

2026 OCEAN STATE SCHOLASTIC CHESS LEAGUE RULES

I. Order of Rules to be followed

- A. Ocean State Scholastic Chess League Rules
- B. United States Chess Federation (USCF) rules
 - 1. USCF rules are to be followed in absence of an applicable rule.

II. Team Eligibility and Rules

- A. Fees
 - 1. Each team must pay an entry fee of \$175 to participate in the OSSCL.
 - a. Any additional funds accumulated will be used to promote school clubs and tournaments in accordance with the Ocean State Chess League's nonprofit standing with the State of Rhode Island.
 - b. The Ocean State Chess League will complete any W-9 IRS form needed for each school.
- B. School Attendance
 - 1. Each student must attend the specific school that they intend to play for. No teams may be composed of students from different schools unless in certain circumstances where there is one student who has no team, he/she must be from the same school district and get permission by league organizers.
 - a. Participants in the high school (HS) league must be in grades 9-12.
 - b. Participants in the middle school (MS) league must be in grades 5-8 but preferably grades 6-8.
 - c. Participants in the elementary school (ES) league must be in \ grades K- 5 but preferably grades K-4.
 - 2. If the middle school has a 5th grade, those students can play in the Middle School League. If the 5th grade is in an elementary school, they can play in the Elementary League. Grade 5 homeschoolers must participate in the Elementary League.
- C. Students who are homeschooled can play for their local district public school group or chess team. Homeschoolers are allowed to participate in all 3 leagues.
- D. Multiple Teams
 - 1. Any school may enter more than one team in its respective league.
 - 2. Multiple teams from the same school may have different schedules.
 - a. Schools or districts with multiple teams can have "double matches" and try to play the same schedule, but an effort should be made to accommodate the other schools they must play.

E. Home Team Locations

1. Any location can be chosen by the home team to host its matches, provided that the location has quiet tournament conditions.
2. It is encouraged that schools be used as the location for home matches, though this is not mandatory. The designated home team or a match may travel if needed. However, designated boards for home or away matches apply.

F. Coaches

1. The coach for a team need not be a teacher, but he or she must be a responsible parent or adult who is eighteen (18) years of age or older.
2. A student from the school cannot be the official team coach.

III. Scheduling Matches

A. Confirmation and cancellation of matches

1. It is the responsibility of both teams' coaches to arrange a date and time for their match.
2. It is the responsibility of the visiting coach to call the home team coach to confirm the time of arrival and the location of the match. The home team is responsible for reaching out as well. Efforts to establish good communication is expected for all teams.
3. Any team that does not show up to a match without notifying the other coach will forfeit the match.
4. A coach wishing to cancel a match must call the other coach no later than 12:00 PM on the day of the match. It is strongly recommended that coaches cancel matches at least 24 hours in advance.
 - a. Any team who does not comply with these rules will forfeit the match.
5. If it is necessary to reschedule a match, it must be moved to a day that is convenient for both teams.
6. If a team cancels the same match twice, it will forfeit that match.
7. If a coach does not respond to three (3) emails and two (2) phone calls concerning match scheduling over the course of fourteen (14) days, his or her team will forfeit that match.
 - a. In order for this to occur, the coach who is trying to communicate with the other coach should document all communication attempts and present them to the Ocean State Chess League. Note well that no forfeits will be given in this manner without sufficient documentation.

B. Makeup Games

1. Unless otherwise stated on the schedule issued each year, all matches are to be completed during the season and or during the make-up period.
2. Any matches not completed by the deadline stated on the schedule will be recorded as a forfeit for both teams.

IV. Chess Sets

A. Type of Chess Sets

1. USCF standard regulation boards and sets recommended for matches. The OSSCL can provide 4 boards & pieces if a team has none.
2. Boards with faded squares or sets with multicolored pieces should not be used unless no other sets are available. Best sets available used for matches.

B. Provision of sets

1. It is the obligation of the home team to provide four (4) boards and sets for the varsity games.
2. The coaches of the two teams can decide on who will provide boards and sets for the junior varsity games, as applicable.

C. Setup of sets

1. Boards and sets must be set up with pieces on the correct squares and with algebraic notation on the correct side of the board.

V. Quiet Area

- A. The playing area must remain quiet while games are in progress.
- B. Any commentary or analysis must be carried out away from nearby games.
- C. Players are strongly encouraged to relocate to a nearby area away from other games once their own games are finished. This will keep distractions to a minimum and will prevent any problems.
- D. Students should not listen to music during match games.

VI. Notation

- A. Notation (recording the moves of games) is not required but is strongly encouraged.
- B. If a dispute arises between two players, the player(s) with notation sheets are given priority in resolving the dispute.

