

Promotional Memberships Report (July 2023)

The Bylaws mandate an annual report on promotional memberships before the Delegates reauthorize them for another year. This is the report for the 2023 Delegates Meeting.

The US Chess Membership System changed from the in-house developed membership system we had used since 2005 to CIVI-CRM, beginning July 7, 2020. The nature of the systems' differences will result in this report offering a different look at the data for the year ending 5/31/2021 and beyond.

Membership in US Chess swelled during the period from June 1, 2022 through May 31, 2023. At year end May 31, 2022, US Chess membership was 55,266. At year end May 31, 2023, US Chess membership was 106,073, or a 91.9% increase year-over-year. Clearly the pandemic impacted our starting point and the interest in chess and US Chess membership has never been higher.

The two major types of promotional memberships currently in effect are the group membership program (voucher) and the two-month membership. This report also covers programs under which the US Chess membership requirement is waived for rated tournaments.

Group Memberships

The group membership program is a voucher system. Affiliates purchase a block of memberships at a discounted rate (the rate varies depending upon the number of vouchers purchased) and are sent vouchers for those memberships which can be redeemed online. The youth group membership pricing plans started with as few as 25 memberships in the initial block. For more on the voucher program visit <https://new.uschess.org/civicrm/contribute/transact?cid=0&reset=1&id=6>, or access it through the TD/Affiliate dashboard on your US Chess member profile.

Although the voucher system was designed so that the voucher could be redeemed by a parent, coach or TD, most of them appear to be redeemed by the organization which purchased the block of vouchers. Many organizations fail to supply US Chess with the member's correct birthdate or mailing address, a contributor to duplicate membership IDs. This practice leads to data quality issues in the database and increases frustration among players who are trying to access their accounts.

In recent years, vouchers were changed so that they are now valid for nine months rather than for six months (plus the fractional portion of the month in which they are issued) and when redeemed are good for a one-year group membership that does not include a printed magazine. This means that vouchers purchased at the start of the school year are essentially valid for the entire school year.

Usage of the group youth membership voucher program has rebounded after the pandemic, resulting in significantly more youth memberships being offered.

During the 2022-23 fiscal year, we issued 90 sets of vouchers to 57 different organizations. In total, 4,432 vouchers were issued during the fiscal year.

During the 2021-22 fiscal year, we issued 45 sets of vouchers to 35 different organizations, with many of vouchers being reissued due to pandemic expiration. With school programs shuttered during the pandemic and the loosening restrictions on voucher expiration dates, the program was quiet for most of the year.

During the 2020-21 fiscal year, we issued 28 sets of vouchers to 24 different organizations, totaling 4,167 vouchers. With school programs shuttered during the pandemic and the loosening restrictions on voucher expiration dates, the program was quiet for most of the year.

During the 2019-20 fiscal year we issued 102 sets of vouchers to 71 different organizations totaling 13,313 vouchers. 3829 of those vouchers have not yet been redeemed. 365 of those vouchers expired without being used (272 on 6/30/2020) though it is possible that some of those vouchers might be extended, other vouchers that might have expired by now have already been extended using the new system. No further extensions will be granted for group memberships purchased during the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Other Promotional Memberships

During FY 2022-23 there were 5 two-month trial memberships purchased by 5 different member IDs. 2 of those trial members subsequently extended their membership beyond the trial period.

During FY 2021-22 there were 73 two-month trial memberships purchased by 73 different member IDs. 3 of those trial members subsequently extended their membership beyond the trial period.

During FY 2020-21 there were 61 two-month trial memberships purchased by 60 different member IDs. 15 of those trial members subsequently extended their membership beyond the trial period.

During FY 2019-20 there were 273 two-month trial memberships purchased by 251 different member IDs. 70 of those trial members subsequently extended their membership beyond the end of the trial month period. In FY 2018-19 there were 310 trial membership for 288 member IDs, 151 of those memberships have subsequently been extended.

