



C&O Family Chess Center

217 W. Diamond Ave.
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
www.chesscenter.net

SOME OPENING PRINCIPLES FOR BEGINNERS

and

7 THINGS TO DO IN THE FIRST 10 MOVES

(Summary)

There are three main strategic “goals” involved in the “*opening*,” or beginning, of every chess game.

1. **Develop your pieces.**
2. **Control the center.**
3. **Keep your King safe.**

Six of the “7 Things To Do in the First 10 moves” are part of the first two goals. These, and the other maxims given here, are well known and have been condensed from many sources.

REMEMBER: Every chess principle or maxim that you hear carries an addendum (usually unstated) “...*unless there is a good reason to do otherwise!*”

The “7 Things To Do...”

Develop:

both center Pawns (2)
both Knights (2)
both Bishops (2)
castle (1)

- Learn the “*7 Things To Do in the First 10 Moves*” and try to do them.
- The order in making these moves is variable. There is no “right order.”

- Develop quickly and to get control of the center.
- Develop minor pieces before major pieces and Knights before Bishops.
- “A Knight on the rim is grim...” so develop Knights to their “best” squares, c3, f3, c6, and f6.
- Bishops, unlike Knights, do not have one “best square” at first. The best development for a Bishop must be determined during the course of play.
- Most players consider Bishops to be slightly stronger than Knights (see below) especially *two* Bishops as opposed to two Knights in the “*endgame*.”
- Try to develop with threats.
- Two threats are better than one and three are better than two, etc.
- Seize, or maintain the “*initiative*,” or offense, by the use of threats.
- When playing the white pieces pick either 1.e4 or 1.d4 to begin and for a while use only that as a first move.
- Initially White has a *very slight* advantage (because he moves first). White's opening problem is to develop and increase this advantage.
- Black's opening problem is to develop and achieve equality.
- When you play Black I recommend picking one response to 1.e4 and one to 1.d4 and explore it for a while.
- Moves such as 2.c4 in the Queen's Gambit, 1...c5 for Black in the Sicilian Defense, and b3 or g3 (or the similar Black moves ...b6 or ...g6) in order to place a Bishop on b2 or g2 (to “*fianchetto*” the Bishop) are normal and popular. That's one reason why ten moves are allowed for in the “7 things.”







- Castling removes the King from exposure in the center and at the same time develops one of the rooks, preparing for the "*middlegame*" where players struggle to gain further advantage and bring their "major" pieces (Rooks and Queen) into play.
- It is more important to castle early in an "*open game*" (where center Pawns have been traded creating "*open files*" for Rooks or the Queen to occupy for purposes of attack). In a "*closed game*" (where the center Pawns block the files) castling may be delayed but is still advisable. When castling has not taken place the Rooks are more difficult to "*connect*" (place on squares where they protect each other) and coordinate.
- Cooperation between Queen and Rooks may be more difficult when castling has not taken place.
- Don't move the same piece twice in the opening if you can help it.
- Don't exchange without a good reason (What *are* some good reasons?).
- If you must exchange, try to develop a piece.
- Don't make too many Pawn moves in the opening, or useless Pawn moves.
- Don't develop your Queen too early (What is *too* early?).
- Don't rely on traps but be aware of them.
- Always assume your opponent will find the *best* reply.
- Become aware of "*tempo*". It's very important in the opening.

- Your main task in the opening is to reach a playable "middlegame."
- In "*open*" positions King safety is paramount.

To improve your play:

1. Know all the rules (including castling and "*en passant*" pawn captures).
2. Learn the relative strength-values of all the pieces (below).
3. Learn how to read and write chess notation and then record the moves of your games. ***This is fundamental!***
4. Play through your own games. Seek to identify errors (from both sides) so you can avoid making similar ones in the future.
5. Play over other games from books and magazines. Identify both good and bad moves and learn from them.

Relative "Strength-Values" of the Chessmen

-  **Pawn = 1 Pawn**
-  **Knight = 3+ Pawns**
-  **Bishop = 3++ Pawns**
-  **Rook = 5 Pawns**
-  **Queen = 9 Pawns**
-  **King = 2-3+ Pawns (the King's game-value is "everything.")**

REMEMBER: The position may alter these "relative" values, sometimes by a lot! For example pawns increase in value as they become "passed pawns" and approach the last rank.

For more detail see the full Journal Article "**7 Things To Do in the First 10 Moves.**"