving contest, with mate-in-two problems from chess books. Ten problems may be an appropriate number. The object is to solve the problems correctly in the shortest amount of time. For your instructional purposes, the patterns found in actual games and chess problems are generally better for developing pattern recognition. Avoid abnormal variations on chess, as they tend to interfere with the development of normal pattern recognition. An example of an abnormal variation would be bughouse chess (*see [Glossary](#)*). There are puzzle books available online that offer realistic positions, and solutions for you. Set up the problems and see who can complete them as quickly as possible. Consider partnering up a couple of club members for dialogue and joint problem solving. The free Chess Kid curriculum also has worksheets and activities sheets that can be copied to present problems.

Note:

You decide if you want the entire club to try the special event, or if you want to have an optional ladder or other activity available for those who do not want to play in theme tournaments. Not all chess players enjoy trying a totally new and unprepared opening, even if it is just for fun.

Try Team Play!

One way to pull a club closer together is team play. Arrange matches with other schools in your town or in a nearby town. You can have the chess team ride with one of the other sports teams (i.e., football, baseball or tennis) when competing against a nearby school. Try to establish a league in your area. There are probably other chess clubs that want to play. If you do not know of any other nearby schools that are active in chess, check with your local district or superintendent, state association or US Chess. US Chess maintains a list of affiliated chess clubs in the “Clubs & Tourneys” section of the US Chess website, <http://www.uschess.org/content/blogsection/18/95/>.

Matches can be played with varying numbers of players, from as few as three boards to as many as can fit into the playing site. In team play the principle “the more the merrier” truly does apply! Try to arrange a 10 to 15 board match with another school or schools, so that every club member can play. Remember that the players from the two schools are to be ranked in

descending order, strongest player on Board One. Matches can give your club a real boost. Playing with a common goal and traveling together to a match can really build club morale. Whenever possible, use school bus transportation. *Note: Each player needs a permission slip.*

Remember, you can find match opponents anywhere. You may be able to gain publicity for your club, especially if you win against a school from a rival city or town. Be sure to let your school and local newspapers know. Newspapers love stories and pictures of youngsters who can hold their own in competition.

One club member can be designated as team captain and take responsibility for some of the details concerning matches.

The advisor should:

1. Contact the other school;
2. Arrange a mutually agreeable place, time, and time limits;
3. Make sure that all the necessary equipment is available;
4. Contact the students and their parents and assign the order in which the players will play.

If you are traveling to the other school, the advisor must make transportation arrangements, plus make sure that no one is left behind by mistake!

Sometimes a concern about team strength prevents some schools from being active in team play. Schools that are not blessed with a quantity of strong players tend to shy away from team competition. This is unnecessary. Team play can be designed as an enjoyable form of chess. Work with the coaches of neighboring schools to set some team competition events that maintain a balance between teams.

For instance, each team could agree in advance to have no more than two players rated over 1400, no more than four over 1200, and at least two unrated players. This type of format allows teams to be more evenly matched. It also promotes more interschool competition for the team positions. Novice players are still important to the success of the team—in fact, they are just as important as the top two boards!

Before forming your team, decide how you choose its members. Being on the team should be an honor that can be earned by anyone. Encourage club members to try to “make the team.” Perhaps the “most improved player” on the club ladder or some of the best players can be automatically awarded a spot. This will increase interest not only in the team but also in the general club activities. A students-versus-faculty match or one in which the students choose up sides would work well.

If there are a good number of school clubs in the area, consider setting up a league with a regular schedule. Some leagues feature rated competition; others are open to non-US Chess members. The latter makes it possible to get other schools involved which have very few or no rated players. Make sure that you get a responsible person as league director and that all the club advisors understand their duties.

It is important that official recognition of the league is obtained due to items like travel scheduling, permissions, and visitor logins for the schools. Start with the Principals of the involved schools and then get support and permission for the league from the School Board(s). If travel is a problem, matches can be played on-line on sites like ChessKid.com and the pay for service ICC (Internet Chess Club). Face to face competition is the most fun, but any match is better than no match.

If other school districts have leagues, a state championship is a great long-term goal. Check with your US Chess State Affiliate or Scholastic Affiliate for help with organizing and funding a State Championship for the leagues. You might happily discover there already is a Scholastic State Championship organized by the state affiliate, and you just need to register your kids to show up.

As you progress, think about club jackets or T-shirts with the school logo on them. High-school students should be eligible for a chess letter to be worn on a collegiate-style sweater or vest. If other teams use school equipment and have club jackets, then so should your team.

V. YOUR CLUB AS A TOURNAMENT SPONSOR

Chess tournaments come in all sizes and shapes. Your experience will lead you to what is best for your students, and almost all chess players enjoy some kind of formal competition. If you don't use the pairings software mentioned earlier, you will find detailed instructions for pairing players, assigning colors, and so forth in the US Chess *Official Rules of Chess* book. Also, you can often contact local tournament directors to help you out (some volunteer their services; others will charge a nominal fee). In this chapter, we are concerned with what happens before and after the games themselves.

Remember that there may be students that do not want to play in any tournaments, so respect their wishes. Stay loose, experiment, listen to your students, and have fun.

Tournament Format?

Round Robin

You can play round robins among any number of players from 4 to 24. "Quads" are traditional favorites, matching four players of about the same strength in a three-round event. Note that first time US Chess ratings based on fewer than 4 games are considered unofficial. Therefore, a new player would have to play in two "quads" (6 games—which is over the minimum 4 game limit) in order to get officially rated for the first time. Or play a "double round robin", where each player plays the other three people in their quad twice: once as white, and once as black. That would count as 6 rated games and generate an official US Chess rating.

Swiss

If you can handle the Swiss system (*see [Glossary](#)*), you might start with a one-section Swiss, involving everyone in the same competition. If you have fewer than a dozen players, a three-rounder is probably enough. For 10 to 20 students, you probably want four or five rounds. For more than 20 players, five rounds might be best. Keep in mind that if all players are to start a round at the same time, a number of students will finish early. There should be an activity to occupy them that is quiet enough so as to not disturb the tournament games in progress, or a separate room, called a skittles room, where students can go to talk and discuss their games without disturbing the players still in the tournament room playing games.

You can also have two or more Swiss sections of any length. Three rounds guarantees no more than one perfect score among eight players, for 16 players you need four rounds.

You'll have to decide what to do about ties. You can have co-champions with equal awards, co-champions with a trophy awarded on tie-breaks, or a winner-take-all playoff match. It's a good idea to award something to anyone tying for first place.

Team Vs Team

A set number of team members are listed in order from highest rated to lowest rated. Each team's ordered roster then plays games against another team's ordered roster: 1 vs 1, 2 vs 2, 3 vs 3, etc. The result of each individual game is totaled to determine a team score. The team with the greatest total score is the winner of the match. Note: Sometimes weighted scores (depending on which board that a player wins their game, their score can count for more than 1-point) are used for individual games. In the case of uneven teams only the first 4 or 5 boards may be used in

totaling the final team score. It is fun to have a “travelling trophy” that is kept by the winning team, until next face-off, when it travels to the new winning school.

Individual/Team

A tournament paired just like a Swiss except pairing players from the same team is to be avoided if possible. Individuals as well as teams can win prizes. Pairings software can keep track of team and individual totals for you. Software is extremely helpful for large tournaments, but not as necessary with only a few players.

Scoring

A win earns the individual 1 point. A loss earns no points. A draw is a half-point for each player. **Example:** if a player wins all their games in a 5 round event, the maximum points earned would be 5 points. A player who loses all games scores 0 points. In a four round tournament a player who drew once, won once and lost twice would have a total of 1.5 points. In a quad, where each player played the other players twice (once with white pieces and once playing black pieces) 6 points would be a perfect score.

Prizes

While it’s possible to have a tournament with only one prize, you will be more popular if you give everyone some chance at an award. You might, for example, offer a first prize and a smaller one for the best score by someone rated under 1200 (U1200). A prize for the best score by a newcomer or unrated player, an upset prize to the student who scores the biggest rating upset of the tournament, a prize for the top scoring girl in the tournament, or a prize/certificate for a plus score (scoring more than half the possible points— in a 4 round event at least 2.5 points and in a 5 round event at least 3 points— allows more people to get recognition beyond “participation awards”). Remember that your students joined your club to have fun and to win, so the more prize categories, the better.

Tournament Titles

One popular feature is to give your tournaments creative titles based on holidays, movies, local geography or history, or whatever else tickles you or your students. **Example:** The Snowflake Special, March Madness, Winter-Warm-Up, School’s Out, Friendly Feud, Autumn Skirmish, Christmas Quads.

The Club Tournament

Many clubs find that regular tournaments form the backbone of their activities. The typical tournament structure is one round a week for a specified number of weeks. Then take a break for a couple weeks, perhaps to teach some new concepts, before starting another brand new tournament with the same or a new format. These are easy events to run and are fun for everybody, but you might have to experiment before you find the best format for your students. Two major words of advice: *inexpensive* and *relaxed*.

Entry Fees

Entry fees should be affordable, and while prizes are not typically a big deal in school club tournaments, one or more small trophies, medals, ribbons, certificates, or book prizes may be appropriate. A prize could even be as minimal as a free entry into a future local tournament.

Caution: To maintain your scholastic standing in the eyes of some state organizations, you should *not* offer cash prizes of any type. Thus, you can get sanctioned just like the debate club, the football team, and the math club. This could come in handy later.

Structure

Don't run a military boot camp. The atmosphere in a school club tournament should be friendly. Relax and let the kids enjoy it within the rules of the game. You will find that some students can't show up for a scheduled round (game). Often they can get together with their opponents some evening or over the weekend. If it's okay with the players involved, it should be okay with you. Also, be flexible about letting students join the tournament after the event has started.

