

Frequently Asked Questions by first-time chess parents – Martin Luther King Chess Tournament

1. How will I know that the GCA has received my child's registration form and payment?

The easiest way is to check <http://www.georgiachess.org/downloads/MLK-Regs.PDE>. This page will be updated almost daily as registrations come in, starting sometime after January 1. Because there is no on-site registration, it is vital that you check this list to make sure we have received yours in a timely manner.

Barring that, if you e-mail MLK2009@georgiachess.org, someone will answer your question as soon as possible. Or you can just trust the US Postal Service. Please allow a minimum of 3-4 days for registrations to be delivered and processed.

THERE IS NO WALK-UP REGISTRATION.

By 9:00 AM we will have the registration lists posted. It is important to arrive early in order to make sure that everything is okay. If you cannot find your child's name anywhere, or they have been registered for the wrong section, locate a tournament official as soon as possible and explain the problem.

2. You're not going to sell my information, are you?

No. We need the phone number and email address on your form in case there is a problem with your registration. The information also enables us to contact you in case of emergency.

3. The Elementary Section is listed as a K-5 section, but my child attends a K-6 Elementary. What section should they be in?

We don't want to split up a team. A sixth-grader at an elementary school should play in the Elementary Section with their potentially younger teammates. A sixth-grader attending a middle school should play in the Middle School section. However, any team consisting entirely of sixth-graders must play as a Middle School team.

4. Does my child have to join USCF in order to participate?

No. The MLK tournament for 2009 will have both USCF rated and non-rated sections. USCF membership is required for the rated sections. No membership is required for the non-rated sections. Players who are USCF rated, and have ratings under 750 may play in a non-rated section, if they so choose. Players rated 750 or higher must play in a rated section.

When registering for a rated section, please include the player's USCF ID number on the form. If you don't remember the ID number, you can look it up in the Member Services Area of <http://uschess.org>. Or you can look on the magazine label. This ID number will help us to determine the players' ratings, and to pair the players for their games in a more fair and consistent manner.

When registering for a non-rated section, if your child has a USCF rating, please include the same USCF information you would include if he/she was registering for a rated section. If your child is not USCF rated, please indicate this on the form.

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

For the rated sections we will enforce all USCF rules. It is a player's duty to be aware of his/her rights and responsibilities under these rules. We will be a bit less strict with our rules enforcement in the non-rated sections. In particular, for the non-rated sections, we will not require that players keep score, and no game will start with a clock unless both players agree to use it. The "touch move" rule, however, will be enforced in all sections. This means that if you touch one of your pieces in a manner that can reasonably be interpreted as the beginning of a move, you must move it if that piece has a legal move. If you touch an opponent's piece in a like manner, you must capture it if

you have a legal way of so doing. Enforcement of other rules will be dictated by the specific situations involved, but we will try to avoid being too technical with the rules in the non-rated sections.

6. How do you pair players? What is the Swiss System?

The Swiss System attempts to pair players with equal scores when possible, and also to equalize the 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. 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 make an effort to pair players who are not more than one grade apart, but this cannot be guaranteed.

7. There are awards for both individuals and teams at this event. What if the only two perfect scores left near the end are teammates from the same school?

In the Individual-Team pairing system which we will use at the MLK Holiday Scholastic Tournament, players are paired individually, and team standings are then determined by adding the scores of each school's top five scorers. Since team awards are involved, we will try to not pair teammates against each other. However, because individual awards are also 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 to 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 (players with identical tournament scores) can be paired among itself without players from the same team facing each other, this will be done.

For the plus one score group (wins minus losses equals one), equal score group (equal number of wins and losses) or minus score groups (more losses than wins), if there is no way to pair the score group without teammates facing each other, then players will be raised or lowered into the nearest appropriate score group(s) to avoid this.

For plus two (exactly two more wins than losses) or higher score groups players will not be removed from their score group to avoid playing a teammate.

8. How does this tournament work? What if my child loses in the first round?

This is not an elimination tournament, such as the NFL Playoffs. All players can (and should) play in all five rounds if they so choose. It is still possible to win a prize in many cases after a loss in the first round.

9. If they *choose* to play? What is a bye? Does my child need one?

A bye is a round in which the player voluntarily chooses not to play. Byes, if chosen, must be arranged in advance on your registration form. Many of GCA's scholastic events only offer zero-point byes, but some tournaments offer half-point byes, which is the equivalent of a draw, point-wise. The MLK Tournament is one that offers half-point byes. For the MLK Tournament, a maximum of two byes may be chosen, in case the player has a conflict, such as a basketball game. If a player cannot commit to playing in a majority of the rounds, they should not participate in this event.

If there are an odd number of players in a section when a round starts, one player will be left without an opponent. That player will receive a full one-point bye. The full point is given because the bye was forced upon that player and was not voluntarily chosen. No player will receive more than one full-point bye in this tournament.

10. Half-point? Zero-point? How do points work?

A win counts as one full point, a draw counts as a half point, and a loss counts as zero points. A player who wins three games, draws one, and loses one would score 3.5 points out of 5.

