



Frequently Asked Questions – 2012 MLK Holiday Tournament

Revised 6 Dec 2012

SHOULD MY CHILD PLAY?

1. How much chess should my child know before participating?

Your child should know how the pieces move, including the details associated with castling, checking the King, promoting a pawn, and capturing “en passant.” It is important that players be able to recognize an illegal move, as well as checkmate and stalemate. USCF “touch move”, “touch-take” rules will be enforced.

2. My child knows basic chess, but he is just a beginner. Should he/she play in a big tournament?

There is always the question of when one’s child should “get on the merry-go-round.” The answer will be different for different people. If a child wants to be introduced to the tournament process and is prepared for the possibility that he or she could possibly lose most or all of his/her games, it might be fine to play. Most players who become strong usually have very modest beginnings.

VENUE QUESTIONS:

3. Should I bring food? Will any be sold there?

There will be a concession stand sponsored by the charitable organization LaAmistad, which will have the usual chess food fare (pizza, nachos, etc.) If you wish to have anything else, it would be a good idea to bring it from home. Healthy snacks are never a bad idea.

4. Is Wi-Fi available onsite?

YES! We try to use venues which have Wi-Fi available on-site whenever possible. Many public schools will not allow us to use their Wi-Fi, but we always ask and try to obtain Wi-Fi access whenever possible.

5. Will there be anyone available to watch my child at the tournament?

We do have “ambassadors” designated to facilitate problem-solving for players and to prevent dangerous situations from occurring on-site; but, *it is the responsibility of every parent to designate a responsible adult (other than a chess coach) to watch their child.*

Please do not expect a chess coach to be responsible for an entire team; this is probably NOT their expectation and most coaches are probably involved with teaching several teams. Children who are not adequately supervised could get lost, hurt or be involved with property damage. When property damage occurs, the GCA is usually not invited back to that venue. Good venues are not easy to find! Help us keep our venues happy with us!

6. Will my child be able to go outside to play at this venue?

NO. This venue does not have any spaces available to play outdoors. There will be indoor activities available planned for the kids. Please leave footballs, frisbees etc. at home.

REGISTRATION QUESTIONS

7. How will I know that the GCA has received my registration and payment?

Check the registration list on our website. This will be updated periodically and daily starting a week before the tournament. Inquires may be made at: MLK2012@georgiachess.org

8. Why do you need my personal information?

We may need your contact information if we need clarification with your registration, if we need to get a belated trophy to you, or in the unlikely event that an emergency occurs. Your information is not released outside the GCA.

9. Is this a knock-out tournament? Do I go home if I lose a game?

No! This is a Swiss style competition, where players with the same scores play each other, every round.

10. What is a “bye?” Do I need one?

A bye is a skipped round in which a player entered in the tournament does not get paired and does not have a game. There are two kinds of byes: *requested byes* and *unrequested byes*.

A *requested bye* is where the player voluntarily asks not to be paired because he has a conflict with another scheduled event, such as a basketball game or a piano recital. A requested bye counts as half a point toward the player’s individual point total and, if applicable, toward the team total. A maximum of two such byes are allowed in the tournament.

An *unrequested bye* happens if there are an odd number of players in a section for a particular round. In that case, one player will not be assigned an opponent for that round. Since this bye was forced upon the player, that player will be given a full point for that round. No player will receive more than one unrequested bye in this manner. Players who still want to play a game may request pairing with other available players and still maintain their extra point from the unrequested bye.

We strongly recommend not to commit to any byes unless necessary. A bye decreases the likelihood that a player will win any tie-break. Any player who cannot commit to play at least three rounds should not enter the tournament. Any player not completing at least three rounds will not be eligible for individual awards and will not have his score counted toward a team total.

11. The rated Elementary section is listed as “K-5”, but my child is in sixth grade at a K-6 school. What section should he/she play?

All 6th grade students must play in the Middle School section.

12. Is this school then forced to split its team and have the 5th graders and below play in the Elementary Section and have the 6th graders play in the Middle School section?

No. That is an option, but you also have the option of having some or all of the 4th and 5th graders play up in the Middle School section. This will probably make it easier for the team to win a team award in the Middle School section, but will probably make it harder for the 4th and 5th graders to win individual awards. It is also OK in this scenario if some of the students in 4th and 5th grade play up in the Middle School section and some do not. How this should be handled is a matter for each school, its team members, and its coaches to decide. Students in grades 3 and below may not play in the Middle School section under any circumstances.

13. My child goes to a K-5 school with a strong team. They would like to play up in the Middle School section to face stiffer competition. Is this allowed?

No. In order for any K-5 student to play in the Middle School section that school must have at least one grade higher than 5th.

