

How Does Correspondence Chess Work?



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USCF Correspondence Chess (CC) is a great way to improve your game and have fun. You don't even have to leave home! You can play CC either by sending moves through the post office or through an electronic network. Since the majority of newcomers to CC choose to play by mail, let's concentrate on explaining how that format works.

ALGEBRAIC NOTATION

USCF correspondence play requires the use of *algebraic notation* (AN), unless you and your opponent agree to another form. AN is easy to learn, simple to use, and useful for enjoying chess columns and chess books. If you don't already know AN or need to brush up, refer to our free info sheet, "Keeping Score," included in this packet.

HOW DO I GET AN OFFICIAL CC RATING?

As a newcomer, you must indicate on the tournament entry form your approximate playing strength. This enables us to pair you approximately with your opponents. Four rating levels are available. **Class A:** Very strong; **Class B:** Strong; **Class C:** Intermediate; and **Class D:** Novice. If you just learned how to play chess, you are considered a Novice. If you know how to play and write notation and are familiar with all aspects of the game, we suggest Class C.

When you receive your pairing sheet (as described below), regardless of which Class you noted, your rating will appear as "0000." When your first game is finished, we calculate your rating based on your result. If you're interested in the details of how the CC rating formula works, see our "Correspondence Chess Ratings" flier (included in this packet).

You now have a chess rating! Each Correspondence Chess game is rated as

soon as it's finished. You may wish to enter more CC events, so having a chess rating will be helpful in matching you with new opponents.

As explained in the rating flier, there are two rating formulas. If you have 25 or fewer games rated, you have a *provisional* rating. If you have more than 25 games rated, you have an *established* rating. Master level is achieved through performance.

GETTING STARTED IS EASY!

You choose which event you wish to enter. You can play against one opponent, three opponents, or even six opponents. Tournament entry fees vary depending on the tournament format and the prizes involved.

For example, let's assume you're already a USCF member and you want to enter a Class Tournament in which you play against three opponents. (That's the maximum we recommend for beginners.) Once you submit your entry fee (currently \$7), we pair you with three other players with the same playing strength, according to the approximate strength you indicated on your entry form.

All four of you are sent a copy of the same pairing sheet. Players are given numbers 1 through 4, and playing assignments are noted accordingly. The pairing sheet includes the name and addresses of your three opponents, as well as a tournament crosstable (explanation below). You will play a total of six games — two against each of your three opponents, once as White and once as Black. After receiving the pairing sheet, note what player number you are assigned. Refer to the pairing chart and see whether or not you have to mail your first White moves to any of your opponents.

It's possible that you are assigned Black for all three first games. In that

case, wait to receive a White move for Game A from your three opponents. After you receive each opponent's first White move, respond with your Black move. At the same time, send your first White move for Game B on the same postcard. After the first moves have been exchanged, you will be sending two moves each time; one move for Game A and another for Game B.

Along with your pairing sheet, you will receive information regarding CC rules, chess notation, rating calculation, and game-result reporting slips.

Please read the rule booklet as soon as you receive the pairing sheet. If you have any questions, feel free to call the USCF Correspondence Chess Director at (845) 562-8350, ext. 123, or e-mail inquiries to: cchess@uschess.org

REFLECTION TIME

If you are asking, "How do we keep track of time?" — it's easy. We allow 30 days of reflection time to make every 10 moves. Unused time can be carried forward to the next 10-move series, which allows you plenty of time later in the game when you want to ponder a position!

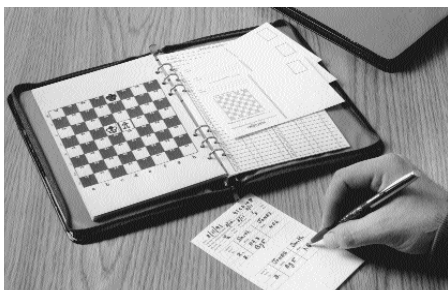
If you receive a move from your opponent today and you get your reply move postmarked the same day, you used zero days of reflection time. If your reply is posted the next day, you used one day, etc.

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO I NEED?

