

How We Teach Chess

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Chess enables you to

- Adjust and adapt
- Analyze
- Be brave
- Be calm
- Be confident
- Be creative
- Be disciplined
- Be flexible
- Be logical
- Be Patient
- Be prepared
- Calculate future
- Compare options
- Compete
- Contemplate
- Enjoy
- Evaluate past
- Expect the outcome
- Fight
- Focus
- Form a community
- Have a plan
- Have Commitment
- Improve memory
- Know your enemy
- Learn from mistakes
- Learn from opponent
- Learn the patterns
- Lose with dignity
- Make good choice
- Manage a team
- Manage time
- Never give up
- Not get greedy
- Not ignore problems
- Play by rules
- Prioritize
- Sacrifice
- See the big picture
- See the threats and opportunities
- Simplicity
- Take initiative
- Take responsibility
- Take tough decision
- Think
- Think Positive
- Try again and again
- Use your strength
- Win with grace
- Work hard



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Foreword

The New England Journal of Medicine found that brain-stretching activities like Chess reduce the risk of developing dementia, there is the study by Robert Ferguson of 4000 Venezuelan students that playing Chess significantly improved IQ scores, another German study in which researchers showed playing Chess exercises both sides of the brain. These are few of the many studies that prove the positive effects of Chess. The conclusion being chess could play a significant role in children's growth by improving their focus and concentration.

Scholastic Chess is about learning competitive Chess in a fun and interactive manner with specific curriculum and tournament formats. We at Saswath Academy, teach Chess in a child friendly format, help children gain confidence and become passionate about Chess. There are two natural outcomes, one being, the passion in children takes them to competitive playing. The other outcome is, children become mentally strong and agile, use the knowledge in playing Chess to other walks of life and succeed.

Our brains are programmed to adjust to the capacity of growth and pressure we decide to give it. Chess is a demanding game when it comes to mind. We consider Chess just like any other sport and teach children with all the rules and etiquettes it requires. We sweeten the tough parts with our unique fun filled coaching format. In a way, our academy is more of a gym for the brains.

In this eBook we explain our coaching methodology, some of the common concerns of parents and kids while learning Chess.



How We Teach Chess

At Saswath Academy, we understand that chess is challenging for the brain. So, we ensure that the child learns in a relaxed environment to absorb the viewpoints of chess.

We teach Chess starting from absolute beginner level to advanced levels for children of 5 years and above. Our teaching includes Chess using games, puzzles, practice workouts and discussions. Our coaches are professional and friendly. We have structured our coaching as a cycle of 8 content rich sessions, each session spanning 1 hour. We use Zoom conferencing for online classes. The medium of coaching is English.

These 8 sessions can be taken as weekly 2 classes or 3 classes according to your convenience. We have batch classes at convenient timeslots from Tuesday to Sunday (Monday is holiday). If the child is totally new to Chess, we provide 1x1 classes for the first 3 sessions and then have them join other kids. Typically, it takes about 24 to 32 sessions for an absolute beginner to reach intermediate levels.

Our coaching is structured such a way that even if a child attends few days of a batch in a week, all the concepts are covered for them. The idea is different from the school academics which is more like climbing a ladder, which requires all the children learn at same level. However, our methodology is circular in nature, the 8 sessions are structured as cycles, so the concepts are repeated within and new concepts are built on gradually. This helps the children learn at their own pace.

Apart from coaching, we also provide access to our Chess club in ChessKid.com. This is a babified platform for kids to learn Chess. In ChessKid.com, the child can use it to do puzzles, games against other kids and bots. After every 8-class cycle, the coach will review the children's practice games in ChessKid.com and provide feedback on their improvement. Parents can also see the progress in rating on the website.

Our club in ChessKid.com has 1000+ Kids. By playing games and tournaments the child gets ratings and as they win more games the ratings increase. We run weekly practice tournaments and monthly tournaments in our club.

How Children Learn Chess With Us

Apart from logical thinking and planning ahead, children also learn from the feedback they get in playing chess. They can see their own thinking process in action and can start to feel responsible for their own decisions. -Jonathan Levitt, British grandmaster

An important aspect of our coaching is batch classes. We believe team-based learning is by far the best way to learn how to play chess well. Though admittedly, this fact is not so apparent at first glance, because we intuitively feel that individual one-on-one coaching is somehow superior, right? It works for piano and tennis lessons after all. Actually no, Chess is very different from these other classes. 1x1 tutoring has its drawbacks. Luckily, there are so many advantages to learning as part of a team.

Educationalists have long known that we learn much more effectively through active group participation than we do only by being given information. Exploration is a powerful motivator for learning; And group collaboration ensures that players of varying ability all progress at their own pace.

