

Discover

10 BENEFITS

of a Developmental Approach

TO TEACHING CHESS



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Learners Chess Academy

532 Adams St NE, Albuquerque NM 87108

learnerschess@gmail.com

505.369.6026

<https://learnerschess.org>

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The Developmental Approach to Chess

Attending a chess club can be about a lot more than just playing a game. A development focused approach to chess is about improving a child's confidence, creativity, interpersonal effectiveness, problem solving skills, and so much more! In this book, we explore developmental values and how students and players use chess to build up these skills they can use everyday.



A Developmental Approach to teaching chess values:

- Creativity
- Mindfulness
- Self Confidence
- A Love of Learning and Intellectual Growth for Yourself
- Teamwork and Leadership: The ability to improve yourself while building others up
- Sportsmanship and Respect
- Learning to take responsibility for our mistakes
- Safe and fun socialization
- Connections with mentors and coaches who are invested in their students growth
- Giving students a community with like minded peers



Creativity

Whether we're creating artwork, cooking a new food dish, engineering a more efficient car, or coming up with a faster way to solve a math problem, the ability to think outside of the known box is an important skill to foster. No matter our age or responsibilities, creativity is something that benefits everyone, which is why when children learn chess, it is important they have mentors that nudge them towards working hard and encourage them to grow creatively and think outside the box.

Creativity in Chess Club:

Every chess game students play gives them an opportunity to come up with new ways to achieve their goals and solve their problems on the board. No two chess games are the same, as the players come to the board each time with new moves, new opponents, new ideas, and new lessons. Each game comes with a chance to reflect on what has been tried, what works, what doesn't, and what one can do to improve.

A development focused approach takes this opportunity for creativity a step further. Development focused chess coaches can foster creativity by giving students opportunities to play from and create different starting positions to focus on different patterns and phases of the game. Additionally, playing variant chess games like Bughouse can encourage thinking about the pieces and how they work together in new ways that can really unlock childrens' creative thinking.



Mindfulness

Video games, sports, school, or anything else in life that requires focus, or a brief moment of clarification can be enhanced by mindfulness. The ability to pause a moment in time, re-focus, and center your mind will have lasting benefits for a child who is able to master the technique at a young age.

Mindfulness in Chess Club:

Mindfulness is the ability to be aware of yourself and your surroundings while not being distracted or overwhelmed by the things around you or inside your head. In chess, this means being able to focus on the game, your pieces, and your plan while not being distracted by your opponent or distracting thoughts. Building self-control through mindfulness is the best way to avoid impulsive moves and not noticing an opponent's threats.

In a development focused chess club, students are not only taught to play chess mindfully, but to think mindfully and keep themselves aware and in control of their emotions in the social environment of a chess club. When playing chess, this means focusing on the position at hand instead of our opponent and their perceived skill as well as letting go of off-topic thoughts like curiosity of what dinner will be for that evening.

To let go of these things, students practice taking a deep breath and turning their thoughts back to the board, acknowledging the distractions but then focusing back on the game. The same is used for puzzles as students are encouraged to pause and take a deep breath before starting a new puzzle, resetting and refocusing their minds towards the position at hand.



Finally, one of the most important aspects of mindfulness that a development focused class encourages in students is to practice deep breathing when dealing with the social aspects of the game. Losing a game of chess can be disappointing at any age, and even as adults we understand that students are going to be frustrated at times with themselves and their peers. To practice mindfulness in these situations, students learn to acknowledge these frustrations, take a deep breath, and then re-focus on their goals of improving and building on their mistakes. This lesson becomes one of the most versatile skills students can take away from chess clubs.



Self-Confidence

Our perceived sense of our abilities affects everything we do in our lives. If you start a game of chess believing you will lose, you won't play as well. The same formula applies to every task we attempt for our entire life. Self confidence doesn't have to come from being good at your tasks though, it comes from knowing that you will do your best, that you are capable, and that even if you fail, you can try again or move on and it will be okay.

Self Confidence in Chess Club:

No one can win every single game of chess they ever play. Even the best chess player in the world doesn't have a perfect record, and most chess coaches have probably lost more games than their students have ever played. Even still, a chess player begins every game knowing that win or lose, they are learning, improving, and that they have the intelligence and drive to play well.



