

AMINE MEDDEB

HOW TO PLAY CHESS

LEVEL 2

CORPORATE CULTURE



Welcome to the World of Chess

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the captivating world of chess! In the pages of this book, we embark on a journey through the rich tapestry of chess history, strategy, and intrigue. Whether you're a seasoned player or just beginning your chess adventure, there's something for everyone to discover within these chapters.

Chess is more than just a game—it's a universe unto itself, filled with endless possibilities and challenges. As we delve into its depths, we'll explore the origins of chess, its evolution over the centuries, and the profound impact it has had on cultures around the globe.

But chess isn't merely a pastime; it's a teacher, a mentor, and a friend. Through its intricate gameplay and strategic maneuvers, chess instills valuable life lessons in patience, critical thinking, and perseverance. It's a game that not only entertains but also educates, shaping minds and fostering intellectual growth.

As we embark on this journey together, let us embrace the beauty of the chessboard, the thrill of competition, and the camaraderie of fellow enthusiasts. Whether you're seeking to improve your skills, deepen your understanding, or simply enjoy the game, I invite you to join me in exploring the world of chess.

So, without further ado, let the adventure begin!

Sincerely,

Amine Meddeb



The Chess Mystery

Once upon a time, there was a young boy who stumbled upon a forgotten corner of the chess club—a dimly lit room with an ancient chessboard. The worn wooden pieces seemed to carry the weight of countless battles.

Curiosity piqued, he sat down at the board. He had never played chess before, but he had read stories of kings, queens, and intricate strategies. Just as he was contemplating the pieces, the door creaked open. A mysterious man entered, dressed in a dark coat and wearing a wide-brimmed hat that concealed his face.

“Care for a game?” the man’s deep voice resonated.

He hesitated but accepted. The game began. Each move the man made was precise, calculated. Bewildered, he mimicked his opponent’s moves, hoping to survive a little longer. Then came the pivotal moment. The man sacrificed his rook, exposing his king. The room seemed to hold its breath. Sweating, he studied the board. He had seen this pattern somewhere—in an old, dusty book. It was risky, but he had nothing to lose.

Taking a deep breath, he moved his knight. “Checkmate,” he whispered.

The man fixed him with an intense gaze. “You have potential,” he said. “But beware—chess is more than just a game.”

And with those cryptic words, he vanished into the shadows, leaving him with an unexpected victory and a mystery to unravel. Who was this man? Why had he chosen him? And most importantly, what secret lay hidden within the ancient chessboard?

From that day on, he trained relentlessly, seeking not only chess mastery but also answers. Each move became a clue, each game a step closer to unveiling the enigma that haunted him.

And so, the boy who knew nothing of chess became a champion—not only on the board but also in the quest for the truth. As he delved deeper into the chess world, he found inspiration in a film called “The Queen’s Gambit.” The story of a brilliant young chess prodigy fueled his determination, and he wondered if his mysterious opponent was somehow connected to the grandmasters of the past.



"As I sat at the ancient chessboard, the worn wooden pieces seemed to whisper secrets of the past. The mysterious man's words echoed in my mind: 'Chess is more than just a game.' I pondered the meaning of his enigmatic message as I gazed upon the 42 known openings, each one a gateway to a unique world of strategy and deception. The Ruy Lopez, the Sicilian Defense, the Italian Game – each name conjured images of battles fought and won, of masters and novices, of triumph and defeat. And yet, as I delved deeper into the openings, I realized that they were more than just moves on a board. They were doorways to understanding the human psyche, to unraveling the mysteries of creativity and problem-solving. The 42 openings became a metaphor for life itself, a journey of exploration and discovery, where each step forward revealed new possibilities and new challenges. And so, I embarked on a quest to master the openings, to uncover their secrets and understand the secrets of the human heart."

The opening phase in chess is **crucial for several reasons:**

- 1. **Control of the Chessboard**: Chess openings allow you to claim your territory on the chessboard right from the start. By making purposeful moves, you establish control over key squares and influence the game's direction².**
- 2. **Efficient Piece Development**: Following established openings ensures that your chess pieces (such as knights, bishops, and rooks) come into play quickly and effectively. Proper development sets the stage for a strong middlegame².**

3. ***King Safety***: A well-chosen opening helps safeguard your king. Castling early and choosing positions that minimize threats to your king are essential for long-term success².

4. ***Avoiding Traps and Blunders***: Familiarity with openings helps you recognize common pitfalls and avoid falling into traps. Knowing the principles behind each opening helps you make informed decisions².

5. ***Strategic Planning***: The opening determines the type of position you'll face. Whether it's an open or closed position, understanding the strategic ideas behind your chosen opening allows you to plan ahead and adapt your strategy².

6. ***Confidence Boost***: Knowing your openings well boosts your confidence. It allows you to focus on the game rather than worrying about unfamiliar positions².

7. ***Time Management***: Efficiently navigating the opening saves valuable time on the clock, which becomes crucial in later stages of the game².

Remember that while beginners benefit from understanding general principles, top-level players delve deep into specific opening theory to gain an edge. So, whether you're a novice or a grandmaster, mastering openings is essential for success in chess!

List of 42 Popular Chess Openings (And Variations)

For easy reference, the chess openings below are listed in alphabetical order. Many of them are named after places, famous chess players or a chess piece that features prominently in the opening.

- ❖ Alekhine's Defense
- ❖ Benko Gambit
- ❖ Benoni Defense
- ❖ Bird's Opening
- ❖ Bogo-Indian Defense
- ❖ Budapest Gambit
- ❖ Catalan Opening
- ❖ Caro-Kann Defense
- ❖ Colle System
- ❖ Dutch Defense
- ❖ Giuoco Piano
- ❖ English Opening
- ❖ Evans Gambit
- ❖ Four Knights Game
- ❖ French Defense
- ❖ Grünfeld Defense
- ❖ Italian Game
- ❖ King's Gambit
- ❖ King's Indian Attack
- ❖ King's Indian Defense
- ❖ King's Pawn Game
- ❖ London System
- ❖ Modern Defense
- ❖ Nimzo-Indian Defense
- ❖ Nimzowitsch Defense
- ❖ Petrov's Defense
- ❖ Philidor's Defense
- ❖ Pirc Defense
- ❖ Queen's Pawn Game
- ❖ Queen's Gambit Accepted
- ❖ Queen's Gambit Declined
- ❖ Queen's Indian Defense
- ❖ Réti Opening
- ❖ Ruy Lopez
- ❖ Scandinavian Defense
- ❖ Scotch Game
- ❖ Sicilian Defense
- ❖ Slav Defense
- ❖ Torre Attack
- ❖ Two Knights Defense
- ❖ Vienna Game
- ❖ Wade Defense

ALEKHINE'S DEFENSE

1.e4 Nf6



Alekhine's Defense Basic Theory

The opening is named after Alexander Alekhine, the fourth world champion, who played it in two of his games in a tournament in Budapest, 1921.

Alekhine's Defense is a hypermodern opening from black's perspective. Black dares white to grab space in

the center with the moves 2.e5 Nd5 3.c4. Black then intends to attack and undermine white's central pawns.

However, if white manages to effectively support their central pawns, white will enjoy a strong advantage in the center.



A common variation in the Alekhine Defense Opening is The

Modern Variation.

Alekhine's Defense Modern Variation

1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.Nf3

In the Alekhine Defense Modern Variation white takes a more cautious approach.

White doesn't play 4.c4 and, instead, supports the center with 4.Nf3.

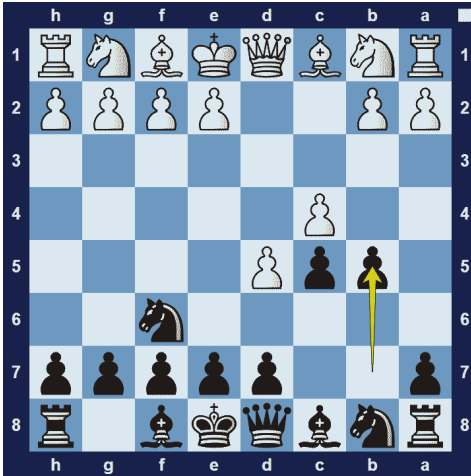
The Pros and Cons of Alekhine's Defense

Since white's options are limited against Alekhine's Defense you can force your opponent to play the opening on your terms. You might even get an advantage if your inexperienced opponent is tempted to make too many pawns moves. However, if you fail to properly execute your strategy, your opponent will enjoy a strong center and your position will be cramped.

