

WORCESTERSHIRE CHESS ASSOCIATION

Rules governing competitions

In accordance with Association's objects to promote, play, teach and develop the game of chess in the County and to promote competitions between clubs and individual players in the County, the rules below set out the framework within which over-the-board competitions are to be played. The intention is to maximise opportunity through a range of competitions so as to encourage participation from the widest possible range of clubs and players.

General Rules governing Club Team Championship competitions

1. The following Rules apply to all over-the-board team competitions unless stated otherwise in the rules for specific events.
2. The Official Laws of Chess, as published by FIDE and updated from time to time on their official website, shall govern play in all competitions, save where such laws shall be modified by these Rules.
3. The following competitions may be held:
 - a. CHAMPIONSHIP: Previously designated the County Championship (Division 1 of the Club Championship);
 - b. WORCESTER & DISTRICT: Previously designated Division 1 of the Worcester & District Chess League;
 - c. CHALLENGERS: Previously Division 2 of the Club Championship;
 - d. TEAM HANDICAP KNOCKOUT CUP: A team handicap competition, the winner of which receives the Laurence Wheatley Memorial Cup;
 - e. RAPID PLAY LEAGUE

Rules specific to each competition are set out at the conclusion of these General Rules. Each competition is treated as distinct, and there is no 'promotion' or 'relegation' between competitions.

4. Arrangements for the competitions shall be in the hands of the Competitions Secretary, but any specific instructions duly passed at an AGM must be obeyed.
5. Entries for the Club Team Championship competitions shall be in the hands of the Competitions Secretary not later than the date of the fixtures meeting or, in the absence of a fixtures meeting, by such date as stipulated by the Competitions Secretary. Clubs wishing to enter after this date may be refused permission to compete.
6. All clubs entering a team or teams in the Club Team Championships shall be affiliated to the Worcestershire Chess Association.
7. The names, English Chess Federation (ECF) rating code and club of each player will be registered with the Competitions Secretary before playing in any match. If a player is not registered, the game on the relevant board will be scored to the opponent.
8. Where the Competitions Secretary allows any club to enter more than one team in an event and the format of the event requires a match between the teams, the first match between teams in the same club must be played as the teams' first match of the season. In a double-round competition, two teams from the same club shall play their second intra-club match of the season before the end of January.

9. In the event of a club entering more than one team in the same competition, each of these teams shall, as between themselves, be treated as a separate entity as if it had been entered by a separate club.
10. In each competition, a player may represent more than one team during the season if both teams notify the Competitions Secretary of the change and the player is registered for the new team before playing for the new team. Only one such change will be allowed per player per season, unless with the express prior permission of the Competitions Secretary.
11. All Club Team Championship competitions shall be completed before the 30th April. Matches not played by the 30th April shall be referred to the Executive Committee for a decision as to what course shall be adopted.
12. Dates for all fixtures shall be arranged between Club Secretaries or Captains, who shall furnish a list of their fixtures for the season to the Competitions Secretary at the Fixtures Meeting or by a date agreed with the Competitions Secretary, who shall also be notified of any subsequent changes to the agreed dates of fixtures.
13. A team failing to fulfil a fixture shall lose the match by default, unless notice of the postponement of the fixture was received by the opposing Secretary or Captain not less than 7 days before the time fixed for starting. When a new date has been fixed for a replay, this date must be adhered to and no further postponement can be allowed. Provided always that where a default is due to circumstances beyond the control of the defaulting Club, that Club shall have the right to appeal to the Competitions Secretary who may order the match to be played on a mutually agreed date. Notwithstanding the above, matches may be postponed without penalty and, if necessary, at short notice if weather conditions make it inadvisable to travel. Rule 13 is not intended to preclude prior agreement between the two captains to rearrange the fixture. The Competitions Secretary may authorise the suspension of rule 13 or a reduction in the 7-day notice requirement if public health considerations or government restrictions or guidance constrain the availability of players at short notice.
14. All games shall be played with clocks. The applicable rate of play in each competition is set out in the *Specific Rules governing team competitions* at the conclusion of these General Rules.
15. Play shall commence at 7.30 pm unless otherwise agreed between the team Captains. In the event that a player designated to use the white pieces is absent or unready at the beginning of the match, the clock shall be started. If the missing player is designated to use the black pieces, white shall make the first move and start the clock of the absent player. At any time during the first 30 minutes of the absent player's time, the team captain shall have the power to substitute a reserve player, who shall take over the clock as it stands. If no eligible substitute is found within 30 minutes, the game will be declared a default.
16. Results of matches must be submitted and verified via the ECF League Management System (LMS) by both clubs within 7 days of the match being played.
17. In all matches a won game will count as one point, a drawn game as half and a lost game as zero. The team scoring the greater number of such points shall be the match winner.
18. Teams will score 2 points for a won match, 1 point for a tied match and 0 points for a lost match. The team securing the greatest number of match points shall win the competition. In the case of a tie on match points, the team with the highest aggregate of game points shall be declared the winner. Should there be a tie on both match and game points, the teams involved shall play off in a single match (the home team having been the away team in the previous match or, in the case of a double-round competition, home venue will be decided by lot), the winners of which will become champions. If the play-off ends in a tie, the result shall be determined by eliminating the result on bottom board and then in ascending order until a majority for one side is achieved. If the play-off consists entirely of drawn games, the clubs will hold any trophy jointly.
19. Any dispute or matter arising from or not provided for in these rules shall be referred to an Appeals Committee, whose decision shall be final. The Appeals Committee shall consist of the

