

US Chess' National Online Tournaments of State Champions 2020 Rules

Player Requirements before the Tournament

1. US Chess membership current through 2020.08.31. Players with expired US Chess memberships will not be paired in Round 1. [Look up the expiration date of your US Chess membership here](#). If necessary, [renew your US Chess membership here](#).
2. US Chess membership and Chess.com account active and in good standing. Chess.com will be the platform. [Register here for a new Chess.com account](#), if necessary. A free Chess.com account is sufficient.
3. Make visible your first name and last name in your Chess.com profile in [Chess.com's Settings](#); however, your Chess.com handle/username does not need to include your name.
4. 2 webcams with a minimum of 1,080 pixels (1080P). (Both webcams must be logged in to the tournament-specific [Zoom cloud conference](#) during play.) The 1st webcam must be embedded in or situated next to the player's laptop or desktop, so it can focus on the player's face. US Chess recommends the 2nd webcam be embedded in a mobile phone or in a (2nd) laptop, because these devices can log in to the Zoom conference easily. The 2nd webcam must provide a partial landscape view of the room in which the player will be competing, while also containing a full view of the player and the screen on which the player is playing. Make sure the 2nd webcam has a continuous source of power, by connecting it with a cord to an outlet. Do not rely on battery power alone. If the battery runs too low or dies, then the webcam's stream will be disconnected, resulting (at a minimum) in the standard penalty being applied: 10 minutes or half of a player's remaining time (whichever is less) subtracted from the player's clock. Further webcam violations might result in stiffer penalties, including forfeiture of the game, disqualification, and withdrawal from the tournament. The player will be notified of the penalty via private chat (Chess.com or Zoom). If the 2nd webcam is a mobile phone, then position it in a manner consistent with the arrangement in the photo below:



Another option is to secure the 2nd webcam in place with a tripod stand such as [AmazonBasics 60-Inch Lightweight Tripod with Bag \(\\$26\)](#). If a player decides to purchase a single-purpose webcam, then US Chess suggests choosing from among these [single-purpose webcams with a minimum of 1,080 pixels \(1080P\) \(≈ \\$50\)](#). If purchasing the 2nd webcam and/or tripod is a financial hardship for a player's family, then please know US Chess has a limited budget to cover those expenses. Such players should contact US Chess's Jennifer Pearson at Governance@USChess.org as soon as possible; mention the specific item(s) needed and include a home address.

5. 5 minutes of participation in a 2-hour Zoom meeting per Invitational for a quality-control check of a player's 2 webcams, Zoom settings, and Chess.com settings. Zoom settings: list the player's full name (first and last) in English, webcam on, microphone (which enables TDs to hear players) at full volume, and speaker (which enables players to hear other players) at zero. (In Zoom, go to Audio settings via Preferences or by hovering the cursor over the microphone icon. [Click here for a tutorial on adjusting Zoom audio settings.](#)) Players do not need a Zoom account, as a link to the Zoom meeting will be emailed to them. Players

experiencing technical problems will be taken to Zoom breakout rooms for technical support.

