**The Renaissance of Chess in the Digital Age**

In 2020, two big events really sparked a surge in chess's popularity. First, during the early months of the 2020 lockdowns brought on by Covid, many of us found ourselves with an abundance of free time. Then came the captivating release of the miniseries 'The Queen's Gambit' on Netflix in October.

This combination reignited interest in the age-old game, with people eagerly jumping in to play, learn, and connect. Chess enthusiasts flocked to engaging YouTube influencers like GothamChess (1) for insights and strategies, a trend that's vividly captured in this graph.

Becoming a Grandmaster is a challenging and distinctive honor. While you can attain a black belt in martial arts through years of practice, achieving the status of a chess Grandmaster requires something beyond just years of play; it demands a unique talent.

That's why there are only around 1,600 Grandmasters worldwide (3). Despite the difficulty, the number of people achieving Grandmaster status has been increasing over the years.

To become a Grandmaster you need to achieve an ELO of 2,500.

Think of the ELO system in chess as climbing a mountain. When you start, you're at the bottom. Winning a game helps you climb higher. If you win against someone higher up (a stronger player), you climb a lot because it's a big deal. If you beat someone lower down (a weaker player), you still climb, but not by much. Losing to a stronger player doesn't make you slide down too far, but losing to a weaker player means you slide down more. Your score shows how high you've climbed, aiming to get as high as possible.

I've been playing since September 2020, I started with an ELO of 1200 and now my ELO is of around 1600. So 400 points in 3 years. Who knows, perhaps in 7 years I will become a grandmaster (or perhaps in 20)

Over the years, technology has evolved, and now we have AI systems that learn to play chess using reinforcement learning algorithms.

Around the year 2000, the ELO scores of computers surpassed the highest scores achieved by humans.

**Rising Stars: The Surge of Child Prodigies in Modern Times**

Many children adopt their parents' interests from a young age, leading to a surge in highly skilled young chess players worldwide. This phenomenon can be attributed to increased accessibility to extensive chess knowledge and the opportunity to practice with advanced chess engines like Stockfish (9). As illustrated in the forthcoming chart, this accessibility has contributed to a rise in the number of players achieving grandmaster status before the age of 20.

**Benefits of Playing Chess**

Playing chess has numerous cognitive and psychological benefits(10):

* Enhances memory and creativity
* Improves planning and problem-solving skills
* Increases empathy and perspective-taking
* Boosts self-awareness
* Offers protection against dementia
* Reduces symptoms of ADHD and panic attacks
* Can improve therapy effectiveness

Chess supports mental agility, emotional intelligence, and overall cognitive health.

...so, what are you waiting for? sign in for free and start playing from your cellphone

**Starting Hints:**

If you play with the white pieces, try practicing the "London System" opening

and if you play with the black pieces, try practicing the "French Defense" opening

5 minutes of chess a day, keeps the doctor away (and gives a lot of happiness too)

Thank you!

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