



Chess Principles

(General Rules for Playing Better Chess)

October 15, 2023



Chess Principles

(From San Diego Chess Club web-site)

OPENING

1. If ahead in development, then open up the position (trade central Pawns) or create confrontation. If behind in development, then freeze the central Pawn structure and avoid confrontation.
2. If you lag in development and your opponent cannot effectively open the game, then **DO NOT** worry too much about the lag.
3. Let your opponent break the central Pawn tension unless you have something concrete to gain from it.
4. In an open game, develop quickly; **DO NOT** move the same piece twice.
5. In a closed game, quality instead of quantity development; pay close attention to the Pawn structure.

ENDGAME

1. Outside passed Pawns favor inside passed Pawns.
2. Rooks should be placed on open files and should **NOT** defend laterally.
3. In the endgame, they should be stationed behind passed Pawns (yours or your opponent's)
4. Try to own fewer Pawn islands than your opponent.
5. In an ending with two Rooks versus Rook and a pair of minor pieces, the side with the minor pieces should keep Rooks on the board.
6. In queening races:
 - a) **DO NOT** putz around!
 - b) Queen a pawn as fast as you can.
 - c) Slow down your opponent's queening attempts as much as you can.
7. A Knight ending is the closest thing to a pure King and Pawn ending.
8. A Bishop is of greater value than a Knight in queening races because a Bishop can perform both defensive and offensive duties, while the Knight is capable of only one or the other.

PAWN STRUCTURE

1. If you have a passed Pawn and your opponent does **NOT**, exchange for an endgame.
2. Pawn captures towards the center.
3. Avoid creating holes in your position. Occupy your opponent's holes with pieces.
4. Attack at the Pawn chain's base rather than at its head.
5. If attacking on the wing, then close the center.
6. If defending, then open the center or seek counterplay in the center.
7. When playing against an isolated Pawn, trade pieces and centralize.
8. When playing with an isolated Pawn, play for attack against the opponent's King.
9. Chip away at the opponent's center from the sides if he has a space advantage.

GENERAL

1. Centralize pieces and redeploy unemployed pieces.



2. If ahead in material, swap pieces but **NOT** pawns. If behind in material swap pawns (**NOT** pieces) and complicate.
3. A Knight on the rim is dim.
4. In a winning position, avoid unnecessary complications. When losing, take wild chances and complicate at every opportunity.
5. Trade opponent's active and centralized pieces.
6. Tie your opponent's pieces down to his Pawns (or King)
7. **DO NOT** play passively. Seek out activity. Masters focus on gradually improving their position to convert.
8. When your opponent is tied down or in a bind and is just waiting; look for ways to improve your position without giving him any counterplay.
9. In a winning position, if the opportunity arises to simplify and retain equality or better winning chances, then make the simplification.
10. Avoid unnecessary retreats or decentralizations in a open position.
11. **DO NOT** capture a pinned piece unless there is a concrete gain from it.
12. Welcome confrontation when your pieces are better posted than the opponent's. **DO NOT** create confrontation if you are the one lagging in development or the confrontation would reside on your opponent's strong wing. Engage the opponent in confrontation when he is unprepared for it.
13. The player who holds a temporary advantage **MUST** create confrontation or attack, otherwise the advantage is lost.
14. When attacking, avoid swapping or retreating pieces.
15. Maintaining a lead in development is more important than keeping the two Bishops.
16. **DO NOT** allow the opponent to eliminate key defenders of your King.

SPACE

1. If cramped, then trade pieces; If you have a space advantage then avoid exchanges unless they favor you.
2. If you are cramped and have a freeing break, then play it.
3. Avoid opening the position on the wing where your opponent has more space.
4. The player with less space only rarely gets an attack going.

