

Frequently Asked Questions

How to Read a Pairing Chart

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I. Goal of This FAQ

The goal of the FAQ is to provide an overview of the symbols or codes that generally appear next to a persons name in the pairing chart. These codes are w, b, W, B, WW and BB.

II. The real short answer

The symbols indicate how hard we should try to get a certain person the indicated color. "b" is a minor preference for black, "B" is stronger, and "BB" is stronger yet.

III. How is it determined whether someone gets W, or b, BB or WW?

At the beginning of the event (Round 1), nobody has any of these symbols. Color is determined as follows:

- The section is sorted by rating, with unrated players ending up at the bottom of the list and those of equal rating sorted alphabetically
- Then the list is divided in two, a top half and a bottom half.
- If there are an odd number of players, a lowest rated player gets paired out.
- The top-rated player gets white, the second gets black, the third white, etc., until the entire top half has been given a color.
- The top half then paired against their counterparts in the bottom half, so the top person in the bottom half is black, then next is white, etc.

A. What happens when we get to round 2?

We have two groups to worry about: those who played in round 1 and those who didn't. Those who didn't play in round 1 don't have a color preference for round 2. But those who did play in round 1 will be given preference in round 2 for the color that they did not have in round 1, and it will be the "intermediate" preference. Thus, the top-rated player, who was white in round 1 will have a "B" symbol in the pairing chart for round 2. We want to give him black on grounds of "equalization", meaning that right now, he has played more rounds as white than black. Similarly, those who were black in round 1 will get the symbol "W".

When we do the round 2 pairings, we try (or the program tries) to make sure that those who have "W" get white, and those who have "B" get black. Within limits, we can move the "natural" pairings (those based strictly on score group, rating, and prior opponents) around to a higher proportion of correct color assignments. It's pretty easy in round 2, but there can still be problems. Suppose four people who played as white in round 1 take byes in round 2. Also suppose there are no people who jump in for round 2. When we look at who showed up to play in round 2, there are going to be four more who are due to play as white than as black. Some people who are "W" are going to have to play each other, and this means that two people who are "W" (because they were black in round 1) are going to be black again in round 2, and there's nothing we can do about it.

There are rules to decide which player gets his due color, but I won't go into that.

OK, I've discussed "W" and "B". What about w, b, WW and BB?

B. Let's go to round 3.

Most of the players in round 3 were either white in round one and black in round two, or were black in round one and white in round 2. Thus, they've played the same number of times as white and black. They don't need a preference for "equalization". But we do prefer that players alternate colors when possible. Thus, a player who was white in round one and black in round two will get a "w" symbol, meaning "preference for white on grounds of alternation, but not equalization". And someone who was black in 1 and white in 2 will get a "b".

But not everyone in round 3 will be a "w" or a "b". What about those people who were white in round 1 but took byes in round 2? Their color preference will be "B" because they need black to equalize their colors. If someone who is "b" gets paired against someone who is "B", the "b" person will get white because the other player "needs" black more. We try

harder to equalize than we do to alternate.

Now think about those players who, in round 2, had to play as black for the second time in a row. It couldn't be helped.

For round 3, their color preference is expressed as "WW". Loosely translated, this means, "you must give these players white!!". They are given the strongest preference for white, even over someone who is "W". Obviously, we'll try really hard not to pair someone who is "WW" against someone who is "W" because the person who is "W" this round (and has to play as black again) will be "WW" next week.

IV. Summary

To summarize, the symbols indicate the degree that someone is due a particular color. We're concerned most about equalization, but we also try to alternate. Also, the software allows us to keep someone from getting the same color three times in a row, even if the player has played an equal number of games as white and black (think of someone who played WWBB in rounds 1 through 4. If we have the "don't do same color three times in a row" option clicked, this player will be a "WW" instead of a "w" going into round 5).