County Association President as Chair, the Competitions Secretary and the General Secretary. If any member of the Appeals Committee is also a member of a club which is a party to the dispute, the President shall nominate a suitable substitute.

20. In all competitions except the Team Handicap Knockout Cup, the team Captains may agree prior to the fixture to the inclusion of one or more additional boards for the purpose of providing experience of games under match conditions to a greater number of players. Any additional boards are *hors de concours*, not counting towards the match result (or end-of-season tie break calculation, if applicable), but are to be submitted for rating in accordance with the guidance provided by the Rating Officer.

Specific Rules governing team competitions

A. CHAMPIONSHIP

- A.1 The winner of the competition will hold the County Championship Trophy.
- A.2 This event is open to all players without rating restriction.
- A.3 Teams shall consist of five players.
- A.4 Teams should be ordered in descending order of playing strength. Before tossing for choice of colours (if applicable) or otherwise before the start of the match, the Captains shall exchange lists of players in the intended order of play. After the toss has been made, no alteration shall be made to the order of the teams save as allowed by rule 15 above.
- A.5 Teams will compete in a single all-play-all group, subject to a maximum of 11 teams. If entries exceed 11 teams, the competition will be divided into two groups. The division into two groups will be made by lot, save that, if there are two teams from the same club, they shall be placed in different groups. If two groups are required, the title will be decided by a play-off match between the two first-placed teams from each group (home team to be decided by lot).
- A.6 If the number of teams in the competition (or, in the case of two groups, per group) is 6 or fewer, the teams shall play each other twice, home and away. Otherwise, the teams will meet once only, with venue determined by the Competitions Secretary at the start of the season.
- A.7 In the case of a single-round competition, the Captains will toss for choice of colours before the start of play. In the case of a double-round competition, the away team will have the white pieces on the odd-numbered boards.
- A.8 A club's preferred time control for home matches for the season must be notified to the Competitions Secretary before the start of the season. Usually, at least 3 hours shall be allotted for play (unless the home club has notified the Competitions Secretary at the start of the season that the playing session needs to be 2½ hours). The time control for each player shall be all moves in 60 minutes, with a 30-second increment for each move played throughout the game. (If the playing session is reduced to 2½ hours, the time control for each player shall be all moves in 45 minutes, with a 30-second increment for each move played throughout the game.) If there are insufficient digital clocks available, the digital clocks shall be used on the higher boards. A time limit of all moves in 90 minutes (75 minutes for the shorter playing session) shall be adopted for the boards using analogue clocks.

B. WORCESTER & DISTRICT

- B.1 The winner of the competition will hold the trophy formerly awarded to the winner of Division 1 of the Worcester & District Chess League.
- B.2 This event is open to all players with a rating below 1650.
- B.3 Teams shall consist of four players.

