

A COMPARISON OF THE THREE MODES OF PLAYING CORRESPONDENCE CHESS

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If you are a member of our International Section you can play in ICCF (International Correspondence Chess Federation) Tournaments. ICCF offers 3 modes of play, postal, email and webserver. AICCF tournaments are postal or email, however the next AICCF Championship will quite likely be played on ICCF's webserver. With the advent of internet and its easy accessibility in the principal cities of India, the average player can connect to the internet from home, office or cyber-cafe. Therefore playing by post is giving way to play by email and (in ICCF) webserver. Here is a comparison of these modes of play.

	Postal	Email	Server
Available	AICCF ICCF	AICCF ICCF	ICCF
Cost for player	Very high for International play, and high for national play considering cost of Certificate Of Posting and reminders	Low, or NIL if you are using email at your place of work.	Low. Further, the net connection time can be reduced by using third party interface software like XECTool*. However some offices do not permit Internet but allow Email.
Cost for organiser	Medium. Postage costs for TD are high	Low, or NIL. Only email costs	Very high. Organiser has to set up and maintain server or pay for the facility
Illegible move	Common	Impossible	Impossible
Illegal move	Probable and common, especially mistakes in move numbers etc.	Possible. Reduced if software like ECTool* is used to submit the moves	Impossible. However you could setup the position wrongly on your board. Can be avoided by analysing from PGN download

Missing mail	Common, especially with some players	Not so common, but sometimes does happen – spam filters block mail, intermediate servers break down losing data, etc	Very rarely, server may break down, and data since last backup may be lost
Incorrect time calculation	Regular. TD may ask for the PC with postmark but usually postmark is not clear	Often happens. Normally nobody bothers to check. Also difficult to verify in case of different time zones etc	Impossible
Time to complete a game	Four to five years	Two to three years, particularly if opponent misses emails	More than two years is exceptional
Game load	Low, because of long post transition time, the number of games in which you have to make a move is very less, and you can always take an unofficial holiday by “not receiving” a move	High, but can manage with “non-receipt of email” sometimes	High, and some players play ping pong chess by replying immediately!
Chat with opponent	Limited by space in postcard	Unlimited space available	Space in message box not very convenient for reading large messages
Record keeping	Lot of space required to store all postcards	Space of a thumb-drive to store all email / backup	Not at all required

Effort	High, you have to go to a postbox to post your moves, and to a post office for COPs	Medium, all can be done from your home	Low, not much needs to be done
Frustration	High, when opponents suddenly start replying after several months and all you work of getting COPs and making a claim go waste when they are not awarded by TD as usually he plays safe	Medium, as not that much effort is required to send reminders or for making a claim	Low, happens only when opponents starts delaying tactics with more than 35 days per move

*ECTool and XECTool are freeware and can be obtained from <http://webs.ono.com/a.valverde>

After reading the above, would you like to try the server free of cost and without worrying about your rating? Anybody can register for two free friendly games at the ICCF webserver www.iccf-webchess.com.