

# Frequently Asked Questions

## By Parents with children who are just starting out in Chess.

### Where can I find information about chess for kids?

The Massachusetts Chess Association, (MACA) is the clearinghouse for all things chess in Massachusetts. The MACA site has a large Scholastics information center with schedules of upcoming events, advice for parents and links to other scholastic information.

### Are there any books that you can recommend to get us started?

Author and Chess Coach Bruce Pandolfini has published a large selection of books geared toward the beginning player whether adult or child.

One book especially written for young children to be read by either adult or the child is "Sammy Seahorse Teaches Chess" by F. Donald Bloss. It is a fun instructional book but it also has very good presentation on chess fundamentals.

If you go to [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and do a search with "Chess for Beginners" and then also "Chess for Children" you will find a wide selection to choose from.

### What about chess software for our computer?

For an instructional program, at [www.schoolchess.com](http://www.schoolchess.com) you will find a product called The Chess Workouts. This program is designed specifically for beginner kids. The people involved with this product have spent a lot of time in the scholastic chess world and have developed a very good set of course materials and a good interactive interface for it. Their chess club manager product gets great reviews and is very widely used around the country for running scholastic chess clubs in schools.

For programs to play chess against, there are two products generally considered the top of the line, Fritz and ChessMaster. Both products let you handi-cap the computer and adjust down its playing strength. Most serious players use Fritz. You can enable it to provide hints in the event you make bad moves. It has a "coach" that you can turn on that watches how you play and makes suggestions. It will also create a complete analysis of a game pointing out strong alternatives and blunders. Fritz is available from [www.ChessBaseUSA.com](http://www.ChessBaseUSA.com)

### What about coaches or instructors and how do I find them?

For most kids just starting out in chess, it is usually too early to consider a coach or instructor. Most coaches and instructors will not even consider taking on a student who is not regularly participating in chess events. In addition, most coaches have pretty full schedules. There are a few locations where there are group classes given. For information about coaches, instructors or classes, go to the [MACA site](#) link for "Teachers and Coaches"

### Where can my child play during the school year?

MACA maintains a complete schedule of scholastic tournaments. Some tournaments are part of Adult events while many are specifically for kids only. Each winter a series of qualifier events leading up to the Massachusetts State Scholastic championships gets under way. There are generally a number of events preceding this series that serve as a good way to get some seasoning for the kids.

### How do I find Chess Clubs near us?

There is a list of all the known chess clubs in New England linked from the [MACA site](#) by way of the "Where to Play" link.

## **When do most Chess Clubs meet?**

Most chess clubs meet only in the evening or on weekends. The Boylston Chess Club is open 7 days a week. Before planning to play at a club that meets on a school night, we recommend you take a look at the tips offered by the [MetroWest Chess Club](#) (MCC) on their site. They have a lot of experience with kids playing at their club, which meets on a school night.

## **Do chess clubs give instruction?**

As a general rule, most clubs do not offer instruction. The [MetroWest Chess Club](#) has a “Study Group” which meets before the tournament game begins. A well-experienced player leads the group in playing through and analyzing a game, looks at specific openings or endgame technique.

The [Greater Worcester Area Chess Club](#) runs a series of scholastic classes. The [Boylston Chess Club](#) also offers classes occasionally.

## **Where can my child play during the summer vacation months?**

This type of information is posted on the [MACA site](#) as the summer approaches. The Boylston Chess Club generally runs a chess Camp. The MetroWest Chess Club runs a summer scholastic series. The Waltham Chess Club has a sprinkling of scholastic events through out the year.

## **Can I watch my child play?**

Yes, you can watch the game. However, you are not allowed to interfere with the game in any way or assist in the playing of the game. We recommend that parents strive to help their children become accustomed to being on their own in the playing room. Generally, parents will not even be allowed in the playing room. This by the way is done to avoid problems with the Adults.

## **Are there any school programs in my area?**

Most school systems restrict participation in programs to residents of the town. There could be a program in your town now, perhaps at one of the grade or middle schools other than the school your child attends. If so, as a resident, you may be allowed to participate in the program. Check with your school department.

## **How do I start a chess program or club at my child’s school?**

This is a topic too large to discuss here. MACA has information available on their site to answer this question.

## **Many events talk about being “rated” or not “rated”. What does “rated” mean?**

A rating is a numerical indicator of a player’s strength. The USCF is the official US organization that calculates ratings for players based on the results of the games they play and the ratings of the players they play against. A “rated” event means that the games will be used to adjust the players rating to more accurately reflect their current strength.

## **What are the requirements for playing in a “Rated Tournament”?**

Most tournaments, unless they explicitly say otherwise are “USCF Rated”. Membership for those 19 years old and younger is \$20 per year, which includes a subscription to Chess Life magazine, which is an excellent magazine. For those 14 years old and younger a scholastic membership is available for \$13 a year. This membership includes a subscription to School Mates magazine geared expressly for very young kids in place of the Chess Life magazine. If you’re not sure which magazine is appropriate, you could also join so that you get both.

## **Any other last bit of advice?**

The best way to improve is to play. If you can keep your child from getting discouraged as he/she plays in events, you will find that they either decide that this isn’t the game for them or that they will take to the game and will be motivated to improve, taking on the job of educating themselves.