

Grandmaster's Opening Laboratory #2

Chess Openings Course

Lesson-1:	Opening Knowledge vs Opening Understanding
Lesson-2:	How to play an opening
Lesson-3:	Advanced Rules
Lesson-4:	Modern Opening Trends
Lesson-5:	Opening Understanding in Action

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Acknowledgements

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Last, but not least, let me mention Alyona, who is my muse. J

Let me thank everyone for his/her contribution!

Sincerely yours,

GM Igor Smirnov

Remote Chess Academy



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Instructions

After a study of my chess course, some students get a 100-300 ratings rise, while others make only very small progress. The course is obviously always the same. Then what makes the difference? The answer is: it's **HOW you study it**.

If you just observe the course – you'll get only 10% of the overall effect that is possible. It's not a Hollywood movie **J** – it's NOT for watching!

This is a TRAINING course, and you should perform the training. Be active.

- Ø Stop (pause) the video lesson sometimes. When you stop the video, you can THINK about an interesting idea and digest it better. It is very important to do so.
Pause the video, think about a position by yourself. After that, resume the video and compare your thoughts with the actual game and my explanations.
- Ø Write down the important ideas. While studying the video lessons you will find a lot of useful rules, principles and so on. Also you will probably form your own conclusions. If you write them down, you will remember and classify them better.
- Ø Print the text versions of the video lessons. When you think about different ideas of the course, you will see them at the same time. It is very helpful.
After studying one video lesson, please look through its text version. Pay attention to the enhanced font: it will help you to remember all the key ideas.
- Ø Each lesson contains a LOT of rules. Even if you are a genius, you can't digest them all after only one observation. Repeat the lessons several times at least (the more, the better).
- Ø Take a break after each lesson. Give your brain some time to digest this new set of ideas. It would be best to study one lesson per day. If you are eager to watch all the lessons instantly, you may do so. But you should repeat these lessons later on (preferably several times).
- Ø If you don't understand something in the practical part – find an explanation of this idea in the video lessons and study it once again. The general principles provided in the video lessons are applicable to ALL openings. So if you don't understand a certain specific line – this means that you have forgotten (or didn't understand) some general rules.
- Ø After the study of the whole course, draw the final conclusions for yourself. How are you going to play openings now? Summarise how you will do so using several of the most important principles.

If you follow these instructions, you'll get 100% benefit from this course and will put it into practice. Based on the experiences of my other students, I'm able to say that it can bring you a 100-300 rating points increase!

Serious study brings serious results! I wish you well-deserved success!



"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Lesson-1: "Opening knowledge VS Opening understanding"

It's my pleasure to welcome you into this new opening course! After a study of these lessons your opening preparation will improve a lot, and more importantly, your general chess *understanding* will rise as well. This can happen very soon! The only thing you need to do is to *study this course seriously*, and then *apply it in your practical games*. So without further ado, let's get started!

I'm Igor Smirnov, International Grandmaster and a chess coach. Together with the Remote Chess Academy team, we've developed the 2nd part of the course, "*The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory*". Here you'll find new general ideas and new openings, as well as an upgrade of some openings from our first opening course.

In this 1st lesson we'll talk about your general approach for studying and playing openings. We'll discuss *typical opening mistakes of chess players*, and I'll show you *how to leave your competitors way behind!*

This first lesson is called "Opening knowledge VS Opening understanding".

Before I start telling you my recommendations, let me ask you one question.

DIAGRAM 1.1



White to move

This is the Najdorf variation of the Sicilian defense – the most popular opening position nowadays. Perhaps you have played this variation for White or for Black (maybe even for both sides).

Black's last move was pawn to a6 (5...a7-a6). Could you explain the reason for this move?

We all know that we should develop pieces in the opening stage. The 5...a6 move breaks this rule. If White now plays the same move 6.a3, we would say that this is a mistake, a waste of time, and that White should have developed his pieces instead. That said, why does Black play 5...a6? *Can you explain it?*

You may say that the move prepares for Qc7 (covering the b5 square) or maybe for b5. However, Black is not going to play Qc7 or b5 on the next move. In most cases, Black either plays 6...e6 or 6...e5. *Then why not to play it straight away?*

Thousands of players play Najdorf variation, and a lot of them would NOT be able to explain *clearly* the reason for these

Of course I'm not talking about this 5...a6 move solely, it relates to any other opening position as well. I'm showing you the Najdorf variation simply because it's the most popular opening.

Maybe you don't play the Najdorf variation for Black, but only for White. Okay, I have another question for you then. Very often White plays 6.f3 here. It prepares the g4 advancement and Be3 development (preventing Ng4).

DIAGRAM 1.2



White to move

Here's the question: *why not to play 6.Be2 with the same purpose?*

It prepares the same moves (g4 and Be3) just as well, and in addition to that it develops a piece.

Don't you think it's funny that many people who play this variation would not even be able to explain the very first moves?

Sadly, most players have never even tried to think about it! They simply reproduce these opening moves because it's an opening theory.

It's easy to explain this situation. How do people study openings? They read books or watch videos about it. In either case it assumes that you do NOT *think by yourself*, but just memorize the author's ideas.

Even if somebody analyses an opening, it usually means that he checks computer recommendations in different lines. Again, there's no *independent thinking* here.

Even the term "opening repertoire" or "opening knowledge" assumes a certain amount of information that you possess.

Memorization of openings is a boring thing. It's more suitable for a computer than for a human. It's difficult to keep in mind all those opening variations, and a few months later you'll have to repeat them again.

Also, intensive opening learning doesn't leave you enough free time for mastering other important topics.

In any case you will not be able to remember all eventual opening lines. Very often you'll face unknown opening positions. Lastly, after an opening you'll have to play the arising position by yourself.

Can you guess the solution? Yes, instead of just opening knowledge, you need actual opening UNDERSTANDING.

Let me tell you a big secret. ♪ There's nothing special in an opening. All the same general principles work throughout the whole game. You can find correct opening moves in the same way that you would find them in the middlegame.

You'll *apply general chess principles* to the opening stage. By doing this you'll easily understand any opening, and will play it successfully.

Now you can fully understand the title of this lesson. While other players memorize opening knowledge, you will develop your opening *understanding*. This approach has a lot of benefits.

- 1) You'll understand what opening lines are good, and what variations you should not play.
- 2) You'll understand the reasons behind opening moves. Then you'll digest them naturally, and without a need for memorizing variations.
- 3) You will not be confused if your opponent plays a novelty. You'll play good moves even in an unknown opening position.
- 4) Your strategic and tactical skills will help you learn openings effectively. And vice versa: your opening analyses will

Now you know the right approach for studying openings. In addition to that let's discuss typical mistakes. We need to make sure that you do right things, and avoid wrong things.

MISTAKE #1:

Do not play openings that seem strange to you, that you can't understand clearly.

This is a very common mistake nowadays. People play opening lines recommended by a computer or by a certain Grandmaster. Even if a player doesn't fully understand this variation, he often relies on the recommendation of a strong GM. Let's see how it works in practice.

DIAGRAM 1.3

R. Swinkels – T. Burg

1.d4-d5 2.c4-c6 3.Nf3-Nf6 4.Nc3-dc. I don't comment on these opening moves as it's not important for our topic. 5.a4-Bf5 6.Ne5-Nbd7 7.Nc4-Nb6 8.Ne5-a5.



White to move

Some of the previous moves may look strange. However, this is a popular variation; it was played many times by strong Grandmasters. I guess this is the reason why the Black player decided to implement it.

Now let's pass the opening stage and come to the position where opening theory ends.

DIAGRAM 1.4



Black's turn

So far Black has reproduced his opening knowledge, and got an approximately equal position. Now it's time to *think independently*. Let's see the game continuation.

16...Rfd8 17.Qb3-Nc8 18.00-Qb6 19.Qa2-Qc7. Obviously Black is doing something very wrong. He just doesn't know what to do.

20.Rfd1-Bd6 21.g3-Qb8 22.Qb3-Ne7 23.Kg2-Bc7. Well, I think you got the point already. Black can't understand what to do. He lost this game very soon. Why did it happen?

Do you think he's a weak player? No, he's an International Master with a rating around 2500.

You may think he just doesn't know the typical middlegame plans for this opening. However, the problem is not here. From the very beginning of this game he played the moves without a *real understanding* of them. It's not surprising that he could not handle the arising position.

My recommendation is very simple: you should play the moves that correspond to your chess understanding. This recommendation is applicable for the whole game, including the opening stage.

After a study of this course your general understanding will be very strong. Thus you should stick to it and rely on yourself.

MISTAKE #2:

Do not try to recollect an opening line if you don't remember it firmly.

Often a player gets an opening position that he studied some time ago. Thus he knows something about it, but doesn't remember it clearly. In such cases, people will often try to recollect their knowledge *during* a game.

DIAGRAM 1.5

Pinero C. – Gascon J.



Black to move

I know the Black player, and he told me what he was thinking about during this game.

He'd remembered a game between Beliavsky and Kasparov. In that game, Kasparov played e5 at some point and then placed his c6 knight on d4. Then when Beliavsky attacked the knight with the Ne2 move, Kasparov played c5 and got a very active position.

It's tempting to follow Kasparov's moves. So Black played 7...e5 quickly.

After 8.d5-Nd4 9.Nge2 Black realized that 9...c5 move doesn't work well. White can play 10.dc-Nc6 11.Nd5 following with 12.Nec3 with a very strong position.

Thus Black decided to play c5 after an exchange: 9... Ne2 10.Bxe2-c5?!

White answered 11.dc-bc 12.Rd1 and now Black is losing. He can't protect a pawn with 12...Ne8 because of a 13.c5 (using a pin).

Why did Kasparov's idea work so badly? Simply because it was used in a different position.

DIAGRAM 1.6

Beliavsky-Kasparov



Black to move

Instead of the immediate 7...e5, Kasparov played 7...a6 8.Nge2-Re8 9.Nc1 and only in this position 9...e5.

When you try to recollect an opening theory during a game, you stop thinking by yourself. Often it leads to very strange moves and annoying losses.

This is a common mistake, and even top Grandmasters like Anand fall into this trap.

Here's my advice to you: if you don't remember an opening theory FIRMLY – do not try to recollect it. Use your general understanding and think by yourself.

MISTAKE #3:

Many players overestimate the importance of an opening.

Often people think that an opening preparation determined a result of a certain game. Some players even suppose that in order to raise their chess level, they mainly need to improve their opening knowledge. Let's check if this is true or not.

DIAGRAM 1.7

Anand V. – Nakamura H.



Black to move

This is a game between Anand and Nakamura – two of the strongest players in the world.

Let's pay attention to changes in the evaluation of positions throughout the game

After the first opening moves, we can see an approximately equal position. Perhaps White is slightly better due to Black's weaknesses.

DIAGRAM 1.8



White to move

A few moves later the situation changed significantly. Now the computer shows that after 22.Ba4-Rc4 23.Ne2, White can win material – he's going to play Bd7 and Nb6 winning the exchange and maybe the d6-pawn.

However, White missed this opportunity and played 22.Ne2. Black answered 22...f4. This weakened the e4-square and White could make use of it. After 23.Nec3 and then Ne4 White would then occupy the center and get a stable advantage.

Instead of that, White found a very interesting combination 23.Ndf4-Bb3 24.h4. Now the position is totally mixed up. 24...Qg4 25.f3-Bc2 26.fg-Bd3 27.Nh5-Kg8 28.Rd3. Complications have ended with an approximately equal endgame.

DIAGRAM 1.9



White's turn

White played the endgame better and reached a winning position. For instance, after 40.Ra3-Ba3 41.h5, White's pawns will reach the last rank very soon.

Perhaps you'll be surprised to know that in the actual game Black got a totally winning position soon.

DIAGRAM 1.10



Black to move

Black promoted his pawn quicker, and now after some checks he can win the rook.

Do you think White resigned? No! Actually they reached a draw in the end.

Now let me ask you a question. Was the result of this game determined by an opening? Of course it wasn't. Both players made mistakes and the advantage shifted from one side to another a couple of times throughout the game.

Let me remind you that we observed a game between two of the world best players. In YOUR games the quantity of mistakes is probably a lot bigger.

So what causes a final result of a game? It's the general strength of the players, together with their strategic and tactical skills.

Opening knowledge has a very secondary importance.

MISTAKE #4:

If a player got a bad position in an opening, he thinks the problem is in his insufficient opening preparation.

It seems logical to think so. Nevertheless, let's analyze it more thoroughly.

Diagram 1.11

Erenburg – Stripunsky



White's turn

Black used a bit of an unusual opening, and perhaps the White player was not aware of the theory of this line. Let's see

how he handled this situation.

5.cd-ed 6.Bf4-Bd6. So far White has just developed his pieces, but now he needs to make a decision: what to do with his f4-bishop? White played 7.Qd2.

In the early stage of a game normally we should develop our minor pieces. 7.Qd2 does not follow this idea. White should care about the development of his light-squared bishop. For this purpose he'll need to play e3. This will close the queen's diagonal and make Qd2 move useless.

How could White have solved this problem? For instance, instead of playing Qd2, White could simply play 7.Bd6 and then 8.e3. Do you need to be an expert in this opening to find these moves? Of course not, this is simple logic.

Anyway, let's move on. 7...Nge7, 8. 000. This looks dangerous for White. His king is a bit exposed here. Also, in case of opposite-side castles, it's unclear how White will develop a king-side attack.

Diagram 1.12



Black to move

8...00 9.h3-Bf5 10.g4-Be4 11.Ne4 White started some active operations, but forgot to develop his f1-bishop first. With these exchanges - 11...de 12.Ne5-Ng6 – White breaks another rule as well: don't exchange your developed pieces when you are behind in development. Otherwise you will not have any active pieces in the game.

13. e3-Nce5 14.de-Be5. Black got an advantage and won the game afterwards.

Diagram 1.13



White to move

After games like this, the White player typically thinks that he suffered for lack of opening knowledge. He didn't know the theory of this variation, and thus he got troubles right into the opening. Is this the whole truth?

Of course not! In this game White broke several base principles of opening play. For instance he forgot to develop his light-squared bishop. This should be pretty obvious even without any knowledge of this variation.

By the way, this is a game between 2 Grandmasters. Now you can see that even such strong players make opening mistakes. So the opening principles are not as simple as it may seem.

Here's the bottom line: if you got a bad position in an opening, this demonstrates your weak understanding of the opening principles. *If you can admit this weakness, you'll be able to correct it and become a stronger player.*

Instead you may try to excuse yourself by thinking "I just didn't know this variation." Maybe it will make you feel better about yourself, but your results will not improve.

MISTAKE #5:

After some losses in a certain opening, a player wants to change it. He thinks this opening doesn't fit to his style.

Let's start from the very beginning. You should choose the openings that correspond to main opening principles, and to your general understanding.

If you studied the first part of the course "*The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory*" – then you already know which openings are good. If you play them, you can be sure that everything is fine with your opening repertoire.

If you lose in a certain opening regularly, this means **you play a certain type of position badly**. Maybe you are not very good in closed positions, or you don't defend well, or anything else.

You see, it's not a matter of style. The world best player, Magnus Carlsen, said: "*If you have preferences, you have weaknesses.*"

Now let's think further. **If you play a certain type of position badly, and avoid playing it – you will never correct this weakness.**

Instead it would be better to study this topic where you feel uncomfortable. Then you can play your problem opening in some training games. This will help you not only to repair this particular opening, but to raise your overall chess power as well.

In this lesson we've been talking about a correct approach for studying and playing openings. It will make your opening preparation easier, and at the same time more effective. Now let's make some conclusions.

Instead of opening knowledge, you need opening understanding. I'm not saying you should not study opening theory. I'm just saying that your general chess skills and an understanding of the opening principles are much more important. Based on this firm foundation, you'll digest specific opening lines easily.

Also we analyzed some typical mistakes. These are pretty common problems, and even some Grandmasters are not free of them. So please be careful, and do not fall into these traps.

1. Do NOT play openings that seem strange to you, that you can't understand clearly. You should play the moves that correspond to your chess understanding.
2. Do NOT try to recollect an opening line if you don't remember it firmly. This often leads to strange moves and annoying losses. Instead, just think by yourself (in the same way you would do it in the middlegame).
3. Do NOT overestimate the importance of an opening preparation. Very often the evaluation of a position changes several times throughout the game. Thus it is your general chess power together with your strategic and tactical skills that will determine the final result.
4. If you've experienced opening troubles in a certain game, this demonstrates your weak understanding of opening principles. This is the main problem you need to correct. Learning the theory of this particular variation is useful, but it's a secondary thing.
5. Choose openings that correspond to the main opening principles, and to your general understanding.

If you experience troubles in a certain opening regularly – study this type of position thoroughly, and practice this opening in training games. This will solve the opening problem and also raise your overall chess strength.

We've been talking a lot about *understanding* an opening. Perhaps you are eager to learn those opening principles. We'll study them in the next lesson, and I'm waiting for you there.



"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Lesson-2: "How to Play an Opening?"

Previously we've been talking about the importance of having *opening understanding*. In this lesson you will learn it. Yes, in just 1 lesson you'll study all *the main principles of opening play*. Sounds good, doesn't it? J

Let me make a last note. I will be starting from the base ideas. You need to digest them very well, because otherwise you will not understand the more advanced ideas that we'll talk about later.

We'll be analyzing games of strong Grandmasters, and you'll see for yourself **how often their opening understanding is lacking**. I bet if we analyze YOUR games the quantity of mistakes will be a lot bigger. So please don't underestimate these general opening principles. They are much more profound than it may look at first glance. If you take them seriously, you can strengthen your game a lot!

Now let's move on and get started. How should you play in an opening stage? As we discussed before, all of the strategic and tactical motifs work throughout the whole game. If we apply these general ideas to the opening stage, we'll get some specific rules for opening play. This is what we'll do in this lesson – we'll be formulating the opening rules based on *the general principles of a chess game*.

It's useful for you to know these specific opening rules. They will tell you exactly what to do and how you should do it. This will guarantee that you play an opening properly.

DIAGRAM 2.1



Let's start from the very beginning. The base idea of a chess game is activity. This means you should *increase your activity and decrease your opponent's activity*. There are several strategic principles that will help you to follow this general guideline.

Note: I don't explain chess strategy here in detail, because I've done it in other courses like "The Grandmaster's Secrets" or "The Grandmaster's Positional Understanding". Ok, let's continue.

2 principles that are most applicable for the opening stage are:

- the principle of the least active piece
- the principle of maximum activity

This means *you should find your least active piece and move it to the most forward available square.*

This is simple and very effective. Let's see how it works in practice.

DIAGRAM 2.2



White to move

We'll start with simple examples and then we'll analyze more advanced positions.

In this position White can develop a knight (2.Nf3) or a bishop (2.Bc4). Both moves are possible and are played by strong players regularly. Nevertheless, which one is better?

We need to develop the knight first, because of the *principle of the least active piece*. The bishop is already active on its initial position, while the knight is totally passive. Thus we should move the less active piece – the knight (2.Nf3).

DIAGRAM 2.3



White to move

Here's another example. Where should White develop his c1-bishop: to f4 or g5? Both options are approved by opening theory. However, I hope you can understand that the move 3.Bg5 is best because of the *principle of maximum activity*. We should put our pieces on the most forward available squares.

DIAGRAM 2.4



White to move

There's another funny thing about this position. For many years, the development of Black's f8-bishop to e7 was the main line and was the most popular. Nowadays, Grandmasters have started to develop this bishop to b4 much more often.

You see, for the chess community it required many years and a lot of opening analyses to come to this Bb4 move. For you, on the other hand, everything is a lot easier because you know that it's just the *principle of maximum activity*. Let's go to the next example.

DIAGRAM 2.5



Black to move

Here's the same idea from another opening – the Ruy Lopez. For hundreds of years Black had played 6...Be7 mainly, but nowadays people have discovered that 6...Bc5 is *more active* for Black.

I hope that all of Black's moves are clear to you, even if you have never played the Ruy Lopez. Black developed his knights first – following *the principle of the least active piece* we should develop knights before bishops.

Now it's time to develop the bishops. Our bishop should go to *the most forward available square*. Yes, the most forward square is b4, but White will kick it away instantly (with a3 or c3 move). Thus the most forward available square is c5.

1. e4-c5 2. Nf3-d6 3. Bb5-Bd7 4. Bd7

DIAGRAM 2.6



Black to move

Black can recapture by a knight or a queen. Which move is better? It seems the most natural to recapture with a knight (4...Nd7), and to develop it simultaneously. However, in this case the knight will NOT go to *the most forward available square*.

That's why strong players usually play 4...Qd7, and then develop the knight to c6. Again, this just follows the *principle of maximum activity*.

DIAGRAM 2.7



Black to move

Here's another similar example. In such positions Black often plays 6...c5 and follows this with 7...Nc6.

At first sight it seems strange. Black moves his c-pawn twice losing a tempo, while he could simply develop his knight to d7. That's true. However, with the 6...c5 move Black is trying to develop his knight to *the most forward square* and thus to follow the *principle of maximum activity*.

My goal here is to make you UNDERSTAND all of the opening moves. Thus you will not follow an opening theory mechanically, but will understand which moves are better and why it is so.

It also helps you to choose the best opening variations easily. You don't need to spend a lot of time on studying numerous opening lines and comparing them. Using your *opening understanding*, you can see for yourself which variation is better instantly!

Now let's have a look at a more complex example.

Nikolaidis – Bologan

DIAGRAM 2.8



White to move

In this position White played 6.Nbd2. What do you think about this move?

I hope it doesn't look great to you. Normally the knight should go to the most forward available square, which is c3.

Black answered 6...b6 7.cd-ed 8.00-Bb7.

DIAGRAM 2.9



White to move

What should White do now? As usual, he should find his *least active piece* and move it to *the most active square*.

The least active piece in White's position is his bishop on c1. White can't develop it now, so he needs to prepare it somehow. There are 2 possible ways:

- White can play b3 following with Bb2. This is one idea.
- Another option is to move the d2-knight and develop the bishop along this diagonal (c1-h6), somewhere to g5 or f4.

Which position do you like better for the bishop? We should *look for the most forward available square*, and therefore g5 or f4 would be the best squares.

By the way, now we can see that the misplaced knight on d2 hampers White's development. If White would have placed it on c3 instead, he could now simply play Bf4 without any problems.

In the actual game White played 9.Ne5 here. Perhaps he's going to move his d2-knight to f3 and develop the bishop then. This is a good plan indeed.

What should Black do now? Black should develop his least active piece – his b8-knight. Instead, however, Black played 9...a5.

White answered 10.Qc2. This is a move in a wrong direction. As we discussed before, White needs to develop his c1-bishop.

10...c5 11.dc-bc 12.Nb3-Na6

DIAGRAM 2.10



White to move

Where should White place his bishop now? To the most forward squares, somewhere to g5 or f4 – we need to check which move works for White.

Instead White played 13.Bd2 and after 13...Nb4 Black got an advantage.

We just analyzed a more complex position, but you can see that opening principles work here just as well.

Another thing you may pay attention on is **the huge quantity of mistakes during just a few moves we observed**. And this is a game played between 2 strong players rated above 2500. If you take this lesson seriously and digest all the rules – you'll play openings on a very high level!

Ok, let's move on. So far we've been talking about pieces. At the same time, the principle of maximum activity works for your PAWNS just as well.

DIAGRAM 2.11



White to move

That's why in the Najdorf variation modern players play e5 very often. In the past Black mostly played e6, but it's not the most forward move. Following the *principle of maximum activity* the pawn should go to e5.

DIAGRAM 2.12



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Black to move

The same idea works for the Sveshnikov variation. Black can play e5 instead of e6, and this will give a more active position to him.

DIAGRAM 2.13



Black to move

For the same reason the Gruenfeld defense (3...d5) is better than King's Indian defense (3...d6).

There's another important rule that is related to the *principle of maximum activity*. According to this principle you should care about activity of your PIECES first of all. They are much *more powerful* than pawns; they can bring you a lot *more activity*.

That's why **in an opening, pawns moves can be good if they prepare a development of your pieces.**

Other pawn moves are an unnecessary waste of time.

DIAGRAM 2.14



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That's why the best moves in the initial position are 1.e4 and 1.d4.

If you play 1.c4, it only prepares a development of 1 piece – your queen. Similarly, a move of your flank pawns (1.b3, 1.a4) also gives more space to 1 piece only.

Unlike them, the 1.d4 move gives more squares to your bishop, queen, knight and maybe even a king. A similar situation happens after 1.e4 move.

So even if somebody tells you that English opening (1.c4) is very good, now you know that it's not true.

Let's make 1 more move. After 1.e4-c5 there's the so-called Alapin's variation 2.c3.

DIAGRAM 2.15



Black to move

This 2.c3 move does not prepare for the development of any of White's pieces. Quite to the contrary – it block's the b1-knight's movement. Thus it's a mistake, and White can't get an advantage in this variation.

Alapin's variation is pretty popular with intermediate level players. However, if you look at the players rated above 2600 – they play Alapin's variation very seldom. It's because they *understand opening principles and choose opening lines accordingly*.

Another popular variation nowadays is the Grand Prix attack. It happens after 1.e4-c5 2.Nc3-Nc6 3.f4.

DIAGRAM 2.16



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Black to move

What do you think about White's last move? This is a pawn move that does not prepare for the development of White's pieces. Therefore it's not that great an idea.

Sometimes, in the Sicilian, White will fianchetto his bishop. Let's say, in the Najdorf variation.