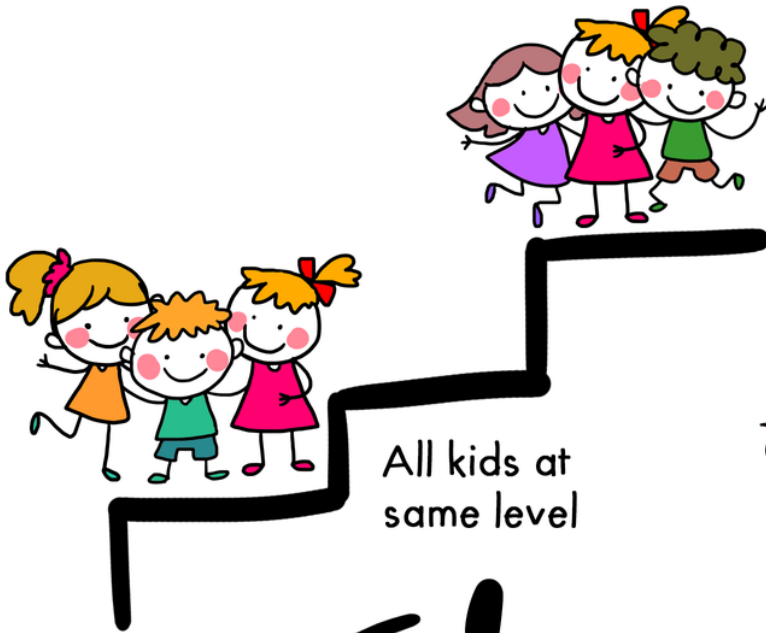
Analysis of chess positions is best done in a group context. And what better way to put insights uncovered through collaborative study to the test than to practice with other group members. Dialogue with peers to solve problems leads to a more dynamic understanding of principles, strengths and weaknesses—of a standard opening, for example. Principles can be explored in depth through discussion and collective decision making.

There is another feature of chess that differentiates it from other games. In chess, age is irrelevant. Unlike other sports, a team of chess players can be of different ages, from 6 to 60 and beyond, so they can play and learn together. There is always something to learn from others regardless of their age. This doesn't hold for other sports like tennis, for example. The only skill a grandchild needs when playing three tennis sets against their grandfather is how to dial the ambulance. This is because only the emergency services will be capable of resetting the dislocated shoulder, bandaging the twisted ankle etc. that will inevitably happen early in the first game.

For self-practice and playing with other kids, we use ChessKid.com platform. This is a well-known and secure portal for children to learn chess. The portal also has a long list of lessons that teach chess concepts with humorous cartoons. These lessons lighten up the notions and help the child understand them better. You can use this portal on mobile phones, tablets, or laptops. For those interested, we help get a Gold membership in ChessKid.com, while basic membership is enough for most kids.

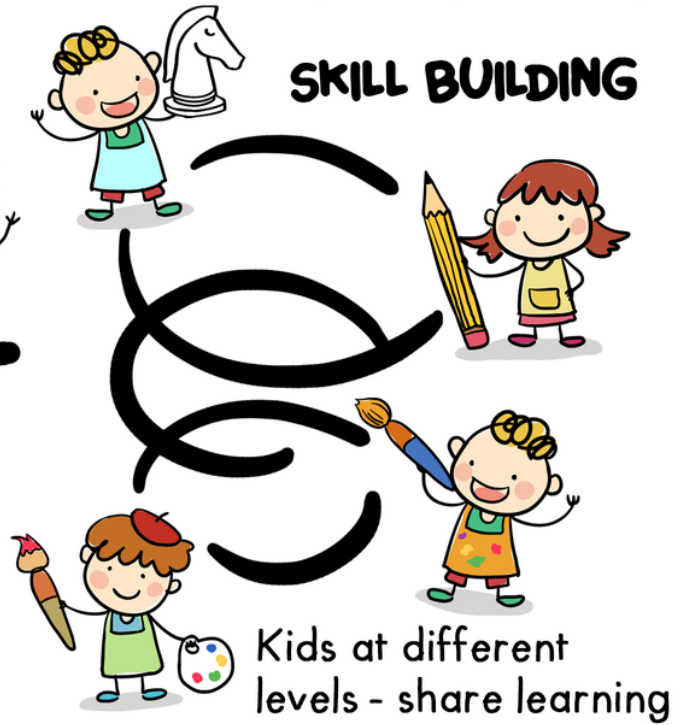
Learn by Textbook

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING



Learn by Exploring

SKILL BUILDING



Learn

A/a



Learn by Textbook



Science

1+2

Math



History

Learn by Exposure



Arts



Sports



Crafts

Interesting facts about chess



Oscar Shapiro became a chess master at the age of 74, and by contrast, the youngest ever chess champion was Jordy Mont-Reynaud at the age of 10.

