**HRCA NEW PLAYER ORIENTATION**

**This might all seem really overwhelming and scary because you are new and have never played in a tournament before. Don’t worry! Our Tournament Director (TD) staff is highly experienced working with “Rookie” players. They are patient and kind and will answer all your questions and help you learn the rules better with every situation that arises on your board during a game. We will walk you through this world of chess tournaments every step of the way. We are so happy you are here!!!**

WHEN YOU COME IN:  After you find your pairing and your board, the first thing you should do when you sit down (at the right color) is check to be sure your board is set up properly.  If it is not and you don’t realize it until you are 8 moves into the game, it is too late to fix it.  Be safe and check before the first move (e.g. Kings and Queens swapped, Knights and Bishops swapped are most common).  Then fill out the result slip on the board with your names, the round, and the section name.  Set the slip aside.  Do not start your game until the tournament director tells you to shake hands and start your clocks / start the round.

BETWEEN TWO PLAYERS:  Chess is a game between two players.  This means it is up to the two of you to determine your result (more to follow on that), and you absolutely cannot interfere in any other games during the tournament!  Remember, even if these are your friends, you can’t talk to them during your tournament games.  If you interfere in another game, you will immediately forfeit (lose) your own game, and then we will be left to determine if the game you interfered in was changed as a result, making some tough calls for us as tournament directors.  Don’t even say hi to someone at an adjacent board – you want to avoid the appearance of interference.  Bottom line – don’t do it!!!  If you are the victim of another player interfering in your game, pause your clock, raise your hand, and call a tournament director over to report it.  We have had this happen before, but it is never truly intentional – it is kids who are friends forgetting for a moment in the excitement of a game that they are in an actual tournament, and discussing the game with their friend at the next board.  Remind your kids that when they are in that playing hall, it is not the time to talk to their friends.  Wait until your game is over and go to Skittles and hang out with them!

DISTRACTING BEHAVIOR:  Chess is a quiet game that requires concentration.  Don’t be distracting.  You should not be talking or making any other types of distracting movements or sounds during your game.  If you do, you will be warned, and your opponent can be awarded extra time on the clock to compensate for the distractions.  If you continue the distracting behavior, you risk forfeiting (losing) your game.  Be courteous to your opponent and all those around you.  During a game, the only talking that should happen between opponents is to point out illegal moves, touch move violations, etc.   If your opponent is being distracting, pause the clock, raise your hand, and call a tournament director over to report it.  Distracting behavior can be the biggest problem in scholastic chess because kids are having fun with their friends.  Restrain yourself for the time it takes to complete your game, then go to Skittles and have fun with your friends.

NOTATION:  For the Seven Cities School Chess Championship, notation is only required in the K-8 and K-12 Rated sections. HOWEVER, you are ALL (no matter how young) HIGHLY encouraged to keep notation, as you will need it to settle / win claims during a game if they come up, and analyzing those games with a coach and/or your opponent after the game is the best way to improve at chess.  Notation sheets / books or approved notation devices (Monroi, PlyCount, Chess NoteR only) must be kept on the table at all times, not in your lap, and cannot be taken out of the room while a game is still in progress.  Refusal to keep notation when required is a violation of US Chess rules.  If your opponent is refusing to keep notation, pause your clock, raise your hand, and call a tournament director over to report it.  If you are keeping notation and miss a move, when it is your move and while your clock is running, ask your opponent to see his notation so you can fix yours (or you can wait until after the game).  Always be kind – never refuse to hand over notation to an opponent who would like to see it to correct his own.  Bring your notation books and a pen or pencil.  We will have extra sheets and writing utensils available, but it’s good practice to always bring your own, and loose sheets tend to get lost.  Books help you keep a record of all your games.

CELL PHONES:  Cell phone apps have been used in a lot of high-level cheating scandals in chess in recent years, unfortunately. No cell phones in the playing hall. Do not mess with this rule – you not only risk being ejected from the tournament but having an Ethics complaint filed with US Chess and being banned from playing chess in this country for a long time. If you have a phone, leave it with your parents or someone you trust in Skittles. If you see someone with a phone in the playing hall, report it to the tournament director.  If you see someone on a phone outside the playing hall and you know they are still in the middle of a game, report it to the tournament director.

BREAKS:  If you leave the room to take a break for water, bathroom, or just to walk around and clear your head, you cannot pause your clock – it must continue running.  You may also NOT talk to ANYONE while on break if your game is still going on.  This is to just avoid any appearance that you may be getting advice on your game.  If you see someone talking to a parent or anyone else about a game or viewing a game on an electronic device while their game is still going on in the playing room, report it to a tournament director.

CLOCKS:  If you own a chess clock, bring it.  We have a limited supply.  Priority for using HRCA clocks goes to Rated games.  If you get to your board and neither player has a clock and there are no HRCA clocks left, start your game when directed to, without a clock.  For the Seven Cities event, if your game is still going on after one hour, you will have a clock put on your board with 15 minutes each to finish.  The only reason a clock should be paused during a game is when you have to call a tournament director over for something.  You are responsible for knowing how to set and work your own clock, not the TD.  Don’t make any changes to the time on a clock once the game starts, though, without a TD being at your board to supervise.  YOU MUST TOUCH THE CLOCK WITH THE SAME HAND YOU USE TO MOVE THE PIECE.  No hovering over the clock with one hand and moving with the other.  This is technically not an illegal move but could be construed as distracting behavior or providing an unfair advantage in time trouble, so you can be penalized for repeatedly hitting the clock with the wrong hand.  For large events, all clocks go on Black’s right side.