Player Requirements during the Entirety of Each Game

1. Play in a room with a strong, stable internet connection. A weak, unstable internet connection and/or technical setup errors might result in a loss or forfeit loss. A player's internet connection and, more broadly, all aspects of the player's technical setup are the player's responsibility—not US Chess's.
2. Play in a quiet room with no background noise and with no one else in the room.
3. A player may not have in or around the player's ear a device that can receive and/or transmit data (such as headphones, headsets, earbuds, etc.). Any medically approved hearing aids must be removed before the start of a game. Furthermore, a player's face, ears, and entire head must be fully visible; they may not be covered by a hoodie, hat, or headwear of any kind. While monitoring players, tournament directors need a full, unobstructed view of the player from the neck up. Let TDs see clearly that you have nothing to hide.
4. Play only on a large screen such as that of a laptop, desktop, or large tablet. Use a web browser, rather than Chess.com's app, because browsers are more stable (they have fewer bugs and glitches). Playing on a small screen such as that of a mobile phone or a small tablet is prohibited.
5. The only electronic devices permitted in the room are the device on which the player is playing and the 2 webcams covering the player. Any mobile phone being used as a webcam must be in silent mode. Any mobile phone not being used as a webcam must be kept outside of the room. Players may not communicate with anyone other than TDs.
6. If a player's mobile phone rings during play, the standard penalty will be applied: 10 minutes or half of a player's remaining time (whichever is less) subtracted from the player's clock. The player will be notified of the penalty via private chat (Chess.com or Zoom).
7. The player must face directly into the 1st webcam; facing away is not permitted. The 2nd webcam must provide a partial landscape view of the player's room, while also containing a full view of the player and the screen on which the player is playing.
8. Both webcams must be logged in to the specified Zoom meeting.
9. Both webcams must be on at all times and streaming to the Zoom meeting. In Zoom's audio settings, the microphone (which enables TDs to hear players) must be set to full volume, and the speaker (which enables players to hear other players) must be set at zero. (In Zoom, go to Audio settings via Preferences or by hovering the cursor over the microphone icon. [Click here for a tutorial on adjusting Zoom audio settings.](#)) That way, TDs can monitor all sounds in a player's room, but the player won't experience other players' sounds as distracting background noise. In short, no webcam blackouts and no self-muting. If a player's webcam fails during game play, and if the player has 5+ minutes on the player's clock, then the player must attempt to repair the webcam failure before the player's next move. The player may not pause the player's clock

while attempting to repair the webcam. If the player is unable to repair the webcam nearly immediately, then the 1st violation will result in the standard penalty: 10 minutes or half of a player's remaining time (whichever is less) subtracted from the player's clock. Subsequent webcam violations during the tournament might result in stiffer penalties, including forfeiture of the game, disqualification, and withdrawal from the tournament. Penalties will be assessed at TD discretion.

10. Players will be recorded throughout the entire tournament, and those recordings are subject to post-game, fair-play (cheat-detection) analysis. US Chess will not request that players and/or parents fill out a consent form to authorize such recordings, as consent is implied by participation in the tournament. If a player refuses to comply with the many required transparency steps listed above, thereby rendering TDs unable to monitor the player properly, then the player will receive a forfeit loss and will be disqualified and withdrawn from the tournament, at the discretion of the Chief Tournament Director.
11. Players must abide by US Chess's [Rules of Chess \(2020\)](#) and [Code of Ethics](#), as well as Chess.com's rules. Players may not use external chess assistance of any kind: no computer engine, no database, no chess program, no book, no hand-written notes, no other person, etc.
12. Check the chat section of Chess.com and Zoom periodically to see whether a TD is communicating with the player. For example, if a player is only partially visible on the screen, then a TD will send the player a private message to sit up, lean forward, stop leaning to a side, etc. The TD will also inform players to remove headphones, headsets, earbuds, hoodies, hats, headwear of any kind, etc.
13. If the player has a concern or question, send a private message to TDs via Chess.com or Zoom.
14. Players may not communicate with anyone other than TDs. Player-to-player chat is prohibited—especially during games. The player-to-player chat feature will be disabled during the tournament.
15. A player may step away from the electronic board to take a break (to use the toilet, etc.), as long as the player is not on move—that is, as long as it's not the player's turn to move. Before stepping away, the player must send a private message to TDs (such as *I'm taking a break*) to provide notification of the player's absence. (The player does not need to wait to receive permission to take a break.) After returning to the electronic board, the player must send another private message to TDs (such as *I'm back*). The messages will timestamp the fact and duration of the player's reported absence. If fair-play screening detects suspiciously strong play in the next several moves after the player's reported absence, then that absence will be considered strong additional evidence of possible cheating. An unreported absence will be considered even stronger additional evidence of possible cheating.
16. To ensure fair play, comply immediately if a TD asks a player to share the player's screen via Zoom. As it is, with regard to the players' 1st webcam, players will be required on Zoom to share automatically the screen of the device on which they're playing their game.
17. No simultaneous streaming on a player's social-media channel.

18. No simultaneous recreation of the game on a secondary chess board.
19. If a situation arises that is not covered sufficiently (or at all) by existing rules, then US Chess confers on TDs the right to apply common sense to resolve the situation.