1. e4-c5 2. Nf3-d6 3. d4-cd 4. Nd4-Nf6 5. Nc3-a6

DIAGRAM 2.17



White to move

One of the lines White can play here is 6.g3. Is this a good idea? On one hand it prepares for the development of the White's bishop. However, there's no need to prepare it as White can move the bishop straight away. Hence it's not the best option for White.

Let's now analyze a more dynamic position.

Kurnosov – Dzhumaev

DIAGRAM 2.18


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White to move

1.e4-d6 2.d4-Nf6 3.Nc3-g6 4.Bg5-Nbd7

With this move Black is putting his knight on a passive position. In addition to that, blocks his bishop! Of course Black could simply play 4...Bg7 instead. Eventually the knight could go to c6 in the future.

5.Qd2-a6 6.000-b5.

DIAGRAM 2.19



White to move

Black is developing his attack on the queen-side where White has castled. Also Black is threatening the e4-pawn – he's going to play b4, push away the knight and grab the pawn then. This looks all very logical and tempting. Many players play in this style.

However, **those players do NOT understand the base opening principles**. They play totally wrong and can't even realize it.

Pawn moves in an opening can be good if they prepare development of your pieces. Otherwise it's a waste of time.

In fact, Black is not attacking with those moves a6 and b5. He's *wasting time* and giving White a chance to become ahead in development.

Again, we are analyzing the games of strong players; all of them are rated above 2500. Now you can see that even those players can make very basic mistakes.

In the current game White punished Black by playing 7.e5. Black can't take the pawn (7...de 8.de-Ne5) in view of a pin (9.Qd8). Black's attack failed before it had even begun.

Although we've analyzed quite a number of ideas, we've in fact been talking just about 2 base principles:

- The *principle of the least active piece*, and

- The *principle of maximum activity*.

Following these principles you find the least active piece in your position and put in on the most forw square.

If you follow this guideline during the whole opening stage, you'll develop all your pieces in turn and will get a good position.

More specifically you'll do the following:

1. You'll develop your minor pieces; knights first and then bishops.

It'll look like this:

DIAGRAM 2.20



2. After that you need to bring your rooks into play. In order to get the rook out of a corner, you castle.

DIAGRAM 2.21



3. Next you can develop your queen, and at the same time free the 1st rank for your rooks.

DIAGRAM 2.22



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Thus you'll be able to develop your queen-side rook and to move your f1-rook to more active position.

This is a general scenario of how you should play in an opening. By summing up these ideas, we can formulate 3 main opening tasks:

1. Develop your minor pieces.
2. Castle
3. Connect the rooks (by moving your queen).

This is very important to remember it.

There are various strategic and tactical ideas in a chess game. It's easy to be deflected by something less important and then forget about the main tasks. That's why **you should FOCUS yourself on these 3 main opening tasks.**

Bologan - Sakaev

DIAGRAM 2.23



Black to move

It's Black's turn. What should Black do now? Very simple: Black should develop minor pieces (Be7), castle and connect the rooks (by moving the queen somewhere).

In the game however, Black found another interesting idea. He played 7...Ne5. This is a prophylaxis – White can't play d4 anymore, because he will lose a pawn (8.d4-Nf3 9.Qf3-cd).

If White takes the knight (which happened in the game) then after 8.Ne5-de Black gets an open d-file against White's backward pawn. This is a *positional advantage* for Black.

DIAGRAM 2.24


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White to move

Let's see what happened then. 9.d3-Be7. According to *the principle of maximum activity* this bishop should go to d6. However, Black has another plan in mind – he wants to use the d-file with his heavy pieces.

10.Nc3. Although Black can simply castle now, he played another interesting move 10...Nd7. He's going to move the knight to b8-c6-d4. If Black can realize this maneuver, he'll get a good position for sure.

White played 11.f4. Now if Black wants to move his knight to b8, he needs to protect the e5-pawn first. Thus he played 11...Bf6. By the way, if Black would develop his bishop to d6, he would then not need to make additional defensive moves.

DIAGRAM 2.25



White to move

12.f5-Nb8 13.Be3 (attacking the pawn) -b6 14.fe-fe 15.Qh5 after 15...g6 16.Qg4 it's difficult for Black to hold all his weaknesses. That's why he answered 15...Ke7.

DIAGRAM 2.26


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White to move

16.Bg5-Nc6 Black realized his plan, but unfortunately after 17.Rf6 he had to resign. His king will be mated soon: 17...gf 18.Bf6-Kf6 19.Rf1 and it's over, for example 19...Ke7 20.Qf7-Kd6 21.Nb5#

The player with the black pieces is a well-known Grandmaster rated 2650. His positional ideas and plans were very interesting and reasonable. However, **those ideas deflected him from the MOST important thing** – the 3 main opening tasks.

Such situations happen very often. People break opening rules not because they don't know them, but because they are misled by other ideas.

Let me repeat this key rule once again: in an opening your goal is to perform 3 main opening tasks:

1. Develop your minor pieces.
2. Castle
3. Connect the rooks.

Only after that, when the opening stage is finished, you may start thinking about further plans. After you finalize *the 3 main opening tasks*, you may and *should* start an attack. However, you should NOT attack earlier.

Attack is a very important topic, so let's discuss it in more details.

How do you attack? You move your pieces onto your opponent's territory and create some threats. For example, let's have a look at this position: 1.e4-e5 2.Nc3-Nf6 3.Bc4-Ne4.

DIAGRAM 2.27



White to move

This is not a sacrifice, because after 4.Ne4-d5 Black will take a piece back. Except for the 4.Ne4 move, White has another tempting alternative. He can play 4.Qh5 with a double attack on Black's f7 and e5 pawns.

Black plays 4...Nd6 attacking the bishop 5.Bb3-Nc6.

DIAGRAM 2.28



White to move

White sacrificed a pawn and he must continue his attack. 6.Nb5. White wants to take away this d6-knight and mate Black on f7-square.

6...g6 7.Qf3 White is keeping an eye on f7-square. 7...f5. Now White can play 8.Qd5 and renew his threat.

DIAGRAM 2.29



Black to move

Here you can see the **main drawback of such early attacks**. In order to create threats you need to move onto the opponent's territory, but you can't use your undeveloped pieces – they are on the 1st rank, and too distant from the opponent's half of the board. Thus you'll have to move the pieces that are already developed. 8.Qd5. This breaks *the principle of the least active piece*, and ignores *normal development*.

While defending against your threats, an opponent will bring more pieces into play and will as a result become ahead in development. 8...Qe7 9.Nc7-Kd8 10.Na8-b6.

After that your attack will fail because your opponent uses more pieces in this battle.

DIAGRAM 2.30


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White to move

For instance, in the current position Black can play Bb7, develop his dark-squared bishop (Bh6 or Bg7), and almost all his pieces will be very active. Plus he'll gain some extra tempi by attacking White's queen.

White tried to attack, but ignored normal development and gave a more active position to Black. As a result, White must now endure a difficult defense. This is why premature attacks do NOT work.

You must finalize the 3 main opening tasks first. Then you'll have enough resources to start an effective attack.

Let me make another important note here. Sometimes you can realize the 3 main opening tasks AND attack simultaneously. In this case, it's great for you!

DIAGRAM 2.31



White to move

In this position White can and should play 7.Bg5. This develops a piece and attacks Black simultaneously. On the next move White can do the same thing again 7...Og6 8.Bd3. These attacking moves do not ignore development. Quite the contrary White brings his undeveloped pieces into play.

At the same time, White forces Black to defend and thus causes Black to have no time for development. This makes White ahead in development and gives him a superior position.

Let's have a look at a more complex example.

Tal – Sosonko

DIAGRAM 2.32


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Black to move

Here Black played 8...cd. After 9.cd he wants to develop his bishop with a tempo 9...Bb4. However, White can use a similar idea earlier. Instead of recapturing a pawn White made an intermediate move 9.Bg5. This develops a bishop and forces Black to lose time on defense.

9...Qf5 10.cd Now Black realizes the same idea by playing 10...Bb4+.

White has to cover his king 11.Bd2-Nc6. How would you play here as White? What do you think?

DIAGRAM 2.33



White to move

For many players it would be a difficult question. For you, however, it's pretty simple because you know the *opening principles*. Let's just apply them.

White should realize the *3 main opening tasks*. Currently he needs to finalize the 1st task – to *develop the minor pieces*. Thus White should care about his f1-bishop.

Where it should go? Normally we should develop a piece to the most forward available square. Hence it would be nice to place this bishop to d3. In this case, White will combine development with attack which is very good.

However, White can't play 12.Bd3 straight away. His d2-bishop closes a line for White's queen. It's very easy to solve this problem; White can simply trade off this bishop 12.Bb4-Nb4.

Now there's another problem. Black's b4-knight controls d3-square and in addition to that, it threatens Nc2 fork. White needs to neutralize this knight somehow.

For this purpose White can play 13.Qa4 forcing 13...Nc6 retreat. However, in this case the queen loses control of the d3-square and White still can't develop his f1-bishop (which is White's primary task).

Instead of 13.Qa4, White can attack the knight with a rook 13.Rb1. This move combines development with attack, and so generally it's very good for White. Nevertheless, we must check if Black can play 13...Nc2+. After 14.Kd2 this knight doesn't have many squares to go. Also you can see that it's difficult for Black to start a real attack since he has only 2

pieces in the game. We have already discussed the fact that premature attacks usually fail due to lack of development.

That's why in the actual game Black played 13...Nc6 instead. Now White can finally play 14.Bd3. Black then has to lose 1 more tempo on defense. 14...Qf6.

DIAGRAM 2.34



White to move

Now the d4-pawn is hanging. White played 15.Be4-00 16.00-Rd8. This d4-pawn is attacked again; White eliminated 1 of the attackers with 17.Bc6-bc.

DIAGRAM 2.35



White to move

What should White do now? In an opening the answer is always the same – *perform the 3 main opening tasks*. Now White needs to develop his queen, which will connect his rooks as well.

Where the queen should go? The queen should go to *the most forward available square* 18.Qa4. During this game White tried continually to combine development with attack. This forced Black to lose some time on defensive moves. That's why in the end White got a much more active position. Afterwards, he won this game.

Let's make a final conclusion about an ATTACK during an opening.

- Ø If you can combine a development with attack – this is great for you. In such cases you will win some tempi and will be ahead in development.
- Ø If you try making attacking moves with your developed pieces – this is bad. Such as making several moves with 1 piece, leaving your other pieces out of a game. This breaks the *principle of the least active piece* and would be called "a premature attack".

In any case, your main goal in an opening is to realize the 3 main opening tasks. If you can do it with attacking moves –

then this is great for you. If you do it with ordinary moves – it's fine as well.

As we've discussed, **you should NOT make several moves with 1 piece in an opening**. It violates the principles of the least active piece, and ignores development. Although this is quite a well-known rule, people continue to break it regularly. Often they are seduced by an opportunity to win a pawn.

Brunnel – Stohl

DIAGRAM 2.36



Black to move

This is a well-known position of the Najdorf variation. What should Black do here? I hope the answer is obvious to you: *develop the minor pieces, castle, and connect the rooks*.

However, Black can use another way and go for a pawn with 7...Qb6. Although it's possible, **I do NOT recommend that you play moves like that**. Very often it's just a terrible mistake. Even if it's ok in a certain position, it will make your task very difficult. You'll have to defend for a long time, and a single mistake can be fatal.

Now let's think about how White should handle such tricky attempts by an opponent. There's 1 useful rule for such situations. It says that you may sacrifice a pawn for 2 tempi. Although it's not a very strict rule, it works very often, especially in open positions.

In the current position Black will spend 2 moves for taking a pawn (Qb6 and Qb2). This means that White may sacrifice it and play for *activity*.

In fact, White even wins 3 tempi, because he'll gain an extra tempo on the Rb1 move (after Black takes a pawn). Let's see it in action.

8.Qd2-Qb2 9.Rb1. Black spent 2 moves taking this pawn, plus White gains an extra tempo upon attacking Black's queen. In total, White gained 3 tempi for the pawn. This sacrifice must then be correct. Let's see how the game continued.

10. f5-Nc6 11.fe-fe 12. Nc6-bc 13.e5

DIAGRAM 2.37


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Black to move

White wants to open the position and provide more lines for his pieces.

13...de 14.Bf6-gf 15.Ne4-Qa2.

DIAGRAM 2.38



White to move

Although Black could have played 15...Be7 (developing a piece), he still wants to take the pawns. 16.Rd1. As a result, White got a big advantage in activity. White is already very active, meanwhile most of Black's pieces are on the home rank.

16...Be7 17.Be2 (threatening Bh5+) 0-0 18.0-0.

DIAGRAM 2.39


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Black to move

Let's stop here and talk about this position. What will be White's next moves? Certainly he'll try to attack. Perhaps he'll play Qh6 and then transfer one of the rooks via the 3rd rank to the king-side. All of these moves are pretty obvious.

What will be the next moves for Black? It's difficult to answer. Generally he wants to develop his queen-side pieces, but it's unclear exactly how he can do it. At the same time, if he does not play the best moves, he'll be crushed by White's attack.

As you can see, practically it's a lot simpler to play such positions for an attacking side. That's why I recommend that you do NOT ignore development and take pawns in an opening.

18...f5 was played. 19.Qh6-Rf7 White as expected plays 20.Rd3-Rg7 21.Rfd1-fe.

DIAGRAM 2.40



White to move

It's a mistake, but again, finding the right moves is not an easy task in such a position. Now 22.Rd8 check and Black was mated in a few moves.

Actually, the conclusion is still the same: in an opening you should realize 3 main tasks: *develop minor pieces, castle, and connect the rooks*. **Do NOT be deflected by other ideas, including an attempt to win an opponent's pawn.**

Now you have a clear understanding of what you should do in an opening. Nevertheless, we can clarify it even more. Let's think about exactly where you should place your pieces.

DIAGRAM 2.41



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The first opening task is to develop your minor pieces.

For this purpose you'll need to move a few PAWNS that block your pieces. However, we must keep in mind that *pawns moves are only good if they prepare for the development of your pieces.*

Nearly always you should move your "e" and "d" pawns. It will enable the development of most of your pieces.

DIAGRAM 2.42



As for the flank pawns, you should be careful and avoid any unnecessary pawn moves. You should make sure that your pawn moves prepare for a piece's development.

While developing your minor pieces, you should activate the KNIGHTS first.

Following *the principle of maximum activity*, the knights should go to f3 and c3.

DIAGRAM 2.43



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Sometimes, if these moves are impossible for some reasons, you may develop the knights to e2 or d2. Let's say if Black has a pawn on e4, you'll then have to develop the knight to e2. However, you should try to place the knights to *the most forward squares*. Do it whenever possible.

Maybe you think this is obvious and that it's a beginner's rule. However, during this lesson we've analyzed the games of strong Grandmasters, and they made some mistakes exactly here. *Do you always place the knights to the most advanced squares?*

Ok, let's move on. After the knights, you need to develop the BISHOPS. A bishop should go to *the most forward available square*, so try to put it on g5 or f4 (b5 or c4 for the light-squared bishop).

DIAGRAM 2.44



If these both squares are controlled by opponent's pieces you'll have to find another position for a bishop. Sometimes it may go to the 3rd rank. Here you need to make sure that the bishop's diagonal is not covered by your own pawn.

DIAGRAM 2.45


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Very often you will have a pawn on the 4th rank and it can block your own bishop. Generally you should try to avoid this. Development of a bishop to the 2nd rank (e2 or d2 square) is usually quite passive. You may therefore like to look for the better alternative.

As you can see, the position of your bishop on e3 or d2 (d3 or e2 for the light-squared bishop) can be bad.

There's 1 another good position for a bishop – you can fianchetto it. In this case it will control a long diagonal and will be *active*.

DIAGRAM 2.46



While your opponent can prevent you from placing the bishop on g5 or f4, you always can fianchetto the bishop and it will still put pressure on your opponent's position.

In conclusion, you should place the bishop on the most forward available square, or you may fianchetto it.

The 2nd opening task is to castle. You need to do it, because otherwise you can't bring the rooks into play.

The 3rd and the last opening task is to connect your rooks by moving a queen.

Where should the queen go? Generally to the most forward available square. However, quite often you can't advance it too much because those squares are controlled by your opponent. Still you should try to move it forward, as much as possible.

DIAGRAM 2.47


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Along this diagonal (d1-h5) White would prefer to place the queen on h5 or g4. However, in most cases those squares are controlled by Black's pieces (Nf6, Bc8). As a result, White often has to use the more modest squares f3 or e2.

In the queen-side direction, the situation is better for the queen. Very often you can move it to the most forward square a4, or at least to b3. Black's c6-knight does not control those squares.

If you decided to leave the queen on the d-file, the d3-square would be the best. However, in most cases it is insecure here: Black can attack it with moves like Bf5, Nb4, etc. That's why White usually puts the queen on d2.

Although such explanations may seem too detailed and obvious, I see that people violate these simple rules very often. I hope now that your opening moves will be close to perfection! Let's make a little test for you.

DIAGRAM 2.48



Black to move

It's Black's turn. How would you play here? The right answer should be obvious to you now.

Black should finalize the main opening tasks by connecting the rooks. The queen should go to the most forward square a5 – 12...Qa5. It's really simple, isn't it? Nevertheless there are hundreds of games where Black did not come to this conclusion.

DIAGRAM 2.49



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White to move

Where should White's queen go here? The h5 and g4 squares are controlled by Black's knight. The most forward available squares are f3 and d3. On the d3-square the queen can be attacked by Black's knight (Nc6-b4). Thus 8.Qf3 is the best move.

However, many players (including Grandmasters) have played 8.Qe2 in this position. Somehow quite a lot of players do not understand these basic opening rules. For you this is good though, because you are becoming stronger than your opponents!

We may make a little conclusion about a queen's development. Similar to all other pieces, you should try to put it on *the most forward available square*. If you can develop the queen to the 5th or 4th rank – it will be very active there.

However, pretty often those squares are controlled by an opponent. In such cases you have to care about security. You may then develop the queen on the central squares of the 2nd rank: c2, d2 or e2 – here it'll be in safety for sure.

Let me make the last note here. The 3 opening tasks are presented in consecutive order. This means you need to *develop the queen last of all*. This is the 3rd and last task. If you develop your queen too early, there's a chance that your opponent will make use of it, and will gain some tempi by attacking it.

It's better to *develop minor pieces first and then castle*. These moves are necessary in any case. After that you can determine a safe position for your queen.

We've just discussed how to perform the 3rd opening task: to *connect the rooks by moving the queen*. You may be wondering here why you need to connect the rooks.

First of all, you simply have no choice. If you want to develop a rook you'll have to develop your other pieces first. After development of your minor pieces and queen, you'll be able to connect the rooks automatically.

DIAGRAM 2.50



Secondly, the rooks supplement each other very well. When connected, they are protecting each other. Also, you can double them on an open line or on the 7th rank and maximize your pressure. All in all, very often it's useful to connect the rooks. That's why it's the 3rd opening task.

Ok, we just analyzed exactly how you should perform the 3 main opening tasks. Hopefully this is clear to you now.

Generally this is all you need to know about an opening strategy. Nevertheless, I'd like to discuss one last related topic here. Probably you've heard that in an opening you should fight for the CENTER. Maybe then you are surprised that I'm not telling you to do so here.

The reason is pretty simple. We have discussed 2 main principles that work in an opening:

- The *principle of the least active piece*, and
- The *principle of maximum activity*.

According to the principle of maximum activity you should *develop your pieces to the most active positions*. On the central squares, the pieces produce the *greatest activity*. Thus you should move the pieces there.

You see, there's no need to have a special rule for the center, because it's already covered by the principle of maximum activity. Anyway let's now discuss it in more detail.

Generally in chess you want to increase your activity and to decrease your opponent's activity. If you occupy the center, your forces will be active and will control a lot of squares.

DIAGRAM 2.51



Black to move

Your opponent, on the contrary, will have to place his forces on less active positions. He can't put his pieces in the center anymore, because it's already occupied by your pieces. Thus if you control the center, you'll get greater activity and a dominating position.

That's why in an opening both players try to move their pawns and pieces towards center. Naturally, since White starts the game, he can occupy the center a bit quicker than Black.

Let's say White plays 1.e4. Next he's going to play 2.d4 and set up his control over the central squares.

Black can try to stop it by playing something like 1...c5 or 1...e5. Still, White will play d4 (perhaps after some preparation) and will trade off Black's pawn. 2.Nf3-Nc6 3.d4, for instance. After exchanging Black's e5- pawn, White's e4-pawn will remain the only pawn in a center.

We may conclude then that because it is White that starts the game, he will establish better control over the center. This determines White's opening advantage.

If Black can exchange White's e4-pawn – he will neutralize White's opening advantage and will equalize the game. This is called the main tactical task of an opening for Black.

This is a very useful and important rule. It will help you to understand a lot of opening positions much better.

DIAGRAM 2.52



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White to move

In the Ruy Lopez, the whole game revolves around this idea. Black wants to play d5 and exchange White's e4-pawn, while White tries to prevent it. If Black can accomplish this plan and play d5 – he'll equalize the game immediately. If White can prevent it – he'll save his opening advantage.

Many players consider the Ruy Lopez to be a very difficult opening that requires great strategic understanding. However, if you know about the main tactical task of an opening – everything becomes clear to you.

DIAGRAM 2.53



Black to move

We can see the same idea in the Sicilian defense. If Black can play d5 at some point and exchange White's e4-pawn – he'll equalize a game.

DIAGRAM 2.54


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Black to move

The main tactical task of an opening is an important goal for Black in this pawn structure as well. Black will try to prepare the d5 advancement. After that, he'll neutralize White's control over the central squares and will get a free game.

So far we've been talking about the first move of 1.e4. The same rule is applicable for closed openings as well.

If White starts with 1.d4, on the next move he's going to continue with e4. This will give him domination in the center.

Black can try to prevent it by playing something like 1...d5. After that White will exchange Black's pawn by playing 2.c4. After the exchange White's d4-pawn will remain as the only pawn in the center. This will determine White's opening advantage.

If Black can exchange White's d4-pawn, he will neutralize White's opening advantage and will equalize the game.

DIAGRAM 2.55



White to move

For instance, in this position Black is intending to play c5 and exchange White's d4-pawn. It's Black's strategic threat. If he can do it – he'll equalize a game. Let's say that after 3.Bg5 Black will play 3...c5 and he has equalized the game already.

That's why White is almost forced to play 3.c4. Then 3...c5 doesn't work so well because White can push 4.d5 and keep his pawn in the center.

Now we can formulate this rule clearly. The main tactical task of an opening for Black is to:

- Ø Exchange White's e4-pawn (in openings after 1.e4)
- Ø Exchange White's d4-pawn (in openings after 1.d4)

If Black performs this task, he'll equalize the game. Otherwise White can save the opening advantage.

The main tactical task of an opening can be an additional guideline for you. With Black you'll try to realise it. With white you'll try to prevent it.

Now let me make a few final notes about it.

Note-1:

Black will equalize a game if he performs the main tactical task **without giving other advantages to White**.

For example after 1.e4 Black can play 1...d5 straight away. However, it does not equalize the game, because after 2.ed-Qd5 White can win a tempo with the move, 3.Nc3. Black exchanged the e4-pawn, *but* gave another advantage to White.

That's why Black can't realize the main tactical task of an opening right on the first moves. He needs to prepare it well. Otherwise White would gain some other advantages.

Note-2:

The main tactical task of an opening is an additional rule. So please do NOT focus on it too much. The main thing that you should care about is the realization of *the 3 main tasks of an opening: develop minor pieces, castle and connect the rooks*.

Please accept my congratulations! You've just learnt all main principles of an opening play. Now let's draw THE CONCLUSIONS.

There are 2 general principles that are most applicable for an opening stage:

- the principle of the least active piece
- the principle of maximum activity

You should *find the least active piece in your position, and move it to the most forward available square*. This is a general guideline for all of your opening play.

More specifically, you need to realize the 3 main opening tasks:

1. Develop your minor pieces.
2. Castle
3. Connect the rooks (by moving a queen).

These are the most important ideas and you should *always keep them in mind while playing*.

There are a couple of other rules as well. In fact they are only a logical consequence of these fundamental rules. Still, it may be useful to know these specific ideas because it can simplify your task even more.

The main tactical task of an opening for Black is to:

- Ø Exchange White's e4-pawn (in openings after 1.e4)
- Ø Exchange White's d4-pawn (in openings after 1.d4)

If Black can do it – he'll neutralize White's opening advantage and will equalize the game.

-

Regarding pawn play in an opening, it's important to remember 2 rules:

- Pawn moves can be good if they prepare for the development of your pieces. Otherwise it's rather a waste of time.
- Principle of maximum activity works for your pawns as well. If possible, move your pawns to the 4th rank (for White) from their initial position.

While realizing 3 main opening tasks, you should:

- Focus on them. These are your PRIMARY tasks.
- Do NOT be deflected by other ideas, including an attempt to win an opponent's pawn.
- If your opponent tries to win your pawn and ignore development, you may then sacrifice this pawn to gain 2 tempi (in open positions).

After you've finalized the 3 main opening tasks, you should start an attack. If you want to ATTACK earlier you must take into account the following rules:

- Ø If you can combine your development with attack – this is great for you. In this case you will win some tempi and will thus be ahead in development.
- If you try making attacking moves with your developed pieces – this is bad. Premature attacks usually fail due to lack of development.

Following the principle of the least active piece you should:

- Develop knights before bishops.
- Do NOT make several moves with 1 piece in an opening.

You may like to review this lesson several times in order to digest all of the rules. After some practice you'll see that everything is quite simple, and in fact there are only a few main ideas.

