I'm not a robot

In chess, a player’s rating (often represented by ELO) is more than just a number. It is a reflection of their skill level, experience, and the amount of effort they have put into mastering the game. For many players, understanding the average chess rating can be a guide to setting personal goals and tracking their progress. We have some average chess ratings within each skill tier below (using FIDE ratings, not online ratings where you might have to add about 300 to these to get the equivalent rating): Novice (Under 1000) Intermediate (1000-1600) Advanced (1600-2000) Expert (2000-2200) Master (2200 and above) Grandmaster (2500 and above) Super Grandmaster (2700 and above) Below we deeper look into the concept of the average chess rating, exploring what is considered to be an “average” rating and how these ratings are determined. Understanding Chess Ratings Before we look into what constitutes an average rating, it’s essential to understand how chess ratings are calculated. The most widely used rating system is the Elo rating system, developed by Arpad Elo in the 1960s. This system calculates ratings based on a player’s performance against other rated players, with the expectation that a higher-rated player will win more often against a lower-rated player. Rating Categories Chess ratings can generally be categorized as follows: Novice (Under 1000): Players in this category are generally beginners who are still learning the basics of the game. Intermediate (1000-1600): Players in this range have a good grasp of the basic strategies and tactics. Advanced (1600-2000): Players at this level have a deeper understanding of the game and have developed more advanced strategies. Expert (2000-2200): These players have a high level of skill and have spent considerable time studying and practicing the game. Master (2200 and above): Players in this category are among the best in the world, often participating in high-level tournaments and competitions. Grandmaster is considered above 2500 and Super Grandmaster (an unofficial title) is considered 2700 and above. FIDE ratings are also different from online ratings. Online ratings are often 300 points inflated relative to what might be an equivalent FIDE rating. What is Considered “Average”? Determining the “average” chess rating can be somewhat subjective, as it depends on the pool of players being considered. Generally, an average club player might have a rating between 1200 and 1600. This range represents a player who has moved beyond the beginner stage and has acquired a decent understanding of chess strategies and tactics. Factors Influencing the Average Rating Several factors can influence the average rating, including: Geographical Region: Different regions might have varying average ratings due to the popularity of chess and the level of competition in that area. Age Group: The average rating can also vary depending on the age group. Younger players might have lower average ratings compared to adults who have been playing for a longer time. Playing Platform: The average rating might differ between online platforms and traditional chess clubs, with online platforms often having a broader range of player skill levels. Improving Your Rating If you’re looking to improve your chess rating, here are a few tips that might help: Study Chess Tactics: Understanding various chess tactics can help you gain an advantage over your opponents. Analyze Your Games: After each game, take time to analyze your moves and understand what you could have done better. Seek Guidance: Consider seeking guidance from a coach or a more experienced player to help you improve your skills. Practice Regularly: Like any skill, improving at chess requires regular practice. FAQs: Average Chess Rating – What’s Considered Average? What is a chess rating? A chess rating is a numerical value assigned to a player based on their performance in chess games against other rated players. The rating is designed to predict the outcome of a game between two players with different ratings. How is a chess rating calculated? Chess ratings are calculated using various systems such as the Elo rating system, the Glicko rating system, and others. These systems take into account the ratings of both players and the outcome of their game to adjust their ratings accordingly. What is considered an average chess rating? An average chess rating can vary depending on the rating system and the pool of players being considered. In the context of the FIDE rating system, an average club player might have a rating between 1200 and 1600. Players with ratings below 1200 are generally considered beginners, while those above 1600 are moving into the intermediate level. How do I find out my chess rating? If you are a member of a chess federation or play on online chess platforms, you will be assigned a rating based on your performance in rated games. You can find your rating on the official website of the chess federation or on your profile page of the online chess platform. Can I improve my chess rating? Yes, you can improve your chess rating by winning games, especially against players with higher ratings. Studying chess tactics, strategies, and analyzing your games can also help you improve your play and, consequently, your rating. What is the highest chess rating ever achieved? The highest FIDE rating ever achieved was 2882 (unofficially 2889), held by Magnus Carlsen in 2014. However, please note that ratings can fluctuate, and new records might be set. Are online chess ratings and official chess federation ratings the same? No, online chess ratings and official chess federation ratings, such as FIDE ratings, are not the same. Online platforms have their own rating systems, and the ratings can be significantly different from the official ratings. It is common to see higher ratings on online platforms compared to official ratings. How does the rating system accommodate for new players? New players generally start with a base rating, and their rating undergoes more significant changes in the initial games compared to established players. This is to quickly find an appropriate rating level for the new player based on their performance. Are there different ratings for different formats of chess? Yes, players can have different ratings for different formats of chess such as classical, rapid, and blitz. These ratings are calculated separately based on the games played in each format. Can I lose my chess rating if I don’t play for a long time? Your chess rating generally remains the same if you don’t play for a long time. However, in some rating systems, you may be marked as inactive if you don’t play any rated games for a specified period. Being inactive doesn’t affect your rating, but you may need to play a few games to reactivate your rating. Conclusion Understanding the concept of an average chess rating can be a useful tool for players looking to gauge their progress and set personal goals. While the “average” rating can vary depending on various factors, a rating between 1200 and 1600 is generally considered to be representative of an average club player. By dedicating time to study and practice, players can work towards improving their ratings and moving up the ranks in the world of chess. Chess ratings are a method to explain a player’s