

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Before the Tournament

### **Is my child ready to enter a chess tournament?**

We will have many first time tournament players at the tournament. If the child understands how to move the pieces and understands the concept of checkmate then they can have fun at any tournament.

Coming to a State wide event is very inspirational for new players. They get to see hundreds of kids playing chess. The very nature of the chess rating system is self leveling such that your child is very quickly playing others very near their ability. In a Swiss style tournament with at least 5 rounds they will eventually play against someone of equal ability and experience.

We have trophies for all ability levels and every player has a good chance to win one. However, even Chess Grandmasters lose games, as long as the parent and the player are emotionally ready for this possibility, then come to the tournament and have a great time playing chess and making new chess friends!

### **What if my child loses in the first round, are they done playing for the day?**

No. Swiss and Round Robin style tournaments mean that each child will play every round except in the case where there are an odd number of entrants. The pairing software helps to sort and pair the contestants based on their prior rating and their wins and losses. In the second round, the winners of the first round are paired together and the losers of the first round are paired together. The sorting of players takes place each round and creates a document called chess pairings. This Swiss System of matching chess players each round helps to pair players with equal ability.

### **How do I register for a tournament?**

- 1) Join United States Chess Federation (USCF) [www.USChess.org](http://www.USChess.org) join/renew
- 2) Register for the tournament online. [www.ChessAchieves.com](http://www.ChessAchieves.com)

### **What is a USCF rating?**

A United State Chess Federation (USCF) rating is established when you play in USCF rated tournaments like this one. The rating system uses formulas to calculate ratings based on wins and losses and the strength of the opponents played. Ratings for new players can fluctuate hundreds of points, but as the number of games played increase the rating changes are much smaller. Players earn a USCF rating only after they join the USCF and play in USCF rated tournaments. The higher the rating the stronger the player. Ratings can range from 0 and currently go up to 2800.

### **Why should a beginning chess player enter a tournament?**

Beginning children almost always have fun at tournaments. They have fun meeting new people, staying at a hotel in a new city, seeing hundreds of kids playing chess at the same time, learning how to find their name on the wall chart and finding their board. Over time they become comfortable with the environment and begin to learn the game better and win more games.

### **How do tournament sections work?**

A tournament is divided into sections based on a player's grade or rating (or, sometimes, a combination of these factors). When you enter a tournament, you must choose a section. Players will

only play against opponents in their own section, and players compete for prizes per section and rating classification.

At the state tournament, typically one should select the section that best matches your grade level. Example: A 2<sup>nd</sup> grader would play in the Kindergarten to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade section (K-3)

Some very strong players choose to “play up” a section as it is more prestigious and challenging- Example: A 6<sup>th</sup> grader can choose to play in the K-12 section. But again, most 6<sup>th</sup> graders would play in the K-8 section.

A player can not “play down” a section- A 4<sup>th</sup> grader can not play in the K-3 section.

### **When do I need to show up?**

It is EXTREMELY important to be on time! Try to show up at least 30 minutes in advance of the first round. If you have NOT registered for the tournament in advance, you will need to register onsite at least one hour before the first round.

If you HAVE registered for the tournament in advance then you do not need to arrive early for onsite registration. You should plan to arrive at least 30 minutes before the first round. After onsite registration closes, the tournament staff will prepare pairings (list of players and board assignments) for the first round and will usually make important announcements before the first round starts.

### **Do I need to check in if I registered in advance?**

The tournament staff will post lists of advance entries called Wall Charts at the site. If you registered in advance, please check that your name appears on the list AND that you are entered in the correct section. If you are, you do not need to check in UNLESS the words "See TD" appear next to your name. Often, but not always, See TD means you have an expired or missing membership.

### **I entered in advance, but I'm not able to make it to the tournament. What should I do?**

If you are not able to attend the tournament, please be sure to notify the tournament staff BEFORE the first round. This helps players get to play as many live opponents as possible and it can make a difference in tournament tie breaks at the end.