MINOR PIECE IMBALANCE

1. In a closed position, Knights tend to favor Bishops; In an open position, Bishops tend to favor Knights.
2. If in possession of a Bishop pair, when your opponent is **NOT**, then avoid exchanging Bishops. Open the game and play for an asymmetrical fluid Pawn structure (i.e. the Bishop pair is more effective when the Pawn structure remains fluid – **NOT** fixed.)
3. If in possession of only one Bishop, then place your Pawns on the opposite color.
4. If the position is closed when in possession of the two Bishops, open up the position to give them more space.
5. Opposite colored Bishops favor the attacker.
6. When in possession of both Bishops, and your opponent only one, place your Pawns on the same color as the opponents remaining Bishop. Fix your opponent's Pawns on the same color as his remaining Bishop.
7. When strong on one color, then play on that color



Chess Principles (www.chess.com)

1. Develop your pieces quickly.
2. Control the center.
3. Try to put your pieces on squares that give them maximum space.
4. Try to develop your Knights towards the center.
5. A Knight on the rim is dim.
6. **DO NOT** take unnecessary chances.
7. Play aggressive.
8. Calculate forced moves first.
9. Always ask yourself, "**Can he put me in check or win a piece?**"
10. Have a plan. Every move should have a purpose.
11. Assume your opponent's move is his best move.
12. Ask yourself, "**Why did he move there?**" after each opponent move.
13. Play for the initiative and controlling the board.
14. If you must lose a piece, get something for it if you can.
15. When behind, exchange Pawns. When ahead, exchange pieces.
16. If you are losing, **DO NOT** give up fighting. Look for counterplay.
17. **DO NOT** play unsound moves unless you are losing badly.
18. **DO NOT** sacrifice a piece without good reason.
19. If you are in doubt of an opponent's sacrifice, accept it.
20. Attack with more than just one or two pieces.
21. **DO NOT** make careless Pawn moves. They cannot move back.
22. **DO NOT** block in your Bishops.
23. Bishops of opposite colors have the greatest chance of drawing.
24. Try not to move the same piece twice or more times in a row.
25. Exchange pieces if it helps your development.
26. **DO NOT** bring your Queen out early.
27. Castle soon to protect your King and develop your Rook.
28. Develop Rooks to open files.
29. Put Rooks behind passed Pawns.
30. Study Rook endgames. They are the most common and most complicated.
31. **DO NOT** let your King get caught in the center.
32. **DO NOT** castle if it brings your King into greater danger from attack.
33. After castling, keep a good Pawn formation around your King.
34. If you only have one Bishop, put your Pawns on its opposite color.
35. Trade Pawns pieces when ahead in material or when under attack.
36. If cramped, free your game by exchanging material.
37. If your opponent is cramped, **DO NOT** let him get any freeing exchanges.
38. Study openings you are comfortable with.
39. Play over entire games, not just the opening.
40. Blitz Chess is helpful in recognizing Chess patterns. Play often.
41. Study annotated games and try to guess each move.
42. Stick with just a few openings with White, and a few openings with Black.
43. Record your games and go over them, especially the games you lost.



44. Show your games to higher rated opponents and get feedback from them.
45. Use Chess computers and databases to help you study and play more.
46. Everyone blunders. The champions just blunder less often.
47. When it is not your move, look for tactics and combinations.
48. Try to double Rooks or double Rook and Queen on open files.
49. Always ask yourself, "**Does my next move overlook something simple?**"
50. **DO NOT** make your own plans without the exclusion of the opponent's threats.
51. Watch out for captures by retreat of an opponent's piece.
52. **DO NOT** focus on one sector of the board. View the whole board.
53. Write down your move first before making that move if it helps.
54. Try to solve Chess puzzles with diagrams from books and magazines.
55. It is less likely that an opponent is prepared for off-beat openings.
56. Recognize transposition of moves from main-line play.
57. Watch your time and avoid time trouble.
58. Bishops are worth more than Knights except when they are pinned in.
59. A Knight works better with a Bishop than another Knight.
60. It is usually a good idea to trade down into a Pawn up endgame.
61. Have confidence in your game.
62. Play in as many rated events as you can.
63. Try not to look at your opponent's rating until after the game.
64. Always play for a win.