You're probably wondering, "How do I keep track of six games simultaneously?" and "What kind of postcards?" Special correspondence chess materials are available just for you. Although none of these items are required, thousands of CC players tell us this equipment makes their play more fun!

POST-A-LOG

The Post-A-Log (see photo) is a vinyl folder with two-sided plastic chessboards and pieces that will stick thousands of times. The folder has two pockets which are handy for storing cards, rulebook, etc. Two-sided scoresheets are also included. The Post-A-Log comes in different sizes, to accommodate any number of ongoing games.



Post-A-Log

MOVE-MAILING POSTCARDS

Move-mailing postcards are also highly recommended*. You can record moves for several games. Fill in the information blanks for each move transmission, and the other information that we require be sent with each move. A blank diagram is printed on the reverse side of the card. (You don't have to diagram the position with each move transmission, however.)

HOW TO COMPLETE A CARD

The sample move-mailing card below has been completed to show what yours may look like. Example: Today's date is 4/24/00. The section number is 00CD101. If you're sending your first move as White, you wouldn't have a card from your opponent. Thus, you won't be noting any postmark. "Received date" is the date you received the tournament pairing sheet/opponent's move. Let's say your reply date is 4/25/00. "My time," meaning *your* reflection time used on the move, would be one day — provided you receive a postmark date of 4/25/00. Your total time would be one day, since this is move 1. "Your time" refers to the reflection time your opponent used. Since this is move 1 of Game A, there's no need to fill in these blanks. (However, if you were on move 2, you would have to give an account of what your opponent's reflection time calculation as of this move.)

Game A: Since you're playing White, your name goes in the blank box above "White" and your opponent's name goes in the blank box above "Black." Below

	PLAYER	RATING							PLACE	SCORE
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
GAME A	1.		x 0				x	x	x	
	2. You		1 x				x	x	x	
	3.			x			x	x	x	
	4.					x	x	x	x	
GAME B	1.		x 0				x	x	x	
	2. You		1 x				x	x	x	
	3.			x			x	x	x	
	4.					x	x	x	x	

Tournament Crosstable

the box labeled "Game A," under "Move no.," write "1." In the next blank box to the right, note your first move; for example "e4." This is all you would send at this time, because you can't send a move for Game B until you receive your opponent's first White move for that game.

You may be asking, "Why so many blank boxes to write just one move for each game?" Once you receive your opponent's move, you're required to note what your opponent's move was, along with your reply. This enables your opponent to be sure you understood and noted his move correctly.

"If" moves are also an option. These are moves you offer based on your opponent's acceptance of certain moves. Newcomers are not advised to use "if" moves.

Once your move-mailing card is filled in, write the names and addresses, put on the correct postage, and pop the card in the mail!

Date _____	Section _____
Your last move, postmarked _____, was received on _____.	
My reply move is being mailed on _____.	
My time: _____ days. My total time: _____ days.	
Your time: _____ days. Your total time: _____ days.	
Game A Move No.	
	White
	Black
Game B Move No.	
	White
	Black

Move-Mailing Postcard

HOW DO I FILL IN A TOURNAMENT CROSSTABLE?

A crosstable like the one shown here appears on the bottom of each pairing sheet. The crosstable allows everyone to keep track of the game results. Since we have discussed Class tournaments, let's continue by filling in a crosstable for a Class tournament.

You'll recall that, in Class tournaments, you play two games with each opponent. The top four lines of the crosstable are for Game A results and the lower four lines are for Game B results. Let's say you're player number 2 and you beat player number 1 in both games. Refer to the player numbers to locate the appropriate result boxes in which to write the game result. A win is noted by a "1." A loss is a "0" and a draw is "1/2." In this sample, we've taken the liberty of already filling in your two wins against player number 1 in both games!

READY TO PLAY CC?

You should now have a better understanding of what CC is, and some idea what items you'll need to purchase to help keep your game records accurately. When you receive your pairing sheet, you will have a better idea who sends the first move to whom! You've also found out how to write chess moves and how to achieve a chess rating.

Well, that about covers it! We suggest you read through all of the information you've received. We're more than happy to answer any questions. Just give us a call! Now, let's play some chess by mail!

*Prices for equipment are in the accompanying brochure.