



Swindon Chess Club Essential Guide

Who Are We:

Swindon Chess Club is a long-standing chess club which was started circa 1900 by Canon A. G. G. Ross (President of the British Chess Federation 1921-1938). We have a thriving and enthusiastic membership and are one of the largest chess clubs in Wiltshire. Our members have a wide range of chess experience and strength of play, from players who are fairly new to the game, all the way up to our strongest members who have a playing strength rating of over 2000 and even a titled FIDE Master (FM).

We have a committee of volunteers who help run the club, so if you have a question please ask one of them who will be happy to help.

At the time of writing, the committee members are:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| • Gordon Price | Chair |
| • Richard Carver | Treasurer (and Vice President of WCCA) |
| • George Georgiou | Secretary |
| • Ollie Swann | Rating Officer |

The club email address is: info@SwindonChessClub.org.uk

For juniors, please refer to the **Swindon ChessMax Wyvern Club**, which is a local club that runs a very active and thriving juniors group (a link can be found in Appendix F).

Club Evenings:

A committee member(s) will normally run the evening.

The club runs two sub-groups:

- **Chess & Chat** ... a social and friendly group, which meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each calendar month at The Abbey Mead, Elstree Way, Swindon. SN25 4YX
- **Rated Tournament** ... a serious rated competition group which meets on Wednesday evenings at G Catering Ltd, Unit A2, Star West, Westmead, Swindon. SN5 7SW

Both groups meet at 7:15pm, with play commencing at 7:30pm.

The big difference with OTB (Over-The-Board) chess that is missing when playing on-line chess, is the chance to have a post game discussion and analysis with your opponent. This is often the most enlightening part and is incredibly helpful in improving your game. Of course, you also get to meet like-minded people and make new friends.

Newcomers are most welcome to come along to "Chess & Chat" in the first instance. You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire with your contact details and other information upon arrival.



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Chess & Chat:

These evenings are informal and relaxed, where participants can play or study chess in any fashion they like. Often friendly games are played with a faster Blitz like time control. However, playing of more serious practice games with the players reviewing the game afterwards, studying chess openings or doing chess puzzles etc., is entirely fine too. It is up to the attendees on the night, to decide what they want to do.

As the name suggests, socialising and chatting with other members is also encouraged! As such, it's a great place to start for any new players who want to practice and get better at chess, before going into the more serious arena of tournament play (where chatting is a big no-no).

Rated Tournament:

The internal rated Club Championship competition uses an "all-play-all" format. Two seasons are held each year, Summer and Winter, each of which lasts 25 weeks. Each season, a maximum of 15 rated games are allowed to count towards the Club Championship. This allows a member to miss some weeks for personal reasons and still be able to compete evenly without detriment. It also allows for a few ad-hoc club evenings to be run in place of the regular rated game night, such as the club AGM, a simultaneous match with a very strong player or a coaching and game analysis evening etc.

The Winter Season typically starts on the first week of October and the Summer Season typically starts on the first week of April. The Winter Season therefore coincides with the Wiltshire League.

The Club Championship games are ECF rated and as such, all players in the Club Championship must be registered with the ECF. The games are played to the "Laws of Chess" as set out by the Federation Internationale des Echecs (FIDE) and in accordance with the English Chess Federation (ECF) Tournament Rules.

Games are played at a time control of 80 minutes + 10 second increment, which happens to be the same as Wiltshire County Chess Association's (WCCA) league time format. Therefore, the maximum length a game could last will be around 3 hours, although potentially it could exceed that.

The Club Championship winner is the player who accumulates the most points, regardless of how many games they have played.

As a rated game, the moves must be recorded while the game is being played, by each player on their scoresheet. With the time control format of 80 minutes + 10 second increment, if the time drops below 5 minutes remaining, then that player may cease recording their moves for the rest of their game (even if the 10 second increment subsequently takes their time back over 5 minutes).

After the game is completed, the players must then ensure that the final game result is recorded on the evening's result summary sheet, which will be left out at the front of the room. This allows the Rating Officer to file the evening's game results with the ECF, to enable the ECF to update the official rating value for each player. Additionally, the Rating Officer will update a results tracking sheet for internal club competition, which is published to the club members.



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Pairing System:

At the start of a Rated Group evening, attending players are matched against each other by ranking them in descending order according to their current standing in the Club Championship. Starting at the top, players are paired with the next lower player, against whom they have not already played. The process is continued until all the players in attendance are paired up.

An attempt is then made to try to balance the number of games each attending player gets to play with the black/white pieces over their season.

Some discretion is then allowed for adjusting the pairings if this is deemed desirable.

