

# How Chess Has Benefited My Life and I Hope Chess Benefits You Too!

Now I'll tell you a bit about myself. I am a USCF Class A player, rated between 1800 and 1999. Chess is a male-dominated game, and I am proud to have been on and off the listing of the top 100 U.S. nationally ranked female chess players for over 10 years. I have been teaching chess professionally for the last three years. Chess has been my passion for over 15 years.

I would like to share my chess odyssey with you and I hope my life journey will inspire you to continue to play chess. While you may find that your life experience is different from mine, I do sincerely hope that you will find, as I have, many great benefits from playing chess.

When I was 8 years old, I learned chess from my mom, a casual and beginner chess player.

Even though I had some good memories playing chess at an early age, I didn't take chess seriously until later because I was more interested in Barbie dolls and playing soccer. I didn't know too much about winning strategies - like you're supposed to move one of your center pawns two spaces to control the center and open up lines for your bishops and queen.

Once I got to middle school and high school, I had to deal with a lot of adversity. Ever since I was about two years old, I had a speech impediment, and as you can

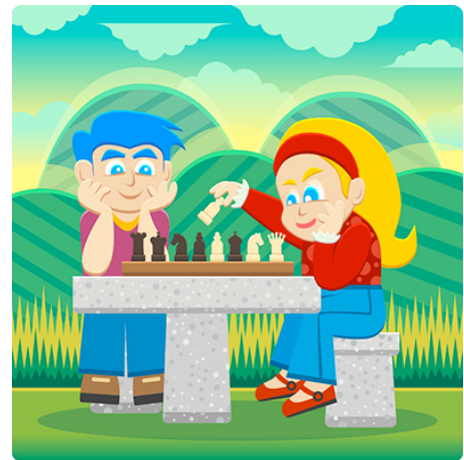


imagine, my classmates teased and taunted me. Sadly, I didn't have any friends in school. This took a huge emotional toll on me, because like everyone else, I had wanted to be accepted by my peers in school. My confidence and self-esteem plummeted. I had a hard time focusing on my schoolwork and that impacted my ability to stay focused in class and my grades suffered. Because of my difficult school situation, at age 15, I started to turn my attention to chess and played often at home. Chess became my positive outlet.



My dad noticed that I was playing chess all the time, so he decided to take me to a local chess club, where I started to play in USCF tournaments. My first established USCF rating was 625, which is considered a beginner's rating. At that time, I still didn't know a lot about tactics or strategy. I also didn't know how to checkmate with a king and a single rook, which is an easy win once you know the strategy. Despite my lack of knowledge and skill, I kept going to the chess club once a week on Thursday evenings. My persistence and dedication paid off. I started to win some games. This made me feel really good inside, and my confidence slowly improved. The chess club took me to a place where I felt accepted. It was a place where I could just focus on the game, and not worry about the bullying in school.

At the chess club, there were a lot of members of all ages and skill levels. I got to meet some very interesting and talented people, including a Wimbledon tennis player, a music composer who scored the Peanut Gang's films, and one of the world's fastest Rubik's cube solvers. I slowly started to make some nice acquaintances outside of school.



Chess is a male-dominated game, but I didn't let that bother me. From time to time, the chess tournament organizers would organize all-girls tournaments. Even though all-girls tournaments didn't happen often, I always had fun and looked forward to them. When my rating reached about 745, I recall playing against a 1000 rated opponent in an all-girls tournament. As you can imagine, she beat me, but the most tragic thing was that I didn't even know why I lost my queen and the game! I was so sad and frustrated. Afterwards, I went over that game with a very nice and helpful 1500-rated player. Through his assistance, we discovered that my opponent used a double attack tactic in the game to win my queen.



What I learned from losing that game was how to defend against the double attack tactic in future games. I also learned that by reviewing and analyzing my previous games, I could get better. When I coach my students in chess, I often go over their moves, their opponents' mistakes, and then we review good moves. By analyzing the moves, my students learn and they improve.

From time to time, I have had lessons from much stronger players. I also studied from tactic books and improved my game a lot. In the magical summer of 2001, after I finished my junior year of high school, I began to use intense focus in each and every game that I played. I paid close attention to all of my opponents' moves. And I asked lots of questions in my mind, such as "Why did my opponent move here?" I won a couple of local chess tournaments and did well in others. I gained about 450 USCF rating points in less than four months, from 1117 to about 1550. This gain put me on the top 100 list of females in the USA. Wow! I was so excited about this!

I got a lot of chess trophies when I did well in chess tournaments!



My life at this point in time was very interesting because even though I was thriving in the chess world, school was the complete opposite. I was still struggling a lot at school. In high school, my main priority was to survive day to day and cope with the mental stress of not being accepted among my peers. I continued to have low self-esteem. I wasn't in the mental state to focus on my schoolwork and get consistently good grades, like As and Bs.



Chess gave me hope since I was good at the game. I still continued to play chess once a week at the chess club because chess still was a positive outlet for my life. When my rating was in the 1600s, I remember playing for the very first time against a chess master, rated 2272, in a club tournament! I was so nervous, since I had never played a master in a rated tournament before! I remember telling myself to just play my best. That master opponent was Peter Thiel, the co-founder of PayPal and a billionaire. What an accomplishment to draw against him!

You can see this game on my website: [www.laurengoodkindchess.com/about-me/](http://www.laurengoodkindchess.com/about-me/)

I am proud to say that chess helped me all the way through high school graduation. My supportive parents encouraged me to go to college. Despite my poor ACT scores and my mediocre grades, I managed to get accepted to a four-year college close to home.

