



CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2026 – 2027 ACADEMIC CHESS RULES AND REGULATIONS

I. COVERAGE

These rules and regulations apply to all Chicago Public Schools students and schools participating in the Academic Chess program.

II. ACADEMIC CHESS TOURNAMENTS

- A. Academic chess tournaments are competitions organized by the Department of Academic Competitions in which students from CPS school(s) compete as individuals or as a team.
- B. Academic chess sanctioned tournaments are outside competitions identified by the chess administrators to send students from CPS school(s) to compete as individuals or as a team; these tournaments may include local, regional, state, national and international competitions.

III. QUALIFICATION

To be eligible to participate in Academic Chess Tournaments or academic chess sanctioned tournaments, a school must be a registered Academic Chess Program school with the Department of Academic Competitions for the current school year and must satisfy all registration and program requirements established by the Department. Only students representing a qualified registered school are eligible to participate in accordance with the rules and eligibility requirements established by the Department of Academic Competitions, unless otherwise authorized by the Department of Academic Competitions.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

- A. Administrative responsibility for Academic Chess in Chicago Public Schools is under the Office of Student Support and Engagement (OSSE) in the Department of Academic Competitions. The chess administrators oversee the Academic Chess Program and tournaments.
- B. The individual school's Principal shall be ultimately responsible in all matters pertaining to Academic Chess involving their school and students. The principal of each participating school shall designate a staff member who is responsible for all matters pertaining to the conduct of Academic Chess for their school.

V. STRUCTURE

Academic Chess will be divided into 2 categories: High School (Grades 9-12), and Elementary/Middle School (Grades K-8). The chess season consists of conditioning and practice, dual matches, conference competitions, city-wide competitions, conference playoffs for K-8, city-wide championship, and sanctioned tournaments. Matches and tournaments can either be over-the board (OTB) or online through www.chesskids.com.

A. High School

- 1. High School competition shall be conducted using the current edition of the U.S. CHESS FEDERATION OFFICIAL RULES OF CHESS and/or IHSA and any modifications or changes in competition rules as established by Academic Competition.
- 2. High School competition utilizes 8-person Varsity team, 5-person Junior Varsity team, and individual Swiss format.
- 3. Standard time control for tournaments and matches is G/45 [Game time per player: 45 minutes with 5 second delay] unless the coaches agree to, or pre-announcement specifies other time control.
- 4. High Schools will have a city-wide conference with a Championship competition which should be held prior to the IHSA Sectionals.

B. Elementary/Middle School

- 1. Elementary/Middle School competition shall be conducted using the current edition of the U.S. CHESS FEDERATION OFFICIAL RULES OF CHESS and any modifications or changes in competition rules as established by Academic Competition.
- 2. Elementary/Middle School competition may utilize a 5-person team or individual Swiss format. In individual competition the top 4 players from the same school may be added together to determine team awards.
- 3. Standard time control for tournaments and matches is G/25 [Game time per player: 25 minutes with 5 second delay] unless the coaches agree to, or pre-announcement specifies other time control.
- 4. Elementary/Middle School competition is divided into 3 divisions:
 - a. Primary (Grade 4 and under)
 - b. Intermediate (Grade 6 and under)
 - c. Junior High (Grade 8 and under)

5. Elementary/Middle Schools will be divided into two (2) conferences.
 - a. North
 - b. South

VI. UNIFORMS

Players at competitions should wear apparel that would indicate a uniform that uniquely identifies that team/school, i.e. t-shirts, patches, etc.

VII. SEASON:

- A. The Chess season will be determined by the chess administrators to include the dates, locations and format of conference tournaments, city-wide competitions, Conference Playoffs, CPS Championships, and sanctioned tournaments.
- B. Elementary and Middle Schools are required to compete in 2 in-person Academic Chess tournaments to qualify for their Conference Championships.
- C. High Schools are required to compete in 2 in-person tournaments; 1 Academic Chess tournament plus 1 additional tournament recognized by IHSA to qualify for the Varsity Championships and 1 Academic Chess tournament for teams to qualify for the Junior Varsity Championships.
- D. A chess tournament is where five (5) or more school teams compete for three (3) or more rounds.
- E. Elementary and Middle Schools conference advancement to the CPS Championship is limited to the top 3 teams & top 4 individuals who are not a part of an advancing team. Advancing teams are limited to five (5) players in the Championship.

