

Chess tips for parents of chess players from Chess Coach Mario Amodeo:

Etiquette:

- Once your child knows how the pieces move around and has played a few games to get acquainted with the game, always play “touch-move”. “Touch-move” means if you touch a piece you have to move it unless it is not movable. It is not only proper etiquette but standard in all junior chess tournaments. Adhere to “touch move” when playing at home so the student learns responsibility and to avoid arguments like “but I let you take your move back earlier”. Students only interested in casual play may choose to bend this rule, but be aware that even some casual players expect adherence to “touch-move” because they have found it increases enjoyment.

Clock Time:

- Young children typically don’t take the time needed to consistently play good moves in part because they play moves very quickly. Therefore, when using a timer, at least fifteen minutes (preferably more) of thinking per side per game is recommended. Most chess coaches agree: playing too much five minute chess may be harmful because it reinforces playing too fast. Like a video game, playing five minute chess may be entertaining but probably is not the way for beginners to improve and may even be detrimental.

Homework:

- Always print out homework a teacher provides via email attachment, even if the child doesn’t always do it. This will show your child that you support the teacher’s decision to provide homework and that you expect your child to do the homework. Actions speak louder than words.
- Avoid study or chess preparation on tournament day. Tournament day is for fun. The time to study is in the weeks and months leading up to the day of the tournament. A five minute warm up of easy chess puzzles is an exception.

Parental Support, Balanced with the Scope of the Coaches’ Responsibilities:

- For a child to reach a competitive level in chess, the parent needs to register and accompany the child to junior chess tournaments to provide supervision and moral support.
- Good tournament goals include having fun and learning. Demanding or even suggesting wins can add unwanted pressure. Chess combat can be intense, and losing one game or several can be difficult enough - don’t make it worse.
- Motivation may be cultivated, but not forced. I motivate by sharing my own enthusiasm for chess in both words and actions. Chess improvement takes staying interested long enough for the improvement to happen. For any young child to stay interested in chess, it is important that the people around him or her not make it too serious until high school. So we need to be gentle when giving advice to not pressure or embarrass anyone. If a parent is disappointed in a poor chess result, keep smiling and bring concerns to ‘Coach’. Hire a coach you trust and let the coach handle the coaching.