Even though I had no idea what I wanted to study in college, going to college was a new chapter in my life. I lived in the dorms and for the first time in many years, I managed happily to make new friends! I still continued to play chess at the community chess club and I looked forward to playing chess once a week!



My older brother studied abroad in Spain for his junior year in college. I wanted to follow my brother's footsteps, so I also studied abroad. I was fortunate to join an exchange program and went to New Zealand for my junior year of college. New Zealand consists of two major islands with lots of pretty mountains, beaches, farms, and more! Team chess is called "Bughouse" in the USA. In New Zealand, team chess is called "Transfer chess"! Chess is also male dominated in New Zealand.

Living abroad by myself took a lot of courage. Once I settled in the university dorms, I enjoyed taking the New Zealand culture classes. At one point, I tried to start a university chess club but I didn't get enough club members, so the club quickly closed down. After doing some research online, I discovered the New Zealand Chess Federation website, and from that I played in two rated chess tournaments.



In the first tournament, which was in the same town as the university where I was studying, I was paired against the New Zealand women's chess champion. I was nervous playing her and I managed to defeat her. That was very exciting for me!

Taking the initiative, or in other words, taking action, in chess is important to win. I was able to apply this winning strategy idea in my life after I returned back to the USA from New Zealand to start my senior year in college. Since I had a great experience learning more about the New Zealand chess community and the two tournaments that I played in, I decided to write a chess article for the CalChess Chess Association. They happily published my article. In order to graduate, getting an internship was essential. I managed to get an interview at a private school for an internship. The woman who interviewed me asked if I have written any articles outside of my classes. She told me she interviewed other candidates for the internship, and those people only had experience writing essays for class assignments. I told her that I had written an article for the CalChess Chess Association, and she was impressed.

A couple days later, she gave me the internship, which helped me graduate from college in December of 2006!

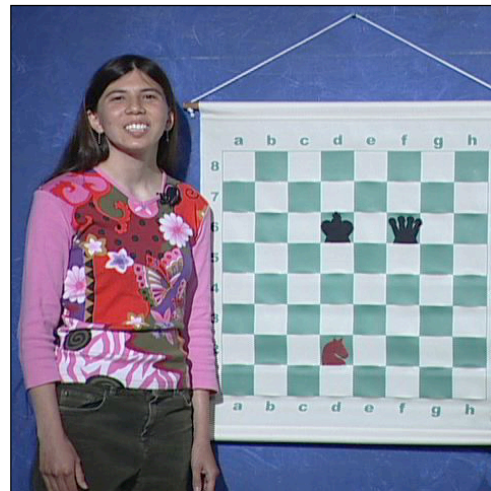
I was happy that I graduated from college, but since my childhood adversity took a painful toll on my life for many years, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. I just knew that I had to move forward in my life in a positive way. Being strong mentally, I used this time to volunteer at a variety of places, had a lot of short-term jobs and internships, and took an assortment of classes at several community colleges. I had a lot of interesting experiences, including



being a San Francisco Giants videographer intern and operating quarter-million dollar video cameras at AT&T Park.

At this time, I continued to play chess. I studied more tactics and played in more chess tournaments; I got my rating up to Class A, 1800-1999. In each game, before and after each move, I kept asking myself questions. And the wins (yes, also some losses), continued, giving me experience beating and drawing various expert level players (rated between 2000-2199). From time to time, I have drawn in tournaments against master players (rated 2200). One of my other highlights was beating a 2300 master player in a blitz game.

After these satisfying accomplishments, I felt so much better about myself. I wanted to give back to the chess community, and with some production help from my family, I decided to produce a local TV show in my free time, called "Chess Diva." I used the show to try to inspire more females to play chess. I interviewed inspirational top chess players, including a young woman chess master and a legally blind woman chess player!



In 2010, a huge and devastating earthquake hit Haiti. I felt sad. After reading about how other chess players throughout the United States organized chess fundraisers to raise money for the earthquake victims, I decided I wanted to make a positive difference. With some help from my supportive family, I organized a two-day chess blitz (fast 5 minute chess games) as a local fundraiser. After playing many blitz games with the public, \$400 was raised for the earthquake victims.



Since chess has been my passion for many years, I plan to continue to teach chess for a long time. I hope my life story has inspired you to continue to play chess and I hope chess will benefit your life, just like mine, in many ways.

I spent hours and more hours writing this eBook, and I hope you enjoyed reading it. I am confident you'll win more chess games by asking questions mentioned in this eBook. The more you practice playing games, asking questions before each move will become second nature to you. Also, when you play more games, you'll gain more experience and thinking a couple of moves ahead will be easier for you. You will ask questions and see your next moves automatically.

Asking questions doesn't get you off the hook for studying tactics to improve your chess skills. You can learn tactics by studying books. I have some recommended books in my chess store: <http://www.laurengoodkindchess.com/store/>

A chess coach might help you improve even faster.

Email me at [laurengoodkindchess@gmail.com](mailto:laurengoodkindchess@gmail.com) if you are interested in taking face-to-face or online chess lessons from me.

Please let me know if and how this eBook helped your chess thinking skills or has benefited or influenced your life in some way. I'd love to hear your thoughts. Post a message on my Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/LaurenGoodkindchess](http://www.facebook.com/LaurenGoodkindchess), or send an e-mail. If you have a special game that you are proud of, please tell me about it!

If you want to learn more about chess strategies, tactics, and more puzzles to solve, stay tuned! I plan to write more chess eBooks for you in the near future!

All the best in life and have fun playing chess!!

Lauren Goodkind



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