

CHESS INVITATIONAL

Official Rules and Regulations



8th Edition
Last Revised: November 2025

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Chess Commissioner



Mission Statement

The Mission of the Chess Invitational is to establish a friendly competition for high school Deaf students across the United States. Each player works to win points for their school as they go head-to-head in friendly competition. The competition occurs on a weekend and allows students to socialize and participate in the tournament. This tournament began on the 5th of April, 2019 at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf campus in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The first Chess Invitational was a success with 5 participating schools and a total of 25 students. The purpose of the Chess Invitational is to establish a friendly competition for high school Deaf and Hard of Hearing students across the country.

Rules & Regulations

1. Team Setup

- Teams will consist of 5 students between the ages of 14 years old – 18 years old per team. If there is a situation where a school needs to have a student outside of this age range, please contact the Commissioner for approval. They are assembled from the most skilled to the least skilled player. 1st Board - most skilled. 5th Board - least skilled.
- Once a team lineup has been submitted, teams may not change or alter their lineup without explicit consent from the commissioner of the tournament's approval. Upon submitting the board lineup form, teams will not change their lineup at any point without the approval of the tournament's commissioner. Any violation of this may result in a forfeit of the incorrect boards. The Commissioner will make the final decision on this ruling.
- Each board number will play the corresponding board number on the opposing team. I.e. 1st v. 1st, 2nd v. 2nd, etc.
- If a team cannot provide 5 players, the strongest players will move up so that the vacant boards are at the end. If you only provide 4 players, the 5th board will be considered a loss.
- Teams will be designated as "home" or "away". Home teams will have white pieces for boards 1, 3, 5. Away teams will have white pieces on boards 2, 4.
- After all players have completed their matches, the players' total points will decide the team's result. Each Board has a specific point value totalling to 30 possible points each round.
 - 1st Board is worth 8 points
 - 2nd Board is worth 7 points
 - 3rd Board is worth 6 points
 - 4th Board is worth 5 points
 - 5th Board is worth 4 points.
- If a player wins their match, they earn all of the points for that designated board. A draw will earn them half of the points of that board for their team. A loss will earn 0 points.



- During the round-robin matches, a team table will display the wins-draws-losses for each team. Wins are valued at 1 point, draws are valued at 0.5 points, losses are valued at 0 points.
- After the round-robin rounds, playoff seeding will be established based on team records.
- Tie-Breakers: During round-robin rounds, if both teams acquire exactly 15 points, both teams earn a DRAW result. Both teams earn 0.5 points towards the Team Table. During a playoff match, there can be no draws. If both teams earn 15 points, the team with the fastest winning board will advance their team. If all players tied their respective matches, the result of the previous matchup between those two teams will decide who advances. If the previous matchup between those teams was a draw, the team with the fastest winning board in the previous matchup will advance their team.

2. Time/Clocks

- Each match will last between 40 – 60 minutes (depending on the tentative schedule of the tournament). Clocks will be used to designate even minutes per player per match.
- Clocks will be provided and players will be required to use them during each match. Each player is responsible for setting their clocks before the match begins.
- Players will use one hand for piece-movement and clock usage. This hand can alternate each turn, but for clarity, if a player moves a piece – they should hit the timer with that same hand.
- If time runs out, that player loses.
- Due to notation not being required, there will be no delay added to clocks during the tournament.

3. Gameplay

- In the case of legal castling, the move is determined with no possibility of change when the player's hand has released the king, which has moved two squares toward a rook, and completed when that player, having legally transferred the rook to its new square, presses the clock. If a player intending to castle touches the rook first, castling is not allowed and the player must move the rook.
- In the case of a legal move which produces checkmate or stalemate, the move is determined with no possibility of change upon release, whichever applies. The move is completed simultaneously with its determination.
- Check: The king is in check when the square it occupies is attacked by one or more of the opponent's pieces; such pieces are said to be checking the king. Check is parried (a player gets out of check) by capturing a sole checking opposing piece, interposing one of the player's own pieces between a sole checking piece and the king (not possible if the checking piece is a knight), or moving the king. The king cannot parry check by castling.
- Players are asked to declare a check prior to hitting their timer if threatening the king's position. This can be done by either saying "check", touching the opponent's king, or making a deliberate point to the opponent's king piece.