Note: When the word "defense" appears in the name of an opening, such as Alekhine's Defense, it usually refers to a choice of opening by black. Ironically though, in many cases the use of the word "defense" can be quite misleading, I.e. the Sicilian Defense is a very aggressive opening.

BENKO GAMBIT

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5



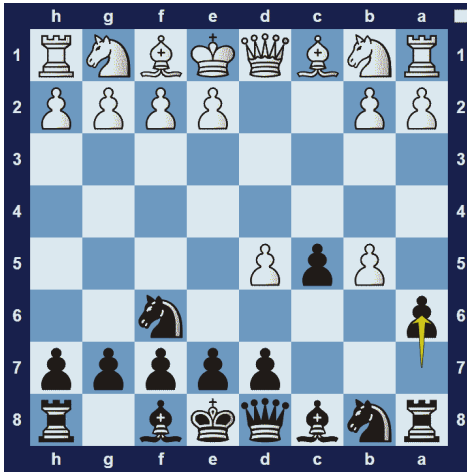
Benko Gambit Basic Theory

The Benko Gambit, also known as the Volga Gambit or the Volga-Benko Gambit (named after Pal Benko and the Volga River), is a gambit opening from black's perspective.

The Benko Gambit is a rather unique response to 1.d4 where black wants to

sacrifice a pawn in the hope to obtain lasting pressure—through active pieces and open files on the queen-side. Black's strategy is then further enhanced by placing a fianchettoed bishop on g7 which can potentially heap immense pressure on white's queenside. Black should approach these ideas energetically—or else risk losing the initiative if white finds the time to organize a solid defense.

If white declines the gambit, then the game will likely enter a position resembling the Benoni Defense, and offers black a completely playable position. However, a popular response for white is to accept the gambit, leading to the Benko Gambit Accepted variation.



Benko Gambit Accepted Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5
4.cxb5 a6

The Pros and Cons of the Benko Gambit

The Benko Gambit is an ideal black is willing to take on some risk—in return for increased winning chances.

However, white can always

decline the gambit and they have many options to choose from.

If you play the Benko Gambit, you will likely get exciting opportunities against all but the most experienced opponents.

Note: In chess, a gambit refers to an opening move in which a player makes a sacrifice, typically of a pawn, in return for a compensating advantage, such as speedy development of their pieces.

BENONI DEFENSE

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5



The name of this opening is linked to a book published in 1825, by Aaron Reinganum, who apparently studied chess to alleviate depression. He referred to his writings as Ben-Oni (an ancient Hebrew name, meaning “son of my sorrow”).

The Benoni Defense is an aggressive opening, from black’s perspective,

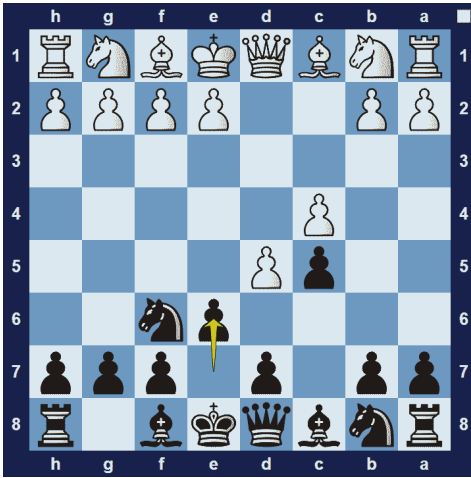
characterized by the initial moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5, by which black intends to exchange their flank c-pawn for white’s central d-pawn.

Benoni Defense Basic Theory

In the Benoni Defence, black’s overarching strategy is to create significant imbalances in the position. Imbalances will create more dynamic opportunities and thus black will get more winning chances than they would typically get from a more solid response. This benefit comes, of course, at the cost of increased losing chances too! That is why top chess players favor this opening in “must-win” match situations.

Note: After 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5, white doesn’t win a pawn with 3.dxc5 because 3... e6, followed by Bxc5 will only help black. Alternatively, 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.dxc5 e6 4.b4 a5! is even better for black.

A popular variation in the Benoni opening is the Modern Variation.



Benoni Defense Modern Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 is 3.d5 e6

A popular response to 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 is 3.d5, to which black will mostly reply 3... e6, known as the Modern Variation of the Benoni.

With the move 3... e6, black's strategy is to capture white's pawn on d5, thereby creating

a majority of black pawns on the queen-side. Black then intends to play g6 and Bg7, from where the bishop will support the advance of black's queen-side pawn majority. Black will control the dark-squares, particularly the d4-square, whereas white will have more control over the light squares.

The obvious structural imbalances in the Modern Benoni reduces the chances of the game ending in a draw and gives both sides more winning chances. This is also why the opening has a reputation for being risky.

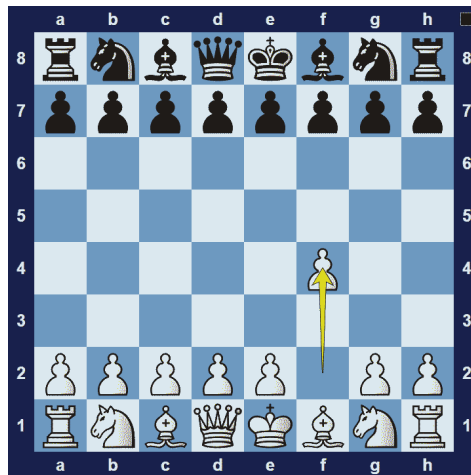
Even though Frank Marshall invented the Modern Benoni in 1927, it was only popularized 20 years later, primarily by Mikhail Tal, the highly tactical player from Latvia, who scored many brilliant victories with it.

The Pros and Cons of the Benoni Defense

The Benoni Defense is an exciting opening that leads to highly imbalanced positions, which increases the likelihood of a decisive result. However, grandmasters will typically avoid this opening because they prefer quieter positions—where they can demonstrate their superior positional understanding.

BIRD'S OPENING

1.f4



The Bird's opening is a flank opening from white's perspective, starting with the move **1.f4**.

Bird's Opening Basic Theory

The Bird's Opening is named after British master Henry Edward Bird, who played the opening throughout his chess career in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Bird's opening is an aggressive, imbalanced and rather unusual opening where white aims to control the **e5**-square, possibly with the help of a fianchettoed bishop on b2. The opening generally offers good attacking chances to white but comes at the cost of weakening their own king-side.

A popular response by black is **1... d5**, known as the Dutch Variation of the Bird's Opening.



Bird's Opening Dutch Variation

1.f4 d5 3.Nf3

If black responds with 1... d5, white usually plays 2.Nf3 and we reach the Dutch Variation of the Bird's Opening.

In the Dutch Variation of the Bird's Opening, white will essentially play the Dutch Defense with reversed colors. White can try to dominate the a1-h8 diagonal with a fianchettoed bishop on **b2** (and pawns on e3 and f4). White can also opt for a King's-Indian setup (**g3, Bg2, 0-0**), with an attack on the black king-side.

Even though the move **1.f4** was mentioned by Lucena in a book from 1497, the opening was eventually named after the British master, Henry Bird, who first played it in 1855 and continued to do so for most of his career.

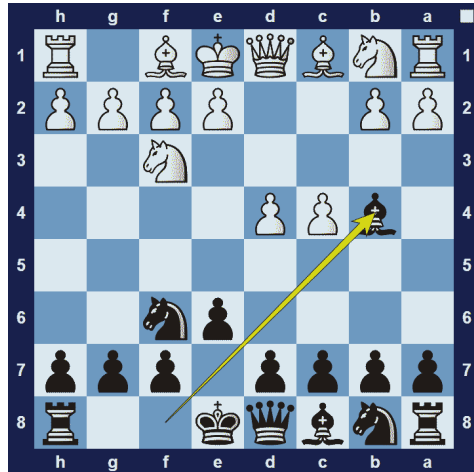
Top chess players probably feel there are better ways to utilize the first-move advantage, which is possibly why the Bird's opening is not popular among them. Even so, elite grandmasters occasionally use it as a surprise weapon.

The Pros and Cons of the Bird's Defense

The Bird's opening is a good choice for players who want attacking chances but don't want to study too much theory. However, white's king-safety will be compromised and if your opponent is well-prepared, they will be able to equalize easily or even get an advantage against you.