### **What does Game 60 or G/60 mean?**

Game 60 or G/60 means that each player gets 60 minutes to make their moves. Therefore the longest a game could take is 120 minutes if both players used every possible moment of time.

Game 90 would mean that each player get 90 minutes.

### **What does 5 Round Swiss mean?**

The first part tells us that there are a total of 5 rounds for this section. Each player will play all 5 rounds no matter if they win, lose, or draw. The Swiss System is the chess pairing system used to determine who your player will play next round. The basic concept is that a player will be playing someone performing about as well as they are after the first round. Example: My player won the first round and lost the second, in the third round they would likely be playing someone else that has only won one game so far in the tournament.

### **What is a preregistered bye?**

A preregistered bye is a request to sit out for that round without any penalty. One reason to request a bye is if you need to arrive late or leave early. Even if a bye is not available to you- please be sure to let the Tournament Director know if you need to miss a round. This helps the remaining players to play more live opponents rather than just sitting waiting for someone to arrive.

**These are competitive tournaments, but not all students can win, so why do students of all different abilities attend these tournaments?**

Many players come to a tournament because they are members of a school team. They may or may not be very experienced players. Some players come because they enjoy chess and take advantage of these tournaments to get better and become more competitive. In a Swiss style tournament players will eventually end up playing someone of equal ability.

**Why would a school want to host a tournament?**

Hosting a tournament gives the host school or coach an event to generate more interest in chess. Tournaments are also an opportunity for the host to raise funds for the club, school or PTA. Host schools almost always have the largest team at a tournament because kids and families do not have to travel.

**How do I know my registration was received?**

You will receive an email confirmation. You will also find your players name in the list of players for the tournament. The list of players is called the Wall Chart and will be available onsite or online before the tournament.

**Will I be penalized if I register and then am not able to attend?**

Any registration fees not used become a fully tax deductible donation to our program. Ratings will not be affected if the player does not show but please call the tournament staff to withdraw the player so that we have as many live opponents each round as possible.

**What is a Combined Individual/Team Swiss Style tournament?**

The state tournament is a combined Swiss style tournament. This means that students compete for individual awards and team awards. The team scores are calculated using the top four scoring players for each team in that section. Hence a team from a school with 4 students participating is weighted equally with a team from a school with 12 students participating. However, the larger team has an advantage because it has a larger pool from which to draw its best scores.

**Who can be on a team?**

A team must be at least 2 persons from the same school and entered in the same section. Every school is welcome to bring any number of students from that school. A team in general can only consist of members that attend that school as their primary school of attendance. Schools that meet one day a week and are supplementary to their principal school of attendance can not constitute a team at the state tournament but some smaller local tournaments do allow teams from smaller schools. The top 4 scores from a team are used to calculate the team score. Every player on the team in the same section must have the same school name in order for scoring to work properly.

There are two exceptions to students being from the same school. One is that a team can be comprised of home school students from one county provided that they are an organized home school group and meet as a group for other purposes. The second exception is when a student attends a feeder school of that team. For example a student attending Wake Tech North could be considered a team mate of students attending Wake Tech South. Please notify a TD at the tournament of any exceptions, so that your team is scored correctly.

**What if I find that my child is not paired in the first round after pairings are posted?**

Not to worry. Sometimes names slip through or some students arrive late. We can pair students manually on the tournament floor before the first round begins. See a Tournament Director at the tournament for help. Worst case- your child would not play an opponent the first round but would a point towards the tournament if the player was register in advance.

## Does my child have to take chess notation (the language of chess)?

Sections K - 5 and up are required to take notation. We encourage everyone to take notation if they can because it is the only way a game in dispute can be fairly arbitrated and it is the only way students can learn from their game once it is over. Also, many research studies have shown that the process of learning and taking notation helps increase students reading ability. Reviewing games later is a great way to find improvements in your game.

