

The player who controls the center of the chessboard can control the traffic between the two armies. If you're weak in the middle, you're likely to be facing an invasion soon! Before starting a successful attack, you first need to gain a firm foothold in the center.

- Bring out your knights and bishops as quickly as you can.
- Don't begin an attack until you have moved your chessmen into position — your attack will be much stronger if your chessmen fight as a team.
- Work at using just one move to get each chessman ready. The beginning of the game is a race to see who gets their soldiers in position first. Don't move the same chessmen over and over.
- Knights and bishops don't need to be in the center but they should be attacking the center squares. Bishops can also be used to pin enemy knights against their king or queen, to prevent these knights from being able to attack the center.
- Be extremely careful when moving your pawns -- they can never back up! Work hard to place (and keep) a pawn in the center.

The whole game depends on who can trap the other player's king first. Make sure your king will not be trapped! Never forget that the reason for the war is to find out who can give checkmate first -- don't seek out unimportant side battles.

- Take the time at the beginning of a game to move your king to a safe location. Leave those king-side pawns close to home. Move out your king-side knight and bishop quickly. CASTLE!
- Black needs to keep a very close eye on his weakest square at the beginning of a game, f7. White needs to watch out for surprise attacks on f2.
- Avoid having any of your chessmen pinned against your king. But use pins whenever you can against your opponent's chessmen! Look for ways to attack the chessmen you've pinned.
- Don't allow the enemy rooks or queen to trap your king behind a wall of pawns. Many games are lost by a sudden rook or queen move that catches a defenseless king trapped behind his own army. Defend your back rank. After you've castled and files have opened, consider moving a pawn one square forward -- to give your king a way to escape a back rank attack should this be suddenly needed.
- Watch the board to see if the enemy queen might be teaming up with another piece to attack a square near your king.
- Stay alert for the ways you can give check, but use these moves wisely. Use your checks when they'll be creating real threats, not just opportunities for the other player to improve the arrangement of his chessmen. So don't give check just because you can -- "a weak player sees a check, a weak player gives that check".
- Focus on the race that matters, the one to give checkmate. Try especially hard to avoid the temptation to spread out your army by chasing after undefended pawns.

Before trading or positioning your pieces, think about their value in your particular game.

- Knights are generally considered to be worth three pawns when it comes to trading pieces. Knights which are firmly positioned in the middle of the board can be very valuable. (Use your pawns and bishops to keep enemy knights from moving onto your side -- guard those squares!)
- Bishops are also generally considered to be worth three pawns when it comes to trading pieces. Bishops are most valuable when they are on long diagonals and when they are not blocked by their own pawns. (Try to block enemy bishops by blocking their pawns in front of them.)
- Rooks are generally considered to be worth the same as five pawns when it comes to trading pieces. Rooks which control open files can be very valuable, and so can a rook which has taken control of the enemy's second rank. Rooks which are talking to each other (on the same file or rank with no chessmen between them) can give a player complete control of a game. (Work to make sure your rooks gain control of files as they open. Also plan early in the game to use one or both rooks to help control the two middle files.)
- Queens are generally considered to be worth the same as nine pawns! (That's as much as a rook plus a knight plus a pawn!) Give your queen the respect she deserves and don't put her out in the middle of the battlefield at the beginning of a game. But if your opponent has blundered, then consider bringing out your queen to take advantage of this. Otherwise, save her for later in the battle when she can be used to make sudden attacks -- often on two or more targets at the same time!

Tips For Improving Your Chess Game!

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great chess players and writers.*

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Keep your pawns organized in a way that lets them work together.

As a rule, avoid doubling your pawns -- having two of them on the same file. Look for ways where you can force the other player to double his pawns. When there are doubled pawns, see if you can use your rooks or queen to take control of the opened file.

Always keep in mind that when you advance your pawns you create holes -- squares in your territory which become more difficult for you to defend.

Isolated pawns can be a real weakness. These are pawns which have been separated from your other pawns (there are no teammate pawns on the files to the left or the right.) Avoid isolating your pawns but try to make your opponent isolate hers.

- Pawns become exceptionally important in long games. Try to create a passed pawn. Protect it. Clear its path. Promote it! See if you can stop your opponent from doing these same things!

Once the battlefield has been cleared except for a few chessmen on each side, the kings should enter directly into the fight. On an open board, kings often can become very powerful in the center of the board.

- At the end of games, kings can become important attacking pieces. They can also be used to protect their chessmen, especially pawns which are trying to cross the board.
- If you're trying to run from a checkmate threat, you'll usually want to move your king toward the center of the board. If you're trying to give checkmate, you'll usually want to force the enemy king to one of the edges of the board or, even better, into a corner.

SOME FINAL TIPS: Take your time! Remember that determination is extremely important in chess, especially after making a blunder. Don't ever forget that chess is meant to be a creative exercise -- boldly develop your own strategies, and when you thoughtfully do so, feel free to throw out all these other tips!