

# CHESS LIFE

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# Kids

## TOURNAMENT 101

### A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TOURNAMENTS

# WORLD CADET:

## YUVRAJ CHENNAREDDY TAKES THE GOLD



**US CHESS**  
FEDERATION

# TOURNAMENT



PHOTOS BY ERIC ROSEN

## A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TOURNAMENTS

By Jennifer Vallens

So you've discovered a love for chess and want to enter the world of tournament play. Now what?

To make this the best positive experience, here are some tips that will help prepare you and your parents for your first tournament.

### FINDING A TOURNAMENT

US Chess lists its national scholastic tournaments on their website at [uschess.org](http://uschess.org). Almost every state lists their state tournaments on their websites, and chess clubs often post local tournament flyers at their clubs.

### HOW DO TOURNAMENTS WORK?

At most scholastic tournaments, you will typically play anywhere from three to nine games, also called rounds. These rounds can all take place in one day or over several days—a lot depends on the time control, or how much time you get to use for your game. After each round you'll receive one point if you win the game, a half point if you draw (tie) the game, and zero points if you lose the game.

### WHAT ARE PAIRINGS?

When you arrive at a tournament, look for a posted pairing sheet. This will tell you who you will play, what color you will play, and what your board number is. All players also are listed by rating in descending order—from the highest rated to the unrated players—on a standings sheet. For the first round at most tournaments, the standings list is cut in half so the top player in the first half of the list plays the top player in the second half, and so on. After the first round, players are paired against other players with similar scores. If you win your first round (game), you will play another player who has also won his or her game.

### WHAT IS A RATING?

A rating is an estimate of a person's chess playing strength and typically ranges from 100-2000+. This number goes up and down depending on the results of each game you play and how well you do against other players. If you want to receive a rating, you'll need a US Chess membership. Your initial rating, which you can find on the US Chess website, will be provisional and may fluctuate

# ADVICE FOR PARENTS:

**DO** encourage your child to play their best. **DON'T** focus on the win.

After each round, **DO** ask if he or she played a good game.

**DON'T** ask if they won or lost.

**DO** offer a hug whether they win or lose. **DON'T** offer suggestions or advice.

**DO** make friends with other parents and encourage play with other kids. **DON'T** talk about your child's chess rating, their games, or challenges with other parents.

**DO** discuss chess etiquette with your child. Remind them to shake hands before starting the clock and to say, "Good game" after the game ends regardless of who won.

chess and bughouse with new friends while you wait for your next round. You'll also want some snacks and interesting diversions like a book, iPad, ball, or frisbee to play outside.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

At national scholastic tournaments, parents will not be allowed in the playing hall after a round has started. Since the host hotel will be filled with people, you and your parent should have a designated meeting place.

Each tournament has a "Skittles" room. No, there is no candy in this room. This room is a place for parents and coaches to wait, and it's where players often hang out and play chess between rounds.

wildly until 25 rated games are played. After 25 games, you will settle in to a more accurate measurement of your playing strength.

## WHAT IS A TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR?

The tournament director (TD) is responsible for the entire tournament. The TD pairs the players for each round, makes announcements, and serves as a "referee." If there is a dispute or question of any kind, players need to pause the clock, raise their hands, and wait for a TD to resolve the issue. When the game is over, both players raise their hands and turn in their scoresheets to the TD or a designated volunteer.

## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A TOURNAMENT?

First and foremost, make sure you get a good night's sleep the night before a tournament. Tournaments can last most of the day and stamina is the key to performing well. Eat a healthy breakfast and stay hydrated. Avoid heavily salted and fatty foods as well as sugary drinks. Before each round, make sure you have used the bathroom.

## KNOW THE RULES!

If you are playing in a rated section, you will be required to use a clock and record your moves. Make sure

you have practiced and are comfortable setting your clock for the correct time control and are well versed in chess notation.

In tournament play, rules will be enforced. Make sure you know what the rules are and always practice playing by the rules. These include touch move, using the same hand to make your move and punch your clock, and making your move **BEFORE** you notate in your scorebook. Other game rules you must know are castling, *en passant*, and stalemate.

Take your time and look at each move before you touch a piece!

## WHAT SHOULD I BRING WITH ME?

**For the playing hall:** For national tournaments, chess sets, boards, scoresheets, and scoresheets are provided. You'll need to bring in a chess clock, a sweater (the tournament hall can get chilly), and perhaps a small snack. If you have a phone to text or call your parent, you can bring it in the room, but it must be shut off and concealed out of view (usually in a pocket or chess bag). You also may use an approved electronic chess notation device in lieu of the provided scoresheet.

**For in-between rounds:** It's a good idea to bring your own chess set, as you may want to review your games after your round—plus you can play lots of

## PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Your parents can help you get situated at your board, but they will be escorted out of the room before the round begins. That's why it's important that you and your parent agree on a meeting spot before you enter the playing hall.

I hope this guide helps set you up for a successful tournament experience. The rest is up to you!