Although everything will become simple for you, most of your opponents do not have such a good opening understanding. Thus you'll be able to outplay them and will enjoy your victories!

Thanks for your attention!

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Lesson-3: "Advanced Opening Rules"

Hi and welcome to the 3rd lesson, "Advanced Opening Rules".

In the previous lesson we analyzed all of the MAIN opening principles. Now you have a solid foundation, and you may go forward.

In this lesson we will discuss **ADVANCED ideas and more complex positions**. We are going to bring your opening understanding to the level of titled players. I guess you are eager to do it as soon as possible, so let's go ahead and get started.

The main opening principles that we've analyzed together in the previous lesson work in most positions. Nevertheless, sometimes, there are exceptional situations where you need to follow other rules. This will not be a problem for you though, because you will learn all of these rules right now.

According to the *principle of maximum activity*, you should develop a piece to the most forward available square. However, you may have noticed that strong players do not always follow this rule.

Well, sometimes they simply make a mistake. We have seen a lot of such examples already.

On the other hand, there are **3 type of situations where you should NOT follow this rule**.

1. When the most forward move does not work.
2. Due to specific tactical reasons.
3. For keeping a harmony between your pieces.

Let's have a closer look at the first situation.

DIAGRAM 3.1



White to move

It's time for White to develop his dark-squared bishop. We would like to place it to the most forward square g5.

However, if you play 8.Bg5, Black will reply 8...h6. Now you can't keep the bishop on this diagonal with 9.Bh4 because of 9...g5, winning piece. You can see that the problem for White is his g3-pawn. If this pawn would have been on g2 instead, White could simply retreat the bishop to g3. In that case, White's 8.Bg5 move would work fine and would be the best.

In the real game, after 8...h6, White will have to either exchange his bishop for a knight (which we don't want to do), or to move it back. Thus the move 8.Bg5 failed; it just does not work.

Since 8.Bg5 is impossible, White will have to find another square for the bishop. For instance he can fianchetto it with 8.b3 and 9.Bb2.

DIAGRAM 3.2



White to move

This is the main line of Ruy Lopez.

What if White plays 9.d4, how would you respond as Black? Black needs to develop his bishop and it should go to the most forward available square. So 9...Bg4 should be played.

Apart from 9.d4, White can also play 9.h3. In this case Black can't place his bishop to g4, and he'll have to find another square for it.

So far everything has been pretty obvious. However, there can be more complex situations. White can also play 9.d3. Now it seems like Black can and should go to g4 – 9...Bg4. Let's see how it works for Black. White will play 10.h3-Bh5, and after that White can push back the bishop once again. He can play g4 (now or later), or move the knight to d2-f1-g3 square. In either case Black's bishop will appear on g6. It will look like this: 11.g4-Bg6.

DIAGRAM 3.3



White to move

Now you can see that the bishop is completely locked and has nothing to do. This means that in this particular variation, 9...Bg4 does not work for Black.

Again, it's determined by very specific properties of a position. If White's d3-pawn was on d4, then the bishop would be very active (putting pressure on White's e4-pawn). But with White's pawn on d3, this 9...Bg4 idea fails.

DIAGRAM 3.4



White to move

You may be wondering why White plays 3.Bb5 even though Black can push it back. Let's have a closer look at that position. After 3...a6 4.Ba4-b5 5.Bb3 the bishop remains very active. It controls an open diagonal and looks at the weak f7-square. Thus Black was not really able to deactivate this bishop.

In addition to that, Black's b5 pawn can be attacked with the move a4. This will open a line for White's a1-rook and will put pressure on Black's queen side.

We may conclude that in this position, the most forward development 3.Bb5 works well for White and that he should play this move.

To sum things up, you should normally develop a piece to the most forward available square. At the same time, you need to check whether or not this move works in a certain particular position.

Now we move on to the 2nd situation where you should not develop your piece to the most advanced square. It may happen due to specific tactical reasons.

DIAGRAM 3.5



White to move

In this position White can castle 8.00 and he's threatening Re1+. That's why Black should play 8...Nge7 to cover his king. [Visit Website | Support](#)

Ideally Black would prefer to develop his knight to f6 (following *the principle of maximum activity*). But in this particular position, he has to cover his king and is forced to move the knight to e7.

There's a funny thing about this variation. I have checked my database and found that after 8.c3, most players still replied with 8...Nge7. Although now it makes no sense at all – White is not threatening Re1 check. Of course, Black should play a normal move 8...Nf6.

A lot of players do NOT understand opening principles. Thus these players can only reproduce an opening theory mechanically. Now, you are in a much more superior situation. Armed with the rules from this course, you will be able to find the right moves in any opening situation, even those situations that are unknown to you.

DIAGRAM 3.6



White to move

It's White's turn. We should develop knights before bishops, so White should move his knight. We want to place it to *the most forward square* c3 (8.Nc3). However, it blocks the c2-queen and Black can win a pawn with 8...dc.

Due to this *tactical reason* White can't play 8.Nc3 and must therefore move the knight to d2 instead.

DIAGRAM 3.7



White to move

There's 1 popular tactical motif that you should know. In positions like this, when Black has a bishop on e7, sometimes you should not develop your bishop to g5. Otherwise Black can make a discovered attack. 8.Bg5-Ne4. Black grabs a pawn and attacks your bishop simultaneously. After 9.Ne4-Bg5 Black ends up with an extra pawn.

Of course, this tactic does not *always* work. However, you should be aware of it. So if your opponent has a bishop on e7, you need to check the lines before playing Bg5. You'll then discover if you can do it safely or not. [Visit Website | Support](#)

Now we come to the 3rd situation where you may develop a piece to a square that is not the most forward available square: Sometimes you should do this to keep the HARMONY between your pieces.

DIAGRAM 3.8



Black to move

It's Black's turn and he needs to develop his b8-knight. According to the *principle of maximum activity* it should be placed to c6. This is indeed the best square for the knight. However, on c6 it blocks other black forces; it closes diagonal for the bishop and blocks the c-pawn so it can't go forward anymore. Without moving the c-pawn it's hard to bring the a8-rook into play.

Although the knight itself is well-placed on c6, when considering the positions of all of Black's forces, it's better to put the knight on d7. It will facilitate the harmonious cooperation of all of black's pieces.

We have just analyzed 3 types of exceptional situations where you may develop your piece to a square that is NOT the most forward available square.

1. It may happen when the most forward move does not work.
2. When you are forced to place a piece on another position due to specific tactical reasons.
3. Or in case if most forward development of 1 piece would hamper your other pieces (keep harmony).

In all other situations you should follow the *principle of maximum activity* and *advance your pieces as forward as possible*.

Let's go to the next rules. In the previous lesson we analyzed a proper sequence of development:

- 1) First you develop minor pieces (starting from the knights, and then bishops).
- 2) Secondly you castle.
- 3) Lastly you connect the rooks by moving the queen.

This is a classical scenario that works in most cases. However, sometimes you simply don't have any good squares available for a certain piece. If this is the case, you may use an interesting trick.

DIAGRAM 3.9


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White to play

This is the Catalan opening that we've seen recently in another example. How would you play here as White?

Of course White still needs to *finalize* the 3 main opening tasks. Currently, he should develop the last minor piece – his bishop-c1. For this purpose, White can play 8.b3 and 9.Bb2.

Although it's a possible idea, the bishop is not very active on b2 (the d4-pawn is blocking the bishop's diagonal). We would prefer to have the bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal, maybe on f4, where it can control a lot of squares.

Although White can't develop the bishop to f4 right now, White can prepare for this move. He can play 8.Qc2-b6 9.e4. Here he's threatening e5 and if Black takes with 9...de, then after 10.Ne4 White has enabled the bishop's development. Let's say, after 10...Bb7 11.Bf4 and his bishop becomes really active.

Let's go back a few moves.

DIAGRAM 3.10



White to move

It seems like 8.Qc2 breaks *the principle of the least active piece*. Normally we should *develop the minor pieces first*, while *the queen should be developed last of all*. However, there's 1 very important aspect here. White is NOT ignoring the development of his c1-bishop. Quite to the contrary, he's preparing its development. That's why 8.Qc2 is good in this position.

DIAGRAM 3.11



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White to move

This is a theoretical position of Panov attack (in Caro-Kann defense).

How should White play here? What do you think? Generally White wants to develop his c1-bishop. However, most advanced squares g5 and f4 are controlled by Black's pieces. Although White can place the bishop to e3 or d2, these positions are quite passive. Actually, the bishop is doing the same job from its initial square.

This gives White an idea to prepare the bishop's development first, and then place it to an active square. Ideally White wants to advance the bishop to h6, g5 or at least f4. Currently all of these squares are controlled by Black's pieces. But White can try to eliminate one of the defenders.

For instance, White can create threats along the b1-h7 diagonal trying to force Black to play g6. After that, the c1-bishop will get an excellent square on h6. White can play something like 10.Qc2 for this purpose. However, if you play it straight away, Black can jump 10...Nb4 which may be unpleasant. Thus White should probably play 10.a3 first.

Pawn moves in an opening are good if they prepare development of a piece. In this position, all of a sudden, the 10.a3 move is preparing a development of White's c1-bishop. After almost any move from Black (I'll play a random move just to see the White's idea – 10...a6) White can play 11.Qc2 and force Black to do something about his h7-pawn. If Black replies with 11...g6 White's bishop will go to h6 (12. Bh6). If Black decides not to weaken his king-side and play 11...Nf6, the bishop will be able to go to g5.

Only 11...h6 doesn't let White to advance his bishop. White can then simply play either 12.Be3 or try to eliminate Black's d5-knight and develop the bishop to f4.

Let's make a little conclusion. If you don't have a good square for the development of a piece, you may make some preparation first, but then you should move the piece to a really good square.

Let me emphasize that this is a rather exceptional situation. In most cases you should *develop your pieces immediately*. Nevertheless, in some positions, when immediate development is very passive, you may apply this idea.

You may either develop a piece instantly, or after the required preparation. In either case you must keep focus on the development of this piece. Do not allow yourself to be deflected by some other plans because it will damage your development.

Ok, let's move on to the next rules.

Normally in an opening you should develop your pieces. Nevertheless **there's 1 alternative that you may use sometimes.**

DIAGRAM 3.12


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White to move

It's White's turn. Which move would you play? Generally we should develop minor pieces, then castle, and lastly – connect the rooks. From this point of view 9.00 should be played. This is a good move indeed. However, White can use another approach as well.

Instead of finalizing his development, White can prevent his opponent's development. The worst piece in Black's position is his a6-knight. On the next move Black is going to play Nc5 and bring it into play. It would be nice to kick it back with b4, but it's impossible because the e4-pawn is hanging (Black would simply take it). White can prevent this plan by playing 9.Nd2.

This time, 9...Nc5 does not work because after 10.b4 Black will have to move it back. In addition to that, the move 9.Nd2 prevents the development of Black's bishop (previously Black could advance it to g4).

As you can see, there are 2 possible approaches for the position:

- You can develop your pieces (9. 00)
- Or you can prevent opponent's development (9. Nd2)

Both ways are good.

DIAGRAM 3.13



Black to move

In this position the main theoretical move for Black is 6...Qe7. Generally such a move is a huge mistake: We should not develop the queen so early. Also, it blocks the f8-bishop and it will be difficult for Black to develop it.

The only advantage of this move is that it forces White to do the same. If White wants to save his pawn, he'll have to play 7.Qe2 which will equalize the situation for both players.

Ideally White would prefer to sacrifice this pawn, but finalize his development quickly and start an attack along this open e-file. However, it doesn't work well because Black takes the pawn with check. This forces White to play a passive move, 7.Be2, then after 7...Qe5 8.00 Black will play 8...Bd6 (threatening mate with Qh2) and then castle. White didn't have enough time to exploit the open e-file.

We may conclude that in this particular position 6...Qe7 move works fine for Black. It makes sense because it prevents White's development after 7.Qe2.

Still, you must be very careful with moves like that (6...Qe7). You must understand that it breaks some opening principles and it can be a huge mistake. You need to check the lines very accurately before playing such debatable moves.

Trifunovic – Kort

DIAGRAM 3.14



Black to move

In this position Black also can try to go for the e5-pawn: 9...Qa5. However, White can sacrifice it for quick development. As we know, *it's fine to sacrifice a pawn for 2 tempi*.

10.Bc4-Be5 11.00 White's advantage in development is pretty huge now.

11...Nf6 12.Re1 (attacking the bishop)-Bd4 13.Qd4 and this is already winning for White. He's threatening Qf6 (using a pin) or maybe Ne4 (using another pin - along d4-h8 diagonal) and Black is defenseless.

You see, it's very important to know opening principles very well. Also you should understand when you must follow them, and when there may be an exception. This is what we are analyzing in this lesson.

It will make your opening understanding very strong. Based on the opening rules from this course, you'll be able to figure out the right moves in almost any opening position. Of course it requires that you study these lessons very carefully and digest all of the rules.

Now let's make a little test of your opening understanding.

DIAGRAM 3.15



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I have a little question for you. *When can you play “a3” or “h3” in an opening?* When is it good for you, and when you should not do it? Please pause the video and think about it. After that you may resume the video and check for yourself.

In an opening we should develop pieces. Hence pawn moves like a3 or h3 are not recommended.

DIAGRAM 3.16



White to move

In this position a lot of players (including Grandmasters) have played 6.a3. Hopefully you understand that it can't be the best move. The move 6.a3 does not support White's development. Yes, it takes away the b4-square from Black's bishop, but that bishop has many other good squares (c5, d6, e7).

Let's recollect the base rule: *pawn moves in an opening can be good if they prepare development of your pieces. Otherwise it's a waste of time.*

Can a move like a3 prepare development? Yes, it can. Let's observe another example.

DIAGRAM 3.17



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Black to move

Black's b7-bishop is completely locked and he needs to activate it. He can't play 11...c5 straight away because it would lose the b5-pawn. Hence he plays 11...a6 first, and on the next move 12.Qe2-c5. In this example, the a6 move did actually prepare the development of his b7-bishop.

By the way, this is a typical situation. You can fianchetto a bishop after b6 and Bb7, or by playing a6, b5 and then Bb7. This may be called an advanced fianchetto. This happens in the Sicilian defense very often.

DIAGRAM 3.18



Black to move

For instance in this position, how can Black develop his c8-bishop? He can place it on d7, but it's quite a passive position. It would be nice to fianchetto this bishop. From b7 it will attack White's e4-pawn and will control a long diagonal. If Black tries to realize this idea with the move b6, White can answer with Bb5+ and exploit those weak light squares (b5, c6 etc). In order to prevent this, Black can use an advanced fianchetto – 6...a6. In the future he can push b5 and place his bishop on b7. In this case the a6 move prepares the development of a piece, and therefore it's good.

We know that in an opening the only alternative for your development is to prevent your opponent's development. Moves like a3 can serve this purpose sometimes.

DIAGRAM 3.19



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White to move

In this position White can either continue his development (for instance castle) or prevent his opponent's development by playing h3. Both moves are possible.

It's important to mention 1 thing here. White is NOT playing 9.h3 because he is afraid of a pin on his knight (after Bg4). If it was a defensive move, it would be bad. *We do NOT want to defend. We prefer to develop pieces and then to attack.*

White is playing 9.h3 in order to prevent the development of Black's bishop. Now it doesn't have any good squares. Yes, Black can put it on d7 or e6, but these are passive positions. The bishop is doing the same work on its initial square.

Now we can make a final conclusion.

When can the moves a3 or h3 (for Black a6 / h6) be good in an opening?

- Ø Generally it's bad, because we should develop pieces instead.
- Ø It can be good if it prepares the development of a piece (advanced fianchetto).
- Ø Sometimes it may prevent the opponent's development, and then it's a possible option.

Actually, this relates to any pawn moves in an opening. So it's useful to remember these rules.

Were you able to provide the same answer on your own? If not, please don't be upset. It's difficult to digest all of these new rules in 1 go. This simply means you should observe these lessons several times. Then you'll study it really well, and will bring it into practice easily.

Now we are moving forward to the next of our advanced rules and ideas. Although you should normally develop all of your pieces in the opening, sometimes you may leave your bishop or a rook on its initial square.

A rook and a bishop are *long-range pieces*. They can stand on the first rank and still pressure the opponent's position. You only need to remove the pawn that covers its line.

DIAGRAM 3.20


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As for the bishop, everything is really simple. After you move the d-pawn (1.d4) it opens quite a long diagonal for the bishop (c1-h6). Sometimes there's even no need for you to move it anywhere, because it's already active.

Belozarov - Perun

DIAGRAM 3.21



White to move

It is White's turn here and he played 14.Qg3. The threat is Bh6 (using a pin). You see, this bishop is already very active so there's no real need to develop it. Even if White developed it to e3 or d2, it will still control the same diagonal. Thus it would not change things much.

That's why White doesn't waste time on moving the bishop and develops his attack instead. Black removed his king from the pin with 14...Kh8. White pursued him with 15.Qh3. This opposes White's queen against the Black king and renews the threat of Bh6.

After 15...Be5 White executed this threat – 16.Bh6. Black can't take the bishop with 16...gh because he'll be mated: 17.Qh6-Kg8 18.Qh7.

In the game Black played 16...f5, closing the bishop's diagonal. It won't save his position though. 17.Bg5-Kg8 18.Nd5 – the problem comes from another side. Black's knight is pinned and after 18...ed 19.Bd5 White is winning.

Let's go back to the starting position of this example and discuss it once again.

Belozarov - Perun

DIAGRAM 3.22


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White to move

As we have just seen, there was no need for White to develop his c1-bishop because it did a good job where it was on c1.

Nevertheless, it creates 1 problem for White – it blocks the rook on a1. In this game White was able to win without using this rook at all. However, this is an exceptional situation. *If your opponent plays well, you can't win without using all your forces.* Let's think how you can activate your rook if first rank is closed by your bishop.

Averbakh – Geller

DIAGRAM 3.23



Black to move

We can activate a rook by pushing the a-pawn forward. Black already played a5 and now he's advancing the pawn further 14...a4. This gives him more free space for the rook.

White answered 15.Rb1-Qe7 16.Re1.

Although the a8-rook has some free space it still does not do any work. Ideally Black wants to exchange his a-pawn. Then the a-file will be opened and the rook will start attacking White's position.

With that in mind Black can try 16...a3. However, White will prevent an exchange by moving his b-pawn 17.b4 and the a-file will remain closed.

Black found a smart solution. He played 16...Ne5 attacking the c4-pawn and provoking White to play 17.b3. Now, after an exchange of the a-pawn 17...ab 18.ab, Black has finally activated his rook.

Even though Black's a8-rook and c8-bishop are on their initial positions, they are very active pieces. Thus there's no need to develop them and Black can start an attack right away. Here Black played 18...Ned3 and got a good position.

⏪ ⏩ ⏴ ⏵ a few moves.

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DIAGRAM 3.24



White to move

In this example we have seen that it's not enough to push your a-pawn to activate the rook. You also need to exchange this pawn and open the line.

If the opponent's adjoining pawn (b2) is on its initial square, it is difficult to force an exchange. But if he moved this pawn at least 1 square forward 17.b3 – your plan works out.

DIAGRAM 3.25



Black to move

A classical example is the Dragon variation of the Sicilian defense. There's no need for White to move his h1-rook because it will work perfectly on its initial square. White just needs to push his h-pawn (h4-h5), exchange it (hg), and the rook will support his attack against Black's monarch.

Although this example is pretty simple, we can make a useful conclusion. There are 2 situations when it's good to leave your rook on its initial square and just push the front pawn:

- 1) Against a fianchettoed bishop. In this case you can open a file easily.
- 2) In case of opposite-side castles. Then your rook will stand against opponent's king and will play a big role in your attack.

We've just analyzed 1 way to activate your rook if the 1st rank is closed by your bishop. There's 1 more way to do it as well.



DIAGRAM 3.26

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Black to move

We know that against a fianchettoed bishop you can push the a-pawn (a5-a4) and activate your rook on its initial square. At the same time, after 10...a5 11.Bb2 Black can use another idea as well.

He plays 11...Ra6 and intends to transfer the rook across the 6th rank to the king-side. This is another way for you to activate the rook if 8th rank is blocked by your bishop.

Let's see how it might look: 12.Qc2-Rh6. 13.Rad1-d6. Now Black has finalized his development even though his c8-bishop is still on its initial square.

Let's make a little summary. Normally you should develop all of your pieces in the opening. However, sometimes you may leave your rook or bishop on its initial square.

- Ø A bishop can be activated by moving a central pawn that covers the bishop (e-pawn for the king-side bishop, d-pawn for the queen-side bishop).
- Ø A rook can be activated by pushing a front pawn forward (and trading this pawn if possible).
- Ø If first rank is blocked by your pieces, you can activate a rook via the 3rd rank (6th rank for Black). It can be transferred to another side and take part in your attack there.

Here I'd like to tell you another related idea. It's commonly used by strong modern players, and it can serve you as well.

If both players develop their pieces normally, there will be an approximately equal position after the opening. **How can you get an advantage in activity?** Do you have an idea?

If you have studied the previous lesson thoroughly then you will know the answer. You need to combine development with attack. In this case you'll develop your pieces while your opponent will have to address your threats. With that in mind, there's 1 plan you may apply.

DIAGRAM 3.27


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White to move

Although White can of course develop his pieces as we usually do in the opening, there's another plan he can use, and it starts with the move 6.g4.

At first it seems like it violates all opening rules. White is trying to attack while almost all of his pieces are undeveloped. However, this plan is more profound. While pushing the king-side pawns White is not only attacking, he's also activating his rook (h1-rook) and bishop (f1-bishop).

We already know that rook and bishop can work on their initial squares. Let's see how it can look like a few moves later.

DIAGRAM 3.28



Black to move

White has a much more active position. His king-side pieces work well on the home squares; the bishop has some open diagonals (f1-a6, f1-h3), the rook will attack Black's king (after h6 or g6). White has already finished his development while Black still needs to bring his c8-bishop into play.

In addition to that, White is realizing his middlegame plan of an attack on Black's castle. Black has not even started to realize his queen-side counterplay. Of course, White's attack will reach its goal faster.

DIAGRAM 3.29


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Black to move

As we have seen, this plan can be pretty powerful. By pushing your pawns on a certain flank you can combine development with attack. You'll activate your rook and bishop on their initial squares. Also you'll force your opponent to waste some time on defense (for instance Black will have to spend time on the Nf6-d7 move). After all, you'll get an advantage in activity and will realize your plan quicker than your opponent.

A lot of players play this opening variation for White; it's called the "Keres attack". However, I doubt that they really understand what they are doing. I bet a lot of them think that White pushes the pawns because of future opposite side castles. You now understand this plan a lot better. Of course you may apply it in different openings, and it can work on the queen-side as well.

Ok, let's move on to the next advanced opening rules. In an opening it's important to develop your pieces and to do it quickly. I hope you'll follow this guideline. But **what if your opponent delays his development?** What should you do in this case?

Generally in such a situation you'll get a more active position and you should start an attack.

Giri-Caruana

DIAGRAM 3.30



Black to move

In this position Black played 9...Qa5. This move violates *opening principles* because we should develop minor pieces first. Black should have cared about his c8-bishop instead.

After an opponent's mistake, we should play more aggressively, trying to exploit it. White answered with 10.Na2. It attacks the bishop, and after it goes back, White can gain a tempo on attacking Black's queen with Bd2. This will make use of Black's prematurely developed queen. In addition to that White is threatening the c4-pawn.



DIAGRAM 3.31

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Black to move

Black played 10...Bd6 11.Qc4. What Black should do now? As usual he should *realize the 3 main opening tasks*. Currently, he must somehow develop his c8-bishop. Maybe he can play 11...e5 (opening a diagonal for the bishop), or at least something like 11...Nb6 and Bd7 (although it's quite passive).

DIAGRAM 3.32



Black to move

In the actual game Black played 11...Nb6 12.Qc2-Qa4. In the previous lesson we were discussing such situations: You should *realize the 3 main opening tasks*, and you should *not be deflected by other ideas (including an attempt to take a pawn)*.

After 12...Qa4 Black is winning a pawn, but losing a few more tempi. There followed 13.b3-Qa5.

Now if Black has some free time, he will finalize his development (Bd7), remove his queen to a more safe position (Qh5) and will get a normal position. Thus White should use his greater activity and start creating threats. Then, Black will have no time for finalizing his development.

White can consider something like 14.e4 (threatening e5), Bd2 (attacking the queen) or the move that he played 14.Ne5. This cuts off Black's queen and now it's almost trapped. White is threatening Bd2, then after Qb5 – Nc3 Black is in trouble.

DIAGRAM 3.33


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Black to move

That's why he played 14...Nbd7, giving an escape path to his queen. However, this move has an obvious drawback – it blocks the c8-bishop even more.

White made another attacking move 15.Nc4-Qc7 Here White took the bishop with 16.Nd6. Firstly, it eliminates a defender of Black's weak squares (c5, d6, e5 etc). But there's also another important reason: When you are ahead in development, you should exchange opponent's developed pieces. After that, your opponent will have no active pieces in the game, and you'll be dominating easily.

DIAGRAM 3.34



Black to move

16...Qd6 17.Rd1 (protecting the pawn)-e5. Black tries to open a diagonal for his c8-bishop. At the same time he's opening the position for White's pieces. There's a general rule that states: if you are ahead in development – open the position. This will help you initiate the battle, make use of your greater activity, and gain a victory. From this point of view 17...e5 is suicidal.

18.Nc3 was played and then 18...ed. Black took a 2nd pawn, but he keeps ignoring development.

