

Rule the Board Scholarship

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The purpose of the *Rule the Board* scholarship program is to support Odyssey scholars who participated in the *Checkmate Your Summer* class to continue their passion for chess. In the first year of teaching chess at Odyssey, we were blown away by the scholars' competitiveness in chess, sportsmanship, and eagerness to learn. Given that some scholars have never played chess before, we were delighted at the scholars' abilities to quickly pick up and apply chess concepts in a short period of time. In particular, a few students displayed all of these qualities at the highest level. Their positive attitude and energy towards the class were truly infectious, and our only regret is that we couldn't spend more time helping these students learn and grow. From the bottom of our hearts, we believe that the highest-performing students in our class deserve the opportunity to further their enthusiasm and interest in the game and experience the competitive setting. Therefore, *Rule the Board* is a one-year scholarship program that will develop these deserving scholars' ability to play and learn chess, which will not only help them excel at the game but also develop the critical thinking and analytical skills that will prove highly valuable in all areas of their lives.

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Scholarship Contents

Recipients of the *Rule The Board* scholarship will receive a 1-year United States Chess Federation (USCF) membership, up to 3 tournament paid entry tickets, a professional chess set (including a chessboard, pieces, and clock), a Chess.com Diamond account, lessons, and additional support and funding if necessary. Returning *Rule The Board* recipients who have demonstrated a sustained passion for chess from the previous year may be reconsidered for the scholarship. Scholarship recipients will also have biweekly or weekly meetings with *Rule the Board* teachers to check in, ask any questions, and/or practice. Additionally, we will hold optional office hours. The following is a breakdown of the scholarship's benefits:

- USCF Membership
- 3 X Tournament Entry Fees
- Full Chess Set (Chessboard, pieces, and clock)
- Chess.com Diamond membership (scholars' accounts will be synchronized with our accounts to check-in with their engagement)
- Biweekly/weekly meetings (required)
 - Chess lesson plans and a structured learning pathway
- Weekly Office Hours (optional)

Lessons and Office Hours

One hour will be held regularly through Zoom to accelerate the growth of each scholar. Each lesson will be structured into five parts: an opener, review, lesson, practice, and questions. Lessons are designed to maximize scholars' time with teachers to provide real-time feedback for meaningful growth. Depending on chess level, lessons will be adjusted and planned accordingly. The following is the structure of a regular, one-hour lesson:

- OPENER: Daily puzzle, review of something from last class – 5 minutes
- REVIEW: Review homework stats + games – Best game / Worst game – 10 min
- LESSON: Openings, midgame, endgame, checkmates, puzzles, exercises – 30 min
- PRACTICE: Play against us, each other, and/or watch one of them play with our supervision – 10 min
- QUESTIONS – 5 min

In addition to lessons, a “Rule The Board Lesson Logs” document will be shared with all scholars. This document is where lesson plans will be posted ahead of time and where scholars can reference it to review any previously covered chess topic. The document also includes notes and tips specific to the scholars in that particular lesson.

All lessons will be recorded over Zoom and shared with scholars and parents through Google Drive. Lessons will be recorded for the following reasons: as an extra resource for scholars for review and catching up, for program modification and improvement, and for archival purposes. It is strongly encouraged that along with the “Rule The Board Lesson Logs” document, scholars utilize these resources to review, reinforce, and/or catch up on any material. Recordings will only be shared with the teachers and scholars themselves; they will not be shared externally without prior parental approval. The videos are intended for scholars and families, but it is their choice to share the clips as they wish. Sharing of any media from the *Rule The Board* scholarship program, including but not limited to recordings and images, is in accordance with [Odyssey Atlanta Inc.'s media policy](#).

Weekly office hours are designated times for scholars to practice the skills they have learned from lessons. Having distinct times for lessons and office hours allows scholars to first

focus on learning a topic and then applying it. Although we will go over examples during lessons, lesson time will be primarily focused on learning and initializing concepts. Office hours will be devoted to giving scholars a place to apply and reinforce concepts they have learned through playing with other scholars, playing games online through Chess.com, or by reviewing concepts with teachers. While scholars are not required to attend, office hours sessions strongly complement lessons in the scholars' learning experience, maximizing their growth and improvement.

