



COLUMNISTS

## ChessOK Cafe

Dadi Jonsson



ChessCafe.com is pleased to invite readers to a game of chess at Convekta's ChessOK Playing Zone!



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Or play online against [Rybka](#).

## Chess for Networks Part One

There seems to be a growing interest in school-related chess training programs. One of the reasons is that many educators and parents believe that chess is good for children and improves their academic results. So there is a need for software that helps schools make the most of the time and money they invest in chess training. *Chess for Networks* addresses this problem. It's a software system for administering a chess school or course under the guidance of a trainer. It can be used in any number of classrooms or even with trainers and students connecting from different locations.



In fact, *Chess for Networks* is suitable for anyone that provides chess training: schools, clubs and individual trainers included. The system can handle any number of students, classes and trainers. Training classes can be conducted on a local network or over the Internet. The system keeps track of the results of each student all the way down to the individual exercises. *Chess for Networks* is therefore very different from training programs intended for individual chess players who practice on their own without guidance from a trainer.

I will use this article as a general introduction to the system, and next month I will take a detailed look at some of the more interesting functions, or perhaps I should say processes, supported by the system.

### An Overview of the System

*Chess for Networks* offers all the tools and functions needed to set up and run organized chess training for any size group. Naturally this requires a different approach compared to traditional training software. The strength of the program lies in the integration of all the necessary functions to run chess schools successfully. It provides a high-quality curriculum, along with many additional functions that are either not available in traditional chess software or are more advanced in *Chess for Networks*.

The system consists of four major components:

- 1) The server is the central piece of the system that links all the components. It holds all the information about trainers, students and their current status, historical information about each student and a database of theoretical training material and exercises.

The server also controls the interaction between trainers and students, e.g. during classes, tests, lectures and seminars. It allows the students to play matches and tournaments and keeps track of the results. New trainers can only be registered by the server administrator.

Even though the server is technically the most important part of the system, it is not very interesting from a user's point of view. Trainers and students only use it indirectly through their respective clients.

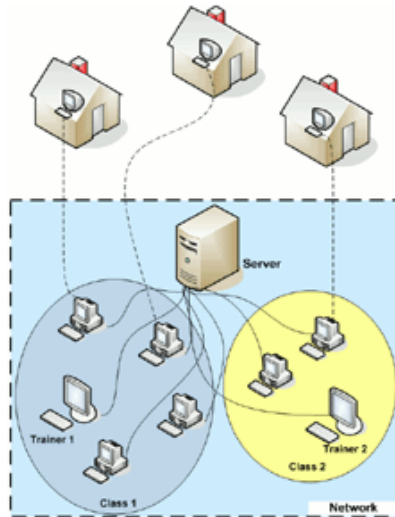
- 2) The trainers access *Chess for Networks* through a special module (or client) that gives them an impressive set of training and administrative tools.

- 3) The student's module allows students to study the training material assigned by the trainer, solve exercises, take tests, watch (or listen to) lectures, participate in seminars, play games and participate in tournaments along with other students, etc. Students can also communicate with the trainer, who in turn can assist them if they run into problems.

- 4) The off-line student's module is intended for homework and allows students to practice and work on their assignments even if they don't have access to the *Chess for Networks* server.

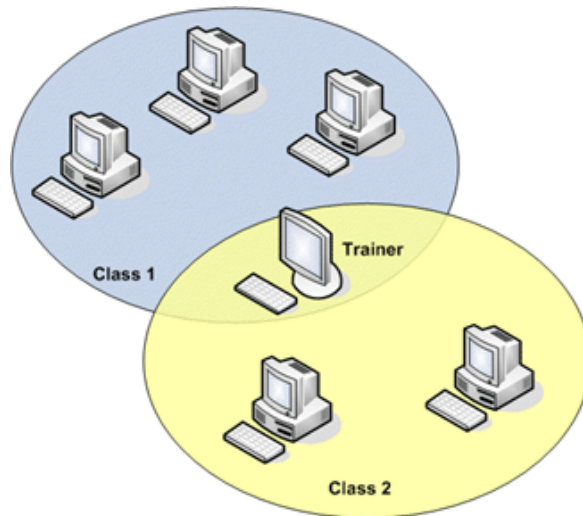
The image below illustrates how the different components work together. Each computer displayed in the image, except the server and the trainers' computers, is a student's computer. When at home (the three houses at the top of the image) the students can work on their assignments, which may contain both theoretical material and exercises that they must

complete and return when the class meets again. The dotted lines indicate that there may not be a network connection between the homes of the students and the school. In that case the home assignments are transferred on portable media (USB flash drive, floppy disk etc.) and imported into the off-line student's module. After finishing the assignment it can be exported again and brought to school where it is imported into the server database.

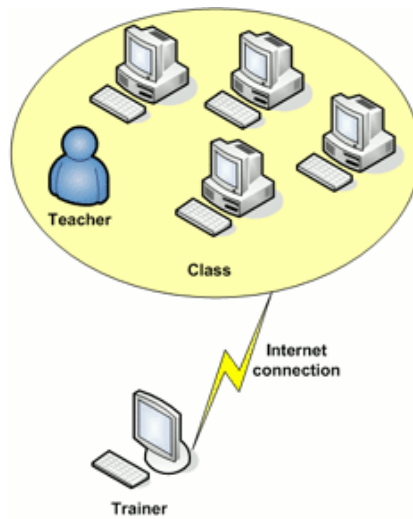


During classes all the students and the trainers must be connected to the server, either through the local network (as shown here) or via the Internet. The image shows two classes being run in parallel (class 1 and class 2), each with its own trainer (trainer 1 and trainer 2).