When you become a member of the USCF, you'll see that a lot of thrilling chess games and stories are filled with chess notation. You also are required to take notation in most official chess tournaments, so it's great to get a firm handle on it as you start to play. Impress your friends by telling them that you're learning an ancient language called Aracaissaic. The pieces are abbreviated to the following CAPITAL letters:

**K = King**

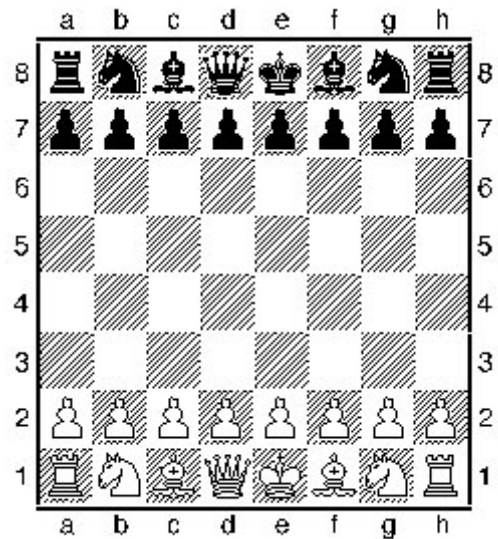
**Q = Queen**

**R = Rook**

**B = Bishop**

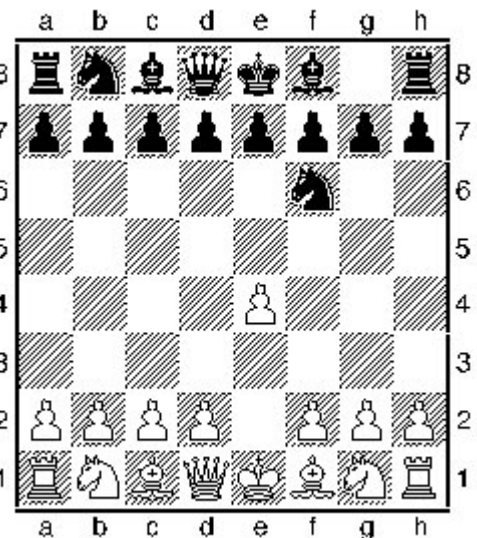
**N = Knight**

**= Pawn**



Piece, Letter, Number- To record a move you want to indicate the piece you are moving, followed by the file (lower case letters at the bottom of the board), followed the rank (number on the side of the board. The pawn no symbol. To record the move of a pawn, you just write square it moves to. Because every other piece has a symbol, everyone will know you mean the pawn when there is not other piece identified. For instance, the most popular first move for white is recorded as e4.

Black's response is called the Alekhine Opening, named the former world champion. It is recorded as Nf6.



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### Other Common Notation Symbols

= Kingside Castling

0 = Queenside Castling

x = Capture

(Bxf6 means Bishop captures on f6)

(dxe4 means a pawn on the d file captures on e4)

+	=	Check
++	=	Checkmate
#	=	Checkmate
1-0	=	White won the game
0-1	=	Black won the game
½-½	=	Draw
0.5-0.5	=	Draw
=	=	promotion (d8=Q means d pawn promotes to a Queen)
!	=	Good move
?	=	Bad move
!!	=	Brilliant, soul searing move-
??	=	Blunder
!?	=	Interesting move
?!	=	Dubious move

### **What are Chess Clocks?**

All serious tournament chess games are played with special clock that have two clock faces on one side. The Player with the Black pieces begins a game by shaking hands with his opponent and pressing their clock button down, thus starting the White Player's clock. When the player with White, moves, they press their clock button and Player with the Black pieces time starts ticking. This goes on throughout the game. Only one side of the clock ticks at a time.

There are two types of clocks, digital and analog. Normally, the player who has the Black pieces chooses equipment. However, digital clocks are easier for tournament directors and players to read, so they are now favored. If either player has one, he or she can insist on using the digital clock.

