

Gungahlin Junior Chess Club

Tournament Chess

As your chess skills get better and better, you will soon look at finding harder opponents. One way of doing this is by playing in chess tournaments. While this may sound scary at first, there is nothing really to worry about.

Your first chess tournaments may be with kids your own age, or in inter-school events. No matter which sort of event they are, they all have some things in common.

Chess Clocks

Almost all organised tournaments use chess clocks. This is to make sure that some games don't run on too long and hold up all the other players.

In most junior events the minimum amount of time you have to think is usually 15 minutes per game. This means that you have 15 minutes to think over your move, and your opponent has 15 minutes to think over their moves. Because of the way chess clocks work, you do not have to use the same amount of time over each move. On easy moves you may use only a couple of seconds, while hard moves may make you think for 30 seconds or more.

The most important thing is not to rush. Take your time over tricky moves, and don't worry about the clock. As you improve, you will find that it may only take 5 seconds to find a good move.

However, you need to always be aware of your time, and your opponents. You should look at the clock after you play your move, to make sure your opponent hasn't run out of time. If they have you should claim a "win on time", which means that you win the game (except in certain circumstances).

Teams Chess

A lot of school chess competitions are team competitions. Usually a team of 4 players will play against another team of 4. Your best player is normally on Board 1, 2nd best on Board 2 etc. Matches are scored by the result of each game, with 1 point for a win, and ½ point for a draw. The most you can score in a 4 board match is 4 points and the worst you can do is 0. This means that every game is important, and you should try your best, no matter how hopeless you think your position is.

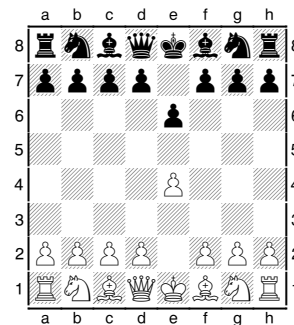
The winning team is the team that scores the most number of points over the tournament.

Normally a tournament is run over a number of rounds (eg 7). After each round the tournament organisers will find another team for you to play. Normally this will be a team on the same number of points as yourself. In this way you will get to play teams doing as well, or as badly, as yourself. Teams that win a lot will play harder teams, while teams who aren't winning that much will get easier opponents.

Tournament Tricks

Your first couple of tournaments can be tricky, and there are a couple of things you need to know.

Firstly, you may have an opponent who will try the "4 move checkmate" on you, especially if you are playing Black. There are a couple of ways to avoid this, but the simplest is to reply to **1.e4** with **1. ... e6** (The French Defence).



Then if White plays **2.Bc4** the bishop isn't attacking the f7 square, as it is blocked by the pawn on e6. If White tries **2.Qh5** then you can safely play **2. ... Nf6** and if White isn't paying attention you can capture the queen next turn.

You should also be able to checkmate with a King and Queen versus a King, or a King and Rook versus a King. These are the most common ways a game ends in junior chess and knowing this will gain you a lot of wins.

Most importantly you should concentrate on your game. The best way to do this is to watch what your opponent has just moved. You should always be aware of their last move, just in case it puts your queen under attack, or threatens checkmate.

And finally, tournaments should be fun. You get to meet lots of other chess players.