

# Academic Chess opening help sheet

## Exeter Chess Club: 10 rules for the opening

1. Get your pieces out into the center quickly. The opening is a race to see who can get their pieces out first while keeping at least a share of control of the center. This is the main point to remember; all the other rules are just footnotes to this one

2. More detail on winning the race:

Move pieces not pawns, and  
move them to their best squares in one move if you can, and also  
try to gain time if you can by aggressive moves.

3. Move minor pieces out first, not your Queen or Rooks which can be attacked and lose time

4. Get a firm foothold in the center and don't give it up

5. Generally move Knights straightaway to f3/c3 or f6/c6

6. Move your king to safety at the side by castling King's-side (which also gets your Rook into play)

7. Complete your development before moving a piece twice or starting an attack

8. Keep your queen safe

9. Don't grab pawns or attack if you haven't completed development

10. What to do if there is a lead in development:

If you are ahead in development, start something going and open up lines for your better pieces

If you are behind in development, don't start anything and keep things closed until you have caught up

## Lasker's rules for the opening

1. Do not move any pawns in the opening of a game but the King and Queen pawns.

2. Do not move any piece twice in the opening, but put it at once on the right square.

3. Bring out your knights before developing your bishops, especially the Queen's Bishop.

4. Do not pin the adverse King Knight (ie. by Bg5) before your opponent has castled.

COOL TIP: Why should you move the knights first? Well, knights are very much more effective if they are in the center. (Bishops are more effective here too, but they can work from a distance). For the opening that has to mean Knights moving to c3 and f3 (or c6 and g6). Where should the Bishops go? The White King's Bishop on f1 could go to b5, c4, d3 or even e2. Which is best? That depends on what your opponent is up to. So, move your knights straight away to the center, and while you are doing that your opponent's moves may suggest to you where you should put your bishops.

## Reuben Fine's rules for the opening

1. Open with either the e-pawn or the d-pawn.

2. Wherever possible, make a good developing move which threatens something or adds to the pressure on the center.

3. Develop knights before bishops.

4. Pick the most suitable square for a piece and develop it there once and for all.

5. Make one or two pawn moves in the opening, not more.

6. Do not bring your queen out too early.

7. Castle as soon as possible, preferably on the king's side.

8. Play to get control of the center.

9. Always try to maintain at least one pawn in the center.

10. Do not sacrifice without a clear and adequate reason, eg.:

it secures a tangible advantage in development

it deflects the opponent's queen

it prevents the opponent from castling

it enables a strong attack to be developed

Fine's two last questions to be asked before a move is made:

How does it affect the center?

How does it fit in with the development of my other pieces and pawns?

## **Nimzovitch's Seven Axioms**

(from My System)

1. Development is to be understood as the strategic advance of the troops toward the frontier line (the line between the fourth and fifth ranks).
2. A pawn move is not considered a developing move, but merely as an aid to development.
3. To be ahead in development is the ideal to be aimed for.
4. Exchange with resulting gain of tempo.
5. Liquidation, with consequent development or disembarassment.
6. The pawn center must be mobile.
7. There is no time for pawn hunting in the opening, except for center pawns.

-- NIMZOVITCH

## **Hort's 13 rules for all players**

1. Take advantage of every tempo.
2. Do not make pawn moves without careful planning.
3. Begin the game with a center pawn, and develop the minor pieces so that they influence the center.
4. Develop flexibly!
5. Develop harmoniously! Play with all your pieces
6. Do not make aimless moves. Each move must be part of a definite plan.
7. Do not be eager for material gain. The fight for time is much more important than the fight for material, especially in open positions.
8. A weakening of your own pawns may be accepted only if it is compensated by a more active placement of your pieces.
9. With the help of your pawns, try to get an advantage in space and weaken your opponent's pawn position.
10. Do not obstruct your pawns by grouping your pieces directly in front of them; pawns and pieces must work together.
11. During the first few moves, pay special attention to the vulnerable KB2 square on both sides.
12. Remember that the poor placement of even a single piece may destroy the coordination of the other pieces.
13. With White, exploit the advantage of having the first move and try to gain the initiative. With Black, try to organize counterplay.

-- VLASTIMIL HORT

## **Portisch on forming a repertoire:**

"Your only task in the opening is to reach a playable middlegame."

"...To all players I can recommend the following: simplicity and economy. These are the characteristics of the opening systems of many great masters... A solid opening repertoire fosters self-confidence." -- LAJOS PORTISCH

(LP goes on to discuss the Exchange Ruy Lopez, the Modern Steinitz (as Black), slow lines of the French Winawer, the Classical Pirc, the Closed Sicilian and the King's Indian Attack against the French (and Sicilian); and on the other side of the board the Exchange Queen's Gambit and lines of the King's Indian Defence and Nimzo-Indian)