VII. Clocks

- A. It is the responsibility of the home team to provide four (4) clocks for the varsity games. However, the visiting team should try to accommodate the home team.
- B. The coaches of the two teams can decide on who will provide clocks for the varsity and/or junior varsity games.
- C. Only digital clocks are to be used; analog clocks should not be used. In extreme cases, players can use a digital chess clock app, but only as a last resort; and it should be replaced by a digital clock once it's available from a finished game. If only an analog clock is available, it can be used if agreed by both coaches.

VIII. Time Control

- A. The time control for all High School Matches: G/60;d5; and Middle & Elementary G/45;d5 (60 or 45 min for each player with 5 second delay)
- B. If both players/coaches agree, a game may be reduced to G/45;d5 or G/30;d5 (45 or 30 minutes for each player to complete all of his or her moves with a 5 second delay). If both players do not agree, the game must be played with a time control of G/60;d5 for High School and G/45;d5 for Middle/Elementary.
- C. A five-second delay must be used when using digital clocks. In this case, the time control will be G/60;d5 or G/45 d5 if both players agree.
- D. Running out of time
 - 1. Only players in a game can call attention to their opponent running out of time. Coaches nor other players, parents, or spectators can interfere. Players who provide unsolicited advice risk losing their own game or game result for the player given constructive advice. Especially if the advice has an effect on the outcome of the game/match.
 - 2. Coaches and spectators watching the game cannot say anything, as it is the responsibility of each player to pay attention to the clock.
 - 3. Spectators should keep a distance away from other match games in progress
 - 4. If a spectator calls attention to one player running out of time, the game will be ruled as a forfeit for the team to which the disruptive spectator belongs. E. Coaches should consult the USCF rules regarding other clock-related issues.

IX. Board Order

- A. Determining Board Order for Each Team
 - 1. Players should play in order of estimated strength, with the strongest player on board 1, the next strongest player on board 2, 3, and 4th.
 - 2. If a player is missing on a given day, all players move up a board to fill the empty board. For example, if player on board 2 is absent, then board 3 should be moved up and fill-in for board 2 and so forth.
- B. USCF Ratings
 - 1. When they exist, USCF ratings should be strongly considered as part of the criteria in determining board order. However, coaches/teams should have multiple practice playoff games to determine the board order of your players.
- C. Shuffling Players
 - 1. Teams can rotate players one board space up or down, but not 2 board positions up or down, unless both Boards 1 & 2 are absent for a match
 - 2. Teams can rotate extra (JV) players on only board 3/4 only.
 - 3. Teams should have established a definite board order by February 10th
- D. Color Determination
 - 1. Board 1 for the home team plays white.
 - 2. Board 2 for the home team plays black.
 - 3. Board 3 for the home team plays white.
 - 4. Board 4 for the home team plays black.

5. For Junior Varsity games, board 5 for the home team plays white, and colors alternate thereafter.

X. Draws

- A. When a player offers a draw, he or she should do it after his/her move has already been made. The opponent can accept or deny the draw offer.

XI. Other Important Rules

A. Touch-Move Rule

1. If a player touches a piece, he or she is required to move it, provided that it is legal to do so. If a player knocks a piece over by accident when reaching for another piece, the touch move rule does not apply.

B. Illegal Moves

1. If a player makes an illegal move, the player's opponent may request that two (2) minutes be added to his or her clock.

C. Other Rules

1. Cell phones must be off and should not be in use by students while playing a match (except Rule VII. A.)
2. For all other rules or situations, consult the *U.S. Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess*, seventh ed. (2025) or see USCF RULES (Online) see link: <https://new.uschess.org/news/7th-edition-rule-book-free-chaptersupdated-2025>

XII. Varsity and Junior Varsity Games A.

Varsity Games

1. The top four boards are referred to as the varsity boards.
2. The games played on these boards are used to determine which team wins a match (see § XIV.A).

B. Junior Varsity Games

1. Any boards lower than the top four boards are referred to as the junior varsity boards. Teams can have four or more players on the JV roster
2. Games played on JV boards have no bearing upon which team wins a match.
3. Junior varsity games only occur when both teams have more than four players.

XIII. Disputes During Matches

A. Involving Coaches

1. If a dispute arises during a match, players should stop the clock and call over the coaches from both teams to resolve the issue.
2. Coaches should try to resolve the dispute during the match.

3. Coaches may consult the OSSCL rules and the USCF rules to answer questions and resolve disputes.
- B. Contacting OSSCL Officials
1. Coaches may elect to contact an OSSCL official during the match.
 2. All OSSCL officials are certified tournament directors who are familiar with chess rules and regulations.
 3. Contact information for OSSCL officials listed at the bottom of the Coaches Directory provided by the OSSCL Director.
- C. When to Resolve Disputes
1. Disputes should always be resolved during the match if possible.
 2. If a problem arises after a match has been completed, coaches must take the following steps:
 - a. Coaches first must contact each other to try to resolve the dispute.
 - b. If a solution can't be reached, either coach may elect to submit a protest to the OSSCL Director and Assistant Director, and both coaches must be notified that a protest has been made.
 - c. Upon submission of a protest, both coaches will have two weeks to submit their arguments.
 - d. A final, binding decision will be made by the RISCL Director and Assistant Director after they consider the circumstances.