If there are few students in some of the classes, the same trainer can easily handle two classes at the same time, even if they are not at the same stage in the training. This is illustrated in the next image.



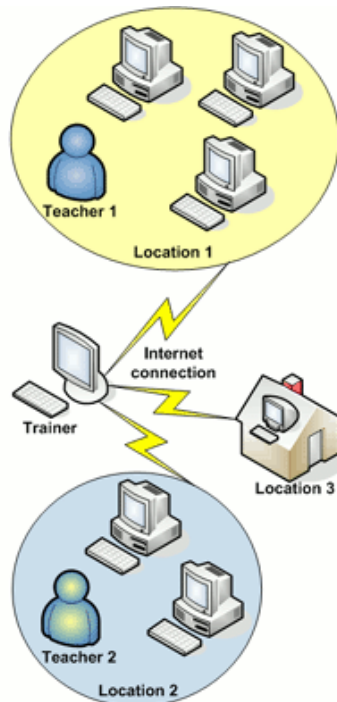
In an [interview](#) at ChessOK.com, grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev mentions another possibility for conducting the training. He calls it two-level teaching. In this setup a teacher is physically present in the classroom with the children. He is not necessarily an experienced trainer, but helps the students with any minor technical problems that may arise and generally makes sure that the children can fully focus on the training. The chess trainer on the other hand connects remotely from his home or office. Using *Chess for Networks* he can deliver lessons, explain new training material and most importantly, communicate with the children.



This arrangement, which is illustrated above, is very flexible and opens up new possibilities:

In many areas it's hard to find a good local trainer. Using *Chess for Networks*, even students in remote locations can have access to experienced trainers. Conducting the training over the Internet makes better use of the trainer's time, as he doesn't have to travel long distances to visit all the schools. This means that he has more time for what he does best, i.e. chess training.

The same trainer can simultaneously teach students in different locations. He can create classes regardless of each student's location. Students will always be a part of a larger group where everyone is at a similar level, allowing them to attend classes, follow lectures, play and talk to each other through *Chess for Networks*. Clearly, aspiring chess players will enjoy such company much more than learning on their own. The image below illustrates this "multi-location" setup.



Here we see one trainer handling students in three different locations as a single class. All students connect to the server through the Internet. In locations 1 and 2 there is a teacher present, but location 3 shows a student participating in the training session from his home.

Regardless of whether the trainer is physically present in the class or not, the biggest advantage over traditional methods is that every student's solutions are saved to the server. This allows the trainer to get a clear view of the progress of the students and take each student's knowledge and skill into account in preparations for the following sessions.

### Creating the School

Creating the chess school is as simple as installing the software. All the training material that

comes with *Chess for Networks* is stored on the server where it can be accessed by the trainers. Accounts for the trainers are created on the server, but otherwise the server can be pretty much left alone working in the background. Just make sure that it is up and running when it's needed.



*Grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev*

### **Resources for the Trainer**

The trainer has access to various resources that allow him to plan his training classes, as well as plenty of theoretical material and exercises for the students:

- Training material prepared by grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev, chairman of the FIDE Trainers' Committee, and other Russian coaches.
- Over 3,000 theoretical examples and exercises organized into 150 lessons.
- A first year education plan.
- An example lesson plan.

Assuming that the students start as total beginners, the training material and methods provided by *Chess for Networks* should cover up to three years of chess training. Plus, the trainer can supplement the provided training material with his own lessons and assignments.

### **The Trainer's & Student's Modules**

The trainer's module gives the trainer complete control over the organization of the training. *Chess for Networks* comes with an abundance of theoretical material and exercises, and there are many different ways to conduct the training:

- The training can take place locally in a classroom or over the Internet;
- The trainer has full control over registration of students. He can create classes based on the student's abilities or other criteria. Groups of students can be formed within a class. The trainer can browse statistics for individual students, groups and classes.
- The trainer can observe each student while he is solving exercises, and offer hints if needed. He can even analyze with a built-in chess engine when discussing positions and variations with students.
- The trainer can assign homework to students, even at scheduled times in the future. He can monitor the progress of each student, review their solutions and add his own notes to their solutions, e.g. pointing out where a student went wrong.
- The trainer can organize chess games between the students, whole tournaments or simultaneous games. The games can be played on a local network or over the Internet.

The student's module offers the following main functions:

- The student can follow the lectures of the trainer on a chessboard displayed on the screen, as well as verbal commentary and variations. The trainer can use graphical markers on the chessboard to illustrate ideas.
- The student can participate in seminars where the trainer and students discuss theory, examine positions and analyze games. The whole dialog between the participants is visible to all students.
- The students can work independently on their assignments. When solving exercises they can take advantage of a built-in system offering hints if necessary.
- The students can play chess against each other and participate in tournaments on the local area network of the school or over the Internet.
- The student can work on his assignments in the classroom or at home using the off-line version of the student's module.

Next month we will examine some of the most interesting parts of the *Chess for Networks* system in more detail.

***Dadi wants your questions!! Send it along and perhaps it will be answered in an upcoming column. Please include your name and country of residence. [Yes, I have a question for Dadi!](#)***

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