19.Ba3 White keeps attacking, which is certainly correct. 19...c5.

DIAGRAM 3.35


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White to move

What should White do now? White needs to open the position and start a direct attack on Black's position. 20.e3!-d3 Black is trying not to open too many lines. 21.Rd3-Qb8 This looks weird, but Black's position is already bad. Black is still paying for his mistake of prematurely developing the queen. This is the last opening task, which should be realized last of all.

Ok, how would you play here as White? 22.Rad1 may seem natural. It's not bad at all, but Black will reply 22...Ne5 and he's a got a chance to finally develop his dozing bishop.

DIAGRAM 3.36



White to move

Instead White made a better move, 22.Nd5. *When you are ahead in development you need to attack and exchange your opponent's developed pieces.* The move Nd5 follows both of these ideas.

22...Nd5 23.Rd5. Now you can see the idea of these exchanges. Black has no active pieces in the game. Some of his pieces are still undeveloped, while others were traded. White is completely dominating and now he can do whatever he wants.

23...b6 24.Bb2 (taking aim at Black's king) -a5 25.Ra4. Usually White makes such transfers via the 3rd rank, but here his position is so powerful that he can use the central rank.

DIAGRAM 3.37


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Black to move

25...Re8 26.Rg5-g6 27.Bd5 (Rg6 is the threat)-Kf8 28.Rf4 and Black resigned.

Black violated opening principles and was crushed quickly. By the way, the Black player is Caruana, one of the best players in the world! You can see how powerful the opening rules are that we analyze.

Let's make some conclusions from this game.

When your opponent violates opening principles (delays development) you should:

1. Start attacking. This will give no time for your opponent to correct his mistake and finalize development.
2. Open the position. This will initiate a battle where your greater activity will determine your success.
3. Exchange your opponent's developed pieces. After that he'll have no active pieces at all.

We've just seen the great importance of quick development in an opening. Nevertheless, there's 1 little exception. In closed positions, sometimes, you may delay your development for a bit.

DIAGRAM 3.38



Black to move

This is a theoretical position out of the closed Sicilian and it is Black's turn. How would play in this position?

The normal move is 6...Nf6 – we should develop minor pieces (this is the 1st opening task). Perhaps this move is really the best.

Nevertheless Black may try the somewhat strange looking 6...Rb8. He's going to push his b-pawn, and with a support of his rook and fianchettoed bishop (g7-bishop) put pressure on White's queen-side. This is a good plan for the middlegame, but in an opening we should finalize development.

Still, in this particular position there's no way for White to exploit Black's delay in development. *Generally, when you want to punish your opponent for a slow development, you should open the position and start an attack in this position* White wants to open the position with the move d4, but now it's impossible (Black controls this square).

That's why in closed positions, sometimes, you may delay your development for a bit. In such positions an opponent can't open a game and start a quick attack. Thus you'll have some free time to finalize your development.

7.Nge2-b5.

DIAGRAM 3.39



White to move

Let me clarify what I mean by "a closed position". It mainly relates to a situation in the center. *If there are no pawns in the center – the position is opened. If there are pawn chains in the center – it's closed.*

In this example, in order to open the position White needs to play d4 and exchange some central pawns. If he does it successfully, he'll be able to initiate a battle, use his greater activity and attack Black's weaknesses.

It can happen after 8.d4-cd 9.Nd4. Now Black's c6-knight is attacked and the b5-pawn is hanging. After an exchange on d4 (9...Nd4 10.Bd4) the a7-pawn will be attacked as well. Black's moves of Rb8 and b5 turned out to be a mistake. It's pretty logical because Black ignored development. Now White opened the position and started a direct attack.

DIAGRAM 3.40



Black to move

Luckily for Black he can avoid this sad situation by using tactics. Instead of 8...cd he should play 8...b4. After 9.Nd5 this knight will be chased by 9...e6. 9.Na4 looks more secure, but now after 9...cd 10.Nd4 Black plays 10...Bd7 and suddenly White's a4-knight is almost trapped. It has no squares to escape to.

This tactic prevents White from playing 8.d4 at this moment, which secures Black's position. Anyway, you can see that Black should be very careful. He has delayed his development, and he must keep the position closed. If White can manage to open it – he'll start a powerful attack.


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DIAGRAM 3.41



White to move

Here, in the above position, White usually plays 8.Qd2. It gives an escape square for the knight after 8...b4 – 9.Nd1.

Now White is ready to play d4 and open the position. Black should stop it. He can play 9...Nd4 or 9...e5 for this purpose.

DIAGRAM 3.42



White to move

Let's have a closer look at this position. Black just made a pawn move which did not support his development and his king is still in the center. White would love to open the center and attack Black's centralized king. However, it will take him quite a long time. White needs to play c3, then d4, and he should castle his king. During this time Black will finalize his development and will be alright.

Let's say 10.00-Nge7, on the next move Black will castle and he has a solid position.

Let's draw the conclusions.

- § In closed positions, sometimes, you may delay your development for a bit.
- § Due to the closed central position, an opponent can't use his greater activity. Thus you'll have some time to finalize your development.
- § You need to keep the position closed. Otherwise an opponent will start an attack using his better development.
- § You may delay your development only for a BIT. After that you should finalize your development quickly.

You may be wondering about the REASON for delaying your development. You can do it **to gain some positional advantages, preferably STABLE advantages**. For instance, it can be a better pawn structure, exchange of opponent's bishop for your knights, or a win of material.

DIAGRAM 3.43



Black to move

This is the main line of the French defense. What is a logical move for Black now? He should develop his minor pieces, starting from knights. Hence he may play 6...Ne7 and then Nbc6. This would be a normal way.

However, Black may use another idea. 6...Qa5 (attacking the pawn) and then 7.Bd2-Qa4. What is the reason for this maneuver? Black blockaded White's queen-side pawns. Otherwise White could play a4, giving more space to his rook and enabling Ba3 (the bishop will be very active here). Now Black has fixed White's queen-side pawns and he's going to attack them in the middlegame.

Yes, Black violated some opening rules. He made 2 moves with 1 piece in the opening, and ignored development of his minor pieces. However, White can't make use of this mistake and start an attack because of the *closed central position*.

Black hopes that he can fix a certain positional advantage, and after that finalize his development quickly. After that the development of both sides will be equal, but Black will still have that positional advantage (a better pawn structure).

Please, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that this is the best idea for Black. The best move is 6...Ne7, following the *opening principles*.

The Qa5-a4 maneuver would be suicidal in an open position. But in a closed position it's ok. It's not the best, but it's acceptable.

Let's sum up what we've been analyzing.

§ In open positions quick development is essential.

§ In closed positions, sometimes, you may delay your development for gaining a stable positional advantage. After that you must finalize your development quickly.

§ You may use this plan **SOMETIMES**, while in most positions you should realize the 3 main opening tasks as usual.

We have seen that the type of the central position is very important. From the previous lesson you know already the main tactical task of an opening for Black: to exchange White's e4 pawn (after 1.e4); or to exchange d4-pawn (after 1.d4).

Now let's talk about some advanced ideas related to the CENTER.

Generally, pawn moves in an opening are good only if they prepare the development of your pieces. However, when it comes to central pawns there can be a little exception. Sometimes you may move your "c" or "f" pawn, even if it doesn't prepare your development.

1. e4-d6 2.d4-Nf6 3.Nc3-g6

Following the base opening principles White should play 4.Nf3 here. It develops his minor piece. Although this move is indeed very good, White may apply another approach as well. He may play 4.f4 to gain a greater control over the center.

DIAGRAM 3.44



White to move

Generally, the pieces are the most active on central squares. Thus your opponent wants to develop his pieces towards the center. If you occupy the central squares with your pawns, the center will not be available for opponent's pieces anymore.

For instance, in this example White's central pawns control a lot of squares (c5, d5, e5, f5), and this makes it difficult for Black to place his pieces on active positions.

In addition to that White is going to play e5 and push back his opponent's knight. After that White's pawn chain will block the g7-bishop as well.

We may say that White's strong pawn center restricts Black's activity. As we know, in an opening we may either develop our pieces or prevent our opponent's development. This is the reason why you may move "c" or "f" pawn in an opening – to strengthen your center and restrict your opponent's activity.

Still it does NOT deny the fact that while moving a pawn you ignore development. That's why **you should be very careful before moving your "c" or "f" pawn in an opening**. Sometimes it may be ok, but quite often it is just a mistake.

DIAGRAM 3.45



Black to move

This position is very similar to the previous example. The only difference is that White has moved his c-pawn forward as well. On one hand we may say that White got even greater control in a center. However, he ignored development 2 times: with the pawn moves f4 and c4.

Such a situation can be very dangerous for White. He's advanced his pawns, making it easy for Black to attack them. Plus he's delayed development, which can make Black's attack very effective. [Visit Website | Support](#)

Let's make a few more moves. 5...00 6.Nf3. Now Black will start attacking White's center with c5 or e5. Let's say, 6...e5. If White captures the pawn 7.fe-de 8.Ne5 Black will undermine it one more time 8...c5.

DIAGRAM 3.46



White to move

After eliminating the d4-pawn Black's bishop will become very active and will attack White's e5-knight. Black is ready to play Re8 putting pressure along the e-file. All in all, White's center is about to collapse.

In conclusion:

- § Sometimes you may move your "c" or "f" pawns to strengthen your center. However, you should keep in mind that you are ignoring development.
- § If your strong center restricts your opponent's activity – it's fine. Otherwise your advanced pawns will become an object for an attack.

Now let's move on to the next rules. Generally in an opening you should realize the 3 main opening tasks. Also, you should not be deflected by other ideas, including an attempt to win an opponent's pawn.

However, if this is a CENTRAL pawn, sometimes you may grab it.

1.e4-c5 Here White can sacrifice his d-pawn to try and open the position and get an advantage in development. 2.d4-cd 3.c3

DIAGRAM 3.47


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Black to move

Is it dangerous for Black to accept this sacrifice or not?

Black can ignore this pawn and just continue his development with something like 3...Nf6 or d5. He'll get a good position in both cases.

At the same time Black may accept White's sacrifice. Due to the high value of the center, it's good to eliminate your opponent's central pawns. 3...dc 4.Nc3. After that Black gains an advantage in the center – he has an extra d-pawn.

Let's make a few more moves. 4...Nc6 5.Nf3-d6 6.Bc4-e6. I'm just making the most natural moves for both sides. 7.00-Nf6. Now you can see that Black's central pawns play a big role. They control a lot of squares (c5, d5, e5, f5) and cover Black's position. Using these pawns as a shield, Black can finalize his development. After that he'll simply be a pawn up without any real compensation for White.

DIAGRAM 3.48



White to move

As usual, you should not follow this rule blindly. *Anytime you are going to slow down your development in an opening – you should think twice.* It may be a very dangerous idea.

Generally it's NOT recommended to deflect from development for winning a pawn. However, if this is a central pawn, then sometimes you may grab it. Your advantage in a center can secure you from your opponent's attacking attempts.

There's another very important principle that I'd like to share with you. It will help you understand a lot of different opening positions. Here's the rule:

Keep Up the Tension between Central Pawns

In an opening stage both players strive to occupy the center with pawns. Very often this creates a mutual attack of

pawns. In such cases it's important to keep up the tension and not to release it. Let's have a look at some examples.

1.e4-e5. Both players placed a pawn in a center, and the situation remains equal. In order to get an advantage, both sides will try to push the d-pawn. Usually White will prepare this move faster, just because White starts the game. After that the position will look like this.

DIAGRAM 3.49



Black to move

White advanced his d4-pawn faster than Black and it determined White's advantage in the center. White has 2 pawns (d4 and e4) in the center against Black's 1 pawn (e5). More specifically, white's advantage is determined by his d4-pawn which is more active than Black's e5-pawn. If White were to exchange these pawns with the move de (9...h6 10.de-de) – his advantage would disappear and it would equalize the game immediately. That's why White should *keep the tension*.

Now let's think about the same position but from Black's side. Although White has a better control over the central squares, we can't say that White is dominating. Black is holding a defense. He has the e5-pawn, and it is his outpost in the center. Moreover, Black hopes to push d5 after some preparation and equalize the game.

You can see that Black should also keep the tension in a center. If he takes on d4 at some point, 9...ed 10.cd, it will give up his center and will determine White's clear advantage.

Now we can make a general conclusion.

It's important to keep up the tension between central pawns.

§ For WHITE it helps to keep his opening advantage. If White releases the tension – it will equalize the game instantly.

§ For BLACK it helps to hold a position and hope to equalize the game sooner or later. If Black releases the tension – it will fix White's advantage.

This is a general rule; it's applicable for many different openings. If you understand this principle, a lot of opening lines will become clear to you.

1.d4-d5 2.c4-e6.

DIAGRAM 3.50


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White to move

What do you think about this position? What should both players do with their central pawns?

Based on the rules that we know, we can say quite a lot of things. White should not take on d5 because it would equalize the game. By the way, this is a very popular variation: 3.Nc3-Nf6 3.Bg5-Be7 4.cd-ed. A lot of players play it, but now you know that White can't get an advantage here.

Ok, let's go back. Black should not take on c4. White will take the pawn back very soon, and after that will have a clear advantage in the center. Again, Queen's Gambit Accepted is a very common opening. 2...dc 3.Nf3-Nf6 4.e3. Even if you don't know any opening theory of this line, you already know that White should get an advantage here.

You see, when you *understand opening principles*, you can detect easily what openings correspond to them and what openings don't. Hence you'll be able to select good openings for yourself without any problems.

In addition to that it will be a lot easier for you to study a new opening. You will understand the reasons for the theoretical moves, and the ideas of both sides. Thus you'll digest all required information naturally.

Let's come back to our example.

DIAGRAM 3.51



(after 1.d4-d5 2.c4-e6)

White to move

We have said that both players should keep the tension. Also we know that Black wants to push c5. If he can prepare this move well and realize it – he'll equalize the game.

Let's observe one more example. 1.e4-e6 2.d4-d5

DIAGRAM 3.52



White to move

This is the French defense. What can you say about central pawns here?

It's all the same. Both players should keep the tension. If White exchanges on d5, it will equalize the game. If Black takes on e4, it will fix White's advantage. Black will need to prepare and push either e5 or c5 to equalize the game.

I hope that you've got the point already, and that the same rule is applicable for other openings as well.

Let's answer the last related question. Maybe you have seen that some strong players release the tension in a center. For instance, it can happen be in Queen's Gambit accepted that we observed before, or here in French Black can play $d5$ ($3.Nc3-d5$). Maybe you are wondering why strong players make such moves if this is really a mistake.

They play in this style if they want to remove the tension, simplify a position and play for a draw. Although it gives an advantage to White, in overall it makes the position more lifeless. It'll be more difficult for White to start a full-scale battle. Thus Black may hope to play accurately, trade pieces and lead the game towards a draw.

We have already discussed a lot of different opening rules. Generally we assume that both players are following opening principles. But what if 1 player breaks the rules? What should you do in this case?

There's a very important rule for such situations. It's a key idea in many modern opening lines and here it is:

If 1 player breaks the balance, another player may and even should break the balance as well (in order to punish his opponent).

Let's clarify what it means. If a player breaks an opening rule, we say that he's *breaking the balance* (he's breaking the normal flow of the game).

If your opponent breaks opening principles, *you should not ignore it. You want to exploit his mistake.* Hence instead of making standard moves, you'll think about how to make use of your opponent's mistake. For this purpose you may need to do something a bit unusual: sacrifice a pawn, make 2 moves of a single piece in an opening and so on. That's why we say that *after an opponent's mistake you may need to break the balance as well.*

Actually we have already analyzed 1 example of such a situation.

DIAGRAM 3.53


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Black to move

Here Black can play 7...Qb6. It breaks opening rules: he's ignoring development. In light of that, White may do something special to punish Black for his mistake.

In a normal position White would need to protect his b2-pawn because we don't want to lose material. But in this position, considering Black's mistake, White may sacrifice a pawn. Black delayed his development and White wants to exploit it. Therefore White doesn't want to make defensive moves. Instead he will sacrifice a pawn but start an attack.

DIAGRAM 3.54



Black to move

Here's the next example of the same principle. This time let's test your *understanding*. In this position Black may use the Marshall counter-attack – 8...d5. It's a pawn sacrifice: after 9.ed-Nd5 White can take e5-pawn. Here's a question for you: why is the Marshall counter-attack good for Black? Please, pause the video and think about it.

At first this 8...d5 move may look like a tricky amateur attacking attempt. For many years White has been trying to find a refutation of this gambit. However, Black always feels alright. This situation seems strange for many players and it's because they don't know *the principle of breaking the balance*.

Let's have a closer look at White's moves. Although it's only the beginning of the game White has made a few mistakes already.

- He made 2 moves with his rook in the opening (castle + Re1). As we know we should not move 1 piece twice in the opening, and we should develop minor pieces first. That's 1 mistake.
- The last White move was pawn to c3. This is a pawn move that does not prepare for development. Quite the contrary: it blocks the movement of White's b1-knight. This is the 2nd mistake.

Taking in to a ccount White's delay in development, Black wants to open the position and start an attack. White broke the balance, and now Black may break the balance as well. He'll sacrifice a pawn in order to start an attack and to punish White for his mistakes.

Therefore this 8...d5 move is not a tricky attempt; it's a very logical reply to White's moves.

The Ruy Lopez is considered to be a difficult opening. But you can see that when you understand opening principles – everything becomes clear to you.

DIAGRAM 3.55



Black to move

This is the Najdorf variation of Sicilian defense. In this position Black can use the hyper-modern idea 6...Ng4. This move started to be used actively only in the 1990s. Before that time it did not come into mind of players. Even nowadays a lot of players consider this 6...Ng4 move as something dubious. What is your opinion about it? Please, pause the video and think about it.

6...Ng4 is the 2nd move of this knight in the opening, and this breaks *the principle of the least active piece*. From this point of view it's a mistake.

However, let's look at White's moves as well. He just played 6.Be3. This breaks *the principle of maximum activity*, as the bishop could go to the more advanced square, g5.

Now we can understand Black's idea. White made a mistake by putting a bishop on the wrong square, and Black wants to exploit it. That's why 6...Ng4 is a good idea. Black uses *the principle of breaking the balance*.

If 1 player breaks the balance, another player may *and even should* break the balance as well (in order to punish his opponent).

With all of these opening rules that you've just learnt, you'll be able to play any opening flawlessly. Now you can even understand very complex opening positions.

At the end of this lesson I'd like to give you 2 pieces of practical advice. They are not related to chess strategy, but are nonetheless practical hints.

- 1) Do NOT put great effort into planning in the opening stage.

Yes, I know, chess books suggest that you should always have a plan. They say that you need to formulate a plan first, and that only after that can you detect the best positions for your pieces. However, very often such a laborious approach is quite unnecessary.

Based on the *general principles* you can simplify your task a lot. You take your *least active piece* and move it to *the most forward available square*. That's it. It will be a good move no matter what plan you will realize later.

2) Play the first 15 moves relatively quickly.

During the first lessons we have analyzed in great detail what you should do in an opening. If you study these lessons well, everything will be clear to you. [Visit Website | Support](#)

Actually, the opening is the easiest stage of the game. First you need to *realize the 3 main opening tasks*. After that, you *should start an attack*. Everything is quite clear and simple. That's why I suggest that you make these moves rather quickly.

Later in the game (in the middlegame, and in the endgame) you'll face much more difficult positions. Then you'll need to have enough time for thinking.

If you play a long time control game, you should *spend no more than 30 minutes on the first 15 moves*. Although occasionally there may be an exception, in most games you should follow this timing.

In this lesson we have analyzed some advanced opening rules. After you digest this material you'll be able to play openings on the level of titled players.

This lesson contains a lot of rules, and of course you'll need to study it several times. It's impossible to remember it all after 1 observation.

Here's a final note: focus on the base principles. We have studied them in the 2nd lesson. This is the most important knowledge that you should keep in mind while playing.

The advanced rules that we learnt in the 3rd lesson is additional information. It should not deflect you from the fundamental rules.

Thanks for your attention!

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Lesson-4: "Modern Opening Trends"

So far you've learnt various opening rules and principles. In this lesson we'll talk about specific characteristics of a modern opening preparation. I'll give you some practical recommendations on how to study openings effectively, and how to neutralize an opponent's home preparation. Welcome to the 4th lesson, "Modern Opening Trends".

The success of your opening play is determined by 2 factors:

1. Your good opening preparation.
2. Neutralization of opponent's preparation.

Both elements are equally important. Most players put major efforts on improvement of their own opening knowledge, and don't think about their opponents.

An old wise idea states: *"If you know your plan, you have a 50% chance for victory. If you know your plan and your opponent's plan, it guarantees your victory 100%."* This is applicable for planning and for your opening preparation just as well.

Nowadays, when EVERYBODY has good opening knowledge, neutralization of your opponent's opening preparation becomes especially crucial.

Around 10 years ago, while playing against a weak opponent, you could get an opening advantage easily. Nowadays it's not the case anymore. Everybody, including very weak players, have access to a wide range of opening tutorials. Your opponent uses his computer, databases, chess engines, opening books, DVDs and so on. Armed with all these resources a beginner player can play first 10-20 moves on the level of a top Grandmaster. Of course you don't want to deal with this, so you need to avoid an opponent's preparation.

In this lesson we'll talk about both factors:

- How to make your opening preparation effective.
- And how to neutralize an opponent's preparation.

Let's start with your APPROACH to an opening preparation. It has a serious influence on the effectiveness of your training and your practical results. There are 4 different approaches. We'll analyze them all and will conclude with which one can work best for you.

APPROACH #1: Playing the same openings all the time.

Some players prefer to choose their favorite openings, and to play them in all of their games.

For instance, Fischer played a lot of his openings during his whole chess career. Talking about modern players, Dominguez plays the Najdorf variation against 1.e4 in almost all of his games. Kamsky uses his favorite variation of Slav defense against 1.d4 insistently. There are many other examples as well.

A big advantage of this approach is that you can learn your opening very well. You'll play it all the time and will get great experience. You'll know all the typical plans and ideas of the arising positions.

Even if you lose a game, you'll analyze it afterwards and will fill in this gap in your knowledge. After some practice, the

quantity of eventual gaps will be reduced to minimum. You'll become a real expert in this opening.

At the same time, this approach has an obvious drawback. Your opponents will know your opening choice and **will be able to prepare very well against you**. Sometimes you can even lose a game just because of your opponent's home preparation.

In order to avoid such sad situations some players use another approach.

APPROACH #2: Always playing different openings.

For instance, Bent Larsen used to play various openings. While talking about Ivanchuk, it's easier to say what openings he does NOT play (because it seems he has played almost all existing openings already).

If you always play something new, your opponents can't make any preparation against you. They don't know what to expect.

However, this approach has its negative side as well. In the case of playing a lot of openings, you can't allocate enough time for each line. **Hence your knowledge in every opening will be superficial.**

APPROACH #3: Postpone a battle until the middlegame / endgame.

A former world champion, Garry Kasparov, was known for his excellent opening knowledge. He was ready to put a lot of time and effort into his home preparation. Consequently it brought good results. In many games Kasparov surprised opponents with powerful novelties. In some games he even gained a victory by just following his home analyses. This is the classical way of fighting for an opening advantage.

The current #1 player Carlsen adopted a rather opposite approach. He doesn't try to initiate a big fight right from the first moves. Magnus is comfortable with having an approximately equal position after an opening. He hopes to use his greater chess power to outplay an opponent in a later stage of the game. If you play a long game, there's a big chance that sooner or later your opponent will make a mistake. Then you can make use of it and gain yourself a victory. From this point of view, you don't necessarily have to get an advantage right in the opening. If you play better than opponent, you'll obtain an advantage at some point in any case.

If you'd like to postpone a battle until the middlegame, you should play solid openings that don't require too much preparation from you.

For instance with White, Kamsky often plays: 1.d4-Nf6 2.Nf3-e6 3.Bg5 following with e3, c3, Bd3, Nbd2.

DIAGRAM 4.1



One can play this set up against almost any moves by Black. White is not trying to play aggressively and he can't get an advantage with such moves. At the same time, however, it gives White a very solid position so he will not be worse either. Hence there will be an approximately equal position after the opening. The real fight is postponed until a later stage of the game.

With the same purpose White can play a double fianchetto. 1.Nf3-Nf6 2.g3-d5 3.c4-e6 After that White will fianchetto

both his bishops. 4.Bg2-Be7 5.b3-00 6.00-c5 7.Bb2

DIAGRAM 4.2

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And White will probably play e3 and Nc3.

White is moving pieces on the first 3 ranks only. This is very accurate play. Of course it does not create any danger for Black. There will be a long game and the stronger player will outplay his opponent.

Let's observe 1 last example. 1.d4-Nf6 2.Nf3-e6 3.e3.

DIAGRAM 4.3



White is going to play Bd3, b3, Bb2 and Nbd2. He'll make these moves against any of Black's moves. As you can see, it doesn't require any opening preparation for White. This can be quite convenient and time saving.

This style of play has 1 obvious drawback: **you will not get an opening advantage**. Nevertheless, if your overall chess strength is higher, you'll be the winner in the end.

This approach is very suitable in 2 cases:

1. If the opening PREPARATION of your opponent is very good
2. If your general chess UNDERSTANDING is very good

For Magnus Carlsen, both items are correct. That's why he uses this way of playing.

For you, the 2nd item is applicable. After a study of this course you'll have a very good understanding of all opening principles. Maybe you've studied some of my other courses as well. In total this gives you a good level of positional play.

