

# The Benefits of Learning Chess

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## Dream List for Parents

There are many benefits that chess can bring for young people. Numerous studies, conducted in all corners of the globe, have shown that chess:

- Develops logical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Improves concentration and focus
- Enhances imagination and creativity
- Develops the ability to see the future consequences of one's actions
- Hones memory
- Promotes independence and a sense of responsibility
- Heightens self-esteem
- Offers hours and hours of fun for enthusiasts!

The list reads like a dream for parents and teachers: the sort of list that would make you wonder why every school in Ireland doesn't run chess classes as standard.

This is because Ireland, in common with the USA and UK, does not view chess as a "sport" and, therefore, there is no state money at all in this country to support chess. This is in direct contrast to non-English speaking countries, where the majority offer government money and support to chess, recognising the enormous benefits that the game gives to young players.

The Irish Chess Union has been told that chess, because it is not a physical activity and thus not a sport, does not qualify for any government support – although talks are ongoing between the ICU and the Sports Council about this issue.

OK, if it's not a sport, how can you explain this fact: Following the 1972 World Championship match between American Bobby Fischer and his Soviet counterpart Boris Spassky, a study was commissioned by the USA's Temple University. Leroy Dubek, a physics professor at Temple, found tremendous stress on chess players, with blood pressure, breathing and heart rates increasing to a rate comparable to a professional footballer during a soccer match. Dubek found that during a 5-hour chess match a chess player could lose more in bodyweight than a boxer over a 12-round fight!

Garry Kasparov, world champion from 1985 to 2000 and the highest-rated player in the history of the game, says that in just ONE YEAR chess tuition will improve a student's learning abilities. The Russian GM has set up a [foundation](#) to promote schools chess. His mission: *to take chess out of the ghetto where it has languished far too long – and where mere games of chance belong.*

## Food for Thought

Things for parents to consider when supporting their children in chess:

- Chess is played globally by millions; race, creed, disability, status are all no barrier. Chess is truly a universal game, the oldest game in the world, rich in

heritage, in diversity and magnitude. Over half of the world's chess federations enjoy full sport status in their respective countries and the Chess Olympiads enjoy participation of more competing countries than in any other activity outside of football.

- Remember Garry Kasparov's first match against the IBM super computer Deep Blue in 1997? That match had more than 59 million Internet hits – more than the official Atlanta Olympic 1996 website the entire time it was operational. This shows the phenomenal power of chess players and the link to computers.
- Chess's international federation ([FIDE](#)) has more member countries than any other sport except football.
- Today more than 285 million people play chess with other chess players from all over the world, via the internet. It is estimated 605 million people worldwide know how to play chess. Of these 7.5 million are registered players, covering 160 countries worldwide, making chess one of the most popular sports around the world.
- Chess fans are hopeful the sport will be in the Olympics one day soon, perhaps the first sport to be played by athletes of both the Olympics and Paralympics on an equal basis. Remember, chess has no physical boundaries even at the highest competitive level.