14. I am not a USCF member, but I would like to get a USCF rating. Can I have a rating after this tournament?

Yes. The first thing you must do is to join USCF. This is most easily done on-line through their website, www.uschess.org. The next thing to do is to enter the appropriate USCF rated section for your grade. By playing in at least four rated games at this tournament you will obtain an official USCF rating. *It is important that all players in rated sections be USCF members before the tournament ends, or there will be a significant delay in rating the tournament and issuing players new ratings.* Players are always anxious to see their new rating! We strive to rate tournaments immediately afterwards, whenever possible.

15. I am already a USCF member, but I don't have an official USCF rating. Which section should I enter?

It is recommended that if you are a USCF member, you should enter the USCF rated section that is appropriate for your grade. By playing at least four games in any of the rated sections you will obtain an official USCF rating. It is permissible for you to enter the non-rated section that is appropriate for your grade; however, you will not have a USCF rating.

16. I already have a USCF rating, but I would like to play in a non-rated section. Is this allowed?

Although we recommend that all USCF rated players play in a rated section, if your USCF rating is below 500, you have the option of playing in a non-rated section. If your USCF rating is 500 or higher, you must play in a rated section appropriate for your grade.

17. What if I fall ill before the tournament and cannot attend?

In the event that you become ill after registering and cannot attend, you should notify us as soon as possible by phone 678/ 453-6640 or email (M LK2012@georgiachess.org). *If we are notified in advance* that you won't be participating, we will refund your entry fee. No refunds will be given in cases where we are not notified in advance that you will not be coming.

TOURNAMENT PLAY AND MECHANICS

18. What if my opponent does not show up for the game?

If playing White, the player makes his first move and starts the clock. If playing Black, the player simply starts his/her clock. The player may request a clock for this purpose. In the event that an opponent has not shown up 30 minutes after the start of the round in the rated sections, and 15 minutes after the start of the round in the non-rated sections, the game will be declared a win by forfeit for the child who showed up. The forfeiting player is then withdrawn from the rest of the tournament.

19. What if I need to leave the tournament early and unexpectedly?

In the event that you decide to leave the tournament early (called “withdrawing”) *please notify* a Tournament Director before leaving. This behavior is *expected* as outlined in the USCF Code of Player Conduct. This courtesy will prevent the remaining players from being paired with someone who never planned to play. A pairing with an absent player would cause that remaining player to likely not be able to play in that round. We all want as many people possible to play, every round!

20. How do you pair players? What is meant by “Individual/Team Swiss System pairings”?

The Swiss System is the pairing system used almost exclusively to pair large chess tournaments where the number of players per section is much greater than the number of rounds. It attempts to pair players with equal scores when possible, and also to equalize color allocations. The precise rules are complicated, but those interested can consult the “US Chess Federation’s *Official Rules of Chess, 5th Edition*,” starting on page 104.

The Individual/Team pairing system is a variation of the Swiss System used in tournaments having both individual and team awards. Since team awards are involved, we will try not to pair teammates against each other. However, because individual awards are involved, an absolute prohibition against such pairings could give an unfair advantage to players on strong teams, who might then be paired down against players in a lower score group rather than face each other. In order to try and make the pairings as fair as possible for both the individual and team awards the following pairing procedures will be used:

If a score group can be paired within itself without players from the same school facing each other, this will be done. For the plus one or lower score groups, if there is no way to pair the score group without teammates facing each other, then a player or players will be raised or lowered into the nearest appropriate score group(s) to avoid this. For the plus two or higher score groups players will not be removed from their score group to avoid playing a teammate.

21. Will the rules be the same for the rated sections and the non-rated sections?

In the rated sections we will adhere to the pairing procedures outlined by USCF without regard to grade. In the non-rated sections we will modify these somewhat and attempt to pair players close to their own grade, but this cannot be guaranteed.

In the rated sections we will enforce all USCF rules. It is a player’s duty to be aware of his rights and responsibilities under these rules. We will be somewhat less strict with the rules enforcement in the non-rated sections. In particular, for the non-rated sections we will not require that players keep score. The “touch move” rule will be enforced in all sections; however, this means that if you touch a piece in a manner that can reasonably be interpreted as the beginning of a move, then you must move it if it is legally possible to do so. Similarly, if you touch an opponent’s piece in a like manner, you must capture it if you have a legal way of doing so. Enforcement of other rules in the non-rated sections will be dictated by the specific situations, but we will try to avoid being too technical with the rules in these sections.

22. Is my child going to be required to write down moves (keep score)?

Scorekeeping will be required in the rated Elementary (K-5), Middle School (6-8), and High School (9-12) sections. In the rated K-1, rated Primary (K-3) and in the two non-rated sections scorekeeping will be voluntary. A simplified guide to scorekeeping can be found at <http://www.uschess.org/beginners/read>. Scorekeeping provides *supporting evidence* for TDs and helps tremendously to sort out problems in the event of an issue occurring in a game.