Most of your opponents spend time on Internet blitz, tactical puzzles and the memorization of opening variations.

Neither of these activities improves their strategic understanding.

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That said, you can use your greater *understanding* to outplay an opponent.

Now we come to the last common approach for an opening.

APPROACH #4: Neglect opening (go into unknown position)

Some players totally neglect the opening. They try to make new moves right in the beginning and bring their opponent into an unknown territory. It even may cost a slight or clear advantage.

Such players don't learn an opening theory; they want to neutralize your opening knowledge by creating an unknown position. Sometimes they even make some ridiculous moves just to get out of theory.

For instance, White can play 1.Nc3 and create an uncommon position straight away.

DIAGRAM 4.4



With Black it can be something like 1.e4-e5 2.Nf3-Qe7.

DIAGRAM 4.5



Actually, they can play any random moves so it doesn't make much sense to provide examples. Let's briefly make a note of just one more.

Against the Sicilian, for example, such players can play 1.e4-c5 2.Nf3 and then Bc4, d3 and other stuff like that.

There are a lot of club players, and moreover some International Masters that I know, that use this approach. However, I do NOT recommend that you follow it.

You should NOT make bad moves intentionally. Your opening moves should correspond to your general understanding of chess.

In this course you've already learnt a couple of important opening rules, and of course you should follow them.

So far we have analyzed 4 different approaches. Which one should you choose? Well, we have rejected the 4th approach already, so let's focus on just the first 3. Here's what I recommend for you to do:

Adopt the 1st approach, and use the 2nd and 3rd ones from time to time.

When facing a weak player, you may use a tricky opening line and it can work. You may surprise such an opponent with a sideline, and use the gap in his knowledge.

If you try to do the same against a strong opponent, you can fail badly. A powerful rival will make use of your dubious opening moves and you'll be in trouble. In order to prevent this, you must play a solid opening, and know it very well.

If you play the right moves, then even Kasparov can't beat you. But you must make those right moves.

In conclusion, you should have a solid opening repertoire that you know very well and can play confidently against any opponent.

However, if you do just that, you'll be too rigid. Your opponents will be ready for your opening choice, and will prepare something against it. That's why from time-to-time you should use the 2nd or the 3rd approach: **You should be ready to play absolutely any opening in a certain particular game.**

Inherently, people want to play those openings that they know very well. It makes them feel confident.

However, nowadays the situation is more complex. Your opponent will expect this line and will prepare something for it. In fact, you will play first 10-20 moves against his computer (not against him).

Thus you should be ready to surprise your opponent and play something new; something that you've never used before, that you aren't familiar with.

But how can you play an opening, if you don't know it? Here's the trick. You don't have to know the line very well. It's enough to know it just a bit better than your opponent. This already gives you an advantage.

Think about this. Let's say that you play your usual opening, the Sicilian defense, against 1.e4. You know this variation, and your opponent knows it as well. In this case your opening preparation is approximately equal.

Now let's imagine another situation. You've spent 2 hours on learning the first move 1...b6. Since this is a rare sideline, your opponent knows almost nothing about it. Therefore, in this game, your opening preparation is much better (even though you only studied this opening for 2 hours).

Thanks to this trick, you may play various openings without even having to have a great knowledge of them.

Now let's make a final conclusion about the most effective opening approach.

You should have a powerful opening repertoire,
and be ready to play anything in a certain particular game.

In most cases you'll play your usual openings. But in some separate games you will play something totally new. Thus your opponents will never know exactly what to expect. While preparing against you, they will have to learn a variety of different openings that you've played before. This will make their task a lot more difficult.

Now you know how to neutralize an opponent's opening preparation. In addition to that I'd like to share some other techniques with you. These are powerful practical tips that can serve you very well.

1) Use a different order of moves.

Sometimes you can reach the same position through a different order of moves. This can confuse your opponent and give you some more eventual options.

For instance, against the Sicilian defense 1.e4-c5 White usually plays Nf3, d4 and Nc3.

DIAGRAM 4.6



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However, you can play these moves in a different order. Also you can develop g1-knight to e2 as well – 2.Ne2. Since White is going to play d4 on the next move, this knight will come to d4 in any case. At the same time, it can give you some extra possibilities in some variations. For example, after 2...d6 White can use another plan. He can occupy the center with the moves c3 and d4, while his f1-bishop will go to g2 (after playing g3). You'll find an analysis of this line in the practical part of the course.

For now you can just pay attention to the fact that White can try a different order of his first moves. This can confuse your opponent, force him to think longer, and maybe even give you some additional possibilities.

Another example is the Paulsen variation of the Sicilian defense for Black. 1.e4-c5 2.Nf3-e6 3.d4-cd 4.Nd4.

DIAGRAM 4.7



Here Black usually plays a6, Qc7, Nc6, Nf6 and maybe b5, and you can make these moves in various orders. Often it will transpose into the same, or at least a very similar, position. At the same time, you can confuse your opponent a lot. You can effectively neutralize his home preparation against you, and force him to play independently (instead of following book moves).

This brings us very neatly to the 2nd method of neutralizing an opponent's preparation:

- 2) Play different variations within 1 opening.

Let's get back to our last example.

DIAGRAM 4.8


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Black to move

In the main line of the Paulsen, 4...a6, White plays 5.Bd3. Here Black can use the so-called *hedgehog* system where you set pawns on the 6th rank. At the same time you can use slightly different variations:

- You can start with 5...Nf6 and then play d6 and Be7.
- Or you can fianchetto the bishop (play g6 and Bg7)
- Instead you can also play 5...Bc5 first (attacking the knight), and only after it comes back 6.Nb3 put the bishop to e7 – 6...Be7.
- Alternatively the bishop can go to a7 – 6...Ba7.

These are many different variations of the same opening. **If you play them all, it complicates your opponent's preparation a lot.** Instead of preparing only 1 line against you, he'll have to learn 3-5 different lines. To do this will require 3-5 times greater effort from him.

For you the situation is much easier. Learning different variations of the same opening is not a big problem. They all lead to similar positions with similar ideas and plans. While playing various variations of 1 opening you'll still improve your overall understanding of this opening. You'll know typical middlegame plans and tactical tricks, and at the same time you will confuse your opponents and get out of their preparation.

The next bit of advice I want to give you is a continuation of this idea.

3) Play similar openings (with similar pawn structure or plan).

Different openings can lead to middlegame positions with a similar pawn structure. In such cases, the typical plans will be similar as well.

DIAGRAM 4.9



White to move

This is the Benko gambit. In the future Black will fianchetto his king-side bishop and, using the open b-file, put pressure on White's queen side.

Now let's compare it with the Benoni defense.

DIAGRAM 4.10



White to move

Similar to the Benko gambit, Black will develop his king-side bishop to g7 (where it controls a long diagonal). In the middlegame he'll try to push b5, exerting pressure on the queen-side. His knight will probably come to e5, and same with the Benko gambit, he can use the maneuver Nf6-g4-e5.

You can see that in both openings Black uses a similar set up of his pieces; the pawn structure is very similar, and Black can even realize the same middlegame plan.

By the way, something similar may happen in the King's Indian defense as well.

DIAGRAM 4.11



White to move

In the future Black can play c5 at some point. For instance 5.Be2-c5 and after 6.d5, this is a well-known pawn structure for us. Here Black can play 6...e6 with a Benoni-like position, or push 6...b5 and turn it into a Benko type of position.

DIAGRAM 4.12



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Black to move

Here's another example. Against almost any variation of the Sicilian defense White can use the same plan. He can play Be3, f3, Qd2 and castle queen-side (000). After that he'll start a pawn assault on the king side: h4, g4, etc. This works against the Najdorf variation, Dragon, Taimanov, Scheveningen and almost anything else.

Since you'll be learning similar openings, it will not take too much of your time. However, what it will do is allow you to surprise your opponents and neutralize their home preparation against you.

4) Play your opening with an opposite color.

This piece of advice is also quite connected with what we have discussed so far.

If you play a certain opening for Black, you may try to use it with the White pieces as well (and the other way around).

If you play the King's Indian defense for Black, you may reach the same position with White pieces. Play 1.Nf3 and then g3, Bg2, d3 and all other moves typical for the King's Indian.

DIAGRAM 4.13



The same thing can work for the Dutch defense. If you use it with the Black pieces against 1.d4, you can use it with White as well. Start with 1.f4 and if Black answers with 1...d5 – you'll reach a Dutch defense.

DIAGRAM 4.14



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Many players realized that the English opening can lead to the Sicilian defense with opposite colors after 1.c4-e5.

DIAGRAM 4.15



You can play the Benko with White as well. It can happen after 1.Nf3-d5 2.g3-c5 3.c4-d4 4.b4. Now it's a Benko gambit with opposite colors and with an extra tempo.

DIAGRAM 4.16



Actually 1.Nf3 is a good way to create an opening that you play with the Black pieces against 1.d4. Here's one last example before we move on. After 1...d5 2.e3-c5 3.b3 you can transpose into the Queen's Indian defense with opposite colors.

DIAGRAM 4.17



Why should you play such transpositions? The answer is, very simply, *because you can surprise your opponent*. If you play the Queen's Indian defense with the Black pieces, an opponent does not expect that you will use it with White. So if 1.e4 is your main weapon with White, when you play 1.Nf3 instead it'll be a huge surprise for your opponent.

5) Play against your opening.

Since you know your opening line, you can not only play it yourself, but you can also play against it. Perhaps it'll be easier to understand if I give you a concrete example.

Let's say you use the Benko gambit with Black against 1.d4 (1...Nf6 2.c4-c5 3.d5-b5). Naturally you will know this line very well; it's your opening.

Now, if you are preparing for a game, and you know that your opponent plays the Benko gambit – you can go into this position with the White pieces. So even if you normally play 1.e4, in this particular game you can play 1.d4. Moreover, it doesn't require any additional study from you because you already know the theory behind the Benko gambit.

You already know a lot of ways to confuse your opponent. Nevertheless I have 2 more techniques for you.

6) Play forgotten openings.

Some openings were popular in the past, but now are forgotten. It's not because they are bad. It is just that other openings have become more common. Therefore you may retrieve those old weapons and make use of them.

Kasparov once played the Evans gambit against Anand.

DIAGRAM 4.18



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1.e4-e5 2.Nf3-Nc6 3.Bc4-Bc5 4.b4. This gambit was very popular at the time of Anderssen, Morphy and other great players of the past. Modern Grandmasters almost never use it, however. Hence Kasparov retrieved it especially for the game against Anand, and won in 25 moves.

It's useful to study old books written by famous players of the past: Capablanca, Alekhine and others. First, you can improve your strategic understanding. And secondly, you can find a lot of forgotten opening ideas there.

And now we come to the last method of breaking an opponent's home preparation.

7) Prepare a new opening specially for 1 tournament.

You may learn a new opening before an upcoming tournament. For example, you may decide to play the Dragon variation of the Sicilian defense with Black. Probably a few players will play 1.e4 against you, and you'll use the Dragon variation.

Although you'll play this new opening several times, it may be a surprise for each of your opponents. After all, they will not be able to find your Dragon games in a database because you only played it 1-2 days ago, and there has not been enough time for it to have been added to any chess databases yet.

Even if they find out that you've used the Dragon variation in 1 game, they will not take it too seriously. You've played other openings a lot more often.

That's how you can use a certain opening in 1 particular tournament with great results. After that your games in this opening will appear in databases and your opponents will expect it from you. However, you are not going to use it again. This weapon was dedicated to 1 tournament specifically.

We have analyzed 7 ways to neutralize your opponent's opening preparation. Now you may be wondering WHEN you should use them. When should you play your usual openings and when you should surprise an opponent?

There are only 2 major cases here.

1) Avoid opponent's strong points.

If your opponent has been playing a certain opening for a long time, and has good results with it – it makes sense to get out of "his territory".

Even if you know the theory of this line, it's better not to play it. You see, it's not just a matter of knowing specific variations. An experienced player knows the typical plans of the opening, typical tactical tricks and other related ideas. He can play arising positions quickly and confidently.

Hence if your opponent is an expert in a certain opening, choose another line to play. Surprise him with your opening choice, and pull him into unknown territory.

2) Use opponent's weaknesses.

Most players rated under 2300 play some wrong variations. They don't understand opening principles, and they choose their openings randomly. Hence, some of their openings are fine, while others are bad.

How do you know if a certain opening is bad? Well, this is a question to you. What do you think? In the previous lessons you've learnt *opening principles*. If an opening does not correspond to them – it's a bad one.

If your opponent plays some wrong variations, you should make use of it. Play this line against him and exploit his mistake.

In this lesson we are talking about 2 factors of successful opening preparation:

1. Your good opening preparation.
2. Neutralization of opponent's preparation.

We've just discussed the 2nd item in great details as it's really crucial nowadays.

Now I'd like to give you 1 important bit of advice for the 1st item. If you follow this recommendation, you'll reduce the quantity of your losses significantly.

After a study of a new opening you should play some TRAINING GAMES:

- A few games against a computer;
- A couple of internet blitz games.

Your computer is a very strong opponent. **If you do something wrong in an opening – the computer will demonstrate it to you clearly.** Most likely you'll lose all of these training games. However it's much better to lose a training game than it is to lose a real competition.

After playing these training games with a computer, you should certainly analyze them. During this analysis you'll discover a lot of interesting ideas and variations. You'll be able to use these discoveries in your future *real* games.

Internet blitz is a good way to get a lot of experience with a certain opening within a short amount of time. You should take these games seriously; you are training your opening. If you lose some games or have any problems – analyze these games with a computer and find the necessary improvements.

Of course you may play real blitz games as well. I'm talking about Internet blitz just because it's easily available for everybody.

You can play all these training games in a day or two, but it will improve your opening knowledge A LOT. You'll detect your weak points and will eliminate them. After that you'll be ready to use your new weapon in real tournaments.

In this 4th lesson we've been analyzing modern opening trends. There's 1 trend you should know about. It will help you understand the opening choices of strong players.

Usually the White player wants to use the advantage of his first move, and to play for a win. However, there's 1 big problem here.

The initial position of a chess game is equal. If both players make correct moves, the final position will remain equal. Thus it'll be a DRAW. This is the most logical result of a chess game. That's why in strong tournaments most of the games end in a draw.

If you want to play for a win, you need to get out of this drawish scenario somehow. That's why Grandmasters start making some strange moves. **They just want to complicate a position, create an imbalance and avoid a draw.**

Let's have a look at the Queen's gambit. 1.d4-d5 2.c4-e6 3.Nc3-Nf6

DIAGRAM 4.19


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Here we can imagine how things will go in the future. White will play the most logical moves like Nf3, Bg5, e3, Bd3. Black will also finalize his development and at some point will play c5. This will lead to the exchange of central pawns and a symmetrical pawn structure. If both players play well, it'll be a draw in the end.

If White wants to avoid this scenario, he has to make some other moves. That's why Grandmasters start playing something like cd, or they develop the bishop to f4 (Bf4), or sometimes they even push g-pawn forward (g4).

When you look at these games, you may be thinking that strong Grandmasters play correct moves. But it's not the case. They are just trying to avoid a draw.

Obviously Bf4 is not the best move because it breaks *the principle of maximum activity*. Playing the move cd releases the tension and gives away White's opening advantage. Grandmasters play such second-rate moves just to mix things up a little.

A lot of intermediate players don't understand this and will copy Grandmasters' games blindly. **Such players make bad moves and don't even realize it.** Please, don't fall into this trap.

After a study of this course you'll learn all of the opening rules and principles. Use this understanding to select the right opening moves. Don't copy Grandmasters' games blindly. They can be wrong or can try to mix things up with strange moves.

We have seen that the White player may make some special efforts to avoid a draw. The Black player, on the contrary, may play for a DRAW.

DIAGRAM 4.20



Black to move

It's the Queen's gambit once again. Here Black certainly should develop his queen-side pieces. However, some Grandmasters play 6...Ne4 here. This is the second move of the same piece in the opening, and so it's a mistake. Then

why did Lasker, Capablanca and other well-known players make this move? They made this move simply because they were playing for a draw. The move 6...Ne4 initiates an exchange of some pieces. Although it's a mistake if Black play accurately afterwards, he has good chances to hold a draw.

DIAGRAM 4.21



Black to move

Another good example is the Berlin defense popularized by Vladimir Kramnik. 4...Ne4 5.d4-Nd6 is the main line. 6.Bc6-dc 7.de-Nf5 8.Qd8-Kd8. You may notice that Black played some rather strange moves. Actually it was considered bad for Black for a long time.

Why then do a lot of Grandmasters play this line nowadays? It's NOT because they believe it's the best option for Black. They just hope to simplify the position and to achieve a draw.

What should YOU do about all this stuff? That's very simple. **Do NOT copy bad moves played by Grandmasters.**

Playing for a draw assumes that one can play a long game without making any mistakes. This is a realistic task for Kramnik, but not for your current opponents. An attempt to play for a draw or to avoid a draw may make sense on a Grandmaster level, but your current task is different. Just learn the opening principles from this course, and try to play correct moves all the time.

In this lesson we have analyzed modern opening trends. This will help you to understand things better and to make the correct opening choices. Let's now make some CONCLUSIONS.

The success of your opening play is determined by 2 factors:

1. Your good opening preparation.
2. Neutralization of opponent's preparation.

Both elements are equally important.

In order to meet both of these factors, you should have a powerful opening repertoire, and be ready to play anything in a certain particular game.

There are 7 ways to neutralize an opponent's opening preparation.

- 1) Use a different order of moves.
- 2) Play different variations within 1 opening.
- 3) Play similar openings (with similar pawn structure or plan).
- 4) Play your opening with an opposite color
- 5) Play against your opening.

- 6) Play forgotten openings.
- 7) Prepare a new opening especially for 1 tournament.

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You may need to play something unusual for you in 2 cases:

- 1) To avoid your opponent's strong points.
- 2) To exploit your opponent's weaknesses.

After a study of a new opening you should play some TRAINING GAMES:

- A few games against a computer;
- A couple of Internet blitz games.

Learn the opening principles from this course, and try to play correct moves all of the time.

Thanks for your attention! Now you may like to make a break and give some time to yourself to digest all this new information. After that I'll be waiting for you in the next lesson.

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Lesson-5.1: "Opening Understanding in Action!"

By now you've learnt ALL of the main strategic principles for the opening. Your *understanding* of opening play now becomes superior when compared to most of your current opponents. Please, accept my congratulations for this great fact!

Nevertheless, *in order to digest these rules completely you need to train them*. To fully understand these rules will take more than a single watch of these videos. It requires some special effort from you. Only then will you develop the necessary skills and be able to use them in practical games.

We are going to start this training right now. Let me emphasize the word TRAINING. I strongly recommend that you be active.

During this lesson we'll go through a number of different games and try to find correct moves. *This will be the same thinking process that you'll use in your future games*. Now you have an excellent opportunity to test your skills, to train yourself and to adopt necessary techniques.

While going through these games you should think about the positions by yourself. Along the way I will be asking you questions that you need to think about. When given a question, pause the video and try to find the right move. After that you can continue the video and compare your solution with that of the actual game and my commentaries.

If you notice that at a certain point your solution was wrong, take a moment to think about **WHY it happened**. When you think that you know why, find the related rule in the previous videos and study it once again. After that, come back to this video and continue the lesson.

If you follow this method, and unbendingly perform this training – you'll become a stronger player today, right after a study of this lesson!

However, if you don't undertake this training, or if you carry it out only superficially – you will not see any progress.

The choice is yours. I do hope for your enthusiasm and readiness to put in the necessary effort. I want to have a successful student, but you need to help me.

Hickl – Glek

This is a game between 2 Grandmasters. The White player has a rating of 2600 and the Black player is rated around 2550.

1.Nf3-g6 2.g3. Here we see that both players have decided to FIANCHETTO their king-side bishops. What do you think about this idea? Is it good or not? If not, then how would you play for White instead of 2.g3?

DIAGRAM 5.1


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We know that pawn moves are good when they prepare the development of your pieces. The move 2.g3 is in alignment with this rule. Nevertheless, a drawback of this move is that it enables the development of 1 piece only.

If White were to play 2.e4 instead, it would give more lines to his bishop, more lines to his queen, and give him more control in the center. Thus in this position, the moves 2.e4 or 2.d4 are the best options. They are more powerful than 2.g3.

This idea to fianchetto the bishop can be good if the f1-a6 diagonal is blocked. Otherwise it's better to place the bishop across this diagonal.

2...Bg7 3.Bg2.

DIAGRAM 5.2



Black to move

How would you play here as Black?

The first opening task is to develop minor pieces. Here Black may play 3...Nf6, or alternatively, he may move one of his central pawns (3...d5 or 3...e5). Which one is better? The move 3...e5 opens a diagonal for Black's queen, while 3...d5 provides space for the queen and for the bishop. Therefore it's better.

In the actual game Black played 3...c5. Similar to 3...e5, it prepares the development of 1 piece only; Black's queen. This, however, is not Black's primary task because *we should develop minor pieces first*. Even so, it's not totally bad since it does increase Black's control in the center.

DIAGRAM 5.3

White answered with 4.c3. What do you think about this move?


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Well, we've just criticized this move for Black and the situation is all the same for the White side. Even if White wants to push his c-pawn, he should play 4.c4 – according to *the principle of maximum activity*. Again, this move (4.c3) is not totally bad because it prepares the development of White's queen and White is trying to increase his control in the center (by playing d4). However, it's not the best idea.

DIAGRAM 5.4



White to move

4...Nf6. How would you play here as White? Here White has only 2 logical moves: 5.d4 or 5.00. However, 5.d4 is more powerful because it *combines development with attack* – it will attack Black's c5-pawn.

White played 5.d3. You may be thinking "Ok, it's not the most forward move, but what's really wrong with it? White's position is fine." Fair enough, it's not losing of course. However, *when you play such second-rate moves, they worsen your position for a while*. 1 minor mistake won't make a big difference, but **after you make 5-10 such mistakes, you'll suddenly appear in a losing situation**. This is what we mean when we say that a player was "outplayed"; he did not make any huge mistakes, it is just that his position became worse and worse until in the end he lost.

DIAGRAM 5.5


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White to move

5...Nc6 6.00-d5. What should White do now? He should realize the 1st opening task – develop his minor pieces. White may consider 7.Nbd2 or 7.Bf4 but in both cases he'll run into a little trouble: 7.Nbd2 blocks his c1-bishop; and after 7.Bf4, this bishop may be attacked (with something like Nh5, h6, e5). He has these problems because of his previous mistakes. Without the pawn on c3, White could simply play 7.Nc3. So as you can see, White has worsened his position all by himself.

DIAGRAM 5.6



In the actual game, 7.Qa4 was played. What do you think about this move? What is the idea behind this move? As you will remember, development of a queen is the last opening task. We should not move it too early because it can be very easily attacked. Hence 7.Qa4 is a mistake.

Still, White has something in mind. He's a 2600-rated player, so probably he had a specific plan. Maybe he was preparing to play e4. This makes sense as it increases White's control in the center. However, it was better to play 7.Nbd2 with the same purpose.

Perhaps then he's going to move the queen to h4 and prepare the development of his c1-bishop (Qh4 and Bh6). *Sometimes, if you can't develop a piece instantly, you may make a few preparation moves.* In this position, however, White is able to play 7.Bf4 straight away. This is a pretty active square for the bishop, therefore spending 2 moves on playing Qa4-h4 seems to be very unnecessary.

Let's move on. What would you do as Black now? Black should either develop his light-squared bishop or castle. While it's not entirely clear at this stage where the bishop should go, castling, on the other hand, is obligatory. In such cases I advise that you first castle and on the next move make a decision about the bishop. Maybe then this decision will become easier. For instance, if after 7...00 white plays 8.e4, then obviously the bishop can't go to f5 anymore.

DIAGRAM 5.7


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In the game, Black played 7...Bd7. What can you say about this move? There are a few related rules. Firstly, the bishop did not go to *the most forward available square*, thus it's not *the most active move*. On the other hand, it may be possible due to *the rule of breaking the balance*. White made a mistake by playing 7.Qa4 and now Black is trying to exploit it. This would be an excellent idea if 7...Bd7 created a real threat, but in our example it does not. Hence it was better to simply castle.

I guess Black did not want to allow Qh4 in case of castling; 7...00 8.Qh4 from where White intends to play Bh6 and maybe Ng5 or something like that. What do you think about this? Was it a good idea for Black to prevent it?

The maneuver Qa4-h4 breaks the opening principles. If White plays bad moves, it will be bad for White, not for Black. Therefore Black should not worry about White's attacking attempts. At least Black can prevent Bh6 move by playing 8...Qb6. There's no danger for Black in any case.

Let's go back to the game. After 7...Bd7 White played 8.Qa3. On the previous move he'd made the mistake of prematurely developing of his queen, and now he has to waste time moving his queen a second time.

DIAGRAM 5.8



Now the c5-pawn is hanging. How would you solve this problem as Black?

In an open position it might be possible to sacrifice this pawn. It's usually fine to sacrifice a pawn for 2 tempi. It may go something like this: 8...00 9.Qc5-Rc8 (trying to chase the queen), and then let's say 10.Qa3-e5. After that Black will push e4, Bg4 and have the initiative in this position. In an open position this would be very strong for Black.

However, this position is not very open. We still have some pawn chains in the center and it will not be that easy for Black to break through. So this pawn sacrifice is an interesting idea, but maybe not the best.

Pushing the pawn forward 8...c4 would allow White to combine development with attack. He'll play 9.Nbd2 immediately or after an exchange (9.dc-dc 10.Nbd2). This would give White some extra tempi for development. Black should not do it.