64 Commandments

<https://www.chess.com/article/view/the-64-commandments>

A Summary of Hints, Pointers and Precepts from the ABCs by Bruce Pandolfini

1. Be aggressive, but play soundly. **DO NOT** take unnecessary chances.
2. Make sure every move has a purpose.
3. If you know your opponent's style, take advantage of it. But, in the final analysis, play the board, NOT the player.
4. **DO NOT** ignore your opponent's moves.
5. **DO NOT** give needless checks. Check only when it makes sense.
6. Answer all threats. Try to do so by improving your position and/or posing a counterthreat.
7. Play for the initiative. If you already have it - maintain it. If you **DO NOT** have it - seize it.
8. When exchanging, try to get at least as much as you give up.
9. Take with the man of least value, unless there is a definite reason for doing otherwise.
10. Cut your losses. If you must lose material, lose as little as possible.
11. If you blunder, **DO NOT** give up fighting. After getting the advantage, your opponent may relax and let you escape.
12. Never play a risky move, hoping your opponent will overlook your threat, unless you have a losing position. In that case, you have nothing to lose.
13. Rely on your own powers. If you can't see the point of your opponent's move, assume there isn't any.
14. **DO NOT** sacrifice without good reason.
15. When you can't determine whether to accept or decline a sacrifice – accept it.
16. Attack in number. **DO NOT** rely on just one or two pieces.
17. Look for double attacks.
18. Play for the center: guard it, occupy it, influence it.
19. Fight for the center with Pawns.
20. **DO NOT** make careless Pawn moves. In the opening, move as few Pawns as necessary to complete your development.
21. If feasible, move both center Pawns two squares each.
22. In the opening, move only center Pawns, unless the opening system or situation requires otherwise.
23. Try to develop your Bishop before blocking it in by moving a center Pawn just one square.
24. Develop your pieces quickly, preferably toward the center (especially Knights, which often are “**grim on the rim**”)
25. Develop purposefully, and not just for development's sake.
26. **DO NOT** waste time or moves. Try to develop a new piece on each turn. **DO NOT** move a piece twice in the opening without a good reason.
27. Try to develop with threats, but **DO NOT** threaten pointlessly.
28. Develop minor pieces early. Kingside pieces should usually be developed sooner than Queenside ones, and Knights before Bishops.
29. Develop during exchanges.
30. To exploit an advantage in development, attack.



31. In the opening, **DO NOT** remove your Queen from play to “win” a Pawn.
32. **DO NOT** bring out the Queen too early, unless the natural course of play requires it.
33. Try to give as much scope to your pieces as possible
34. Seize open lines.
35. Develop Rooks to open files, or to files likely to open.
36. Castle early.
37. Try to prevent your opponent’s King from castling. Keep it trapped in the center, especially in open games.
38. Try to pin your opponent’s pieces. Avoid pins against your own pieces.
39. **DO NOT** capture pinned pieces until you can benefit from doing so. If possible, try to attack them again, especially with Pawns.
40. After castling, **DO NOT** move the Pawns in front of your King without specific reason.
41. To attack the King, pick a target square around it.
42. When applicable, pick target squares on the color of your unopposed Bishop, (Bishops control squares of only one color. If you have a Bishop that controls dark squares and your opponent has exchanged his corresponding Bishop, your dark squares Bishop is “unopposed” on those squares.)
43. Look for tactics especially on squares of the color controlled by your unopposed Bishop.
44. Try to avoid early exchanges of Bishops for Knights.
45. Double your attacking pieces by building batteries (two or more pieces of like power attacking along the same line.) Put Queen and Rook(s) on the same file or rank, and Queen and Bishop on the same diagonal.
46. Build batteries with the less valuable men up front, unless tactics require otherwise.
47. Maximize the efficiency of your moves. Play flexibly.
48. To strengthen control of a file, double your major pieces (Rooks and/or Queens) on it.
49. Determine whether you have an Open or Closed game, and play accordingly.
50. Usually play to retain your Bishops in Open games, and sometimes Knights in Closed games.
51. To improve the scope of your Bishop, place your Pawns on squares opposite in color to it.
52. Keep your weaknesses on the color opposite to that of your opponent’s strongest Bishop.
53. Trade when ahead in material or when under attack, unless you have a sound reason for doing otherwise. Avoid trades when behind in material or when attacking.
54. Choose a play and stay with it. Change it only if you should or must.
55. To gain space, you usually have to sacrifice time.
56. If cramped, free your game by exchanging material.
57. Trade bad minor pieces for good ones.
58. If the position is unsettled, disguise your plans, make “noncommittal” moves.
59. To gain space or open files, advance Pawns.
60. If the center is blocked, **DO NOT** automatically castle.
61. If behind in development, keep the game closed.
62. Try to accumulate small advantages.
63. Try to dominate the seventh rank, especially with Rooks.
64. Use the analytic method. When you **DO NOT** know what to do, first evaluate the position (as best you can), then ask pertinent questions about your analysis.