The Tournament Director

You need someone to be in charge, whether or not your event is to be rated by US Chess. In practice, the Tournament Director (TD) usually does everything connected with a small tournament, but for larger tournaments it's better to have at least a small team of TDs that divides the actual directing chores from the organizing ones. Be sure that the TD has a copy of the US Chess *Official Rules of Chess* and the on-line rules updates (<https://new.uschess.org/news/7th-edition-rule-book-chapters-now-available-download>).

If your event is to be US Chess-rated (definitely a good idea!), your tournament director needs to be US Chess certified and US Chess affiliate approved. Your state affiliate, or even a local adult chess club, can provide contact information of a tournament director who might help out, and even mentor you so you can serve as a director at a future event. Any US Chess member in good standing can become a US Chess certified Club TD by signing a form stating that he or she has read the US Chess *Official Rules of Chess*, has access to a copy of these rules, understands them, and promises to uphold them fairly.

Please visit the US Chess website (uschess.org) to download forms and obtain information concerning [TD certification](#).

The Weekend Scholastic Tournament

There are many rated and unrated weekend and scholastic events available to you and your students. Look them up in *Chess Life* or in the Clubs and Tournaments/"Upcoming Tournaments" section of the US Chess website (<http://www.uschess.org/content/blogsection/18/95/>), or contact your local scholastic organizer. Taking your students to face new people, even adults, will greatly improve their chess, and add to the fun via such a field trip.

Sponsoring such an event yourself is not difficult, as nearly everything that is true of club tournaments applies to weekend events that are open to other students as well as your own. These events, whether one day or two days in length, take more advance planning, but most of your concerns will be similar to those you encounter in planning a school club tournament.

You will find in the [Appendix](#) a [Tournament Accounting Sheet](#), a [Tournament Financial Summary Sheet](#), a [Tournament Supplies](#) list, and a [Sample Flyer](#) that will help you to plan ahead. Talk this over with the other coaches in your area. They can guide your estimates so they will be very accurate.

Finances

One of the essential differences is finances. For club events, you can probably remain flexible and determine your prizes. For an open scholastic event, you should either guarantee the trophies, medals, and ribbons (ideal) or offer a realistic estimate of these based on the number of entries. Consider companies like Trophies Plus, Crown Awards and local trophy companies that have these awards. One budget conscious TD used glass star shaped dishes from a dollar store. Using a pen that writes on glass she was able to put the event name and date on these cost-effective awards for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. Then “plus score” certificates were awarded to all of the players totaling more than half the possible points. Later as finances allows, you may choose to use medals, rather than certificates.

You will find in the Appendix a [Tournament Accounting Sheet](#), a [Tournament Financial Summary Sheet](#), a [Tournament Supplies](#) list, and a [Sample Flyer](#) that will help you to plan ahead. Talk this over with the other coaches in your area. They can guide your estimates so they will be very accurate.

Tournament Site

Your tournament site is another major issue. Can you use your classroom, library, gym or cafeteria? Clear this with your principal by getting a building use form, completing it, and sending it to the superintendent or other official of the school district who will handle the approval. Getting this approval is essential. If an accident should occur, you will be protected from liability and the school district insurance will cover all persons involved. Weekend tournaments also need an area for the parents to wait and for the players to relax or go over their games while waiting for the next tournament game to start. This is a good opportunity to sell food to support the club. If by chance you choose a tournament location outside of school, try to have the community center, college, or hotel donate the space and custodial services. These other sites have insurance coverage, so that should not be a problem.

Insurance

A scholastic club may want to run tournaments at public sites both for groups of schools or to promote chess in the community. Some sites may require liability insurance in order to use their facilities. R. V. Nuccio provides insurance for both clubs and non-profit organizations. US Chess is one of the master organizations that R.V. Nuccio will accept to provide insurance to chess organizations. Visit <http://www.rvnuccio.com/> to see information and costs.

Publicity

Publicity is another important factor. You should plan very far in advance—as much as six months to a year. The first step is to check with your US Chess regional clearinghouse or state organization to make sure that there is no significant scholastic activity already scheduled for that weekend. You can find a complete list of regional clearinghouses at the [US Chess](#) website. If a major tournament, open to students and adults, is scheduled for the same date, it might cut into your attendance. Check with some of the other coaches and students to see if that’s the case. A big scholastic event just before or after your tournament could affect attendance too. You might want a margin of 2-3 weeks between events in the same area that could draw attendance from the same local players.

Boost attendance at your event by posting and distributing fliers at other area tournaments and by mailing fliers to area players and coaches you wish to attract. US Chess supplies address labels of chess players by ZIP code and rating at a nominal cost. Write, call, or e-mail the US Chess office for more information.

Social Media

One of the best ways to reach parents and students to share information about your event in advance—and to share photos after the event—is to use social media sites such as Facebook. You can create a Facebook page, or wall or private group, for your school club. To increase your publicity, you can open the access to a social media page beyond just your students. Managing the content is very important.

Placing Ads in *Chess Life* Magazine

One way to attract US Chess rated players to your event is to announce or advertise it in your local state chess bulletin and in the Tournament Life Announcement (TLA) section of *Chess Life*. The TLA form is available from the US Chess website. You may use it to submit *Chess Life* TLAs for your events. But the best way to submit a TLA is online. Visit the [US Chess](http://www.uschess.org) website for more information about submitting TLAs.

***Chess Life* TLA Acknowledgement**

All TLA fees must be paid with the return of the TLA acknowledgment form, even if there are no corrections. If you do not return your acknowledgment form with your payment by the required date, your TLA will not appear. Please keep in mind that your TLA, in addition to appearing in *Chess Life*, also appears, at no extra charge, on the US Chess website: www.uschess.org.

Registration

A smooth registration process is essential to running a successful weekend rated or unrated tournament. As in all other things, planning and teamwork help enormously. Convince your club that the tournament is theirs, not yours. Everyone in the club should help out at least a little, and there are indeed lots of little chores that can be parceled out.

Advance registrations are great. You can handle them in peace and quiet and at your own pace. To encourage advance entries, offer a discount for early entries and provide a cutoff registration form on your tournament flier. Of course, if you are running a tournament with several sections, you need a space for the section the entrant wants and maybe one for their current rating.

It is your responsibility to check all US Chess ID numbers, expiration dates, and ratings. Duplicate names for one player (Frederick W. Smith III, Fred Smith, Freddy Smith, F. W. Smith, etc.) create havoc with membership records and ratings. Avoid headaches by asking US Chess members to bring their membership cards. Copy the information directly from the card. Mailing labels from their *Chess Life* magazine are also helpful in establishing accurate data.

There are two basic parts to the registration process on the day of the tournament, and they should be split between at least two people if your line is more than a few players long.

- I. Fees
 - A. Entry fees
 - B. Dues (league, state association, US Chess, as applicable). It's often faster to have the student fill out the forms (print please) and return them to you with the appropriate fees, at which time you should give a receipt if requested. When possible, have the coach or advisor who brought the team prepare a list in advance.
- II. Player Information
 - A. Name (student and parent)
 - B. Address and/or e-mail address (This is important for expanding your scholastic contact list, for providing information to the newspaper and state bulletin, for mailing prizes and cross tables, and for responding to post-tournament inquiries)
 - C. US Chess ID Number
 - D. US Chess Expiration Date
 - E. Rating
 - F. Birthdate and Grade
 - G. School (If it is not a team event, you may wish to avoid pairing students who are from the same school, especially during the early rounds.)

Rating Lists

The US Chess *Rating List* is an all-in-one tool for all information except address, grade, and school. US Chess certified tournament directors can download US Chess rating lists from the TD/affiliate support area of the US Chess website. Tournament pairing programs such as [WinTD](#) and [SwissSys](#) are designed to be used with the US Chess downloadable rating lists.

Pairing Cards

If you are not using pairing software—such as WinTD or SwissSys—and you’re running a tournament with more than one section, or a team competition of any type, then using color coded pairing cards is helpful. Use different color pairing cards for each section or mark the corner of the pairing cards with a different color to identify each school. Pairing cards contain a player’s official rating and US Chess ID numbers. A player’s pairing card also contains information regarding his/her opponents, colors played and won-loss record. An explanation of how to use pairing cards can be found in the [7th](#) edition of the *U.S. Chess Federation’s Official Rules of Chess*. Using pairing cards is much more challenging than using pairings software. It is recommended that you find a mentor to help you master the use of pairings cards.

Reporting Results

Inform the students that both players who are paired should go together to the pairing sheet or result taker to record the result of the game as soon as they finish.

Wall Charts

You’ll want to post wall charts so that the students can follow the action. Don’t hold up your first round to do so, but do see that someone—whether it’s you or someone else—gets to them as soon as possible. Good tournament directors get these charts prepared and on the wall before the end of round one. Pairings software can print out wall charts with the click of a button.

REMINDER: No student or advisor is to write on a wall chart. Any corrections or changes to a wall chart are to be made by a Tournament Director

VI. CLUB FINANCES

Funding

Almost certainly, your club will have at least some financial concerns. They can be large or small depending on the size of your club and the nature of its activities and programs. Raising money for your chess club can be very easy if you have the participation and support of students, parents, and school administration.

The school district is a primary source of funding for school activities. Some districts have funded programs for special academic classes. Districts may fund programs for exceptional and talented students. In addition, districts usually make provisions for bus transportation to student events.

Each school's student council funds many activities. However, the student council sometimes requires funding to be budgeted a year in advance. Work closely with the activities director to recognize your chess program and team. Student councils are interested in securing equipment that will be of long-term benefit to the school. Items such as chess clocks and chess books for the library qualify. The student council will sometimes fund team entry fees to promote the school and encourage school participation.

Most school clubs have ways of raising money for their activities. Find out what they are by checking with several advisors and your school activities director. One or more of their ideas may suit your need to raise a certain amount of money. Your parent booster club will be a valuable resource. There are also community groups (e.g., Parents Association, Lions Club, Optimists, Kiwanis) that support schools and worthy scholastic projects.