8...Qb6 looks like the best move. In any case we'll need to move the queen and connect the rooks. Usually we do it after castling, but Black will castle on the next move, so it's not a big deviation. [Visit Website | Support](#)

Now let's check if it works. White can try 9.Be3, but it's not dangerous because of 9...d4. 9.Nbd2 can be more unpleasant. Once again White is going to combine his development with attack. After 9...00 10.Nb3 White will open his bishop and attack c5-pawn. After 10...c4 White can gain 1 more tempo with 11.Be3 (attacking the queen). We should not give extra tempi to an opponent.

We may conclude that 8...Qb6 would be nice, but doesn't work in this particular position.

Black correctly played 8...b6 and simply protected the pawn. This also leaves White's a3-queen on the side of the board, out of the game.

DIAGRAM 5.9



White to move

Now here's a good question about how White should play. He has already made a couple of bad moves. Now he must be very careful, as a few more mistakes can be fatal. Please think about how you would solve this problem for White. White still has a way to escape. Can you find it?

Of course White should think how to finalize his development. Thus he needs to find good squares for his b1-knight and c1-bishop. Normally we should develop a knight first. However, 9.Nbd2 would block his bishop. After that White will probably need to play e4, take on d5 and play Nc4. This is a pretty long plan. Taking into account that White is already behind in development, this may be too long.

It would be nice to develop the bishop first, and only then play Nbd2. But there's no way for White to do it. In the case of 9.Bg5, Black will play 9...h6; after 9.Bf4 Black will push the bishop back with 9...Nh5.

So what should White do with his bishop? Generally there are 3 good options for a bishop: it may be developed on the 5th or 4th rank, or you may fianchetto it. In the current position we haven't tried to fianchetto the c1-bishop yet. For this purpose White can push his b-pawn. 9.b4 (of course it should go to *the most forward available square*). White is preparing the development of his bishop on b2 and attacking Black's pawn simultaneously.

Currently the b2-position is very passive for the bishop but if Black takes 9...cb 10.cb, then things become not so sad for White. He'll put the bishop on b2, and the knight will go to c3 or d2. In this case he'll finalize the opening tasks and will get a normal position.

In the game White played 9.Re1. **He is not focused on the right thing: on the 3 main opening tasks.** That's why he finds some other ideas that are not suitable for the opening stage.

9...00 10.e4. How should Black play now? Once again there are a few rules that we should recognize here.

DIAGRAM 5.10


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Black to move

One rule suggests that we *keep the tension between central pawns*. From the other hand, *White delayed his development and Black should open the position*. This will help him to *start a direct attack*. Where a few rules can be applied to the position, you need to calculate the variations and detect what works better.

If Black keeps the tension with 10...Qc7 White will push 11.e5 and then 11...Ng4 12.d4 (protecting the pawn). This now blocks the g7-bishop, and the g4-knight will soon be kicked away with h3. Overall, Black's position became less active than it was. Let's check another option then.

In the case of 10...de 11.de, white's advancement to e5 is not dangerous anymore. Black can move a knight to d5, or move a knight to g4 and attack that e5-pawn. Also there's an open d-file now. Considering Black's advantage in development, he'll occupy the open line before White. That said Black exchanged on e4 in the actual game.

DIAGRAM 5.11



Black to move

Now it's Black's turn, what should he do? I hope the answer is obvious to you. In an opening one must *develop minor pieces*, then *castle*, and lastly, *connect the rooks*. In the current position Black has only 1 good square for the queen, and thus he should play 11...Qc7. This develops the queen and connects the rooks. After that Black will have finished the opening stage and may then start his middlegame attack.

In the game Black played 11...Ng4 though. Maybe he was worried about White's eventual e5 advancement. Well, if this was the case Black should have calculated this variation. At the same time it's very important to understand this general rule: **Bad moves are dangerous for the side that makes them**. This means that if White violates opening principles, it will be bad for him only. Also, if White tries to attack while most of his pieces are stuck on the queen-side, it will only weaken his position. So there's no reason for Black to worry about it.

DIAGRAM 5.12


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White to move

Anyway, 11...Ng4 was played. How would you play here as White? The answer is pretty obvious again. White should develop his minor pieces. He has delayed it for quite some time already, and he must do it now. According to *the principle of the least active piece*, a knight should be developed before a bishop; 12. Nbd2. After that, the knight will go to c4 (or at least to f1), opening the c1-bishop.

In the game he played 12.Qa6. Black answered 12...Nce5.

DIAGRAM 5.13



White to move

What should White play now? He should move his b1-knight finally. The move 13.Nbd2 does not work this time because Black has a tactical idea: 13...Bc8 and following with Nd3 (attacking White's rook, f2-pawn and other squares in White's position).

However, White has another square for a knight: 13.Na3. Actually, it's a pretty good idea because it leaves White's c1-bishop active. After that, only White's a1-rook is completely passive, but all other pieces are doing something. Black is still an attacking side, but White has a reasonably good position.

In the actual game White found another idea. 13.Ne5-Ne5 14.f4. This is a pawn move that does not prepare for the development of any White pieces. **White is trying to attack before finalizing his development.** The advancement of White's pawns is weakening his position and will make it easier for Black to open the game and start an attack. It's funny that 1 move can break so many rules.

DIAGRAM 5.14


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Black to move

14...Bc8 (Black wants to go inside with Nd3 move) 15.Qf1-Nd3. Here White made a blunder 16.Rd1.

DIAGRAM 5.15



It looks logical but allows a nice little bit of tactics 16...Bd4 and White resigned. After 17.cd-Qd4 (check) 18.Kh1-Nf2 Black will win a rook and will continue with his attack.

What do you think? **Why did white lose this game?**

Well, he made a blunder by playing 16.Rd1. He could have played 16.Re3 instead and the game would have gone on. However, this is not the whole truth. Yes, he made a blunder, but his position was worse in any case. Even without 16...Bd4 tactics, Black could still have played something like 16...c4 or 16...Ba6 with a strong attacking position. Perhaps Black would win anyway.

Maybe White didn't know the theory of this opening. I have to confess that I don't know it as well. Normally Black plays the King's Indian. I haven't tried it for White in serious games. Even so, without any knowledge of the King's Indian attack we could still detect the right moves easily. This is the power of understanding the general opening principles.

For lack of this understanding, White lost the game. That's the real cause of his loss. It's easy to admit it while talking about another player. But you must be as objective in your self-evaluation. If you can admit your weakness, you can then correct them and become a stronger player. To conclude this idea: **if you get a bad position in an opening, it demonstrates your weak understanding of some opening principles.**

Hopefully after a study of this course you will no longer suffer from such troubles.

Korchnoi - Turikov

Here is the next game. As usual I'll be asking you some questions, and I hope that you'll think about them and will try to find correct moves by yourself. So, here we go.



DIAGRAM 5.16

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1. e4, ...b6. What can you say about this move (b6)? Well, there are a few related rules that we have analyzed already.

We know that b6 is a pawn move, however it prepares the development of a piece, and so from this point of view it is fine.

On the other hand, if we compare this b6 move with a move like d5, we can see that d5 also provides for the development of the bishop (actually it develops it straight-away because the bishop is already very active from its initial square), and in addition to that it will give more space to the queen (maybe even a knight) and will strengthen Black's control in the center. Therefore, when comparing these two moves, the d5 move would be a lot stronger.

Ok, let's come back to the actual game. White played 2. d4, then came ...Bb7. How should White play here? What do you think?

DIAGRAM 5.17



White to move

Of course White should play 3. Nc3 in agreement with opening principles; *we need to develop knights before bishops*. In addition, according to *the principle of the least active piece*, we know that the bishop is already active on its initial square.

However, in spite of this fact, white played 3. Bd3, and Black answered with ...e6. Now here is the next question for you. How would you play here as White?

DIAGRAM 5.18


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White to move

Once again, *the first opening task is to develop the minor pieces*. You know that you need to develop knights before bishops, so there are two logical moves for White: Nf3 and Nc3.

The Nf3 move is more precise because if you play Nc3, Black gets an opportunity to develop his dark-squared bishop to an active square b4, pinning the c3 knight. If White plays Nf3 instead, the Black bishop has no good squares at all: If it goes to b4 then White will push it back with c3, if it goes to d6 White will push it back with e5, and in the end the bishop will have to go to e7. That is why in this position, when comparing the moves Nc3 and Nf3, we can say that Nf3 is the best option.

You know that there are two ideas in the opening: *you can either develop your pieces or prevent your opponent's development*. If you can realize BOTH of these ideas simultaneously, then this is excellent for you.

So, Nf3 was the best move, but instead White played 4. Qe2. It is actually pretty amusing that strong grandmasters break opening rules so often in their games. Currently we are analyzing a game between Korchnoi and Turikov. The White player is of course a famous Grandmaster but still, you can see that sometimes he played moves that were not the best.

Okay, how would you play here as Black?

DIAGRAM 5.19



Black to move

Black's situation is similar to White's. He also should develop his knights. Therefore he should consider playing either Nf6 or Nc6.

By the way, 4...Nc6 is interesting. Black is attacking White's d4 pawn, and if White protects it in the normal way with the move 5...Nf3, Black can play 5...Nb4 (trying to take the bishop). If White removes it by playing something like 6.Bc4, then Black can attack the e4 pawn somehow: maybe by playing Nf6, or maybe d5, or maybe even 6...Bxe4. Note that Bxe4 is not a sacrifice because after 7...Qxe4 Black will play 7...d5 (forking queen and bishop), so it is only an exchange. Anyway,

Black will take back material and will ease his position.

Do you know why such variations became possible for Black? Well, let's go back a few moves. It was possible because White made a mistake with the move 4.Qe2. If White had made a normal move like 4.Nf3, then 4...Nc6 wouldn't do anything. White could simply ignore it and play 5.Nc3. If Black then played 5...Nb4, White could simply remove the bishop to somewhere like e2 and there is absolutely nothing for Black (see position below).

DIAGRAM 5.20



This is proof that Qe2 was bad. Anyway, let's come back to the actual game and see what happened next. Instead of developing his knight, Black played 4...d6. What do you think about this move?

DIAGRAM 5.21



White to move

Well, we already mentioned that Black should have developed his knights instead. But also, even if Black wanted to move his d-pawn, it should be pushed forward as far as possible, right? *The principle of maximum activity* works for your pawns as well as your pieces; 4...d6 is very passive. The game continued with 5.Nf3,...Nf6.

Now here's another position where you may think for White. Please think about what moves could be good for White here. Actually, there are a few good ideas here so it is difficult to tell which one of them is the best. But anyway, your task is just to pause here for a moment and to think about what moves are reasonable for White in this position.

DIAGRAM 5.22


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White to move

I can see a few good moves. First, same as before, White should *develop knights before bishops* and so 6.Nc3 is an option. Another option for White is castling (6.00).

Normally these would be the only two good moves, but in the current position, considering Black's passive play (e6 and d6 are not the most forward squares for his pawns), White may try to make use of Black's mistake and play more aggressively; the principle of breaking the balance.

As we analyzed previously, if an opponent breaks the balance, you may try to break the balance as well, trying to exploit the opponent's mistake and punish him for it. So in this position White may also consider the move 6.e5 (attacking Black's knight on f6). Black will respond with 6...Nd5.

DIAGRAM 5.23



Ideally, White would like to play 7.c4 here but right now it does not force Black to go back as Black will play 7...Nb4 (attacking White's bishop on d3). So White must first play 7.a3 (to prevent Nb4) and then only on the next move play c4. This will force Black's knight to go back to an awkward position on e7. There is a small drawback with this idea for White though; *he is making pawn moves that do not facilitate his development*. Once again, the variation became possible for White just because of Black's mistakes on the previous moves. So, 6.e5 was another idea worth considering for White.

The last logical move was the one played in the game; 6.c4. This move does not prepare for the development of a piece and from that point of view we can say that it is probably not the best. However, we discussed before that movement of your c-pawn or f-pawn is possible sometimes, even if it does not prepare for your development. By playing c4, White is strengthening his center and therefore restricting Black's activity as well. This is because White's central pawns now control a lot of important central squares.

The game continued with 6...Be7 7.Nc3. Okay, now what moves do you consider as being good for Black here? (See diagram below)



DIAGRAM 5.24

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Black to move

Black doesn't have many options. He can either develop his knight or he may castle.

If we talk about the development of the knight, I think that it would be better to place it on d7. Normally we should move the pieces as forward as possible, that is true. But after 7...Nc6, this knight blocks the path of the bishop behind it on b7. It also blocks the c-pawn, stopping it from going forward in the future to undermine White's center. So, if Black decides anyway to develop his knight to c6, it is difficult to understand what he is going to do on the following moves. That is why I think that 7...Nbd7 may be a better option.

After Nbd7 the b7-bishop is still active, the c-pawn can be freely pushed in the future, say to c5, and Black will have some counter-play. It is also important to mention that Nbd7 prevents White from playing e5, because Black should certainly keep an eye on White's possibilities in addition to his own. White is ready to push e5 to try and push back Black's f6-knight (probably to its initial square on g8). This would be very good for White but Black has a counter blow.

If 8.e5 is played Black can take on f3 (8...Bxf3), trying to deflect the White queen from its protection of the e5 pawn (after that he'll take with the pawn and then with the knight). White may try to keep the queen on the e-file and protect the pawn (9.gxf3) but even after that Black can take on e5 (9...dxe5) and after White takes (10.dxe5), Black can still take with the knight (10...Nxe5). If White takes the knight (11.Qxe5), Black will take the hanging bishop on d3, winning a pawn and destroying White's pawn structure. So this is bad for White.

DIAGRAM 5.25



Let's recap. It just means that the ...Nbd7 move prevents White from playing e5 (which is also important: **while developing pieces you should also keep an eye on your opponent's possibilities**), so I think it would be the best option. Castling is also worth considering for Black.

DIAGRAM 5.26


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In the actual game he played 7...Nc6. By the way, do you remember when you should not develop pieces to the most forward available square? There are three such cases:

1. When the most forward moves does not work
2. Due to specific tactical reasons
3. To keep the harmony between your pieces

So in this position ...Nc6 was not very good because it breaks the harmony in Black's position. Okay, let us move on. White castled 8.00 and Black answered ...e5. White then played 9.d5 and Black replied with ...Nb4 (attacking the bishop on d3). How would you play here as White?

DIAGRAM 5.27



White to move

Here White should save his bishop, and so he played 10.Bb1. On the next move he can play a3 and push Black's knight to the edge of the board, which is good for White. In the game, Black played 10...a5, White played 11.a3 and Black retreated the knight to a6 (11...Na6). Okay, so this is the position where I would like to ask you to think about White's next move.

DIAGRAM 5.28


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White to move

How would you play here as White? Obviously White needs to develop his queen-side pieces (the two bishops and the rook on a1). That is one of the opening tasks: to develop the minor pieces. Thus White may either move his dark-squared bishop or his light-squared bishop. **When we have a choice between two pieces we need to apply the principle of the least active piece.** If we compare these two bishops we can see that even though the dark-squared bishop has not moved, it is already pretty active; it controls quite a long diagonal (c1-h6). We can also see that the light-squared bishop is very passive on b1. Therefore, we should develop the light-squared bishop.

Normally we would like to play Bd3, but in that case Black will play ...Nc5 (attacking the bishop straight-away and forcing it to go back). So we may say that Bd3 does not work and that's why White should play 12.Bc2, which is what White played in the game. Here, Black castled ...00. What do you think about this position?

DIAGRAM 5.29



White to move

What should White do now? Normally he needs to develop his dark-squared bishop, connect the rooks and finalize the opening. If we think about the best square for the development of this bishop, the most forward square would be g5. But Bg5 may not be the best option here for White and I would like to ask you why. Please take a moment to stop and think about it.

In the case of 13.Bg5, Black can use standard tactics. He can play 13...Nxd5 with a discovered attack on that bishop. We've analyzed this idea in an earlier lesson. This is a typical tactical operation. Before playing Bg5 you should always check for variations like this. Now if White takes the bishop (14.Bxe7) Black will recapture with the knight (14...Nxe7) and he has got an extra pawn. Thus Bg5 does not work.

The next available square is e3 (13.Be3), and White should play here. It is a good move. With this move White finalizes the opening and has a good position.

In the game though, he made another move, which is also pretty good: he played 13.Rb1. Now what is the point of this move?



DIAGRAM 5.30

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We have analyzed that rooks and bishops can sometimes work from their initial positions. In our current example, White's dark squared bishop is already very active so even if you were to place it e3, its activity would not be increased significantly. It does pretty much the same job from either c1 or e3. Although, I agree that on e3 the bishop would be a little more active. Nevertheless, if we compare the activity of White's c1 bishop and the rook on a1, we can see that the rook is definitely *the least active piece*. Therefore, White may try to activate this rook right away. And White has a way to do it.

In order to activate a rook on the first rank you need to push pawns. That's why White plays Rb1, preparing for b4. This will activate the rook (which is currently the least active piece in White's position) and also cuts off Black's knight on a6, making it impossible for this knight to go to c5.

That is why Black played 13...Nc5. Here, White answered with 14.b4 (pushing the knight back) after which Black played ...Ncd7. Now, please think about this position. (See diagram below)

DIAGRAM 5.31



Which moves do you think would be good for White here?

Actually, the situation is quite similar to the situation where White played Rb1. White may still play the move 15.Be3, finalizing his development and connecting the rooks, and this is a good option for sure.

In the game he applied a reasonable alternative. Once again, if you take a look at all of White's pieces you will see that the least active piece is the rook on f1. Currently, this rook does nothing at all. And if we compare the rook on f1 with the dark-squared bishop on c1 you will see that the bishop is far more active (it already controls a long diagonal). Therefore, it makes sense to activate the rook following *the principle of the least active piece*. And this is exactly what he did in the game, he played 15.Rd1. It makes sense and so it is a reasonable alternative to the move Be3.

We will not analyze this game through until the end because in this course we are focusing solely on the opening stage. It is sufficient to say that after a long game, White won the point. In this example, besides the chess ideas that we've

discussed, you may pay particular attention to two interesting facts:

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1. On fact is that in the early opening stage, Black played some odd moves and this quickly brought his game of theory. Even in that unknown position we were able to easily find correct moves for both sides. This just shows the general power of the opening principles that you are studying.
2. The next interesting fact is that although we are analyzing the games of strong Grandmasters, you can see that **even those great players will sometimes make mistakes in the opening.**

This means that if you study this course material seriously and adopt all of these rules in your games, you will be able to play your opening even better than those famous Grandmasters did.

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Lesson-5.2: "Opening Understanding in Action!"

We will move forward now to the next example.

Flohr - Romanovsky

In this game White played 1.d4.

In this lesson we will be observing different openings so that you can see how general opening principles work in different types of positions.

The game continued 1...Nf6, 2.c4-e6 3.Nc3-Bb4 (this is the Nimzo defense). By the way, while playing 4...Bb4 Black is developing his piece to the most forward square, while at the same time he is preventing White from playing e4 (because the c3-knight is pinned). If White plays 5.e4 Black will just win this pawn with 5...Nxe4.

Thus with the move 4...Bb4, Black develops a piece and restricts White's development at the same time. This is the ideal situation – to combine BOTH of these ideas and further your own development while restricting your opponent's development.

How would you play here as White?

DIAGRAM 5.32



White to move

I hope that the answer is pretty obvious for you right now. We should develop knights before bishops and so 4.Nf3 should be played.

In the game though, White played 4.Qc2. What can be said about this move? What rules can we apply? There are a few related ideas.

One of them is that we should NOT develop the queen at such an early stage of the game because the development of the queen is the last opening task and we should do it last of all. Also, when you develop the queen too early it may become attacked by your opponent.

White played 4.Qc2 because he wants to push a3 (to kick the bishop) and after an exchange (...Bxc3, Qxc3) gain a stable positional advantage (Black no longer has the bishop pair). We've analyzed that *in closed positions, you may sometimes delay your development for a moment in order to get a stable positional advantage*. After that you will finalize

development quickly and will remain with that positional advantage. And so that is White's idea. It's mainly applicable in closed positions because in such situations an opponent cannot open the position and start an attack to make use of his greater development.

In the current situation, the central situation is not closed. It is still unclear what will happen in the future. Thus White's task for this game will be to try and keep the position closed, get his stable advantage after a3 (getting the opponent's bishop), and after that try to finalize his development quickly.

Black's task will be to try and open up the position and exploit White's mistake of delaying his development. In order to open the position Black will need to push one of his central pawns (something like c5 or d5 or e5), exchange central pawns and open up the position. Of course Black does not have to play one of these moves right away but after preparation it may be a good idea for Black.

So this is what both players will try to play here. The game continued with 4...Nc6, which is a good move for sure as Black is developing a piece and attacking White's d4-pawn. Also, Black is exploiting the fact that because White has removed the queen from d1, the d4-pawn is now left hanging. Okay, how would you play here as White?

DIAGRAM 5.33



White to move

Of course White should play 5.Nf3, which develops a piece and protects the pawn. In the game he played 5.e3. This move is not so good because he made a pawn move instead of developing his pieces and he closed the c1-bishop's diagonal (it can no longer go to g5 or f4). Now what do you think about Black's position?

DIAGRAM 5.34



Black to move

What options do you think could be good for Black here? There are a few good options.

For example, Black could castle or he could play d5 (preparing the development of his bishop and also exerting more

control over the center).

He could also try to exploit White's mistake. Because White played e3 instead of Nf3, Black may try to use the situation. For example, with due to the lack of a knight on f3 Black may push 5...e5, attacking White's center. As we know, this is *the main tactical task for Black in the opening*.

In closed openings after 1.d4, the main tactical task of the opening for Black is to exchange this pawn. For instance, if White takes with 6.dxe5 then Black can recapture with 6...Nxe5 and equalize the game immediately. That is why 5...e5 makes sense for Black.

Of course if White was to fight for an advantage here he should play 6.d5, but Black can still retreat the knight to e7 and in the future attack White's center with the c6. Also if Black plays d6 in the future, he will have a harmonious position. So this is one option for Black.

It is difficult to say which move is absolutely the best so Black has at least a few good alternatives.

Here you may also pay attention to the fact that *you shouldn't just realize the 3 main opening tasks. You also need to pay attention to the opponent's moves*. There are 2 reasons for that.

- One reason is that you want to not only *develop your pieces*, but also to *restrict your opponent's development*.
- The second reason is that you need to *evaluate your opponent's moves* and *if you see that he has made a mistake, you may think about how to exploit it*. Like in this position, White didn't play Nf3 so Black can exploit it by pushing e5.

Returning to the game, Black played 5...d5. White answered with 6.Nf3 and Black castled 6...00. Okay, what do you think about this position?

DIAGRAM 5.35



White to move

What moves do you think would be good for White here? He should develop minor pieces so he should move one of his bishops. 7.Bd3 seems to be the most logical move. 7.Bd2 is possible as well, but the bishop is not very active from this square (but at least it neutralizes the pin and still it develops the bishop).

What do you think about the idea 7.cxd5? Do you think that White should make this move or not?

Of course White should not. He should *keep the tension between the central pawns*. If White releases this tension, it usually helps Black to equalize the game immediately. In this position if White takes with 7.cxd5, then after the recapture with 7...exd5 Black will give his bishop on c8 the possibility of traveling along the c8-h3 diagonal. He will probably place the bishop on g4 and will have a very active position. So cxd5 is a bad idea for sure.

In the game White played 7.a3.

DIAGRAM 5.36


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We have analyzed this motif before. White is delaying his development and trying to gain a stable positional advantage. If you want to make a move like that you must check the variations very carefully. You need to realize that you are breaking an opening principle and you are ignoring development. Also, if your opponent can open the position and start an attack, it may become very bad for you. So I'm not saying that moves such a3 are always bad, but you do need to *be extremely careful before playing them because very often it can be a bad mistake.*

In the current position, there is no way for Black to open up the position quickly and luckily for White this works for him. So, 7.a3 is also an option, but 7.Bd3 was more logical. The game continued with Black takes 7...Bxc3 and then White takes 8.Qxc3. Okay, now I have another question for you. The situation on the board has become more complicated. What do you think about it?

DIAGRAM 5.37



Black to move

Which moves do you think could be good for Black here?

The one idea that Black may think about is exploiting White's delay in development. What should you do in general when an opponent breaks opening principles? There are a few main ideas.

- First of all, you may start an attack
- Secondly, you should try to open the position
- Lastly, you may try to exchange off your opponent's developed pieces

With that in mind, Black may try to go with 8...Ne4 (attacking the queen and exploiting her premature development) and after White plays 9.Qc2 Black may just continue with normal development.

Alternatively, Black may even consider a move like 9...e5. I'm not saying that you should play it but you may check this move because again, Black's idea is to open up the position and start an attack. So 9...e5 may be an interesting move. To quickly recap, Black wants to open the situation in the center, use White's undeveloped position and start an attack across the central lines. For example, in the line 10.dxe5-Bf5 Black gets pretty good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



DIAGRAM 5.38

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Now Black is preparing a discovered attack on White's queen. Also, White's e5-pawn is pretty weak and Black will try to take it back with something like Re8 and Nxe5 and this may give Black the initiative in this position.

In the current position (after 9...e5), however, this idea does not work so good for Black because White has a better option. Instead of 10.dxe5 he can play 10.cxd5 and after 10...Qxd5 develop his bishop with tempo to c4 (11.Bc4). Now there is a problem for Black because his e4-knight is hanging, but it's not the end of the line and Black may play 11...Qa5+. I won't analyze until the end right now but this position is good for White. In any case, 8...Ne4 was an option for Black and 9...e5 was definitely worth considering and calculating.

