The Complete Guide To Chess - Master Chess Tactics, Chess Openings and Chess Strategies

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Introduction

Often we disregard chess as a game for nerds and introverts and never truly attempt to fathom what it is all about. We can never really appreciate anything until we understand what goes into it and this couldn’t be any truer in the case of chess. The reason why many of us shy away from playing chess is because of our lack of knowledge about the game and because of our lack of knowledge about the game, we do not attribute much value to it. We instead regard sports such as football, cricket, rugby etc.; with so much respect because we are of the opinion that it not only involves physical activity but also mental involvement in the form of strategies and ploys. Would you be surprised to know that chess is a game that
is filled with thousands of such strategies and tactics? Ploys that could help you sharpen your mind and analytical skills with practice?

It’s true; chess is known as the quintessential game of strategy and planning. It is referenced in many movies and attributed to characters in those films that reflect traits of strategic thinking and cunning. Many people know or have heard that listening to the compositions of Mozart helps to increase one’s brain function as a passive activity. In the same respect, playing chess can be considered the active version of listening to Mozart.

By gaining an understanding of the movements of the pieces and how to plan and adjust their positioning against an opponent in real time, one is simultaneously activating associations in the brain to identify predictable patterns and determine consequences before they happen. Setting up blocks against the opponent to create pathways elsewhere for one’s advantage is much like the strategies we see used in pick-and-roll plays in basketball or slot options designed to break through a defense’s barrier in American football.

This kind of analytical thinking and the development of it can be applied to a number of various areas in life like setting up a business, playing the stock market, project management, planning surprise parties, organizing team activities like scavenger hunts or geocaching, effective multitasking or pulling off a really great practical joke!

Playing chess trains one’s mind to understand how maneuvering individual pieces effectively work to achieve a desired goal in the grand scheme. In other words, a person develops the ability to see how the details make up the big picture; how a large, complex concept can be broken down into simple step-by-step processes. A person develops keen problem-solving skills to see a challenging situation from multiple angles and how to approach it in multiple ways. One learns how to foresee what approaches will run into problems down the line and how to counteract them or take alternative approaches that give them a higher success rate. Chess also trains a person’s thinking to become adaptable, so that with foresight and strategy, if one cannot back out of a difficult situation they will have developed the know-how to see other options to turn their disadvantage into an advantage. This quality pays tribute to the ever-famous quote, ‘Within every problem, there lies an opportunity.’ Chess players understand the practical application of that meaning both in the game and in life.

As one begins to play chess more and engage in the game with various players, they will come to notice that each person has a particular style of playing that comes to represent their particular patterns of thinking. For example a
person who plays more on the offensive side is more likely an aggressive person that has an overall assertive attitude toward life, whereas someone who plays more on the defensive is likely to be on the cautious side of life that waits to see how a situation will play out before making their definitive move. Learning to read a person’s style of play is an important part of the game, the same as it is in playing poker or the game of life at large. It will help to predict the opponent’s next probable move and adjust your style to counter theirs effectively.

If you are unaware of these facts about chess, you have perhaps done the right thing by buying this book. All that you need is the preliminary knowledge about chess and the interest to learn the openings and tactics suggested here, to make the best use of this book.

In the first chapter of this book, I have highlighted the most common and powerful openings in chess that can change the style of your game. In the second chapter, I have listed the key principles based on which chess strategies are built. An understanding of these principles will help us retort to our opponent’s moves in an effective manner. In the continuing chapters, I have highlighted the commonly employed chess tactics and strategies.

It is in my dear aspirations that this book in your possession helps you elevate not only your skillfulness in chess, but your intellectual grace as well.

Sincerely,

Logan Donovan

**History of Chess**

Before we go over the various chess openings and tactics, it is important that we know about how this beloved game originated. The history of chess is fascinating enough and you would be impressed to see how this game has transformed over the years. The version that we know today is not how it started centuries ago. Let us look at the marveling history of this game now.

**Chaturanga**

Even though we cannot associate a certain timeline with this game, we will have to go by the time frame agreed upon by most historians. The game of Chaturanga was believed to have been invented in India around the sixth century.
It was during the rule of the Guptas that the game of Chaturanga was discovered. The game was then called chaturanga, based on the four divisions of the military. At that point of time, the four divisions of the army were the elephants, infantry, horse cavalry and chariots and the pieces in the game represented these four divisions. In the game of Chaturanga, the king was accompanied by his general or counselor and there was no Queen in Chaturanga.

This game differed from the version of modern chess in many aspects. Though these two games had different rules, the game of Chaturanga can be played easily on the modern chessboard. The rules of Chaturanga differ from the rules of modern chess in certain features. In the game of Chaturanga, the soldier was allowed to move only one square as a part of his initial move unlike the pawns of today, which are allowed to move two squares as a part of their initial move. Another important difference between the two games lay in the way the pieces were arranged on the board. In the modern version of chess, the kings are placed facing each other. However, in the game of Chaturanga, the kings were placed in a diagonally opposite fashion.