A good chess coach also knows that this is true for every one of their students, and isn't afraid to tell them that. No matter how the game ends, every student is capable, smart, intuitive, and improving, which is something to be proud of! Every class and tournament, coaches encourage and praise the accomplishments of their students, whether it be winning a tournament, a game, solving a puzzle, or coming up with a new position to explore in class.

A development focused classes' goal is for the students to leave class knowing that they are smart and capable, and to see their accomplishments in everything they do, even if it's difficult or they lose. This teaches them to approach new challenges with an open and confident mind, knowing that they are capable of winning, and will progress even if they fail.





A Love of Learning and Intellectual Growth for Yourself

A love of self improvement comes hand in hand with self-confidence, but loving your intellectual growth enough to love learning can be especially hard, especially for kids. The drive to always delve deeper into a topic, build upon the knowledge you already have, and develop brand new ways to achieve your goals is something that will push you much further in life than just the outside encouragement to improve.

A Love of Learning in Chess Club:

Chess is full of intellectual benefits, from building better problem solving and special awareness to improved cognitive development and information processing. In fact, chess is thought to improve test scores in all areas of school from science and math to reading. Chess gives students a new and different way to exercise their mind and build up these skills that also comes with a sense of accomplishment and the promise that there is always more to discover.



A development focused approach sets up classes so that students can constantly build and draw connections between the different discussion topics themselves. Students are given a couple basic patterns and then as their classes continue, they circle back, building new ways to use what they already know and apply them, until the students start to realize they know more than they thought, and classes are more about naming and expanding techniques than starting from scratch every time.



A beginner who has learned the three ways to get their King out of check will find that protecting their other pieces incorporates similar approaches. A more advanced student who has sat through a class on opening theory will recognize the power of minor pieces working together as they enter a lesson on the two bishops checkmate. The excitement and pride that comes with recognizing these patterns in chess brings with it the drive to find new ways to use them. Not only does this habit of applying what they've learned build excitement to improve in chess in students, it grows their curiosity and improves pattern recognition.





Teamwork and Leadership: **Ability to improve yourself while building others up**

As children start to grow and develop, being able to work with others, lead, and understand how people work is vital to their development. Competition always leads to a clash of who comes out on top, but being able to be part of a team learning environment allows students to develop skills of working with others.

Teamwork and Leadership in Chess Club:

By itself, chess is not a particularly team focused game. Games are played between just two players. In a chess club focused on whole child development, the game can be a medium through which leadership is taught and developed. In the group learning environment there is a diversity of perspectives and individual experiences with the game, each player has a different lens with which to view each position and come up with ideas they can share with their peers.

The developmental approach to a chess club provides students with time and space to share and receive new ideas with their fellow chess players. Instead of quiet lectures, students are given a classroom where they can discuss each position, play out ideas, and even show other students patterns and techniques they have learned.

A coach focused on leadership can give strong chess learning students the opportunity to lead a conversation and teach each other new things. The step between knowing how to do something and knowing how to explain it to someone else is a huge one on the road to mastering a skill. Win or lose, all chess students are part of a community that will work on improving their skills together so that the next game will be even better.





Sportsmanship and Respect

Sportsmanship is a part of learning to respect oneself and others, especially in competitive environments. It's very common that children come in contact with elements of respect and sportsmanship at a young age, through school and sports. The ability to play as a team, keep your head up after a tough loss, act with dignity after a win, and maintain respect for your opponents and teammates will continue to present itself throughout life.

Sportsmanship in Chess Club:

Chess clubs constantly have matches being played. Students may even play multiple games throughout one session, getting their share of losing and winning. This allows students to quickly recognize proper sportsmanship etiquette and respect.



Shaking hands before each game begins, with a quick, “good luck” starts each game on a positive note. This simple show of respect reminds students to take a more mindful approach to winning and losing, emphasizing learning and the beauty of the game over the results.

Respect is something that is present day one of a chess club. The chess coach is given the respect of being listened to, obeyed when asking to do something, and keeping the area in which the chess club is being played clean and tidy.

Raising hands and participating during lessons and discussions shows respect for the lessons, that students are actively engaged, and looking to better themselves as chess players. Listening and learning from their peers shows respect for each other as teammates and sportsmanship over the board shows respect for each other as competitors. Through sportsmanship and respect, students are taught to be part of a team, a community, and win and lose with dignity.





