

Essex Chess Association - Living with the virus Playing Conditions Guidance

General

This Guidance applies to all events run by the Essex Chess Association, matches played at Essex Chess Association venues and to the teams it enters in external events. It is intended to provide consistency of approach for chess players as to what to expect during the course of the season and to provide the flexibility that will be needed to cope with ever changing circumstances as the season progresses. It is a safety first approach not only for players and officials at events but also for those with the legal duties and liabilities that come with organising chess events, which must be risk assessed and which may be uninsured. Without organisers there is no chess !

Chess players must recognise that the playing of chess indoors involves close contact with at least one other individual for a prolonged period of time, which all HMG guidance to date cautions against. Match play also involves travel which may involve close contact with others in an enclosed environment. It is because of this inherent enhanced risk to the individual that measures to reduce this risk are required in the Playing Area, whatever the policy of the venue.

By playing in one of the Association's events or for one of its teams, players must accept this increased personal risk. It is essential that a player's expectation of the playing conditions for play are upheld and that involves everyone's co-operation. Consideration of the requirements of others should be placed ahead of one own's personal preferences and risk tolerance.

Those with medical conditions are strongly advised to obtain medical advice before agreeing to play.

Those who require adjustments to enable participation should declare these in good time to their captain or event organiser as appropriate so that arrangements can be made to accommodate you and ensure the safety of others. In Essex, we are used to accommodating through alternative arrangements those who are blind or who have other physical limitations. Provision for those who are exempt from the wearing of face coverings is no different. There are various adjustments that can be made including increased ventilation, board barrier, or two-boarded chess for social distancing reasons (which is permitted for over-the-board rating). Chess is a game for all and will continue to be.

There are also steps any individual can take to reduce risk as a matter of individual choice:

- Vaccination – to reduce the severity of an infection and reduce your ability to transmit
- Testing – to find out if you have the virus and thus able to infect others
- Stop the spread – do not attend if you have covid-19 or flu like symptoms or required to self-isolate
- Slow the spread – avoid unprotected close contact & maintain social distancing indoors

Ventilation

Through ventilation (an open window and door, or two open windows) or air conditioning refreshed with external air (filtered as necessary) provides the best mitigation against the build up of viral load concentration. It is now well documented that airborne aerosols are the greatest means of transmission. Fresh air flow however small reduces the concentration in anyone area and accordingly the risk of infection. The more ventilation the better.

Ventilation will however be venue specific and will inevitably vary with the seasons as the need to balance other health risks comes into play (e.g., influenza, pneumonia). Where chess is to be played in venues with poor ventilation then warnings must be issued and other mitigations should be adopted to reduce the risk of transmission such as increased distancing. These should form part of your risk assessment for playing in that venue.

Conditions of Entry/Participation

The following are mandatory requirements following consultation with our member clubs:

- Compliance with government (local and central) regulations in force at the venue at the time of playing (this may include imposition of restrictions and closure of venues)
- Socially distanced boards (ideally one game per table, where practicable)
- Face coverings to be worn in the Playing Area unless:
 - exempt as under 12 years of age
 - exempt for medical reasons
 - when at the board, both players agree to dispense with them provided suitably distanced from other players
- Sanitise hands at start of playing session
- Sanitiser and face coverings to be available

Recommended practice

Ventilation

Ensure the playing area is ventilated. If not adequate, issue warnings and take other measures.

Adjustments for players exempt from face coverings

Where one player is exempt additional mitigations where necessary should be agreed with the opposition in advance of play, so that these can be accommodated in the Playing Area. These may include board placement in an area with increased ventilation, greater distancing between players, board barrier.

Where agreement is not possible socially distant two boarded chess applying the ECF Tournament Rules should be the default means of play provided it is not excluded by HMG regulations. Variations are permissible that enable the use of a single clock such as 1m separated side by side boards or face to face with the widths of two boards providing additional distancing.

Avoiding crowding

Consider:

- Avoid pinch points on entry/exit and display of pairings
- Stagger arrivals into the Playing Area
- No standing around the boards of others, whether the players are masked or not
- Web based team sheets – make use of the LMS for team entry & display of team sheets
- Exchange team lists in advance
- Announce pairings

Social distancing

Please continue to observe social distancing in indoor settings:

- Maintain face coverings when moving around the playing area
- Respect personal space of others and observe a minimum separation of 1m
- Avoid crowding around any board whether the players are masked or not
- Where players are playing without face coverings increase spacing from others

In play well-being

Consider:

- Breakout areas / rooms where face coverings can be removed if socially distant
- Areas for partaking of refreshment
- Spacing for players to sit further back from the board for refreshment

When to sanitise

It is recommended to sanitise:

- On entry & exit to the Playing Area
- At the start of the playing session
- Before & after hand to face contact

Co-operation

Together we can make what will be a difficult season work for as many of our chess players as possible. Be respectful of the sensitivities of others at all times particularly when it comes to face coverings and distancing.

Be prepared to be flexible so that we have a sporting chance of completing our programme as circumstances around us change. Provided venues can remain open, your Executive believes that these playing conditions should enable the continued playing of chess in a relatively safe environment as the rate of transmissibility fluctuates and HMG advice and regulation changes.

Always distinguish between your need for adjustments and playing preference. Make each of these clear to team captains / event organisers in good time so that necessary adjustments can be made in all necessary cases and where possible like-minded individuals paired.

Essex Chess Association Executive

29 September 2021.