- B.4 Teams should be ordered in descending order of playing strength. Before tossing for choice of colours (if applicable) or otherwise before the start of the match, the Captains shall exchange lists of players in the intended order of play. After the toss has been made, no alteration shall be made to the order of the teams save as allowed by rule 15 above.
- B.5 Teams will compete in a single all-play-all group, subject to a maximum of 11 teams. If entries exceed 11 teams, the competition will be divided into two groups. The division into two groups will be made by lot, save that, if there are two teams from the same club, they shall be placed in different groups. If two groups are required, the title will be decided by a play-off match between the two first-placed teams from each group (home team to be decided by lot).
- B.6 If the number of teams in the competition (or, in the case of two groups, per group) is 6 or fewer, the teams shall play each other twice, home and away. Otherwise, the teams will meet once only, with venue determined by the Competitions Secretary at the start of the season.
- B.7 In the case of a single-round competition, the Captains will toss for choice of colours before the start of play. In the case of a double-round competition, the away team will have the white pieces on the odd-numbered boards.
- B.8 At least 2½ hours shall be allotted for play. The time control for each player shall be all moves in 45 minutes, with a 30-second increment for each move played throughout the game. If there are insufficient digital clocks available, the digital clocks shall be used on the higher boards. A time limit of all moves in 75 minutes shall be adopted for the boards using analogue clocks.

C. CHALLENGERS

- C.1 The winner of the competition will hold the Cobham Trophy.
- C.2 This event is limited to players rated below 1850 at the time of registration, with the exception of board 1 which is open to all players regardless of rating. Where no current rating is available, reference to a previous grade or rating will apply if possible (see Annex A).
- C.3 Teams shall consist of four players.
- C.4 Teams should be ordered in descending order of playing strength. Before tossing for choice of colours (if applicable) or otherwise before the start of the match, the Captains shall exchange lists of players in the intended order of play. After the toss has been made, no alteration shall be made to the order of the teams save as allowed by rule 15 above.
- C.5 Teams will compete in a single all-play-all group, subject to a maximum of 11 teams. If entries exceed 11 teams, the competition will be divided into two groups. The division into two groups will be made by lot, save that, if there are two teams from the same club, they shall be placed in different groups. If two groups are required, the title will be decided by a play-off match between the two first-placed teams from each group (home team to be decided by lot).
- C.6 If the number of teams in the competition (or, in the case of two groups, per group) is 6 or fewer, the teams shall play each other twice, home and away. Otherwise, the teams will meet once only, with venue determined by the Competitions Secretary at the start of the season.
- C.7 In the case of a single-round competition, the Captains will toss for choice of colours before the start of play. In the case of a double-round competition, the away team will have the white pieces on the odd-numbered boards.
- C.8 At least 2½ hours shall be allotted for play. The time control for each player shall be all moves in 45 minutes, with a 30-second increment for each move played throughout the game. If there are insufficient digital clocks available, the digital clocks shall be used on the higher boards. A time limit of all moves in 75 minutes shall be adopted for the boards using analogue clocks.

D. TEAM HANDICAP KNOCKOUT CUP

- D.1 The winner of the competition will hold the Laurence Wheatley Memorial Cup.
- D.2 This event is open to all players without rating restriction.
- D.3 Teams shall consist of four players.
- D.4 The competition's secretary shall organize the draw for all rounds of the competition at the start of the season by lot and specify dates when each round shall be completed.
- D.5 The away team will have the white pieces on the odd-numbered boards.
- D.6 Team players **MUST** be ordered in descending order of chess rating. After the team order and handicap have been announced, no alteration shall be made to the order of players in the teams.
- D.7 Captains should consult the WCA website before the start of the match to record the published or assigned ratings of their players and are advised to use a calculator or the calculator function provided by most mobile phones for calculating the sum of ratings of players in each team. Captains will agree the difference in sum of ratings in each team. After consulting the table for the handicap tariff - which has been fixed so that draws are not possible - the captains will announce to all players the score the higher rated team must achieve to win the match. If the team with higher rated players fails to achieve this score, the team with the lower rated players wins the match. If, after applying the handicap, the captain of the team with a lower score concedes a match by e-mail or in writing to the competition's secretary, the match result stands even if an error has been made in determining the handicap, transcribing players' ratings or assigning a rating to a team player.
- D.8 If the difference in sum of ratings of players of the teams is less than 200, there is no handicap. If such a match ends in a draw, the tie-break is by successive elimination of the scores on boards 4, 3 and 2 until the tie is broken. If every game of the match has ended in a draw, the team with the player facing an opponent with the largest difference in rating wins the match. If there are two or more pairs of players with the same difference in ratings, the tie-break should be applied to the players with next largest difference in rating. If the last procedure fails to break the tie, captains shall draw lots.

