



Chess coaching for budding masters!

Welcome to the county's brand new chess academy course that we will be running, starting with this current chess season.

We want you to get the most out of your chess playing and believe that part of this is derived from aiming at specific learning goals and achievements and that's precisely what the academy offers. We are very happy to put the time and resource in to coach for and run the academy but we also need three things from you:

Commitment

We need you to turn up regularly to the junior chess club sessions and commit to studying the material and practising outside of these sessions too. In order to gain success at each of the levels, you will also need to enter into chess competitions to demonstrate that you can apply the knowledge you have learned.

Permission

You need to show this letter and attachments to your parents or carers so that they know what is involved and indicate that they are prepared to support you. Don't take their contribution for granted (as if!) They will need to give you lifts, pay for some things and cheer you up when you haven't done as well as you had hoped, occasionally. Try thanking them (the odd hug or two helps as well).

Money

Chess is not an expensive hobby but there is some cost involved. For each of the Saturday morning sessions, there is a charge £2 per session. To register for any level of the Academy costs £5 and this includes the relevant booklet. Other costs might arise, for example, through buying some of the recommended books, entry fees into tournaments, chess software, scorebooks etc. We are able to subsidise the running costs of junior chess to some extent and the modest fees reflect this.

Bring the signed slip along to the next session and welcome to the Shropshire Junior Chess Academy.

Francis Best & Steve Rooney



Introduction

Welcome to the Shropshire Junior Chess Academy course. The aim of this course is to give a structured approach to learning and improving at chess. The material will enable you to move from being a complete beginner to being an accomplished player, when coupled with regular study and participation in competitive play so that you learn how to apply the theory and hone your skills through regular practice.

Why Bother?

A good question! Playing chess helps develop powers of analysis, logic and reason, as well as encouraging powers of concentration and self-discipline. Most people also play chess because they enjoy it; it gives them a “buzz”. If there’s one thing to remember from this introduction it’s that – chess should be fun! If it stops being fun for you, then try changing what you do to make it more fun again.

One of the things that makes playing chess more fun is getting better at it. Winning a game can be very satisfying. Even losing a game can still be satisfying if you and your opponent have effectively worked together to produce a beautiful or fascinating game. Improving your skill and knowledge at chess will help you appreciate that the great chess players are really artists that just happen to use the chess board as their canvas.

So get stuck in, give it a go and enjoy the great adventure that is chess!

Course Structure

There are two strands to the course. The first measures your level of technical knowledge and is denoted by the chess pieces. When you first enrol in the Academy, you will be a **Member**. Learn the moves and basics of chess thoroughly and you will become a **Pawn**. Learn some tactics and more aspects of the game and you will graduate to **Knight**, then to **Bishop** and finally to **Rook**. We don’t have a level called King or Queen because we wanted to indicate that no one ever stops learning and improving at chess, so there is still more to aspire to once you have reached the maximum level of the Academy qualification.

The second strand of your achievement will be in demonstrating that you can apply your knowledge in gaining practical results. At the beginning, your designation will be Standard and, as your achieve levels of success, you will progress through **Bronze**, **Silver**, **Gold**, **Platinum** and **Diamond**.

We won’t formally measure how much fun you have but that remains a key objective, as we said earlier. Opposite is a schematic of the whole course. Then, let’s get chessing!

Francis Best & Steve Rooney
2008

**Shropshire Junior Chess Academy
Course Schematic**

Level	Theory				Practice	Ancillary
	Openings	Middlegame	Endings	General		
Pawn	Understanding the distinction between opening, middle-game and ending.	Understanding the distinction between opening, middle-game and ending.	Understanding the distinction between opening, middle-game and ending.	Knowledge of all moves, including <i>en passant</i> , 50-move rule and castling.	Participation in at least one competition of at least 5 rounds.	Able to use and write algebraic notation.
Knight <i>As Pawn, plus:</i>	Recognise basic opening types. Know the principles of opening play.	Basic toolkit tactics. Basic ideas on pawn weaknesses.	Checkmates: Q+K v K, R+K v K, 2R+K v K. Pawn races: rule of the square. Simple K+P v K.	Recognise common mating patterns. "Time of the essence" considerations.	Win at least one game in formal competition of at least 5 rounds.	Understand how to use a chess clock.
Bishop <i>As Knight, plus:</i>	Know the principles plus some detail of 1 opening for white and a defence to each of 1e4, 1.d4.	Advanced toolkit tactics. Good pieces v bad pieces. Basic principles of middlegame planning. Preparing and launching a kingside attack.	Basics of pieces verses pawns in the ending. Simple pawn break ideas. More advanced K&P endings.	Forced drawing techniques. Understanding attack and counter-attack.	Score at least 25% in a formal competition of at least 5 rounds.	Making basic training use of common software chess package (e.g. Fritz, Chessmaster etc.) Basic psychology.
Rook <i>As Bishop, plus:</i>	Know principles plus reasonable detail of an opening repertoire as white and black.	Understanding and formulating plans from a given position. Converting advantages. Pawn structures. Permanent v temporary advantages.	K+R+P v K+R. More advanced K&P endings. Endings with more complex combinations of pieces and pawns.	Dynamic imbalance in positions. Positional exchange sacrifice.	Score at least 50% in a formal competition of at least 5 rounds.	Making more advanced use of common software chess package (e.g. Fritz, Chessmaster etc.) Analysing a complete game.

Performance Achievement Standards

Performance Ranking	Achieving ECF rating of at least:	Achieving "new" ECF rating of at least:
Standard	Below 30 or no grading yet	Below 85 or no grading yet
Bronze	30-49	85-99
Silver	50-74	100-120
Gold	75-99	121-139
Platinum	100-119	140-154
Diamond	120 and above	155 and above

The level of achievement is a combination of the two tables, so you will start off as a "Standard Pawn" and move through levels such as "Silver Knight", "Platinum Bishop" and so on. The two "strands" don't have to keep pace with each other. In theory, you could be a "Diamond Pawn" or a "Standard Rook", although generally, as your level of knowledge improves, you should expect this to show in your performance level.



Now all you need to do is sign up and start winning more games!

I would like to enrol in the Shropshire Junior Chess Academy.

Name of parent / carer..... Signed.....

Name of child..... DoB.....

Email address

Estimated level of study (please circle) Pawn Knight Bishop Rook Unsure

I enclose £5 for initial enrolment fee.

You can bring the form along to the next Academy session or post to:
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