There are many old reliable methods—bake sales, car washes, raffles, and chocolate sales (where permitted). Also to be considered are chess related fundraiser such as a tournament with an entry fee and limited prizes. You could try a “challenge-the-champions” event where your students and faculty pay a donation fee to play one of your top players. Food concessions at your events can also bring in funds to your club treasury. PTA, student council, or even school district funds designated for “after-school activities” would be worth investigating. Spend the time looking for the money and you will have to spend less time raising it. Check school district rules on excess funds at the end of the year. Most districts funnel excess funds to General Accounts.

Banking

You don't really have to run downtown and open an account as soon as you decide to have a student chess club. First, check with your principal or activities director and see how other clubs at your school handle finances. Their system will probably work for your club too. Many districts require funds to be placed in a student club activity account.

If, however, you find that your club would be better off with its own account, then check with local banks to see which one will give you a no-charge bank account. Many banks do this for schools. If necessary, your principal could call the bank and verify your need. Remember: The

bank will receive your money and not pay interest to you and you will receive all services free. It's a good trade-off for them and it's also good public relations.

You'll have to decide who signs the checks. It's best to have two signatures on file with the bank, probably those of the advisor and the vice-principal. Then, when the statement comes in each month you simply have the vice- principal initial it. When needed, you have him/her sign checks.

Insurance

As noted earlier: A scholastic club may want to run tournaments at public sites both for groups of schools or to promote chess in the community. Some sites may require liability insurance in order to use their facilities. R. V. Nuccio provides insurance for both clubs and non-profit organizations. US Chess is one of the master organizations that R.V. Nuccio will accept to provide insurance to chess organizations. Visit <http://www.rvnuccio.com/> to see information and costs.

Taxes

Because yours is a school club organization, it is a 501(c)(3) organization. You pay no income tax on your activities. Through your district, it may be possible for your club to be exempt from sales tax on your purchases, get special postage rates, and offer donors write-offs on gifts. Check with your district business office to confirm any legal questions with regard to the above. There may be variations from state to state.

VII. LARGER CHESS ORGANIZATIONS

Benefits of State Association

Many school clubs have found it helpful to have a good relationship with their state chess association. In some cases, these clubs can become affiliates of state associations. In return for paying little or no annual fee, your club will probably receive a copy of the state magazine and often a listing in the magazine or website citing the club's existence. You will also be able to announce any weekend tournaments that you run. Your students will benefit from having a copy of the state magazine available. They will also enjoy seeing their names featured in the scholastic events you report.

Active ties with your state chess association can benefit your club in other ways. Sometimes, a state association arranges tours by masters or the state champion—if so, your club can have a chance to be included. If a special event is coming up in your state, such as a grandmaster simul, all your students will learn of it promptly. Also, state tournament calendars are often printed far in advance of the Tournament Life listings in *Chess Life*. These calendars will help your students plan their tournament activity more efficiently.

The state association may also assist you if you have any special problems. Your state officers are usually a good source of advice on many chess-related topics. When your club embarks on its first open tournament, you may be able to count on the state association for assistance with publicity, a director, and so forth. Remember that helpfulness is a two-way street, so do support your state association when it requests your assistance.

As your club and league grow, you may want to bid for a state-sponsored scholastic tournament. These events offer your students the opportunity to compete against the best players the state has to offer, while avoiding the inconveniences of traveling to another city.

You can find your state affiliate by using the search engine at:

http://www.uschess.org/component/option.com_wrapper/Itemid,198/

US Chess Club Affiliation

At the earliest opportunity, you should consider making your club a scholastic affiliate of the U.S. Chess Federation. The paperwork is minimal, the benefits are numerous and too good to pass up! Here are some of the exciting, special advantages:

1. A monthly copy of *Chess Life* and a bi-monthly copy of *Chess Life Kids* mailed to your school.
2. A listing on the US Chess website. School coaches in your area looking for other school clubs will be able to find you.
3. The ability to sponsor and conduct the US Chess sanctioned tournaments in which your students will earn national ratings.
4. Information and involvement in chess by mail with pen pals on a rated basis (correspondence chess) could include games with students from other countries.
5. Discounts on books and equipment. What you purchase can be used by your whole club, given as prizes, or even resold to your members at your cost. (Ask your school librarian

to see if your library has any chess books. School libraries sometimes have money to spend, and chess books are a worthwhile investment because your club members will check out the books.)

6. Free-for-the-asking materials such as membership brochures, explanations of the rating system and tournament procedures, rules booklets, posters, and even back issues of *Chess Life* for your special scholastic events. Also, the U.S. Chess Trust (uschesstrust.org), a non-profit educational organization provides free chess sets and boards to schools.
7. An experienced staff at [US Chess](http://USChess.org) headquarters is ready to answer your questions.

US Chess-Rated Tournaments

Rated tournament competition is the driving force behind the success of [US Chess](http://USChess.org). Over 50,000 scholastic players participate in nationally rated chess activities every year, and the numbers are increasing rapidly.

Participating in US Chess-rated events is fun and will give your players an opportunity to gauge their improvement. Also, if they are members and have high enough ratings, their names might appear on our Top 100 lists for the different age groups or on lists of top players in your state. These lists can be used to publicize the success of your club.

US Chess has made the cost of holding a US Chess-rated tournament very inexpensive. The only costs are an annual US Chess club affiliation fee and a per-game rating fee (contact US Chess for current rates). For these tournaments, US Chess membership is required of all players.

So, as you can see, it is easy and inexpensive to get your players involved in our nationally rated chess tournaments.

US Chess Certified Chess Coach Program

US Chess recognizes chess coaches as special people who are fair, positive, compassionate and caring. These coaches make a strong effort to instill in their students these same attributes. The US Chess Certified Chess Coach Program (<http://www.uschess.org/content/view/9474/131/>) was established to recognize these special people. Different levels of certification are available based upon knowledge and experience. Please contact [US Chess](http://USChess.org) for more information about current requirements.

Coaching at Tournaments

One of the most exciting experiences a coach will offer his or her students is the opportunity to participate in US Chess-rated tournament competition. There are weekend club events as well as state and national tournaments. Participating in the National Championships gives players, coaches, and parents the opportunity to experience scholastic chess at the championship level, as well as the chance to meet people from other parts of the country.

Code of Conduct

Spectators and coaches are governed by the ground rules of the tournament organizer. These rules supersede the suggested guidelines that follow. In this discussion, 'COACH' also refers to 'PARENTS' acting as supervisors and observers at a scholastic chess tournament and other 'SPECTATORS' (other than tournament officials). Here are some of the "dos" and "don'ts" of coaches and parents on the floor:

1. Once a game is in progress, a coach can never interrupt it for any reason. Only tournament directors and their assistants may intervene.
2. If a coach notices a player playing the wrong opponent, he or she should immediately notify the tournament director (TD).
3. If a coach observes an illegal move, he or she is to say or do absolutely nothing, as it is the responsibility of the players to bring violations to the attention of the TD.
4. If a coach sees a player's hand raised he or she should *NEVER* try to assist any player. The TD will take care of it.
5. If a coach observes that a player has overstepped his or her time limit, the coach should not say or do anything, as only the players can make time-violation claims.
6. Once a tournament game has started, a coach should talk to his or her players only in the presence of the TD.
7. In general, the coach should avoid eye contact with both his or her players and their opponents, keeping a sufficient distance from the board to avoid distracting the players.
8. Players may leave their boards for short periods. They should inform the TD if they will be gone for an extended time. While absent from his/her game, a player must not consult any chess books, diagrams, computer programs, or analysis. He or she should not discuss the game (while in progress) with anyone else.
9. Players, coaches, spectators, and TDs may be prohibited from bringing food or drink into the tournament rooms. All scholastic tournaments are non-smoking.
10. After the conclusion of a tournament, if a coach notices that a prize was incorrectly awarded, he or she should bring this to the attention of the TD *ONLY*.
11. Wall charts usually show the ranking of the players, their ratings, their round-by-round results and other pertinent information. Only tournament officials can record information on these charts. Coaches or players should *NEVER* write on them or remove them. Report errors to a tournament official.
12. Coaches should make sure their players' results are reported. In many individual tournaments, results are posted on *pairing sheets*. These sheets show each player's pairing and board number for a particular round, and have a space by each player's name for posting results.
 - A. At some tournaments, including most major nationals, players are required to report their results to designated officials. In most TEAM vs TEAM tournaments, results should be recorded on the "Team Card" at the playing table.
13. Pairing Cards (when used) contain tournament results used for pairing purposes. Only TDs have access to these cards.
14. OTHER coaching duties include:
 - A. Providing instruction for their players before and after (but not during) rounds
 - B. Helping their players find their pairings and boards
 - C. Offering moral support to their players before and after (but not during) games
 - D. Making sure their players stay out of trouble and exhibit good sportsmanship
 - E. Helping maintain proper order throughout the tournament site

VIII. NATIONAL PROGRAMS

National Scholastic Tournaments

U.S. Chess annually sponsors the **National Scholastic Chess Championships** and the **All-America Chess Team**. The three traditional events each spring (typically in May) are the **National Elementary** (K-6), **Junior High** (K-9), and **High School** (K-12) Championships. Once every 4 years, these three championships are combined into one extravaganza called Super Nationals. Students, with their families and/or coaches, come to compete in a wide range of sections, so there are sections for unrated players to Master level players. In addition, US Chess holds an annual **National Scholastic K-12 Grade Championship**—each player competes at his or her grade level but only against others in the same grade. The Grade Championship is typically held in December. These championship events are open to students, individually and as a team, from all 50 states and US Territories. The event dates and locations can be found on the US Chess web page, under PLAY, National Tournaments.