- Stalemate: The game is drawn when the king of the player to move is not in check and that player has no legal move. This type of draw is called stalemate. Providing that the opponent's previous move is legal, this immediately ends the game.
- The game is drawn when the player on move claims a draw and demonstrates that the last 50 consecutive moves have been made by each side without any capture or pawn move. If the director wishes to allow more than 50 moves for certain positions.
- The game can be a draw following the Insufficient Material clause, Three-Move Repetition clause, and/or both players agreed to a draw which is stated in the US Chess Federation Rulebook.
- Touch-Move: a player on move who deliberately touches one or more pieces, in a manner that may reasonably be interpreted as the beginning of a move, must move or capture the first piece touched that can be moved or captured.
- If a player wishes to rearrange a piece on a square, to center it for example, they may do so on their own move. The player cannot rearrange pieces on their opponent's move. The player is required to say, "I adjust" to inform the opponent that they are adjusting the piece. If the player does not use this phrase or any similar phrase, the player may be deemed to have violated the touch move rule by the opponent.
- No player may touch their opponent's pieces during regular game play. If an accidentally touch occurs, a director who believes a player touched a piece by accident should not require the player to move that piece. The ONLY exception to this rule is when you force your opponent into check. The player can tap the opponent's king to inform them that they are in fact in check.
- En passant: a special pawn capture that can only occur immediately after a pawn moves two ranks forward from its starting square and an enemy pawn that could have captured it had it only moved forward only one square.
- Algebraic notation of moves will be optional, but there will be no delay on the clocks.

4. Grievances

- It is the responsibility of both the players and the coaches to be mindful of any illegal moves that occur during the game.
- If there is a grievance or illegal move, either a player or a coach can suspend the game. They must pause the timer and raise their hand and then indicate the illegal move.
- When a grievance is called, both coaches must approach the board to rule on the decision (backtracking moves, clarifying rules, etc). A fair and respectful discussion is expected.
- If an acceptable solution is not achieved by both parties, the Tournament Commissioner will be called to make the final decision.
- All decisions made by the Tournament Director/Commissioner are final.

5. Coach/Chaperone

- Coaches and Chaperones are responsible for their students during the entire duration of the event weekend.



- During matches, coaches are to have limited communication with their players. Only authorized interjections (overlooking illegal moves, addressing grievances, directing students to leave the playing area, etc.) are permitted.
- If an incident occurs and a student or staff member violates the Code of Conduct, the coaches and chaperones will be made aware and expulsion of that person may be enforced. The final decision will be made by the Commissioner.

6. Scheduling Structure

- The Invitational schedule will consist of three (3) days of events.
- Day 1 will consist of team arrival, dinner, opening ceremonies, a coaches meeting, and an evening social.
- Day 2 will consist of a round-robin style gameplay with a midday and evening social. Results from Saturday will impact how the playoffs are set up the following day. Coaches will be voting on the Sportsmanship Award Saturday evening. The All-Star Awards will be tallied from Saturday's results, not including the playoffs.
- Day 3 will consist of a bracket-style playoff based on the seeding results of the previous day. Awards will occur directly after the championship round. Lunch will be provided in a to-go manner to assist in efficient departure.

7. Conferences

- If there are less than 14 teams in attendance, we will operate using a single conference format. If there are 14 or more teams in attendance, we will operate using 2 conferences.
- Two Conference System: Based on team history, schools are categorized into Tier A, B, or C. Tier A teams are considered the top 4 overall since the tournament's inception. Participating Tier A teams are to be distributed fairly in both conferences. Tier B teams are considered any team that is not top 4, but has attended at least one in-person tournament. Tier B teams will be randomly added to both conferences. Tier C teams are considered any team that has only attended online tournaments (2021 and 2022) or have never previously attended an invitational. Tier C teams are distributed fairly in both conferences.
- Tiers are determined in a point scale system. Schools acquire 1 point for each tournament they attend and 3 points for each Top-3 Finish they've earned.
- Please see the Commissioner for details on which Tier your school currently resides.

The Chess Invitational will be using the United States Chess Federation official rulebook. The rules outlined here will be implemented during the Invitational as well. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Nick Catalano at deafchessinvitational@gmail.com.

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