



## *C&O Family Chess Center*

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**[www.chesscenter.net](http://www.chesscenter.net)**

# **New Parent & Student Essential Information (Including Requirements for Parents and Students)**

C&O Family Chess Center offers unique programs aimed at nurturing a love of the game of chess, and offering students and families the means to develop their skills to the highest levels. Like music and sports activities, chess has the power to expand an individual's mind, creativity, and social interaction. But to achieve such an outcome requires discipline and commitment. **Parents are as essential as coaches in helping to develop these internal character attributes. We hope parents will read these pages carefully, then help and encourage students to practice regularly and come to classes on time and prepared.** Chess.com registration is the responsibility of parents. We hope you will pay particular attention to the registration instructions below. The last three pages outline our core curriculum and are mainly for student use.

## **Snow Days and Absences**

C&O Family Chess Center follows the Montgomery County Public School policy for snow days and other such closings. If MCPS opens late our morning programs are cancelled. If they close early our afternoon programs are cancelled. Under such circumstances students are requested to go online with their Chess.com accounts (see below) and practice with "live-" or "online-chess." Coaches may be online, as well, for questions and other chess chat. The same opportunities are available on scheduled school closing days and Holidays. Absences due to weather or illness may be made up at the Saturday Morning Chess Club in Lakeforest Mall. Ask your coach for details.

## **Program Objectives**

Our scholastic chess programs are oriented toward students of beginner and intermediate skill level. Students should have knowledge of the basic rules and moves before coming to class. These basics may be learned on our website, or on the Chess.com website (see below).

Many parents are already aware of the variety of benefits from participation in an organized chess program (that includes instruction and study as well as required practice outside of class sessions). We have prepared this small packet of basic information for

all students and parents to help ensure that their children get the most benefit from their chess experience.

As teachers, we at C&O have several objectives:

1. **All participants should have fun. Chess at its most basic level is simply a game to be enjoyed.** This enjoyment is essential to students' continued participation in organized chess and advancement to ever higher skill levels.
2. **All students should have the opportunity to develop their chess skills as far as they can.** Toward that end we provide study materials appropriate to different levels of understanding and mastery as well as access to a practice site (Chess.com) for informal and serious practice with coaches, classmates and other C&O chess students,. Chess "Levels" vary and are not a function of age or grade.
3. **Students should be made aware of their progress (or lack of) in such a way as to help correct problems or to seek more challenging competition.** This is the purpose of our club rating system and the Chess.com ratings. Initial “club-ratings” allow us to make fair pairings, challenging to both players, and to determine the kinds of individual instruction that may be needed. The Chess.com “Live Chess – Standard” rating will *become* the club rating when enough games have been played on the internet. Coaches, parents and students may access the games played on Chess.com to provide in-class and home instruction for all.
4. **We believe parents should have access to all our teaching materials and other information that will help them to understand (and assist in) their children's progress.** Parents are encouraged to use the free “Learn To Play” practice site, and access the Chess Journal, and other downloads on the “Students I” and “Students II” web-pages on our website. Parents are also encouraged to create their own accounts on Chess.com to follow our programs, improve their own knowledge and assist their children. We also welcome volunteers with some basic knowledge of chess in our programs.

## Teaching Materials and Other Downloads

In July 2008, we began linking all of our classroom study materials, and scoresheets for recording games in class, to the "Student Pages" of this website. Portions of our *Chess Journal* and other supplementary materials are currently available to you and your children as .pdf files for direct download. Additional materials will be added as they are published. **We will no longer be making these materials available as in-class handouts so you should help your students become familiar with the process of opening and printing these publications.**

The following is a partial list of teaching materials, downloads and links found in the dark blue, left side margins of our website, <http://chesscenter.net/>. There are ten web-pages on the site. Some links occur on more than one page.

**LEARN TO PLAY:** A USCF and C&O sponsored, interactive, website where new, or novice, players may learn the basic rules and moves, as well as practice mates, etc.

**Chess Basics...:** A 34 page introduction to chess from the “*Student Chess Journal.*” It includes essential information for all new players.

**Parent Packet:** An earlier version of this attachment.

**SCORE SHEETS (3):** Large (for young players), Medium (for normal use), and Small (for tournament use).

**ESSENTIAL CHESS CURRICULUM SUMMARIES:** The three print-outs given below (Chess Notation, Opening Basics, and The 10 Bad Moves).

