

# **The 80/20 TOP 25 TD TIPS with comments**

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**1. Think like a player:** (how would you like things run when you are playing)

**2. Post it!!** (if it isn't posted then people will complain that they didn't know) (in the internet age posting it on the tournament website is a way to ensure that people cannot say no attempt was made to inform them) (in a based on tournament let people know as soon as possible what the prize fund will really be)

**3. Announce it!** (not everybody reads, so announce critical information before the start of the round(s)) (next round, time control, cell phones, fair play announcement, washroom locations, other info)

**4. Be in the tournament room at time control.** (reduces delay in getting to a game with a flag claim – if it turns out to be one needing TD involvement) (with increment time controls the length of "time control" is extended but there are generally fewer problematic games at the same time)

**5. Train someone to be a TD.** (nobody lives forever) (you can't be at two different tournaments on the same day) (it is easier to play if you are not the TD) (if you plan on directing larger events you will need trained staff to assist you)

**6. Use common sense.** (rule 1A is there for a reason) (many of the Safe Play requirements are applied common sense)

**7. Use the [uschess.org/msa](http://uschess.org/msa) site or the player search utility.** (find current membership expirations) (make sure of the right ID for the player – many players, particularly kids, are entered with a sibling's ID) (the name search can help find duplicate IDs or never-paid-for IDs)(the old system created an ID after payment while the new one creates it before payment and some players think once they have an ID they are done)(the TD pages have useful information)

**8. Keep everything.** (I usually toss the results sheets after about six months but have had questions arise one or two months after the event – with the results sheets able to show that the report to US Chess matched the actual report of the game – with pairing programs the tournament can be kept essentially forever) (the on-line zoom chat logs have come in handy to verify that communication was done in a timely manner)

**9. Use the USChess forums.** (the noise to content ratio could be better but there is a lot of good content and tips available)

**10. Check bye and withdraw sign up sheets.** (if there are multiple sheets make sure you get them all) (post a cross-table showing all rounds so that people can see upcoming byes) (nowadays that also means checking the e-mail addresses that byes and withdrawals can be sent to, along with messages to applicable phone numbers)

**11. Check everything (even playing room arrangements) at least twice.** (it can be hectic starting a scholastic tournament by moving tables and chairs into the <previously locked> tournament room five minutes before the start of the round) (bathroom availability needs to be ensured) (you can continue checking during the event – some TDs want completed boards to have their chairs pushed in so that the room looks neat and tidy, while I want them pushed in because it makes it easier for players, and me, to move through the room quickly – both reasons have the same result)

**12. A short time after the round has started, check to see who has not yet arrived at their board.** (they may be missed bye requests) (they may be at an unused board) (if it is an ASAP schedule then the announcements may not have gone everywhere) (that also lets you know which boards to check to make sure that forfeit wins were actually marked as forfeit wins)

**13. Consistently deal with the odd-man player.** (that means be consistent in how you handle the odd-man player) (if the tournament is only four rounds then players who have no rated games yet need all four to get a publishable rating – when such a player

has a forfeit win in the final round I've generally found an extra game to provide that needed fourth)

**14. Start the rounds on time.** (Players, and parents, can accept other inconveniences if the rounds start on time) (at scholastic tournaments one way to start on time is to allow all games with both players present to start early if both players agree – otherwise many parents will bring in their kids at the last moment so they are not sitting around waiting and if the games start quickly they will bring their kids in quickly)

**15. Treat your TD job as a profession.** (very few TDs can live off of TD earnings, so it is usually a hobby – but it is a serious one and I know I've handled things well when people think that it really is my primary job) (if you treat it like a casual hobby then your performance will be sub-par and people will notice)

**16. You cannot have more prizes than winners.** (putting a single person in two different prize groups is the bane of properly paying prizes – think of the 19xx player that tied for third overall and was clearly the top A player) (the obverse is that you cannot have multiple players sharing less prizes than winners when there are still more prizes they are collectively eligible for – generally a concern when there are prize limits for unrated or provisional players)

**17. Submit your tournaments on-line.** (it is cheaper) (once you are used to it you will find it easier) (errors can be discovered during the submission process and corrected immediately with nobody ever knowing that they existed) (players have come to expect same-day

rating updates, sometimes same-hour rating updates, and occasionally a rating update before the tournament is even finished – can't do much about that last one) (for a multi-day event submit a test rating report at the end of each day to make sure there are no membership issues or TD certification issues – making sure to delete the test afterwards to ensure the games only get rated once)

**18. Ask physically challenged players what they need.** (making assumptions can result in overlooking something needed or in making an unwanted accommodation) (in the early 70s a child playing chess in a wheelchair was seen by many as brave, in the early 90s as worthy of special respect, and today as just another player that sometimes happens to need to play at the end of a row and sometimes would be quite willing to play in the middle of others as long as the board could be reached)

