

## Benefits to Kids

Kids need activities, when they are alone and when they get together to ward off boredom. These days, activity of choice is TV and Video Games. The drawbacks of too much TV are obvious. Video games are quick to get bored of, and therefore short-lived. New game-cartridges become a necessity for such systems. Chess, however, is forever challenging, difficult to master, addicting at the higher levels, and extremely competitive. Chess can and does take the place of Video Games and TV for many children. Chess offers huge advantages to the child's development that Nintendo does not:

Chess builds self-esteem. The stereotype is "smart people play chess." For a child who is doing poorly in school, this stereotype can be a self-esteem boost. Even if this child is not the best chess player in the class, the skills we teach him/her will be ample preparation to defeat the average adult chess player. Defeating an adult at a game based on "smarts" can do wonders to any child's self-esteem.

Chess exercises memorizing skills. In the Guinness Book Of World Records, under "best memory", you will find a world-class chess player. The player, among other memory tricks, will play fifty chess games simultaneously, without seeing any of the boards (he retains all fifty games in his head. This task is called "playing blindfolded chess".)

Chess builds concentration skills by stimulating higher thought. It is said that the average human only uses five percent of their reasoning powers. For a chess player, completely engrossed in the game, complete "brain-utilization" is not so hard to imagine, or at least 90% utilization.

Chess builds logical skills. Various studies have been conducted on chess players to examine the benefits of chess to a chess player. Chess is proven to increase IQ and creative problem solving. These are skills that will follow a chess player throughout life, not just during chess play. In turn, a school with a high number of problem solving chess players will score better during testing than a school without such students. You will find that chess is an activity shared among the most productive peoples in the world- lawyers, presidents, scientists, and many other groups because of its creative nature.

Chess stimulates productive social interaction. Playing Chess, the child will make many new friends. As a chess player, challenging an opponent is a convenient way to interact with any other player...all barriers broken. The social interaction aspect of chess is an extremely important one. To illustrate this point, most chess players would agree that compared to playing with a person, playing with a chess computer is remarkably dull.

Chess underlines the importance of having a general goal (winning), and also a well thought out plan consisting of coherent and detailed steps necessary to carry that goal through. I always use the analogy in my chess classes that deciding you want to be President is not enough to actually become President. If you are serious about becoming President, you should carefully outline a plan now (getting good grades, going to college, to law school, shaking hands with the right people, etc.) Likewise, in Chess, wanting to win simply is not enough.

Chess encourages sophisticated reading in the form of readily available chess books. Most tournament players (child and adult) find it necessary to read chess books. Most public libraries and even school libraries stock them. If a child decided that one-hour a week of lesson is not enough, he/she is encouraged and taught to use chess books by their instructor. In my experience, nearly all of the more advanced chess students bought adult chess books to hone their skills. Chess books are an extremely sophisticated form of reading. Notation is mixed with complicated description of the strategies being used. Children can grasp books like these amazingly fast.

Chess teaches the value of listening to your instructor. In the realm of the chess class, those who begin as "the best in the chess class" usually do not finish as such because they already think they know it all and are impervious to the instructors lessons. The children that listen the hardest, and practice what they learn, will inevitably come out on top. Winning and losing is a clear-cut indication to the child of his/her progress. If suddenly he/she is loosing to an opponent they once beat regularly, that child knows that he/she has not been listening and practicing hard enough. Chess is among the easiest activities to learn concerning this lesson.