**Pawn & Piece Tutorials:** A series of instructional aids for parents, CITs, or others, who wish to teach chess to new players. Four downloads, 4 to 10 pages each.

**PRACTICE SITE:** The same site as “**LEARN TO PLAY**” (above). A USCF and C&O sponsored, interactive, website where new, or novice, players may learn the basic rules and moves, as well as practice mates, and play a computer.

**Tips for Good Recording of Chess Moves:** Just what it says.

**Ten Move Games:** A useful method of approaching the “opening” of a game. A teaching technique often used in class.

**Chess Secrets of the Ancients!:** Extended documents for the “summaries” included with this packet. 10 or 11 pages each.

**Four Move Checkmate, etc.:** A four page introduction to common themes often used by beginners to achieve a quick win.

**Chess Analysis Symbols:** A Guide recommended for beginner and intermediate players.

**How to Learn an Opening (The C&O Way):** A tried and true introduction for those ready to move onward... and some popular openings to start with; **Italian Opening, French Defense, Sicilian Defense, and Queen’s Gambit.**

**Other Chess Notations:** What it says.

**Tournament Basics for Beginning Tournament Players (and Parents):** What it says.

**MD Chess Association Tournament Calendar**

**USCF National Tournament Announcements**

Some of these materials are copyrighted and intended for personal use only. Parents, teachers, and coaches are welcome use these materials, as well. Teachers and coaches who find the materials useful may obtain written permission for reproduction (available from the center for a small donation).

## **Student Responsibilities and Chess.com**

On our student pages we list things that we expect each student to do and items they should have at home, or bring to class, each week. While we support parent efforts to oversee this aspect of chess club we want to encourage you to help your children meet these responsibilities on their own, as much as possible.

**We also request that parents register their children on Chess.com so that they may participate in the required regular practice when not in class.** To this end we have included registration instructions (below) for Chess.com in this information packet. It is not enough to practice with family and friends (although that is encouraged). By practicing on Chess.com student games may be observed by coaches and accessed in class for analysis and discussion. The ideal would be for students to practice chess every day (as with music), but we realize that this will be a very rare occurrence. If students can practice even three or four times a week, amazing progress may be made. The Chess.com website makes practice possible, with players of similar skill levels, 24/7 at the individual's convenience.

**However, Chess.com is an ad-supported website for “free” users. We recommend that parents get the free “Adblock Plus” download for their internet browser as a few of the ads may not be appropriate for children. If you prefer, Chess.com has a low cost “premium” membership which also eliminates the ads. This is a good way to support the Chess.com website when students have become very involved and are ready for some advanced features.**



## *C&O Family Chess Center*

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**[www.chesscenter.net](http://www.chesscenter.net)**

To: All C&O Scholastic Parents

**All our scholastic chess students are required to have additional practice, outside of chess class. They can also benefit from additional instruction.** To that end we have developed a C&O group presence on the Chess.com internet web site. This is an on-line playing site where students from all our programs meet each other, and our instructors, for games, inter-school competition, or just for fun.

All C&O students should have learned the basic rules and moves by the second week of class (if not earlier). This may be done on our website (above) by using the “Learn to Play” link and by printing the “Chess Basics” article (both on our home page). It may also be done through links on the Chess.com website.

Free registration provides basic features for all students and families including the ability to play not only with a computer but with classmates and others, both local and from all over the world. Initially students will play correspondence chess (“On-Line Chess”) with time controls up to two weeks between moves (this is where much of our instruction takes place). **Chess.com is an ad-supported website and we recommend that parents get the free “Adblock Plus” download for their internet browser as a few of the ads may not be appropriate for children.** At some point all students will play “Live-Chess” with classmates and other players at their skill level. When students are ready, optional “premium membership” features (paid) allow advanced players to access other features. Feel free to consult me about these.

After reading this guide completely, follow the step-by-step instructions on the Chess.com website for registering students. Parents, siblings, and others are invited to open their own accounts **but each account must have its own E-mail.**

We recommend that “usernames” be simple and direct. A first name and initial is useful and will allow friends to recognize you without difficulty. For example, GeorgeW or MaryG. If your requested username is unavailable try adding a number to it (ie. GeorgeW2012, etc.). Passwords should be lowercase letters and numbers, and be easy for students to remember (7 or 8 characters only).