Three special invitational events, the **GM Arnold Denker Tournament of High School Champions** (denkerchess.com), the **Dewain Barber Tournament of K-8 Champions** (barberchess.com) and the **National Girls Tournament of Champions** (<http://www.nationalgirlschess.com>) take place every summer, at the same location and time frame as the US Open. In these tournaments, state champions compete for college scholarship prizes.

The U.S. Chess Trust

Chess for Youth is a program sponsored by the US Chess Trust (uschesstrust.org) that donates free chess sets to schools around the county. It is also known as “Koltly Chess for Youth,” named for its famous founder, Grandmaster George Koltanowski.

The US Chess Trust provides **free US Chess Memberships for Underprivileged Children** who are on their school’s free lunch program. The memberships will be channeled through coaches and parents who coordinate and organize chess programs in the schools. Each school program is eligible to receive a maximum of 10 free memberships.

The Free Membership Program, in addition to providing assistance to underprivileged kids, is one more incentive for coaches to generate and organize chess activities at the schools. Coaches are encouraged to send a list of qualified kids on school letterhead, with a cover letter that includes a brief description of the program.

US Chess and the U.S. Chess Trust thank Trust donors for their generosity and their support of children who could otherwise not afford to participate in tournament chess.

Scholar-Chessplayer Award

The **Annual National Scholar-Chessplayer Awards** recognize and encourage high school students who promote a positive image of chess in the United States. High school juniors and seniors who are US Chess members are eligible to apply. Applications must be completed and submitted to US Chess along with five copies of an academic transcript, a photograph, and a letter of recommendation from an adult coach or chess organizer. The deadline is **March 1st** of each academic year.

Award winners are selected on the basis of outstanding merit in academics, chess play, and sportsmanship. The winners are announced annually at the National High School K-12 Championship. They receive scholarship prizes from the U.S. Chess Trust.

For more information on Chess Trust programs or to receive a Scholar-Chessplayer Award application, contact: Events Director, US Chess, PO Box 3967, Crossville, TN 38557; telephone 1-800-903-8723.

All-America Chess Team

Only the most promising of America's young Chess players are selected for the **All-America Chess Team**. Team members must show outstanding achievement in their age group and be considered likely to distinguish themselves in the future. All candidates must have competed in at least FOUR open (non-scholastic) tournaments since July 15 of the previous year. US Chess reserves the right to discount recent rating gains earned in small, unannounced or "private" events. Each qualifying youngster will receive a certificate and a congratulatory letter. Team members will also receive a jacket prominently displaying the All-America Chess Team insignia from Trophies Plus.

College Scholarships

Many colleges and universities offer full or partial scholarships for chess players. Some of these scholarships are based solely on chess achievements, and some are based on a combination of chess achievements and academic achievements. Some tournaments, particularly certain national scholastic and youth championships, offer scholarship prizes to the top finishers. In addition, you might want to review <http://www.uschess.org/content/view/8164/131/>.

Stamford Fellowship

The **Samford Fellowship** is the richest and most important prize of its kind in the U.S. The annual fellowship offers brilliant young American Masters the support and resources necessary to reach their full potential. Samford recipients must be willing to devote their efforts to studying and playing chess in an attempt to become leading grandmasters. The Fellowship rewards talent, achievement, and commitment to chess and is open to high school graduates under age 25.

IX. APPENDIX

Appendix A: [Suggested Books for Scholastic Chess](#)

Appendix B: [Chess Books Recommended for Parents, Teachers & Coaches](#)

Appendix C: [Useful Software/Internet Information for Teachers, Coaches, and Students](#)

Appendix D: [Types of Tournaments](#)

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Suggested Books for Scholastic Chess

Content of each title is in Algebraic notation unless otherwise mentioned. Software is indicated by an (S). (*While geared for student players, adults are welcome to peek; we won't tell*) **NOTE:** These books are recommended by chess teachers. Teacher guidance is suggested, as some books (e.g. Comprehensive Chess Course) are especially suited to a classroom setting.

Novice Players (Rated Under 750)

TITLE

Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess (S)
Beginning Chess
Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess
Comprehensive Chess Course, Vols. 1 & 2
200 Checkmates for Children
Chess Training Materials
Chess Detective Workbook

AUTHOR

GM Maurice Ashley
Bruce Pandolfini
GM Bobby Fischer
GM Lev Alburt
Fred Wilson
Jim Mitch
Todd Bardwick

Intermediate Players (Rated Under 1000)

TITLE

Chess Puzzles for Children
The Chess Tactics Workbook
Chess Tactics for Students
Winning Chess Strategy for Kids

AUTHOR

David Levin
Al Woolum
John Bain
Jeff Coakley

Advanced Players (Rated Over 1000)

TITLE

1001 Winning Chess Sacrifices and Combinations
Modern Chess Openings
Understanding Pawn Play in Chess
Basic Chess Endings
How to Reassess Your Chess (4th Edition)
Jeremy Silman Endgame Book

AUTHOR

Fred Reinfeld
GM Nick de Firmian
GM Drazen Marovic
GM Reuben Fine
IM Jeremy Silman
IM Jeremy Silman

Chess Books Recommended for Parents, Teachers & Coaches

TITLE

AUTHOR

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Searching for Bobby Fischer</i> <i>US Chess Official Rules of Chess</i> <i>Teaching Life Skills Through Chess</i> <i>101 Questions on How to Play Chess</i> <i>Parents Guide to Chess</i> <i>Chess for Kids and Parents</i> <i>A Beginners Guide to Coaching Scholastic Chess</i> <i>Children and Chess: A Guide for Educators</i> <i>Science, Math, Checkmate: 32 Chess Activities for Inquiry and Problem Solving</i> <i>Read, Write, Checkmate: Enrich Literacy with Chess Activities</i></p> | <p>Fred Waitzkin US Chess—Tim Just, Editor Fernando Moreno Fred Wilson Dan Heisman Heinz Brunthaler Ralph Bowman WIM Dr. Alexey Root WIM Dr. Alexey Root WIM Dr. Alexey Root</p> |
|---|---|

Useful Software/Internet Information for Teachers, Coaches, and Students

Chess Playing Software:

The following software is useful for your students. An important function of these programs, in addition to play and practice, is the ability to enter, analyze, and save your tournament games [database functions]. **Note:** links subject to change without notice.

| Program | Cost | Platforms | Comments |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|---|
| Arena Chess | Free | Windows | Has play, analysis, database, and import / export functions |
| Fritz by ChessBase | ~ \$60 | Windows | Has play, analysis, database, and import / export functions |
| | | | |

Chess playing software for tablets.

There are many chess apps for IOS and tablets. [Stockfish](#) is free for IOS and has almost if not all the features found in the computer programs above including the important ability to enter and save games. There is also a version called [Droidfish](#) for non-Apple tablets.

Learn or improve your chess skills or play on the Internet.

There are many websites where you can learn and play on the Internet. [Chesskid.com: discount](#) is an outstanding site. It has beginner teaching, lessons, tactics practice, and videos for players of all skill levels. A great feature for coaches is the ability to form a club where you can track your student’s progress. Log on using a browser or get the app for your tablet. Membership

is either free or Gold (fee applies) @ \$50 a year with discounts for multiple memberships. Parents/coaches can get a free account to watch and interact with their students.

Tournament Software

The following software is useful for your Coaches, Teachers, or tournament directors for running tournaments and looking up ratings.

| Program | Cost | Platforms | Comments |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--|
| SwissSys | \$100 | Windows | Free demo – restrictions on # of rounds. |
| WinTD | \$90.00 | Win, OSX | Free 30 day trial. |
| Chess Club Manager | \$100 | Win, OSX | The name says it all. |

Types of Tournaments

US Chess Rated

While some tournaments may be unrated, many US Chess members find that participation in US Chess rated chess tournaments is one of their favorite benefits. Sanctioned tournaments are sponsored by the US Chess or its many affiliated organizations. Players compete against other US Chess members under the direction of certified tournament directors. There are tournaments everywhere. There's probably one taking place soon in your own area.

<http://www.uschess.org/content/blogsection/18/95/>

Round-Robin (RR) Tournaments

In a round robin, you play one game with every player in your section of the tournament. One common type of round robin is a quad, in which each section is grouped into four players each of approximately equal ability. Quads are usually played in a single day against three different opponents. Sometimes you might choose a Double Round Robin (DRR) where you play the other three in your quad twice, once with black and once with white. NOTE: In creating quads, the bottom group may have fewer, or more, than four players, depending if the total number of participants in the tournament is divisible by four. The players in that group still play every other player (either once or twice depending on your plan). It will take as many rounds as the number of players minus 1. So five players play four rounds (or eight games if playing each opponent once with white pieces and once with black), six players get five rounds, etc.

Swiss System (SS) Tournaments

The Swiss is the most common tournament format in the United States. An unlimited number of competitors play a specified number of games —no one is eliminated. Normally, as you continue to win games, you face progressively stronger opposition, leaving those not so successful to play against each other. Toward the end of the event, you will probably find yourself matched against players around your own level. Many tournaments have special prizes for new players and novices.

In Swiss-System events, players are paired with each other according to the following general principles:

1. A player is not paired with any other player more than once.
2. Players with the same score are paired whenever possible.
3. Colors are assigned by the director as fairly as possible. Alternating the colors is ideal, but not always possible.

For the first round, the players are ranked according to their last-published US Chess rating. The top player in the upper half of the field is then paired against the top player in the lower half of the field, and so on. The top ranked player's color in the first round is randomly determined and then the colors alternate.

In the second round, the director uses the same principles to pair each of the three score groups (those who won, those who drew, and those who lost). These pairing procedures will continue through the rest of the tournament. In some large tournaments, "accelerated pairings" are used in early rounds. Instead of the TD splitting the ranked list of players in half to make pairings, the TD may use "accelerated pairings" to split the ranked players into fourths before making the pairings. A complete explanation of pairings can be found in the [7th](#) edition of the *U.S. Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess*.