This system aims to provide players with a similar strength opponent who they have not yet played during the season.

Sit-Outs:

In the event of an odd number of players turning up to a Rated Group evening, which can happen from time to time, then one player will be asked to stand down (i.e. "sit-out"). The following criteria are used to determine which player in attendance is asked to sit-out, applied in the order shown:

- A verbal request for a volunteer willing to sit-out
- A player who has played the maximum 15 club championship games
- A player who has played the most games in the club championship

Alternatively, three volunteers maybe requested to sit-out and play some quicker time-format casual games, taking turns to play. In this case, these games will not be rated.



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ECF Membership - English Chess Federation:

To play rated games in the club, you need to be a member of the ECF. The ECF is the main UK chess organisation and will maintain your official ECF rating. Once you have taken out ECF membership, you can compete in the internal Swindon Chess Club Championship and many other external tournaments.

You can register with the ECF by phoning them or via their website (a link can be found in Appendix C). Membership runs for one year from the time of registration / renewal.

When you first register with the ECF, you will start at a nominal Provisional rating, which is indicated by a "P" suffix. You should expect this provisional rating to change rapidly over your first few games, towards your true playing strength and then stabilise. Don't get disheartened if your rating falls sharply from its initial value - this has happened to most of us!

Eventually once you have played a number rated games, your provisional status will be removed.

FIDE Membership - Federation Internationale des Echecs:

Sometimes external tournaments are run under the FIDE organisation, which will require you to be listed with FIDE. FIDE are the main World chess organisation and will maintain your official FIDE rating.

If you take out Gold ECF membership, this supports you being listed with FIDE and means you won't have to pay an extra charge for tournaments run under the FIDE banner. Bronze ECF membership does not support this and so you would need to pay an extra fee to enter those tournaments. Silver ECF membership has been discontinued and no longer exists.

If you enter a FIDE tournament(s) where the average FIDE rating exceeds 1000 (retrospectively), then once you have played 5 games against FIDE rated players and obtained at least one point (i.e. a win or two draws), then you will also get a FIDE rating.

Your FIDE rating is maintained separately to your ECF rating but should be roughly similar, since in August 2020 the ECF converted over from an older 3-digit ELO system, to a 4-digit ELO format that is comparable to a FIDE grade.



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External Tournaments:

External tournaments and league matches, often group players by their playing strength in order to match players with opponents of a similar level. Typically, these are called Minor, Intermediate and Major. Another group called Open often exists into which any player can enter, but this section is usually populated with the strongest players.

Wiltshire League:

The Wiltshire League is an inter-club tournament held over the Winter Season, between the Wiltshire Clubs who are affiliated to the Wiltshire County Chess Association (WCCA), which are currently:

- Chippenham Meet on Tuesday nights (for rated games)
- Devizes Meet on Tuesday nights (for rated games)
- Swindon Meet on Wednesday nights (for rated games)
- Trowbridge Meet on Thursday nights (for rated games)

The Wiltshire league is split into the following sections, with the rating bands as shown:

- **Minor** dissolved by WCCA (23-Sep-2025)
- Intermediate Under 1820
- Major 1820 and above (*strictly, the Major is unrestricted with no rating band*)

Wiltshire League games are played both at HOME where other club's teams come to us, and AWAY where we travel over to them. The league match games are typically played on the night that the hosting club meets to play rated games, as shown above.

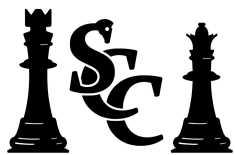
Normally, four players normal make up each Wiltshire League team. It is possible a team may have more than four players on a scheduled match evening, but only the game results from the top four boards will count towards the Wiltshire League result. The other games will however, still be rated.

The boards for a Wiltshire League match are played as follows:

BOARD	WHITE Pieces	BLACK Pieces	NOTES
1	away	HOME	Strongest player (usually)
2	HOME	away	
3	away	HOME	
4	HOME	away	Weakest player (usually) (optional game)
5	away	HOME	
6	HOME	away	

Or paraphrased:

The **AWAY** team gets the **WHITE** pieces on **ODD** board numbers.
The **HOME** team gets the **BLACK** pieces on **EVEN** board numbers.



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Please let the committee know if you are available to play in the Wiltshire League, including whether you are able to play both HOME and AWAY, or just HOME. Also if you cannot commit to playing, whether you would act as a backup player to step in, if a player is unable to make one of the scheduled league match evenings.

Playing away matches requires some travel, but often players from the same team work out a car-share between themselves to save on costs.

