

WASHINGTON STATE HIGH SCHOOL CHESS TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT

OFFICIAL RULES

updated February 15, 2026

1. Type Event. This is a set-team Swiss event, conducted in six rounds. Pairing and placing are by total team points. During the first round, teams from the same league may not play each other; the TD should adjust Swiss rules in whatever way necessary in order to preserve this rule while pairing in the spirit of the Swiss system. After the first round the TD will turn off the league protect feature on SwissSys.

2. Team Composition. A team is composed of five players. Two alternates may be substituted. The team must be arranged in order of strength from top to bottom, with no greater than 150 NWSRS established rating point difference for players out of rating order. (Coaches may be asked to justify players playing out of rating order if they feel ratings are inaccurate reflections of strength.) A player with less than 15 total rated games is not bound by the 150-point rule, but the coach must still place the team in order of strength.

Alternates may be used to fill in for missing players. Substitutions must be announced before the tournament unless needed due to an unforeseen illness or emergency. When alternates are substituted, they must be inserted from the bottom of the team after moving up remaining team members, unless cleared ahead of time with the TD. Penalties, including game and/or match forfeiture, will be determined by the TD for failure to follow consistent team composition: once the team ranking is declared at check-in, it may not be changed except for the use of alternates as described above.

Teams must have 5 players. If an emergency happens (e.g.: a car breakdown on day 2), teams may not leave a board unfilled mid-team. If this is done and the missing player does not appear, that board and all boards below it will be forfeited. Teams may not change the order of players after their official registration has been submitted, except for the use of alternates as described above.

3. Player Eligibility. To be eligible a player must be registered in grades 9 through 12 for a majority of his/her school program in the school for which he/she is playing. A senior who graduates at semester of the tournament year will still be considered eligible. 1B and 2B schools can use 8th grade students on their high school chess team, at the discretion of the chess club advisor.

Additionally, a player must have competed in at least two of his/her team's league matches to be eligible at State, unless he or she is a recent new registrant at the school, or if the player is clearly a "fill-in" for an absent player. For more information on team eligibility, consult the "player eligibility" rules on the WHSCA website.

4. Team Eligibility. Only a school's A and B teams can qualify to play in the State Team Championship. The number of teams in a given league that qualify for State Team will be determined by using WHSCA Table 1. When counting up the number of teams in the league do not count any C or D teams and teams that forfeited half or more of their league match games.

If a league qualified team can't attend the State Team Championship, the highest finishing A or B team that didn't qualify in that league may enter the State Team Championship to make up for the league's absent qualified team.

No team can be admitted which had access to a league or regional but declined to compete in that league or regional. Independent schools without access to a league may be permitted to play by appealing to the WHSCA Board for inclusion.

5. All Comers HS Individual at State Team. This is an open event for all Washington state high school players. This event will be a multiple section, six round Swiss system individual tournament with individual awards. It will play by the same rules, schedule, and time controls as the team tournament.

6. Team Seeding for Pairings. The Washington High School Chess Association (WHSCA) TD will seed the teams in assumed order of strength from top to bottom using average team ratings. For this purpose, no distinction is made between provisional and established ratings.

7. Emergency Team Replacement. If after check-in there are an odd number of teams, the TD will invite an "evener" team to fill in. This procedure is to avoid unchallenged five point forfeits. The evener team is admitted free to the event.

8. Penalty for Withdrawal without Reason. Teams registered for the tournament and which do not appear, or which withdraw from the tournament, shall be barred from the following year's event in accordance with standard policy for invitational and/or qualified events. There may be additional penalties.

9. Laws of Chess. WHSCA Tournament rules, which are a shortened version of USCF rules, shall be used for this tournament.

10. Time Control. All rounds will be Game/60 with a five second increment.

Both players may suspend recording the game when either player is in "time trouble." Time trouble is when either clock has five minutes or less remaining for the game. The player with five minutes or less remaining may invite another person to record in his stead. (Score sheets written by persons other than the player involved are not an acceptable basis for claims.) During time trouble neither player may pick up the clock, both players must actuate the clock with the same hand with which they move the pieces, and hands must not remain on the clock. Touch move rules continue in time trouble.

11. Summoning a TD. All players have the right, with good cause, to summon a director. To do this, the player should inform their opponent that he or she needs to summon a TD, stop both clocks, and quickly find a director and bring him to the table. This procedure is particularly important in time trouble portions of games, since a win on time alone will not be allowed in purely drawn (book draw) positions.

12. Consultation. Under no circumstances may a player consult with any other person, or use a book or computer, or comment about a game in progress.

A player may not consult a coach or captain regarding resignation, offering, or accepting the offer of a draw. If a player needs to know the effect of a resignation or a draw on the eventual outcome of the match, he may leave his seat, go to where the team scoring sheet is being kept, and look at it. **Again, no player may consult with anyone for any reason during a game.**

A player shall not leave the tournament room when it is their turn to move.