BOGO-INDIAN DEFENSE

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+



The Bogo-Indian Defense is named after the Russian grandmaster Efim Bogoljubow. He famously said: “When I am White, I win because I am White. When I am Black, I win because I am Bogoljubov.”

Bogo-Indian Defense Basic Theory

Black’s idea is very simple—to develop their king-side as quickly as possible, whilst disrupting white’s queen-side development. Once this is achieved, black will aim to undermine any white presence in the center.

A popular variation in the Bogo-Indian Defense is the Nimzowitsch Variation.



Bogo-Indian Defense Nimzowitsch Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+
4.Bd2 Qe7

If white blocks the check with
4.Bd2, black's popular reply is
4... Qe7, which leads to the
Nimzowitsch variation:

In the Nimzowitsch variation
black defends the bishop with

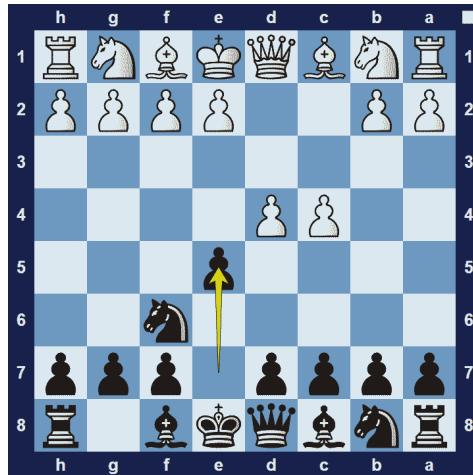
their queen, 4... Qe7. White usually avoids 5.Bxb4 Qxb4+, which may force white to give up a pawn.

The Pros and Cons of the Bogo-Indian Defense

The Bogo-Indian Defense is reasonably easy to learn and it is also strategically sound. However, it is also not too difficult for white to maintain a space advantage and black typically won't get many opportunities to complicate the position.

BUDAPEST GAMBIT

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e5

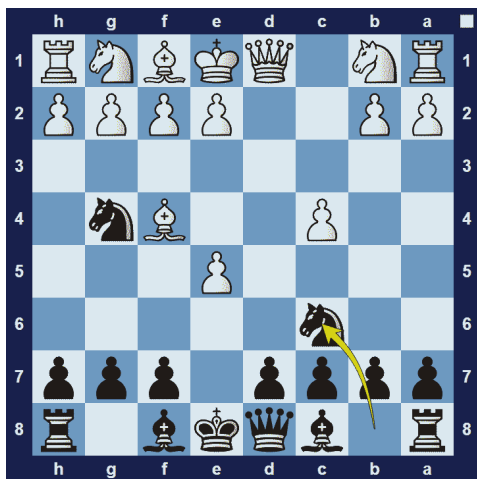


The Budapest Gambit is an opening for black, named after the location of the first known game featuring the moves **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e5**. It was the game Adler–Maróczy (played in Budapest in 1896).

Budapest Gambit Basic Theory

The Budapest Gambit is mostly used as a surprise weapon against people who are probably not up to date with the theory of the opening. It is a very aggressive approach by black, challenging the center from the word go and potentially launching an all-out attack on the white. White shouldn't try to keep their pawn on **e5** as this will help black. Instead, white should aim to give back the pawn on favorable terms, for example gaining the bishop pair or forcing black to waste time regaining the pawn.

A popular variation in the Budapest Gambit is the Rubinstein Variation.



Budapest Gambit Rubinstein Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 Ng4
4.Bf4

The Rubinstein variation refers to the first time when **4.Bf4** was employed, by Akiba Rubinstein, as white, against GM Milan Vidmar. Rubinstein actually won the game, which led to more players adopting the move **4.Bf4**.

Budapest Gambit Rubinstein Variation, to which the main response by black is **4... Nc6**.

The game could then continue **5.Nf3 Bb4+ 6.Nbd2 Qe7 7.e3 Ngxe5** and black regains the lost pawn.

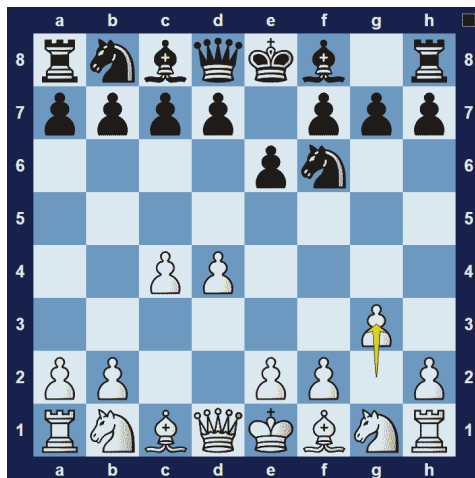
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov used the Budapest gambit against the former world champion, Vladimir Kramnik, in a rapid game in 2008. Mamedyarov won the game, which clearly proves the surprise value of this opening, even if it is a less common gambit. You can check the game here: [Vladimir Kramnik vs Shakhriyar Mamedyarov](#)

The Pros and Cons of the Budapest Gambit

Although the Budapest gambit is rather unusual, it is still considered to be sound. This means you can lead your opponent into territory that may be unfamiliar to them, without risking too much. However, black has to spend time to get the pawn back and white can use this time to solidify some space advantage.

CATALAN OPENING

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3

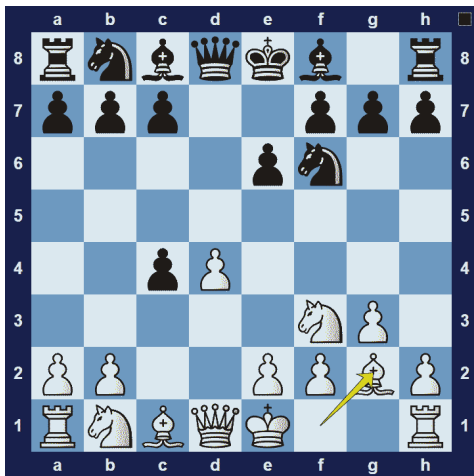


The Catalan Opening is an opening for white, named after Catalonia, the location of a tournament in Barcelona, 1929, where the organizers asked Polish-French Grandmaster Savielly Tartakower to create a new variation in honor of the area's chess history.

Catalan Opening Basic Theory

White aims to get a solid foothold in the center and then mounts pressure on the queen-side. To this end, the white bishop on **g2** plays a prominent role in the Catalan opening and will coordinate its efforts particularly with white's c-pawn.

A popular variation in the Catalan opening is the Open Defense.



Catalan Opening Open Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 e6
4.Nc3 dxc4 5.Bg2

In the Open Defense variation of the Catalan Opening, black compromises their presence in the center by capturing the white pawn on c4, but hopes to gain sufficient

compensation in terms of extra time (since white must use a few moves to regain their sacrificed pawn).

The Pros and Cons of the Catalan Opening

The Catalan Opening is a popular choice on the highest levels because white can often obtain long-term positional pressure. However, accumulating small advantages from a marginal positional advantage, against a strong player, will require advanced capabilities.

CARO-KANN DEFENSE

1.e4 c6



The Caro-Kann Defense is an opening for black, named after English player Horatio Caro and Austrian player Marcus Kann. These two analyzed the opening and published their analysis in the German chess magazine in 1886.

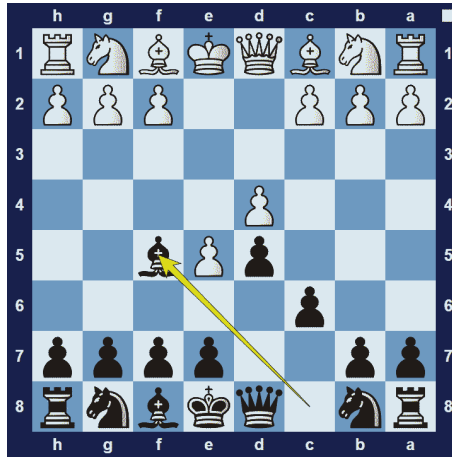
Caro-Kann Defense Basic Theory

Black intends to occupy the center with pawn to **d5** (supported by a pawn on **c6**). Furthermore, black avoids any serious weaknesses in their pawn-structure and is assured of attaining a very solid, albeit slightly passive position.

A popular variation in the Caro-Kann opening is the Advance variation.