Chess.com has special requirements for registering children under 13. You must have an adult’s E-mail address to confirm the membership. Their “Terms of Service” statement says in part:

**“Chess.com is concerned about the safety and privacy of all its users, particularly children. For this reason, parents or guardians of children under the age of 13 who wish to allow their children access to the Service must create an account that is maintained by a legal guardian of at least 18 years old and monitor the child's usage. By allowing a child access to your**

account, you also give your child permission to access all areas of the Service. Please remember that the Service is designed to appeal to a broad audience. Accordingly, as the legal guardian, it is your responsibility to determine whether any of the Service areas and/or Content are appropriate for your child.”

Therefore, when filling out the date of birth you must put the year as your own, or the most recent available. This information may be removed once the account is created. **When you click on “Create My Account” You must immediately check your E-mail and “activate” your account using the link provided.**

At some point you will be asked how you heard about Chess.com. Fill out “How’d you find us?” by clicking on “Friend” and typing in my name or **user name, CoachOmar**. This will allow me to find and contact your student on the site and vice-versa.

When you fill out the “**profile**” make sure you put the student’s first name as used at school. If you do not wish to use the student’s last name you may use the initial, but add “C&O” so that other players can identify the student as one of ours (for example: Mary Grant C&O or Tariq G. C&O). Delete the Date-Of Birth. An image is optional, and may be anything appropriate. I will supply one when adjusting a student’s settings if there is not already one supplied by parents.

Once students are registered you need to locate me (Coach Omar) and “friend” me if you did not do so earlier. If you did, you should find me listed as a “friend” on the student’s home page. Click on my “avatar” (picture icon) to send me a message with the student’s username and password. Feel free to explore the site. I would avoid “Live Chess” for now, but we’ll explore that in class. Have fun! We’ll also explore other options in class.

I recommend reading the messages from CHESS.com, and others that appear under “alerts” but you may delete their ads. You will not need a premium membership at this time. **Parents may later modify the Alert and E-mail settings to remove regular alerts from your E-mail.** It’s best for students to log-in regularly (three, or more, times a week). Parents make a note to remind students.

**Please “message” me on Chess.com with the student’s user name and password so that I may adjust their settings to conform with club norms. User names and passwords should be easy for students to remember.** They should also be written down in each student’s backpack in case they are needed during class.



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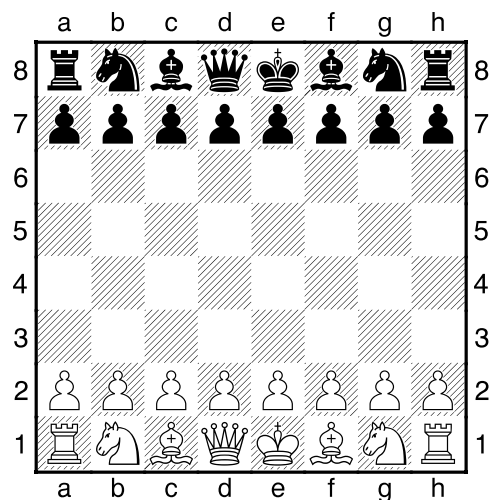
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## How to Read and Write Chess Notation

Adapted from the U.S. Chess Federation

There are many different ways to write chess moves. The most popular (and easiest) method is called algebraic notation. The main idea is that every square has a name, like this:

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	
8	a8	b8	c8	d8	e8	f8	g8	h8	8
7	a7	b7	c7	d7	e7	f7	g7	h7	7
6	a6	b6	c6	d6	e6	f6	g6	h6	6
5	a5	b5	c5	d5	e5	f5	g5	h5	5
4	a4	b4	c4	d4	e4	f4	g4	h4	4
3	a3	b3	c3	d3	e3	f3	g3	h3	3
2	a2	b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2	h2	2
1	a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	f1	g1	h1	1
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	



It looks very complicated but it's not! Each square on a chessboard has a first name (a letter) and a last name (a number). The letter identifies a file (column in the diagram) and the number identifies a rank (row in the diagram).