Learning to take responsibility for our mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes. As children and as adults, mistakes are natural and part of life. The ability to recognize and take ownership of mistakes that are made in life allows us to reflect, adapt, and increase our abilities. The best way to grow is to make mistakes and learn from them. When children and students lose, there is much to learn from mistakes. When children and students win or are successful, they are able to recognize what they did well and still fix what was wrong, and learn and improve off those building blocks.

Personal Responsibility in Chess Club:

Chess is the perfect backdrop to teaching students to identify and learn from their mistakes. Often when a student makes a mistake of behavior, it is because they didn't think before acting.

If a student makes a behavioral mistake in a chess club, it can be addressed in a way that points out that they acted before thinking in the same way that not thinking before making a move in chess leads to missed attacks and lost pieces. Understanding one's mistakes allows everyone to change their behavior more effectively to avoid the same behaviors in the future.



Mistakes in chess can lead to understanding and growth in all areas of life. Making a mistake that can be taught and corrected shows students that they still have a lot to learn, and helps them improve their approach. Most mistakes in chess are either because the student doesn't understand something about the game yet or because the student wasn't in a good mindset to focus. Focusing on understanding why a move is a mistake allows students to bring a new level of awareness to their games and refocus on their goals both in game and in their classes.

Chess also teaches students to admit when they've made a mistake so they can learn from it. Someone saying, "oh i went easy on them, to give them a chance, and that's why I lost" doesn't help them improve at all. Admitting that a move wasn't the best, an exchange miscalculated, or that a student played too quickly, allows for more progressive growth and self awareness.



Safe and fun socialization

Meeting new people in a safe environment is especially important for children's growth! Whether it's sports, video games, personal hobbies, collections, or anything else, knowing you're in a group that is safe and fun will always put your mind at rest.

Socialization in Chess Club:

When children are placed into a classroom setting, parents are assured that their students will be learning, and interacting with students in a safe environment. A chess club provides that same sense of security. Children and adults alike are being placed into an environment where friendships are formed, bonds are created, and a sense of belonging is developed in a space that revolves around playing and learning the amazing game of chess.

There are also multiple fun chess variants, that allow students to play a less serious version of the game. Some of these chess variants, like bughouse, involve having a partner with whom they may communicate and strategize throughout the game. These games result in lots of fun positions, and teammates joke around with an air of fun companionship.



While sports are normally competitive, a developmental approach to chess emphasizes progress over results. If you lose to someone multiple times, you are able to find what areas you need to improve on, and learn from it. Everyone is there to help each other grow, not prove they are the best. If a student is top of the class, that doesn't exempt them from learning, moreover they are expected to apply what they have learned, and teach those who still need to learn. A development focused classroom makes sure that students are in an environment where they can learn and make mistakes safely, around peers and teachers who will support them.





Connections with coaches and mentors who are invested in student's growth

Mentors and role models are integral parts of growing up. Being able to look up to someone, or model your behavior like them, allows children to add pieces of what they admire to themselves. Everyone as they grow older can give stories regarding a person or individual that influenced them at some point in their life. Having a connection with someone, especially one that you can contact for help, or advice, can be instrumental in a child growing and being able to explore new exciting interests.

Mentorship in Chess Club:

In a development focused chess club, coaches are great role models and friends to their students. They also will foster leadership development and ideally will have a small group of older students volunteering to serve as mentors as well. This gives young chess students plenty of opportunities to learn from and adopt mentors from a diverse group of smart and driven leaders who they can rely on and aspire to. Coaches who value their students' development love watching their students grow both inside and outside of the game itself. Providing lessons and encouragement for students to focus, breathe and practice mindfulness, display teamwork, respect, and confidence all help mold a student in the time they are with their coaches.



Giving students a community with like minded peers

Being around people that have the same values is important when doing something you like. Having the positive energy, support, and people willing to build you up in your journey has immense value in today's society. Especially as a child, growing up trying to find a place that accepts you for who you are is rare. Being able to involve yourself in a community that wants to help you grow, improve, and converse is a place that benefits everyone involved in it.

A Sense of Community in Chess Club:

People who are involved in a development focussed chess club are looking to grow in a game that challenges them to mature mentally and emotionally. Chess is also something that is played throughout the world, giving all chess players a sense of global community, as we can all travel to any corner of the world and regardless of a language barrier, communicate through a game of chess.

In a development focused chess club combining knowledge together as a community, creates an environment where everyone has access to support from each other.



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