Tournaments

Tournaments allow scholars to engage and practice in a real-world and competitive environment. Chess tournaments are not only where scholars can show off their skills and improvement that they have gained from the program but also represent Odyssey. *Rule the Board* covers all charges and entry fees for one tournament per semester and one tournament in the summer. More information about participating in tournaments can be found in the ["Rule the Board Getting Ready for Chess Tournaments"](#) document.

Expectations and Chess Etiquette

Participating in the *Rule the Board* program requires recipients to be focused, engaged, and fully committed to their growth as chess players and scholars. growing through our scholarship program. Along with going above and beyond, recipients are expected to:

- Exhibit punctuality in attending lessons
- Be engaged and present during lessons
 - Turn their camera on, with themselves in frame
 - Remove any distractions
 - Give their undivided attention to the speaker and lesson
- Play to the best of their ability in each chess game
- Analyze their games after playing them, regardless of the result (remember, you learn the most from your mistakes!)
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship (when applicable) by:
 - Saying “good luck” to their opponent at the start of a game
 - Saying “good game” to their opponent at the end of a game, regardless of the result
 - Shaking hands with their opponent before and after a game
 - Resetting the board after each game
 - Otherwise maintaining respect towards opponents and coaches, regardless of performance in any chess game

Homework

Weekly homework completed through Chess.com is required from scholars. Weekly practice ensures consistency, practice, and growth. Homework completion will be reviewed at the beginning of lessons and is assigned to be completed in between lessons. Scholars who consistently have missing homework may lose their privilege of competing in tournaments for that semester covered by the scholarship. Weekly homework consists of the following:

Recipients of the *Rule the Board* scholarship are required to:

- Play at least 7 games per week (any time control except bullet)
- Complete at least 1 lesson per week
- Complete at least 35 puzzles a week
- Participate in at least 1 online tournament per month

Progress will be recorded through each recipient's individual Chess.com account.

Scholars are expected to uphold the standards above. A meeting will be scheduled promptly with the scholar if these standards are not met. If the situation does not improve, the parents of the scholar will be notified, and the scholar may not be considered for the following year's *Rule the Board* scholarship program. Furthermore, the scholar may be put on probation at the teachers' discretion.

Parent Involvement

While the *Rule the Board* scholarship program is intended to be scholar-driven, parents still play a key role in their success. Parents are expected to attend all parent meetings and ensure that their scholar(s) are engaged with the program. If necessary, parents may be asked to assist scholars in fulfilling any expectations mentioned above.

Fair Play

Cheating in any form is not tolerated. In person or online, methods including but not limited to using a chess engine are strictly prohibited unless used for analysis. Violating fair play policies gains an unfair advantage for a player, which includes receiving help from others or a computer unless administered by the *Rule the Board* teachers. If someone is deemed to have cheated by us, we reserve the right to dismiss them from the program.

Timeline

The *Rule the Board* scholarship program lasts one full year, beginning at the end of the current Odyssey summer program and ending at the beginning of the following Odyssey summer program. *Rule the Board* will have 8 recipients each year. In partnership with Odyssey staff and volunteers, we will select each recipient through demonstrated characteristics, including but not limited to an eager willingness to learn, infectious enthusiasm, an engaged and present mindset, a positive attitude, a notable potential to learn chess, strong character, and good sportsmanship. A general timeline for the scholarship period is shown below. Lessons are held regularly unless mentioned otherwise.

Summer: July:

- Scholarship recipients are announced at the end of the Odyssey summer program. Parents will be notified to confirm or offer the scholarship to another scholar
- Recipient families' welcome and orientation meeting
 - Lesson and Office Hours dates and times for the year are confirmed
 - Scholars are registered for Chess.com accounts
 - Lesson Logs and Recordings folder is shared

Semester 1: August–December

- Scholars receive their chess sets
- Family meeting one week before the first tournament: register scholars for USCF memberships
- Scholars participate in first tournament
- End of semester recap with families
- No lessons in the month of December

Semester 2: January–May

- Scholars participate in second tournament
- End of semester recap with families
- No lessons in the month of May

Summer: June–July (Following year's Odyssey summer program)

- Summer tournament if scholars' schedules allow
- End of program recap and celebration

Commitment

Rule the Board is a year-long commitment, and recipients are expected to meet the core expectations outlined in the “Homework, Expectations, and Chess Etiquette” section. If, for any reason, you are unable to take on this commitment, please notify us as soon as possible so that the opportunity may be offered to another scholar. Students who opt out will still remain eligible for consideration in future years.

For any questions or to formally opt out, please contact:

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