To identify the piece you are moving you just need to use a single capital letter:

- K = King**
- Q = Queen**
- R = Rook**
- B = Bishop**
- N = Knight**

Note that "P" is not used. Chess players have agreed that a move without a letter (such as "e4") is understood to be a pawn move.

You are almost ready to start using chess notation. Just pay attention to the following symbols:

- x = Take or Capture**
- 0-0 = K-side castle**
- 0-0-0 = Q-side castle**
- + = check**
- ++ = double check**
- # = checkmate**
- ! = good move**
- ? = questionable/weak move**
- ?? = blunder**

Playing over your games, identifying mistakes and finding better moves is the best thing you can do to improve.

Here is a brief sample game:

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>White</b>    | <b>Black</b> |
| <b>1. e4</b>    | <b>e5</b>    |
| <b>2. Nf3</b>   | <b>d6</b>    |
| <b>3. Nc3</b>   | <b>Bg4</b>   |
| <b>4. Bc4</b>   | <b>g6</b>    |
| <b>5. Nxe5</b>  | <b>Bxd1</b>  |
| <b>6. Bxf7+</b> | <b>Ke7</b>   |
| <b>7. Nd5#</b>  |              |

Another sample game appears on the back of this sheet.



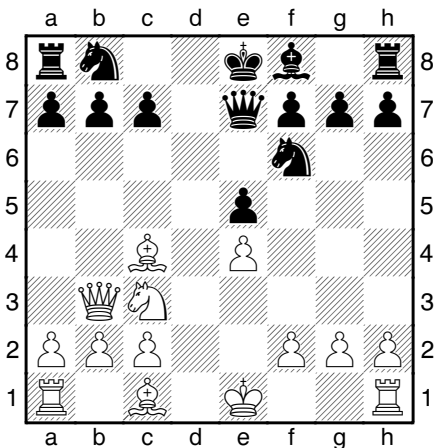
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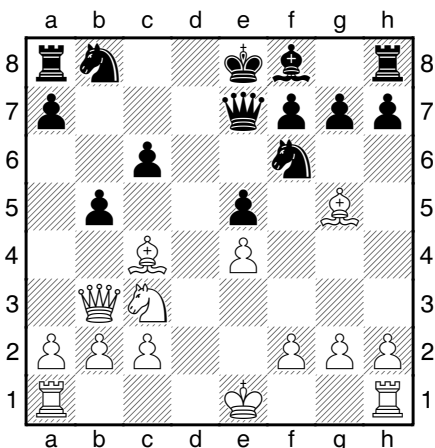
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**Morphy, Paul - Duke of Brunswick & Count Isouard [C41]**  
Paris - Opera House, 1858

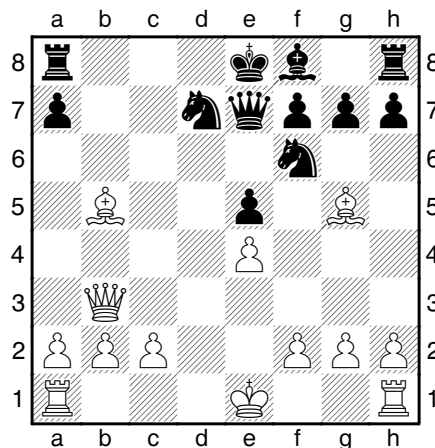
1. e4 e5
2. Nf3 d6
3. d4 Bg4? [3...exd4]
4. dxe5 Bxf3
5. Qxf3 dxe5
6. Bc4 Nf6?
7. Qb3 Qe7(Forced. Why?)
8. Nc3!



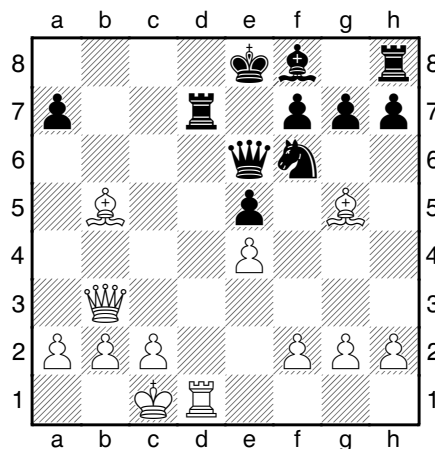
8. ... c6
9. Bg5 b5? [9...Qc7]



