

# Chess Course

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**Description:** Chess is a classic two player strategy game, with numerous variants. This course aims to facilitate players who are rank-beginners to learn some facets of chess that will elevate them to the next level. Chess, unlike say tic-tac-toe, is a fairly complex (even if finite) strategy game, so the spectrum of player levels is really wide. It is difficult, if not impossible, to design a course on chess that will benefit players of all levels. Thus, this course specifically caters to rank-beginners and for players of a higher calibre, a different course must be designed. Even books by the greatest masters cannot collapse the wide spectrum of player levels and cater to everyone. This course, however, assumes that the students know the basic rules. If not, this can be incorporated, by a preparatory session of one or two hours.

**Aims:** Here, we describe some aspects of chess. Although chess is often associated with mathematics, this might miss the point. The main difference is, in chess you don't need to be correct. In order to win, you just need to be more correct than the opponent. In this sense, it is more appropriate to compare chess to the legal profession. The advocate usually (if not always) defends their client, no matter the merits. Likewise, if you are playing chess you need to do your best at each point, with the current configuration of your army. You do not surrender, merely because your opponent's army is currently superior. However, when the superiority becomes overwhelming, it makes sense to surrender. What is overwhelming is dictated by the calibre of the players involved in the game.

**Objective:** Chess is a game that can be enjoyed, without bothering about acquiring expertise. However, even if one is not a super-talent, one can enjoy the game more, if one raises the level to an extent. One approach is to start playing in the hope that playing a lot will automatically raise one's level with exposure. This is contested by some of the great masters; the reason assigned: while exposure teaches you new things, playing without understanding concepts discovered by masters of the past result in mistakes becoming a reinforced, to the point the player makes them a habit and is not even aware of the flaws. This justifies some kind of formal framework within which to learn the game. Once a player acquires a level of proficiency they will be better equipped to improvise and experiment.

**Contents:** The following facets will constitute the broad coverage areas of this course:

1. Counting the number of units of control each side has over a square. Extending it to the weighted case, which incorporates the relative value of pieces.
2. Understanding (general) relative values of pieces, and understanding that these differences become more significant when taken over more moves, but for the purpose of an instant evaluation (taken to the extreme, just one move), any piece is as good as any other.
3. Basic tactics with examples: Pin, fork, skewer, discovery, double attack, deflection, intermezzo, interference.
4. Elementary checkmates in the endgame.
5. Other common checkmating themes.
6. Basic blunder check at every move.
7. Making moves with a purpose at any stage. Varying the depth of look ahead, based on the nature of the position.
8. Opening concepts: rapid development, centre control, king safety and restraining the opponent's forces.
9. Notion of candidate move: Look for forcing options that are favourable, and if none are available, look to improve the position.
10. Special play with each kind of piece

**Outcome:** At the end of this programme, the students will have improved their chess proficiency, significantly.