

What rules should students know?

Tournament players should understand the following basic rules:

1. **Touch/Move, Touch Take.** If you touch a piece with intent to move it, you must move it. If you grab a piece with your fingers, the intent is clear that you mean to move it, and you must. Once you place a piece on a square and let go of it, the move is final and may not be changed. If you touch your opponent's piece and you can legally capture it, you must capture it.
2. **Illegal Moves.** An illegal move occurs when a player moves in a manner inconsistent with the rules of chess, such as when a player moves a pawn backwards, or moves into check. The most common illegal moves involve checks. For example, a player may not castle through check, and if a player is in check, he must either capture the checking piece, block the check or move out of check. Any other move is an illegal move. Touch move rules apply here as well; if there is a legal move to be made with the illegally moved piece, then it must be made. Castling is considered a king move. Thus, a player who commits an illegal move by attempting to castle through check must make a legal move with his king if possible. When an illegal move has been made, the opposing player should pause the clock (if present) and raise his hand to consult with a tournament official.
3. **No Talking or Distracting Behavior.** Chess is a game of concentration, and all players deserve the opportunity to think quietly. Players may not discuss their game with their opponents, their parents or their coaches while the game is in progress. Most scholastic tournaments require parents and coaches to leave the playing area once the round is set to begin. Players may not engage in annoying behaviors designed to distract their opponents, such as tapping their pencils or making noises, or "trash talk." Any player who feels his opponent is badgering or distracting him should pause his clock (if present) and raise his hand to bring the behavior to the attention of a tournament official.
4. **Disputes.** If a question or problem arises during the game, players should pause the clock (if present) and raise their hands to consult a tournament official. Do not try to resolve disputes directly with your opponent. Accurate notation sheets can greatly aid a TD in making a fair determination. Do not move the pieces from the disputed position or reset the board until the TD has ruled. A player has the right to ask to speak to another TD or the chief TD if he does not understand or agree with the ruling of a TD.
5. **Draw Offers.** When offering a draw to an opponent, a player must first make his move and offer the draw on his own time, that is, before he starts his opponent's clock (if present). The game is over once both players agree to the draw.
6. **Losing on Time.** A player loses on time if his clock shows no time remaining and the opposing player – only the opposing player—notices and claims a win on time. The opponent must also have sufficient material remaining to create a checkmate. (If the opponent does not, the outcome is a draw.) If both players run out of time before either player has called it, the game is ruled a draw.
7. **Comings and Goings.** Inform the tournament director – if possible, before the event—if the player is going to arrive late for a round or miss a round entirely. Many tournaments have forms or special requirements for such situations.
8. **Draws.** A chess game can end in three possible outcomes: a win, a loss, or a draw. Players should understand the following types of draws so that they can recognize drawn positions when they arise on the board.

- a. **Stalemate.** A stalemate occurs when the player who is on move is not presently in check, but cannot make a legal move with any piece, pawn or king without placing himself into check. Because moving into check is an illegal move, the player cannot make a legal move and the game is a stalemate.
 - b. **Insufficient Mating Material.** A king cannot be checkmated by a solo king, or by a king and knight, or by a king and bishop. These pieces are considered insufficient mating material and the game is a draw.
 - c. **Draw by Three-Fold Repetition.** If during the course of the game, all of the pieces are arranged in exactly the same position three times, either player may claim a draw by three fold repetition. If the opposing player disagrees, the tournament director should be summoned and the claim proven by replaying the game from the notation sheet. Where the players do not agree, and there is no notation sheet, the draw claim cannot be proven, and the players must play on.
 - d. **50 Moves Without Progress.** A player who is on move may claim a draw when each player has made 50 moves without capturing a piece or moving a pawn. Once again, an accurate notation sheet may need to be consulted to prove this claim if the players do not agree.
 - e. **Insufficient Losing Chances.** A player who has a clearly won or drawn position but is low on time (less than five minutes) can request a draw based on insufficient losing chances. This is frequently a difficult calculation requiring a tournament director.
 - f. **Both Players "Flag."** If both players run out of time on their clocks before either player notices and calls out, the game is a draw.
 - g. **Draw By Agreement.** See number 5
9. **Time.** Each round will last approximately 1 hour. The Tournament Directors reserve the right to place a clock on games that they judge will exceed the allotted time. Students should be aware of basic chess clock operation; the players must touch the clock with the same hand that they use to move the chess pieces.
 10. **Notation.** Students should be able to keep standard notation. It does not need to be perfect, but we want students to keep track of their games in case of any disputes. Please consult the notation handout if you need assistance with this.

Adapted from <https://www.il-chess.org/guide-to-scholastic-tournaments>