

Local Group Offers Free Weekly Chess Gatherings at Bellingham Library

By LocalTalk Contributor



Chess in the Lecture Room of the Bellingham Public Library.

Submitted by [Bellingham Chess](#)

Calling chess a “gymnasium for the mind,” a local chess aficionado is organizing free weekly chess meetups on Sundays at the downtown library, offering opportunities for all ages and skill levels to meet others and play the world’s most strategic game.

Steve Szirom, the group’s organizer, a semi-retired marketing executive and a player for 30+ years, says chess fosters a strategic mindset that leads to improved memory, concentration and spatial thinking.

"Chess is a 1,500-year old game as well as a language that is spoken in every country," Szirom said. "I believe playing chess enhances creativity, problem-solving, character, co-operative skills, patience, reading skills, and even IQ scores."

The recently formed Bellingham Chess and Coffee Meetup has partnered with the [Bellingham Public Library](#) (BPL) to offer weekly chess gatherings on Sundays from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Central Library Lecture Room.

The Bellingham Chess and Coffee Meetup is open to all ages and levels. The club will provide chess sets but players are welcome to bring chess clocks and their own chess sets. The chess matches on Sundays are informal but basic chess rules, such as the touch-move, apply.

Membership has grown to more than 100 players mainly through word-of-mouth and local publicity, mostly from the Whatcom County area. The ages of players range from 5 to 75. There is no cost to joining or dropping in to play "Sunday Chess in Bellingham."

Szirom said, "The Bellingham Public Library venue is a great site for chess play. The Lecture Room is quiet with big windows to the courtyard. It has good lighting, good tables/chairs and the room can accommodate more than 50 players. Added bonuses are a kitchenette and audio-visual equipment."

Bellingham Public Library's Communications, Community Relations, and Programming Manager, Janice Keller, said, "The Bellingham Chess group's program fits nicely into the core mission of the library, which is 'Connecting our community with each other and the world to read, learn, meet and discover.' We are pleased to help offer this regular opportunity for people of all ages and skill levels to exercise their minds and have fun by connecting and playing chess."

Bellingham Chess is also offering classes at the library for newcomers to learn chess from experienced club members, with June classes scheduled 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays, June 14 and 28 in the SkillShare space at the Central Library. Both the SkillShare chess lessons and the "Sunday Chess in Bellingham" programs in the Lecture Room will be included in BPL's monthly announcements and events calendar. Szirom said the Bellingham Public Library joins [ChessHouse.com](#) of Lynden as a key sponsor of Bellingham Chess.

For additional information on the Bellingham Chess and Coffee Meetup and to join for free, visit www.meetup.com/BellinghamChess.