Team Vs Team

A set number of team members are listed in order from highest rated to lowest rated. Each team's ordered roster then plays games against another team's ordered roster: 1 vs 1, 2 vs 2, 3 vs 3, etc. The result of each individual game is totaled to determine a team score. The team with the greatest total score is the winner of the match. Note: Sometimes weighted scores are used for individual games.

Individual/Team

A tournament paired just like a Swiss except pairing players from the same team is to be avoided if possible. Individuals as well as teams can win prizes.

The Wall Chart

The wall chart is important in a Swiss tournament. This listing of players and their results allows everyone to see exactly what is happening in the event. After a wall chart is posted, players normally help the directors by proofreading the entries that interest them.

This sample wall chart shows us that John F. Anderson is the top-rated player in the event (because he is ranked No. 1). Anderson's US Chess identification number is 12345678; his last published rating was 1852. In round one, he had white against player 35 and won (for a total of 1 point); in round two, he had black against player 21 and won (for a cumulative total of 2); in round three, he had black against player 3 and lost (still a cumulative total of 2); and in round four, he had White against player 12 and drew (for a cumulative total of 2½).

| No. | Player's Full Name | Rating | Round 1 | Round 2 | Round 3 | Round 4 |
|-----|------------------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------------|
| 1 | John F. Anderson 12345678 | 1852 | W 35 1 | B 21 2 | B 3 2 | W 12 2.5 |

Coaches should make sure their players' results are reported, both accurately and immediately. Players may write their result on the pairing sheet, but coaches and players should NEVER write on wall charts.

Sample Pairing Sheet

Round 1

| Board | White | RESULT | | Black | RESULT |
|-------|---------------|--------|--|---------------|--------|
| 1 | Bob Bishop | 1 | | Rachel Rook | 0 |
| 2 | Patty Pawn | 0 | | Charles Check | 1 |
| 3 | Kim Knight | 1/2 | | Phil File | 1/2 |
| 4 | Richard Rank | 1F | | Kathy King | 0F |
| 5 | Gerald Gambit | | | Quentin Queen | |

Pairing sheets are easy to read. In the above example, it is round 1 of a 10-player tournament. On Board 1, Bob Bishop was white. He defeated Rachel Rook, who was black. He then put a "1" by his name and a "0" by his opponent's name. Rachel Rook, although she lost, should check that the result was posted accurately.

On Board 2, Patty Pawn lost with white against Charles Check, who was black. On Board 3, Kim Knight (white) drew Phil File (black). Note that a "1/2" appears next to each name.

On Board 4, Richard Rank was supposed to play white against Kathy King. He set up the pieces and started his clock. However, Kathy never showed up. After one hour, Richard stopped his clock and claimed a win by forfeit. Note that he wrote "1F" and "0F" to indicate the forfeited game. Indicating a forfeit is very important. Players that lose by not showing up are typically removed from being paired for the next round so no other player has to sit and wait for a "no show."

Finally, Gerald Gambit is still playing Quentin Queen on Board 5. When their game is over, they should mark the result appropriately. If they forget, they may be penalized in the next round.

Chess Clocks

Another standard part of a sanctioned tournament is the chess clock. Usually, players must bring their own clocks. These special timers are really two separate clocks in a single case. When a player makes a move, he presses a button that stops his side of the clock and starts his opponent's side.

In tournament play, any player who has not completed the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time *loses*, unless his or her opponent has insufficient mating material. Most scholastic tournaments are played with a sudden death time control. Some typical time controls for scholastic chess tournaments are Game in 30 minutes (G/30) and Game in 60 minutes (G/60 or G/1); this is the amount of time for EACH player, so to determine the maximum amount of time

per game, you would want to double the time noted. Those time controls often use a delay, given in seconds such as 5 second delay (d5—the chess clock delays starting for 5 seconds for each player’s move, d10 means a 10 second elapse in time before the time on the clock starts to count down) for each move for each player. The time for a game might also have an increment of time permanently added after each player’s move, also noted in seconds. Increment means that after each move time is permanently ADDED to the player’s game time after a move is completed (example: inc. 15, or +15, means each player gets an extra permanent 15 seconds of time added to their clock each time they complete a move). Sudden-death games must be completed within the prescribed time no matter how many moves it takes. If a player runs out of time, his opponent wins if he has sufficient remaining material to make checkmate possible.

Recording Games

US Chess rules require that players keep a record of the game, although score keeping is not required when a player has less than five minutes left on the clock, unless the game has an increment time control—then notation is required for each move. Most players use the algebraic system of chess notation to record the moves of their games. A complete description of algebraic notation can be found in *The Official Rules of Chess* or downloaded at <http://www.uschess.org/docs/forms/KeepingScore.pdf>. A player’s score sheet is also a very important study tool and allows them to make claims such as repetition of move. Without a score sheet, making a claim is almost impossible—it is the proof a player needs to verify his/her claim.

Conduct of Players

Tournament players are not allowed to look at personal or published chess material during a game or to receive either solicited or unsolicited advice from a third party or a computer concerning a game in progress. Cell phones and other electronic informational devices need to be turned off in the tournament hall and not used in any capacity during a player’s game—digital chess clocks and US Chess approved electronic score keepers are an exception. Players are also forbidden to distract or annoy their opponents. Conversation, blitz games, and other noisy activities should not take place in the playing room. These rules and others are in the *US Chess Official Rules of Chess*.

If you need to withdraw from an event or miss a round of play, **ALWAYS** tell the tournament director well in advance. Players who fail to do so are subject to a penalty. Not informing a tournament director means some other player will be paired expecting to be your opponent, but in reality you will not be there for the game.

Ratings

US Chess ratings are of special interest to many players. These numbers reflect a player’s standing relative to other US Chess rated players. There are three separate rating systems for over-the-board (OTB) chess—Regular, Quick, and Blitz ratings—plus a separate rating system for correspondence chess. Quick ratings are used for events with time controls of Game/10 to Game/60, and regular ratings are calculated for tournaments with time controls of Game/30 or slower. Note that tournaments with a time control between G/30 and G/60, inclusive, will be rated under both the Regular and Quick rating systems, which are called dual rated. Blitz is another popular option for faster paced play (1-10 minutes, with 5 minutes being the most common). Blitz can be a fun activity between rounds or at the end of the lunch hour. Blitz rules

(chapter 11) can be found here: <https://new.uschess.org/sites/default/files/wp-thumbnails/2018/12/US-Chess-Rule-Book-Online-Only-Edition-v7-chp-11-1-1-20-1.pdf>

A player's OTB and correspondence ratings are printed on members' *Chess Life* mailing labels. Up to date OTB rating information can also be found at www.uschess.org. For more information on either rating system, contact the US Chess office or visit the US Chess website.

Novice OTB ratings are often 800 or less, and master ratings start at 2200. Most serious tournament players are rated between these levels.

Correspondence Chess Tournaments

Many US Chess members enjoy chess primarily by mail or e-mail in our various correspondence tournaments. Many others play both correspondence and OTB.

In a typical correspondence section, you play six games—three with white and three with black. Moves are exchanged on postcards or by e-mail, and play is governed by the official chess rules as specially modified for correspondence chess. Some games may take up to two years to complete, but many do not.

We have a variety of correspondence tournaments available, from the prestigious Golden Knights to the more sociable class tournaments.

If you're interested, please contact the US Chess office or website for more information.

Online Tournaments

You can check out information for what is available at the US Chess website, uschess.org!

Tournament Planning Sheet

Event Date(s):

Event Name:

Number of Rounds:

Format: SS Quad RR Double RR Other:

Time Control:

Prizes: Guaranteed or Based-on # Trophies Ribbons

Define Section(s):

1. _____ Open to: EF: \$ _____ if rec'd/postmarked by _____, \$ _____ after

Prizes:

Rated: US Chess NOT rated

2. _____ Open to: EF: \$ _____ if rec'd/postmarked by _____, \$ _____ after

Prizes:

Rated: US Chess NOT rated

3. _____ Open to: EF: \$ _____ if rec'd/postmarked by _____, \$ _____ after

Prizes:

Rated: US Chess NOT rated

Other Entry Fee notes:

Name and Address of Tournament Site:

Please Indicate: No Smoking Handicap Accessible

Lodging Info:

Rate:

Phone:

Complete Advanced Entry by Mail to:

Contact Name for Questions:

Email:

Phone:

Website or Facebook page url:

Organizer:

Chief Tournament Director:

Asst. TD(s):

Is US Chess Membership Required? Yes or No (If yes, is it available onsite?)

Is State Chess Association Membership Required? Yes or No (If yes, \$ adults; \$ students)

See also the [Tournament Supplies](#) list in the Appendix.

Tournament Supplies

Below is a checklist of materials that you or your tournament director might want to have within easy reach during a tournament.

- Official Rules of Chess, latest edition plus updates
- Computer, printer and all necessary software
- Pairing cards (if you are not using a computer)
- [Contact Card](#) to gather player info (sample found in appendix)
- Plenty of paper
- US Chess membership forms
- Numbers for boards (Index cards folded in half like a tent work nicely)
- Score sheets (if possible, make scorebooks available at a reasonable cost)
- Pens, pencils, and pencil sharpener
- Chess clocks (including loaners)
- Various supplies such as tape, thumb tacks, rubber bands, etc.
- Coins and small bills to provide change
- Copies of ads for this tournament (for round times, prizes, etc.)
- Medical kit in case of emergency
- **FLIERS FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT!!**
- Tournament Software: If you plan to run Swiss-system tournaments, you will probably want to obtain a pairing program such as SwissSys or WinTD.
- For a basic three round Quad, you can use the [Quad Pairing Chart](#) found in the appendix.