A chief distinction in rules is that in Chaturanga, to win, the player must eliminate all the pieces of the opponent, except their king; hence it is very clear that the concept of checkmate does not exist in the game of Chaturanga. Another key variance is that if a player manages to stalemate the opponent, the player who is stalemated wins the game. This contradicts with the rule in modern chess, namely, stalemates are considered as a draw.

Travel to Persia

When Chaturanga moved to Persia, this game underwent several changes and the biggest revolution in the game of chess happened at this point of time. The game soon became a hit among the noble families of Persia and very rapidly became an integral part of formal education in Persia. When Chaturanga moved to Persia, it was known as “Shatranj”. When you look at the rules of Shatranj, you will realize that it is not so different from the modern version that we are now accustomed to; nevertheless, there were still differences between the two games. It was during this stage when several modern day tactics emerged, in other words, many famous chess tactics employed today were actually derived from Shatranj.

The way the various pieces were arranged on the board was not different when you look at both the games. The significant difference between the two, like in Chaturanga, lays in the fact that the pawn was not allowed to move more than one step initially under Shatranj. Also, just like how it was in Chaturanga, if a
player managed to eliminate the pieces of the opponent, except their king, he
was considered as a winner in the game of Shatranj. On the other hand, if a player
managed to stalemate the opponent, he was considered as a winner. This is the
polar opposite of the stalemate rule under Chaturanga.

It was during this period when several prominent players emerged. These
popular players wrote several books on the various strategies, openings and
tactics. Their books also spoke of these players’ experiences. These literary
accounts by the Shatranj players were the initial contributions made to chess
literature. A few noteworthy Shatranj players during this period were Al-Razi, As-
Suli and Rabrab.

**Chess in Europe**

When the Islamic conquest of Persia happened in the seventh century, the game
of Shatranj traveled to all the Muslim countries. By the end of 1000 A.D., this
game soon became popular in Russia and Europe. Eventually, the game even
spread to Japan and China. The Japanese and Chinese improved the game of
Shatranj and brought about a lot of variations. These versions of chess have major
differences from the style of chess that is played all over the world.

From the beginning of the 13th century till the end of the 15th century, this
game underwent a lot of changes. Several rules of Shatranj were changed and
newer tactics were discovered and employed. The rules that were framed during
this period were soon accepted all over Europe. These rules are still in practice in
all tournaments across the globe even today. It was during this time, the game of
Shatranj started transforming slowly into chess.

Eventually, more rules were created to ensure that the game did not take
eons to finish. The pawns were allowed to move two squares as a part of their
initial move precisely due to this reason. The move known as “en passant” also
came into existence to speed up the game. It was during this time that the
concept of castling was also introduced. With the advent of the fourteenth
century, the powers of the Queen and the Bishop increased tremendously. The
Queen gained a lot of power and there was a point in time when Chess was
referred to as “Mad Queen Chess” because of the powers bestowed upon the
Queen. When the fifteenth century rolled in, the game started resembling what
we now know as chess. Several famous chess strategies and tactics were also
discovered during this era.
I hope you found the history of chess fascinating and intriguing. Who would have thought that the simple game of Chaturanga would evolve into one of the most popular games in the world today, Chess!

**Chess Pieces**

Before you start playing chess, it is imperative that you understand what each piece on the board represents. These pieces need to be arranged on the board in a correct fashion, only then can the games begin. Let us look at all of these pieces in detail.

**Pawn – Value 1**

The pawn is the first line of defense that everybody has on the board. There are 8 pawns each side in all and they are also known as foot soldiers. They stand in front of the other pieces and protect them. Although they stand in the first row, their value is not too high. This makes people believe that pawns are not valuable but you must recognize that all your pieces are vital, especially towards the endgame. It is possible for you to checkmate your opponent’s king and obtain victory during the latter stages of the game with merely your pawns if the positions are fitting. The first move of your pawn can either be one step or two steps depending on what strategy you have in mind. The pawn will always only capture another piece by moving diagonally except if you utilize the “en passant” (later explained) move. After the first move the pawn can only move one step forward per turn, so if there is another piece in front of you, then your pawn is potentially trapped. Your pawn cannot move backwards once it moves forward and so, you must move your pawns carefully on the board.

**Rook – Value 5**

The next piece on the board that we will read on is the rook. Many consider this to be one of the most powerful pieces on the board and rightly so. The rook is also known as the elephant and starts off placed on the far ends of the board; one on each side and each player is given two. The rook only moves in straight lines like the pawn and cannot attack diagonally. It can only kill whatever lies in its path and can move both vertically and horizontally. Another distinction is that it can move as many squares as it likes so it can move to the other end of the board in a single turn, provided there is nothing obstructing its way. The rook is also used to serve another important purpose. It can be used to exchange places with the king to safeguard him, which is known as “Castling” (later explained). All that must be
is to clear out the spaces between the king and rook, then their positions maybe be exchanged legally.

