

Frequently Asked Questions – 2015 Metro Atlanta Scholastic K-8 Team State Qualifier

1. Are there any major changes to the K-8 Team Qualifier from last year?

Yes

1) There are no same day bye or section changes. We apologize for this but due to the size of this tournament (comparable to a National event) and the fact that it runs all in one day it is impossible for us to run the tournament on time while allowing same day bye or section changes. Please commit to your byes and section when you register or at the latest 9pm Friday Feb 20th. Only withdrawals will be allowed same day or players who are in “illegal” sections (ex. a 4th grader in K-3).

2) The best 4 scores will be calculated for K-1 teams. The top 5 scores will be calculated for all other sections.

3) Because it is a fire hazard we are not allowed to run extension cords through out the skittles hall (waiting area for parents). This is in our contract. **You will need to come with your electronics fully charged.** We will have wi-fi provided in Skittles. This is for parents to work and look up pairings. Please do not allow children to download video games or movies which slows down the network immensely.

4) Chess Control (Help desk) will be divided into 4 sections along the concourse in between Exhibit Halls C (Skittles) and D (tournament hall). The sections for the help desk coincide with the tournament sections: K-1, K-3, K-5, Middle School. Go to your child’s section for questions.

5) We will post results online so you can find out if your team receives a trophy before the ceremony begins.

2. Does my child need a rating or USCF membership to participate?

No. This is an unrated tournament and your child does not have to be a USCF member to play. We do use USCF ratings as seedings for initial pairings. Parents are obligated to notify us if their child has a USCF rating. If your child does not have a USCF ID, please mark the checkbox that your child does NOT have a USCF ID number.

The next level tournament, the K-8 State Team championship *is* USCF-rated and all members of the team who would play on the five member team would need to have a USCF membership. There are options for a two month membership and a regular (year-long) scholastic membership which is determined by your child’s age.

3. Will I know that the GCA has received my registration and payment?

Families should be able to check the website to verify if a player has been properly registered. Registrations are updated periodically and do not automatically update upon entry. Registrants should be visible on the list, noting the section and any byes

that were requested. It is the responsibility of all registrant families to ensure that they are registered properly *before* the tournament! Registration problems brought up too late may not be able to be changed. If you notice an error, please email statequalifier@georgiachess.org with name, section, school, and requested change. Check chess control upon arriving at the tournament to be sure that changes have been processed. If your child is sick on the day of tournament, or you need to cancel for any reason, please email the above address by 8:30 a.m. and you will receive a refund of the entry fee.

4. Why does GCA need my personal contact information? What does GCA do with it?

GCA does not release your personal information under any circumstances. We may have a need to contact you for an issue that comes up during the tournament. We also find lost articles (clothing, sets, etc.) on a regular basis.

5. One of the best players at our school has a conflict the day of the tournament. Does this player have other options to compete in the qualifier?

Unfortunately, there are no other options. However, if your team is able to qualify for the State Championship, your key player can still be added to the roster for that tournament.

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

No! This is not an elimination tournament, like the NFL play-offs. All players are scheduled to play in all five rounds, unless requesting a bye. It is still possible to help your team even if you lose one or more games.

7. The Elementary section is listed as “K-5,” but I am in sixth grade at a school having only grades 4-6. May I play the Elementary section?

If you are in 6th grade then you must play in the Middle School section irrespective of how your school classifies you.

8. Does this mean that my school must split its team into two different sections?

No. For a school having only grades 4-6, the entire team may elect to play in the Middle School section. It is also possible for some of the 4th and 5th graders to play the Middle School section and others to play in the Elementary section. K-6 Elementary schools will have the same options for their 4th and 5th graders as the grade 4-6 schools. However, students in grades K-3 at these schools may not play in the Middle School section under any circumstances.

K-1 section = Kindergarten and 1st grade only

K-3 section = Kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade and 3rd grade only

K-5 section = Kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade only

Middle School = 6th grade, 7th grade, 8th grade (and some 4th & 5th graders if from the same school)

9. **My school doesn't have a chess club, so I go to a chess club at a different school. May I represent them at this tournament?**

No. You may only represent the school at which you study your core academic subjects. This rule holds even if your school has no chess club, and there aren't enough players from that school to win a team award.

10. **How are the scores determined?**

A player gets one point for every game won, half a point for every game drawn, and zero points for every game lost. In addition a player gets zero points 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 one game, draws two games, loses one game, and asks for a bye in one round will end up with two points for the tournament.

11. **What is a "bye"? Requested bye? Unrequested bye? Do I need one?**

A **bye** is a round in which a player entered in the tournament does not play. 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 of a conflict with another scheduled event, such as a basketball game or a piano recital. A requested bye counts as zero points toward the player's individual point total, and toward the team total. A maximum of two such byes are allowed in the tournament. We strongly recommend not to request any byes unless absolutely necessary. The zero point given for such a bye will hurt the player's individual score and may also hurt the team's total score.

An **unrequested bye** happens if there are an odd number of players in a section for a particular round. You may see a "please wait" next to your child's name. Your child should report to the scorer's table for that section to see if the TD wants to try to find an opponent within that section. If there is not an opponent available within the section, your child will receive a full point for the round. No player will receive more than one unrequested bye in the tournament.

Any player who cannot commit to play at least three rounds should not enter the tournament. The score of any player not completing at least three rounds will not be counted toward the team total.