(www.reddit.com/r/chess/comments)

1. Control the center
2. Develop your pieces quickly
3. Knights before Bishops
4. **DO NOT** move the same piece twice in the opening
5. **DO NOT** bring out your Queen too early
6. Castle before move 10
7. Connect your Rooks
8. Rooks should go to open or half open files
9. Knights on the rim are grim
10. Avoid doubled Pawns
11. Avoid isolated Pawns
12. Avoid backward Pawns
13. **DO NOT** give up your Bishop for a Knight without a good reason
14. Avoid moving Pawns in front of your King
15. **DO NOT** open the center if your King is still there
16. 2 minor pieces are better than a Rook and a Pawn
17. 3 minor pieces are better than a Queen
18. Rooks are good on the 7th rank
19. Doubled Rooks on an open file is extremely strong
20. Bishops are better in open positions, Knights better in closed positions
21. The best way to deal with a flank attack, is with a counter attack in the center
22. When 2 Pawns can capture the same piece, capture towards the center
23. The King should be used in the endgame
24. Rooks go behind passed Pawns
25. 2 connected passed Pawns on the 6th rank will beat a Rook
26. Attack the base of a Pawn chain
27. Knights are the best blockaders of Pawns
28. If your position is cramped, trade pieces
29. Trade your passive pieces for your opponent's active pieces
30. When ahead material, trade pieces, not Pawns
31. When behind material, trade Pawns, not pieces
32. Opposite colored Bishop games are dangerous in the middlegame, and drawish in the endgame
33. **DO NOT** play "**hope**" Chess
34. When you see a good move, look for a better move
35. A truly good Chess player knows the best times to break opening principles



Rules of Thumb

<https://www.chess.com/blog/CaptainPike/rules-of-thumb>

1. Use the center Pawns to gain space in the opening.
2. Invade only with support.
3. **DO NOT** lock in Bishops.
4. Exchange relieve cramped positions.
5. Control the center of the board.
6. Counter a wing attack with a center attack.
7. After you control a square in enemy territory, occupy it with a Knight.
8. When ahead in material, force exchanges.
9. Secure your King early.
10. Try to keep your Pawn structure intact.
11. Try to keep Pawns mobile or in duos.
12. If a Pawn becomes locked, try to use others to pry it free.
13. Create passed Pawns, especially protected passed Pawns.
14. Push passed Pawns.
15. Attack backwards Pawns with heavy pieces.
16. Try to provoke a hanging Pawn into advance then blockade.
17. Avoid stacking your Pawns, and try to force your opponent to stack his Pawns.
18. Try to exchange your stacked Pawns.
19. Attack Pawn chains at their base.
20. Look for pins, forks and skewers.
21. Avoid the "**good Knight, bad Bishop**" end game by checking Pawn structure.
22. **DO NOT** move an already developed piece unless all pieces are developed, or you have good reason.
23. If you have more Pawns, exchange pieces, not Pawns.
24. If you have fewer Pawns, exchange Pawns, not pieces.
25. When capturing with Pawns, try to push your Pawns to the center.
26. Protect your Pawns.
27. **DO NOT** bring your Queen out early.
28. Use your King for end-game play.
29. In Pawn endings, put your King in front of, or beside your Pawns.
30. If your opponent has a Bishop, keep your Pawn chains on its color. If you have a Bishop, keep your Pawns on its opposite color, regardless of what your opponent has.
31. In end game play, use your King to control the movement of your opponent's King.
32. When facing a King and Pawn after you have lost your material, try to keep your King in front of your opponent's King. You may be able to force a stalemate.
33. When your Pawn and King are facing only an opponent's King, lead with your King and move the Pawn only when necessary for its safety.
34. Push Pawns that are not obstructed by other Pawns.
35. Capture hanging pieces.
36. Create hanging pieces by taking advantage of overburdened pieces.
37. The one who captures last gets the most active piece.
38. **DO NOT** start a wing attack if the control of center is in question.