XIV. Match Results

- A. Determining Match Results
1. The winner is determined by the results of the four varsity games. Points are awarded for each game as follows:
 - a. Win = 1 point
 - b. Draw = $\frac{1}{2}$ point
 - c. Loss = 0 points
 2. The team with the greatest number of points wins the match, so a team wins the match if it has 2.5 or more points. The match is drawn if both teams have 2 points.
- B. Reporting Responsibilities
1. It is the responsibility of both coaches to report match results to the OSSCL scorekeeper. Coaches can decide among themselves who will report the match results, but if a coach is unsure as to who will report the results, he or she should send the results. It is better to have both coaches send the results than to have no coaches send the results.
 2. Match results should be reported as soon as possible upon conclusion of the match.
 3. If the results of a match are not sent to the OSSCL scorekeeper by the deadline on the schedule sent out each year, both teams will receive a forfeit for the match.
- C. How to Report Results

1. All results are to be reported to the OSSCL scorekeeper via email.
2. Coaches should send an email to **frank@oceanstatechess.com** with the results of each individual game and the result of the overall match.
3. The results also should be sent to **danamadio@yahoo.com**

XV. Determination of OSSCL Place Awards

A. Order of factors in provision of awards

1. Match Points for Each Match
 - a. If a team wins (see § XIV.A), it receives one (1) match point.
 - b. If a team draws, it receives one half (½) of a match point.
 - c. If a team loses, it receives zero (0) match points.
 - d. The team with the most match points will be OSSCL champion.
2. Head-to-Head Results
 - a. If two teams are tied with the same number of match points, head-to-head results will be used to determine the winner.
 - b. Of the teams in contention, whichever team won the match between them during the season will be declared the winner.
 - c. Head-to-head is only used if there are two teams tied with the same number of match points.
 - d. Head-to-head is not used if there are three or more teams tied with match points (game points are used in such a case).
3. Game Points
 - a. If two teams are tied with the same number of match points and draw each other during the regular season, game points are used as a third tiebreaker.
 - b. Of the teams in contention, whichever team had the greatest number of game points during the regular season will be declared the winner.
4. Discretion of OSSCL Tournament Directors & Board of Directors
 - a. If two teams are still tied after considering match points, head-to-head results, and game points, the OSSCL officials will determine a method to select a winner.
5. The case of three or more teams
 - a. If three or more teams are tied with the same number of match points, then game points will be used to determine correct finishing places for each team in contention.
 - b. If teams have the same number of game points, the OSSCL officials will determine a method to select a winner.

XVI. Championship Traveling Trophies such as the High School “Taylor Trophy”

A. Recipient

1. The winning 1st place team in all 3 leagues will receive a “Traveling Trophy” displaying all the winning teams from throughout the years much like the

Stanley Cup in Hockey (Example: Taylor High School Trophy). Taylor Traveling Trophy shall be returned at the end of the next season.

2. The 3 top winning teams in all leagues will receive a 1st, 2nd, 3rd place league trophy to keep for their school for all-time.

B. Duration

1. The winning team will be able to keep the “Traveling Trophy” for only one year, after which it will be awarded to the winning team the following year.
2. The winning team cannot keep the traveling trophy forever, but will be awarded their own 1st place trophy to keep for the school.

C. Presentation

1. The Traveling Trophy will be presented and given to the winning team each year at the OSSCL awards ceremony and blitz tournament at the end of the season.
2. Other trophies are awarded as follows:
 - a. The first through third place teams in each league will receive a regular team trophy and individual trophies for their varsity students which they can keep.
 - b. Each team in the league will receive two “Coaches MVP” awards to present to their players, regardless if they placed in top three team.

XVII. Playoffs Format for Leagues with Two Divisions

A. Rounds:

- Round 1:
 1. Team #1 from North Division vs. Team #2 from South Division
 2. Team #1 from South Division vs. Team #2 from North Division
- Round 2:
 - Championship Match: Winners of Round 1 face each other to determine the Champion (1st Place) and Runner-up (2nd Place).
 - Third-Place Match: Losers of Round 1 play each other for 3rd and 4th Places.
- Match Structure:
 - The top 4 players from each team will participate.
 - The higher-seeded team gets the choice of color on Board 1.
 - Boards 2, 3, and 4 will alternate their colors accordingly.

Playoff Process:

- The strongest team from each division faces the second-placed team from the opposite division in the first round.
 - Winners advance to play for the championship, while the losing teams play for 3rd and 4th places.
 - There are two rounds, and each round consists of two single team matches.
- C. Tiebreaks:

- In case of a tie, each player will play a rapid tiebreak game with a time control of G/10; d5 (each player has 10 minutes with a 5-second delay per move).