

# Chess Progression of Skills

Chess benefits children's **problem solving**, **resilience** and **strategic thinking**. It is also a **great hobby** for them to develop and share with their family, friends and teachers.

This progression document was developed to support teachers planning a series of chess lessons, whether during the school day or as extra-curricular activities.

Skills have been selected to enable children to play chess and reach a good standard by the end of Year 6.

Teachers may choose to start their children at points different from the year groups indicated. If a class is just starting out with chess for example, teachers may start at the 'Year 2 or 3' sections. After several years of chess instruction, it should be possible to adhere more closely to this progression.

As with any discipline, success in chess depends upon a balance of study and practise. Children should be encouraged to study chess as a class, discuss good and bad moves, study themselves through books and videos, and play games. Solving chess puzzles is a great way to develop understanding of tactics. Chess puzzles available through websites like Chess.com or Lichess can be practised as a class or individually by children.

Children should aim to learn chess **openings** so that they can make moves confidently at the start of the game. Learning one opening for the white pieces and two openings for the black pieces allows them to start playing with confidence. Openings for the black pieces are usually called 'defences'. Children should learn one defence against pawn to d4 and one against pawn to e4. Learning an opening does not mean learning long sequences of moves, although some common moves, patterns and variations are useful to remember.

The openings for white pieces chosen in this progression is the '**Jobava London**' opening. This opening teaches children to develop their knights and bishops, before looking for attacks against the opposite king's side. The defences chosen for black pieces are the **Caro-Kann** (against pawn to e4) and **King's Indian Defence** (against pawn to d4).

As well as learning sequences of moves, children should be taught chess principles. In the **opening** of the game, these include moving the centre pawns, developing knights and bishops, controlling the centre, avoiding moving the same pieces too much and castling by about move 10. In the **midgame** (after the opening), children should learn to look for weak pieces, scan the whole board, make beneficial exchanges of pieces and play according to the mantra of '**check→capture→ attack**', looking for moves in this priority. Children should also learn common patterns of checks and checkmates.

## Year 2 Chess Progression

Lesson	Learning objectives	Suggested activities
1 Openings	<p>Know the names of chess pieces</p> <p>Know the points value of chess pieces</p> <p>Set up a chess board</p> <p>Know how all pieces move on a chess board</p>	<p>Set up chess board from a diagram</p> <p>Play simplified 'cat and mouse' games of bishop v knight, queen v rook etc.</p>
2 Openings	<p>Move the knight around, take with the knight</p>	<p>Play simplified games of knight and king v knight and king</p>
3 Checkmates	<p>Know what 'check' means</p> <p>Use the 'CPR' (capture, protect, run away) to deal with check</p> <p>Recognise 'checkmate' and know the back rank checkmate</p>	<p>Play simplified games of queen, rook and king v queen, rook and king</p>
4 Midgame	<p>Know and use opening principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Move centre pawns</li> <li>- Move pieces once</li> <li>- Move knights and bishops first</li> <li>- Castle early</li> </ul>	<p>Play class game against the teacher</p>
5 Calculating	<p>Know the points value of pieces and use this to evaluate exchanges</p>	<p>Play class game against the teacher, discussing exchanges and whether they are beneficial</p>
6 Tactics	<p>Recognise pieces that are defended and undefended</p>	<p>Play class game against the teacher</p>
7 Endgame	<p>Recognise a second checkmate (protected queen)</p>	<p>Practise simplified games with queen, rook and king v king</p>

## Year 3 Chess Progression

Lesson	Learning objectives, success criteria	Activities
1 Openings	Know and use common opening principles (move centre pawns, develop knights and bishops, castle early)	Class discussion, followed by repeated practise of opening of chess games
2 Openings	Recognise and use a common opening for white (Jobava London)	Class discussion, followed by repeated practise of Jobava London opening and counter
3 Checkmates	Recognise and use common checkmates (ladder with queen and rook, queen adjacent)	Simplified games, using only queen and rook v king
4 Midgame	Recognise pieces that are defended and undefended Evaluate exchanges according to points	Discussion, examples Class games against the teacher
5 Calculating	Prioritise according to 'check, capture, attack' Scan the whole board before making a move	Discussion, examples Class games against the teacher
6 Calculating	Calculate beneficial exchanges using points values	Discussion, examples Class games against the teacher
7 Endgame	Recognise and promote passed pawns	Simplified scenarios featuring opportunities to promote pawns

