***Mr. R’s Tips:***  
***If You’ve Never Played In A Chess Tournament***  
(Much of this was woven from bits of the Practical Matters chapter in Jeremy Silman's *Complete Book of Strategy*, which,  [**buy and read**](http://www.amazon.com/Complete-Book-Chess-Strategy-Grandmaster/dp/1890085014)!)  
  
**CLOCKS**.  
        We rarely use clocks in chess club but you always use clocks in a tournament. **The two crucial things to know about clock play:**  
**1.     USE THE SAME HAND to press your clock button that you use to move your pieces.** It's an important rule, and the one most often broken so don’t forget it; If your opponent uses both hands raise your hand and call an arbiter—chess “referee”. If you have to call an arbiter more than once your opponent *should be*disqualified. (Sit on your other hand if you have to; I almost always have to.)  
**2.     If your opponent has made a move**--**or offered you a draw**--**but forgotten to hit his/her clock, you are free to sit there and watch the clock tick down**. If you want to be a good sport you can remind him/her once, but I wouldn’t remind more than once: *part of being a good tournament player is good clock management, and if you know how to use a clock and your opponent doesn’t, you deserve to advance more than he/she does.* Take advantage of it: Sit there and look like you’re deep in thought, studying some long combination, rubbing your chin--really selling it--but knowing darn well you won’t lift a FINGER until he/she hits the clock. (It works against newbies, but beware: Many of you never use clocks—i.e. many of you are newbies!--so it will probably work on you!)  
  
**Opponent’s Time Pressure**. We all know what to do if our clock is running low. But what do you do if your opponent's clock is low and yours is fine? Many players see their opponent rushing and pressing so THEY start rushing and pressing. ***DON’T.*** If you *have* time, *take the time and make a smart move so you don’t blunder and let him/her back into the game.*  
  
        If you have never played with a clock (or if it has been a while) ***play a few clock games the week before the tournament***. We have clocks in room 119, but honestly, if you have a smart phone there are several free chess clock apps available that take two seconds to DL.  
  
**BOARD ETIQUETTE.**  
**1.  Touch/Move.**In club we usually play “If You Take Your Hand Off It, That’s Your Move,” but that’s not how it’s done in a tournament. In a tournament we play what's called “**touch/move,**” if you touch one of your pieces, you must move it, or if you touch an opponent’s piece you must take it.  
**2.  Don't talk a lot.**A little “how do you do” or other light conversation with a handshake when you first arrive at your board and meet your opponent is natural and polite, but any more than that and it starts looking like you’re intentionally distracting your opponent; he/she may call an arbiter. ***And once the game has begun? DON'T MAKE A PEEP UNLESS YOUR OWN CLOCK IS RUNNING***. (Draw offers should be made ***only***while your own clock is running. More on draw offers later.)  
**3.  Swatting pieces.**Many young players like to use the capturing piece to “swat” enemy pieces and knock them over. At a tournament that’s not only annoying but inappropriate; you might knock other pieces over or otherwise mess up the position.  
**4.  Adjusting a piece/J’Doube.**If you just want to center a piece that’s not centered on its square, first, get your opponent's attention. Say “I adjust,” or “Adjusting” or in the tradition of the game, “J’doube” (which is French for “I adjust” and is pronounced “zha-DOOB”) and make the adjustment. If you don't say anything and just adjust the piece, your opponent may call touch/move and insist that you move (or take) the piece. And I wasn't kidding about getting his/her attention: make eye contact. If you just mumble "J'doube" and grab the piece before your opponent knows what's happening, you invite trouble.  
  
**EAT BREAKFAST THAT MORNING AND/OR SNACKS DURING.**  
        A human brain that's focused for long periods of time burns a *tremendous* amount of energy. Unless you're an athlete, ***one-quarter of the energy your entire body burns during the typical day at school is burned by your brain!*** It’s why you feel exhausted if you’ve just done something non-physical for hours, like studying hard, or driving a car for several hours, or...you know...playing a lot of chess!! Fruit juice is a good thing to have at your side during a tournament.  
  