13. Interference during Play. No person may make a comment about a game in progress, including about the fact of flag-fall. A flag, or a clock running for one player when it is opponent's move, may be called only by the player involved. If an improper warning is given, the TD may take whatever action he deems appropriate, including setting proportionate clock time to continue the game, reversing the result, penalizing an interferer's team, and/or ejecting the offender from the tournament.

14. Sportsmanship. All persons attending the event will observe good sportsmanship at all times. For instance, should a losing player refuse to continue a game and leave the table to anticipate his own flag-fall, the TD may cause the game to continue, or may force a directed resignation.

15. Placards. Each team must provide a team placard with the team's name, 8.5" x 11" (before folding) to be placed on the table to identify the teams playing in each match.

16. Cell Phones, Smartwatches & Electronic Devices. The competition area is designated as a Cell-Free Zone. Players, coaches and adults may not handle cell phones, smart watches or electronic devices while in the competition area. No headphones of any type may be worn in the playing area. Players are required to turn their cell phones completely off and must not handle or view them anywhere while their game is in progress.

Exceptions: Tournament directors and floor judges may have their phones on vibrate. Designated photographers may use their phones for pictures during the first ten minutes of each round only. Medical exceptions are allowed. Students may use their cell phone in the presence of a TD.

Penalties:

1. Player's cell phone or smartwatch in use: Forfeiture of game. Game is still rated.
2. Player's cell phone vibrating or ringing: Loss of 10 minutes on the player's clock, or half the time on the clock, whichever is less. Also, 1 point taken from team's tiebreak points.
3. Coach's cell phone ringing or in use in tourney area: 1 point taken from team's tiebreak points. (No penalty for coach's phone vibrating.)

17. Pairing Teams From the Same School. An "A" team will never be paired with their "B" team in the first two rounds, or the final round. An "A" team with a 50% win rate or less will never be paired with their "B" team. Pairings teams from the same school is to be avoided. When SwissSys pairs an "A" team with a "B" team, the TD is encouraged to adjust pairings to avoid that pairing. Should all alternate pairings be judged to substantially violate Swiss pairing rules, and/or give an undue advantage to that school's teams, the TD is allowed to pair an "A" team with the "B" team. Should an "A" team be paired with a "B" team, the TD shall call a coaches conference of the schools involved, along with the WHSCA officers, so that all involved can understand, clarify and question the pairing, before it is posted.

18. Reporting Game Results. Both players are responsible for marking their result on the posted pairing sheet. If results are not posted, and cannot be quickly discovered, the TD may double-forfeit the game.

19. Appeals. Appeals and protests may be delivered to the WHSCA Board only by a coach or team captain. In case of appeal or protest, the WHSCA Board members will meet to hear and decide the appeal. In case of conflicts of interest, the Board may invite league directors or a disinterested, experienced coach

to help decide the appeal. The WHSCA President, barring conflict of interest, will chair the meeting, and its decision is final.

20. Tie-breaks. Ties will be broken by the following systems:

- (1) If for the title itself, by full team speed (game/3 with 2 second increment) chess.
- (2) Match results between two tied teams, but only if this breaks all ties in the same score group.
- (3) Modified Team Solkoff (top five opponent scores)
- (4) Team Cumulative Score
- (5) Team Opposition Cumulative Score.

21. Contested Games. All games counting for points are to be "contested." That is, a played game must occur; a player may not start his clock and then leave to do other things. In such cases, the TD may forfeit that game and all boards below it, as in the case of unfilled boards.

22. Awarding Team Championship Trophies. Only one trophy per high school will be awarded. If a high school's A & B teams both finish well enough to earn a trophy only the highest place trophy will be awarded to the school.

23. Amendment of the Rules. These rules are created by and follow established practice and custom at these tournaments. The WHSCA Board members themselves amend the rules according to such practice from time to time. Coaches, assembled in their meetings at State Team, may amend these rules by majority vote.

WHSCA Table 1

WHSCA Leagues will use this table to determine the number of teams from each league that qualify to compete at State Team from their final season standings.

Teams in the League or Regional*

3	The top 2 teams qualify for State Team (.666)
4	The top 3 teams qualify for State Team (.750)
5	The top 3 teams qualify for State Team (.600)
6	The top 4 teams qualify for State Team (.666)
7	The top 5 teams qualify for State Team (.714)
8	The top 5 teams qualify for State Team (.625)
9	The top 6 teams qualify for State Team (.666)
10	The top 7 teams qualify for State Team (.700)
11	The top 7 teams qualify for State Team (.636)
12	The top 8 teams qualify for State Team (.666)
13	The top 9 teams qualify for State Team (.692)
14	The top 9 teams qualify for State Team (.642)
15	The top 10 teams qualify for State Team (.666)
16	The top 11 teams qualify for State Team (.687)
17	The top 11 teams qualify for State Team (.647)
18	The top 12 teams qualify for State Team (.666)

* Do not count any C or D teams and teams that forfeited half or more of their league match games.