

How to Start Your Own Chess Club

School chess clubs are the most common starting point for new players in the United States today. Clubs bring together players, parents, and coaches, the three elements needed to start and kindle the flame of chess. The game best flourishes where clubs are local and convenient. So how might you start a school chess club? Take a look at these links. If you have resources we should post, please contact the SCA [Webmaster](#)

Russ Erickson, SCA's training consultant to schools and our 1989 Coach of the Year, has started chess clubs in a dozen schools. Russ has a wealth of information and teaching materials, and is always ready to help get your chess club "up and running." Contact him at russ@schoolchess.org.

SCA Vice President Lorene Lampert gives [advice on starting your club](#)

Another perspective from rockfordchess.org

SCA's Lorene Lampert gives advice about starting a scholastic chess club

Discuss it with the school's administration and discuss the possibility of including it as an after-school activity. Have a preliminary meeting with the interested parties and see what time best fits their schedule. Ask them to bring some other students to play in the club. Send a notice to the parents of the players. There could be some parents who could help. They will be needed to help with administration of the chess activities. If one or more of the parents plays chess, all the better.

They and/or the administration may have ideas for obtaining seed money to pay for chess sets. You will need about one set for every two players. Some players may be willing to bring their own sets from home. Always have an extra chess set or two for late registration or drop-ins. You may also charge a small registration fee. The United States Chess Federation is an excellent tie-in with a special foundation grant for giving a few chess sets to start-up school clubs. They also have an excellent guide to starting a chess club, *A Guide to Scholastic Chess*, which is free from American Chess Equipment, 524 S. Avenida Faro, Anaheim, CA 92807; Phone:(714)-998-5507; Fax:(714)-998-1160. E-mail: amchessg@aol.com. The U.S. Chess Federation E-mail is: scholastic@uschess.org.

Some of your better players may be willing to help the less experienced players. Perhaps a senior high player could help out in exchange for community volunteer credit. Senior citizens may also help out. Of course if there are other staff members interested in helping that would be great.

You would have to decide on how many weeks you want to extend the activity. My suggestion is to make it for most of the school year, about one hour per session for elementary students, 100 minutes for Junior High, and two hours for High School. In that way kids will have time to play chess and still be able to have a lesson. You will need a room that will be big enough to seat the players. Best would be a room that has rectangular tables such as may be available in a cafeteria or maybe a library.

Remember to advertise. Notices can be sent home that the school will have a chess club, or a flier on bulletin board advertising the chess club. This will give people an opportunity to be aware of this option. Then send a flier and get parents to sign up, before they are already committed to other activities. There are a number of course books that are also available.