Sample Flyer



Winter Open Scholastic Tournament

Date, Year

*Hotel (School) Name
Street Address
City, State Zip, Phone.*

Discounted early EF \$25, \$30 at door by 9:30 am, \$35 after that.

Rounds: 12 (noon)-1-2-3-4

Time Control: G/25 Delay 0

Open to under 18 years of age, 2 sections: U1200, U700. Regular ratings may be used for pairings/prizes; however, tournament is Quick Rated only.

10 individual trophies per section + 5 team trophies, Participation award to each player.

Bring sets-boards-clocks, none provided.

Ent: (early) *Your Name, Street, City, State Zip Info only Phone Number* before 6 PM. e-mail for info only (sorry, e-mail & phone entries not available): you@provider.com, Checks payable to *Name*. Enter at the site 8-8:30 AM.

Info and Discounted PayPal early entries until 6 PM (date before tournament):
<http://your e-mail.com>

Tournament Accounting Sheet

| | | |
|---|-----|-----------------|
| INCOME: | | |
| Advance Entry Fees | @\$ | \$ _____ |
| Advance Special Entry Fees | @\$ | \$ _____ |
| On-Site Entry Fees | @\$ | \$ _____ |
| US Chess Youth Memberships | @\$ | \$ _____ |
| State or Club Dues | @\$ | \$ _____ |
| Donations | @\$ | \$ _____ |
| Other Income | @\$ | \$ _____ |
| TOTAL INCOME: | | \$ _____ |
| EXPENSES: | | |
| Prize Fund (Trophies, Ribbons, Medals, etc.) | | \$ _____ |
| Tournament Director(s) Fee (<i>None if possible</i>) | | \$ _____ |
| Site Rental (Try to get it free) | | \$ _____ |
| US Chess Dues | | \$ _____ |
| State or Local Dues | | \$ _____ |
| Rating Fee | | \$ _____ |
| Printing Flyers & Postage (Use school services if possible) | | \$ _____ |
| Supplies | | \$ _____ |
| Other Expenses (Itemize): | | \$ _____ |
| TOTAL EXPENSES: | | \$ _____ |
| INCOME MINUS EXPENSES: | | \$ _____ |

CHIEF TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

DATE

OR

Tournament Financial Summary

Tournament Name: _____ Event Date(s): _____

Tournament Venue: _____ City: _____

Tournament Director(s): _____

INCOME RECAP:

Pre-Registered/Early-bird: _____ players at \$_____/ea. \$ _____

Regular Registration: _____ players at \$_____/ea. \$ _____

Other: (memberships, concession or merchandise sales) _____ \$ _____

TOTAL INCOME: \$ _____

EXPENSE RECAP:

Venue: (if applicable) _____ \$ _____

Cash Prizes:(guaranteed/based-on, fully pd./prorated) _____ \$ _____

Non-Cash Awards: _____ \$ _____

Rating Fees: _____ \$ _____

Other: (paid TD, advertising, GM incentive, other) _____ \$ _____

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$ _____

TOTAL INCOME: \$ _____

P & L Summary

Less TOTAL EXPENSES: \$ _____

TOTAL EVENT Profit or <Loss>: \$ _____

Submitting Tournament Director's Signature

Date

Please submit A COPY to:

Travel Permission Form

The following is a sample permission form, based on a form used by the Buena Park School District in California. **Please check with your local school district and use their permission forms.** It is imperative that you obtain the permission of parents or guardians for in and out-of-state trips.

EXCURSION AND FIELD TRIP WAIVER (OUT-OF-STATE)

Education Code Section 35330 provides, in part, as follows:

“All persons making the field trip or excursion shall be deemed to have waived all claims against the District or the State of California for injury, accident, illness, or death occurring during or by reason of the field trip or excursion. All adults taking out-of-state field trips or excursions and all parents or guardians of students taking out-of-state field trips or excursions shall sign a statement waiving such claims.” Completion of this form, therefore, is required for ALL out-of-state field trips and tours. If the participating student is under 18 years of age, this form must be completed by the student’s legal guardian or parent.

I/We hereby grant permission for _____ to participate in the voluntary _____ field trip from _____, 20__ to _____, 20__.

I/We, the undersigned, hereby release and discharge the Buena Park School District, its officers, employees, and servants (herein collectively referred to as “District”) from all liability arising out of, or in connection with, the above described field trip. For the purposes of this agreement, liability means all claims, demands, losses, causes of action, suits, or judgments of any and every kind that I, my heirs, executors, administrators or assignees may have against the District, or that any other person or entity may have against the District because of any death, personal injury or illness, or because of any loss or damage to property that occurs during the above described field trip and that results from any cause other than the negligence of the District. All participants are to abide by all rules and regulations. There is to be full cooperation with supervisory and volunteer personnel. Any violation or unfulfilling of behavior standards will result in that individual being sent home at his/her and/or parent’s expense. It is further understood that the District cannot and will not be held responsible for needs or well-being when not under the direct supervision of designated supervisory personnel. In the event of illness or injury, I/we hereby consent to whatever X-ray, examination, anesthetic, medical, dental or surgical diagnosis or treatment and hospital care from a licensed physician deemed necessary for the safety and welfare of the participant. It is understood that the resulting expenses will be the responsibility of the parent(s) or participant.

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date Address Phone

_____/_____
Signature of Student Date

Health Insurance Company: _____

Policy# _____

In the event of illness or accident and if different from above, please contact:

_____/_____/_____
Name Address Phone

Special Note to Parents/Guardian: (1) All medications and prescription drugs must be registered on this form; (2) All medications and prescription drugs, excepting those which must be kept on the student person for emergency use, must be kept and distributed by staff; (3) If any medication or drugs are to be taken by student, list them here:
(Name of drug and reason):

If there is any medical problem(s), attach a description of same to this sheet. (4) Check here ___ if there are NO special problems. (5) Check here ___ if NO medications/prescription drugs are required on the trip.

An Abridged List of 21 Successful Rulebook Player Habits

Courtesy of *Just Law* by Tim Just

This is a partial abridged list of successful rulebook player habits. These rulebook habits work to a player's benefit almost all the time. (Yes, there are exceptions, but they are rare.) Practicing these habits will help you avoid common tournament rules pitfalls.

1. Always keep score, even if either player's clock has less than five minutes left. Sometimes neither player needs to keep score in those last five minutes, but it is a good idea to do so anyhow. It is tough to win or draw a game when making a claim without a complete scoresheet.
2. Stop the chess clock when getting a TD to come to your board and make a ruling. Let your opponent know why you stopped the clock. There are rare times when this does not work out as well as you hoped for; however, those times are so rare it is in your favor to stop the clock when making a claim.
3. With more than five minutes left in any time control period, you may fill in your own score sheet using your opponent's score sheet—of course, you have to do this on your own time, not your opponent's. And you may need the TD's help in getting those moves from your opponent.
4. Always report your own game result, even if you lost. Certain hardline TDs may impose penalties if you do not, so why take a chance?
5. Only you or your opponent can call a flag down in your game, not TDs and not bystanders. If it is your call, make sure you say it out loud. Do not expect a TD to know what your significant glance in their direction is supposed to mean.
6. If both flags are down in a sudden-death time control, the game is over and a draw—even if you do not make a claim. At that point, since the game is over anyhow, anyone can point out the downed flags.
7. Get a TD if your flag falls and your opponent insists you lost when they do not have mating material (even a pawn is mating material!). The game is a draw, not a loss for you.
8. Use the same hand to press your clock and move your pieces. It is easier than trying to remember when it is required and when it is not required.
9. Claim a draw if fifty moves are made with no pieces captured and no pawns moved.
10. Make your move *before* offering a draw.

11. Claim a draw if any position repeats three times. *Even if that position does not occur three times in a row!*
12. Learn how to set your clock. Depending on others to set your clock properly is a roll of the dice and may cost you a win.
13. Always check whether the TD will allow you to claim insufficient losing chances in the last two minutes of any sudden-death time control.
14. Immediately accept or reject the implied draw offer if your opponent makes any draw claim. (The TD might still declare the game a draw based on your opponent's claim if you reject the draw.)
15. Check with a TD if anyone is bothering you.
16. Directly ask a TD to intervene in your game if you have a claim. They will not become involved until you do so. Do not expect otherwise.
17. Ignore the clock when a game is over. And remember, stalemate or checkmate immediately stops the clock and ends the game.
18. Claim a win if your opponent's flag falls before they respond to your offer of a draw.
19. Always look at the wall chart. You can check your current score, future bye requests, US Chess ID number, and possible next-round color assignment or opponent.
20. Touch your king first when castling. This way, you do not have to know which castling rule is in vogue.
21. Move the piece you touch; touch only the piece you are sure you wish to move. "Touch move" should always be practiced. Always. (from Karis Bellisario)

Chess Algebraic Notation

It's simple. Here's how it works!

1. Each piece is indicated by the first letter, a capital letter, of its name. Example: K = king, Q = queen, R = rook, B = bishop, N = knight. (In the case of the knight, for the sake of convenience, N is used.)
2. Some other languages use different letters
3. Pawns are not indicated by their first letter, but are recognized by the absence of such a letter. Examples: e5, d4, a5.
4. The eight files (from left to right for White and from right to left for Black) are indicated by the small letters, a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h, respectively.
5. The eight ranks (from bottom to top for White and from top to bottom for Black) are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, respectively. Consequently, in the initial position the white pieces and pawns are placed on the first and second ranks; the black pieces and pawns on the eighth and seventh ranks.
6. As a consequence of the previous rules, each of the sixty four squares is invariably indicated by a unique combination of a letter and a number.