Determination of handicap. Points to be added to the score of a lower rated team in the Team Handicap Knockout Cup competition

Difference in sum of ratings of players between higher and lower rated teams	Value to be added to the lower rated team's score
0 - 199	No handicap. See rule D.8
200-499	0.1
500-699	1.1
700-1199	2.1
Greater than 1200	3.1

- D.9 At least 2½ hours shall be allotted for play. The time control for each player shall be all moves in 45 minutes, with a 30-second increment for each move played throughout the game. If there are insufficient digital clocks available, the digital clocks shall be used on the higher boards. A time limit of all moves in 75 minutes shall be adopted for the boards using analogue clocks.

- D.10 If a team is missing a single player at the agreed time for starting a match, captains may agree a later starting time, or an accelerated time control, rearrange the match within the time stipulated by the competition secretary for completion of the round or provide an eligible substitute (see D.11). Where there is no agreement and there is no available substitute, the team with the missing player will default board 4. The handicap will be calculated from the difference of the sums of ratings of players on boards 1-3 in each team and adjusted for the fact that there will be three boards in play only by multiplying the difference in sum of rating points of the teams by 1.33.
- D.11 In the event that a player is missing at the start of the match and playing the white pieces, the clock shall be started: if playing the black pieces, white shall play the first move and start the missing player's clock. A team with a missing player may provide a substitute player so long as the rating of the substitute is the same or lower than that of the missing player. Even if the rating of the substitute player would have altered the handicap for the match, the originally announced handicap agreed by captains immediately before play will stand. If the substitute player commences after the start of the match, that player takes over the clock as it stands. After 30 minutes has elapsed, the game will be declared a default unless an eligible substitute has taken the place of the missing player. Where, in good faith, a team has announced that a player will be late, but subsequently has to default a game because the missing player is absent 30 minutes after the start of the match, the handicap announced before the start of the match will be applied even though only three boards are in play.
- D.12 If a team is missing two or more players at the time scheduled for start of play, captains may agree a later starting time or an accelerated time control so long as duration of the playing session is longer than 60 minutes. If captains cannot agree a later start, or an accelerated time control, or re-arrange the match within the time stipulated by the competition secretary for completion of the round, the team with missing players loses the match by default.

E. RAPID PLAY LEAGUE

- E.1 The winner of the competition will hold the trophy formerly awarded to the winner of Division 2 of the Worcester & District Chess League.
- E.2 This event is limited to players rated below 1850 at the time of registration, with the exception of board 1 which is open to all players regardless of rating. Where no current rating is available, reference to a previous grade or rating will apply if possible (see Annex A).
- E.3 Teams shall consist of four players.
- E.4 Teams should be ordered in descending order of playing strength. Prior to the scheduled start time, the Captains shall exchange lists of players in the intended order of play. Thereafter, no alteration shall be made to the order of the teams save as allowed by rule 15 above.
- E.5 On each board, play will consist of two games, the second with colours reversed. The home team shall have white on the odd-numbered boards in the first game.
- E.6 All games shall be played with digital electronic clocks. The time control for each player shall be all moves in 20 minutes, with a 10-second increment for each move played throughout the game.
- E.7 The 2 matches will be scored separately, so there will be 2 match results per fixture, with 2 points for a win, 1 for a draw and 0 for a loss.
- E.8 Teams will compete in a single all-play-all group, subject to a maximum of 11 teams. If entries exceed 11 teams, the competition will be divided into two groups. The division into two groups will be made by lot, save that, if there are two teams from the same club, they shall be placed in different groups. If two groups are required, the title will be decided by a play-off match between the two first-placed teams from each group (home team to be decided by lot).

- E.9 If the number of teams in the competition (or, in the case of two groups, per group) is 6 or fewer, the teams shall play each other twice, home and away. Otherwise, the teams will meet once only, with venue determined by the Competitions Secretary at the start of the season.
- E.9 In the case of a single-round competition, the Captains will toss for choice of colours before the start of play. In the case of a double-round competition, the away team will have the white pieces on the odd-numbered boards.