Age does not matter for Chess. A 6yr old can beat a 60yr old grandparent. There is always something to learn from opponent regardless of their age.



Alan Turing developed the first computer program for playing chess was developed in 1951.

However, no computer was powerful enough to process it, so Turing tested it by doing the calculations himself and playing according to the results, taking several minutes per move.



Robert Sapolsky, who studies stress in primates at Stanford University, says a chess player can burn up to 6,000 calories a day while playing in a tournament.

That is three times what an average person consumes in a day.



Judith Polgar is a female chess player who defeated three world champions Kasparov, Karpov and Spassky.

Chess world is dominated by men, but Judith Polgar proves nothing stops women from being a champion.



Before the internet, chess players used to play with each other all over the world by taking turns mailing postcards to their opponents describing the move they had made--ChessKid.com

Even nowadays, chess requires a lot of patience and focus. But, this amount of passion and determination for chess at that time is commendable. No?



You know about bullet chess? It is a chess game that is very fast, played in the time of three minutes for both the players on the clock.--ChessKid.com

How concentration and focus-requiring that could be, can you imagine? But yes, with the practice, all becomes easy.



Sadhwani, India's 65th Grandmaster, became a GM on Oct. 19, 2019, but only after 7,243 games

It takes thousands of attempts until one becomes good at chess. One needs not only lot of practice but also continuous sustained effort to get good at Chess!

A child is shown in profile, looking down at a chessboard. Their hand is near their chin, suggesting deep thought. The chess pieces are visible on the board. The entire image has a yellow tint.

Our Coaches are teachers first, Players next

If learning from GMs were all that good, we'd all be trying to learn chess from a Grandmaster. Unfortunately, there aren't enough of these geniuses to go around (1,700 GMs to 605 million players world-wide) and considering the eccentricity of past GMs this might not be the wisest of choices. For a child learning chess, needs a passionate teacher than a serious player as coach.

Take Cuban champion Jose Raul Capablanca, for example. Most GMs possess the skill of mental visualization. But Capablanca was so skilled in this regard that he saw no need to allow a chess set in his house. He could play the game in his mind rather than physically. Several grandmasters almost drove themselves insane taking part in 'blindfold' chess exhibitions. Alekhine once challenged 32 players simultaneously. Most competitive chess players have these GMs as their ideals and work towards that.

So, perhaps having a coach that pushes himself to the edge of insanity isn't the best person to teach chess for kids who are quite new to the game after all. We have nothing against learning from GMs but it is only recommended when the kids have gained enough practice and a rating of 1500 and above. The idea is knowledge can be transferred but skill isn't. Skill requires nurturing and discipline.

Besides GMs, is learning Chess from computer any good? Up to a point. Chess is more psychological and emotional most of the time. A computer is not a good teacher to help master the emotions and make better decisions. Computer is not afraid of losing, it does not even know what is losing. Winning or losing is just a calculation. Playing chess with computer is equivalent to learning weightlifting from a forklift.

We believe our coaches should be a good teacher first who understands the student's mental makeup and helps them grow. We make sure the coaches are qualified by at least a 1000 rating points more than the level of students they are teaching, At the same time, we also ensure our coaches are child friendly, understanding and aware of child psychology.

A background image showing two children sitting at a table, playing a game of chess. The chessboard is open, and several pieces are visible. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter.

Tournaments:

Preparing children for any outcome (victory/loss)

Results show that just one year of chess tuition will improve a student's learning abilities, concentration, application, sense of logic, self-discipline, respect, behavior, and the ability to take responsibility for his/her actions. - Garry Kasparov, World Chess Champion

Just like every other sport, chess can either result in a victory or a defeat. When it comes to children, it is significant to infuse the concept of coping with losses in their minds. At Saswath Academy, we abide by a simple strategy that can help the child in this scenario. We call this strategy as **GBM - Guidance, Behavior & Motivation**.

Guidance:

An essential part of making the child learn to cope with defeat is guidance. We converse with the children and make them understand that loss is a lesson and not a failure that they cannot overcome. And with more lessons; they can learn to be better than they were.

Behavior:

The responses of people after a child faces defeat in any area of life; holds a significant influence on their growth. We make sure that our behavior is positive towards them. Our coaches also encourage the parents to let their children know that their love for him/her is more than this when the child is going through such time. We make them understand by our behavior and teaching methods that this is another lesson in the journey of their life.

