



2017 MLK Holiday Tournament FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

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” and “touch-take” rules will be enforced.

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

There is always the question of when one’s child should begin rated tournament play. 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 is fine to play. Most players who become strong usually have very modest beginnings. Unrated tournaments typically draw beginner players. Rated tournaments draw both beginner and experienced players and often have stronger competition. This is a rated tournament.

2a. In which section should my child play?

New this year are the K-3 U400/unrated and the K-5 U600/unrated sections. Your child should register for the section that is appropriate for them based on grade and rating, and with consideration given to playing with a team from school. If your child has never played in a rated tournament before, most would recommend playing in the “Under” section appropriate for their grade (the exception is K-1 where most kindergarten and first grade students will play). You must talk to your school’s coach or other players from your child’s school to decide if you will enter a team into a given section. Top 4 scores are counted per team per section. Scores from different sections are not combined for the purposes of figuring team scores.

VENUE QUESTIONS

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

There will be a concession stand sponsored by the Ecuador Missions Team, which will offer pizza, Chick-Fil-A, snacks and drinks. 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. Wi-Fi is available but limited for this venue. Limited meaning you will have guest access and some sites are blocked for security reasons.

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

No. All children should have parental supervision while at the tournament.

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

Yes, assuming that the weather is cooperative. There is a large outdoor play area. Feel free to bring footballs, frisbees, soccer balls, etc. Please do not bring baseballs due to the risk of injury with children of different ages. **Please do not allow children to play outside unsupervised** as we did have property damage to the school last year. It is important that we take care of our venues so that we are able to continue using them. Also, there will be charitable activities between rounds in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. for those who would like to participate.

REGISTRATION QUESTIONS

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

You will get a confirmation email when you register and pay for your child on the GCA website. You should receive both a confirmation from our website as well as PayPal. If you have not received a PayPal confirmation it's possible your payment did not go through. Please log back in and check the status of your registration. You may also check the registration list posted on the MLK tournament webpage. This will be updated periodically until the registration deadline. If your child is not on this list, please contact us immediately. Final registration will be posted at the site tournament day. Inquires may be made at: mlk@georgiachess.org

8. Why do you need my personal information?

We may need your contact information if we need clarification with your registration or in the unlikely event that an emergency occurs. Your information is not released outside the GCA.

9. Is this a knockout tournament? Do I go home if I lose a game?

No. This is a Swiss style competition, where players with the same or similar scores play each other, every round. Each participant will play all five rounds unless he/she has requested a bye.

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 taken in rounds 1-4 counts as half a point toward the player's individual point total and, if applicable, toward the team total. A bye taken in the last round is 0 points. A maximum total of two byes are allowed in the tournament. ****No bye changes will be accepted after 8:00 pm on Sunday 1/15.**** (We strongly recommend not to commit to any byes unless necessary. A bye decreases the likelihood winning on tiebreaks. 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.)

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. If this happens please see the tournament director immediately. Players who still want to play a game may request pairing with other available players by waiting at the scorekeepers table at the beginning of the round and still maintain their extra point from the unrequested bye.

11. Is there on-site registration?

No. There is no on-site registration.

12. What if my registration information is incorrect?

We will post registration information on the website periodically. Please make sure that your child's information (particularly section and byes) is accurate. There will be a registration list posted at the venue on game day. **It is the parents' and coaches' responsibility to make sure that this information is correct.** We will post pairings for the first round promptly at 9:15 am to have the best chances for the tournament starting on time. If an issue is brought to the attention of chess control or the Chief Tournament Director after 9:00 am, that player will likely start competition in the second round. Registration questions on the day of the tournament for the K-1 section should be handled in the K-1 playing hall before 9:45 am. Pairings will be posted for K-1 promptly at 10:00 am. ****No bye changes will be accepted after 8:00 pm on Sunday 1/15.****

13. 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 (6-8th).

14. 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.

15. 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 player in 6th, 7th or 8th grade.

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

Yes. All players MUST have an up to date USCF membership prior to registering for this tournament. In order to join the USCF go to their website, <http://www.uschess.org>. By playing in at least four rated games at this tournament you will obtain an official USCF rating. If a player has entered without a **current** USCF membership there will be a significant delay in rating the tournament for all players – meaning one player has held up submitting the tournament to USCF for everyone. Players are always anxious to see their new rating! We strive to rate tournaments immediately afterwards, whenever possible. Please make sure your child has a current USCF membership when registering for this tournament.

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

In the event that you/your child becomes ill after registering and cannot attend, you should notify us as soon as possible by email (mlk@georgiachess.org). If we are notified by 7:00 am on tournament day 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 are cancelling.