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**OFFERING A DRAW/RESIGNING**  
            **DRAWS**. ***We’re not professionals or masters so you shouldn’t be offering anyone a draw***. If you feel you must, there actually is a correct way to do it.   
***First***, make your move,   
***Then*** say “I offer a draw,” (or "Would you take a draw?" etc.)   
***THEN hit your clock,***and wait while his/her clock ticks. This ensures two things: 1. that you won’t be talking while his/her clock is running, and 2. that he'll be thinking about your move/offer only while *his* clock is running. (NOTE: As I mentioned up in the CLOCKS section, if your opponent has offered you a draw while his clock is ticking, you are perfectly free to sit there and watch his clock wind down, even if it means he loses on time. ***I AM NOT KIDDING: IF HE/SHE DOES ANYTHING WHILE HIS/HER OWN CLOCK IS TICKING, SIT THERE AND WATCH IT TICK.)***If your opponent offers a draw but hasn’t moved yet, say “Make your move and I’ll consider it.” You can refuse a draw by saying “no thanks” or by simply making your next move.  
            **RESIGNING**. Again, **I would NOT resign in a high school tournament**. Here’s why: many high school players are OK at the opening and middlegame, but ***many cannot finish efficiently, if they can finish at all*.**I’ve seen a player who has a Queen lose on time to a player who has nothing but a naked King because he just chased the King around with his Queen. DRILL YOURSELF AGAINST A FRIEND OR COMPUTER (OR ME!) OVER AND OVER AND OVER AND OVER UNTIL MATING WITH A ROOK OR QUEEN IS SECOND NATURE. It’s a fun drill because you always win, AND if you DON’T win but blow it with a stalemate, you’ve found a serious hole in your game: PATCH IT UP!\*  
        \*In a nutshell: **go right after that King *with YOUR King, NOT with your Queen or Rook***. Force him to any side of the board by using your King and major piece together, use your King to hold him there, and finish him off with your Rook or Queen!  
  
**FREAKOUTS**. (or "HOLY CRAP, I JUST BLUNDERED MY QUEEN. IT’S OVER!")  
        ***It’s NOT over****.* I can't tell you town many times I have lost Rooks (or even my Queen! Many times!) and still won. Everyone blunders material sooner or later ([**World Champions sometimes blunder *entire games***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blunder_(chess)#Deep_Fritz_vs._Vladimir_Kramnik)!) but when it happens in a pressure game it just *feels*much worse. If you blunder, remember that your opponent is a human being too, and he/she just might blunder you right back into the game! The reverse is true as well so watch out: if your opponent coughs up material early, you must stay focused and play solidly. The worst game I ever played against one of my students was one that began with him blundering his Queen on move 8. He almost resigned! Good thing he didn't: I got careless, blundered \*my\* Queen right back, got rattled and blundered a Rook, then a Bishop: a bloodbath, and it was \*I\* who had to resign in utter disgust and embarrassment.  
       Consider it: One of the reasons playing against PEOPLE is so much more fun than playing against computers is because mistakes against *people* are not necessarily fatal the way they always are against computers.  
  
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**PIECE VALUE.**  
        You should definitely know the relative value of pieces and pawns so you don't trade away a Rook for a Bishop or Knight.   **Queen = 9,  Rook = 5,   Bishop/Knight ≈ 3\*,   Pawn = 1.**(The King is the object of the game and therefor priceless, but as a fighting piece in an endgame it’s worth about 3.)  
     \* Early in the game, when there are 32 pieces clogging everything up, the jumping Knights are probably worth 3.2. In an endgame when there are only a few pieces left and a lot of wide open real estate, far-ranging Bishops have the slight advantage. (And if you have both bishops late? Man. They probably combine to be worth 7.) EXCEPT REMEMBER, *a Bishop is a prisoner of his square's color.* If you have a light-square Bishop and your opponent can keep all his pieces and pawns on the dark squares, your Bishop is essentially worthless UNLESS your opponent's ***only pawn***will queen on a ***light square!*** Gobble it the moment it promotes!  
  
**RARE MOVES: *En Passant* and *Underpromotion***  
        Newcomers don’t always know about [**Castling**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castling) or [**Pawn Promotion**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Promotion_(chess)) (which I’m assuming you do...if not, study those links, or ask me!) but even players who have been playing awhile occasionally are unaware of these two unusual situations.  
  
1.  **En Passant**. “A Capture In Passing.” En Passant is a French term that means “in passing” and it refers to a rare pawn move. Below, the **far left diagram** illustrates en passant in three stages.   
     a. IF... one of Black's pawns is on b4, three squares off its b7 starting position,  
     b. AND...White moves the a pawn two squares so it lands on a4, next to Black’s pawn  
     c. ***ON HIS NEXT MOVE AND ONLY ON HIS NEXT MOVE, Black can...***  
     d. *Capture the White pawn as if it only had moved off its line one square*. The gray diagram **in the middle below** shows a [game from 1928](http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1242924) where Black has just moved his pawn to g5, landing right next to Whte's h5 pawn. So what did White do? White's h-pawn slipped behind it and captured En Passant on g6 for Checkmate!  
  
2.   **Underpromotion**. Most newcomers learn early that a pawn "Queens" when it reaches the 8th rank. But many newcomers don’t know that it *doesn’t have to Queen*; it can “underpromote” to a Rook, Knight, or Bishop. In the **far right diagram below** it’s White’s move. White ***must*** underpromote to a Knight on f8 to checkmate. (If White Queens on f8, Black immediately mates with the Rook on e1!)

