

RULES FOR CHESS EQUIPMENT IN TOURNAMENTS

WHY RULES FOR EQUIPMENT

Chess is a very complicated game that demands concentration and focus. Certain rules have been adopted for pieces, boards, and clocks to keep them from distracting from the chess game. If a set is too detailed or the pieces are too similar then they may distract the player who has to spend time figuring out which pieces are which. At the same time a chessboard with graphics on it or squares that are too bright can become irritating after looking at the board for several hours.

CHESS PIECES

Chess pieces must be of the staunton style. The staunton style is the very classical look of pieces that most of our sets feature. This includes the King with a cross, a queen with a spiked crown, a rook that looks like a tower, a bishop with a diagonal slit, a knight that looks like a horse head, and a round-headed simple pawn. Many "fancy" sets are too detailed and it becomes hard to tell the pieces apart. Some modern sets feature pieces that look almost identical and can be frustrating for opponents who are not familiar with the pieces. Each set of chess pieces must also be significantly different in color - one light set and one dark set (usually white/cream/natural/light wood vs. black/dark brown/dark wood). Chess pieces are generally measured by the King's height. Tournament chess pieces should be between 3.5" and 4.25" (King height). The base should be 40-50% as wide as the height. The pieces should not be overly shiny and should be made of plastic or wood. The pieces should also be significantly weighted as to not tip over easily. Generally if your pieces weigh at least 1 lb. for all 32 pieces you are fine. Heavier pieces are not needed, though they do feel nice. If you have any questions about your chess pieces check with your tournament director. [Click here to see a variety of tournament chess pieces!](#)

- * Classic staunton style
- * 3.5" - 4.25" King height
- * Made of plastic or wood
- * At least 1 lb set of 32 pieces

CHESSBOARDS

Chessboards must be plain squares of alternating light and dark colors. The colors should not be too bright and should also not blend in too much with the pieces. For this reason the most popular colors are matte green and blue (and why black/white is usually not recommended - it blends in with the pieces). The material may be any material that is not too shiny. Generally vinyl chessboards are recommended or folding paper boards. Wood may also be used. The squares must be between 2" and 2.5". They must fit the pieces proportionally - not too crowded, not too spread apart. [Click here to see a variety of tournament chessboards!](#)

- * Alternating light/dark squares
- * 2" - 2.5"
- * Made of vinyl, paper, or wood
- * Not too bright colors

CHESS CLOCKS AND TIMERS

Chess clocks and timers are used to control how much time each player uses. There are mechanical/analog clocks and digital clocks. Both are acceptable, though digital clocks are usually preferred if there is a time delay featured in the tournament (check with your Tournament Director). Clocks should be near silent. The player with the black pieces gets to choose on which side of the board they would like to have the clock. [Click here to see a variety of tournament chess clocks and timers!](#)

- * Analog and digital clocks are allowed, though digital may be preferred
- * Clocks must be near silent

OTHER TOURNAMENT CHESS EQUIPMENT

Besides pieces, boards, and clocks, you may need some other materials like scorebooks or scoresheets. Those are used to record, or write down, your games for record. Ask your Tournament Director if you are required to write down your games. [Click here to see a variety of other tournament accessories!](#)

HOW TO RUN A CHESS TOURNAMENT

TOURNAMENT BASICS

Chess tournaments can be very fun if done well... or frustrating if done wrong. The information presented here is for schools, teachers, parents, and coaches who want to organize a fun and enjoyable tournament where all students learn and have a good time. If you are looking for more serious competitive or rated tournaments, check with your local chess federation or organization.

WHY HAVE A TOURNAMENT?

Chess is a competitive game. There is usually only one winner! Players naturally want to compete to see who is better, but it is very important to emphasize that no matter who wins the tournament or each game, you can never lose when you are learning! The only losers are those who are too afraid to participate! Wholesale Chess recommends that all participants should win something, even if it is just a certificate or ribbon of participation.

ORGANIZING PLAYERS

Wholesale Chess recommends that you divide players by general skill and/or age. While it is never fun losing, it is definitely NOT fun being beaten by somebody who is obviously in a different category. It is usually better to have more small groups than one large group. It is easier to manage and also allows for more winners.

THE BASICS OF A CHESS TOURNAMENT

The best thing you can do for your chess tournament is make sure that everybody plays the same number of games! Don't use elimination tournaments - they are frustrating, discouraging and boring for those who lose early. Wholesale Chess recommends that you use the round robin style of tournament (see below). Chess tournaments require that each game be scored. A win is worth 1 point, a loss is worth 0 points, and a draw is worth 1/2 a point. If you are not using clocks in your tournament you need to encourage players to move quickly. If a player feels that another player is stalling, have them raise their hand to draw your attention. If the game is not finished in the specified timeframe of the game then Wholesale Chess recommends that you call the game for the player who has a point advantage of 5 or more points (King = not counted, Queen = 9, Rook = 5, Bishop = 3, Knight = 3, Pawn = 1). Or, if there is less than 5 points difference than call the game a draw. Wholesale Chess also recommends that you play "touch-move". A player must move the first piece he/she touches unless it is an illegal move. Also, if you find that players have made illegal moves, try to go back and reconstruct the most reasonable position. Try and make sure that both players are happy with the results of any dispute.

ROUND ROBIN TOURNAMENTS

You can play a round robin tournament with almost any number of chess players, but it is usually best with a small number of players (6 or fewer). Within each group each player plays one (or two) games against each other player and the player with the most points at the end wins. If you have more players than that, try separating them further into smaller groups. You can have the winners of each round robin group play against each other in an exciting playoff! Check out the following example:

5th GRADE TOURNAMENT

PLAYER		1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL
1	Joe	X	0	1	1	0	0	2
2	Ryan	1	X	0	1/2	0	0	1.5
3	Jenny	0	1	X	1	0	1	3
4	Sarah	0	1/2	0	X	0	0	.5
5	Collin	1	1	1	1	X	1/2	4.5
6	Jessie	1	1	0	1	1/2	X	3.5

Notice that each player is given a player number. The chart shows how each one did against their opponents. Notice that there is an "X" in each space where it shows that they play against themselves. You can see that in this tournament "Collin" won because he had the most points of the group.

ENDING THE TOURNAMENT

Again, make sure that each player feels like they are a winner for participating. You might consider giving a "Good Sportsmanship" special award to any students who lost all of their games. Encourage all players to practice more and pay more attention in their games.

HOW TO START A CHESS CLUB

BASICS

Chess clubs can be very rewarding for organizers and participants if they are done well. Chess clubs need the following 6 things:

ORGANIZERS

Without good organizers, coaches, parents, or volunteers, chess clubs would not succeed. They need dedicated and patient leaders who provide structure and motivation. If you are an organizer, don't over-commit. Do what you can, and do what you promise. Make sure you are always having fun!

PARTICIPANTS

Almost anyone can learn chess! Even 2 year-olds can learn how to setup the board and move pieces around. Try and invite as many eligible participants as possible. Make sure you advertise your club as best you can. Clearly outline the purposes of the club and all of the information. Don't be afraid to ask for some donations of time and equipment from participants and their parents (if applicable). Also make sure that you clearly outline the many intellectual and social benefits of participating in chess club.

FACILITIES/SCHEDULE

Make sure that you have proper facilities for chess club. You might have a great school, local community center, university, or even home or business willing to donate some space to you. You will need a well-lighted area with enough tables and chairs for all participants. Try and get long picnic-type tables - not round tables! Also try and schedule all club days and activities as far in advance as possible.

EQUIPMENT

One of the worst things that can happen at chess club is to have people standing around waiting for a chess set. Make sure you get enough chess equipment for all participants. You don't need the fanciest sets for everyone. You don't even need chess clocks! [Click here](#) for some of Wholesale Chess' recommendations for quality affordable chess equipment for schools and clubs!

INSTRUCTION

Chess club should be fun and educational. Clubs that are not balanced are not enjoyable. Too much play without progress can wear thin. And too much instruction without play can be dull. Try one lesson a day (within your participants' attention span!) and then some play. You might also want to mix in some activities like mini-tournaments, chess mini-games (like trying to put 8 queens on a board without any of them attacking each other!). [Click here](#) for some books that Wholesale Chess recommends for chess coaches and teachers!

MOTIVATION

Set goals for yourself as the coach/organizer and for your students. Maybe your goal might be to attend a local tournament a few months away. Or set your own tournament day or chess party day. That way everybody is looking forward to something and working on their chess for a reason

RECOMMENDED CHESS CURRICULUM

TEACHING BASICS

Chess is such a wonderful thing to learn... and teach! If you are starting a chess club or beginning to work with a child or student then bless you! You are passing on a wonderful gift to them. Make sure you use care, patience and respect while teaching. Additionally, try to be interesting! Use humor, funny voices, cartwheels - whatever it takes to make your students pay attention and have a good time. Below is a very basic chess curriculum recommended by Wholesale Chess that you can use to work with beginners. You can find materials for your lesson preparation in the Winning Chess series of books found in our bookstore!

BASIC BEGINNER CHESS CURRICULUM OUTLINE

1. How the pieces move and how to setup the board
2. How to capture pieces (its ok to capture the King before you learn checkmate!)
3. Check and checkmate
4. More advanced rules of castling, en passant, and pawn promotion
5. The values of the pieces and making good captures and trades
6. Developing your pieces and controlling the center
7. Using multiple pieces to attack and defend
8. Basic tactics - forks and pins
9. Basic strategies - controlling squares, diagonals, and files
10. Basic opening principles - control key squares, activate your pieces, get your king to safety

HOW TO BE A GOOD CHESS PARENT

YOUR CHESS CHILD

If you have a child who enjoys learning and playing chess, you should encourage that as much as is healthy. Chess has great social and intellectual benefits that can affect other aspects of their life. But remember that chess is a part of life, not the purpose of life. Wholesale Chess suggests you either watch the movie "Searching for Bobby Fischer" or read the book. We also recommend the book "Survival Guide for Chess Parents".

GET CONSTANT FEEDBACK

Make sure you know how your child is feeling about chess. If they are feeling burned out then pressuring them may just turn them off more. If they are hungry for chess and you are not feeding that, they make get frustrated.

ALWAYS SHOW LOVE AND SUPPORT

Always make sure that your child knows how much you love them regardless of whether they are winning or losing their chess games. Never show disappointment at their performance - they are most likely frustrated enough on their own!

HOW TO GET BETTER AT CHESS

IMPROVING YOUR GAME

Chess is a huge, vast, complex, massive game - big enough that you should never get bored with it! To get better you need to do 3 things: play chess, study chess, and get involved in chess. People who get burned out on chess are probably not doing all of these things!

PLAY CHESS

In order to improve at chess you will need to play lots and lots of chess. This means winning games, and losing games. Just remember that you are never losing when you are learning! Learn something from every win and every loss. And never be a poor sport! There are lots of places to play chess. You can play at your local club, online, through email, through regular mail, with friends and family - there is never any excuse not to play!

STUDY CHESS

Along with playing chess, you need to study if you want to get better. First you need to make sure you know all of the rules. Then you should learn the basic principles of the game such as controlling the center, developing your pieces, attacking and defending pieces, piece values, etc. After that you should learn more about tactics and strategies. Don't start studying openings at all until you fully understand all of the elementary tactics and strategies! You will be wasting your time. Learn to play sound and solid chess. Don't get caught up in trying to get cheap-o wins with opening traps. Once you understand tactics and strategies, start learning some opening systems and endgames as well. Make sure you study master and grandmaster games so that you can learn what the best players are thinking and doing when they play! Also, it is a good idea to study with a friend. You might also consider getting a private chess coach at some point to accelerate your learning. [Click here to see some recommended chess books for studying the basics and great games of the masters!](#)

GET INVOLVED IN CHESS

If all you do with chess is play online and read books by yourself you are bound to lose interest at some point. Get involved! Teach a friend. Go to your local club. Play in over-the-board tournaments. Teach chess at a school. Get involved somehow and you will see that chess is more than a game - it is a great community as well!

RESEARCH ON THE BENEFITS OF CHESS

A GAME FOR SMART PEOPLE, OR A GAME THAT MAKES YOU SMART?

Everyone recognizes chess as an intellectual icon. But is it that smart people play chess... or is it chess that makes people smarter? Chess actually helps us learn to think. Here are some areas that have been proven to be enhanced by chess:

- * The IQ
- * Memory
- * Pattern recognition
- * Analytical skills
- * Patience
- * Overall comprehension

There is an incredible amount of information out there that demonstrates the many benefits of chess.