## Year 4 Chess Progression

Lesson	Learning objectives, success criteria	Activities
1 Openings	Recognise and use a common opening for white (Jobava London) Recognise and use a fork in the opening	Watching YouTube videos featuring Jobava London Class discussions Opening of games against the teacher
2 Openings	Recognise and use a common defence against e4 (Caro Kann) Recognise and use a common defence against d4 (King's Indian)	Watching YouTube videos featuring Caro Kann and King's Indian defence Class discussions Opening of games against the teacher Repeated practise of just these openings and defences
3 Checkmates	Recognise and use common checkmates (back rank, queen and rook ladder, queen adjacent) Avoid stalemates	Simplified scenarios featuring only rook, queen and king Class discussion about scenarios with the risk of stalemate
4 Openings	Recognise and counter scholar's mate	Class discussions of scholar's mate Opening of games against the teacher featuring a scholars' mate attack
5 Midgame	Play according to 'check, capture attack' Scan the whole board before moving	Games against the teacher where the class plays according to 'check, capture, attack' mantra, considering the whole chess board
6 Tactics	Eliminate opponent's pieces in your own half	Discussion and playing of scenarios where an opponent's piece is in your half
7 Endgame	Use a king to support pawns in the endgame	Simplified games featuring only a king and several pawns YouTube videos about endgames featuring only kings and pawns

## Year 5 Chess Progression

Lesson	Learning objectives, success criteria	Activities
1 Openings	Recognise and use a common opening for white, including some variations (Jobava London)	Watching YouTube videos featuring Jobava London Class discussions Opening of games against the teacher
2 Openings	Recognise and use a common defence against e4 (Caro Kann) Recognise and use a common defence against d4 (King's Indian)	Watching YouTube videos featuring Caro Kann and King's Indian defence Class discussions Opening of games against the teacher Repeated practise of just these openings and defences
3 Checkmates	Recognise and use common checkmates (back rank, queen and rook ladder, queen adjacent) Avoid stalemates Recognise and counter 'scholar's mate'	Simplified games featuring only queens, rooks and kings  Examples of situations involving stalemates and scholar's mate
4 Midgame	Evaluate exchanges that are equal on points	Class games against the teacher and discussion of possible exchanges
5 Calculating	Evaluate an opponents' responses before making a move	Class games against the teacher and discussion of opponent's options
6 Tactics	Defend and attack pieces multiple times	Class games against the teacher
7 Endgame	Play common pawn endgames	Simplified games featuring only pawns and kings

## Year 6 Chess Progression

Lesson	Learning objectives, success criteria	Activities
1 Openings	Recognise and use a common opening for white, including some variations (Jobava London) Recognise and name other openings (Italian, Sicilian, Ruy Lopez, Queen's Gambit)	Watching YouTube videos featuring Jobava London Class discussions Opening of games against the teacher
2 Openings	Recognise and use a common defence against e4 (Caro Kann) Recognise and use a common defence against d4 (King's Indian)	Watching YouTube videos featuring Caro Kann and King's Indian defence Class discussions Opening of games against the teacher Repeated practise of just these openings and defences
3 Checkmates	Recognise and use common checkmates (back rank, queen and rook ladder, queen adjacent) Avoid stalemates Recognise and counter 'fools' mate	Simplified games featuring only queens, rooks and kings  Examples of situations involving stalemates and scholar's mate
4 Midgame	Recognise 'good' and 'bad' pieces and know when to trade these	Games against the teacher and discussion about which pieces to take and trade/strong and weak pieces
5 Calculating	Simplify a position from an advantage by exchanging equal pieces	Games against the teacher featuring an advantageous position requiring simplifying pieces by exchanging
6 Tactics	Recognise and use discovered attacks and forks	Examples and puzzles featuring discovered attacks and forks
7 Endgame	Play common pawn endgames, using the king in the centre to support	Simplified games featuring only pawns and kings