Motivation:

We do not let the child play the blame-game. We allow them to take the responsibility of defeat without letting it get over their heads. And it all comes with the motivation to improve the components they lacked before, so that, they can get it done the next time in the best way.



For kids:

Common issues in learning Chess

Being the Wood pusher


Ahh, the wood pusher. If you're not familiar with the term, here is the official definition in the world of chess: "To be called a wood-pusher is generally viewed as an insult in the world of chess. It means that the player likely only knows how the pieces move and has no strategy towards the game of chess at all."

However, we don't think it's an insult at all, and you shouldn't either...because if you are in fact a wood pusher, at least you've already conquered one of the most important parts of chess - learning how the pieces move! All too often, chess players at all levels get concerned with being the supreme chess player. Being the best. While being the best you can be is always a noble goal, we'd like to take a minute to stress the importance of simply understanding the game, being a good sport and having fun along the way.

Fearing high rated players

Any level of chess player will, at some point in their playing, come up against a player who they perceive as being much better than them. That's when the little voices start in your head. "I'm not as good as them, I'll never win." "They are impossible to beat." "They've been playing so much longer than me."

Here's the secret to overcoming any doubts you may have in chess: practice more. Try harder. At any given time, you can only do the best you can based on experience. By playing more and practicing as often as you can, you'll get better with every move.



Sure, maybe it would feel good to play against someone who has never played chess before, but it's not helping you get better! It would be like wanting to grow big muscles by going to the gym and lifting the pen and pencils lying around. It won't help!

Always try to do your best. Try harder and set yourself up with opponents who bring the best out of you.

"I Know EVERYTHING!" mode

Ahhh, the ego of the chess player. When you think you know everything, that's the slippery slope of feeling amazing followed by feeling like you just went to school and forgot to wear pants. When chess players start to feel confident, many of us start to feel like we know everything. We feel like we're invincible and every other player should sit under our enormous learning tree. We also feel like our tree is the best tree and it grows the best fruit.

Guess what? Not so much. Even the greatest chess players will tell you they don't know everything. They are constantly learning and trying to grow. Don't fall into the trap of thinking you're so much better than someone else, or that you know everything. That's when you take your eye off the game and start to become immersed in your own hype. Focus. Try. Have fun!

"I Know NOTHING" mode

Even more difficult than the "I know everything" mode is the "I know nothing" mode. Many players get stuck in the mud when they think they know nothing. Maybe you're just starting, and feel like every player knows a better strategy than you.

Good! These are the moments to recognize that you need more practice. So do just that!



Sulking In Defeat

That moment when, after you thought you would have won easily...you lost. Then you spend the entire rest of the day replaying the game over and over in your head. "I should have done this," or "Why didn't I do that."

Whatever the reason, there's no reason to sulk in the wake of defeat. It's OK to lose! That simply means there is room for you to get better! By sulking in defeat, you're wasting time being sad about something that you can't control. It's over...you lose - and that's fine! Get on to the next game. Practice more!

Hating Chess While Getting Good At It

Sometimes getting good at chess can feel like running on a treadmill...for weeks without stopping. In chess, maybe your body isn't sweaty and tired, but your mind sure is. The game may come easy at first, but then comes the drag. It takes a lot of focus, practice and consistency to become a good chess player. You start to play so much and find it so difficult to break through the next level of being better that you begin to hate the game. Ugh.

Remember why you started playing in the first place, and especially concentrate on how good it will feel to overcome the current day obstacles. Don't get stuck on the same treadmill - just keep running until you've leveled up! It will happen. We've always found it helpful to remember - no one ever became a better chess player by quitting.

No...More...Practice

A common problem amongst chess players is getting annoyed with having to practice. Sometimes it feels like your brain is going to melt. It feels like you want to go to sleep. Maybe you never even want to think about chess again. The bigger problem: without practice you won't get better! As a matter of fact, you might even get rusty and get worse!

What separates the good from the great in almost anything is discipline. By making practice fun and appreciating what you're learning along the way, coupled with the fact that you're growing and getting better should help you keep your eye on the prize. The goal is to always have fun, get better and stay disciplined! You won't be a woodpusher forever...even if sometimes it feels like it.



Fun moments in Chess

Timing Sense

While playing a 3-minute blitz game of Chess at the World Championships in 2019, grandmaster Magnus Carlsen wasted 20 seconds of his time taking his suit coat off, drinking water and organizing his pieces – and still won!.

One vs Thousand Players

In 1999, chess Grandmaster Garry Kasparov played The World in a game of chess that lasted 4 months. Over 50,000 people from more than 75 countries participated in the game with moves being decided by majority vote. Garry ended up winning on turn 62 when 51% of The World decided to resign!