VIII. TEAM TOURNAMENT AND MATCH FORMAT

- A. Teams should consist of 8 or 5-players; a minimum of 7 or 4 players respectively.
- B. One player may be named captain, and each player shall play only one game per round.
- C. Players must play on the same board throughout the tournament/match, unless a substitution or withdrawal occurs that realigns the board lineup.
- D. Substitutes may play different boards; however, a substitute can only play any board once. If a substitute plays the same board twice, then that substitute can only play that board.
- E. Tournaments and matches will be played using weighted boards (board points).
- F. Players shall play in rating/strength order. The highest rated/strongest player on the team must play board 1, the second strongest player must play board 2, etc. Players within 100 points of each other may switch boards. The chess administrators and the Chief TD may authorize other switches.
- G. If a team starts a tournament/match without a player, then the last board will be left empty and scored as a loss. The Chief TD may grant a waiver for this and allow another board to be left blank if a player is running late to the event.
- H. After the first round/match, should a player miss a round, substitutes can be used, or the board left empty and scored as a loss.

- I. 8-player home team will play white on boards 1, 3, 6, and 8 and black on boards 2, 4, 5, and 7. 5-player home team will play white on boards 1, 4, and 5 and black on boards 2 and 3.

J. Match Scoring:

1. 8-board match

Board	Win	Draw	Lost
1	12	6	0
2	11	5.5	0
3	10	5	0
4	9	4.5	0
5	8	4	0
6	7	3.5	0
7	6	3	0
8	5	2.5	0

2. 5-board match

Board	Win	Draw	Lost
1	10	5	0
2	9	4.5	0
3	8	4	0
4	7	3.5	0
5	6	3	0

- K. Participants playing black will supply the equipment, therefore each school must provide chess boards, Staunton design chess sets, and digital chess time delay clocks for at least half of the individuals participating. By mutual agreement, one team may supply all the equipment.
- L. In cases of a team dropping out from competition before the third round/match has been played, all match scores against them shall be dropped.
- M. If a team drops out after the third round/match, the remainder of its matches shall be scored as forfeits.
- N. Any team playing an ineligible player shall forfeit the ineligible player's board scores and forfeit any award achieved using the ineligible player's score.

IX. SWISS TOURNAMENTS

A Swiss-system tournament is a non-eliminating tournament format that features a fixed number of rounds of competition where each competitor (team or individual) does not play all the other competitors. Competitors meet one-on-one in each round and are paired using a set of rules designed to ensure that each competitor plays opponents with a similar running score but does not play the same opponent more than once.

X. TIEBREAK ORDER

- A. Individual tournament
 - 1. Modified Median
 - 2. Median
 - 3. Solkoff
 - 4. Sonnenberg-Berger
 - 5. Cumulative
- B. Team awards in individual tournament
 - 1. Median
 - 2. Solkoff
 - 3. Sonnenberg-Berger
 - 4. Cumulative
 - 5. Coin Flip
- C. Team vs Team tournament
 - 1. IHSA
 - 2. US Amateur
 - 3. Modified Median
 - 4. Median
 - 5. Solkoff
- D. Board awards in Team vs Team Tournament
 - 1. Total Individual Modified Median
 - 2. Total Individual Median
 - 3. Total Individual Solkoff
 - 4. Coin Flip
- E. Online tiebreak order may differ due to constraints of the platform used

XI. BYES

- A. Requested byes will be scored as zero points
- B. A bye given to a player for not having an opponent to be paired against will receive a full point
- C. A half point bye may be given to a player based on special circumstances

XII. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

- A. A player may only play for the school they attend.
- B. Players must know the basic rules of chess and how the pieces move. A player who does not know these basics may be removed from the tournament/match by the Floor Chief or Chief TD.
- C. School must have received the players signed Academic Chess Parental Permission forms
- D. During the Conference Playoffs, players may play up (in a higher division) to be part of a team.

- E. Conference Playoff team rosters are frozen; players must play in the division they are listed in throughout the Playoffs and Championship.