Black Side

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 8 | a8 | b8 | c8 | d8 | e8 | f8 | g8 | h8 |
| 7 | a7 | b7 | c7 | d7 | e7 | f7 | g7 | h7 |
| 6 | a6 | b6 | c6 | d6 | e6 | f6 | g6 | h6 |
| 5 | a5 | b5 | c5 | d5 | e5 | f5 | g5 | h5 |
| 4 | a4 | b4 | c4 | d4 | e4 | f4 | g4 | h4 |
| 3 | a3 | b3 | c3 | d3 | e3 | f3 | g3 | h3 |
| 2 | a2 | b2 | c2 | d2 | e2 | f2 | g2 | h2 |
| 1 | a1 | b1 | c1 | d1 | e1 | f1 | g1 | h1 |
| | a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h |

White Side

Notes: Diagonals are sometimes referred to in chess literature or discussions by the end square designations separated by a hyphen (examples: a1-h8 is the long black diagonal, a8-h1 is the long white diagonal). The “Center” is also sometimes referred to in chess, which is the four squares in the center of the board: d4, d5, e4 and e5.

7. Each move of a piece is indicated by (a) the first letter of the name of the piece in question and (b) the square of arrival. There is no hyphen between (a) and (b). Examples: Be5, Nf3, Rd1. In the case of pawns, only the square of arrival is indicated. Examples: e5, d4, a5.

8. When a piece makes a capture, an x is inserted between (a) the first letter of the name of the piece in question and (b) the square of arrival.

Examples: Bxe5, Nxf3, Rxd1.

When a pawn makes a capture, the square of arrival is indicated after an x. Examples: xe5, xf3, xb5. In the case of an "en passant" capture, the square of arrival is given as the square on which the capturing pawn finally rests and "e.p." is appended to the notation.

9. If two identical pieces can move to the same square, the piece that is moved is indicated as follows:

(1) If both pieces are on the same rank: by

- (a) the first letter of the name of the piece,
- (b) the file of the square of departure, and
- (c) the square of arrival.

(2) If both pieces are on the same file: by

- (a) the first letter of the name of the piece
- (b) the rank of the square of departure, and
- (c) the square of arrival.

(3) If the pieces are on different ranks and files, method (1) is preferred. In the case of capture, an x must be inserted between (b) and (c).

Examples:

(1) There are two knights, on the squares g1 and d2, and one of them moves to the square f3: either Ngf3 or Ndf3, as the case may be.

(2) There are two knights, on the squares g5 and g1, and one of them moves to the square f3: either N5f3 or N1f3, as the case may be.

(3) There are two knights, on the squares h2 and d4, and one of them moves to the square f3: either Nhf3 or Ndf3, as the case may be.

If a capture takes place on the square f3, the previous examples are changed by the insertion of an x:

(1) either Ngxf3 or Ndx3

(2) either N5xf3 or N1xf3

(3) either Nhxf3 or Ndx3, as the case may be.

10. If two pawns can capture the same piece or pawn of the opponent, the pawn that is moved is indicated by:

(a) the letter of the file of departure

(b) an x

(c) the square of arrival.

Example:

If there are white pawns on squares c4 and e4 and a black pawn or piece on the square d5, the notation for White's move is either cxd5 or exd5, as the case may be.

11. In the case of the promotion of a pawn, the actual pawn move is indicated, followed immediately by an equal sign and then the first letter of the new piece. Examples: d8=Q, f8=N, b1=B, g1=R.

Essential Abbreviations:

x : captures

0-0 : castling with rook h1 or rook h8 (kingside castling)

0-0-0 : castling with rook a1 or rook a8 (queenside castling)

+ : check

: checkmate

e.p. : captures "en passant"

= : promotion

? : bad move ?? : blunder

! : good move

... : black's move (example: 4... d5 indicates that black's 4th move was pawn to d5)

Sample Game: 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Bc5? 3.Qh5 Nf6?? 4.Qxf7# (known as Scholars Mate)

More information about notation is on-line at:

<http://www.uschess.org/docs/forms/KeepingScore.pdf>.

Club Ladder

1. The Tournament will last (*Insert the number of weeks the tournament will last—3 months?, 3 weeks?, etc*).
2. Initial positions on the ladder are determined by current US Chess ratings or tournament director assigned ratings. New players joining the tournament after the tournament has started will start at the bottom of the ladder.
3. A player may challenge anyone who is one, two, or three spots above them, who is at the club that night. The top three players may challenge ANY player. If you are challenged to a ladder game, and you are not already in a game, you must play the challenger. A refusal to play will be treated as a loss.
4. Ladder games must be played with a chess clock (there is a free chess clock app if you don't have a clock). The time control will be a minimum of (*insert time control*)
5. A record of the game must be kept (chess notation). The record of the game and the game result should be turned in to (*insert name*).
6. The player making the challenge plays white; the person accepting the challenge is black.
7. If the lower ranked player wins, the lower ranked player takes the higher ranked player's spot on the ladder, and the higher ranked player moves down one spot. If the higher ranked player wins, there is no change to the ladder sequence.
8. If the game ends in a draw, the lower ranked player has the spot just below the higher ranked player.
9. After a ladder game is played, both players should both report the score. Both players should play a ladder game against someone else before they are allowed to play a rematch.
10. At least half of the ladder games a player plays must be played at the club. The other half can be played wherever the players agree. A player must play at least eight ladder games during the tournament to be eligible to win any prize. (Editor's note: Variations on this rule are possible)
11. A player may play as many rated ladder games in the tournament as desired, but we suggest a limit of one tournament game (challenge) per meeting.

Contact Card

PRINT Name: _____ DOB _____

Phone: () _____ - _____ Circle: Home *or* Cell

PRINT E-mail: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

US Chess# _____ Exp. Date: _____

Do you attend a Chess Club for casual play? Circle: YES *or* NO

If YES, which? _____

If no, are you interested in one? _____

Please indicate PREFERRED ways to stay informed:

Call, Text, Facebook, Email, Mailing

Young players, add parent's name(s): _____

Internet Links

Here is a handy list for most of the links in this document. (Subject to change without notice):

| Name | Link |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| American Chess Equipment | amchesseq.com |
| Arena Chess | http://www.playwitharena.com/ |
| Barber K-8 Championships | barberchess.com |
| Blitz rules (chapter 11) | https://new.uschess.org/sites/default/files/wp-thumbnails/2018/12/US-Chess-Rule-Book-Online-Only-Edition-v7-chp-11-1-1-20-1.pdf |
| Chess Club Manager | http://www.uscfsales.com/chess-software/think-like-a-king-chess-software.html |
| Chess Clubs by state | http://www.uschess.org/component/option,com_wrapper/Itemid,198/ |
| Chess Curriculum, free | https://www.chesskid.com/article/view/chesskidcoms-curriculum |
| Chess Magnet School | https://www.chessmagnetschool.com/lesson_guide.php |
| Chess4life | https://chess4life.com |
| Denker HS Championships | denkerchess.com |
| Droidfish | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.petero.droidfish&hl=en |
| Fritz | http://www.uscfsales.com/chess-software/chess-playing-software/fritz-15-chess-playing-software-program.html |
| How to keep score | http://www.uschess.org/docs/forms/KeepingScore.pdf |
| Internet Chess Club | https://www.chessclub.com/ |
| Lesson Guide, free | https://www.chessmagnetschool.com/lesson_guide.php |
| National Girls Championships | http://www.nationalgirlschess.com |
| Round Robin form | http://www.uschess.org/docs/forms/RoundRobinReportForm.pdf |
| Rulebook update/changes | https://new.uschess.org/news/7th-edition-rule-book-chapters-now-available-download |
| Scholastic scholarships | http://www.uschess.org/content/view/8164/131/ |
| Score keeping device, Monroi | http://monroi.com/ |
| Score keeping device, Plycounter | http://www.plycount.com/plycounter |
| Stockfish | https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/stockfish-chess/id305558605?mt=8 |
| Tournament director certification | http://www.uschess.org/content/blogcategory/342/668/ |
| US Chess | https://new.uschess.org/home/ |
| US Chess affiliate membership | https://new.uschess.org/form/affiliate-new-membership |
| US Chess affiliates (clubs) by state | http://www.uschess.org/component/option,com_wrapper/Itemid,198/ |
| US Chess clubs and tournaments | http://www.uschess.org/content/blogsection/18/95/ |
| US Chess Coach program | http://www.uschess.org/content/view/9474/131/ |
| US Chess forms | http://www.uschess.org/component/option,com_uscf_dirlist/Itemid,412/ |
| US Chess National tournaments | http://www.uschess.org/content/view/10015/95 |
| US Chess Scholastic forms | http://www.uschess.org/content/blogsection/27/131/ |
| US Chess Trust | http://www.uschesstrust.org/ |
| YouTube | https://www.youtube.com/ |

Quad Pairing Chart

| Name | | Rating | Vs. 1 | Vs. 2 | Vs. 3 | Vs. 4 | Total |
|------|-----|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | | | | | | | |
| | ID: | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | |
| | ID: | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | |
| | ID: | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | |
| | ID: | | | | | | |

Please do not enter your results above. The TD will keep this table up-to-date

Draw for positions on the chart. Don't put in rating order

Please record your results by circling the winners number. Circle both numbers if a draw.

| |
|--------------|
| Event |
| |
| Date: |
| |

| | Board 1 W – B | Board 2 W – B |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| Rd. 1 | 1 – 4 | 2 – 3 |
| Rd. 2 | 3 – 1 | 4 – 2 |
| Rd. 3 | 1 – 2 | 3 – 4 |