### **What if my child does not have a clock?**

Often times a player's opponent will have a clock or a range of boards will have clocks. Some schools bring multiple clocks for others to use. Students can also play without a clock and if time is an issue then the floor TD will start a clock on a game with an equal amount of time set for the game to finish with in the average time for that round.

### **Why is the tournament director using an out-of-date rating for me? Why does the USCF web page show an old rating for me?**

This often trips up both new and experienced players. When you look up your record on the USCF web site, the page will show a "General" tab and a "Tournament History" tab (as well as a "Rating Supplement" tab).

The USCF publishes "official" ratings once a month. These "official" ratings are the ones used to determine the player's eligibility for sections and class trophies.

When you look at the "tournament history" tab, you can see your most up-to-date unofficial rating. That's where you can see your tournaments in chronological order and how your rating changed after each tournament.

The cut-off date for the official rating list is defined in the notes of the tournament flyer.

### **What do I need to bring to the tournament?**

Please bring a chess clock (if you have one). We do supply chess sets at the state tournament. There may be chess equipment for sale at the tournament.

Spectators may want to bring a portable chair.

Wi-Fi Internet access should be available.

## **During the Tournament**

### **What can I expect at the start of the tournament?**

After on site registration closes, the tournament staff will make important announcements for both experienced tournament players and newcomers. While the announcements are made, other tournament staff will post the chess pairings for the first round. Chess Pairings are simply lists that will be put up that show:

1. Player's name,
2. Color (white or black pieces) assigned to the player for the first game,
3. Opponent's name,
4. Bd "board number"

The player should find and note this information and then go into the playing room and find the table with the player's board number and sit at color of pieces assigned.

Once a round starts, parents and coaches are generally NOT allowed to remain in the playing area. We do make an exception for our youngest players, who may need some help finding their board number and setting up the board and pieces for their game. However, even in this case, once the two opponents are at the board and ready to start the game, parents and coaches typically leave the room.

When the game is done, the players must report the result of the game to the tournament staff. They will then reset and board and then leave the playing area to wait for the next round.

### **What happens if I don't win the first game? Am I knocked out of the tournament?**

Absolutely not! Chess tournaments are NOT elimination format. You will play every round, whether you win, lose, or draw.

### **How do the results of match get recorded?**

At most tournaments there is a scoring table and both players are to go the scoring table and report the result to the scorekeeper. In some tournaments both players are to record their results on the pairing sheet on the wall by marking a 1 for a win,  $\frac{1}{2}$  or 0.5 for a draw or stalemate, and a 0 for a loss beside the appropriate name.

### **If my child receives an assigned bye can he/she have a bye again?**

No. A player with an assigned bye will be awarded 1 point and then he/she would be paired with other players who have 1 point. Assigned byes occur when we have an odd number of players in a section. Unfortunately someone has to sit out a round when there are an odd number of players.

### **What if I see an illegal move?**

Only the players of that game can point out move errors. At no time should a parent, coach, or any observer, intervene in a game in any way. Both players have to bring to the others attention, illegal moves, checkmate, or stalemate. The aspects of the game are the player's responsibility. TD's will not intervene unless asked for help by a player. If a dispute occurs then a player is instructed to stop the clocks raise their hand and wait for assistance from a floor TD.

### **When is the lunch break and are meals served on site?**

You should make arrangements to have lunch between your games. If your game was the last to finish and you need a few minutes' break before the next round starts, please do ask the tournament staff.

There is no meal service at the tournament facility. Feel free to bring your own snacks. There are many restaurants near the tournament site. There will be a map of restaurants in the tournament event guide.

### **When does the next round start?**

We do our best to keep the tournament moving along. Round times are posted. We will do our best to keep to the posted times.

### **Why is my child paired against an opponent with a higher (or lower) score?**

What factors are used for pairing? Is this pairing correct?

