

Discovering Benefits and Secrets of Chess

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How would you like to improve your math ability?

When I was in first form at Clarendon College, I scored 8% on a math test. I feared numbers and calculations. If only I had known chess then.

Chess has taken its place in history for centuries. More books have been written about it than any other subject. It is the national sport in many countries. In my travels, chess is one of the few socialisation tools I have successfully used to bond with friends who do not understand English. 'Check mate' is about all the talking we need to do while we enjoy a game of chess.

While it is true that the game of chess is not just a mere sport, and can be very challenging at first, becoming a great player lies in developing your memory and observation power. There is no need to memorise all the moves or learn the tactics and strategies by heart. A few simple tricks are all you need to improve your skills. To become good, you need to have a general idea of the game and know the relevance, importance, merits and demerits of each piece. Of course, practice is very essential. If you are serious about boosting your prowess, get a step-by-step tutorial at www.chesscorner.com to learn the basics.



Tips and Tricks

Chess is great because of the personalities of the pieces. Each piece moves differently. For each player, there are eight pawns, two knights, two rooks, two bishops, a king and a queen. The goal of the game is to checkmate your opponent's king. Checkmate happens when their king is in a position to be captured (in check) and cannot escape from capture. While the game is in progress, the many tactical combinations are enjoyable to watch. My favorite piece is the pawn. You've simply got to love those determined little underdogs.

Double Threat

One of the most important ideas in chess is the double threat (any move you make that presents your opponent with two problems at the same time). Since each player can make just one move per turn, your opponent only has time to address one of the threats you have made. On your next turn, you execute the other threat. For example, if your move puts your opponent's king in danger and attacks another of his pieces at the same time, your opponent has to use his next move to save his king, and then you get to take the other piece you had attacked.

Don't Get Too Loose

Another key idea in chess is the loose piece. A loose piece is simply a piece that has no protection. It is common for players to leave pieces unprotected here and there. As long as they are not being attacked, they look safe enough. But loose pieces make perfect targets for double threats. So don't carelessly lose your pieces! Each piece is valuable. Here is an easy system that most players use to keep track of the relative value of each chess piece:

- A pawn is worth 1
- A knight is worth 3
- A bishop is worth 3
- A rook is worth 5
- A queen is worth 9
- The king is infinitely valuable

At the end of the game, these points don't mean anything – it is simply a system you can use to make decisions while playing, to know when to capture, exchange, or make other moves.

Any piece your opponent leaves unguarded is a possible target for a tactical strike. Any piece of yours that is left unguarded is vulnerability. You should not only notice loose enemy pieces, but also look for ways to create them. Checks, captures, and mate threats are known as forcing moves. They force your opponent to pick from a small set of possible replies. They are the essence of tactical chess and allow you to dictate your opponent's moves and control how the game goes.

Find Your Inner Strategist

The ability to calculate and work out combinations is often deemed challenging. You should work at overcoming this hurdle so that you can improve your chess performance. Any mental improvement you make will take you one or more steps further toward becoming a chess expertise.

Here is one exercise, to be done at bed time, which can improve your mental capacity.

As you lay, you normally experience all kinds of random thoughts passing through your mind in between which you are usually be in a half-asleep. At this time, try to remember each activity, conversation, thought and so on from that day. It will be like you have made a video recording of your whole day and are playing the video in your mind. Go into as much detail as you can.

This may sound crazy, but it increases photographic memory. This is one way I now memorise legal cases and facts. I visualise the characters in the cases and bring them to life.

When you start, that mind video will be in a fast forward mode. You will find that you are unable to remember what else you did when you were brushing your teeth, then the scene will shift to possibly mid-afternoon in your workplace, and then jump back to your tying your shoes or to some other point. When this happens, you must try to remember in correct sequence.

Benefits of Playing

The greatest plus chess offers, in my view, is that it develops logical thinking. It forces players to use logical strategy, as well as exercises and trains the mind. It also enhances problem-solving skills. Through this game, logic, patience, concentration, innovation, cleverness, preparation, circumspection, strategy and sportsmanship are taught and learned.

In addition, chess boosts confidence and independence. Over time, this will affect your life. You will realise that you think differently about budgeting money, the consequences of actions, how to approach people, and the list goes on.

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