Caro-Kann Defense Advance Variation

1.e4 c6 2.e5 Bf5



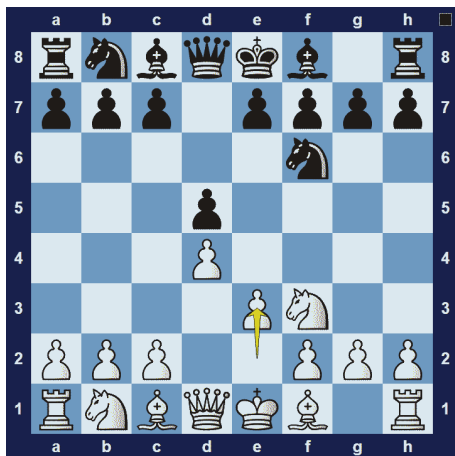
With **2.e5**, white aims to solidify a space advantage in the center. However, black's has compensation in the fact that the center is rather closed (making it harder for white to maneuver their pieces freely) and black's light-squared bishop is free (in contrast with the French Defense where this bishop is locked in).

The Pros and Cons of the Caro-Kann Defense

The Caro-Kann Defense is very popular opening among top players because it has a very solid reputation. A main advantage of the Caro-Kann is that black's light squared bishop will not be trapped behind the pawn-structure. However, black has to settle for slower development and accept that there are many ways white can play against the Caro-Kann.

COLLE SYSTEM

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3



The Colle System is an opening system for white, named after a Belgian chess master, Edgard Colle, who popularized this opening in the 1920's. The setup is similar to the London System and the Torre Attack, but in the case of the Colle System the white dark-square bishop remains inside the pawn-chain.

Note: An opening system is a chess opening that allows you to:

- Use various move-orders to reach the same piece-setup.
- Achieve the same piece-setup against almost any opening moves your opponent plays.

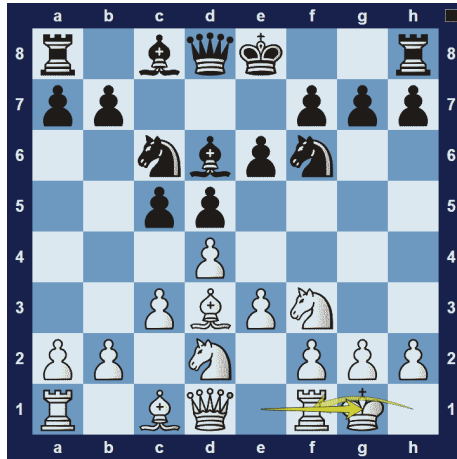
Colle System Basic Theory

White's first goal is to reach the Colle System setup (d4, Nf3, e3, c3, Bd3, Nbd2 and 0-0) after which white will decide on a plan depending on how black develops.

A popular variation in the Colle System is the Traditional Colle (which actually refers to the way black chooses to respond, specifically to play c5, whilst white still goes for the standard Colle System setup).

Colle System Traditional Colle

The Traditional Colle System setup.



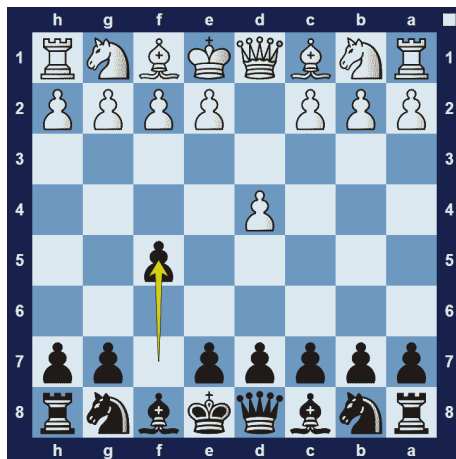
Although the Colle System is known for being a slow and solid opening, the situation can quickly become very dynamic if white gets to play a well-timed **e4**, with support from a bishop on **d3**, a knight at **d2**, and possibly the rook at **e1**.

The Pros and Cons of the Colle System

The Colle System a sound opening and very easy to learn. Even though this system does not put immediate pressure on the opponent, white can unleash a surprisingly quick attack on the king-side. However, a well-prepared opponent will have little difficulty in dealing with the Colle System, which is why it's not very popular on the highest levels of play.

DUTCH DEFENSE

1.d4 f5



The Dutch Defense is an opening for black, named after Elias Stein, born in 1748. He became a Dutch chess master who recommended **1... f5** as the best reply to **1.d4**.

Dutch Defense Basic Theory

With **1... f5**, black aims to dominate the light-squares, fundamentally the **e4**-square. The thinking is that since white played **1.d4**, the **e4**-square becomes a sensible target. Black will also have flexibility as to how they will play in the center with the d-and-e-pawns. However, black must accept that **1... f5** weakens their king-side.

A popular variation in the Dutch Defense is the Fianchetto Attack.

Dutch Defense Fianchetto Attack

1.d4 f5 2.g3 Nf6



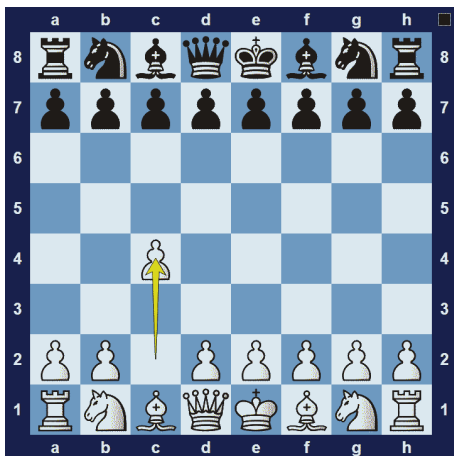
The fianchetto attack refers to white's idea to play **g3** and **Bg2**. Understanding that black takes aim at the e4-square, white immediately enlists their light-square bishop to support the center.

The Pros and Cons of the Dutch Defense

The Dutch Defense leads to imbalanced positions and gives black the opportunity to try original ideas. However, due to playing ... **f5** early on, black's king-safety will be compromised and white might enjoy a space-advantage in the center.

ENGLISH OPENING

1.c4



The opening is named after Howard Staunton, the famous English chess master who was widely recognized as an unofficial world champion from 1843-1851. In those years (1840's-1850's) his contemporaries believed the opening to be inferior, partly due to the pawn on **c4** restricting the white light-

square bishop.

English Opening Basic Theory

The English Opening is an opening for white that starts with the move **1.c4**. In a pure English opening, white will aim to control the **d5**-square, with the help of a bishop on **g2** and another pawn on **e4**, supported by a pawn on **d3**.

However, the English opening often transposes into another opening, such as the Queen's Gambit or the Catalan Opening.

Note: In chess, transposition is the scenario where the exact same position is reached, but by a different sequence of moves. For example, the English Opening will often transpose into a variation of the Queen's Gambit.

A popular variation in the English Opening is the Anglo-Indian Defense.

English Opening Anglo-Indian Defense

1.c4 Nf6



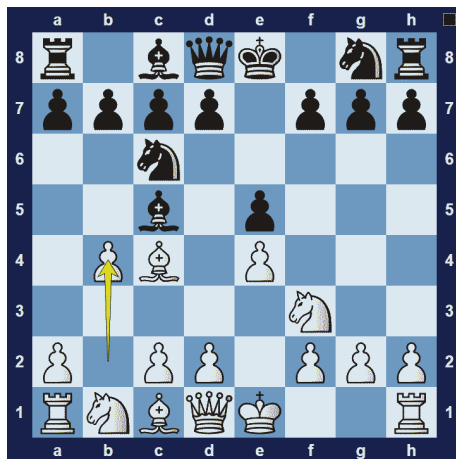
By playing **1... Nf6**, black keeps their options open with this very flexible move. It also gives white an opportunity to transpose to another opening, such as the Queen's Gambit.

The Pros and Cons of the English Opening

In the English Opening white settles for slower development in return for long-term pressure on the queen-side. However, since white's development is slower, there are less chances for a direct attack and black may be able to get a strong hold in the center.

EVANS GAMBIT

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4



The Evans Gambit is an opening for white, named after Captain William Davies Evans. He was a seafarer and inventor of the tri-colored lighting system—to prevent naval collisions at night. He played this opening against Alexander McDonnell, whilst on shore leave in London in 1825/1826.