Sometimes, if there are many members who are able to play in the Wiltshire League, a club may enter 2 (or even more) teams in a league section. These are identified as for example, InterA and InterB teams. The letter suffix should denote which team is stronger, so InterA should be stronger than InterB. The players and team structure are worked-out by the club's committee and the various nominated team captains.

When the league match is played on the same night as a club night, then this will reduce the number of nights available to play in the internal SCC Championship. However, there should still be ample opportunity for a player to play in both competitions without detriment. Note that a Wiltshire League match game will always take precedence over playing a game in the internal club competition.



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Etiquette:

Chess like most sports, has particular expectations from the behaviour of players and also from any spectators. Spectators are advised to watch from a distance, so as not to distract the players.

Primarily, the following are expected:

- No cheating! (Chess Engines and outside help are not permitted, except where agreed in a friendly game)
- Good sportsmanship.
- Loosing gracefully (also winning gracefully!)
- Respect for your opponent, regardless of the result.
- Avoid swearing, rude gestures, insults, politics etc.

In rated games, the following are also expected (even if only one game remains in play):

- Absolute quiet - no talking, laughing, causing noise etc.
- Not interfering, gesturing or causing a distraction to players
(*The environment should be likened to a library or school exam hall*)
- Not helping another player, including pointing anything out such as a clock timing-out, an attempt to make an illegal move, failure to record moves on the scoresheet or any other mistakes.
- Mobile phones must be switched off, or set to completely silent with no vibration.
- In more serious competitions, mobile phones must be off and placed on the table for the arbiter to see, or not present on your person at all.
- Following the official rules, including touch-move and no take-backs.
- Accepting the arbiter's decision when they are called upon to make a judgement call.
- Once a player has finished their game, they officially become a spectator.

Health & Safety:

Health and Safety is everyone's responsibility.

You should exercise good judgement at all times.

If you have any issues or concerns, please flag them to a committee member.

You must abide by the committee and/or venue's instructions on Health & Safety matters.

Feedback Form:

A form exists for providing feedback suggestions. If you wish to provide feedback, please complete this form and return it to a committee member to be looked at.



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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

Q: Are juniors accepted in the club?

Currently, the club is adults only, although we are looking into whether juniors could be permitted in the future. Currently for juniors, please refer to the Swindon ChessMax Wyvern Club (a link can be found in Appendix F).

Q: What can I do to get involved?

The club is run by the committee members who are all volunteers. Any assistance you can provide to them is always welcome, such as helping to setup and pack-away on an evening, help in organising events, etc. If you have any suggestions or initiatives, there is a form on the website for you to submit ideas to the committee for their evaluation. Do please offer your help where you can.

Q: What competition prizes are there?

The following prizes are available to play for, which are held until handed on the following season/year when won by someone else:

- Internal Club - Tournament ... Grand-aggregate seasonal winner (summer / winter)
- Internal Club - Most Improved Player ... Based on ECF rating change over a season
- ~~Wiltshire League – Minor Section~~ ... ~~dissolved by WCCA (23-Sep-2025)~~
- Wiltshire League - Intermediate Section
- Wiltshire League - Major Section

Q: Who are the main chess entities?

The following are the main chess entities you may come across:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| • FIDE | Federation Internationale des Echecs (Global Chess Organisation) |
| • ECF | English Chess Federation (UK Main Chess Organisation) |
| • 4NCL | Four Nations Chess League (UK Inter-Country League) |
| • Chiltern League | An English inter-county League (UK Inter-County League) |
| • WCCA | Wiltshire County Chess Association (Wiltshire Inter-Club League) |
| • WECU | West Of England Chess Union (Western Counties Organisation) |

Q: What should I do if I have a complaint?

Please raise your concern verbally with a committee member in the first instance. If the complaint is a significant issue, we may require you to put something in writing.

Q: How will you handle my personal data?

The club has a Data Protection & Privacy Policy, in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). This can be downloaded from our website (a link can be found in Appendix A).