How to get better at Chess

<https://chessklub.com/a-dozen-ways-to-be-a-better-chess-player/>

- 1) Play a lot of serious Chess
- 2) Start by memorizing a few famous games. Memorize your games!
- 3) Remember to review and analyze your games
- 4) Practice tactics – and then practice some more!
- 5) Conserve your energy for wars, let go of battles wisely
- 6) Balance your time
- 7) Keep asking questions before and after every move
- 8) Never shy away from constructive, honest criticism
- 9) Learn to make of most of all the pieces
- 10) Listen to all, but do what you think is best for you!
- 11) There are still ghosts
- 12) Take care of your health and fitness



What makes a good Chess player?

<https://www.gamesver.com/traits-and-qualities-of-great-chess-players-road-to-becoming-a-grandmaster/>

- 1) Most great Chess players are intelligent
- 2) Great Chess players are studious
- 3) Great Chess players prepare well
- 4) They are good at recognizing patterns
- 5) Great Chess players engage wholeheartedly in the game
- 6) Grandmasters are tactical geniuses
- 7) Great Chess players think before they act
- 8) Good memory is essential in becoming great at Chess
- 9) Great Chess players have the willingness to improve
- 10) Self-criticism helps great Chess players to improve
- 11) Great Chess players play a harmonious game
- 12) They have loads of experience
- 13) Great Chess players compete in tough tournaments
- 14) They are willing to take calculated risks
- 15) Confidence is key to becoming a great Chess player
- 16) Great Chess players are passionate about Chess
- 17) Avid Chess players are patient
- 18) They are adaptable
- 19) Great Chess players have perseverance
- 20) They have stamina
- 21) Great Chess players are ambitious
- 22) Many great Chess players have strong characters
- 23) They have a killer instinct
- 24) Great Chess players love the game

In closing: Grandmasters and great Chess players have many common traits and qualities.

These characteristics include cognitive, emotional, character, and practical aspects.

However, Grandmasters are not necessarily born as Chess prodigies. Instead, they develop and refine their traits through persistence and experience.



Golden Rules of Chess

<https://ustchessteam.weebly.com/golden-rules-of-chess.html>

Opening Principles

1. The easiest way to learn chess is to open up the e-pawn (e4).
2. Whenever possible, make a good developing move which threatens something.
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 or the most three Pawn moves in the opening, not more.
6. **Do not** bring the Queen out too early.
7. Castle early otherwise the King may become stranded in the center.
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.
11. **Don't** block either center Pawn with your own pieces.
12. Develop your pieces towards the center as quickly as possible in conformity with the principle of cooperation.
13. **Don't** block the path of development of your pieces.
14. **Don't** move the same piece twice in the opening.
15. **Don't** exchange a developed piece with undeveloped one.
16. **Don't** move any of those pawns in front of your castled King unless necessary.
17. **Don't** exchange pieces without good reason.
18. **Don't** make careless Pawn moves.
19. **Don't** capture a center Pawn free with a piece (Knight) especially while your King is still in the center.
20. **Don't** try at any cost to win material to the detriment of your development.
21. **Don't** just attack while your King is not safely tucked or you still have undeveloped pieces.
22. **Don't** play "automatic" chess.
23. **Don't** ignore your opponent's move.
24. Always play with confidence. Rely on your own ability. Play and concentrate in your game not the player (opponent).

Middle Game Principles

1. Have all your moves fit into definite plans. **Don't** play aimlessly.
2. When you are ahead in material, exchange as many pieces as possible, especially Queens.
3. Avoid doubled, isolated and backward Pawns.
4. In cramped position, free yourself by exchanging.
5. **Don't** expose your King while the Queens are still on the board.
6. All combinations are based on double attack.
7. If your opponent has one or more pieces exposed, look for a combination.
8. To attack the King, you must open a file (or less often a diagonal) to gain access for your heavy pieces (Queen and Rooks).
9. Capitalize the action of all the pieces.
10. The best defense is a counter-attack.



