

# The Chess Cheat Sheet: 101 Rules for Chess Mastery

## **Openings**

1. Control the center.
2. Develop pieces.
3. Castle.
4. Don't bring your queen out too early.
5. Don't push too many pawns.
6. Don't move the same piece too many times.
7. Don't learn too many openings. Learn a few in depth.
8. Play openings you know.
9. Stop going for opening traps.
10. Understanding beats memorization.

## **Tactics**

11. One strong tactic is all it takes to win the game.
12. One mistake is all it takes to lose the game.
13. Warm up with puzzles before an important game.
14. Look for tactics every move.
15. Scan the whole board.
16. Don't get preoccupied with just one side.
17. Look for checks, captures, and threats.
18. Look for forcing moves.
19. One-move attacks are usually a waste of time.
20. Calculate.
21. Double-check long calculations.
22. Look at the board from your opponent's perspective.
23. Prevent your opponent's tactics.
24. Not all threats are created equal. Be mindful of danger levels.
25. Look for counter-tactics.

26. *Zwischenzug* – an “in-between” move that your opponent must deal with immediately.
27. Be mindful of perpetual checks.

## **Strategy**

28. Think long-term.
29. Use your intuition.
30. Take the initiative.
31. Constantly evaluate the position.
32. Look for weaknesses in your opponent’s position.
33. Attack the weakness.
34. A kingside attack is the deadliest plan.
35. The most important thing in chess is king safety.
36. Look for imbalances in the position.
37. Defend when necessary.
38. Speed is key. A fast plan beats a slow one.
39. When you’re winning, simplify.
40. Play to your strengths.
41. Use what you’ve got. Use all your pieces.
42. Look for weaknesses in your own position. Find ways to liquidate them.
43. Trade off your bad pieces.
44. Trade off your opponent’s good pieces.
45. If your king is in danger, trade pieces.
46. If you realize you picked a bad plan, abandon it.
47. Accumulate small advantages.
48. Whoever controls the center controls the game.
49. Gradually improve your position.
50. Try to hold a strong pawn structure.
51. Anticipate your opponent’s threats.
52. If you have nothing else, play a waiting move to see your opponent’s response.
53. Sometimes the best plan is to prevent your opponent’s plan.

54. If your plan requires luck to work, it's a bad plan.
55. Material isn't everything.
56. Think "how can I make the game difficult for my opponent?"

## **Endgames**

57. Activate your king.
58. Activate your pieces.
59. Attack pawns.
60. Rooks on the 7<sup>th</sup> (or 2<sup>nd</sup>) rank are deadly.
61. Create a passed pawn when possible.
62. A protected passed pawn is even better.
63. Outside passed pawns are a good decoy.
64. Watch out for stalemate.
65. *Zugzwang* – put your opponent in a position where any move he plays loses.

## **Psychology**

66. Mindset matters.
67. Even when you think you are competing with others you are competing with your own mind.
68. Build self-awareness.
69. Maintain control of your emotions.
70. Do the basics right.
71. Obsess over the few things that matter. Ignore everything else.
72. Believe.
73. Your preparation determines your performance.
74. Effort beats talent.
75. You either win or you learn.
76. Your opponent's rating doesn't matter.
77. The only thing that matters is your next move.
78. Keep the bigger picture in mind.
79. If your opponent offers you a draw, he probably thinks he's losing.

80. Focus.
81. Don't get complacent. The game isn't over until it's over.
82. Don't give up. The game isn't over until it's over.
83. Don't move too fast.
84. Don't move too slow.
85. Never rely on your opponent's mistakes.
86. Never underestimate your opponent.
87. Learn from your losses.
88. Celebrate your wins.
89. If you're never willing to lose, you're never going to win.
90. Keep a chess journal.
91. Measure your process.
92. Seek guidance from people ahead of you.
93. Apply what you learn.
94. Be like water – adaptable.
95. Be like grass – resilient.
96. Champions perform even on their worst days.
97. Use momentum when you have it.
98. Control what you can. Ignore what you can't.
99. Play to win, but don't obsess over the result.
100. Be relentless.
101. Love the game.

Good luck on your chess journey!