How to Prepare for the Start of a Game

1. Log out of your computer, so all programs (especially any chess programs and including any hidden engine processes) will be closed.
2. Log back in to your computer.
3. Do not start any program or application (especially one that enables communication with others) that is not required for participation in the tournament.
4. Start your favorite web browser and open only 2 tabs:
 - 1 tab for logging in to Chess.com
 - 1 tab for logging into to Zoom
5. At least 15 minutes before the scheduled start of a round, log in to Chess.com and be present on Chess.com/live. (A link to the tournament will have been emailed to you.) Confirm that your first name and last name are listed in English in your Chess.com profile in [Chess.com's Settings](#); however, your Chess.com handle/username does not need to reflect your name.
6. At least 15 minutes before the scheduled start of a round, log in to Zoom and join the tournament-specific conference. Zoom settings: list the player's full name (first and last) in English, webcam on, microphone (which enables TDs to hear players) at full volume, and speaker (which enables players to hear other players) at zero. (In Zoom, go to Audio settings via Preferences or by hovering the cursor over the microphone icon. [Click here for a tutorial on adjusting Zoom audio settings.](#)) A link to the Zoom conference will have been emailed to the player.
7. Pairings will be posted as soon as possible before the scheduled start of a round.
8. At the scheduled start of a round, a TD will start games manually one by one, starting with Board 1. All games should start within 8 minutes. Conversely, all Blitz games in the Weeramantry will start simultaneously, because they will be paired automatically by Chess.com.
9. If a player is not at the electronic board on Chess.com/live at the scheduled start of a round, that game (including the missing player's clock) cannot be started. Chess.com will indicate to the TD that the player is unavailable. After the TD has started all games in which both players are present, the TD will return to any unstarted games to see whether the missing players are finally ready to play. After 3 such cycles of a TD attempting to start unstarted games, any player still not ready to play will receive a forfeit loss. Consequently, players who are more than 5 minutes late to the electronic board at the scheduled start of a round, will likely receive a forfeit loss.
10. Do not surf the internet while games are being played. In particular, do not watch chess livestreams on platforms such as Twitch.tv. Recall that with regard to the players' 1st webcam, players will be required on Zoom to share the screen of the

device on which they're playing their games. Furthermore, recall that players' screens are being recorded.

11. If a player loses internet connection, then the player should try to reconnect immediately, as internet disconnection will not automatically end a game and result in a loss on any online platform such as Chess.com. (Of course, any lost time is the player's responsibility.) However, if a game is aborted during an internet disconnection or because of a technical glitch, then the game will result in a loss—a result TDs cannot change. Although an aborted game will result in a loss, it will not result in disqualification; so, players with aborted games will be paired in subsequent rounds. Please note, though, that aborted games during a Blitz tournament such as the Weeramantry can lead to disqualification from the tournament, because pairings are determined automatically by the platform (Chess.com), rather than manually by TDs. Players with aborted games in the Weeramantry should stand by until the next round to see whether they will be paired. If they are not, then unfortunately that means they have been disqualified from the tournament—a result TDs cannot change.

Pairings for Rounds 2-6

1. Pairings in Rounds 2-6 will be posted only after results in the previous round have been verified and fair-play analysis has been completed.
2. Players are required to play all 6 rounds of their Invitational. Players unable to play in a round (or in the remainder of the tournament) because of an emergency (medical or otherwise), must notify a tournament director of their withdrawal as soon as possible, so the host state's alternate can be substituted, if needed. Players forfeit prizes if they withdraw or are disqualified and withdrawn from the tournament.

How Pairings Will Be Determined

1. Pairings will be determined by players' US Chess over-the-board Regular ratings and according to US Chess's [Rules of Chess \(2020\)](#).
2. Pairings will be generated offline by tournament software and reviewed manually by a TD, before they are posted on each tournament's separate Chess.com page.
3. Weeramantry pairings will be determined by players' Chess.com Blitz ratings and according to Chess.com's rules. The pairings will be posted automatically by Chess.com.

How Prizes Will Be Determined

1. Most prizes among players with tied scores will be determined by tiebreaks in the following order: 1. Modified Median, 2. Solkoff, 3. Cumulative, and 4. Cumulative of Opposition. Tied scores in the Weeramantry will be determined by Chess.com's tiebreaks. Only Senior cash prizes will be shared among tied players.

2. To ensure fair play, prizes will not be awarded until after post-game analysis of results is complete—a process that might take up to 2 weeks after the conclusion of the tournaments. Furthermore, the tournament will not be submitted for rating until after post-game analysis of results is complete.

