

FIDE Candidates Tournament 2026: Qualification paths

Eight players shall qualify for FIDE Candidates Tournament 2026 by the following criteria:

Path A

1 spot – the player in the 1st place in the FIDE Circuit 2024 ranking list.

If this player is the FIDE World Champion as of January 1st, 2025 or withdraws, the qualification spot shall be awarded, in the order of priority, to the player

- in the 2nd place according to the FIDE Circuit 2024 ranking list;
- in the 3rd place according to the FIDE Circuit 2024 ranking list;
- who is the next yet unqualified in the FIDE Circuit 2025 ranking list (but not below the 3rd place, in which case the spot goes to the player with the lowest sum of places in 2024 and 2025 ranking lists).

Path B

3 spots – the players in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd places in the FIDE World Cup 2025.

If any of these players is the FIDE World Champion as of January 1st, 2025 or have already qualified for the FIDE Candidates Tournament 2026 at the moment of the beginning of the FIDE World Cup 2025, or withdraws the qualification spot(s) shall be awarded, in the order of priority, to the player

- who finished in 4th place in the FIDE World Cup 2025;
- in the 2nd place according to the FIDE Circuit 2024 ranking list;
- who is next yet unqualified in the FIDE Circuit 2025 ranking list (but not below the 3rd place, in which case the spot goes to the player with the lowest sum of places in 2024 and 2025 ranking lists).

Path C

2 spots – the players in the 1st and 2nd places in the FIDE Grand Swiss Tournament 2025.

If any of these players is the FIDE World Champion as of January 1st, 2025 or have already qualified for the FIDE Candidates Tournament 2026 at the moment of the beginning of the FIDE Grand Swiss Tournament 2025, or withdraws the qualification spot(s) shall be awarded, in the order of priority, to the player

- in the 3rd place in the FIDE Grand Swiss Tournament 2025;
- in the 2nd place according to the FIDE Circuit 2024 ranking list;
- who is next yet unqualified in the FIDE Circuit 2025 ranking list (but not below the 3rd place, in which case the spot goes to the player with the lowest sum of places in 2024 and 2025 ranking lists).

Path D

1 spot – the player in the 1st place in the FIDE Circuit 2025 ranking list.

If this player is the FIDE World Champion as of January 1st, 2025 or has already qualified for the FIDE Candidates Tournament 2026, or withdraws the qualification spot shall be awarded to the player who is next yet unqualified in the FIDE Circuit 2025 ranking list (but not below the 3rd place, in which case the spot goes to the player with the lowest sum of places in 2024 and 2025 ranking lists).

Path E

1 spot – the highest-rated player according to the 6-month average rating based on FIDE Standard Rating Lists from August 1st 2025 till January 1st 2026 provided the respective player has played at least 40 games calculated for FIDE Standard Rating Lists from February 1st 2025 till January 1st 2026 (including at least 15 games in any of the 6 consecutive rating lists). If two or more players have equal ratings, the qualifier shall be determined by the higher performance rating based on the same list of rated games.

If this player is the FIDE World Champion as of January 1st, 2025 or has already qualified for the FIDE Candidates Tournament 2026, the qualification spot shall be awarded to the player who is next yet unqualified in the FIDE Circuit 2025 ranking list (but not below the 3rd place, in which case the spot goes to the player with the lowest sum of places in 2024 and 2025 ranking lists).

If the player withdraws, the qualification spot shall be awarded to the second-highest rated players according to the same criteria, unless the later is the FIDE World Champion as of January 1st, 2025 or has already qualified for the FIDE Candidates 2026, in which case the qualification spot shall be awarded to the player who is next yet unqualified in the FIDE Circuit 2025 ranking list (but not below the 3rd place, in which case the spot goes to the player with the lowest sum of places in 2024 and 2025 ranking lists).