TOURNAMENT PLAY AND MECHANICS

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

If playing White, the player starts the clock and then makes his first move. If playing Black, the player simply starts the clock for his opponent. In the event that the player does not have a clock, the TD will monitor the time and call a forfeit at the appropriate time. It is up to the TD's discretion whether to place a clock on the game for this purpose. In the event that an opponent has not shown up 30 minutes after the start of the round, 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. The player who showed up gets a full point.

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 Chess Control 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 result in the remaining player not being able to play in that round. We all want as many people possible to play, every round! It's not fun to sit alone and wait for half an hour for your opponent to show up while everyone else around you is playing one of your favorite games ☺

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, 6th Edition," starting on page 111.

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 (this is why you enter your school name during registration). 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 (variation 28N1):

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 USCF rules be enforced?

We will adhere to the pairing procedures outlined by USCF. We will enforce all USCF rules. It is a player's duty to be aware of his rights and responsibilities under these rules. The "touch move" rule will be enforced in all sections; 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. However, it is up to the player to "call" touch move and to claim it by raising his/her hand to notify the tournament director in the event that there is a disagreement between players. **A good tip: don't hover over a piece – it may look like you are touching it from your opponent's perspective.**

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

Scorekeeping will be required in the Elementary (K-5), Middle School (6-8), High School (9-12), and U1000 (6-12) sections. In the K-1, Primary (K-3), K-3 U400, and K-5 U600 sections, scorekeeping will be voluntary. A guide to scorekeeping can be found at http://www.chesshouse.com/how_to_read_and_write_chess_notation_a/166.htm. Scorekeeping provides supporting evidence for TDs and helps tremendously to sort out problems in the event of an issue occurring in a game. It also allows your game to be analyzed by a coach later – a great learning experience and your path to becoming a strong chess player.

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

In ALL sections, if either player has a clock and wants to use it, 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 5-10 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 question, then he or she should summon a Tournament Director by **raising his/her hand**. This cannot be stressed enough. 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 a player's best interests at heart. One should not take an opponent's word for anything. An opponent may sound convincing, but may not necessarily know the rules any more than anyone else. A TD can answer factual and rules questions posed to them when players don't agree with one another (e.g., is this checkmate, 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. One 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. If both players agree it's checkmate, then the game is over (whether it's checkmate or not).

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. **Raise your hand for assistance.**

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 or keeping score (approved devices only). Other electronics could be perceived to give a player an opportunity to cheat. Players should report any suspicious activity to a Tournament Director by **raising their hand**. 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 by both players with a Tournament Director (TD) present to verify the outcome. 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. Section Chiefs double check the completed Results Sheets for their sections before submitting them to Informatics to enter in 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 declare to their coaches that they 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 he draws, and zero points for every game he loses. In addition a player gets half a point for a requested bye in the first 4 rounds 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 round 1 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 four 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. Top scoring teams in each section will receive a trophy; the number of team trophies awarded will depend on section size. If sections are combined, trophies will be limited and based on the number of participants.

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. For home schooled students to constitute a team, the students in question must have a practice of studying at least two core academic subjects together. An all-star aggregation of chess players will not be allowed to constitute a team.

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

Place trophies will be awarded to at least the top 5 individual scores in each section. If sections are combined, trophies will be limited and based on the number of participants. Since we cannot divide trophies, in case of a tie or ties, we will use tiebreaks to determine awards. All players will receive a ribbon except in the K-1 section where all participants will receive a participation trophy. All players with plus scores (at least 3 points) will receive a plus-score trophy. A \$100 stipend will be given to the 1st place winner in each section to attend Supernationals VI, May 12-14. If sections are combined, then the stipend is for the winner of the combined section only. Currently there are no stipends for teams, only individuals. You must register and play in the appropriate National Championship to receive the stipend. After playing, please email treasurer@georgiachess.org and include the players name and address where the stipend check can be mailed.

31. What is the order of tiebreak systems that will be used?

For the individual awards the order of tiebreak systems will be:

Head-to-head (if applicable)

Modified Median

Solkoff

Cumulative

Cumulative of Opposition

Coin Toss

For the team awards the order of tiebreak systems will be:

Solkoff

Cumulative

Cumulative of Opposition

Kashdan

Coin Toss

More information on these tiebreak systems can be found starting on page 207 of the "US Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess," 6th edition.

32. When will all the trophies and prizes be awarded?

The awards ceremony will begin as soon as possible after the last game of the fifth round is complete and results have been tabulated. The K-1 section will have their award ceremony immediately following the 5th round (which is paired ASAP after the 4th) and will hence have a shorter day than the other sections.