Genius is not by birth, by Practice!

Psychologist Laszlo Polgar theorized that any child could become a genius in a chosen field with early training. As an experiment, he trained his daughters in Chess from the age of 4. All three went on to become Chess prodigies, and the youngest Judit is considered the best female player in History.

Initial Encounter of Human with Computer

Gary Kasparov went head to head with the world's best chess computer, IBM's Deep Blue, there were times when neither man nor machine stood out as intellectually superior.

Deep Blue was on the verge of issuing blue smoke from its motherboard just before the 44th move of game two because it couldn't settle on a desirable move, so 'panicked' and played a failsafe. There were no curtains for the embarrassed machine to hide behind for shame, so it just stayed put. Had Deep Blue had a face, it would have been deep red.

Some suggest that Kasparov spotted this wrong move but decided that it must be part of a coherent, superior intelligence on Deep Blue's part. Now it was his turn to panic, and his resulting strategic change lost him the second game.

100 Chess topics for classroom discussion

- 
- 1.Active piece vs passive piece
 - 2.Artificial castling
 - 3.Attackers and Defenders counting
 - 4.Attacking the castled king
 - 5.Avoid stalemate
 - 6.Backrank weakness
 - 7.Battery attack
 - 8.Bishop and knight ending
 - 9.Bishop pair
 - 10.Board and Pieces - Introduction
 - 11.Bong cloud challenge
 - 12.Break castle with pawn storms
 - 13.Breaking the castle
 - 14.Capturing pieces, Winning material
 - 15.Castling
 - 16.Check & Checkmate
 - 17.Checkmate with King and Pawn
 - 18.CheckMate with King and Rook
 - 19.CheckMate with Queen
 - 20.CheckMate with Two rooks
 - 21.Chess Etiquettes – Touch move, Resigning
 - 22.Chess Notation
 - 23.Closed and open positions
 - 24.Color weakness
 - 25.Connected Rooks
 - 26.Counter threat
 - 27.Counter threats
 - 28.Cross Check
 - 29.Decoy sacrifice
 - 30.Deflection
 - 31.Desparado
 - 32.Developing pieces
 - 33.Discovered Attack
 - 34.Discovered Check
 - 35.Double Attack or Fork
 - 36.Double Check
 - 37.Draw & Stalemate
 - 38.En passant
 - 39.End game – use your king
 - 40.Escape outlet for king
 - 41.F2/F7 Weaknesses
 - 42.Fast checkmates
 - 43.Fianchetto Bishop
 - 44.Find checkmates
 - 45.Finding attack
 - 46.Finding right move under attack
 - 47.Fried Liver tactic
 - 48.Gambits
 - 49.Games with odds / Handicaps
 51. Good and Bad bishop
 52. Good/Bad Bishops
 53. Hanging Piece
 54. How the pieces move, Pawn Promotion
 55. Interference
 56. Isolated pawns, Doubled pawns, Backward pawns
 57. Make the pieces work together
 58. Mate in Two
 59. Moving & Capturing
 60. Open files, Semi-open files
 61. Opening Principle: Open the center pawns
 62. Opening Principle: Do not bring queen out early
 63. Opening Principle: Do not move same piece twice
 64. Opening Principle: Do not block your own piece
 65. Opponent move reasoning
 66. Opposite colored bishop
 67. Opposite side castling
 68. Outposts
 69. Overloaded pieces
 70. Overloaded pieces
 71. Passed pawns
 72. Pawn chains
 73. Pawn race
 74. Perpetual check
 75. Phases of game
 76. Piling up
 77. Pin
 78. Preventing opposition from castling
 79. Removing the defender
 80. Removing the guard
 81. Rook and pawn ending
 82. Sacrifice
 83. Saving from losing games
 84. Skewer
 85. Smothered checkmate
 86. Solo chess
 87. Space advantage
 88. Supported pieces, Defended piece
 89. Tempo
 90. The Goal of Chess – Checkmate
 91. Trading pieces
 92. Trading pieces & Simplification
 93. Trapping queen
 94. Triangulation
 95. Under promotion
 96. Vulnerable king
 97. Windmill attack
 98. XRay attack
 99. Zugzwang



Meet the Author: Aishwarya Srikanthan



Aishwarya has a decade of experience in education industry and very passionate about teaching children and helping them learn life skills. She has been successfully running Saswath Academy an institution for helping children learn subjects other than the regular academics. This eBook is for parents and little learners joining Saswath Academy for learning Chess, explaining how Saswath Academy is different in coaching children.

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