**Knight – Value 3**

The next piece is known as the knight. The knight is shaped like a horse and is also referred to as the horse. Each player is dealt two knights at the beginning of each game. The knight stands next to the rook on both sides and moves in an “L” shape. This means that it takes two straight steps and then one to the right or the left. Similarly, it can also move one to the right or left and then 2 steps forwards or backwards. The knight is quite powerful, in that, your opponent might not notice that you have strategically placed your knight in a powerful position. With this movement pattern, it can jump over pieces, which if used with a well-calculated strategy, makes this a most dangerous piece. It can capture a piece only if the victim lies on the last square.

**Bishop – Value 3**

The bishop is a piece that stands next to the king on one side and the queen on the other. Owing to this placement, one bishop will always stand on its color and the other on the opposite color. The bishop always moves diagonally and cannot move in any other way and even while attacking, it will only capture diagonally. It can move as many diagonal squares as it likes as long as the board permits. It is generally considered to be more powerful than the knight although their piece values are equal. Many believe that two bishops attacking is much more effective than two knights or a knight and a bishop together. You can pose a bigger threat to your opponent by using your two bishops and playing an attacking game, especially towards the endgame.

**Queen – Value 9**

The most effective piece on the board is nonetheless, the queen. The position of the queen is next to the king; the white queen stands on a white square and the black queen stands on a black square. The queen is allowed to move in any direction and take as many moves as she likes. This makes her extremely powerful and fearful so it is extremely crucial that you safeguard your queen as much as possible and not allow any harm to come to her. She can win you the game in no time, provided you use her to her full potential. The queen is a hybrid and has the diagonal power of the bishop and the straight-line attack of rook. She does not move like the knight, which is her only drawback.

**King**
The king is the most important piece on the board and defending him is the main motive of a chess game. Even if you have all of your other pieces on the board, losing the king will mean the end of the game and your loss so right from the very beginning, you must safeguard your king. The king can move only one step, diagonally or straight. This limits his powers a lot and makes it easy for your opponent to attack him. Although you would think the king is useless, you must understand that it is the most important piece and can help you win the game in late games scenarios. Accordingly, start thinking of its merits and how you could use it strategically to your advantage because after all, it’s your most important piece. Most people do not move their king much at all during the early and middle stages of the game as once he is out of his fort, he is endangered. It is best that you castle early and put him in a safe zone, lest the enemies restrict your offensive by keeping you in “check”.

These form the various pieces that exist on the chessboard; next off in Chapter 1, we’ll learn how to use them in popular strategic openings.

CHAPTER 1

Major Chess Openings

Having an effective opening can help you set the pace and tone for the game. Your opening can give away your style to your opponent and vice versa, thus, it gives you ample opportunity to play according to your opponent’s style. You might wonder, “What good an opening can do”? Let me state here at this point that many games have been finished in a matter of minutes due to powerful openings. Sometimes all you need is a challenging opening to catch your opponent off guard and drive the game in your favor. Hence it is important that you are aware about the different openings in chess not only to use them against your opponent but also to know what to expect when your opponent plays a certain one.

Keeping this in mind, I have chosen some of the most important chess openings and explain them in this chapter. Use them wisely.

Ruy Lopez

Moves: e4, e5; f3 c6; b5
This opening is popularly known as the Spanish game and was named after a Spanish priest, Ruy Lopez, who discovered this opening in the year of 1561. This opening was however not appreciated or used much at that point of time. Only over the years, this has become a favorite among pros (grandmaster levels as well) and is regarded as one of the most powerful chess openings. It is used as White’s best attempt in gaining an advantage after double king pawn formations. A major plus of this opening is that it gives the white player enough opportunity to develop a complex offensive strategy and also slows down Black’s pawn formation.

**Italian Game**

Moves: e4, e5; f3 c6; c4
The Italian Game is another old chess opening like the Ruy Lopez and was discovered in the 1600s. This opening was fairly prominent at that point of time since people overlooked the Ruy Lopez opening. Nevertheless, with the Ruy Lopez opening hogging the limelight over the years, this opening has lost its charm. This is generally because of the conviction that the Bb5 move in the Ruy Lopez opening puts the Black at a better disadvantage than the Bc4 move in this opening. Nevertheless, this is a powerful opening by itself and should be considered if you want to start the game on an offensive note.

**Sicilian Defense**

Moves: e4, c5
This opening is a favorite among the Black players when White moves the king pawn to e4. The reason is because this opening gives the Black player an opportunity to retort very powerfully to White’s opening. This method perhaps can neutralize any aggressive opening of the White player, which is precisely the reason behind its popularity today. C5 is a much more effective response to e4 than any other move and can be used to black’s advantage if the next moves are played right.

This defensive stance was considered as a terrible opening when it was discovered initially and was not used in many games originally. It is one of the most common chess openings that is being widely used across various levels of tournaments today.

**French Defense**

Moves: e4, e6; d4, d5
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