Okay, let's see what else Black has here. Another thing is that Black needs to develop his light-squared bishop, and of course that is precisely what Black should think about here.

DIAGRAM 5.39



He may develop it to d7 but this square is quite passive. In actuality, it makes no real difference whether the bishop is on c8 or d7 because it is pretty passive in either case.

A better option would be to fianchetto the bishop by playing 8...b6 and after that develop the bishop to b7 or even a6. In this case the bishop will control one of the long diagonals and will become quite active.

A little drawback of this move b6 is that White can take on d5 (9.cxd5), attacking the knight and after 9...Qxd5 White can gain a tempo for development. As we know, it is very good if you can combine development with attack and here White can do just that with 10.Bc4. Nevertheless, even after that Black will relocate the queen, maybe to d6 or to h5. After that he'll play Bb7 and he will have accomplished the 3 main opening tasks and will have a normal position. So that was definitely an option.

Also, in order to develop the bishop on c8, Black may try to prepare the move e5. As we've discussed, if you can't develop a piece to an active position straight away, sometimes you can make a few preparatory moves but then you can develop the piece to a good square. According to this idea Black may try to prepare the move e5 and then develop his bishop to somewhere like g4.



DIAGRAM 5.40

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Black can play something like Re8 then Qd6 or Qe7 and on the next move e5. This may be an option for Black as well. At the same time, I don't like it very much because there was a much easier way for Black to develop the bishop. Instead he could have decided to simply fianchetto the bishop and not waste so much time.

In the game, Black played 8...Bd7. However I do not think that this is a very good move because it develops the bishop to a very passive square.

DIAGRAM 5.41



White to move

Okay, how would you play here as White? What moves do you think would be good for White? White needs to develop his bishops and so the light-squared bishop should obviously go to d3 (9.Bd3), which is the most logical move in this position.

If we talk about the dark-squared bishop, then here the situation is not so clear. You do not want to move it to d2 (9.Bd2) because first it is quite passive there and second because Black will reply with 9...Ne4 (forking queen and bishop) and will take this bishop.

Of course, White may also try to fianchetto this bishop. Actually, that is what he did in the game. He played 9.b4. It is a pawn move but it prepares the development of the bishop (which can now go to b2 and be much more active) and that is why it is a normal move.

DIAGRAM 5.42


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Black to move

What do you think about this position for Black? What should Black play here? There are a few logical alternatives that I can see. One idea is that black still may play 9...Ne4 (taking advantage of White's prematurely developed queen).

Another option is that Black can develop the queen to e7 – 9...Qe7 (because the 3rd opening task is to connect the rooks by moving the queen). It may seem like White can then push 10.b5 and force Black's knight back to the last rank but Black has a better option. Can you see it?

DIAGRAM 5.43



Black to move

Black should make the counter-blow 10...Ne4 (forcing the queen to go away) and after that the attacked knight will go forward (NOT back) with 11...Na5. Now Black gets a really good position because White ignored his development with his last moves. He made pawn moves without developing while most of his pieces remained at home on the back rank and now Black will start an attack. 10.b5 was definitely a mistake for White. This whole variation shows that 9...Qe7 was a possible alternative for Black.

There is also another approach for this position. As I've told you before, you need to *pay attention to the opponent's moves and evaluate them*. If you see that your opponent has played something dubious, something that you don't like very much, something that does not correspond to opening principles, then you may consider how to exploit it. This is because *if the opponent has broken the balance, we may break the balance as well and start an attack*. In our example, White played the move 9.b4 instead of a normal move like Bd3 and now Black may try to exploit it by pushing 9...a5 and attacking this advanced pawn.

DIAGRAM 5.44


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If White wants to keep his pawn chain he will need to push b5. Black's knight will go back (Ne7) and after that he will keep attacking that pawn by playing ...c6 to undermine the whole of White's pawn structure and may get some counter-play. So that was another option for Black.

Thus in total we may say that Black should consider either 9...Ne4 (attacking the queen), 9...Qe7 (finalizing development) or maybe 9...a5 (trying to make use of White's mistake). So these are the reasonable options. In the game, however, Black played 9...dxc4.

DIAGRAM 5.45



This is the wrong move as *pawn moves are good only if they support development* (but of course not your opponent's development **J**). Here it rather helps White to develop his bishop with a tempo (10.Bxc4).

We have also said that you need to *keep the tension between the central pawns*. When you release this tension you are *strengthening your opponent's center*. And so that was a mistake.

Nevertheless, Black has a certain tactical idea in mind and after ...dxc4 and Bxc4 he pushed 10...b5. This is a tactical trick. It doesn't make Black's position so good, but nevertheless he played for a trick. The idea is that after White takes with 11.Bxb5, Black has an interesting counter blow; 11...Nxb4 with a discovered attack on White's bishop. Now if White takes with the queen (12.Qxb4) Black will play 12...Rb8 installing a pin on White's bishop and on the next move will play a6 or c6 and take the bishop back.

DIAGRAM 5.46


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In the game White took the bishop on d7 (12.Bxd7) and at first sight it seems like it is winning, but Black has an intermediate attacking move 12...Nbd5 (attacking the queen).

DIAGRAM 5.47



White to move

Where would you place your queen here as White?

Normally we want to move a piece as forward as possible. From that point of view the move 13.Qc6 seems like the best idea. However, after 13...Qd7 White will have to exchange queens and in that case, you can see that the White queen which made a few moves (d1-c2-c3-c6) will be exchanged for Black's queen that made only one move. In such a case, it will be very good for Black because **White has now lost those moves made by his queen**. So we may say that after this exchange Black has won two tempi, because White made three moves of his queen compared to Black's one. That is why it is not a very good option for White.

If White tries to push the queen to c5 (13.Qc5) then Black can recapture with a knight (13...Nxd7) and gain an extra tempo by attacking White's queen. By the way, this is the reason why it is NOT recommended that you develop the queen at such an early stage of the game. *Quite often in an opening you have to place your queen in a safety position on the central squares of the central ranks, where the opponent's pieces cannot attack it.*

That is why in this game, White played 13.Qc2, and that is fine. After that, Black took on d7 (13...Nxd7). How would you play here as white?

DIAGRAM 5.48


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White to move

Although you can castle (and that would be a normal move) there is a better option. You can play e4 (attacking Black's knight). Once again, *you may either develop your own pieces or restrict your opponent's development*. Here after 14.e4 White forces Black to go back, and of course this is an achievement for White. Where should Black's knight go? Obviously it should go to *the most forward square*, so to the sixth rank, preferably f6 because from f6 it also controls the center.

In commentaries to the game, the Black player said that he did not want to play 14...Nf6 because White can reply with 15.Qc6 and block his backward pawn on c7. However **you should NOT bother yourself with so many extra ideas**. You just need to *think about the base opening principles that we are learning*. 15.Qc6 is not really dangerous for Black. There are many things that Black can do because Qc6 actually violates an opening principle (this is the second move of a piece in the opening) and this is why that move should not be good for White. For instance, one idea is that Black could play 15...Rb8 and then ...Rb6 and force the queen to go back. Another idea is that Black may try to make use of White's mistake.

We know that *after an opponent breaks the balance (makes a mistake) you may try to open the position and start an attack*. We also know that *to open the position you usually need to push your central pawns and exchange them*. Here Black has the sudden move 15...e5. It seems losing at first but after 16.de Black has the sudden tactical idea 16...Nxe5 17.Nxe5-Qd4 with a double attack on White's rook on a1 and the knight on e5. In addition to that, the pawn on e4 will be hanging as well. So, that is an interesting trick for Black and it just shows that White's Qc6 move is definitely not that dangerous for Black.

In the actual game, however, Black played 14...Ne7, which violates *the principle of maximum activity* because it moves the piece backward. What should White do now?

DIAGRAM 5.49



White to move

White needs to castle and develop his dark-squared bishop. But if we compare these two options we can see that the bishop is already doing something (it is controlling the c1-h6 diagonal) while the centralized king is still in a completely

bad position. That's why, following *the principle of the least active piece*, we should care about the king first of all. Also, castling helps White to activate his rook so White should castle (15.00). Black responded with ...Rc8. What do you think now? What do you think White should do?

DIAGRAM 5.50



White to move

White needs to finalize the 3 main opening tasks and thus he has to move the bishop and connect the rooks. Normally we should move the bishop to the most forward available square (thus to g5). In the current position however, after 16.Bg5 Black can push 16...c5 (a move he prepared with his last move Rc8) and this will help Black to develop his rook.

That's why in the game White played 16.Be3 instead, which is a better option because it not only develops White's piece, but also prevents Black's development (Black cannot play c5 any longer and thus his rook will remain passive).

In this position there was another alternative, one that you are already familiar with. We know that *rooks and bishops can sometimes work from their initial positions*. Currently we can see that the bishop on c1 is already pretty active. In situations such as this, *sometimes instead of moving the bishop you may activate the rooks*. Here White has an obvious way to activate the rooks; the a1-rook will go to b1 and control an open file while the f1-rook will probably go to d1 and will also play in the center—and in this case we can see that there's no need for White to move his c1-bishop because all of White's pieces will be active.

If we compare moves Rb1 and Rd1, we will see that Rd1 is definitely the better move because it not only develops the rook but also prevents Black from playing c5. The problem for Black is that if he tries to play c5 then after dxc5 Black will suffer a pin on his knight.

DIAGRAM 5.51



So 16.Rd1 was a good option for White, perhaps following with Rb1. In the actual game White played 16.Be3, which is also a totally normal move. This is the classical approach. White has just finalized the 3 main opening tasks; he

developed his pieces, castled and connected the rooks by moving the queen. Now we may say that the opening is finished.

White has a good position. He has better control in the center and Black has some weaknesses (isolated pawns on a7 and c7). We may conclude that White has an advantage. In the middlegame White will need to start an attack. Most likely he will attack Black's weak queen-side pawns. On the next moves White will activate his rooks (bringing them into the center or onto an open file like the b-file or c-file) and after that will attack Black's pawns.

Let's now move on to the next example. I hope that you have already adopted many of these opening principles into your game. Nevertheless, it is very important that you train them. In a real game you have only a matter of minutes, sometimes even seconds, for finding the correct moves and thus you need to have these skills to be automatic. They should become natural for you and that is why we are doing this extensive training right now. So let us move on and get started.

Our example begins with the moves: 1.Nf3-Nf6 2.d4-e6 3.c4-b6. This is the Queen's Indian defense. Here, White played the move 4.a3.

DIAGRAM 5.52



What do you think about this move? There are a few things that we can say about it.

First of all this is a **pawn move that does not support White's development** and from this point of view it is not a good move.

However, we should pay attention to *the purpose of this move*. With 4.a3 White wants to prevent Black from playing Bb4. Also, if we take a look at Black's dark-squared bishop we will see that it does not have any good squares left (because the squares b4 and c5 are controlled by White). Additionally, Bd6 would block Black's d-pawn and so he is only left with a passive position on e7. Thus we can conclude that Whites a3 move restricted Black's bishop quite a lot. With that in mind we can say that this is a possible option for White *because in an opening you can either develop your pieces or prevent your opponent's development, and both ideas are approximately equal*. That is why 4.a3 is a possible option for White.

Another possible option is just to follow standard opening principles and play 4.Nc3 (developing the knights).

Let's see what happened in the game. At this point Black played 4...Bb7 and White replied with 5.Nc3. And now I have a question for you. How would you play here as Black?

DIAGRAM 5.53


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Black to move

Black should realize the first opening task and develop his minor pieces. Normally we should develop knights before bishops, but if we move the knight to c6 (5...Nc6) now White will play 6.d5 and push it back right away. Thus 5...Nc6 does not work for Black.

Black can prepare this move by playing 5...d5, and in this case Black will make it possible to develop the knight to d7 or to c6 in the future. It also gives Black extra control over the important central squares. Thus d5 is a good option, and perhaps even the best one.

Alternatively, Black may just develop his bishop and play 5...Be7. This is a little more passive and that is why I think that 5...d5 is the best, but it is still an option.

In the actual game Black played 5...Ne4. This move is a mistake. It is **the second move of the same piece in an opening**, breaking *the principle of the least active piece*. It will give White an advantage in development.

White then took this knight with 6.Nxe4 and Black recaptured with ...Bxe4. So let us think about this position.

DIAGRAM 5.54



White to move

What would you play here as White? When you know opening principles everything is pretty simple. White needs to develop his bishops now (either the dark-squared bishop or the light-squared bishop).

If we think for a moment about the dark-squared bishop, we would like to push it to *the most forward available square* but the problem is that if you play 7.Bg5 in this position Black can answer with 7...f6 and push it back, or even just 7...Be7, attacking the bishop. White will then have to do something about it (8.Bxe7) and Black will recapture with the queen (8...Qxe7), simultaneously developing the queen. We can see that White has made two moves with his bishop (Bg5 and Bxe7) and as a result has only helped Black to develop his queen. Of course, this rather favors Black's development so it is not what White wants. Thus we can say that Bg5 does not work in this position.

We should then try the next square. The next most forward available square is f4 (7.Bf4), and this is a good option for White. With this move White develops the bishop to a good square and after that will develop his light squared bishop. In the game he played 7.e3, which is also possible. Here White decides to first develop his light-squared bishop. Black played 7...Be7.

What is the best move for White now?

DIAGRAM 5.55



White to move

It is 8.Bd3. White needs to develop his bishop to *the most forward available square*, and at the same time it helps White to *neutralize* Black's bishop in the center.

Now it is a branching point for Black. He has a couple of options. He can go back with the bishop or take one of White's pieces (or do something else). What do you think?

Of course **Black does not want to go back as it would lose a tempo.**

It would be better to take the White bishop but the drawback is that afterwards, White gets to develop his queen with a tempo, because White needs to recapture the bishop but at the same time he develops the queen. *It is always good when you can make a developing move with a tempo* and that is why Black does not want to favor White's development and may try to find something else.

And Black does have a good alternative here: he can just protect his bishop by playing 8...d5 (occupying the center with his pawn and protecting his bishop on e4).

Okay, the normal move for White here would probably be to just castle. In the actual game he took on e4 (9.Bxe4). This is also a possible option. Black then recaptured ...dxe4. And now, what do you think is the best move for White?

DIAGRAM 5.56



White to move

This question was a little bit tricky. You may say that the most forward available square is e5 and so White should move there – 10.Ne5. Indeed generally White does want to place the knight there but a small problem is that Black will push the knight away with f6 and after that this knight will not have many good squares to go to. Black can't play 10...f6 now however, because of 11.Qh5+ and White is creating problems for Black. But if both sides were to castle (10...00 and 11.00) and after that Black plays 11...f6, then the only square for the knight is g4 (12.Ng4), and then after 12...h5 this knight is simply trapped.

Let's go back. Now you can see why in the current position, the move Ne5 does not work so well. You can also see that *you cannot follow the general rules blindly; you need to check the specific variations as well*. In most cases, the general rules work and these moves will be the best. But *sometimes, due to specific tactical properties of the position, the most forward move is just impossible because it does not work well, and in that case you will have to pick something else*. In the game White played 10.Nd2.

The positive side of this move is that it is an attacking move; White is attacking Black's pawn and forcing Black to defend it somehow. Thus White causes Black to waste some time defending instead of developing. Black now played 10...f5 in order to protect this pawn. What do you think White should do now? What moves do you think could be good for White here?

DIAGRAM 5.57



White to move

White needs to care about his development. With that in mind, one good option for White is to castle (11.00).

If White want to develop his dark-squared bishop then it will be difficult to achieve this across the c1-h6 diagonal because it is blocked. And so he may try to fianchetto the bishop by playing 11.b4 and then Bb2. So that is another option for White.

In the game White played 11.f3.

DIAGRAM 5.58



What do you think about this move? There are a few things that we may say here.

One thing is that **this is a pawn move that does not really prepare White's development**. White somewhat attacks Black but at the same time he is taking actions before finalizing his development and from this point of view this move is little dubious.

On the other hand it has some ideas because we can see that if Black captures on f3 (11...exf3) then White will take with the knight (12.Nxf3) or the queen (12.Qxf3) and will actually develop his piece. For instance if he takes with the queen it helps White to develop his queen, and also it is an attacking move as it is attacking Black's rook on a8. Thus we may conclude that although 11.f3 looks like it is just undermining Black's center, it does in fact support White's development. That is why it is a possible option, although maybe castling was an easier way for White.

And now I have a question for you. What should Black do now?

DIAGRAM 5.59



Black to move

Of course the most natural option is to take on f3 (11...exf3). White will recapture with either the knight or the queen. If White recaptures with the knight Black will castle (continuing his development), and if White takes with the queen attacking the rook Black will probably play Nd7 or maybe c6 and in either case he has a good position. It was probably the best option for Black.

In the game he found an interesting alternative. He decided to make use of White's rather dubious move 11.f3. As we have discussed before, it is very important to pay attention to the opponent's moves as well, and if you notice that he made a mistake or played something dubious, then you may ask yourself, "What is the drawback of this move and how can I exploit this mistake?"

Here a drawback of White's f3 move is that he weakened his king. Black tried to exploit this by playing 11...Bd6, creating the threat of ...Qh4+. We can see that this move Bd6 is also violates some opening principles as this is the second move of the one piece in an opening and Black is starting to attack too early (he has not yet finalized the 3 main opening tasks). That's why in general such a move would be a big mistake, but in this particular situation it is possible for Black because White broke the balance by playing 11.f3. *When your opponent breaks the balance, often you may do so as well in order to exploit the opponent's mistake and punish him for it.* That is why we may say that Bd6 is a possible alternative.

Black's idea is that after 12.fxe4 he can play 12...Qh4+. White does not want to move his king, he will play 13.g3. Black will take this pawn with 13...Bxg3+ using the pin on White's rook. Actually, it is still not very dangerous for White because Black has started a premature attack. Black has only two pieces in the game and after White plays something like 14.Ke2 it is not that simple for Black to find something real. Once again, he is trying to attack with only two pieces.

Now I have another question for you. How would you play here as White?

DIAGRAM 5.60


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White to move

White could simply castle, and that is probably the best option. Now if Black tries that attack via Qh4 there is nothing very dangerous for White; White can play f4 and his king is well protected. After that White will develop his dark-squared bishop (probably with b4 and Bb2) and have a good position.

In the real game, White played another move. He played 12.Qa4+, which is a little bit strange because normally we should not try to attack at such an early stage of the game. We should not develop the queen too early (we should develop the minor pieces first). 12.Qa4 rather helps Black's development because now Black may develop one of his pieces.

I guess White's idea was to somewhat prevent Black from playing Qh4, for example in a line like 12...Nd7 13.00. Now if Black plays 13...Qh4 the knight on d7 will be left hanging and White creates some problems for Black with the pin on the knight). So I guess White tried to prevent the move Qh4, even though it wasn't that dangerous for White. We shouldn't be afraid of an opponent's premature attacks and that is why it was unnecessary for White to play that move (Qa4).

Anyway, that is what White played. How would you answer as Black?

DIAGRAM 5.61



Black to move

Of course we want to move a PIECE. In an opening we need to develop pieces and from that point of view Black should either play Nd7 or Qd7.

12...Qd7 would be a good idea, forcing White to exchange queens and lose a tempo (because White made two moves with his queen and it will be exchanged for Black's queen that only made one move). But the bad thing is that after that exchange White will grab the e4-pawn which is still hanging. Thus 12...Qd7 does not work but 12...Nd7 works perfectly. After Black plays Nd7 White will probably castle (13.00) and now the e4-pawn is hanging so Black will have to take (13...exf3). White will recapture (14.Nxf3). Black will castle (14...00). And we will have a normal position which is approximately equal. White will also finalize his development now but you can see that the Qa4 move didn't give White anything real.



However, in the actual game Black played 12...c6, which is certainly a mistake. *In an opening we should make pawn moves only if they prepare our development.* Here c6 does not prepare our development, it ignores development.

After that White castled 13.00. What do you think Black should do now?

DIAGRAM 5.62



Black to move

Black's e4-pawn is hanging and he must do something about it because he does not want to lose a pawn. Black can decide to take on f3 just to save the pawn but the negative side to this move is that it gives White an opportunity to develop his knight; he will recapture on f3 and simultaneously develop his knight. Normally we do not want to favor our opponent's development. So in the game Black played 13...Qh4.

DIAGRAM 5.63



White to move

After that White has to protect his king. He can't do it with 14.g3 because Black will take with the bishop (14...Bg3) and then White's king will be in danger. The same thing happens after White plays 14.h3 and Black plays 14...Qg3. Suddenly Black creates quite strong threats. That is why White has to play 14.f4, and we may say that Black prevented White from developing his knight to f3.

At the same time, we may say that 13...Qh4 has a negative side as well because it is **a premature development of the queen** (normally we should develop minor pieces first) and now it is a little off to the side in the position. So if we go back to that position we can see that both 13...exf3 and 13...Qh4 have a negative side. *In such situations, you shouldn't bother yourself too much with analyzing the variations. You just need to recollect the opening rules, try to FOCUS on them and not be deflected by something else.*

DIAGRAM 5.64


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So here Qh4 violated opening rules because it is a premature development of the queen. That is why Black should simply take on f3, castle and then think about his development. After that the next thing that Black will think about is how to develop knight. He can't do it instantly because the c6 pawn is hanging but he can maybe push it to c5 first, or protect the pawn with something like Qc7 and then Nd7 and Black will have a normal position.

Anyway, let's go back to the actual game. The continuation after Black played 13...Qh4 was 14.f4 and then black castled ...00. Now we've reached the next position where White needs to think and to find the best move. What do you think is good for White here?

DIAGRAM 5.65



White to move

In the opening we should develop minor pieces, castle and connect the rooks by moving the queen. Here, in order to finalize the opening tasks White needs to develop his bishop on c1. One option is to move the knight somewhere and then develop the bishop to d2, but here the problem is that the knight has no good squares to go to. Another option is to play b4 and develop the bishop to b2. This is a normal solution and White has a good position here.

In the actual game however, White found a very good option that is even more powerful than b4; he played 15.c5.

There is a rule that states that: *usually, in open positions, we may sacrifice a pawn for two tempi*, and here White can get those two tempi after sacrificing a pawn. With the move c5 White is trying to exploit Black's mistakes. Black's first mistake was 12...c6 when he ignored development. His second inaccuracy was the move 13...Qh4, which was a premature development of his queen. After your opponent has made some mistakes you may think about how to start an attack and how to open the position. That's why c5 is a very good option.

Black takes the pawn 15...bxc5, White now plays 16.Nc4 and that is one tempo that White wins with this positional sacrifice (he is attacking the bishop). Black plays ...Qe7 and now White can take the pawn 17.dxc5 and after ...Bxc5 will win the second tempo by playing 18.b4. This move prepares development because after that White can develop the bishop to a very active square. After ...Bd6 White did just that and played 19.Bb2, developing the bishop on a long diagonal (a1-h8) and a very powerful position. And thus we can say that as a result of White's pawn sacrifice he gained two tempi for development and opened the position as well. He will now have a very powerful attacking position. In the

game Black played 19...Bc7. How would you play here as White?

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DIAGRAM 5.66



White to move

In most cases, after you've finalized the main opening tasks it is time to start an attack, and that is what you should think about. However, *quite often before the direct attack you also need to do one last thing; to bring your rooks onto the central files*. Here White achieves this with the move 20.Rfd1.

Now we should try and think for Black's side. What should Black do here?

DIAGRAM 5.67



Black to move

Black obviously needs to develop his b8-knight. Currently it can only go to d7 but it is bad for Black because after that White will take the c6-pawn and will attack two of Black's pieces simultaneously.

Okay, let's go back. If Nd7 doesn't work right now we may try to prepare it. For example he can play 20...Rc8, trying to protect his bishop and after that play Nd7 right away or make some more preparation moves if required. That was the way for Black to still finalize his development and keep playing. In the actual game he played 20...c5. What can be said about this move?

DIAGRAM 5.68


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One thing is that it is a pawn move that does not prepare development and it is bad for this reason. But there is an even greater reason to call this move a mistake. *The side that is ahead in development should try to open up the position and start a direct attack.* By playing c5, Black actually helps White to open the position and start attacking Black across those new open lines and diagonals. And that is why it's a big mistake which strengthens White's attack.

Okay, now what do you think about White's options?

DIAGRAM 5.69



White to move

First of all let's recollect what you should do when you are ahead in development. In this position, White is definitely ahead in development; he has already finalized all main opening tasks and has even started some aggressive actions while Black still has some pieces on their initial squares and he can't activate the knight. So, when you are ahead in development you need to attack, open the position and exchange your opponent's developed pieces. Following these guidelines you can easily find a couple of ideas for White.

One idea is that White can take on c5 and open the position (which is what he did in the game).

Another idea is to exchange opponent's developed pieces by playing 21...Be5. After that, let's say if Black takes and then knight takes (21...Be5 22.Ne5), you can see the point of the idea. **When you exchange the opponent's developed pieces he has no active pieces in the game at all.**

DIAGRAM 5.70

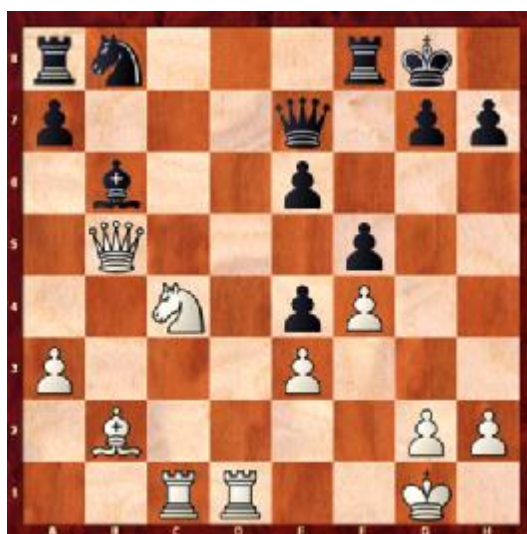

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Now it seems as if all of Black's forces are completely passive and completely out of the game. So that's an option for White as well. We've tried to open the position, we've tried to exchange the opponent's developed pieces and we may also try to attack.