In October of 2012, an International Online membership was authorized by the Executive Board. This membership is \$20 for one year, is only available to members living outside the USA and members are expected to provide an email address. It is not available on the US Chess membership webstore but can be sold by US Chess affiliates at tournaments. Usage of the International Online membership diminished due to discontinuation of the Millionaire Open.

During the fiscal year ending 5/31/2023, 162 International Online Memberships were sold.

No pilot membership programs were in effect for the fiscal year ending 5/31/2023.

We also have the longstanding Delegate mandated waiver of membership requirements for foreign IMs and GMs. (GMs who are registered with FIDE as USA players are entitled to a free USCF membership by Delegate mandate, IMs are not.) Foreign players do not earn Grand Prix points unless they are also paid US Chess members. The table below uses our captured FIDE historical data to determine a FIDE registered player's title and country of registry as of the start of the event and does not take into consideration whether those foreign players are US Chess members. I've broken out OTB and Online events separately.

fy	gm	for_gm	for_gm_player	im	for_im	for_im_player
2018-05-31	ONL	0	0	0	2	0
2019-05-31	ONL	0	0	0	1	1
2020-05-31	ONL	17	7	9	19	9
2021-05-31	ONL	179	128	839	112	59
2022-05-31	ONL	81	62	267	71	47

fy	gm	for_gm	for_gm_player	im	for_im	for_im_player
2018-05-31	OTB	175	115	669	197	98
2019-05-31	OTB	199	137	797	209	108
2020-05-31	OTB	199	134	650	175	80
2021-05-31	OTB	46	23	58	54	21
2022-05-31	OTB	141	75	426	171	78

Junior Tournament Player Program (JTP)

We also have the Junior Tournament Player program, which does not convey any ongoing membership privileges beyond participation in that event, but without any fee other than the ratings fee for that event.

There are two types of JTP events. Any affiliate may hold a Primary JTP event, one in which all players (including house players) are in the third grade or lower. A scholastic affiliate (the affiliate ID begins with the letter H) may also hold an in-school K-12 JTP event, one intended only for the students enrolled in that school and limited to students in the 12th grade or lower.

Adult players are not allowed in JTP events, not even as house players

Here's a breakdown on JTP events over the past several fiscal years, though the number of JTP events in the 2020-21 fiscal year was much lower than in recent years due to the shutdown of most schools and their chess programs. The way data was collected may have changed the numbers a little from the previous report, and the membership system change may have modified some prior year counts.

Primary (K-3) JTP events				In School (K-12) JTP events			
Annual Data by fiscal year				Annual Data by fiscal year			
Year End	jtp_primary	players	members	year	jtp_k12	players	members
2018-05-31	176	4282	2741	2018-05-31	219	3722	1543
2019-05-31	173	4356	2614	2019-05-31	231	3001	1348
2020-05-31	91	2350	1616	2020-05-31	202	2343	1083
2021-05-31	6	86	76	2021-05-31	44	732	205
2022-05-31	58	1297	1021	2022-05-31	89	1034	541
2023-05-31	75	2049	1373	2023-05-31	67	851	427

Other Membership Programs

There is also the longstanding waiver (dating back to 1989) of membership requirements for events that are part of sanctioned State Games (ie, sanctioned by the National Congress of State Games.)

The national governing bodies for most other sports extended similar membership waivers to NCSG sanctioned events in the late 80's and early 90's, the exceptions being ones where national membership also includes participant insurance, such as gymnastics and boxing.

At present, only Nebraska has a State Games that include chess. It is not clear that this membership exemption program is being extended, states considering having chess in their State Games should contact the office.

We also have the 'house player' rule, which the Delegates sanctioned in 1990. At present each section of an event may have one non-member house player per round, though a house player may not compete in over half of the rounds in that section without a waiver from the US Chess office, and an office override will be required if the house player scores better than 75% in the event. We do not have data which permits us to provide detailed statistics on house player usage.