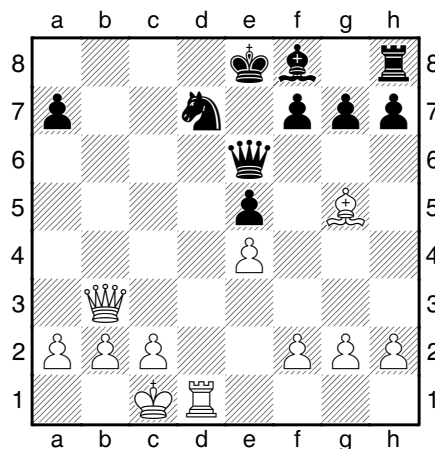
10. Nxb5! cxb5
11. Bxb5+ Nbd7



12. 0-0-0 Rd8
13. Rxd7! Rxd7
14. Rd1 Qe6



15. Bxd7+ Nxd7



16. Qb8+!! Nxb8
17. Rd8# 1-0





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### 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.**"



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# The “10 BAD MOVES”

(Summary)

### 1. Moving Too Fast. (Impulsiveness)

*This is the single greatest contributor to lost positions.* It really has to do with taking the time to carefully look at the position - and to ask yourself (and answer) certain very specific “key questions” (over).

### 2. Developing the Queen Too Early, or Exposing the Queen to Attack.

What is meant by “too early?” If the queen may be easily threatened or attacked by developing enemy pieces or pawns then it’s too early. She usually needs support and protection to attack effectively.

### 3. Moving the Same Piece Too Many Times, or Making Too Many Pawn Moves in the Opening.

Making such “extra” moves is one of the chief contributing factors in cases of failure to achieve the “*7 Things To Do in the First 10 Moves.*”

### 4. Failure to Castle, or Exposing the King to Attack.

The king is the most important piece you have. If he is lost the game is lost, therefore “king safety” is *always* an important consideration.

### 5. Attacking Too Soon.

As with developing the Queen, the key here is judging just what is “*too soon.*” Does the attack have enough support from other pieces, etc.?

### 6. Ignoring, or Failing to Relieve, a Pin.

The pin is number one of the four primary tactical weapons (pins, forks, skewers, and discovered attacks). A pinned piece is temporarily immobilized, threatened with capture, and usually neutralized both as an attacker and a defender.

### 7. Ignoring a Threat, or Failing to Guard Against Captures.

After the first few moves, potential captures and threats will exist all over the board, but they must be “*looked for.*” The key is “*visualization,*” or the ability to imagine what the board will look like after a move.

### 8. Thoughtless or Impulsive Pawn Snatching.

The “*hanging pawn*” (seemingly unprotected) may be “poisoned,” (bait for a trap) or may open lines of attack for your opponent. Or you may waste time when a more direct attack is possible

### 9. Useless, or Weakening, Exchanges.

Will the exchange help you? It's generally “bad” to trade pieces if you have the initiative, if your opponent has a cramped position, if it will weaken your pawn structure, or if you are behind in material. “*Visualize*” (see in your mind) the results before you make your move.

### 10. Losing, or Drawing, a Won Game.

(Losing Your Focus/Overconfidence)

“If you have a better position, watch out!” A player may sometimes lose his focus or become so frustrated with an opponent who “plays on” in a “hopeless” position that he blunders into a draw or a loss.

Almost as bad as losing a won game is “giving up” when there may be chances for a draw.



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**KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF  
(AND ANSWER)  
BEFORE CHOOSING A MOVE!**

**ABOUT THE MOVE YOUR OPPONENT JUST MADE:**

1. Did my opponent make a threat or capture?
2. Did my opponent defend against my threat?
3. Did my opponent improve his position?

**Three "no" answers indicate  
a possible mistake!**

4. Can I capture the piece that moved? ...any others?

**ABOUT YOUR POSSIBLE MOVES:**

1. Does this move make a threat or capture?
2. Does this move defend against a threat?
3. Does this move improve my position?
  - a. development/cooperation of my pieces
  - b. control of the center or other space
  - c. improved pawn structure
  - d. king safety

**Three "no" answers indicates you  
may be about to make a mistake!**

4. Can my opponent capture any of my pieces?
  - a. ...the piece I will move?
  - b. ...any unprotected pieces?