skill level and also to determine the expected score against any given opponent. In this post, we explain lichess ratings, chess.com ratings, FIDE ratings, and USCF ratings. With the current landscape since 2020, online chess has definitely increased in popularity as over-the-board events were canceled for most of the year. Chess ratings are highly correlative between the different systems though, so improving one’s online chess skills should transfer to over-the-board play. This plot shows the correlation between USCF Regular Ratings (y-axis) and Chess.com Blitz Ratings (x-axis).USCF Regular Ratings vs. Chess.com Blitz RatingsModern chess rating systems have been around now since the mid-1900s and have been implemented by both online chess sites and over-the-board (OTB) chess federations. In 1948, the West German Chess Federation used the Ingo system, possibly the first documented chess rating system. The first system used by the United States Chess Federation (USCF) was the Harkness system, from 1950 to 1960. Professor Mark Glickman’s A Comprehensive Guide to Chess Ratings has more information on the history of chess ratings.In chess, there is always a winner and a loser, or the two players split the point. This is completely balanced and often referred to as a zero-sum game. Let’s take a fictional character Bill and say we want to know how good he is at chess. Bill can beat his friends but will be attending a chess club for the first time. Bill shows up to the club and he beats James 7-3 (seven games to three), but loses to Mark 2-8. Mark beats James 10-0 in their ten-game match. It’s clear the rankings for these players should be:Mark (18/20, 90% score)Bill (9/20, 45% score)James (3/20, 15% score)Now extrapolate that out to a region that has 300 active players. We’d like to know how strong each player is, what the expected score is between any two players, and how can we split these players up into different sections if we are to run an event. That’s where ratings come into play, and we will start with one of the most popular systems, the Elo system.Download Free Study PlansOne of the most famous rating systems, the Elo system, was developed by Arpad Elo and implemented by the USCF in 1960. Elo’s system made some assumptions to help keep the computations manageable, but this is not an issue with the power of computers nowadays. Since Elo ratings will depend on the pool of players and their average rating, ratings between systems are not always comparable. The rating comparison page attempts to map these two systems, which indeed are pretty similar.Using the Elo system, the USCF has a special rating formula for players that have played less than 26 rated games. The formula is a way to estimate one’s rating by calculating a performance rating for each of the first 26 games, and then averaging across the total games played. After game 26, a player moves into the established rating category. For each game, a player wins their performance rating is the opponent’s rating plus 400. Draws count as the opponent’s rating, and losses count as the opponent’s rating minus 400. Here’s an example five-round event:ResultOpponent RatingPerformance RatingWin10001400Draw12001200Win11501550Loss14001000Draw13001300Example TournamentThe player’s performance rating through five games is the sum of the performance rating for each game, divided by five. The provisional rating would be 1290 with five games played in this case.Once a player has completed 26 rated games, they have what’s called an established rating. Back in the 1990s, I used to help my local club compute club ladder ratings using a table similar to this one for established players. Note that this is an approximation and that computers will use decimal points for the ratings.Elo Change TableFor two players with the same rating (Rating Difference 0-24), the winning player’s rating increases by 16 points and the losing player’s rating decreases by 16 points. For a draw, both players will stay the same rating. The simple math tells us these players should score about 50% against one another.Let’s assume now that Player A is rated 100 points above Player B. If Player A wins, she gains 12 rating points and Player B loses 12 rating points. If Player B wins, though, the change is 20 points for each player. A draw increases Player B’s rating by 4 points and decreases Player A’s rating by 4 points. Again these are approximations, but this makes sense when we look at a rating change by the expected score table. Player A is expected to score about 64% against an opponent rated 100 points lower.source: ChessbaseThe k-factor determines the maximum points gained or lost in a single game. USCF uses a formula to determine the k-factor and FIDE uses a lookup table based on player ratings. Typically as players play more games or have higher ratings, the k-factors decrease, this allows these more established players to have ratings that are also more stable. It also helps account for the matches between a high and low-rated player, putting fewer points at risk for the higher-rated player.Elo rating systems do a pretty good job for the most part, but there are some potential issues that Professor Mark Glickman in particular has attempted to address with his rating systems.Rating Inflation/DeflationStability of RatingsFast forward to 1995 when Dr. Mark Glickman from Harvard University developed a system to improve the commonly used Elo system. The new Glicko System improved the Elo system by factoring in player rating reliability. The Rating Deviation, as it was coined, or RD was a value that represented the confidence in each player’s rating. The more games someone plays, the more confident the rating system can be in the player’s current rating. Lower RD means we have more confidence, higher RD means we are less sure of the player’s ability.An example Professor Glickman gives in his paper nicely describes a potential issue with the Elo system. Let’s pretend Player A has played 30 games and is an established 1700 player. Player B is rated 1700 but has played over 1000 games. If one of these players was truly 1500 strength or 1900 strength, would we expect it to be Player A or Player B? It seems like Player A is a reasonable guess considering their rating is based on a small sample of only 30 games.Now let’s say Player A beats Player B in one game. The Elo system would say that Player A gains 16 points and Player B loses 16 points. We would actually like to see Player A earn more than 16 points and Player B lose less than 16 points based on the reliability of their ratings. The RD values for each player account for this.If we haven’t lost you on the math yet of the Elo and Glicko systems, you’ll be in for a treat when you research the Glicko-2 system! Also developed by Professor Mark Glickman, this system adds an extra component to the Glicko system. Glicko-2 uses a rating and RD, just like Glicko. The third component is a volatility value that measures a player’s consistency. Please read up on the linked article above if you want more details on how it works mathematically. The Glicko-2 system works well when players have a lot of games, and the system has been adopted by Lichess.What is a chess rating? ChessGoals lists the following categories for players based on chess.com blitz ratings:Novice (