11. What if my child's 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 after all, or will be leaving early. This often leaves the other child sitting at the board, alone and confused. In the event that an opponent has not shown up for 30 minutes after the start of the round, the game is declared a forfeit win for the child who showed up. The player who did not show up is withdrawn from the rest of the tournament.

If a number of players from the same section have missing opponents, they will not be re-paired against a different opponent.

12. What if my child is registered, but falls ill the night before the tournament and cannot attend?

It is a violation of the Player Code of Conduct to register for a tournament and then not show up. In the event that the child cannot participate after all, you should notify us via email at MLK2009@georgiachess.org the night before the tournament (or earlier). This will help us to prevent a forfeit win for the opponent your child would have otherwise faced. If we are notified in advance that your child can't play after all, a refund of the entry fee can be arranged.

13. What if my child needs to leave the tournament early and unexpectedly?

In the event of an unforeseen early departure, such as illness, please notify a tournament director immediately. This will help to prevent forfeits to the aforementioned lonely opponent at the board. Notifying the directors is courteous and kind both to the directors and the other players in the tournament. Not to do so is a violation of USCF Rule 13G, and penalties are possible.

14. What are the fundamental chess rules that my child should know before participating?

The child should know how the pieces move, including the details associated with castling, capturing "en passant", and promoting a pawn. The child should be able to recognize an illegal move, as well as checkmate and stalemate. Ideally, the child will know how to achieve checkmate against a lone king with a king and a queen. Most important of all, if a child has a question, he should raise his hand immediately in order to get the attention of a tournament director. If a question arises after the game is already over, it is far too late for the directors to do anything about it.

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 what the "en passant" capture entails. It does mean that we will disqualify someone who clearly doesn't know how the pieces move.

15. Is my child required to keep score?

Scorekeeping will be required in the rated sections, except for the rated K-3 section, where it will be optional. Players who elect not to keep score should know that they forfeit certain rights if someone challenges a move as illegal, or other unusual activity occurs during the game. Keeping score accurately does offer many benefits to the player, such as the ability to go back over a game, and if done in time, discover any illegal moves a player has made and make corrections. Plus, a well-kept scoresheet can be very instructive for a player who wishes to learn from past mistakes. If you feel like learning quickly before the tournament, a simplified guide to keeping score can be found at <http://www.uschess.org/beginners/read/>

16. Is a clock required for my child's game?

For a normal rated tournament, games will have clocks on them to ensure that each player has access to the same amount of time from the start of the game. For the rated sections, if either player has a clock, that clock will be used, even if the opponent would prefer not to use it. In the non-rated sections, a clock will be used only if one of the players has one, and both players agree to use it. If neither player has a clock, then the game will begin without one. Players may not request to borrow a GCA clock to begin the game, however, the tournament directors reserve the right to place a clock on

a game that is moving too slowly. In such a case, the directors will attempt to leave each player with at least 10 minutes for each side.

17. How many points will it take to guarantee that I win a trophy?

We will guarantee to award a trophy to any player who scores 3.5 out of a possible 5 points in one of the rated sections. Since we do not know in advance how many scores of 3.5 or better there will be, we will try to order enough trophies to make sure that we have enough to hand out at the site. That means we will probably order more than we end up needing for the scores of 3.5 or better. The extra trophies, if any, will be awarded to the players scoring 3.0 who have the best tie-break scores. So a score of 3.0 might get a trophy, but probably will not, and a score of 3.5 or better definitely will get a trophy. Please remember that there are NO trophies to be awarded in the non-rated sections.

Depending on how many entries there are, it may be possible for there to be two or more perfect scores in a section. If that happens we will guarantee to award a first place trophy to both players. Note: this does not apply to all co-winners of a section, but only to co-winners who each score 5-0.

18. How are the team trophies calculated?

To arrive at a team score, we will take the five best individual scores from players in the same section attending the same school and sum them. This will be the team score for that school team for that section. It is important to note that a player's score counts only in the section that player has entered. Thus a third grader's score counts only in the K-3 section, if that player entered the K-3 section, and counts only in the K-5 section, if the player entered the K-5 section.

19. How are the tie-breaks figured?

For the individual trophies, the order of tie-breaks will be:

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

For team trophies the order of tie-breaks will be:

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

More information on these tie-break systems can be found starting on page 198 of the 5th edition of "U.S. Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess."

20. When will the awards ceremony begin?

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

21. What amenities can be found at the site? Do we need to pack a lunch, or forage for fast food?

For 2009 we will be moving to a new site, the North Gwinnett High School. It is located at 20 Level Creek Road, Suwanee, Ga 30024. This is at the intersection of Level Creek Road and Suwanee Dam Road.. Food will be available on site. There are also fast food places within a few minutes drive of the High School. It is always a good idea to bring healthy snacks along, too. Children tend to lose focus toward the end of the day, and part of that is due to their energy fading.

There is ample parking on site in the student parking area across Level Creek Road from the school. Please do not use the "Visitor" parking spaces next to the school. We would prefer to "reserve" those spaces for the handicapped and for the tournament directors who have to make several trips hauling heavy equipment in and out of the building.

This document will be updated when more questions come in, and when clarifications become available. You may want to check again in a few days.