

FAQ for Grade Level Championship

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

You will get an automatic confirmation once you register online. THERE IS NO WALK-UP REGISTRATION. By 9:00 AM, pairings should be posted for the first round, which begins at 10:00 AM. It is important to arrive early in order to make sure that your child is registered and in the right section. If you cannot find your child's name anywhere, or they have been registered for the wrong section, locate a tournament volunteer as soon as possible and explain the problem.

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

No. Personal data is kept confidential. We need the phone number and email address on your form in case there is a problem with your registration. You wouldn't believe how many parents forget to tell us what grade their child is in. The information also enables us to contact you in case of emergency.

3. Why do you want a USCF ID number?

This is a rated tournament. Your child needs to be a USCF member in order to compete. Go to <http://www.uschess.org> to join, renew or check your child's expiration date.

4. 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 (black or white) 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. One goal of the Swiss System is to reduce the number of players tied for first place at the end of the day in a fair manner.

5. 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 or College World Series. 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. So please don't leave so soon – there's a lot of chess left to be played. If you have to go, you must withdraw from the tournament so find a volunteer to take you to the Tournament Director (TD).

6. 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.

7. 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. Only zero-point byes are offered to players in Grade Levels voluntarily choosing not to play a round. This tournament is for a Championship title. For the Grade Levels, a maximum of two byes may be chosen, in case the player has a conflict (soccer game, SAT, family commitment, etc). 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 ever receive more than one full-point bye except under extremely unusual circumstances.

8. 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 15 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.

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

Please [email](#) us immediately so that we do not pair your child with another player. Your child's opponent will be left sitting alone at the board when he/she could have been paired with another player. 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 gradelevels@georgiachess.org the night before the tournament or as soon as possible. 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.

10. 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. So please don't leave the party without saying goodbye to the host, first. This is important 'chess etiquette' for your child to learn.

11. 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, 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.

12. Is my child required to keep score?

Keeping score is required for 4th grade and up. It is not required for K-3rd grade. Keeping score accurately offers 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. Not keeping score, however, means the player forfeits certain rights when reconstruction of a game becomes necessary. A simplified [guide to keeping score](#) can be found on the USCF site (scroll down to chess notation).

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

No, the beginner child does not need to bring a clock. However, if one player brings a clock and requests its use both players must use the clock. If neither player wants to use a clock the tournament directors reserve the right to place a clock on a game that is moving too slowly. The tournament directors would attempt to leave each player with at least ten minutes remaining to complete the game. When a clock is present for a game, both players must remember to press the button closest to them after each move. It is also helpful to observe when the other player has run out of time – a little red flag falls on the standard BHB clock. Time flashes at zero or green turns to red on digital clocks. In general, when a player's flag falls, they lose. Also remember that ten minutes pass more slowly than a pressured first-time clock user might think. If he has time, a tournament director may spend a few seconds at the board to make sure that both players understand how the chess clock works.

14. Is there anything else I should know? Any false rumors to watch out for?

Yes. Lots. More than we can fit into this FAQ. The biggest rumor is that a score of 3 points or more will automatically guarantee that a child receives a trophy. This is simply not true at a GCA Event. It is not possible to predict in advance how many 3s there will be with any accuracy. We have promised a set number of trophies in the flier. There may be more than that number in some of the more heavily populated sections, but there is no exact minimum score that will guarantee a trophy.

15. 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 15-30 minutes to get the lists together for an event as large as the Grade Levels, and another 15-30 minutes to distribute the awards, take pictures, etc. In theory, everyone should be on their way home by 6:15 PM, except the directors and the people who generously donate their time to help clean up.

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

The site this year is at Creekland Middle School. There will be an onsite vendor selling standard food fare (pizza, drinks, etc). Healthy snacks are always a good idea to bring along. Children tend to lose focus toward the end of a long day at the chess board, and part of that is due to their energy fading. Beware of sugar highs and provide your

child with long lasting protein food. If you have any folding chairs, and the weather is pleasant on the day of the event, please feel free to bring them for use outside.

17. How can I help?

We are so glad you asked! Since you will be at the tournament all day anyway, why not chip in? There will be plenty of volunteer opportunities to sign up for on the GCA website and parents can work in shifts. Ambassadors, scorekeepers, TDs, runners, set-up, take-down crew – please step up, we'll train you on the spot!