12. **How are the team awards calculated?**

A team score is calculated by summing the top five (top 4 for K-1) 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 the score of a third grader who has entered the K-5 section will count only in the K-5 section, and the score of a third grader who has entered the K-3 section will count only in the K-3 section. That sum is the team score for that section. All teams with plus scores (13 or more points out of the 25 possible points (10.5 points for K-1)) will receive trophies. The top team from each metro-county in each section will receive a County Championship trophy.

Note that winning a trophy does NOT guarantee that the team will advance to the

State Championship. A school may still win a team award in a section if it has only three or four players in that section. However, one or two person teams will not be allowed.

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.

13. Are there any individual awards?

This tournament is strictly a team event, and no individual awards will be given out. All participants will receive a ribbon.

14. When will the awards be announced and handed out?

We will post results online so you can find out if your team receives a trophy before the ceremony begins. The awards ceremony will begin as soon as possible after the last game of the fifth round is complete, which should be around 5:00 p.m. It usually takes about 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. We plan for everyone to be on their way home before 6:00 p.m.

15. How do you pair players? What is meant by “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. In general 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, Fifth Edition,” starting on page 104.

16. Is there a chance that I may have to play someone from my own school?

No. For the scholastic team state qualifier, we guarantee that you will not have to play anyone from your own school. If by chance you do get paired against someone from your own school, then that is an error on our part, probably because we have one of you listed as attending the wrong school. Inform a Tournament Director immediately if this happens so that we can revise the pairings before play begins.

17. This is not a USCF rated tournament. Will you be enforcing USCF rules?

In general, yes, we will be. Exceptions to that are that scorekeeping is not going to be required, and all rules pertaining to scorekeeping will therefore be null and void, and that players will not be required to begin the game with a clock. One rule in particular that we will be enforcing is the “touch move/touch capture” rule. This means that if a

player touches one of that player's own pieces in a manner that can reasonably be interpreted as the beginning of a move, then the player will be required to move that piece, if that piece has a legal move. If a player touches an opponent's piece in a like manner, then the player will be required to capture that piece, if there is a legal way to do so. Note that an accidental touching of a piece, such as brushing it with your shirtsleeve when reaching for another piece, does not constitute a violation of this rule.

While by and large we will be going by USCF rules, we will try to avoid becoming too technical with these rules, and enforcement of other USCF rules will be on a case-by-case basis.

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

This happens occasionally, as some people fail to notify the Tournament Directors that their child won't be participating, or will be leaving early. An attempt may be made by the Section Chief to re-pair the player with another opponent. In the event that an opponent has not shown up 15 minutes after the start of the round, the game may be declared a win by forfeit by the Tournament Director for the child who showed up. The player who did not appear is then withdrawn from the rest of the tournament.

19. **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 email at statequalifier@georgiachess.org. If we are notified by 7:00am Saturday 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.

20. **Do I need to check in with the tournament staff when I arrive to play?**

No. We will have a list of registrations posted by 8:30 a.m. These will show the players, sections, schools, and byes (if any). If all the information for you is correct, you need do nothing further. If anything is not correct, or if you are not listed on this sheet, then you need to contact the tournament staff immediately. **We intend to pair round 1 at 9:00 a.m. sharp and it is your responsibility to arrive early enough to get any problems corrected before we have to pair the first round, or preferably to get any problems solved by checking the registration list online and emailing on Thursday or Friday.**

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

In the event that you decide to leave the tournament early, please notify chess control that your child will need **to withdraw**. Go to chess control and fill out a slip stating the child's name, section, and request to withdraw. If you leave without notice, then there will likely be a player paired with a non-existent opponent, that will either have a less-than-optimal pairing or who may not get a chance to play that round. Notice is a courtesy will help prevent an unpaired player situation.

22. What fundamental rules of chess should I know before participating?

You should know how the pieces move, including the details associated with castling, checking the King, promoting a pawn, and capturing “en passant.” You should be able to recognize an illegal move, as well as checkmate and stalemate. GCA reserves the right to disqualify from further participation any student who clearly does not know the most basic rules of the game. This does not mean that we will disqualify a player who is a bit hazy on exactly how to perform an “en passant” capture. It does mean that we will disqualify someone who clearly doesn’t know how a Knight moves, or what is meant by “checkmate.” No refunds of any kind will be given to any player so disqualified.

23. Am I going to be required to keep score?

Scorekeeping will not be required, and we may not be furnishing score sheets, pens or pencils. Players may elect to keep score if they so choose, but they will need to bring their own scorekeeping equipment. No time adjustment will be made if one player is keeping score, and the other is not.

24. Will I have to use a clock for my game?

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. Players may not request to borrow a GCA clock to start the game, however, the GCA reserves the right to 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.

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

There will be a concession stand, which will have hot dogs, salads, veggie wraps, pizza and sandwiches. No outside food is allowed to be brought into the exhibit halls (this is part of our contract with the facility). Galleria states that if they see outside food or beverages they will collect them and discard them.

26. What should I do if I have a problem, or I don’t understand something?

If you have a problem or a question about anything during the game, you should raise your hand to summon a tournament director. This cannot be stressed too strongly.

Do not take your opponent’s word for anything. Your opponent does not necessarily know the rules any more than do you, and your opponent does not necessarily have your best interests at heart. The tournament directors are here to answer questions and to solve problems, so please don’t hesitate to get them involved. Once a game is over then the result is going to stand, and it is too late for the tournament directors to do anything.

27. Will Wi-Fi be available?

Yes! The GCA is providing free Wi-Fi. Pairings will be posted online at georgiachess.org. Please do not allow children to download video games or movies which slows down the network immensely. Wi-fi is for parents to work and look up pairings. You need to come with your electronics fully charged.