Questions during the Tournament?

If a player has a question or encounters technical difficulties during the tournament, then contact Chess Control at Invitationals@USChess.org—or 919.265.7560 (but only in the case of an emergency).

Fair-Play (Anti-Cheating) Measures

Manually by the Public

1. Move data and live game analysis are publicly available on Chess.com via Play : Live Chess : binoculars icon : select a game : Live Analysis icon. An unexpectedly high level of move accuracy might be considered suspicious.

Manually by Tournament Directors

1. Several TDs will be assigned to each Invitational to monitor players while games are in progress.
2. If a player is only partially visible on the screen, then a TD will send the player a private message to sit up, lean forward, stop leaning to a side, etc. The TD will also inform players to remove headphones, headsets, earbuds, hoodies, hats, headwear of any kind, etc.
3. Players will be recorded throughout the entire tournament, and those recordings are subject to post-game, fair-play (cheat-detection) analysis. US Chess will not request that players and/or parents fill out a consent form to authorize such recordings, as consent is implied by participation in the tournament. If a player refuses to comply with the many required transparency steps listed far above, thereby rendering TDs unable to monitor the player properly, then the player will receive a forfeit loss and will be disqualified and withdrawn from the tournament, at the discretion of the Chief Tournament Director.
4. A player may step away from the electronic board to take a break (to use the toilet, etc.), as long as the player is not on move—that is, as long as it's not the player's turn to move. Before stepping away, the player must send a private message to TDs (such as *I'm taking a break*) to provide notification of the player's absence. (The player does not need to wait to receive permission to take a break.) After returning to the electronic board, the player must send another private message to TDs (such as *I'm back*). The messages will timestamp the fact and duration of the player's reported absence. If fair-play screening detects suspiciously strong play in the next several moves after the player's reported absence, then that absence will be considered strong additional evidence of possible cheating. An

unreported absence will be considered even stronger additional evidence of possible cheating.

Manually by Chess.com's Live Staff & US Chess's Cheat-Detection Specialist & Automatically by Chess.com's Cheat-Detection Algorithms

1. Chess.com will dedicate multiple members of its Cheat-Detection Live Staff to analyze all games upon completion.
2. Suspicious results will be analyzed further by Chess.com's cheat-detection algorithms and by US Chess's cheat-detection specialist, IM Kenneth W. Regan, a professor of computer science and engineering at the University of Buffalo.
3. Both Chess.com's and US Chess's cheat-detection specialists will submit tournament reports about any suspected acts of cheating.

LiveStreaming

1. There will be a delay for livestreaming of game analysis on platforms such as Chess.com and Twitch.tv.

Steps that Might Be Taken if Cheating is Suspected

1. US Chess reserves the right to forfeit, disqualify, and withdraw any player suspected of a fair-play violation.
2. Results of the games of a player determined to have committed a fair-play violation will be adjusted according to US Chess's [Rules of Chess \(2020\)](#).
3. Players determined to have cheated expose themselves to punishment outside the confines of the tournament. Likely punishments include:
 - being brought before US Chess's Ethics Committee, having one's US Chess membership revoked, and being banned from competing in future tournaments (both online and over-the-board) rated by US Chess;
 - being banned from competing in future games rated by Chess.com.

Chess.com's Fair-Play / Anti-Cheating Videos

US Chess recommends watching the following YouTube videos about Chess.com's cheat-detection measures:

- [Chess.com - Online play and cheating concerns \(GM Magesh Panchanathan\)](#), 2020.05.11
- [Answering YOUR Questions About Cheating In Chess | IM Daniel Rensch](#), 2020.04.30
- [Don't Cheat At Chess: What Chess.com Is Doing to Catch Cheaters!](#), 2020.04.30
- [ChessKid.com Teaches Kids Fair Play & Chess Ethics](#), 2019.11.25
- [Cheat Detection QA with Danny Rensch and Gerard: 2018 Chess.com Isle of Man International](#), 2018.10.24

Jon Haskel, National State Invitationals Committee (Chair) & Chief Tournament Director
Chris Bird, FIDE Events Manager
Pete Karagianis, Assistant Director of Events
John Rockefeller, National State Invitationals Committee
Judit Sztaray, Scholastic Council