We get lots of questions about the pairings at our tournaments. Pairings are the single most complex part of tournament operation. We will try to explain some of the basics here for the Swiss System rules for pairing players. Our state tournaments are Combined, Individual/ Team tournaments. This means that players compete for individual prizes and for team prizes. This Combined tournament style increases the complexity of the pairing calculations because of the need to avoid pairing teammates with each other whenever possible.

There are several pairing rules or criteria that need to be considered.

The USCF Pairing Criteria are:

- Avoid players meeting twice.
- Players with Equal Scores are paired whenever possible.
- Within a score group, the upper half is paired against the lower half (with exceptions).
- Players receive each color the same number of times, whenever practical.
- Players receive alternating colors whenever practical.

Additionally, in Combined Individual/Team style tournaments:

- Teammates should not meet whenever possible.

The first round is paired by simply taking the top ½ of the players and pairing them up against the bottom ½ of the players in that section. Subsequent rounds are paired based on performance in the tournament and all the other factors listed above.

In later rounds Players with Equal Scores are paired whenever possible.

This means that a player with 4 wins "should" be paired with an opponent who also has 4 wins. This may not be possible for several reasons.

- If the players have already met, they would not be paired again.
- Forcing the pairing results in other players in the section meeting twice.
- Forcing the pairing results in teammates meeting.
- Forcing the pairing results in unequal colors.

Due to the complex nature of the pairing calculations, we use a software program to calculate the pairings for our tournaments.

### **When will the tournament be done?**

After the last board in the last round for that section is complete then the tournament will be over for that section.

## **After the Tournament**

### **Who wins the trophies?**

The final standings will be up as quickly as possible. These documents will define who has won a trophy. We have to make a few reviews in order to try to avoid an error. So, please be patient.

Each game you win a match in chess it is worth 1 tournament point. Each draw or stalemate is worth  $\frac{1}{2}$  a tournament point. A loss is worth 0 tournament points. In each section, there are trophies. The section trophies will be awarded to the players with the top scores. There are also rating class prizes in each section. So, even if you do not win an overall section trophy you may still be eligible for a rating class trophy.

Often, there will be ties for trophies. Example, there may be one player who scores 4.0, one who scores 3.5, and three who score 3.0. Ties are decided by "tie break" methods defined by USCF.

### **What are rating classes or class prizes?**

Having both section prizes and class prizes allows children of all different levels to compete in the same section and still have a chance to win a prize. Rating classes are tied to a USCF member's rating. Some tournaments have multiple prize levels in the form of section prizes and class prizes. For example, section K-5 has over all winners 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> place. These are called section prizes and are more prestigious. They are award to the top performers of this section regardless of their rating. Class prizes are rating based prizes and are awarded to the top performing player of that rating. For example- John is playing in the K-5 section and he has a USCF rating of 752. John could win his section of K-5 or he could win the 600-799 rating class prize. The player is automatically eligible for both prize levels with their registration. However, if the player wins a section prize (larger awards or trophies) then they will not receive both the section and the class awards. The class prize would then be awarded to the next highest person in that rating class.

### **When will I get my rating? How can I find out what my rating is?**

We submit the rating report for the tournament as soon as possible after the end of the tournament. While it is not guaranteed, the rating report is usually processed the same day as the tournament, and the results are available on the USCF web site ([www.uschess.org](http://www.uschess.org)) the next morning.

### **I've played in a tournament. Why am I still "unrated"?**

As explained above, there is a sometimes significant delay before your official rating reflects your latest tournament results. Also, if you have played fewer than four games, you will not have an official published rating (but your results still count for your unofficial rating). Often, the tournament director will use your unofficial rating if you do not have a published rating yet.

### **How soon will results be posted on the website?**

We try to post the results online with 48 hours of the completion of the tournament. Rating reports to USCF are also submitted within that time frame.