

Tournament Advice

Before the tournament. Practice playing with a chess clock to get over the jitters most players get when they do so for the first time. You may wish or need to play with a clock at the tournament. (See below). Most of our clubs have clocks you can practice on. Consider buying one.

When you arrive at the site. Check in when you arrive at the tournament site, normally at tables set up for this purpose as you walk in. If pre-registrations are posted on wall charts, be sure the information, including your team designation, is correct.

When the pairings are posted. You will be told when the pairings are posted. There are two important things to note on the pairing sheet: what color you are playing and your board number, which corresponds to a numbered location on a table inside the playing room.

When you enter the playing room. Find your board and introduce yourself to your opponent. Wait until you are told you can start. Then shake hands with your opponent, wish him or her a good game, and begin.

If your opponent is late and you are not sure the floor directors know this, raise your hand and tell a director. If you have a clock, and if you are playing white, make your first move and hit your clock. (This will reduce the amount of time your opponent will have to finish his or her moves.) If you are playing black, hit your clock after the round starts so your opponent's time starts to run down.

Problems during the game. Problems may arise such as a claim of an illegal move, a touch-move violation, your opponent making noise or otherwise bothering you, a problem with a clock, and so on. **Leave the board exactly as is**, stop your clock if you are using one, and raise your hand for a director. Explain the problem when the director arrives. If you wait until after the game to report a problem, it will be too late. In the rare event in which you disagree with the director's ruling, you are allowed to ask for (or yourself get) your coach, who might be better able to argue your case.

Clocks and time penalties. Any player who owns his or her own clock has a right to use it during the game. Even if you start your game without a clock, if your game runs long, a director may ask you to use a clock toward the end of the round, and will tell each of you how much time you have. You are required to hit your clock with the same hand you move your pieces with. The player playing black has the choice of which side the clock is placed on. If you are right-handed, put it on the right (and vice versa). If you run out of time, don't "call your own clock" – that's for your opponent to do. Similarly, keep a close eye on the clock when time begins to run short so you will see (and can tell your opponent) when his or her clock runs out. Some tournaments assess time penalties if there is an illegal move. Normally, rather than time being taken away from the offending player, two minutes are added to the remaining time of the non-offending player. Some tournaments penalize players who are not keeping notation by deducting time from their total allotment, but this is rare, especially for young players.

Advice from your opponent during a game. Some players will try to give their opponents "advice." Don't take it. Make up your own mind.

Draw offers. Some experienced tournament players will offer a draw to an opponent who is beating them, hoping to sucker them in and end with a tie rather than a loss. Watch out for this. In this situation, resist the normal temptation to accept someone's handshake when it's offered.

At the end of the game, if you and your opponent agree on the result, extend your hand to your opponent whether you've won or lost and say "Good game." (If you don't agree on the result, get a director and leave your board untouched.) Then re-set the pieces on your board, remind yourself of your board number, and, **together with your opponent, report your score.** Normally there are tables set up near the exit door where people will ask for your board number and the result.