

What to Expect at a Chess Tournament?

How long will this take?

The older your children are, the longer it will take. Younger children tend to play very impulsively and with haste while older children use their time more and compete at a higher level. But here are some end-time *estimates* for our Saturday 1-hour game events with 5-rounds (when we do 4-round tournaments, the estimates change by about an hour each)::

K - 1st	11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
2nd - 3rd	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
4th - 5th	1:00 - 2:00 PM
6th - 8th	1:30 - 2:30 PM
9th - 12th	2:00 - 3:15 PM

As your kids get older, you can add about 1 additional hour every year or two. But these are not hard and fast times. Just estimates based on my experience.

Is it an elimination tournament?

This is a very common question. Any events we run are not elimination. All players can play all rounds whether they win, lose, or draw each game. We generally do not run elimination tournaments, and, in the chess world, those are quite rare.

When do rounds begin and end?

It depends on the players. Each player receives the same amount of time as their opponent. So, if both sides receive 30 minutes, then the game can last 1 hour maximum. But, the players are not obligated to use up all of their time, either. So, a game that can last a maximum of 1 hour could also last just 4 minutes.

Who will my child be playing against?

There are different sections at our tournaments:

K1	Kindergarten through 1st Grade
K3	Kindergarten through 3rd Grade
K5	Kindergarten through 5th Grade
K8	Kindergarten through 8th Grade
K12	Kindergarten through 12th Grade

It might seem odd to see Kindergarten listed in all sections. The reason is because of a term we have called "Playing Up." **Playing Up** means you choose to enter a higher section than you normally would enter. This happens when talented players surpass their peers and decide they need tougher competition. So, they play up.

But, you cannot "Play Down." For example, an 8th grader cannot play in the K3 section. But that same 8th grader would be allowed to play in the K8 or K12 sections. I often tell parents "*You can go forward in time, but not back.*"

Do you have team awards and individual awards?

Yes.

What to Expect at a Chess Tournament?

To be on a chess team, you must have at least 2 players from your school in the same section. Team scores are determined by taking the top 4 scores each round per team. You get

1 point per win
0.5 for a draw
0 for a loss

For example, if your team has 6 players and all 6 of them win, then your team score for that round is 4 points, not 6. Likewise, if those same 6 players scored 2 wins, 1 draw, and 3 losses, then the team score would be 2.5 points.

Individual awards are much simpler: you get 1 point for winning, 0.5 for drawing, and 0 for losing. The higher the score you achieve, the more likely you get a top place trophy.

What happens if two kids tie for the same trophy?

This is where “tiebreaks” come in. Since we cannot divide a trophy in half, we must determine who gets the second-place trophy and the third-place trophy (or whatever places are in question) if the players in question have the same score.

We use several different tiebreak formulas. Each formula is provided by US Chess and they are all used to determine who had a more difficult tournament. For example, if player A played two players who were brand new and 3 players who were tough and player B played 5 tough players, then player B had a harder time achieving the same score as Player A. Therefore, Player B would get the 2nd place trophy in that scenario.

How do the match ups (Pairings) work?

If there are 10 players in a tournament, we will line them up based on their national ranking (rating). The top player, which is also the highest rated player, will be seeded #1 and the lowest would be seeded #10. With this format, in round 1 we would see

#1 vs #6
#2 vs #7
#3 vs #8
#4 vs #9
#5 vs #10

To be a little more precise, who gets the white pieces goes first; therefore, it matters who goes first. So, who gets white and black is randomly determined, by computer software, who gets white and black on the top board. Then, it alternates from there. So, if it was determined #1 gets black in round 1, then here is what the pairings would look like:

#6 vs #1
#2 vs #7
#8 vs #3
#4 vs #9
#10 vs #5

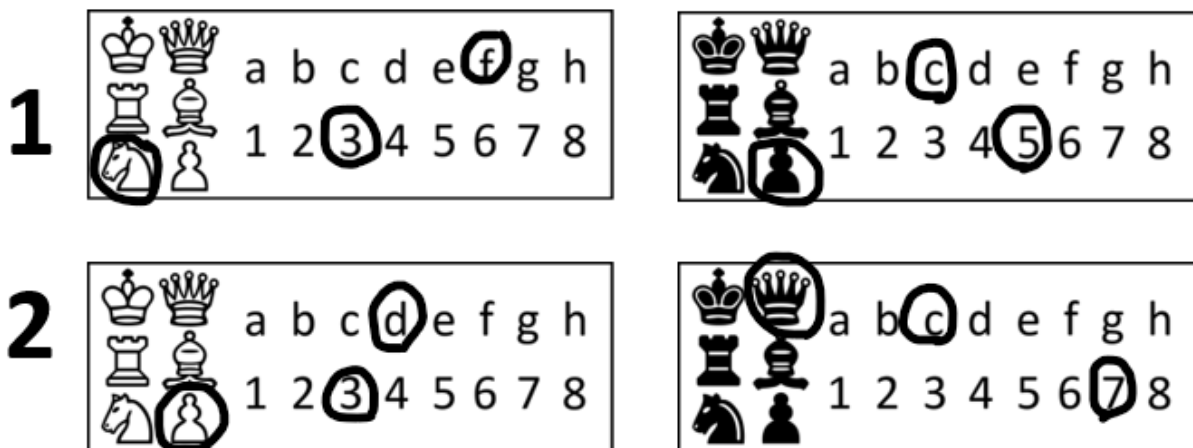
What to Expect at a Chess Tournament?

After each round we tally up who won, drew, and lost. We take all the people who won and do the same pairing format with the winners. We take all the people who lost and pair them together. Then, we do the same with players who drew.

There is a lot more to it than that; however, this is a simple explanation.

Do you have to write down your moves (ie: Take Notation)?

Many kids dislike writing down their moves. We highly encourage all players to notate their games. We encourage it so much we provide notation sheets to everyone. We try to provide pens/pencils, but it is always good to have your own pen/pencil in case our supplies run out. We have also designed a special notation sheet that makes notation super easy and fun. Here is a sample:



All you have to do with these notation sheets is circle the piece that is moving and the letter and number for the square it moved to. Kids generally like it. We call it figurine notation. It is the best way to learn how to notate in the beginning. Eventually, you will abandon this sheet in favor of better and more acceptable versions of notation.

By Ryan Velez
October 10th, 2019