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Chess is thought by many to be the greatest game ever invented. What does it take for a game to garner that type of distinction? First, it has to be fun to play, and second, it should offer great benefits to the players. In these areas, chess certainly qualifies. It is fun to play, and the many benefits help players of all ages. Because it can be played throughout one's life, the benefits can also last a lifetime.

Personally, I also love the fact that it's one of the few games that's based 100% in skill and involves no luck. This means the time spent studying and learning the game will never be wasted because the better you get, the more you'll win. And even though the total number of possible chess moves is finite, I have played literally thousands and thousands of games and no two have ever been the same, which keeps the game fresh, interesting and challenging.

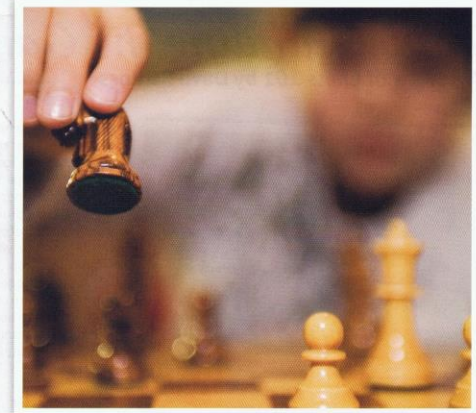
Chess helps develop cognitive and creative thinking skills while also improving problem solving and decision making skills. Chess requires you to think, come up with a viable plan and carry it out. This is a microcosm for life, as it's been said many times, "People don't plan to fail, they fail to plan." The thought process needed to constantly devise plans in the game of chess easily translates to many areas of life, from something as simple as throwing a ball, to driving a car, to planning your future and much more.

Chess probably saved me some money when I was young because before I would throw a ball to play catch with someone, I'd think past the throw to looking at what I might hit, which many times caused me to keep the ball in my hand until we walked to the ball field. In driving, thinking ahead and anticipating what I thought the other driver might do has also saved me from more than a few accidents. The ability to envision what you expect someone else to do has obvious benefits, whether it's over a chess board or a boardroom table.

Players of all ages have also attested to improvement in memory as another benefit of playing chess. This is great for kids, but it's becoming evident now that it's even more important to people later in life as a fun exercise for their brain so they can continue to stay sharp.

Children who play chess build confidence with each win. Other benefits include an increase in reading aptitude as well as improved math skills. Another great thing about getting involved in chess is that it takes very little expense to get started. A roll-up chess board and a set of Staunton design pieces can be purchased almost anywhere for less than \$20.

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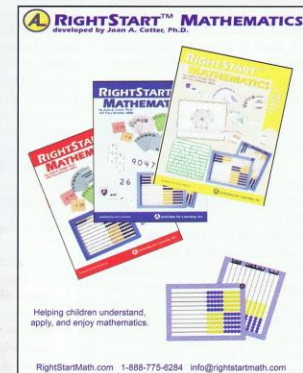


One way to get your child started in the game might be to find other kids in your area who want to learn the game. You could start a small club at a local clubhouse or other facility. Another way would be to locate other parents whose children want to learn through your homeschool web site. While these children might be all over the country, they can still play against each other by joining a free chess site, such as ChessKid.com, which is part of Chess.com. I highly recommend ChessKid.com, not only because it's a truly safe (no social-networking) website for chess, but its learning tools (videos, articles and more) are second to none.

I really believe that the game of chess has so many benefits for kids that it should be fully incorporated into every homeschooler's schedule. Chess has it all, especially when you factor in the human element. Many of the friends I have today are friends because we first met playing chess, whether it was over the board at a local chess club or online. Of course with the advent of the Internet, I can play a game anytime and also keep in touch with my chess playing friends all over the world.

Dave Schloss is an internationally known award-winning author. His beginner chess book, *Chess 101, Everything A New Chess Player Needs To Know!* has been endorsed by many top chess teachers in the U.S. and is used in numerous schools and chess camps. To find out more about this book, please visit, OnlineChessStrategy.com. ChessKid.com is the world's #1 chess website for kids. Safe, fun, educational. Learn and play chess with other kids from around the world!

In the game of chess, there's always someone better than you and there's always someone worse. Another thing that makes the game great is, it doesn't matter where you are with regard to skill level, if your opponent is equal in strength, you'll always have fun playing.



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