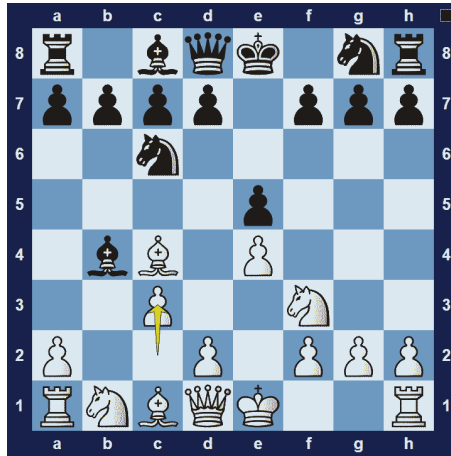
Evans Gambit Basic Theory

In typical gambit style, white sacrifices a pawn, with **b2-b4**, in order to get ahead in development. An important observation is that other gambits often sacrifice a pawn near the center. In the case of Evans Gambit, white still has all their central pawns.

A popular variation in the Evans Gambit is the Evans Gambit Accepted.

Evans Gambit Accepted

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 c3



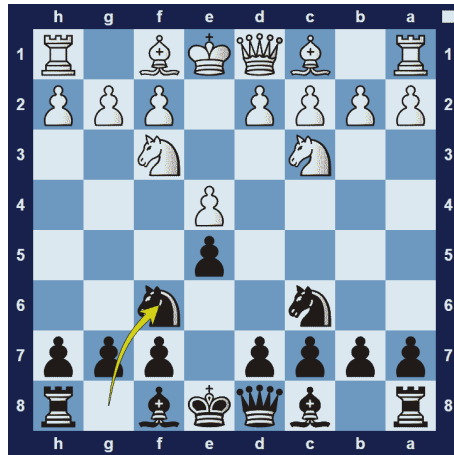
By accepting the gambit, black declares they will defend against white's threats whilst aiming to catch up in development. If black can succeed in this, they will be a pawn ahead—with good chances to win the endgame.

The Pros and Cons of Evan's Gambit

The Evan's Gambit is a very aggressive opening that gives white plenty attacking chances. However, there are risks. For one, black can decline the gambit safely. Also, if white's attack fizzles out, black will simply have an extra pawn.

FOUR KNIGHTS GAME

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6



The Four Knights Game is an opening for black, named after the simple fact that the four knights are the first pieces to be developed in the game.

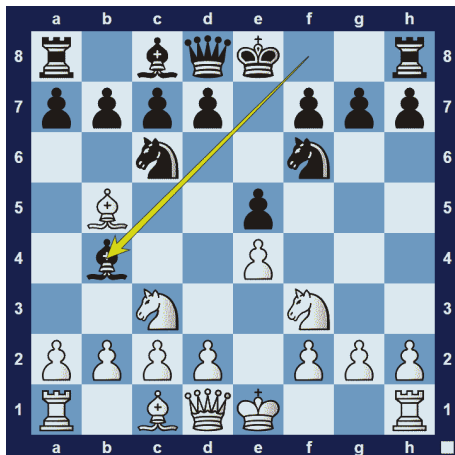
Four Knights Game Basic Theory

Four Knights Game is a very principled opening, featuring very natural development from both sides. Both players develop their knights before the bishops. This is a little more flexible because, whereas the knights generally go to the c-and-f-files, it is a little less obvious where the bishops will go.

A popular variation in the Four Knights Game is the Double Spanish Variation (also known as the Symmetrical Variation).

Four Knights Game Double Spanish Variation

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 Bb4



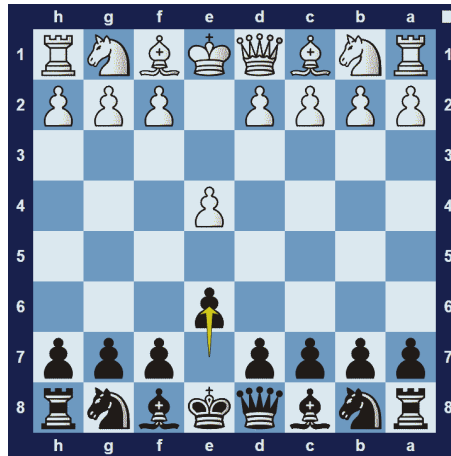
Black hopes to get easy equality by keeping the position completely symmetrical.

The Pros and Cons of the Four-Knights Game

The Four-Knights Game is a perfectly sound opening that feature very natural development. However, some players may not like its simplicity. Also, due to it being very symmetrical, it may lead to rather draws positions.

FRENCH DEFENSE

1.e4 e6



The French Defense is an opening for black, so named after a correspondence match played between the city of London and the city of Paris, in 1834.

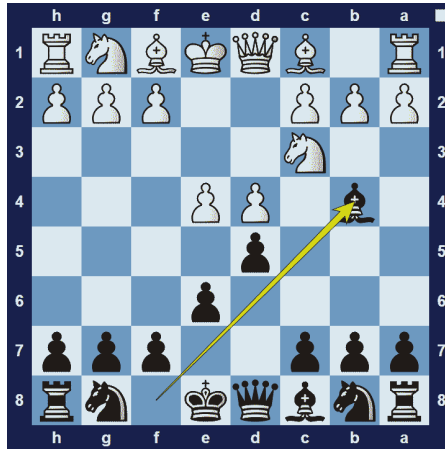
French Defense Basic Theory

In the French defense the purpose of black's first move, e6, is to support the d5-square from where black intends to challenge the center. Also, by playing e6, black's king is immediately safer since white will not be able to attack on the **g8-a2**-diagonal anytime soon.

A popular variation in the French Defense is the Winawer Variation.

French Defense Winawer Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4



A main idea in the French Defense is that the black pawn on **d5** attacks the **e4**-square. The Winawer variation further supports this idea by pinning the white knight on **c3**.

The Pros and Cons of the French Defense

The French Defense is a very popular opening because it is fairly easy to learn, very solid and even offers attacking possibilities. However, the French Defense leaves black with a locked in light-squared bishop. (There are ways to deal with it though.)

GIUOCO PIANO

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5



The Giuoco Piano is sometimes used interchangeably with the Italian Opening. However, the Giuoco Piano is actually a variation of the Italian Opening—specifically referring to the moves **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5**.

Giuoco Piano Basic Theory

The Giuoco Piano is a very principled opening where both sides develop naturally. White chooses to place their bishop on **c4**—from where it attacks the center and takes aim at the **f7**-square. Black responds with the same idea, **Bc5**.

A popular variation in the Giuoco Piano is the Classical Variation.

Giuoco Piano Classical Variation

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6



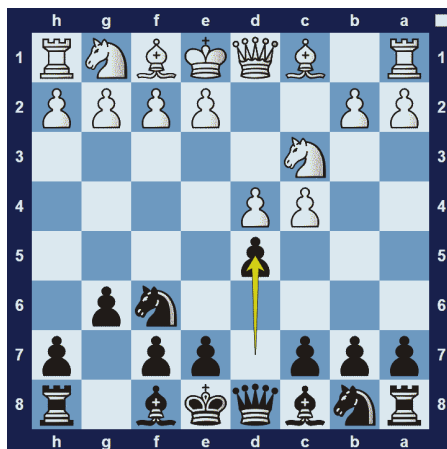
In the classical variation of the Giuoco Piano, white plays the pawn-moves **c3** and **d3**, controlling the center with their pawns, whilst minimizing any potential weaknesses caused by advancing the pawns further.

The Pros and Cons of the Giuoco Piano Opening

The Giuoco Piano is a solid opening with relatively simple theory and gives strategic players a good base to work from. However, due to the position being very balanced and very well known, the opening typically won't lead to fireworks.

GRÜNfeld DEFENSE

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5



The Grünfeld Defense is an opening for black, named after Ernst Grünfeld, an Austrian chess player who, in 1922, defeated future world champion, Alexander Alekhine, with this opening.

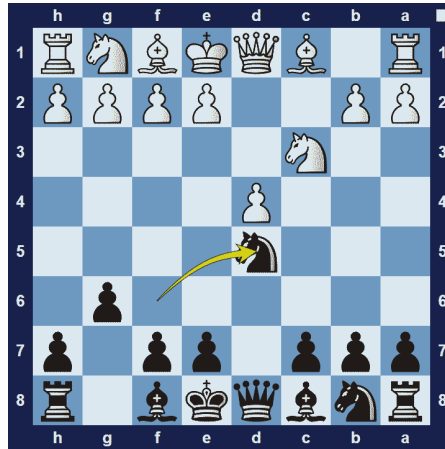
Grünfeld Defense Basic Theory

In typical hypermodern style, black invites white to attack the center with their pawns (classical style). Black then seeks to aggressively counter-attack white's center with the **d7-d5** push and their minor pieces.

A popular variation in the Grünfeld Defense is the Exchange Variation.

Grünfeld Defense Exchange Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5



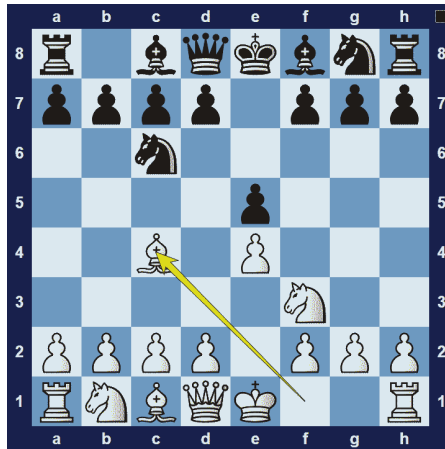
In the Grünfeld Defense Exchange Variation, white exchanges the pawn on **d5**, with the idea to follow up with **e2-e4**, dominating the center with their pawns. In the ensuing battle, white will aim to demonstrate that the classical school of thinking (occupy the center with your pawns) is wise. Black, on the other hand, will seek to prove that the hypermodern school of thinking (allow your opponent to occupy the center—then undermine them) is also good.

The Pros and Cons of the Grünfeld Defense

The Grünfeld Defense is a highly theoretical in nature. This implies that either player can benefit from experience and superior knowledge of the opening. Black may be able to get a very active position whereas white could obtain a strong center and space advantage.

ITALIAN GAME

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4



The Italian Game is a family of chess openings beginning with the moves: **1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4**. The opening is named after the nationality of its early practitioners, Italian chess players Greco and Polerio. The opening is also referenced in The Göttingen manuscript—a Latin text devoted entirely to chess, possibly written late in the 15th century.

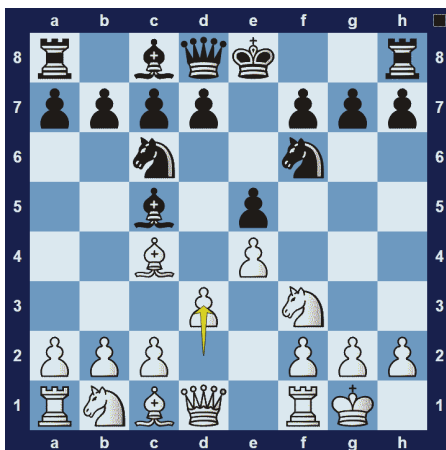
Italian Game Basic Theory

The Italian Game is one of the oldest recorded openings and it is easy to see why. According to classical principles (control the center, develop quickly, castle soon) there is hardly a simpler example of achieving these objectives, than **1.e4, 2.Nf3** and **3.Bc4**.

Two popular variations in the Italian Game is the Giuoco Piano (translated “quiet game”) and the Giuoco Pianissimo (translated “very quiet game”).

Italian Game Giuoco Pianissimo

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.0-0 Nf6 5.d3



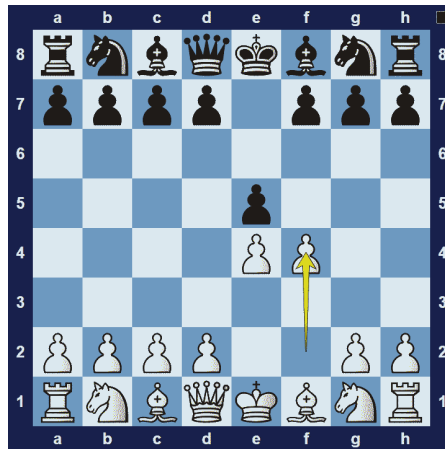
Instead of **5.c3** (Giuoco Piano), white plays **5.d3** (Giuoco Pianissimo) and thereby avoids an immediate confrontation in the center. White then prepares to play **d3-d4** at a later stage.

The Pros and Cons of the Italian Game

The fact that many beginners play the Italian Game, quite possibly without even knowing its name, attests to just how natural the piece-development flows in this opening. At the same time though, the Italian Game doesn't do much to put any pressure on black early on.

KING'S GAMBIT

1.e4 e5 2.f4



The King's Gambit is an opening for white, named after the early pawn-sacrifice offered on the king-side of the board.

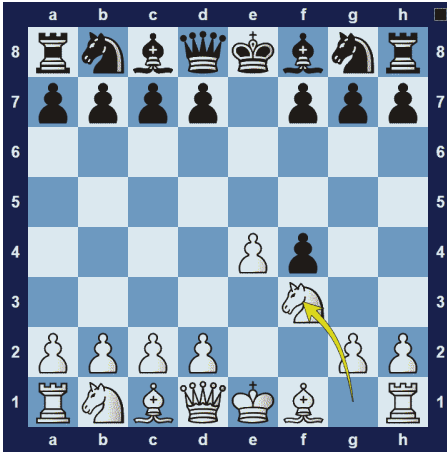
King's Gambit Basic Theory

In the King's Gambit white sacrifices, a pawn, but also compromises the safety of their king, in exchange for rapid development and attacking opportunities on black's king.

A popular variation in the King's Gambit is the King's Gambit Accepted.

King's Gambit Accepted

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4



If black accepts the pawn (the King's Gambit Accepted), white usually responds with **3.Nf3**—to prevent the immediate threat, **Qh4+**. White gets a stronger center and quick development, at the cost of a pawn and compromised king-safety. The logical strategy for white is to attack quickly, before black manages to coordinate their

defenses. Black, on the other hand, will seek to defend tenaciously whilst looking for an opportunity to launch a counter-attack on white's king.

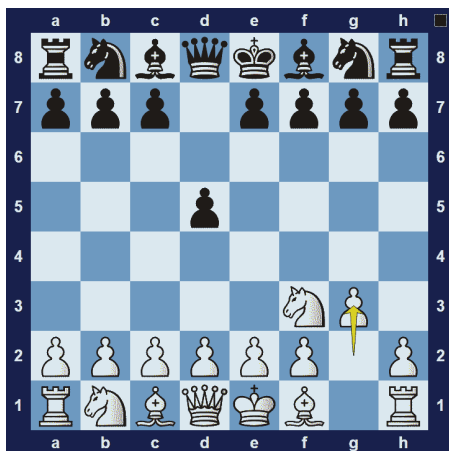
Another popular option for black is to decline the gambit and instead play 2... **d5** (the Falkbeer counter-gambit).

The Pros and Cons of the King's Gambit

The King's Gambit is a very exciting opening, particularly among spectators of the game! Although it's a fun opening, white takes on a lot of risk by exposing their king. And since the opening has been studied extensively, there are many known ways for black to deal with the King's Gambit.

KING'S INDIAN ATTACK

1.Nf3 d5 2.g3



The King's Indian Attack, also known as the Barcza System (named after Gedeon Barcza), is a chess opening system for white that mirrors the popular King's Indian Defense (from black's side of the board).

King's Indian Attack Basic Theory

The King's Indian Attack is often characterized by an all out

attack on black's king-side.

However, before they can attack, white typically aims to:

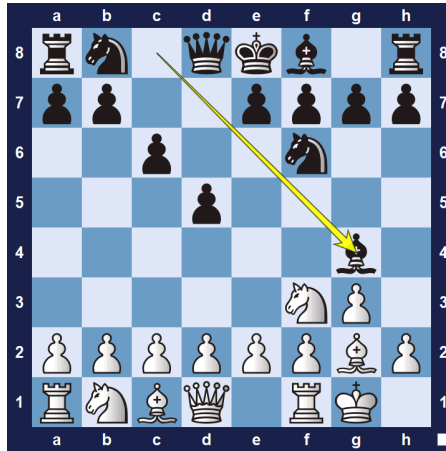
- Develop the pieces and get their king safe (castle).
- Get a pawn to e5 from where it gives white a space-advantage on the kingside (if black has a pawn on e5, white usually wants to attack it—by preparing to play f2-f4).
- White's usually avoids pointless piece-exchanges early on—they need the pieces to attack.

However, white should be flexible too. Depending how black plays, white may decide to rather focus on the center or expand on the queen-side.

A popular variation in the King's Indian Attack is the Yugoslav Variation.

King's Indian Attack Yugoslav Variation

1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 c6 4.O-O Bg4



The Yugoslav Variation is characterized by black's move **4... Bg4**. By attacking (and potentially pinning) the knight on **f3**, black anticipates that white typically wants to use the e5-square as a base to attack from.

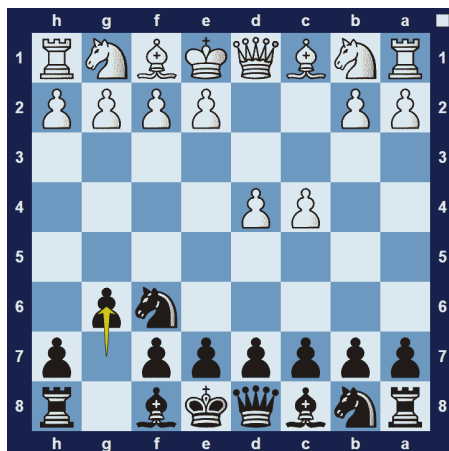
Note: When the word "Attack" appears in the name of an opening, it usually refers to an opening from white's point of view. For example, The King's-Indian Attack resembles the same setup for white as the King's-Indian Defense does for black.

The Pros and Cons of the King's-Indian Attack

The King's Indian Attack is fairly easy to learn because it is not very theoretical. White can often launch a promising king-side attack. However, since white doesn't challenge the center early on, there are many ways for black to get a decent position.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6



The King's Indian Defense is an opening for black that mirrors the King's-Indian Attack for white. The family of Indian Openings are named after the opening moves used by Moheschunder Bannerjee, a strong Indian chess player, in the late 19th century.

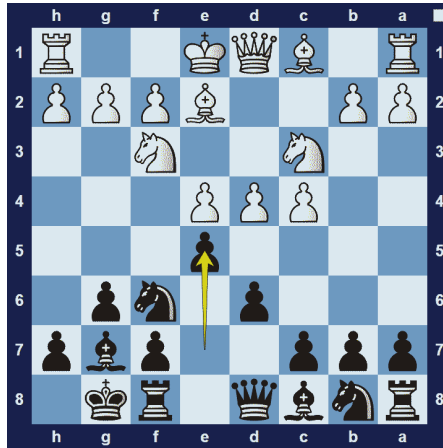
King's Indian Defense Basic Theory

The King's Indian Defense follow hypermodern principles. That is, black allows White to build a strong pawn center to later counter-attack it with a pawn-push, either e5 or c5. Black will support the pawn-push with their minor pieces, prominently the fianchettoed bishop on g7.

A popular variation in the King's Indian Defense is the Classical Variation.

King's Indian Defense Classical Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5



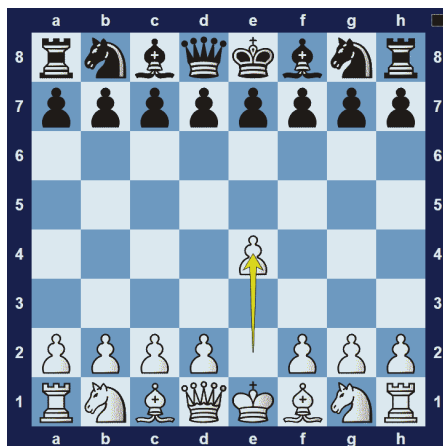
The Classical Variation of the King's Indian Defense refers to the classical approach from white. That is, to occupy the center with their pawns. White will generally aim to create a breakthrough on the queenside—with the pawn push **c5**. Black should try to block this pawn-advance by placing a knight on **c5**. If black manages to restrain white's ideas on the queen-side, they can launch a promising attack on the white king.

The Pros and Cons of the King's-Indian Defense

The King's-Indian Defense is a very dynamic opening for black and it leads to interesting positions. Even though black can often attack on the king-side, white usually has a space-advantage in the center and it can be difficult for black to deal with pressure on the queen-side.

KING'S PAWN GAME

1.e4



The King's Pawn Game refers to a family of openings where white starts the game by pushing the pawn in front of their king, two squares.

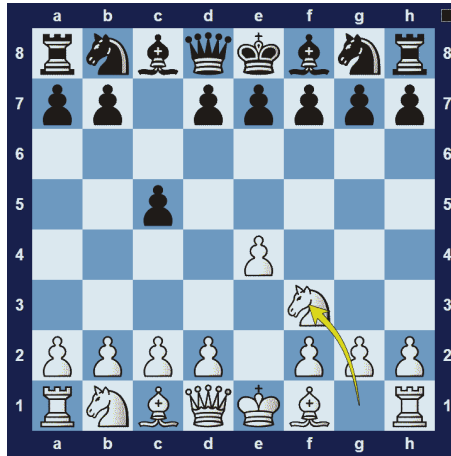
King's Pawn Game Basic Theory

The variations of the King's Pawn openings are characterized by quick development from both sides and early clashes in the center. This leads to games that are often more tactical in nature than Queen's Pawn openings or other Flank openings.

A popular variation in the King's Pawn Game is the Sicilian Defense

King's Pawn Game / Sicilian Defense

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3



In the Sicilian Defense, black upsets the balance in the position on their very first move, which declares they are ready for a fight.

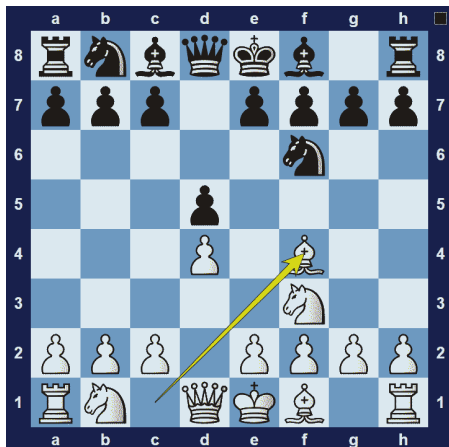
In the Sicilian Defense, black typically wants to expand on the queen-side ...a6 and ...b5, whilst adding pressure on the open c-file. White, on the other hand, will seek to crash through the center—into black's position—or potentially launch an attack on the king-side. White's strategy will be very effective if black allows white to dominate the center.

The Pros and Cons of the King's Pawn Game

The King's Pawn Game family of openings typically allow quicker development than Queen's Pawn and Flank Openings. However, quick development from both sides lead to sharp positions and generally require more opening knowledge from the players.

LONDON SYSTEM

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.Bf4



The London System is an opening system for white, named after the 1922 London tournament—where the opening became prominent.

London System Basic Theory

In The London System (also known as the Mason Variation of the Queen's Pawn Game), white sticks to the same setup, almost regardless of what Black

plays. As with all opening systems, the theory and move order is not as important as it would be in non-system type openings.

White will give a lot of support to their pawn on **d4 (c3,e3,Nf3)**. Their pawn-formation in the center will exert substantial control over the dark squares. Since black's dark-square bishop will play an important role in defending dark squares, white will often aim to exchange their dark-square bishop for its black counterpart, quite possibly on **d6**.

A popular variation in the London System is the Main Line.

Note: The Main Line Variation of a particular opening may not always remain the most popular. The popularity of opening variations can change over time. Top-level trends, new discoveries, novelties or refutations of existing variations can all affect its popularity.

London System Main Line

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.Bf4 c5 4.e3



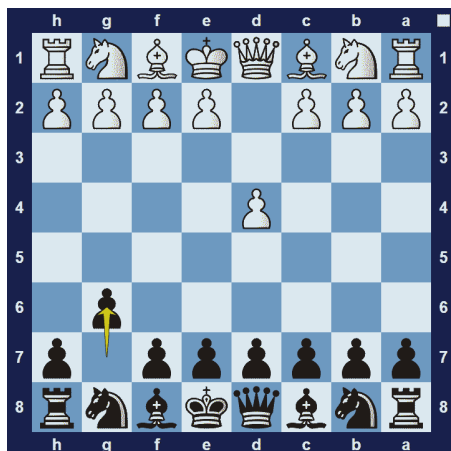
With the moves **1.d4 2.Nf3 & 3.Bf4**, white revealed they want to play the London System. The traditional continuation is then **3... c5 4.e3**, known as the London System Main Line. A more modern approach is to play **2.Bf4**, on the second move, committing to the London System one move earlier.

The Pros and Cons of the London System

Being a System Opening, the London System is easy to learn and there isn't much black can do to avoid it. It is a reliable way for white to get a satisfactory position. However, black is not under any immediate pressure and it might not be clear how white can obtain an initiative.