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APPENDIX A: Swindon Chess Club

Swindon Chess Club	Web Address
Facebook Page (The Swindon Chess Club)	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064651541144 <i>NB: This is the new Facebook group and is titled "The Swindon Chess Club". The Facebook group titled simply "Swindon Chess Club" (with no "The" prefix) is an old, deprecated Facebook page and should NOT be used.</i>
Main Webpage	https://www.swindonchessclub.org.uk
Useful Information	https://www.swindonchessclub.org.uk/downloads <i>Including...</i> GUIDE: Essential Guide = this document GUIDE: OTB Playing Guide FORM: Member Questionnaire FORM: Member Feedback Form POLICY: Data Protection & Privacy Policy (GDPR) <i>...and many more!</i>



Swindon Chess Club
Website



Swindon Chess Club
LinkTree



Swindon Chess Club
Facebook

APPENDIX B: Other Wiltshire Clubs

Other Wiltshire Clubs	Web Address
Chippenham = SN15 4LL	https://www.chippenhamchessclub.org.uk
Devizes = SN10 1LD (see also WCCA below) former Nationwide club now merged into Devizes	http://www.wiltshirechess.org.uk/devizes.html
Nationwide = SN3 1TX (see also WCCA below) now merged with Devizes	https://www.wiltshirechess.org.uk/nationwide.html
Salisbury = SP1 1DU	https://www.wiltshirechess.org.uk/salisbury.html
Trowbridge = BA14 0AX	http://www.trowbridgechessclub.co.uk



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APPENDIX C: Chess Governing Bodies

Chess Governing Bodies	Web Address
ECF (English Chess Federation) Controls, directs and promotes chess in England (formerly the BCF = British Chess Federation)	https://www.englishchess.org.uk
ECF Rating Database	https://rating.englishchess.org.uk/v2/new/list_players.php
ECF Joining Form	https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-membership-rates-and-joining-details
FIDE (Federation Internationale des Echecs)	https://www.fide.com
FIDE Rating Database	https://ratings.fide.com

APPENDIX D: Official Chess Rules

Official Chess Rules	Web Address
English Chess Federation Tournament Rules (V03 November 2024)	https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-tournament-rules https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Tournament-Rules-V03-Nov-2024-1.pdf
FIDE Handbook Laws of Chess (2023) - Section E (taking effect from 1 January 2023)	https://handbook.fide.com https://handbook.fide.com/chapter/E012023
FIDE Rules Commission Laws of Chess (2023) (taking effect from 1 January 2023)	https://rcc.fide.com https://rcc.fide.com/2023-laws-of-chess https://rcc.fide.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/20230101Laws-of-Chess.pdf
FIDE Technical Commission	https://tec.fide.com/layout https://tec.fide.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-12-13-TEC-NEW-Chapter-2021.pdf



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APPENDIX E: UK Regional Chess Organisations

UK Regional Chess Organisations	Web Address
Wiltshire League (WCCA) (Wiltshire Inter-Club League)	https://www.wiltshirechess.org.uk
West Of England Chess Union (WECU) (Linked with the WCCA)	https://www.cornwallchess.org.uk/wecu/home.htm
West Of England Chess Union (WECU) (ECF LMS)	https://lms.englishchess.org.uk/lms/organisation/281
Oxfordshire	http://www.oxfordfusion.com/oca

APPENDIX F: Junior Chess

Junior Chess	Web Address
Chess in Schools and Communities (CSC)	https://www.chessinschools.co.uk
Wiltshire Juniors	http://www.wiltshirejuniorchess.com
Swindon ChessMax Wyvern Club (held at Hindu Centre, next to Wyvern Theatre)	https://www.swindonhinducentre.co.uk/chess-club https://sites.google.com/view/chessmax/home <i>(the main Swindon club for juniors)</i>
Moon Junior Chess Club (held at Shaw Ridge Primary School, SN5 5PU)	moonchess@hotmail.co.uk

APPENDIX G: On-Line Chess Websites

On-line Chess Websites	Web Address
Chess.com	https://www.chess.com
LiChess (Li from Libre, meaning free) Libre is pronounced "lee-bray", thus the website is pronounced "lee-chess"	https://lichess.org



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APPENDIX H: UK Chess Leagues

UK Chess Leagues	Web Address
Wiltshire County Chess Association Rules	https://www.wiltshirechess.org.uk/wilts_rules.html
Chiltern League (UK Inter-County League)	https://oxfordfusion.com/oca/index.cfm?Org=8 https://www.buckschess.org.uk/chiltern-league
4NCL (UK Four Nations Chess League)	https://www.4ncl.co.uk

Wiltshire League:

See previous section for details.

Chiltern League:

The Chiltern League is an inter-county tournament held over the Summer Season, which is between members put forward by all of the Wiltshire Clubs (Chippenham, Devizes, Salisbury, Swindon and Trowbridge) and players put forward by clubs from the other UK counties who have entered into this League.

Please let a committee member know if you are available to play in this and they will direct you to the person who is organising it.

4NCL:

The 4NCL is the UK's Four Nations Chess League and is an inter-country tournament between the four nations of the United Kingdom. This is outside the scope of this document and is only mentioned here for completeness.