

Chess: Art, Science, or Sport?

The Chess Friends

The Man Benjamin Frederick, The Myth Sarang Sankrithi, and The Legend Vivaan Sankrithi

<https://www.chessfriendsbooks.com/blog>

Get their new book, *Q&A Chess: Tournament Edition* here (published 9-15-2025): <https://a.co/d/hMYdF7B>

Howdy! It's the Chess Friends! We now have more than 20 blog posts on our website, read by over a thousand readers from 17 countries and counting! We're very excited to write this exclusive piece for our favorite magazine, *Northwest Chess*!

There has been this question going around, whether chess is an art, science, or sport, but no one had asked us, the kids... So, in this article, we are going to share our opinion, based on our own chess experience. Our short answer: Chess is all of them! Let us explain...

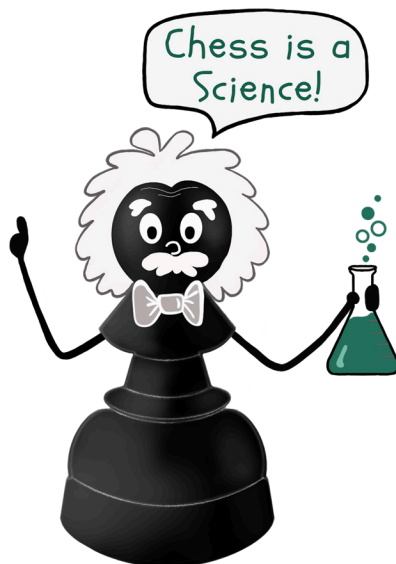
Before we dig deeper, let's define science, art, and sport. Science is based on logic, experiments, and data. It is objective. It follows a clear method, and results aren't accepted until they're repeated over and over again. Art is subjective; it's more creative, intuitive, and not based on the right answer. Science thrives within boundaries. Art is boundless. Sport is challenging yourself, trying to push your limits by working hard, experimenting in your training, and being creative in your play. When we combine art, science, and sport, amazing things can happen. Space travels, for example, wouldn't be possible without all three!

Leonardo da Vinci, the greatest artist and scientist of all time, used his scientific skills to take his art to a masterpiece level. He observed nature with his artistic eye, and came up with discoveries in biology, engineering, and physics. Albert Einstein famously said that imagination (another way of saying creativity) is more important than knowledge. Advances in science inspire creativity in art, and creativity in art motivates advances in science. And let's not forget Einstein's famous photo, where he is riding the bike! Score for the sport!

To become a great chess player, you need to find a good balance between

art and science! To become a chess champion, you need to appreciate sport.

The Myth Sarang:



When I play a chess game, I am not really playing my opponent, but the positions that are in front of me on the chess board. It's really me versus me. Most of these positions follow certain patterns that I've studied and analyzed many times. I like to set up positions when I'm playing that follow ideas I've studied a lot. That way I am ready to push for strong results.

After each game, I analyze it with coaches and engines. In this analysis, I'm looking to learn from my mistakes, particularly in those critical positions that deviate from patterns I'm familiar with, so I can be better prepared in the future. In many ways this is science. I experiment with ideas I've studied, reflect on those experiments, learn from them, and then iterate to keep improving.

The Legend Vivaan:



When I play a chess game, I like to play in crazy creative ways that no one has ever seen before. This makes my opponents feel unprepared and not ready for my wild ideas! This is just like art! My brain rapid fires ideas, and I like to think about what my opponent will most likely do when I make a sneaky move. My favorite games are ones where I have fun and sac pieces!

Engines and coaches often don't love the piece sacs, but I still do them anyway because they're so pretty and fun! Now that I've gotten a lot better though, the engines tend to call my piece sacs brilliancies! Chess is all creativity for me. I learn from my coaches and calculate, but they know I'm a wild man, so they help me build my attacks and help me coordinate and improve my creative ideas.

The Man Benji:



I love volleyball as much as I love chess (don't make me pick one!). When I'm at a volleyball practice or a tournament, and someone asks me: "What other sports do you play?" without hesitation, I say *Chess*. Their reaction? *Oh, cool!* Chess is a sport on many levels! Let me highlight those levels, drawing from my tournament experience playing chess and volleyball.

1. Chess is a mental sport while volleyball is a physical sport. When you play volleyball and you try your best, your muscles get sore, which results in them getting stronger. In chess, when you think hard about a position, you're working your brain, which means you're building new neuron connections. But in both sports, you're getting pushed to your limits, whether it's physically or mentally.

2. In chess and in volleyball, you dedicate lots of time to practice, which is key to improving. In all sports, chess and volleyball included, we start at the same place. Someone might have a natural talent for the game, but if you want to get anywhere, talent is not enough. You have to practice day after day, whether it's getting reps at the gym or at chess tactics.

3. We test our practice at competitions. During a tournament game, it's you and your opponent, on the other side of the board, or the other side of the net. At first, it might seem like your opponent is someone who you have to "beat", or surpass. In reality, like Sarang said, it's me versus me. Your opponent is there to push you, to test your preparation, just like you do this for them. I am grateful that there are people to challenge me and help me get better.

4. Then, there are emotions. In volleyball and in chess, they are the same: elation with a win or frustration with a loss (let's skip a draw for now, since in volleyball, it's not a possible outcome). In volleyball, my teammates and I cheer each other during and after the match, sometimes very loudly! During a chess game, I would love to come to Vivi's board and start dancing and chanting *Let's-go-Vi-vi-let's-go!* But I can't. A chess game is all on you. Sure, we have our parents and chess friends to share emotions with after the game, but only you know how bad the mistake you made was. I think that's a reason why I tend to get more frustrated when I lose a chess game than a volleyball game.

5. Why do we play sports? During my first few years of playing chess and volleyball, the answer seemed obvious to me. *I play because I have fun!* Later, when I got more competitive, I realized that's not the only answer to this question. *I play because I want to play in the Olympics, or I want to be a Super GM.* You become driven by your goals, but you shouldn't think about them too much or else you will crumble under pressure. Reach for the stars, but grab the lowest hanging fruit on the way there! Also, never forget why you started playing your sport—for fun—whether it's chess or volleyball, or something else!

For our scientist chess readers, lean into the art! For our artist chess readers, lean into the science! For all our readers, enjoy the sport!

Now, if you made it this far, through the serious business part of this article, here are some knee-slappers! As they say, come for the information, stay for the jokes!

Why does Benji keep his volleyball knee-pads on when working on a chess blog?

Because of all those knee-slappers!

Why did an artist sign up for a chess tournament?

To win some Monet!

Why are scientists good at chess?

Because they understand it at a cellular level.

Why are artists good chess friends?

Because after a loss, they offer their shoulder to crayon.

Why can an artist quickly bounce back from a loss?

Because they know how to brush it off.

Why did the chemist win the puzzle solving competition?

Because he had all the solutions!

Three Cheers, Fellow Future Master Chess Friends!

The Man Benji, The Myth Sarang, The Legend Vivi