**19. Get a pairings program.** (when I began in the '80s I was a very fast manual pairer – some saying I looked like a Mississippi riverboat dealer – and I've found that with a pairing program I can often have rounds paired at about the same time I did when I did pairings manually, but with a pairing program I can spend a lot of the round on the tournament floor instead of taking care of all the updates and partial pairings that would otherwise be needed to quickly finish the manual pairings, and do so without being blindsided by a last minute withdrawal) (the reports are simpler to generate) (various pairing sequences such as alpha and board-by-board can both be done) (if the wall charts are thrown away by the hotel staff then they are easily regenerated instead

of one US Open having to go dumpster diving for them) (they can handle tie-breaks and money splits) (make sure you know how to use the program and set it up correctly) (still learn how to do manual pairings so that you have a chance to recognize incorrect settings)

**20. Listen to people.** (you may not rule in a person's favor but if you listen to them they will feel better) (for that matter, you may find out more information that will lead you to actually rule in their favor once you verify it) (when people come up after round one pairings are posted to say they were skipped in error – often a self-inflicted error – getting a reputation for calmly listening and working to resolve things helps to keep those players and parents calm with the confidence that it will be resolved if there is any way to do so) (people want to know that you care about them and it is hard to do that if you do not listen) (I have often said there are four types of scholastic parents - <1> parents that know what is going on, have very few questions, and are easy to deal with <2> parents who do not know what is going on, do not ask questions, get confused and exasperated, pull their kids from chess due to their frustration, and are easy to deal with because they are invisible <3> parents who do not know what is going on and are determined to find out, ask questions they want answered/generally accepting a delay if you are in the middle of a critical task, and require a lot of a TD's time – some TDs find them to be a pain in the neck, maybe lower, but I've found that in the long run they intercept 15 to 25 as many future questions as they've asked, not only moving to the first group but being available to notice parents in the second group and answering their unasked

questions before they get frustrated <4> the true pains that only want to hear the answers that would help them – revisited at the end of the next point)

**21. Use a soft voice.** (I remember going up to a HS coach that had just pointed out an illegal move <and been ignored> and quietly saying “please leave” – when he looked at me in confusion I just as quietly said “now” – and he left immediately, later saying he’d coached HS baseball, basketball and wrestling and the only time he was ever ejected was at a chess tournament) (the term “soft voice” might also be described as a non-accusatory voice – when I do scholastics tournaments I ask participants to raise their hands if there is any confusion about the rules, not “if their opponent is trying to cheat”, because resolving confusion is much less confrontational than saying whether somebody was cheating or was being falsely accused of cheating) (when spectators are not allowed I finish my general announcement by saying “I cordially invite all parents and coaches to leave” – they know it is just a polite way of saying “get out” but they appreciate the politeness) (one thing to remember to help you stay calm is that if you have a problem then you have a problem to deal with, but when you have multiple problems you can often pair them off so that you have solutions) (one time to NOT use a soft voice is during announcements) (if you use a soft voice and listen to people then you come across as a TD that no reasonable person would see a need to argue with and that no unreasonable person would be able to win an argument with)

**22. Don't take it personally.** (sometimes coaches will argue to show

their students that they have their backs, but will accept the correct rulings after they’ve shown the support for their students) (when you react calmly, others are more likely to listen to why your ruling is correct) (sometimes there is friction between people but if at least one of them remains calm that friction can be undone) (if somebody is trying to make you react poorly then it annoys the heck out of them when you remain calm)

**23. Do not rush.** (rushing is prone to generating mistakes) (if you are moving at a deliberate and reasonable pace regardless of how much participants want to make you rush – and that avoids other people chiming in thinking you are getting flustered or unduly influenced by the first people trying to rush you) (if you have a lot of last minute entries after the normal entry cut-off then I’ve paired the people that entered on time and then continued taking entries with the later entries either paired against each other or getting half-point byes – thus starting the round on time for the players that were there on time and still taking later entries so that the organizer gets the entry fees) (the easiest way to make an error at the end of the tournament is to rush through the final results with players or coaches pressing to know as quickly as possible if they need to book a different flight so they can stay for the awards ceremony – the 50 people you’ve helped over the years by doing that are outweighed by the one time you missed something by rushing) (a big time waste is unnecessary multi-tasking because the interruptions and transitions are not having work done – once you avoid rushing you will find that those time wastes are avoided and your lack of rushing gets everything done more quickly in addition to more accurately)

**24. Nothing is perfect** (even when it's not you can often make it seem to be) (after 700+ tournaments I have yet to have a perfect one, but often I am the only one that knows something wasn't perfect) (experience helps you learn how to recover from any problems – and when your players and their coaches realize you are able to make a recovery they are then calmer when pointing out issues) (some have said that the road to NTD requires learning how to recover from the mistakes you've made on the way) (note that “nothing is perfect” also applies to the information you receive from registration – I often spend an extra two to six hours handling registration glitches in the week before an event, and thus avoiding an unexpected half-hour recovery in mid-tournament when time is so critical – accepting that nothing is perfect better puts you into the mindset to track down and correct those imperfections before they damage an event) (there is an old saying that a pessimist is never unpleasantly surprised but I feel that a realistic optimist can prepare for and combat adversity while still retaining that hope for the best that a pessimist has abandoned)

**25. Be prepared.** (computer, printer, backup print cartridge, paper, clocks for long-running games, scoresheets, tape, current rating supplement, signage ready to be printed if necessary) (know how to run the pairing program) (know the significant details of the event – time control, round times, prizes, etc.) (check certification level/expiration and the SafePlay expiration of the TDs that will be working the event)