TOUCH MOVE:  If you touch a piece and it can be legally moved, you must move it.  This applies even if, for example, your King was in check and you didn’t realize it, and you started to move your Queen somewhere else.  When your opponent then points out that you were in check and that move was illegal, if the Queen can be used to block or stop the check, even if it means losing her, you must do so.  So be careful!  Sit on your hands until you are absolutely sure what you want to move before touching anything.  Until you let go of the piece, you can make any legal move with it.  Once you let go, your move is done (“determined”).  If you need to fix a piece that is knocked off its square or not centered, you must say the word “ADJUST” BEFORE touching the piece to fix it.  You CANNOT say “Adjust” AFTER – this would be a blanket excuse for very touch move violation.  No exceptions.  If your opponent makes a touch move violation, first address it quietly directly with your opponent – EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE HONEST!!!  IF YOU TOUCHED IT, ADMIT IT.  THERE IS NO LYING IN CHESS.  If you can’t agree on the circumstances, pause your clock, raise your hand, and call a TD over.  We will help determine if it was an intentional touch or not (don’t call your opponent out for touch move if he accidentally touches the tall queen with the palm of his hand while reaching over her for a pawn – it has to be an intentional touch to move).  We usually issue a warning the first time if it is still unsettled, and if we get called to your board again on a touch move claim for the same player, we will usually make you move the piece.

TOUCH CAPTURE:  If you touch an opponent’s piece and can legally capture it, you must.  This includes touching it with another piece and not your hand (clear intent to capture), as well as reaching over and picking up or grabbing an opponent’s piece.  Many experienced chess players will pick up the opponent’s piece first and then slide their piece to that square as a method of capturing.  For this reason, if you touch your opponent’s piece and can capture it, you must.  If you really need an opponent’s piece ADJUSTED, first ask them if they can adjust the piece.  If you must adjust an opponent’s piece yourself, you MUST say “Adjust” BEFORE touching it, or your opponent has grounds to claim touch capture.  So if you touch a Knight with your queen because you didn’t realize the knight was defended, and you realize you will lose your Queen, it’s too late.  You must capture anyway.  Again, sit on your hands until you are 100% sure of your move!

OTHER DISPUTES:  If any other dispute arises, such as a move that couldn’t have happened from the previous position / dispute over where a piece was located, pause the clock, raise your hand, and call the TD over to help you.  The TD will use your NOTATION to settle the claim, so I hope you have it!

END OF GAME PROCEDURES:

FLAG FALL:  If your clock runs out and your opponent still has mating material, you lose.  If your clock runs out and your opponent does NOT have mating material, it’s a DRAW.

RESULT SLIP:  When your game is over, before you call the TD over, if you both agree on the result, check the appropriate box (White Wins, Black Wins, Draw), then raise your hand in the air with the slip in it.  The TD will come over and verify your result by asking if you played the color you listed on the slip, and asking if you agree to the result.  The TD will then sign your slip. You and your opponent will reset your board and go together to the score desk to turn in your slip. Scorekeepers will record your result and have you initial the final scoresheet to verify they wrote it down correctly.

                BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU AGREE TO!  If your opponent says “Checkmate” and you are not sure, you are allowed to call a TD over and ask “IS THIS CHECKMATE?”  TD’s are limited in what they can answer, but it may help you determine the result. First, they will ask, “Whose move is it?” If it is your move (the one who might be in checkmate), the TD will then ask, “Are you in check?” followed by “Can you make a legal move?” If you CAN make a legal move, your game continues. If you are in check and cannot make a legal move to get out of it, it IS checkmate. If you are NOT in check but cannot make a legal move, it is STALEMATE (a draw) – KNOW THE DIFFERENCE! Let’s say you agree to a checkmate but there was actually a way to capture/protect/run (CPR) out of it, but you didn’t see it.  You didn’t bother to ask the TD and when the TD came to your board for the result, you told the TD you agreed it was a checkmate.  The TD would sign the slip, and you would lose the game.  Agreeing to a checkmate that wasn’t actually checkmate is a loss.  Get it?  Be careful!  Likewise, if you are crushing your opponent and your opponent incorrectly says it’s a stalemate (usually because the King can’t move but something else can), but it’s not, and you don’t realize it, and you agree to a draw, it’s a draw.  You only get ½ point instead of being allowed to play on by telling your opponent it is not a stalemate, and possibly winning.  Be careful!  You may also ask “Is this stalemate?” if you are not sure, and the TD can follow the same questioning procedure as for checkmate.

CLAIMING DRAWS:  If you are claiming a triple repetition or 50 move rule draw, you MUST have NOTATION to back up your claim.  If not, the TD cannot rule on it unless the opponent agrees, and then it is treated as an agreed draw.  If the TD notices that you are still playing while neither player has mating material, the TD can stop your game.  It is a draw for insufficient material. A stalemate is a draw by position. Two players can always just agree to a draw for any reason (see below).

OFFERING DRAWS:  The proper time to offer a draw is on any move, after you’ve “determined” it (made your move and released the piece) and before you’ve “completed” it (pressed your clock).  Do not offer a draw on your opponent’s move.  This can be considered annoying / distracting behavior, especially if done repeatedly.  Don’t make repeated draw offers.  If declined, you can offer again if something changes significantly to warrant another offer.  If you haven’t moved yet and offer a draw, your opponent has the right to say “make your move first.”  You must then make your move to allow your opponent to decide if he will take or decline the draw.  You can’t withdraw the draw offer even if you found a spectacular move (unless it’s checkmate – then you win).  The draw offer stands until accepted or declined.  If you offer a draw after your move and your opponent just moves a piece, that is another way to decline a draw.

**Most important rule: HAVE FUN!!!!**