

## How Chess Club Works

### Chess Club Timing

Chess Club meets every Wednesday from 3:20-4:45 in the cafeteria. There are two 15-week sessions, Fall and Spring, open to Grades 2-6.

### How the Chess Players are Organized for Chess Play

Tables are set-up with two chess boards per table. Our Chess Master assigns seating each week based on relative player strength, represented by a computer-generated numerical “chess rating”. Over time, these chess ratings tend to fairly reflect relative skill of each Chess Club member. Beginning chess players may start with a rating of 100 points. As a player’s skill improves, so will his/her chess rating. The use of this rating system has proven to be an effective way to match players of similar skill each week, allowing for a relatively equal chance of a win or a loss in chess matches.

Based on these chess ratings, Chess Club members are organized into broad groupings, from least-experienced to most-experienced as follows:

- Pawns (Our newest chess club members)
- Knights
- Bishops
- Rooks
- Queen (Reserved for any player that has >5,000 points. Very few reach this feat!)

Within the large groups, members are further broken down into appropriate color-coded sub-groups such as the following:

- Purple
- Blue
- Green
- Yellow
- Orange
- Red

**Keep in Mind** - Groups are determined by chess rating points, which can go up or down weekly for individual players based on wins/losses/ties in the preceding week’s match play. It is very common for players on the cusp between categories to alternate up or down each week. Chess ratings are cumulative, and points carry over from week to week, session to session, and

year to year. So, it is important for players to realize that the results of every match played counts towards their rating. So, play hard each and every match!

### How Chess Ratings are Determined

These numerical ratings represent an accumulation of weekly wins/losses/draws, factoring in the opponents strength. For example, defeating a player with a much lower ranking may only result in a few points added to a rating, while defeating a much higher ranked opponent will add a greater number of ratings points. The same is true in the opposite direction. Losing to a much higher rated opponent may only result in a deduction of a few points. Losing to a much lower rated opponent will result in loss of a greater number of points. Matches can also result in a draw (or stalemate), which also is accounted for in the rating system.

The results of all chess matches are recorded by the players as they are completed each week. These results are collected by our Chess Master, who inputs the results into the computer to determine the next week's starting match-ups and groupings.

The exact number of matches played each week will depend on the length of the individual games. Players are only allowed to play each other twice each week, before moving on to another match-up. This better ensures that players are developing their skills by facing a variety of opponents.

### How an Individual Chess Club Member's Rating Can Improve

Chess club ratings can improve in any of the following ways:

- Winning weekly matches, especially those against higher rated opponents
- Winning matches in the In-House Tournament (typically held in October and June)
- Good behavior points awarded at the Chess Master's discretion

### Weekly Lessons

Our Chess Master gives lessons to each broad group of kids each week. The lessons are tailored to meet the developmental needs of each group, with the goal to continue their chess knowledge and skill progression. After each lesson, the members are encouraged to return to their tables to put their learning into practice during actual match play.

### New Members to Chess Club

All new chess club members start out as Pawns, regardless of playing ability. This allows our Chess Master to ensure that all players know the rules of formal tournament play. Even self-taught experienced chess players might not be familiar with some of the more intricate rules

(e.g., touch move rules, en passant, etc.) Our Chess Master will identify the more experienced new club members within the first few weeks each new session, and quickly “test them out” to be placed with the most appropriate broad grouping. All members will eventually move out of the Pawn grouping as they earn points during on-going weekly match play against their peers.

### Chess Club Ratings are Different than USCF Chess Ratings

Chess ratings vary depending on who is issuing them. In terms of United States Chess Federation (or USCF) ratings, a complete beginner who has just learned the rules of chess would likely earn the minimum rating of 100. The average scholastic tournament player has a rating of around 600. A "strong" non-tournament player, or a beginning tournament player that has gained some basic experience, might have a rating around 800 or 1000. If a Wolftrap Chess Club member signs up for USCF Membership and participates in local “rated” tournaments where USCF membership is required, the results of these tournaments will be reported to the USCF. The resulting USCF chess rating will impact initial match-ups for future “rated” tournaments.

**Interesting Note:** The average adult tournament player in the USCF is rated around 1400. Very strong adult tournament competitors -- the top 10% or so of that group -- are rated over 1900. Prestigious titles are available to the strongest players. These titles are usually awarded partially or entirely based on ratings. Experts are players with ratings over 2000. Masters are players with ratings over 2200. Earning the International Master or Grandmaster title requires more than just a high rating, but these players are typically rated over 2400 and 2500, respectively. The best players in the world are rated over 2700; the highest rating ever achieved was 2851, by former World Champion Garry Kasparov.