A Glossary Of Terms

- **Action Chess**—Tournament chess in which each player has 30 minutes on his or her side of the clock to complete the entire game.
- **Affiliate**—An affiliated chess club, one that is a member of the U.S. Chess Federation and is permitted to sponsor nationally rated tournaments.
- **Algebraic Notation**—The most popular method of recording a chess game. In algebraic notation, each square on the board has a letter and number; e.g., a1. An explanation of this system of notation can be found in the US Chess *Official Rules of Chess*.
- **All-America Chess Team**—A team named annually by the U.S. Chess Federation. It is made up of the most promising young chess players of the year, based on age and rating. Team members receive a personalized jacket and certificate.
- **Blitz**—Another name for speed chess (also called five-minute chess), in which each player is given five minutes on his side of the clock to complete the entire game.
- **Board**—A word used to designate places in a tournament. Games are numbered consecutively from the top-ranked player down. It is used similarly in team competition. “Board 1” is usually played by the strongest player on a team.
- **Bughouse**—Also called Siamese chess. A variation of chess involving two players who play as a team and pass chess pieces to each other while they are playing two other opponents. The pieces are then placed on the board and become active.
- **Certified Chess Coaches**—Individuals officially certified by US Chess to coach chess at the scholastic level.
- **Chess for Youth**—A U. S. Chess Trust program that donates free chess materials to schools around the country. It is also known as “Koltly Chess for Youth” in honor of its famous founder, GM George Koltanowski.
- **Chess in the Schools**—A Master/Expert visitation program, sponsored by the U. S. Chess Trust, which provides strong players for free one day chess workshops in schools.
- **Chess Life**—The monthly magazine published by US Chess for its members. It contains information about international, national and local chess, including a section on tournaments available in your local area.
- **Chess Life Kids**—A bi-monthly magazine published by US Chess for scholastic members. It contains information on chess improvement and understanding.
- **Chess Master**—A player with a national rating of 2200 or greater. Only about 3% of rated chess players reach this level of performance.

- **Chess Notation**—A method of recording chess moves. (*see algebraic notation and descriptive notation.*) A full explanation can be found on the UA Chess web page at: <http://www.uschess.org/docs/forms/KeepingScore.pdf>
- **Chess Tutorial** – Interactive software that teaches chess.
- **Club Ladder**—A list of the members of the club in the order of their chess playing ability (usually the strongest player down to the beginner). Often used for challenges and placement on the team.
- **Club Rating**—A point system used to determine the approximate strength of club members. This is a separate rating system, not to be confused with national rating.
- **Club Tournament**—This is a tournament that is held within the school that is open to all students attending that school.
- **Commitment Form**—Students commit that the chess club is not a come and go thing. They commit to the chess club as they might to band, a sport, or any other school activity.
- **Delay Time**—A small amount of time not used by a chess clock before the clock starts operating for each player’s move.
- **Demonstration Board**—Often referred to as a “demo board.” It is a large two-dimensional representation of a chess board and pieces. The board is generally three feet square or larger, and is used by teachers and lecturers. It is also used by organizers to show spectators the progress of an important game while keeping a crowd away from the players.
- **Descriptive Notation**—A method of recording a chess game. In descriptive notation, the files are named for the pieces that stand on them at the beginning of the game, while the ranks are numbered; e.g., a1 in algebraic would be QR1 for white (and QR8 for black) in descriptive. This is an older system of notation rarely used by modern players.
- **Double Round-Robin**—A tournament in which each player plays two games (one with white, one with black) against each of the other participants in his or her section.
- **Dual Rating System**—US Chess calculates both the Quick Chess and Regular ratings for tournament games where the total playing time per game is from 30 to 65 minutes.
- **Gambit**—An opening in chess that gives up a pawn or piece for an advantage in development or space.
- **Harkness System**—A rating system that awards rating points based on the rating differential between the two players. (*See page 26.*)
- **Increment Time** — Extra time added to each move in a game by the chess clock for each player. Chess notation is required for each move when increment time is used.
- **Individual Team Tournaments**—A tournament paired just like a Swiss except pairing players from the same team is to be avoided if possible. Individuals as well as teams can win prizes.
- **Kolty Chess for Youth**—(*see Chess for Youth.*)
- **Ladder** —A ranking of players from strongest to weakest where weaker rated players may challenge higher rated players for the higher rated player’s ladder position.

- **National Rating**—A number assigned to a player after he or she has played in a nationally rated event. A player's rating is based on his or her number of wins, draws, and losses and the ratings of the player's opponents.
- **National Chess Tournament**—A tournament of national scope that is sponsored in whole or in part by the U. S. Chess Federation.
- **On-Line Play**—Chess play over the Internet.
- **Pairing Card**—A card, usually about 3" x 5", that contains player information and the results of tournament games played.
- **Pairing Program**—Software, such as SwissSys or WinTD, that determines which players should play against each other in a tournament.
- **Pairing Sheet**—Usually a piece of lined paper showing the pairing of tournament players and the board at which they are assigned to play. Results should be recorded on this piece of paper after the game is over unless the tournament director specifies another method of reporting results.
- **Plus Score**—When a player scores more than 50% of the total score (number of games) available in a tournament. The total score available in a 4 game tournament, so any score greater than 2 points (50%) is a plus score; i.e., a score of 2.5 points or greater. Or in a 5 round tournament any score greater than the 50% mark of 2.5 points (3 points or greater) is a plus score.
- **Post-Mortem Analysis**—A time after the game when players replay their games with their opponent or coach, discuss their strategies, evaluate various tactics, and try out alternative moves.
- **Quad**—A round-robin tournament with a section composed of four players.
- **Quick Chess**—Tournament games with total playing time greater than 10 minutes and less than 30 minutes. Quick Chess has a separate individual US Chess rating system.
- **Rated Game**—A tournament game that is submitted to US Chess for a national rating. You must play at least four rated games to have an official US Chess rating.
- **Regional Clearinghouse**—A person or organization appointed to help coordinate tournaments within a specific geographic area so as to avoid conflicts.
- **Round-Robin Tournament**—A tournament in which all of the players play one game against each other.
- **Sanctioned Tournament**—A tournament—sponsored by an organization affiliated with US Chess and under the control of a certified Tournament Director—that meets certain standards for time controls and pairing procedures and is played to determine new or revised national ratings for the participants.

- **Scholar-Chess Player Awards**—An annual presentation by the US Chess Trust to recognize high school juniors and seniors who are members of US Chess and who excel in academics, chess play, and sportsmanship. The six most qualified recipients also receive college scholarships. Applicants are required to complete an application form and provide an academic transcript, with a letter of recommendation from an adult coach or organizer.
- **Scholastic Chess**—Chess in which all participants are school age students, usually from grades K-12.
- **Scorebooks**—Booklets containing pages of score sheets used to record a game of chess. They usually contain a diagram on the back and a place for information about the two players.
- **Score Sheets**—Single sheets of lined paper, containing columns that are used to record moves in a chess game.
- **Sealed Move Envelope** — A small envelope used to seal a move in a game when there is not enough time to complete it during that round or day. The outside of the envelope should contain information about the position on the board, the two players involved, and the amount of time used.
- **Simultaneous Exhibition** — Sometimes called a “simul.” A type of chess exhibition in which one player will play two or more players at the same time, going from one board to the next making one move and returning.
- **Skittles**—Chess for fun with no prizes or ratings at stake. This type of recreational chess allows the players to experiment and try out various tactics and strategies. Also, the name of the secondary room at a tournament where players who are finished with their game, and waiting for the next round pairings, can talk and analyze their completed game as they wait.
- **Speed Chess**—Another name for blitz chess, in which each player is typically given five minutes to complete a game. □
- **Swiss System**—The most common system for pairing players in a large chess tournament. (see the *US Chess Official Rules of Chess* for a complete description.)
- **Team vs Team Tournaments**—A set number of team members are listed in order from highest rated to lowest rated. Each team’s ordered roster then plays games against another team’s ordered roster: 1 vs 1, 2 vs 2, 3 vs 3, etc. The result of each individual game is totaled to determine a team score. The team with the greatest total score is the winner of the match. Note: Sometimes weighted scores are used for individual games.
- **Tiebreaks** —Tiebreaks are only used for non-money prizes. Tiebreaks are mathematical formulas used to typically award trophies or sometimes for qualifying for another tournament. Money prizes are not used in scholastic tournaments; therefore, tiebreaks are not used for money prizes.

- **Time Control**—1) The amount of time each player has to complete a game. If a clock is used, the amount of time for the game is divided between the two players and the time spent on any individual move is a matter of personal choice. A player must make the required number of moves in the specified time or lose the game. 2) Also, the point when a player runs out of time on their clock.
- **Top 100 Lists**—A series of US Chess lists, based on age, in which the strongest players in the country are ranked using official national ratings.
- **Tournament Chess**—Games played for a national rating or club tournament activities within a school, league or chess association.
- **Total Playing Time**—The total playing time US Chess uses to determine which rating system to use when rating a tournament. Total time is calculated by summing the base time + any delay or increment time (G25; d5 has a base of 25 and a delay of 5, so $25 + 5 = 30$ minutes of total playing time)
- **Tournament Director (TD)**—The person responsible for conducting a tournament, enforcing the rules of chess, determining the pairings for each round, resolving disputes, and—usually—figuring the prize distribution, submitting the rating report, and processing the new and renewed memberships. TDs are certified by the US Chess.
- **Tournament Life Announcement (TLA)**—A brief description of an upcoming tournament printed in a special section of *Chess Life*.
- **USCF**—Abbreviation for United States Chess Federation, the governing body for chess in the United States (now referred to as US Chess).
- **US Chess Identification Number**—A unique number given to all players who compete in rated tournament chess and used to report results.
- **U.S. Chess Trust**—A non-profit organization that promotes chess. Its mission is to promote and encourage the study of chess through such programs as Chess for Youth and Chess in the Schools. The Trust also supports various chess championships including the **GM Denker Tournament of High School Champions**, the **Dewain Barber Tournament of K-8 Champions** and the **National Girls Tournament of Champions**.
- **Wall Chart**—The Tournament “scoreboard” that lists all of the players, their ratings, their opponents, their color assignments, and their round-by-round results. No one is allowed to mark this sheet except the TD.

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