

St. Charles Chess Club Rating System

The ratings are very important for pairing students during club meetings because they are a reasonable measure of students' abilities (relative to each other).

Parents and players alike probably wonder how the basis for the chess rating is calculated. Our system is loosely based on a system developed by Chess Express Ratings, Inc. (CXR) which is significantly different from the system used by either Washington State or the United States Chess Federation. The main difference is that this system can be applied after each game - so multiple rounds are not required. The other difference is the ease of calculation. One modification that we have made to the CXR system is that all players are given a tentative starting rating of 400.

Ratings are not considered "official" until at least 5 club games are played and should not be considered very accurate until at least 10 club games are played - more if the player is particularly strong or had a really bad start.

RATINGS FORMULA: If the players are within 12 rating points of each other, the winner will gain 21 points after the game and the loser will drop 21. A draw in this situation would result in no change to either rating. Otherwise, the result of the opponent's rating minus your rating, divided by 25 will be added or subtracted from the 21 points at risk. For example, if your opponent is rated 100 points higher than you and you win, you will have 21 plus 100 divided by 25 (4), or 25 points added to your rating and they will lose 25 points. If you lost, you would lose 21 but add back the 4 points for a loss of 17. Conversely, they would gain 17 points. Had you drawn, the same math would apply except that the 21 points would not be at risk. Hence, you would gain 4 points and the higher rated opponent would lose 4 rating points. (Simple, huh? We are very fortunate to have a former parent who is a professor of mathematics develop the system.)

There are 4 overriding factors to the formula:

1. The winning player always gains at least 2 points
2. The losing player always loses at least 2 points
3. Neither player may gain or lose more than 41 points
4. No one can be rated under 300

Calculation mistakes discovered after the fact are usually not corrected for administrative reasons and because continued play tends to self-correct the players' ratings back to their "true" ratings.

As you can see, a ratings difference of 30 to 40 points between any two players is not significant. A single match can swing the difference.