

Playing in your first scholastic chess tournament



You are receiving this email because you indicated on the registration form that this will be the first chess tournament for your child. We wanted to share with you what to expect. This email contains details you will pick up during the tournament, and if you don't have the time to read it, no worries.

Congratulations to your child on their first scholastic chess tournament! Here are some things you should know:

This tournament will be a beginner-friendly tournament, and everyone isn't expected to know everything. Expect a friendly and embracing environment and lots of helpful people. Both you and your child will likely make new friends.

Check the tournament rules:

The tournament director will go over the rules, and time controls and give directions prior to the tournament commencement. You want to try to be on time.

Bring necessary supplies:

Make sure your child has all the necessary supplies, such as a chess board, chess pieces, a chess clock (if required), a score sheet, and a pen or pencil. These will all be provided at this tournament, with the exception of the chess clock, bring one if you have it. You may also want to bring healthy snacks and water for your child. This tournament will also have onsite concessions, and your purchase will support the PS19 EVCS chess program.

Encourage good sportsmanship:

Remind your child to be a good sport, to shake hands with their opponent before and after the game, and to follow the tournament rules. Also, make sure to tell your child to congratulate their opponent after the game, whether they win or lose.

Time controls:

In chess tournaments, time controls are rules that specify how long each player is allowed to make their moves. Various time controls are used in different tournaments and games, but for this tournament, we will use the standard time control. In standard time control, each player is given a certain amount of time to complete their game. We will be using 30 minutes per player. Time can range from a few hours to several days, and players may be allowed to take breaks between moves. Overall, time controls are an important part of chess, as they help ensure that games are played fairly and efficiently. They can also add an extra level of excitement and tension to the game, as players must balance the need to make good moves with the need to make them quickly.

Emphasize focus and concentration: Chess requires a lot of focus and concentration, so remind your child to stay focused and to think carefully about each move. Encourage them to take their time and not rush through their moves.

Ratings:

As a new tournament player, your child is not rated and will likely be playing in a non-rated section for the tournament. That doesn't mean your child will never play a rated player, as the pairing could accommodate odd numbers of participants in a section. We want everyone to have the chance to play each round if possible. Rated players do play in unrated sections, and not all tournaments are rated, so rated and unrated players are mixed.

The USCF (United States Chess Federation) rating system is a system used to calculate the strength of chess players based on their tournament performance. A player's USCF rating is calculated based on their performance in rated tournaments. The rating starts at 100 and can go up or down based on the player's results. The rating changes more drastically initially but will eventually stabilize as the player plays more tournaments, and their rating becomes more accurate.

Hopefully, this is the beginning of the enjoyment of chess tournaments, and new players will want to continue in tournaments. In that case, you will want to join the United States Chess Federation, which is necessary to participate in rated tournaments. The annual membership fee is small, a few dollars, a year for those under age 19, and there are benefits to joining. www.uschess.org.

Structure

Most scholastic tournaments are formatted in what is known as the "Swiss-System" or just Swiss Sys. The Swiss System is a tournament format used in chess (and other games and sports) to pair players against opponents of similar strength. In a Swiss System tournament, players are not eliminated after losing a game; instead, they continue to play against players with a similar record in each round.

The basic idea of the Swiss System is to minimize luck and ensure that players are paired against opponents of similar strength. The tournament director will typically use players' ratings to determine the initial pairings for the first round and then use the results from each round to adjust the pairings for the next round.

So here are the logistics

Upon arrival, check to ensure your child's tournament registration is in order. The section is correct; if you didn't indicate a section on the registration form, note what section the player is placed in. Check that the player's name is spelled correctly. Find out if there is a designated waiting area. No, you shouldn't hover over your child's playing board.

Check for pairings

Just before each round begins, "Pairings" will be posted with details of what board each player will be playing their game, the color of the pieces each player will use, and the name of the player's opponent. Odd numbers of players in a section or players who have to leave can create a bye (meaning no scheduled game for a player who will be credited with a point as if they won the game) or "Please Wait," in which case the tournament director will attempt to make a match between two players without opponents for an unofficial game. If your child's opponent does not show up for the match, your child must still be ready and preferably at the board. If the opponent is late, they will have reduced time to make moves.

Parents should ensure the child can find the board they are designated to play each round (listed on the pairings and labeled at the table). Help your child complete the paper at the board with players' names and direct the player to record the game result filled in at the end of the game and present it to the tournament director. Parents then need to leave the playing area.

The tournament director will give an outline of the tournament's agenda before the start. Details will be given about the schedule, lunch break, and what your child should do if there is a dispute (raise their hand, stop the clock if they are using one, and wait for a tournament director).

Have fun

Finally, remind your child to have fun! Scholastic chess tournaments are a great opportunity to meet new friends and improve their chess skills. Even if they don't win every game, remind them that they are still learning and improving with each tournament they play. This quote from Nelson Mandela, who was a chess player, is something that you might introduce to your child, "I never lose. I either win or learn."

Good luck to your child in their first scholastic chess tournament!