

About the topics

Chess Clubs vary widely in what programs they offer and in the atmosphere they provide for playing. We cannot speak on behalf of all clubs so the questions answers provided here are based on The MetroWest Chess club.

The MetroWest Chess club is primarily focused on providing USCF rated chess with a typical format of playing a tournament within a month and one game per week. As the club meets on a weeknight just once a week, it is considered to be a week-night chess club.

How is playing at a club different then playing my computer?

There's a big difference between sitting in front of a machine and sitting across from another person. When you play another person, it's like having a long conversation without words. When the game is over, you can discuss what happened and what might have been. You can learn much more from playing a person than just getting a pass or fail in your test against a machine.

There's another whole dimension to the game as well. The machine usually plays to its potential; people seldom do. When the machine makes a mysterious move, you're generally the one in trouble. When it's a person across from you making the mysterious move, someone's probably in trouble, but it's not necessarily you. Now you have to figure out if a mistake was just made or if you're about to make one.

No matter how bad things may be going for you or your opponent, the game is never over as long as someone can goof.

How is playing at a club different from playing on the Internet?

In addition to the downsides of playing a computer, Internet play has it's own down sides.

- Playing games shorter than 60 minutes for each player, while perhaps more exciting, trains you to move quickly but not deeply.
- Internet players trying a club for the first time generally struggle through a difficult transition period of learning to take their time to think about their moves.

- Internet players will generally play a lot faster than a club player. It's not unusual for the Internet player to have used about 20 minutes on the clock while their club opponent has used a full hour or two.

You'll find the game takes on a whole other dimension when you learn to play more slowly and thoughtfully.

Common Questions

I don't have a chess rating. What is it and how do I get one?

There are over 85,000 rated players in the United States. Just because these people have a rating **does not** necessarily mean they're better than you!

A USCF rating is simply a system to let you know how your playing strength compares to that of other rated players. Ratings go from 100 to about 2800. You're considered a master when you have a rating of 2200 or greater. The majority of people are in the middle of the range at about 1500.

It takes about 25 rated games to get a rating that is accurate enough to tell you your playing strength. After your first 25 rated games, every win earns you points on your rating. Of course, losses take your rating in the other direction. Get a rating and find out where you stand. You might be one of the greats, but the world won't know it until you have a rating.

Why shouldn't I be afraid to play at a chess club?

Many people who haven't played organized chess are fearful of "jumping in". Most of our new members started out this way, but after hanging out at the club, playing some casual games, watching what's going on and getting some pointers on their game, they make the jump. They come to realize that the best way to improve their game is to play and learn.

It does take some time to get used to playing with a clock, writing your moves down, and actually playing at your potential, all at the same time.

At first, all this stuff may be distracting, but after a while, you'll be able to focus sharper on your game than ever before.

Will there be any beginners at the club?

Every club has it's own mix of players at different skills and that mix of skills often changes over time. While there is **no such thing as "not good enough to play at a club"**, you do need to know how the pieces move and how to play.

Everybody is at some level of skill. Many have started out at the bottom and worked their way up. Others have found that they were much better than they thought. All you need is the desire to play and learn.

Do I need to bring my own equipment?

As in any sport, you need to have your own gear. Some clubs may have some equipment you can use but you should not rely on this. For "rated" play, you will need to have a "standard board and pieces"

For boards and pieces, simple, functional designs are required. Ornate, unusual, or miniature design is not allowed. The king and queen should have clearly different tops.

The size of the squares on the board should be between 2 inches and 2.5 inches in length/width, with the standard tournament set having a square size of 2.25 inches in length/width. Anything within these measurements meets the mark.

The "Staunton" pieces design is generally taken as a standard acceptable design around the world.

If you have an "expensive" chess set, you would be wise to not use it at a club. Wooden pieces may break when hitting the floor or might chip while in use and pieces may go missing.

Do I have to wait till the start of the next tournament to start playing?

Generally you can join a tournament in progress any week except the last one.

There is no good reason to wait until the start of a new one instead of joining one in progress.

Do not be concerned with "messing things up". The way players are matched to play takes into account people joining after the start of the tournament.

I know I may not be able to attend every week, can I still play and will this cause problems?

Many players have trouble making all of the nights in a given month (tournament). We encourage them to play anyway because there is no real disruption because:

- In any given week there may be several people who are already playing who may not make a given night
- We use a computer to match players so we just tell it who's playing that week and it does the rest.
- There's no elimination if you lose, you are matched against others with similar results and rating

As a player, can I watch someone else's game or look around while I play?

Yes you can. You can wander among the games in progress. Because play is divided into sections based on skill, you can check out what play is like at the different levels. It's kind of like flipping the channels on the TV when every channel has a different baseball game on it. When you spot one that's got something interesting going on, you can stay there a while and see what happens.

You can also watch the players as they discuss their just finished games in the other rooms. You can ask them why they did what they did at various points during their game.

As a parent, can I watch my children play?

As at most any USCF rated event, Parents are not allowed to be in the playing room when their children are playing.

Is there casual play?

Occasionally there is some casual play but generally not. The reason is that our club is very attractive for those who want to learn and improve their play by playing rated games.

The MetroWest chess club's primary features are:

- Large attendance, from beginners to masters
- Slow time controls to give time to think
- Well organized operation

- Space to go over your game afterward's
- Friendly atmosphere

Because we excel at the above, very few people attend who do not participate in the tournament so we do not attract many people for casual play.

As games finish through-out the night you may be able to get some casual play in with those who have finished going over their games.

Can kids play at the MCC, and are they welcome?

Players of all ages are welcome to play at our club. We have some players as young as 7 or 8 years old.

- Play will be against both adults and children.
- A parent or guardian must be present at all times and ensure appropriate behavior
- We do not teach the rules. Understanding of how to play and recording moves is required

We have a brochure on our website that discusses other considerations you should take into account for young players in a club environment.

How do I sign up to play or learn more?

Please visit the clubs web site for specific information about signing up to play

About the MetroWest Chess Club

- Founded in 1983
- A **non-profit** organization
- Run entirely by volunteers
- One of the largest chess clubs in the country
- Average of 81 players per month over the last Sixteen years
- Players range from beginners to Masters
- 2002 US Chess Club of the year
 - *they only let you win once*
- Meets one night each week all year round

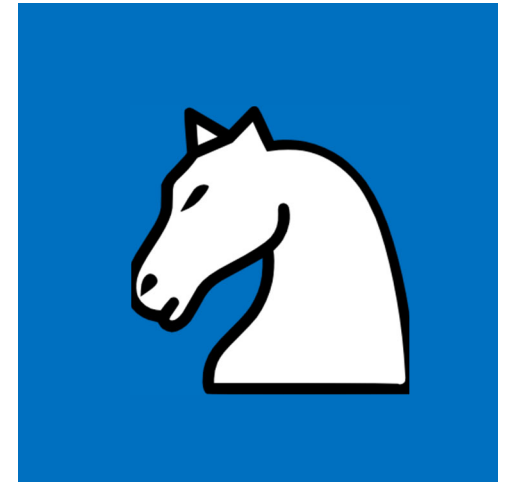


MetroWest Chess Club

Largest Chess Club in New England

Serving the MetroWest Boston chess community since 1983

Playing at a Chess club



www.MetroWestChess.org