XIII. COACHES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. **MANDATORY:** Coaches must ensure that anyone who serves as a coach, assistant coach, trainer, volunteer, or in any other capacity in a school's chess program where they have contact with students has completed and cleared the appropriate CPS Background Check Level prior to having contact with students. Anyone who has not been cleared at the appropriate CPS Background Check Level is not allowed to attend practices, tournaments, escort on buses, etc. Any questions on the CPS Background Check Policy contact your school administration.
- B. Coaches are responsible for ensuring a current parental permission form and student data sheet have been properly completed and are on file at the school for each student.
 - 1. These forms are part of the Coaches Packet which is available online at www.cpschess.org.
 - 2. Coaches must bring paper or electronic copies of these forms to each tournament the student participates in.
 - 3. Only students with forms on file are allowed to participate in tournaments or matches.
- C. Coaches are responsible to ensure use of technology in their chess programs and communication with students are compliant with the CPS Acceptable Use Policy which can be found on the CPS Acceptable Use of Technology Guidance site at <https://cps.edu/AcceptableUsePolicy/Pages/aup.aspx>.
- D. Coaches must participate in 4 team matches and their team must play in the Conference Playoff or High School Championship to qualify for the chess coach's stipend.
- E. Coaches & school chaperones are responsible for the control and conduct of their team members.
- F. Coaches are responsible for arranging the number of chaperones needed to properly supervise their team members.
- G. Coaches or a representative from each school must be present at the beginning of a tournament/match and remain throughout the event.
- H. Coaches are responsible for checking in their players at tournaments/matches.
- I. Coaches are responsible for seeding their team in board order at team tournaments/matches.
- J. Once a match begins, coaches and players cannot communicate except through a Tournament Director.

XIV. SPECTATORS

- A. Spectators are not allowed in the playing area or within designated boundaries set by the chess administrators. A spectator is anyone not currently playing a match (i.e. parent, coach, player whose game is finished)
- B. Exceptions to this rule include:

1. Coaches at high school team tournaments.
2. Person(s) authorized by the chess administrators or Chief Tournament Director.
3. The chess administrators or Chief Tournament Director may designate boundaries, conditions or revoke any or all these exceptions if the presence of spectator(s) is deemed disturbing to players.

XV. US CHESS RATINGS & MEMBERSHIPS

- A. CPS Academic Chess tournament will be rated with the US Chess Federation.
- B. Academic Chess will purchase a new or renew a student's US Chess Membership under the following conditions:
 1. They are playing in a CPS Academic Chess tournament
 2. They are playing in a CPS sanctioned tournament
 3. Memberships will not be provided to students just because their membership has expired, or they do not have one.
- C. Players must have a valid US Chess membership, or their information submitted as required for a new or renewal of their membership. If a player arrives onsite without a valid membership or submitting the required information, they will not be paired for round 1 or for following rounds until the US Chess form is turned in.
- D. US Chess Membership Service Area can be found at <https://www.uschess.org/msa/> where you can:
 1. Look up membership information to include a player's ID number and expiration date.
 2. Find a player's ratings that includes the monthly Rating Supplement that is used for pairing tournaments.
 3. See a player's tournament history.

XVI. CHESS NOTATION & CHESS TIMERS

- A. Chess notation is required for all players. Chess notation is necessary to adjudicate, reconstruct, and for players to study their games.
- B. Chess notation may be written in long or short algebraic notation or descriptive form and must be in accordance with the most recently published edition of THE USCF OFFICIAL RULES OF CHESS.
- C. If a player decides not to notate, 10 minutes, or half the time remaining, (whichever is less) may be deducted from his/her time
- D. Players who fail to keep notation shall lose the right to make claims for which notation would be required.
- E. If a player has less than 5 minutes remaining on his/her timer, he/she may stop notating without penalty. Once this happens, the opponent may then also choose to stop notating, if he/she wishes to do so, even if the opponent has more than 5 minutes remaining on his/her own timer.

- F. A notation sheet must, to be considered satisfactorily filled out, not have more than three consecutive missing or incomplete move pairs (a move pair being consecutive moves by each player).
- G. Use of a timer (when available) is required and is to be used in accordance with the most recently published edition of THE USCF OFFICIAL RULES OF CHESS.

XVII. VIOLATIONS RULES & REGULATIONS

- A. Penalties for violation of the regulations and THE USCF OFFICIAL RULES OF CHESS shall be imposed by the Tournament Directors.
- B. Tournament Directors may impose penalties to include, but are not restricted to: Warning, forfeiture of games, forfeiture of team match play, or other such penalties as outlined in these Regulations, and/or the most recently published edition of USCF OFFICIAL RULES OF CHESS.
- C. The chess administrators may also impose penalties to include denial of participation and expulsion of an individual or team.