General Rules governing Individual Championship competitions

1. The following Rules apply to all over-the-board team competitions unless stated otherwise in the rules for specific events.
2. The Official Laws of Chess, as published by FIDE and updated from time to time on their official website, shall govern play in all competitions, save where such laws shall be modified by these Rules.
3. The following competitions may be held:
 - a. WORCESTERSHIRE CLOSED CHAMPIONSHIP: A weekend congress open only to players eligible to represent Worcestershire, the winner being designated Worcestershire Individual Champion;
 - b. BENNETT CUP: A season-long competition open to all players registered with a club affiliated to the County Association;
 - c. BALL CUP: A season-long competition open to all players rated below 1650 at the start of the season registered with a club affiliated to the County Association.
4. Arrangements for the competitions, including rate of play and format, shall be in the hands of the designated event controllers.

Annex A - Assigning chess ratings to players in WCA competitions

At the AGM on 19 July 2023, it was agreed that the August 2023 ECF rating lists would be used for the Championship, Challengers and Rapidplay leagues.

The controller has ruled that 'partial' ratings (P category ratings) are unreliable and additional evidence should be sought for allocating ratings to players in WCA events. Where a player has an August standardplay K category rating and no rapidplay rating, WCA shall use the standardplay rating for determining eligibility for play in teams in the Rapidplay League: where a player has only a rapidplay category K rating, that rating shall be used determining eligibility for play in the District and Rapidplay Leagues and play on boards 2 to 4 in the Challengers League.

1. On receiving player registrations, the relevant competitions or tournament secretary will consult the extant ECF rating list and other records of playing strength to assign a rating to those players who are unrated at the start of the season.
2. Ratings published by the ECF and assigned ratings by WCA will be published on the WCA website and used in team and individual competitions organized by WCA.
3. Club secretaries and team captains will have seven days to appeal against a player's assigned rating.
4. The ratings published on the WCA web site will remain valid until completion of the final match of each competition unless the investigation of an appeal demonstrates an error. In such a case, a corrected rating will be used in any subsequent match.
5. Procedures for assigning a rating to unrated players:
 - 5.1. The rating shall be determined by reference to any published values or, in the absence of

such information, to performance in recent games, including social games without clocks. Precedence will be given to more recently published ratings. It is recognised that some players new to the game, especially juniors, may experience rapidly improving ratings and performance in untimed social games may be variable. The secretary of each competition in consultation with the association's rating officer will assign a rating for WCA competitions and will provide a rationale for the assigned rating in cases where there is an appeal.

- 5.2. For standard play games, the order of precedence for evidence will be:
 - 5.2.1. an over-the-board standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by ECF;
 - 5.2.2. an over-the-board standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by FIDE or a chess nation other than England;
 - 5.2.3. an over-the-board rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by ECF;
 - 5.2.4. an over-the-board rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by FIDE or a chess nation other than England;
 - 5.2.5. an online standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by ECF;
 - 5.2.6. an online standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by FIDE or a chess nation other than England;
 - 5.2.7. an online rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by ECF;
 - 5.2.8. an online rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by FIDE or a chess nation other than England;
 - 5.2.9. an online standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by chess.com, lichess.org or similar online platform;
 - 5.2.10. an online rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by chess.com, chess24.com, lichess.org or similar online platform;
 - 5.2.11. results of social and untimed games played in affiliated or associated clubs.
- 5.3. For rapid play games, the order of precedence for evidence will be:
 - 5.3.1. an over-the-board rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by ECF;
 - 5.3.2. an over-the-board rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by FIDE or a chess nation other than England;
 - 5.3.3. an over-the-board standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by ECF;
 - 5.3.4. an over-the-board standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by FIDE or a chess nation other than England;
 - 5.3.5. an online rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by ECF;
 - 5.3.6. an online rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by FIDE or a chess nation other than England;
 - 5.3.7. an online standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by ECF;
 - 5.3.8. an online standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by FIDE or a chess nation other than England;
 - 5.3.9. an online standard play rating published within the latest 24 months by chess.com, lichess.org or similar online platform;
 - 5.3.10. an online rapid play rating published within the latest 24 months by chess.com, chess24.com, lichess.org or similar online platform;
 - 5.3.11. results of social and untimed games played in clubs affiliated or associated with the association.