Here White has the attacking move 21.Qb5, attacking Black's pawn and at the same time threatening Qb7 and attacking those pieces in the corner and trying to win them.

Those were a few good options for White. In the actual game he chose to play 21.bxc5, which was one of the possible alternatives. Black recaptured with the queen ...Qxc5 and now White played 22.Rac1, bringing one more piece into the game and preparing an attack on Black's hanging pieces along the c-file. Black played ...Qe7 and White answered 23.Qb5. We have seen this idea before. White is going to go inside with Qb7. Here Black answered ...Bb6. What do you think White should do now?

DIAGRAM 5.71



White to move

Some time ago we saw that it was good for White to exchange an opponent's developed pieces. Here White may consider taking on b6 (24.Nxb6). Then after 24...axb6, even though White can take the b6-pawn, he would then lose control of d7 and Black would at last be able to finalize his development. Of course White would still have a big advantage but this move would allow Black to finalize development, and so White may try to find something better. The purpose of the Nxb6 move was not even to win a pawn but to just neutralize the opponent's only active piece. Therefore, right now, White should mainly think about how to attack and how to keep Black's knight out of the game.

White has the strong attacking idea 25.Be5, threatening Rc7 or Bd6, and now Black is defenseless, he can just resign. That was the best continuation for White.

In the actual game he played 24.a4 and won anyway because White has a big advantage. He's preparing an attack with a5 (or Ba3 which is a possible alternative as well) and won the game pretty soon.

Now we may make some general conclusions about this game. In the opening stage Black was deflected by some

attacking ideas on the king-side and he ignored his development for some time. That is why White decided to punish Black for his mistake and sacrificed a pawn to gain an advantage of two tempi. Once he got that advantage and became ahead in development he started to realize important ideas for the side that is ahead in development. They are to:

1. open up the position
2. exchange the opponent's developed pieces, and the major one
3. attack!

If you realize these 3 ideas when you are ahead in development, you will create huge problems for your opponent and it is quite likely that you will win the game very quickly. That is what happened in this game.

Here at the end of this lesson I can give you some final notes:

Although we have analyzed different games you may have noticed that the general opening rules and principles were always the same. So even if you play an unknown opening you can very easily find correct moves if you just focus yourself on the opening principles and try to follow them.

During these examples we have analyzed different opening positions and maybe you were not aware of the opening theory of these lines. Still, we were able to easily find correct moves for both sides even without orienting on any theoretical book moves.

Lastly, in these games we analyzed the opening moves of very strong Grandmasters and you were able to find some mistakes there and this shows that YOUR opening understanding is now very good. So, let me congratulate you on this great fact!

Now you may go to the practical part of the course. There you will improve your opening skills further, and will learn a powerful opening repertoire for your practical games.

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Task: self-analysis

-

Before you move on to the opening repertoire, let's check your current progress.

Take the 10 most recent games that you played before studying this course "The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2. It can be the games from a serious tournament or even internet blitz games.

Review an opening stage of these games. Find positions where YOU:

1. Followed the opening rules.
2. Violated the opening rules.

In the second case, ask yourself why you made this mistake and what rules should have been applied here?

Don't be upset if you detect mistakes in your past games. On the contrary – this is great! It means that now you are stronger than before – you are progressing!

This task will help you digest the opening principles better and measure your progress.

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Practical Part: Instruction

In the practical part you will find a comprehensive analysis of different openings. It contains:

- Ø Additional variations for the openings presented in the 1st opening course, "The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory";
- Ø New openings that supplement the ones you've already learnt from the 1st opening course.

Ultimately this will build you a powerful opening repertoire.

The practical part contains A LOT of information. Of course, there's no need to study it all at once. Learn the openings gradually, one by one.

What is the proper SEQUENCE of studying openings?

It all depends on your needs. Start with those openings where you experience trouble (lose games more often).

While talking about an opening repertoire for BLACK, I would suggest the following sequence:

1. Bogo-Indian Defence and Nimzo Defence. You need to study these two openings together, as it is your opponent's choice which one to play. After learning these variations, you'll have very powerful and solid preparation against 1.d4 move.
2. Sicilian Defence. The Paulsen variation was presented in the 1st opening course as well, and I suggest that you review those lines first. After that, you may study the additional lines and explanations presented in this new course. Then you'll get a menacing weapon against 1.e4.
3. English Opening. 1.c4 move is not so popular, but you should still be ready for it.
4. Scandinavian Defence, Icelandic Gambit. The Sicilian Defence will probably be your main weapon against 1.e4. Nevertheless, sometimes you may surprise your opponents with less common – yet very interesting – variations of the Scandinavian. It was presented in the 1st opening course, too, and I recommend that you review those lines first. In this new course, you will find some additional attacking variations that can confuse your opponent and bring you a victory!
5. 1.Nc3 opening has suddenly become relatively popular nowadays, especially in blitz games. Thus you should be ready for it. Still, this is rather a sideline and you should not spend too much time on it.

Regarding the opening repertoire for WHITE, you may use the following order of study:

1. The Najdorf variation of the Sicilian Defence is the most popular opening at present. It was analysed in the 1st opening course and you may review those variations first. In this new course, you will find some additional lines and explanations that will further strengthen your play against the "Najdorf".
2. Against the Sicilian Defence, you may sometimes use the 2.Ne2 variation in order to confuse your opponent and break their home preparation.
3. 1...e5 move is the second most popular reply to 1.e4. You can use the Vienna game against it. This is a very solid and, at the same time, very interesting and flexible opening. The positions arising are somewhat easier to play compared to the Ruy Lopez. In conclusion, you may either use the Ruy Lopez (presented in the 1st opening course) or the Vienna game against 1...e5. The best option is to adopt both openings.
4. French Defence. This was analysed in the 1st opening course as well, but now you can deepen your preparation.
5. Caro-Kann Defence, Panov attack. In the 1st opening course, you have already studied this line. However, you don't want to play the same variations all the time. That's why in this new course you will learn some alternative lines and additional interesting ideas.

6. The Sicilian Defence, Loewenthal variation is less popular than the Sveshnikov variation, but still you should be ready for it.
7. Scandinavian Defence. In the 1st opening course you've studied the 4.g3 variation, which is very good and simple. In this new course, you will learn more complex but, at the same time, more ambitious variations. Such aggressive play can break down your opponent right after the opening!
Since you will also play the Scandinavian Defence for Black, additional study of this opening will be useful for sure.
8. Pirc Defence. The 4.Bg5 variation is more aggressive compared to 4.Be3 (presented in the 1st opening course). Both options are fine though: 4.Be3 is more solid, 4.Bg5 more ambitious. White's plan is similar in both variations, thus it'll be easy for you to study and play it.

For every opening you will need to study the following materials:

1. "Base theory": it contains the main lines and ideas of an opening. This will help you familiarise yourself with an opening quickly. Later on, you can use it to refresh your knowledge of this variation quickly.
2. "Advanced theory": this is a comprehensive analysis of the opening and all the necessary variations. Study it, use it in your games and enjoy your victories! ♪ If you are a beginner, you may skip this part and study other material instead.
3. "Commented games": it's not enough merely to know the opening variations; you also need to understand the ideas and plans typical for this opening. Commented games will do exactly that for you.
4. "Instructive games": we have selected the best and the most instructive games that illustrate typical strategic ideas and tactical motifs. Going through these games will further improve your knowledge of a given opening.
5. "Theoretical summary": some of the openings are pretty complicated. In such cases, it's useful to summarise the ideas you've learnt. This will form "a clear picture" of this opening in your head and you will digest it better. First try to make such a summary yourself. After that, find a corresponding chapter in the e-book and study it.

Note: NOT all the openings have all the above mentioned materials. For instance, "a theoretical summary" is presented for some of the openings only. That is correct. Simple or less common openings don't worth too much of your training time. Important openings, on the contrary, deserve a serious study, and you'll find a lot of materials in corresponding sections.

What if you still have some questions about an opening, even after you've studied it?

As you are aware, the game of chess is infinite. It's impossible to analyse every single line. Hence an opening theory contains the main necessary variations only. Most often they will occur in your games and you will know what to do.

Still, sometimes an opponent will surprise you and you will need to think for yourself. This is completely normal. In such cases, you will use general rules of playing in the opening stage and knowledge about typical plans and ideas of this opening.

If you have a question about an opening, you can find the answer using the following routes:

- 1) Review once again the video lessons from this course. After that, apply the general rules of play in an opening and think what should be played in this particular position.
- 2) Use your chess engine (Houdini, Rybka, Fritz, etc.). It will show you the best move, nearly always.
- 3) Find the games of strong players in this opening. See how they played in this position. There are a lot of chess databases (including on-line free databases) and you can find a lot of games there.

Now please go to the openings and start your study!

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Theoretical summary:

French defense (White)

What are the best squares for your pieces in this opening?

The b1-knight should go to c3, where it controls important central squares e4 and d5. It's typical for this knight to go to e2 to support the important square d4. Also there is a possibility of Nb5-d6 maneuver to occupy Black's weak square d6.

The g1-knight should be developed to f3. If possible, White will then advance it to a dominant position on e5.

The dark-squared bishop is well placed on g5. If Black trades White's c3-knight with the maneuver Bb4 and Bxc3 – after that White will be able to develop his c1-bishop to a3 and attack Black's weaknesses.

The light-squared bishop should go to d3. It's a good central position. In the middlegame this bishop 'looks' at Black's castling and supports White's attack.

Rooks: the best position depends on a specific variation. As usual, rooks are well placed on the center files "d" and "e". If central position is closed, White may leave his king-side rook on f1 (after castling) to support f4-f5 advancement.

Queen: The queen can stand on the central squares of the 2nd rank (just to finalize White's development). Ideally White wants to bring his queen to the king-side (e.g. g4, f4, h5 squares) where it facilitates White's attack.

King: usually it's castled king-side. In the MacCutcheon variation the king lives for a while in the center but it's very typical to play Ke1-f1.

What are the typical maneuvers of your pieces?

- Nb5-d6
- Qd1-g4
- Bc1-a3
- Nh3-f4-h5
- Rh1-h3

What are the main plans for White and for Black?

For WHITE: Attack the king is a very usual plan in the French. Usually White needs to strengthen his center first, and after that start an attack on the king-side. It can be either a piece attack, and/or White can push his f-pawn: f4-f5.

For BLACK: Create a counterattack against White's center. Very often Black should expand on the queen-side.

Are there any standard tactical ideas for White and for Black?

For WHITE: The sacrifice Bxh7+ against Black's castling.

For BLACK: Black can undermine White's center with c5 and f6 moves, and sometimes even sacrifice a piece for White's central pawns.

Are there any typical endgame positions for this opening? Are they good for you?

In French defense usually endgames are good for black because of his good pawn structure and solid position. So for White it's better to attack in the middlegame.

Endgame positions can be in White's favor when Black suffers from his "bad bishop" (the light-squared bishop is "bad" because it's restricted by Black's pawn chain d5-e6-f7).



"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Theoretical summary:

Sicilian defense, Najdorf variation, 6.Bg5 (White)

What are the best squares for your pieces in this opening?

Queenside Knight: Normally stands on c3. It's very common to sacrifice this knight on d5.

Kingside Knight: Normally stands on d4. Sometimes it can go to b3, but you should not do it without a serious reason.

Light-squared bishop: Usually it's placed on d3. Sometimes White may leave it on its initial position to start an attack on the Kingside without losing time (while the bishop is pretty active even on f1).

Dark-squared bishop: Stands on g5 and puts pressure on the Black's position along h4-d8 diagonal.

Rooks: Commonly they stand on e1 and d1. In some lines the h1-rook may be left on the king-side to support White's pawn assault (especially in variations when Black castles kingside).

Queen: Is placed on f3 and then it can go to g3 to support e4-e5 advancement and to attack Black's g7-pawn.

King: Is castled queen-side.

What are the typical maneuvers of your pieces?

- Pawn breakthrough e4-e5.
- Qf3-g3 move attacking g7-pawn.
- Sacrifice of a knight on d5 with the move Nc3-d5. After that – doubling of the rooks on the "e" file.

What are the main plans for White and for Black?

For WHITE: When Black's king is in a center, White should open the central position (even at cost of material). White can do it by pushing e4-e5, or using a sacrifice Nc3-d5.

Sometimes White can push his g-pawn (g4-g5) to gain space, disturb Black's f6-knight and start a king-side attack.

For BLACK: Withstand against White's attack and start a counter-attack on the queenside (against White's king).

Are there any standard tactical ideas for White and for Black?

For WHITE: Sacrifice of a knight is a very typical tactic. It can be made on the squares d5, b5, e6, and sometimes even on f5.

For BLACK: After the moves h6 (for black) and Bh4 Black has a tactical blow Nxe4 with a discovered attack on White's hanging bishop on h4.

Are there any typical endgame positions for this opening? Are they good for you?

In this line normally the endgame positions are in Black's favor because White's position is more advanced and weak.



"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Theoretical summary:

Caro-Kann defense, Panov attack (White)

What are the best squares for your pieces in this opening?

The b1-knight goes to c3 where it puts pressure onto Black's d5-pawn.

The king-side knight should be developed to f3. In the middlegame White should try to advance this knight to e5. Here it will dominate in the center and support White's flank attack.

The dark-squared bishop is well placed on f4.

As for the light-squared bishop, its position depends on a specific variation. In the 5...g6 variation f3 is the best square for this piece (here it supports White's d5-pawn). In the 5... e6 variation b5-square is the best option for White's f1-bishop. Later it can be traded for Black's c6-knight which will simplify White's expansion on the queen-side.

The rooks are well placed on e1 and c1.

What are the typical maneuvers of your pieces?

- Qb3 attacking b7 and d5.
- Bb5 controlling e5 especially in the structure with c5.
- Nf3-e5. e5 it's a typical good square in this variation.
- Nf4-d3-e5 in the 5...g6 variation in the lines where white keep the material (his extra pawn on d5).

What are the main plans for White and for Black?

Black has 3 main plans. White plans depend on Black's choice.

- 1) Black can play 5...g6 trying to put pressure on d5. White's response: maintain the material advantage and put a knight on e5. Alternatively White can play Qb3, win the d5 pawn, and then return the material with a d6-move forcing Black to take with a pawn so that Black can't use the "d" file to attack the d4-pawn.
- 2) 5...e6 trying to develop pieces normally. White's response: play c5 and obtain a queenside majority. Whites plan is to use the queenside pawn majority and the e5 square. A common idea is to tie black pieces in the queenside and then starts and attack on the kingside.
- 3) 5...Nc6 the Caro-Kann style move. Black simply uses the principle of maximum activity and don't define any plan. White's response: White plays Bg5 and depends on how black plays white should use one or another plan. But the most common ones are:
 - Play c5 against e6 mainly with similar ideas to the 5...e6 variation
 - Play with an isolated "d" pawn getting piece activity
 - Attack blacks queenside and blacks center with a move like Qb3 or Qa4.

Are there any standard tactical ideas for White and for Black?

For WHITE:

- Attack Black's king using the a4-e8 diagonal.
- Qb3-move attacking b7 and d5 pawns.
- Na4-move in reply to Black's pawn moves on the queen-side (b6, a5). It works in the pawn structure with White's

pawn on c5.

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For BLACK: It's difficult to find a tactical idea for black here. However, White still should be careful as his central pawns are somewhat "hanging" and Black may try to attack them.

Are there any typical endgame positions for this opening? Are they good for you?

It depends on a concrete variation:

- In the 5...g6 variation the endgames favor White because he is a pawn up.
- In the 5...e6 line, when White advances c5, almost all the endgames are in White's favor because of his pawn majority on the queen-side and a protected passed pawn on c5.
- If White is left with an isolated d-pawn, the endgames favor Black. He will attack that weak pawn.

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Theoretical summary:

Bogo-Indian defense (Black)

What is Bogo Indian?

Bogo Indian is characterised by the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+.

The main advantage of the opening is that it is very flexible. Also we don't have to alter our Repertoire after 3.g3 instead of 3.Nf3. We will usually transpose into our main lines after 3...Bb4+. There is less of memorisation of theory and more of plan oriented approach which helps you to make Bogo a part of your repertoire for lifetime.

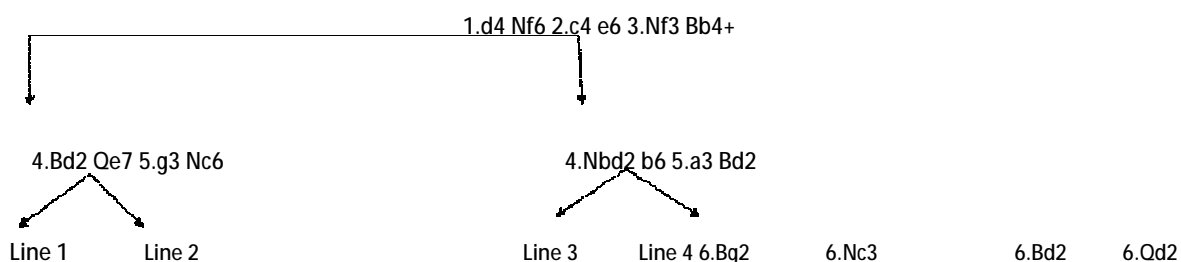
Main Characteristic of Bogo Indian.

Unlike popular defences against d4, i.e the King's Indian Defense or Grunfeld Defense, the Bogo Indian is not so theoretical. In fact it is highly positional and strategic in nature. Hence studying this opening you can develop a feel for which pieces should you keep on the board and which ones exchange, which are the best squares for your pieces and how to create weaknesses in your opponents position.

Thus this opening will help you to improve your positional and planning skills.

Variations of Bogo Indian.

Bogo Indian is mainly divided into 2 parts depending upon how white responds to the check given to him.



Thus from the above Diagram we note that after the check on b4, white has 2 ways of responding. If he plays 4.Bd2 and then Bg2 we have the highly positional line 1.

If he plays 4.Bd2 followed by 6.Nc3 then we have the highly challenging line 2.

If white responds to the check with Nbd2 and then after that recaptures on d2 with the bishop, we will have the very sharp line 3.

And if he recaptures on d2 with the queen we have the most complex line 4.

Line 1: 4.Bd2 followed by 6.Bg2

I would say this is the most positional line in the entire Bogo-Indian and also the most popular line.

One of the main points to remember is that we do not want white to develop his Knight to c3 and hence we take on d2 on move 6. White cannot recapture on d2 with the Queen as then we have the strong move Ne4 followed by Qb4+. We are helped by the Knight on c6.

Once the central structure is blocked after blacks e5 is replied with d5, we have a superior version of King's Indian Defense as we do not have a dark squared Bishop. At the same time our light squared Bishop is way better than white's Bishop.

Black deploys his pieces almost always this way.

1. The a pawn goes to a5.
2. The b8 Knight goes to a6
3. The Bishop is usually well placed on d7. You can play it directly there or after inserting Bg4 f3 Bd7 because then the g2 Bishop becomes even more cramped.
4. And finally we get our queenside counterplay going with the move c6 breaking whites central structure.

Positionally black would like to exchange his light squared bishop for one of whites Knight so that he can be left with a good knight vs bad bishop scenario.

White usually plays Ne1-d3 and then continues with the plan of b4 and queenside expansion or with f4 and Kingside attack.

It always makes sense to break with c6 and then take cd5 when if white recaptures with the e pawn, the black pawn on e5 is free to move and if white recaptures cd5 then black can play Bd7 and Bb5 and the Bishop is very strong on that diagonal.

A good knight vs Bad bishop is a dream scenario that one is looking at in this variation.

Line 2: 4.Bd2 followed by 6.Nc3.

This is one of the most critical lines against the Bogo Indian. White has scored very well because black always chose the traditional plan of taking on c3 and then playing Ne4. However the new plan suggested here is to play 0-0 and follow it up with Na5.

When black plays Na5, white has 2 ways to respond. 8.c5 or 8.b3.

8.c5 is rarely played but I think blacks task is seriously cut out in order to equalise. So he must be objective and play the prophylactic 8...Nc6 followed by later breaking the center with d6.

8.b3 is usually played. When this is done, we fianchetto our queenside Bishop with b6 and Bb7.

Usually in such lines black gets his desired counterplay with hitting in the center with c5. Sometimes the center is totally occupied when we also put our pawn on d5.

The biggest revelation in this line is the novelty with 10...d5!N. Earlier everyone used to play 10...Rac8 but after this untested novelty I think, this line has an extremely pleasant position for black to play.

All in all Black almost always tries in all the lines to break the center with c5 and d5 and gain a good position.

Line 3: 4.Nbd2 followed by 6.Bd2.

White recaptures on d2 in this line with the Bishop so that later he can develop his Bishop actively on g5. It is precisely this idea that is the reason for whites problem. Black not only breaks the pin with h6 and g5 but then tries to hound down the bishop with h5-h4.

The combined action of Bb7 and the kingside pawns on h5-g5, make the whites kingside into a readily available target to attack.

Usually blacks idea is to harass the white dark square bishop with first h6 then g5 and then h5. When the threat is to trap the bishop with h4, white can respond with h3 or h4.

If white plays h3, black has an option between taking the bishop on g3 or play h4 followed by Rg8 and g4 getting good kingside play.

If white plays the move h4 then after g4 he is sacrificing his g2 pawn for insufficient compensation according to me.

All in all I think this line is very comfortable and favourable for black.

Line 4: 4.Nbd2 followed by 6.Qd2.

According to me this is strategically the most complex line. There are so many ways in which white can play, that it is absolutely impossible to cover all of the lines and ways in which black must react. But here are the general points.

1. Black must develop his pieces in the following manner b6, Bb7, 0-0, Ne4, f5 d6, Nbd7, Qe7. Once all the pieces are developed we must react to how white plays. [Visit Website | Support](#)
2. If white plays Rad1, then we must usually break with a5 to keep the tension on b4 pawn in our favour. We can open the file any time and our rook can become active.
3. If white plays Rfd1, then f2 pawn becomes a little weak and we can go Ndf6 with the threat of Ng4. If white is forced to play h3 then we have created a weakness in white's kingside based on which we can later launch our attack.
4. Whites main play in this opening starts with the move d5. Its most of the times a pawn sacrifice which we must not accept as it opens up the position for whites bishops. Hence as a rule of thumb, our usual reaction to d5 should be e5.
5. After d5 e5 the knight on e4 becomes a little weak as it loses contact with the b7 Bishop. But we can overcome this with a break in the centre of c6! If we can successfully achieve this then black bishop will be reactivated on the long diagonal and no one can block it after that.

This Nbd2 a3 Qd2 line is the most complicated line strategically for black. He must play very carefully to ensure that he gets good counterplay.

CONCLUSION:

The Bogo Indian is an opening for all seasons. You are not risking your life with unimaginable complications and at the same time you are retaining enough pieces on the board to outplay your opposition. Hence, I would recommend you to go through the analysis and play the Bogo Indian because it can really help you to become a better positional player.

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"The Grandmaster's Openings Laboratory" – 2

Theoretical summary:

Vienna game (White)

Introduction to the Vienna



The Vienna with 2. Bc4 is also called Bishop's Opening and Vienna Hybrid. The opening is very ambitious and highly popular at club level. Top GMs occasionally use this opening to surprise their opponents. The opening is very sharp in nature and suitable for those players who always play for a win with the White pieces.

Summary of Vienna (2. Bc4) / Bishop's Opening / Vienna Hybrid

The Vienna Opening is a part of Open games (1.e4-e5).

Features of the Vienna:

- 1) As in Open games, control over 'a2-g8', 'a3-f8' and 'h5-e8' diagonal is essential for White.
- 2) Attack against f7 is always a major target for White.
- 3) Attack against Black's e5 pawn.
- 4) To control the 'd5' square. This prevents Black from playing d5 and, in some lines, allows White to fix his knight on d5.
- 5) To play f4 at the appropriate time and open up the 'f' file, to carry an attack against Black's weak f7/f6 squares – or sometimes White plays f4-f5 (without taking on e5), thus gaining more space on the king side and, at the same time, limiting Black's light-squared bishop.

Strategic Points:

- 1) White should always keep an eye on the queen side to keep a pawn majority there or create a distant passer along the 'a' file.
- 2) White plays exd5 after Black's thematic d5 breakthrough and releases the key 'e4' square for his knight, from where it can monitor the Black camp.
- 3) White sometimes plays Na4 and neutralizes Black's strong dark-squared bishop, as and when Black plays Bc5 followed by d6 without playing a6.
- 4) White always focuses on restricting Black's activity on the queen side and brings his pieces along the king side at the same time.

- 5) Always remember, the main plan for White is to attack in the king side with the help of the semi-open 'f' file.

Ideal piece placement for White in the Vienna (2. Bc4)

White's ideal piece placement in the Vienna is Bc4, Nc3, d3, Nf3/Ne2, 0-0, f4, fxe5/f5.

Diagram 1



Diagram 2



Important Note: The Vienna is a very sharp and dynamic opening. So always try to play with the utmost care and play actively.

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