XVIII. REQUEST FOR RULING, APPEAL PROCEDURE, AND QUESTIONS OF CONCERN

- A. It is the player's responsibility to make a REQUEST FOR RULING.
- B. A player has the right to stop both clocks to ask a Tournament Director to rule upon a point of law, procedure, or conduct.
- C. A coach, parent, or any third party may not request a ruling covering game play.
- D. A player or coach may request a ruling covering pairing, possible errors in scoring, or a concern by completing a Question of Concern form. The procedure is for the coach or player to fill out the form and turn it into the designated person. The Floor Chief, Backroom Chief or Chief Tournament Director will write their ruling and the designated person will inform the coach or player of the answer.
- E. A player or coach may appeal a ruling to the Chief Tournament Director; the Chief Tournament Director ruling cannot be appealed.
- F. A challenge to a recorded score is limited to the following round.

XIX. ONLINE FAIR PLAY SYSTEMS

- A. Online tournaments utilize their own proprietary Fair Play rules.
- B. In case of any fair play violations, none of the games played by the violator will be rated. For the purposes of standings, the opponent of someone who violates fair play rules will be given 1/2 point if they lost and 1 point if they drew. Any wins against fair play violators will stand.
- C. The CPS & tournament staff are not involved with the fair play analysis and will stand by the online tournament company's decisions in all fair play violations.

XX. ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The tournament playing room is designated as a Cell Phone Free Zone.

- A. While having a game in progress, players may not use cell phones or other electronic devices capable of chess analysis or communication, without permission of a Tournament Director.
- B. Chess clocks and approved electronic score keeping devices are permitted.
- C. During play, all prohibited electronic devices must be stored out of sight in a bag or case, etc. and must be turned off, silent, sleep or airplane mode.
- D. A player whose prohibited electronic device makes an audible noise in the tournament room while a game is in progress will be penalized. If the offending player's game is over, the penalty shall apply to the following round.
- E. A player who needs to make a phone call during play must see a TD and request permission to do so.
- F. The penalty for violating these rules by a player may be any of the following*:
 - 1. Warning
 - 2. 10 minutes or half the remaining time, whichever is less, deducted from the player's clock.
 - 3. Loss of tie break points
 - 4. Forfeiture of the game
- G. Coaches may not handle cell phones or other electronic devices in the playing room while games are in progress. Coaches must leave the competition area to use their phones.
- H. The penalty for violating these rules by a coach may be any of the following*:
 - 1. Warning
 - 2. Loss of tie break points
 - 3. Expulsion from the playing room

**The TD will determine the penalty, taking into consideration the details of the offense. A second offense will generally result in loss of tie break points for the team. If there is evidence of cheating by the coach, all of their players' games will be forfeited.*

XXI. TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION

- A. Academic Chess utilizes an online registration system. All registration must be done utilizing this system.
- B. Registration period and deadlines will be listed on the individual event webpage. No late or onsite registrations will be allowed.
- C. Substitution periods and deadlines will be listed on the individual event webpage. No late or onsite substitutions will be allowed for individual tournaments. Onsite substitutions are allowed for team tournaments.
- D. Onsite section changes in individual tournaments occur in round 2 or the following round after the request is received. Prior round score does not transfer to the new section.
- E. The registration system has a list of advance entries, coaches are responsible to check this list after registering to verify their players' registrations.

- F. Any error on a registration must be reported by 1 pm on the last day of registration via email to David Heiser. If you do not receive a response to this email by 1 pm the following day, you should follow up with a phone call.

XXII. SPORTSMANSHIP

- A. The [CPS Student Code of Conduct](#) applies to all students participating in CPS Academic Chess tournaments/activities.
- B. Unacceptable conduct of students includes but is not limited to
 - 1. Running inside the building
 - 2. Kicking or throwing objects in the building
 - 3. Leaving the designated tournament area without an adult and never outside
 - 4. Misusing equipment and facilities
 - 5. Smashing food on the tables and floors
 - 6. Not cleaning up after themselves
- C. Students, coaches, trainers, chaperones, or another attendant must not commit an unsportsmanlike act. This includes, but not limited to, acts or conduct such as:
 - 1. Disrespectfully addressing others to include an official, coach, or participant or gesturing in such a manner as to indicate resentment.
 - 2. Using profane or inappropriate language or gestures.
 - 3. Baiting or taunting an opponent. Any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others under any circumstances, based on race, religion, gender or national origin is disapproved.
- D. Students violating the Chicago Public Schools' [Student Code Conduct](#), engaging in unsportsmanlike behavior or in unacceptable behavior are subject to being withdrawn from the tournament and being banned from participation in future tournament(s). Students should not: