

D.C. Chess League – Tournament Rules

Updated August 2025

1. Application of the Rules

1. These rules govern the seasonal team tournaments of the D.C. Chess League (League).
2. These rules may be amended at any organizational or special meeting of the League by a majority of League Leadership (as defined in Article VII of the DCCL Constitution) present and voting.
3. Amendments applicable to the current season must only be made in urgent and immediate need to address unforeseen circumstances at any special meeting of the League Leadership. All non-urgent issues are to be addressed at the next organizational meeting prior to the start of a new season.

2. Executive Director

1. The Executive Director or his designee shall implement these rules as the Tournament Director for the League.
2. The Executive Director may supplement these rules with statements of policy, interpretations, and precedents, and in consultation with the Board of Directors (Board).
3. The Executive Director shall see that the League schedule and standings are published at least fourteen (14) days before the start of each season and updated within a week of each match, to contain at least current team standings for all sections, results for each match and pairings for each round.
4. The Executive Director is the second level of game adjudication (after an attempt by the two (2) match captains).
5. The Executive Director will communicate any significant tournament rulings to League Leadership as they occur.

3. Team Captains

1. The team captain is the official team representative to the League.
2. The team captain is responsible for ensuring that all team players are USCF members when they compete. Team captains will be held financially responsible for players who are not USCF members.
3. Captains or their designated representatives for both teams must be present during every match.
4. During the course of a match, a team captain may only advise his players as to general game conduct and whether to offer or accept a draw. He also may answer questions about rules. However, he cannot not at all give advice as to a position, strategy, or choice of moves, or call attention to a clock condition other than for a defect.
5. The team captain, along with his counterpart in a match, is the initial arbiter for any game or match dispute. Together, they will enforce all relevant League and USCF rules. In cases where the two captains cannot agree on a solution or how to apply the rules, the Executive Director or his designee will resolve the dispute. Both captains may jointly solicit advice from very experienced tournament players (NOTE: conversely by USCF rule, no player can offer unsolicited advice or interject in any ongoing game or deliberation).

4. Teams

1. Only teams from the Washington, DC metropolitan area may enter the League.
2. A team captain must notify the Executive Director and the opposing team captain at least two (2) weeks in advance of a permanent Home site change.
3. A team captain must notify the Executive Director and the opposing team captain at least one (1) week in advance of a temporary site change.

5. Rosters

1. Team Captains must submit an initial annual roster upon entry into the league or submit an update to last season's roster no later than the start of Round 2 each season.
2. Roster players can only play for one team in a season.
3. Rosters must adhere to the ratings requirements of their section (see 6.1 and 6.2).
4. Captains may add or subtract players throughout the season however they are not limited to only using roster players when fielding a team in any regular match.
5. Players may opt-out of a team pursuant to rule 7.2.
6. At the direction of the Executive Director or his designee, or upon agreement by the two (2) captains in a match, and in exception to the one-player-one-team rule (5.2), replacement players can be recruited in any round in which they have not already played (as may occur when a match is delayed), including from teams that have already played the current round.

6. Team Lineups

1. Rating limits for each section are:
 - a. Premier section: Open to all. For players rated 2300+, the player must be on the roster (Rule 5) or at least a two day notice must be given to the opposing team captain for the player to be eligible to play.
 - b. Amateur section: No player over 1999.
 - c. Reserve section: No player over 1699.
2. For application of Rule 6.1 only, a player or captain may use the rating a player had when he/she first played for the same team during the current season. An exception to this rule is that no player may play in a section with a current rating of more than 100 points above the maximum rating for that section.
3. A captain will assign his players to boards in rating order using the latest USCF monthly supplemental ratings. If two players have the same rating, including unrated players, their board order will be left to the discretion of the captain.
4. With the consent of both team captains, players may play out of rating sequence in order to avoid forfeits and/or to accommodate last minute player recruitments.
5. An unrated player may be assigned a tentative rating with the approval of the Executive Director, and based on other non-USCF official rating systems, including online ratings, FIDE and those from other countries, and including quick or blitz ratings.
6. Unrated players (including players with provisional ratings based on less than four [4] game results) may play in any section with the approval of the Executive Director, but can only play on the lowest board(s) for a team unless assigned a rating (See Rule 6.5.). Provisional ratings based on four (4) or more game results will be used as done in regular tournaments.
7. Upon consent of both captains, a match can be organized for more than four (4) boards with the extra games rated but with only the results from the top four (4) boards counting towards match results.

7. Players

1. A player must be a current USCF member in good standing whenever he competes.
2. A player can be on a roster for only one team in a section except when the Executive Director determines that a player has been unfairly prevented from playing, in which event he may switch to another team (once per season); or if the player's current rating is 2099 or lower in the Open Section or 100 points or more below the maximum rating (according to Rule 6.1) in the other sections.
3. A player may play only one League game per round.
4. Any roster player unscheduled to play for a given match/round can play for another team upon approval by either the Executive Director or his representative or their team captain.

8. Fees

1. The registration fee for a season shall be set by the Board of Directors. This rate shall prevail unless disapproved by two-thirds of the League Leadership (see Constitution/By-Laws).
2. League membership can be purchased by any USCF player in good standing with the USCF and the League, and regardless of whether they play in the League for a given year.

9. Match Schedule

1. Matches may be rescheduled with consent of both teams' captains and the Executive Director.
2. The Executive Director will postpone a match at the request of either captain, if weather conditions or other emergencies require such, or if insufficient notice has been given for the match.
3. Matches must be played by teams and individual games may not be pre-played or postponed.

10. Match Play

1. A match shall consist of four boards or more by agreement of the captains except in the Open Section where a match is six or more (See Rule 14.1). NOTE: Post-COVID, all sections are fielding 4-board teams until League participation increases generally and 6-board teams can be readily fielded by all Open teams.
2. The visiting team has White on odd-numbered boards.
3. The home team shall provide a site with sufficient room for four (4) boards to play comfortably, with ready available parking for visiting players and under normal competitive chess conditions (quiet venue, good lighting, etc.). Changes in playing site do not change a team's designation of "Home" or "Away" for the round.
4. The time control shall be Game in 90 minutes with a 30 second increment (G/90 +30). Notation must be taken throughout each game as there is no 5-minute notation rule with time controls using increment. Chess clocks with increment settings are required in all games.
5. Games begin at 8:00 pm, and clocks of absent players can only be started at this time, unless both captains agree otherwise. Players arriving or absent after 8:45 p.m. forfeit their games.
6. Exceptions may be made to Rules 10.2-5 by agreement of both captains.

7. In the case of any Swiss round(s) following the Round-Robin round(s) during a season, rule 17.3 shall apply. (Note: This rule does not apply if the only rounds during a season are Swiss).

11. Disputes

1. In case of a dispute, the captains may agree to a temporary ruling, after which either or both may appeal to the Executive Director. If a game is completed under such a temporary ruling, the result is conditional subject to resolution of the appeal.
2. If the captains do not agree on a ruling, either player may request an adjournment and seal his move pending a ruling by the Executive Director.
3. If, in the interval between the adjournment of any disputed game and the final adjudication of the dispute, a draw is agreed upon by the players concerned, all protests shall be considered withdrawn and the game declared a draw.
4. If the Executive Director or his teammate is party to a dispute which requires a ruling, the President shall temporarily appoint another Tournament Director (who is at least USCF certified as a Local TD) to make this ruling.

12. Appeals

1. Any decision by the Executive Director may be appealed in writing to the Board of Directors, and which shall hold an in-person meeting if requested by any three members of the Board.
2. No meeting on an appeal shall be held without reasonable notice to all Board members and to all parties to the dispute.
3. Such appeals will be heard and decided by a majority of the Board members voting. The Executive Director shall not vote, nor shall any Captain or his designee of a player in a disputed game. In the event of a tie vote, the Executive Director's decision is upheld.

13. Penalties

1. A team forfeits on a board when its player has a higher USCF rating than another player on a higher board. (Exception, Rules 5.6 and 6.4)
2. Both teams forfeit on a board when a match is played on fewer than four (4) boards (except in the Open Section where it is six (6) boards. See Rule 14.1). In calculating a match score, such double forfeits are counted like draws.
3. The Executive Director may declare a match forfeited by both teams if the result is not reported by the Wednesday following the match.
4. Forfeits made in advance of a match will be made on the lowest boards.
5. Even if forfeited by a penalty ruling, any game played to completion between USCF members will be rated.
6. Two (2) points will be awarded for a forfeiture on first board. However, only one (1) of the two (2) forfeit points will be counted in the team game points when used for tie-breaks. Upon appeal, the Executive Director has the discretion to reduce the penalty.
7. If a team deliberately fields a non-USCF player, or lists a player who later confirms they did not intend to play, the team shall forfeit all lower boards.
8. If a player or a team member not playing interferes with a game in violation of the rules of chess, the Executive Director may declare his game (if still in progress) lost by his team or the opposing team be awarded an extra game point. Upon agreement by both players, they may finish the game to completion for rating purposes.
9. The Executive Director has the power to bar:
 - a. a captain from playing or captaining during the subsequent season for failing to provide twenty-four (24) hours-notice of his team's forfeiture of a match to the opposing team captain;
 - b. a team from League play for the rest of the season for forfeiting all of its games in a match, or 50% of its games in two (2) consecutive matches, or a total of ten (10) individual games during a season;
 - c. a team from League play for the subsequent season for forfeiting all its games in either of the last two (2) matches of the current season;
 - d. a player from League play for the rest of the season for forfeiting two (2) games in a season;
 - e. any player from League play, until he is reinstated at an annual meeting, who is penalized twice under Rule 13.8.; and
 - f. a team from League play, for the rest of the season for not paying league fees within one (1) week after the completion of the second round of the season.
10. Home site rules concerning smoking and drinking shall be in effect for all DCCL matches. Players shall be warned once and forfeited for such and future violations.
11. If a team forfeits a match, the team captain must have informed the opposing captain of this forfeiture at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the match. If the captain fails to inform the opposing captain by this time, the captain will be penalized \$5 per forfeited game. The penalty fee will be due prior to the captain's participation in any future season.
12. The Executive Director shall impose standard USCF penalty rules where not otherwise addressed in Rule 13.

13. In all matches, there will be a 10 minute noise penalty for a first infraction, and a forfeited game for a second infraction for any phone/device that rings, beeps, vibrates or otherwise makes noise during a game. No warning need be applicable if a location announcement is made at the beginning of each match. This includes smartwatches and similar devices. This does not include heart, diabetes or other healthcare devices. Players/captains are allowed to use their phones for emergencies and team management if they first ask/notify the onsite Executive/Tournament Director.

14. Summer League Rules

1. A match shall consist of four (4) boards, unless otherwise agreed by both team captains in advance of a match.

15. Prizes

1. The League shall award four (4) plaques to the winning team in each section (except in the Open Section during the Winter League where six (6) will be awarded) and trophies to the individuals with the highest score in each section. Teams can purchase additional team trophies.

2. Additional prizes may be awarded at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

16. Tiebreakers and Scoring

1. The following are the list of the tiebreakers:

- a. Match Score
- b. Board Score
- c. Head to Head
- d. Match Wins
- e. Board Wins
- f. for seasons only using Swiss pairings:
 - Modified Median (Swiss Only)
 - Solkoff (Swiss Only)
 - Cumulative (Swiss Only)
- g. Coin Flip

2. Before advancing to the next tiebreaker, every team eliminated in the previous tiebreaker is dropped.

3. The board score is calculated using results for all boards from all rounds.

17. Playoffs

1. If at the end of the season there are two (2) teams in the same section which are tied for first in score, tiebreakers (see Rule 16.1) will be used to designate which team will be "Home" and host a playoff match to determine first place. Any playoff match will occur on either the Friday (or that weekend) after the final round of the season, or the following Friday (or that weekend). In case of a subsequent tie in the playoff match, the team with the better tiebreakers will be declared the winner.

2. If more than two (2) teams are tied at the end of the season, tiebreakers will be used to select the teams to play a playoff match according to the provisions using Rules 16.1a-e, followed by the US Amateur Team East (USATE) System followed by a coin flip. The USATE system calculates a team's total points scored against an opponent for the season (possibly two [2] rounds if Swiss rounds are used at the end of a season) multiplied by the opponent's final season win/loss/draw record. The USATE system is not part of the tie-breaking between two (2) teams because it is effectively the same calculation as Rule 16.1.c (i.e. it is only effective when applied to a tie by three [3] or more teams).

3. Only players who have played at least once for their team during the season may participate in a playoff match with the match to be played within two (2) weeks of the final round. The only allowed substitutes (i.e., players who did not play during the regular season) must be under the float limit for the section (see Rule 7.2) or players who are on the team roster (Rule 5). The Executive Director will allow other player exceptions only after confirming there is no date that works for both teams. No roster player can use an excuse of playing in another event to not play a League playoff. With no resolution of a date conflict by the two captains, the Executive Director will declare a win against the short-handed team.