11. Keep your plans flexible and must be based on sound strategic principles.
12. Be aggressive, but play soundly. **Don't** take unnecessary chances.
13. Always look for a tempo gaining move.
14. Never play a risky move hoping your opponent will overlook your threat unless you have a losing position. In that case, you have nothing to lose.
15. **Don't** give needless checks. Check only when it makes sense.
16. Try to prevent your opponent from castling. Keep his King trapped in the center, especially in open games.
17. Exploit open lines. Seize the control of open files with your Rooks.
18. Try to dominate the seventh rank, especially with Rooks.
19. Attack in number by coordinating all your pieces. **Don't** rely on just one or two pieces.
20. **Don't** weaken your King's position unnecessarily. Try to maintain the Pawn structure (original position) in front of your castled King.
21. Avoid pin. Get out the pin the earliest convenient moment.
22. Look for a pin that will immobilize your opponent's pieces.
23. Passed pawns must be pushed.
24. Avoid exchange when attacking and in command of the position unless you are forced or leave you a better endgame.
25. If you blunder, **don't** give up fighting. After getting the advantage, your opponent may relax and let you escape.

End Game Principles

1. To win without Pawns, you must be at least a Rook or two pieces (except two Knights) ahead.
2. The King must be active in the endgame.
3. Passed Pawns must be pushed.
4. The easiest endings to win are pure Pawn endings.
5. If you are only one Pawn ahead, exchange pieces but not Pawns.
6. A Bishop is better than a Knight in all but blocked Pawn positions.
7. It is worth giving up a Pawn to get a Rook on the 7th rank.
8. **Don't** place your Pawns on the same color as your Bishop.
9. Block passed pawns with the King.
10. Rooks belong behind passed Pawns, whether your Pawn or your opponent's.
11. Always look for a tempo gaining move that will put your opponent's King in a zugzwang position, especially by means of the "Triangulation System" to gain the "Opposition."
12. In a King with a Pawn against a King or a King with two Pawns against a King with a Pawn, the King must be advanced or moved ahead of his Pawn.

End Game Techniques

- Opposition
- Push-away method
- Promotion
- Stalemate Defense
- Tempo
- Triangulation
- Zugzwang



Tactics/Combinations

- Remove the guard
- Diversion (Divert / Deflect the Defense)
- Block the defense or escape route
- Line clearance and Square clearance
- Reverse defense / Attack of heavy pieces
- Back Rank Mate
- Smothered Mate
- Promotion
- Pin
- X-Ray
- Mill

How to analyze position

1. Material: Am I ahead, behind or even in material?
2. Pawn Structure: Are my Pawns well placed and how do they compare with my opponent's.
3. Mobility: How much freedom of action do my pieces have and is my degree of mobility greater than my opponent's?
4. King Safety: Are the King's safe or exposed to attack?
5. Combination: What are the threats?

Power of Rook/Queen

- Power of cut off
- Power of Tempo
- Power of Check

Types of Opposition

- Distant
- Adjacent
- Vertical
- Horizontal
- Diagonal

Pin

- of the square
- of the piece
- of the King



Top 12 Ways to Become a Better Chess Player

<https://chessklub.com/a-dozen-ways-to-be-a-better-chess-player/>

1. Play a lot of serious chess
2. Start by memorizing a few famous games- Memorize your games!
3. Remember to review and analyze your games!
4. Practice tactics – and then practice some more!
5. Conserve your energy for wars, let go of battles wisely
6. Balance your time
7. Keep asking questions before and after every move
8. Never shy away from constructive, honest criticism
9. Learn to make the most of all the pieces
10. Listen to all, but do what you think is best for you!
11. There are still ghosts lurking about – don't be scared
12. Take care of your health and fitness



How to play better Chess with Tactics and Strategy

Tactics:

<https://chessmood.com/blog/improve-chess-tactics>

- 1) Learn the tactical pattern
- 2) Solve puzzles on a specific tactic
- 3) Solve puzzles on different tactical themes
- 4) Study the mating patterns
- 5) Understand the mistakes you make and work from there
- 6) Study from different sources
- 7) Practice to keep your tactics sharp

“Chess is 99% tactics.” Richard Teichmann (1868 – 1925)
(This percentage seems a little high, but Teichmann was a chess master after all!)

Strategy:

<https://www.chess.com/article/view/5-grandmaster-tips-to-improve-your-strategy>

- 1) Fight for the center
- 2) Pay attention to pawn chains
- 3) Exploit pawn weaknesses
- 4) Exploit weak squares
- 5) Improve your worst piece

Practice Chess Strategy

<https://chessfox.com/strategy-training-room/>