

US CHESS AFFAIRS

New Scholastic Notation Regulations in Effect as of September 1, 2019

Nothing has contributed more to the advancement of chess knowledge than acceptable notations for describing moves. They do for chess what the writing of notes does for music, and both written versions are called scores.

~ THE OXFORD COMPANION TO CHESS

AS US CHESS PURSUES ITS GOAL to “increase the use of chess in education,” we need to remind ourselves that when scholastic players notate and review their games, they are engaged in a powerful literacy activity—one that complements learning across the curriculum. It is also a gateway into the treasures of chess literature and history.

Notation provides a foundation for the critical feedback loop (play-review-study) that leads to improved understanding and appreciation of the game. It empowers players to support themselves in tournament disputes and share their games with others. Children who learn to notate for such personally compelling and practical reasons do not need to be “made” to write down their moves. They will do so willingly as part of their journey toward chess improvement.

What is more, quality notation can aid tournament directors in running events more smoothly and efficiently.

With these (and other) educational benefits in mind, the US Chess Scholastic Council made the following **scholastic regulations effective September 1st, 2019 for the upcoming 2019-20 scholastic nationals** (see table at right).

We understand that raising notation standards will have the most impact on students with the least experience notating. For this reason, we have left notation optional for players in sections where proficiency cannot be assumed. However, we strongly encourage all chess players to learn to notate.

Just as there are “reluctant readers” at school, there are “reluctant notators” in chess. At a recent state scholastic championship, a coach noticed that one of his kindergarteners did not have a notation sheet or pencil but was seated to begin the round. When told to notate *because it is a rule of chess*, the student hemmed and hawed before offering a compromise: “Can I just write down my moves?” The coach asked what good that would do and the student replied: “Well, I only pay attention to my own moves anyway.” The coach and the student’s parent convinced him that since spectators are not allowed in the tournament room, their only way of seeing the whole game would be if the student notated for both sides. The student proceeded to produce a beautifully notated thirty-plus move game.

To help parents and coaches prepare, the official notation sheets required for national events will be made available in advance and online so that coaches and parents can help students become familiar with the format.

NOTATION REQUIRED, ALL SECTIONS:

National Junior High School (K-9) Championships, National High School (K-12) Championship, National Youth Action Championship, U.S. Junior Open

National Elementary School (K-6) Championships NOTATION REQUIRED?

K-1 Under 500 & Unrated	NO
K-1 Championship	NO
K-3 Unrated	NO
K-3 Under 700	NO
All other sections	YES

National K-12 Grade Championships NOTATION REQUIRED?

Kindergarten	NO
Grade 1	NO
All other sections	YES

All-Girls National Championships NOTATION REQUIRED?

Under 8	NO
All other sections	YES

Junior Chess Congress NOTATION REQUIRED?

Age 6 & under	NO
Age 8 & under	NO
All other sections	YES

How to help students become proficient notators



NOTATION IS A WAY TO PRESERVE A GAME FOR ALL TO SEE.

- Spend a well-rounded class to teach and practice notating, which includes **writing down the pieces and identifying the squares**.
 - Provide students with portions of well-notated games and have them **play out the moves on a board**.
 - Ask students to notate **just the first five moves of a game** the first time they notate. Once they have done this, **gradually increase this number**, taking into consideration the comfort level of the student in taking notation. In a relatively short period of time, it's quite feasible that students will be ready to notate entire games.
 - Emphasize that **we all sometimes make mistakes** in our notations. Adults are no exception, so kids can relate.
 - Require notation for games to count towards a “ladder” or “club tournament” score during chess club. This attaches a **tangible reward** tied to taking notation.
 - **Consider giving a prize** for “best notation” during a club meeting or each round of a small event—criteria that includes completed scoresheet, legibility, and accuracy.
- **Celebrate** students completing their first full scoresheet and well-written scoresheets.
 - When reviewing a game in club/class, take a moment to share with the audience how awesome it is that the game was written down so that **we can all enjoy reviewing it, learning from it, and showcasing the students' moves (celebrate success)**.

Electronic Device Policy for National Events Organized by US Chess

The following policy has been reviewed and approved by the US Chess Scholastic Council and US Chess Executive Board:

1. Effective immediately, participants (upon starting their game) and spectators (where permitted) at tournaments directly organized by US Chess must not have on their person in the playing area any cell phone, smart watch, tablet, laptop, or other internet-enabled device, except the following:
 - 1.1. Electronic scoresheets approved by the regulations governing the tournament.
 - 1.2. Other devices approved by US Chess prior to the event.
2. If a player with a game in progress is found to possess such a device, the game will be declared lost for the violating player, and the game will be submitted for rating purposes. A second such violation during the tournament will result in the same penalties, as well as removal from the tournament.
3. Exceptions to paragraph 2 may be specified for events covered by the Scholastic Regulations.
4. If a spectator is found to have such a device on his/her person, the offender will not be permitted to enter the playing hall for the remainder of the tournament.
5. If a player wishes to bring such a device into the tournament hall, the device must be turned off (not placed into “silent” or “airplane” mode) and placed either face-up on the table where the player has a game in progress, or placed into a bag that the player does not carry or open during the game in progress.
 - 5.1. US Chess understands that players may not want to risk losing their devices. The recommended solution is to not bring them into the hall at all.
 - 5.2. US Chess is not responsible for devices left in the playing hall.
6. Automatically exempt from this policy are the following:
 - 6.1. US Chess staff with badges for the event.
 - 6.2. Tournament staff with badges for the event.
 - 6.3. Other individuals with badges for the event or prior written approval from the US Chess Director of Events.
7. Any exceptions must be approved by the US Chess Director of Events, in writing, at least three weeks before the event begins.
 - 7.1. To request an exception, contact the US Chess Director of Events at boyd.reed@uschess.org.
 - 7.2. If the request involves a medical situation, additional documentation may be necessary. This allows US Chess to fully understand the situation and have enough time to ensure the proper accommodations.

Last edited August 31, 2019