23. Will my child have to use a clock for his/her game?

In ALL sections, if either player has a clock, then that clock will be used even if the opponent would prefer not to. If neither player has a clock, then the game will begin without one. Clocks will not be available to start a game; however, tournament directors may place a clock on any game that is proceeding too slowly, or in which one player is using an inordinate amount of the time. In such a case the directors will attempt to leave each player with at least 10 minutes for the remainder of the game.

24. What should I do if my child has a problem, or he/she doesn't understand something?

Tournament Directors (TDs) will not intervene in games unless asked. If your child has a problem or a TD director. This cannot be stressed too strongly. *A TD will NOT interfere in any agreements made among players such as accepting a draw or resigning.* One's opponent does not necessarily have your player's best interests at heart. Do not take one's opponent's word for anything. An opponent does not necessarily know the rules any more than does your player. *A TD can answer factual information (e.g., is this check mate, can I move en passant here, etc.)* The tournament directors are here to answer questions and to solve problems, so please don't hesitate to get them involved. You will never be penalized for asking a question. ***Once a game is over then the result generally stands, and it is likely too late for the tournament directors to do anything.***

25. What if someone displays poor sportsmanship or is annoying?

Good sportsmanship is encouraged and learning good sportsmanship is thought to be one of the benefits of chess competition. Poor sportsmanship is strongly discouraged, and may result in warnings, time penalties, and possible forfeiting of the game by the player. Annoying behavior is not to be tolerated, and should be reported to a tournament director at the player's earliest opportunity.

26. What if my child notices suspicious activity during the tournament?

While we generally don't have many accusations of cheating during a tournament, the subject does come up. During a round, players should not be saying more than essential information needed to play a game. They should not be commenting on their game or others, to ensure that others do not get the impression that cheating could be taking place. Players should only be using electronics for clocks, music, or keeping score. Other electronics could be perceived to give a player an opportunity to cheat. Players should report any suspicious activity to a Tournament Director. Their witness might be important in any allegation of cheating. Players caught cheating risk being forfeited or even banned from USCF competition in some instances.

27. How are game results reported?

We use a procedure similar to what is done in National competition. Game results are first recorded at the board with both players present by a Tournament Director (TD). The TD makes sure that both players agree with the result. The agreement is recorded on a result slip and given to a scorekeeper, who compiles and rechecks the results within a section and gives these section results to the Chief TD, who assists the informatics TD putting the results into the computer. This procedure is used to lessen the chance for errors. It is not uncommon in the course of a tournament to have a game in which both players to declare to their coaches that they both won. We strive to ensure that tournament results are accurate.

28. How are the scores determined?

A player gets one point for every game he wins, half a point for every game she draws, and zero points for every game he loses. In addition a player gets half a point for a requested bye and one point for an unrequested bye. A player's point total for the tournament is found by summing that player's total points from the five rounds. Thus a player who wins two games, draws one game, loses one game, and asks for a bye in one round will end up with three points for the tournament.

TEAM COMPETITION AND AWARD QUESTIONS

29. How do the team awards work?

A team score is calculated by summing the top five individual scores from players in the same section attending the same school. A player's score counts only in the section that player has entered. Thus a third grader who entered the K-5 section will have his score count only in the K-5 section, and a third grader who has entered the K-3 section, will have his score count only in the K-3 section.

All public and private schools are eligible for the team awards. Home schooled students will also be eligible for team awards if they meet our criteria for a home school team, which can be found on our website, www.georgiachess.org. The primary one that must be met is that in order for home schooled students to constitute a team the students in question must have a practice of studying core academic subjects together. An all-star aggregation of chess players will not be allowed to constitute a team.

Also, please remember that **there are no team awards in the rated K-1 section.**

30. What about the individual awards? What do I have to do to win a trophy ?

The top 10 scores in each section will win a trophy. Since we cannot divide trophies, in case of a tie or ties, we will use tie-breakers.

31. What is the order of tie-break systems that will be used?

For the individual awards the order of tie-breaker systems will be:

1. Head-to-head (if applicable)
2. Modified Median
3. Solkoff
4. Cumulative
5. Cumulative of Opposition
6. Coin Toss

For the team awards the order of tie-breaker systems will be:

1. Solkoff
2. Cumulative
3. Cumulative of Opposition
4. Kashdan
5. Coin Toss

More information on these tie-breaker systems can be found starting on page 198 of the “US Chess Federation’s Official Rules of Chess,” 5th edition.

32. When will all the awards be announced and handed out?

The awards ceremony will begin as soon as possible after the last game of the fifth round is complete, which should be around 5:00pm. It usually takes 10-15 minutes to get the lists together and get set up for the ceremony, and another 30 minutes or so to distribute the awards, take pictures, etc. Everyone should be on their way home before 6:00pm.