

Chess.com: A chess renaissance

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How do you feel about students playing on Chess.com?

"It (Chess.com) is sometimes a challenge because it is distracting, and it's easy to switch over to that and to not pay attention to what's happening in class. I think that's a pretty common struggle we have just using computers; that's always going to be something that you have to face, whether it's chess or whether it's something else."

— Emily McGready, World History teacher

"The website is fairly well-designed. Some people claim that bullet chess is an addictive thing because the distribution of winning and losing is near random. It's not actually due to skill level because the time structure is condensed. It's (similar to) gambling, almost. Also, it's one of the few websites that aren't blocked." — Jeffrey Wang, freshman

How did you start playing chess?

"I've always played chess with my grandfather, but when I was in elementary school, that's when he first tried to get me interested in chess. As an elementary school kid, I really had no interest sitting around for 45 minutes playing a (board game). But when I got into middle school, in sixth grade, I decided to join the chess club at Valley Forge (Middle School). I kind of rediscovered it in a way that was a lot more fun for me and a lot more beginner friendly. And then I got to play with my grandfather more." — Aidan Stewart, senior

Do you use any other chess websites?

"There's a really great online resource called Lichess; it's actually an organization, and it's completely free. I'd say it's a little less user-friendly than Chess.com. Chess.com did a really great job gearing itself to be open to beginners and really easy to navigate, especially if you're just starting out and you need to chat (with other users). Lichess is a bit less user friendly, but it's got tons of free resources and libraries for studying openings or tactics. Chess.com has a premium account where you get access to an unlimited amount of anything, but you have that paywall. (Lichess) is a little more difficult to navigate and you have to know what you're looking for and how to get there." — Aidan Stewart, senior



At first glance, Chess.com is exactly what it says on the tin: a free website that allows users to play chess against a computer or their fellow players. However, since its conception, Chess.com has steadily added and adapted its website to include new features for beginners and masters alike. As of 2023, players can compete in tournaments for a position on the leaderboard, take lessons on chess strategies, watch chess matches live and complete the daily chess puzzle. These additions attracted a sizable user base, currently boasting more than 100 million users. There was a spike in interaction with the 18-year-old website during the past three years, which Chess.com attributed to a combination of boredom from the COVID-19 pandemic and the release of the 2020 chess drama series "The Queen's Gambit." In January 2023, Chess.com released a memo discussing the rise in interaction and the subsequent effects on the site's servers. It reported that, on Jan. 20, Chess.com had 10 million active members, almost double that of December 2022, and users played almost 1 million games each hour in January. Chess.com predicts that its user base is likely to continue growing and addresses the challenge with optimism. "Chess is incredible, and it's a joy to share this game with all of you," according to the Chess.com website.



Chess.com user base growth from 2002 to 2023
(Source: Chess.com)

