



Ways to Introduce Chess to Children: A Guide for Parents

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When thinking about the best games for young kids, most of us remember fondly our childhood favorites, like Jenga, Connect Four, or Sorry! While these games are no doubt fun and involve some level of strategy and critical thinking, one classic board game that's been around for ages has actually been proven to stimulate the brain and influence intelligence: chess.

Learning the gameboard, pieces, and basic rules isn't difficult, and doesn't require skills like reading or math. According to the famous study by Dr. Peter Dauvergne, kids who learn to play chess develop and utilize logical reasoning and critical thinking skills, which can then be transferred to academic endeavors, possibly helping kids who play chess achieve more and score higher in subject areas such as math.

Now that you know the [benefits chess can offer your child](#), you might be wondering where to begin and how to play chess for kids in a way that won't frustrate your little learner. While there are dedicated chess lessons for kids available in your community, it's also possible to start at home. So get out the chess set and let's get started!

When to Begin

According to the book, *Thinking With Chess* by Dr. Alexey Root, kids can start learning to play chess as early as age 5. Be sure to consider your child's maturity level by assessing how they handle playing other games that involve winning or losing. Kids will need to know how to take turns, and learn from losses. In addition, ensure that your child is interested in playing turn-based strategy games, as kids must be interested in learning to play so that the game itself doesn't become a chore.

After you've assessed your child's readiness and have determined that it's time to get started, it's time to introduce the chess board and pieces and dig in!



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Where to Begin

This might sound obvious, but it's always a good idea to make sure your own chess-playing knowledge is refreshed and ready to go by the time you start teaching your child! If it's been a while since you've played, you might want to remind yourself of the gameboard, pieces and their movements before sitting down to teach your child.

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If you are more of a hobbyist and your chess-playing experience mostly consists of playing the Chess app loaded on your PC, it might be time to get a closer look at the game. One great way for adults to get started is to learn about the important news and happenings in the chess world. Start with these trusted organizations:

- **FIDE:** The International Chess Federation, or FIDE, is the world's leading governing body of chess as a sport. This organization oversees all international chess competitions.. Not only is it seen as an international sport just like swimming, or auto racing, it also is recognized by the International Olympic Committee. In short, the FIDE website might be your best resource in learning about news, prominent players, and the wide world of chess.
- **The US Chess Federation:** To learn more local chess news and to potentially explore membership, the US Chess Federation features a section dedicated to new players, as well as a pathway to local clubs, tournaments, and a calendar of all the events taking

place in the United States. Also find articles and magazine subscriptions so you and your child can keep up with all the latest updates from around the country!

Once ready to begin with your child, try the following:

- Explore the chess board. Get out the chess board, and start by explaining the squares. Explain that the board is an 8x8 grid of alternating light and dark squares. It's sometimes helpful to notate the squares, marking on the chess board itself to create a coordinate system. If you do this, label the horizontal squares at the top from 1-8 (ranks), and the vertical squares going downwards starting from a-h (files).
- Get to know the pieces. Next, help your child begin memorizing the pieces. Learning all the pieces and their names can be tough, but you can make it easier by giving your child something to remember each piece by. For instance, the knight piece looks like a horse, while the rooks look like castles.
- Learn how pieces move and capture. After memorizing the names of the pieces, it's time to learn what they do. Explain what each piece does during gameplay. For example, only a knight could jump over another piece because it moves in an "L" shape, while kings can move just one space in any direction, except for in a situation it would be side-by-side with a king. Be sure to show your child how each piece moves during your explanation, and remember that it's a lot for your little learner to remember. Be patient during the learning process, as this might take many sessions to learn.
- Play practice games! With children, learning all the pieces and movements at once might be overwhelming. Make it easier for your child by playing special practice games. For example, play a pawns only game first, with the objective as getting the pawns to the other side of the board. As your child learns, add in bishops, rooks, and then the knights, slowly building familiarity and confidence with the pieces as they gain experience. As your child advances, play a game with only the king, queen, pawn, and rook to introduce the concept of check and checkmate.

When ready, play a full game of chess with your child, using all the pieces!



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Keep it Relaxed

Once your child learns to play, your child may or may not want to join chess classes for kids, a club, or other community organization that often hosts games and competitions. Some kids have a deep passion for the game and want nothing more than to compete with others to play more games. Other kids, however, may not necessarily like the intense pressure they might feel if they feel forced into a club or competition.

Like with anything else, follow your child's motivation and interest in the game, and don't push your child to play or do anything he or she doesn't want to. The benefits of chess might not shine through if a child feels pushed into doing something. Instead, keep the gameplay lighthearted and fun, and pursue the local chess community only if your child shows interest in taking the game further.

If you're looking for a worthwhile game to share with your kids that promises the unique benefits of enhanced critical thinking, chess might be the perfect game for your family! Don't forget to assess your child's readiness, and once you get started, go slow and have patience as your child learns to strategize and play this classic game!

[Try Chess Course Now](#)



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