MODERN DEFENSE

1.d4 g6



The Modern Defense (also known as the Robatsch Defense after Karl Robatsch), is an opening for black, named after the hypermodern opening strategy it represents (dare the opponent to grab more territory in the center than they can defend).

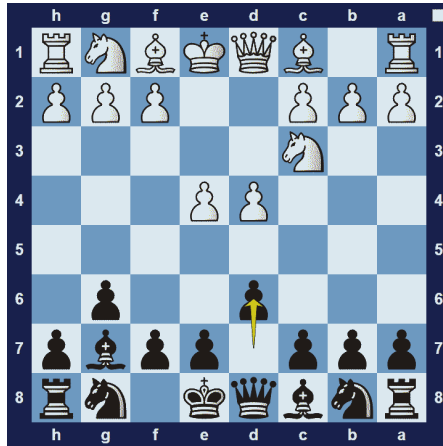
Modern Defense Basic Theory

In typical hypermodern style, Black allows White to occupy the center with pawns and then seeks to undermine this “ideal” center by attacking it—primarily with minor pieces. Black delays **Nf6** in order to maximize the effect of the bishop on **g7**.

A popular variation in the Modern Defense is the Standard Line.

Modern Defense Standard Line

1.d4 g6 2.e4 d6 3.Nc3 Bg7



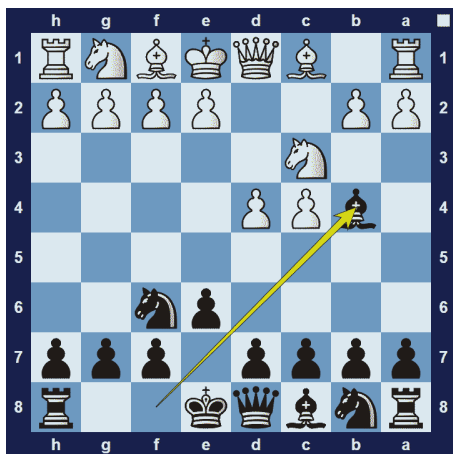
In the Modern Defense Standard Line, white plays **Nc3** early on. This move blocks the white c-pawn and indicates that white will, for the time being, focus their attention on the center and the king-side.

The Pros and Cons of the Modern Defense

The Modern Defense is a very unbalanced opening, which also gives black more opportunities to play for a win. However, black must be very skilled in this opening, else white's space-advantage and strong hold on the center can prove too much for black's awkward development.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4



The Nimzo-Indian Defense is an opening for black, developed by and named after Aron Nimzowitsch. He wrote the famous chess book “My System” and was an avid proponent of hypermodern openings.

Nimzo-Indian Defense Basic Theory

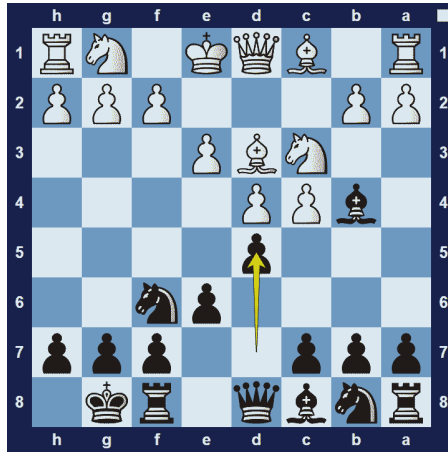
In the Nimzo-Indian Defense, black wants to control the e4-square and all their efforts will support this strategy. Since the white knight on c3 will be a key defender of the e4-square, black wants to exchange their dark-square bishop for this knight. Once this first objective is achieved, Black will also try to keep the position closed because white will have the bishop-pair. (Bishops prefer open positions.)

The Nimzo-Indian Defense is a highly respected opening, to the extent that white sometimes chooses to play the Anti-Nimzo-Indian, where white delays 3.Nc3 (in favor of 3.Nf3) in order to avoid the Nimzo-Indian.

A popular variation in the Nimzo-Indian Defense is the Rubinstein Variation.

Nimzo-Indian Defense Rubinstein Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d5



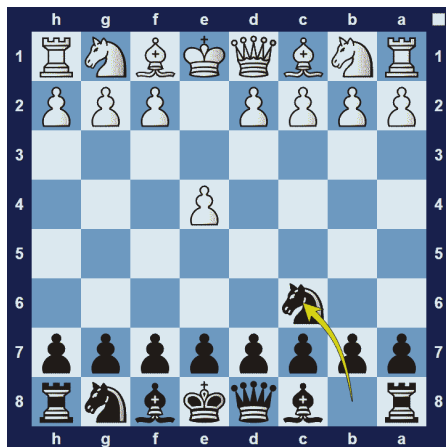
In the Rubinstein variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defense, characterized by the move **4.e3**, white accepts that the **e4**-square is under black's control, for the time being. White then focuses on development first and will address this situation in the center only once their development is complete.

The Pros and Cons of the Nimzo-Indian Defense

The Nimzo-Indian Defense is a highly respected opening for black that can lead to very interesting positions. However, black may lose the bishop pair and, if white succeeds in holding the center, black's position will just be worse.

NIMZOWITSCH DEFENSE

1.e4 Nc6



The Nimzowitsch Defense is another hypermodern opening for black, also named after Aron Nimzowitsch.

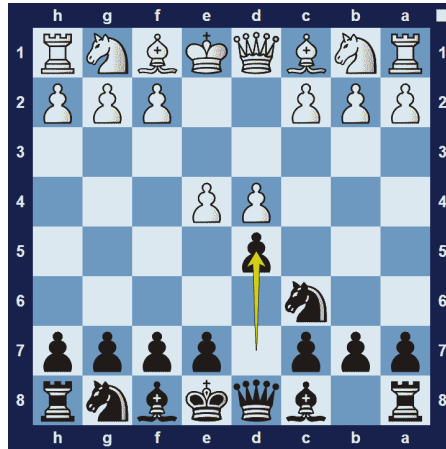
Nimzowitsch Defense Basic Theory

The Nimzowitsch Defense invites white to play **2.d4** in classical style. Black will then prepare to undermine white's center, striking back with either **2... e5** or **2... d5**.

A popular variation in the Nimzowitsch Defense is the Scandinavian Variation.

Nimzowitsch Defense Scandinavian Variation

1.e4 Nc6 2.d4 d5



2... d5 is referred to as the Scandinavian Defense variation of Nimzowitsch Defense because it somewhat represents a delayed version of the Scandinavian Defense (1.e4 d5).

The Pros and Cons of the Nimzowitsch Defense

The Nimzowitsch Defense is a very practical opening, particularly at lower levels where black can surprise their opponent with it. However, experienced players will know how to get an advantage against the Nimzowitsch Defense.

PETROV'S DEFENSE

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6



Petrov's Defense (or Petroff Defense) is an opening for black, named after Alexander Petrov, a Russian chess player, who popularized the opening in the mid-19th century. He discovered this opening is playable if black meets **3.Nxe5** with **3...d6** before **...Nxe4**.

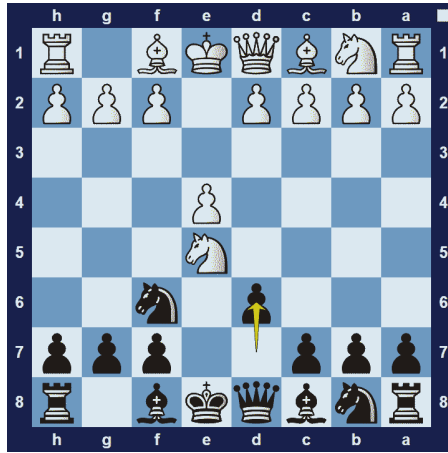
Petrov's Defense Basic Theory

By keeping the game absolutely symmetrical, black can achieve a very solid, albeit drawish, position. In high-level games, black will usually play the Petrov only if they will be happy with a draw. The player with the black pieces may also use this opening if they want to tempt their opponent to overreach.

A popular variation in Petrov's Defense is the Classical Variation.

Petrov's Defense Classical Variation

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6



3... d6 is the move that Alexander Petrov discovered. Previously, the moves **3... Nxe4?** **4.Qe2!** **Nf6??** **5.Nc6+!** made black believe that this opening is terrible for black. However, after **3... d6** **4.Nf3**, black can safely play **4... Nxe4** and restore the balance in material.

The Pros and Cons of the Petrov's Defense

The Petrov's Defense is a very solid opening for black and a surprising amount of theory exists in some lines. It will be very difficult for white to get any advantage from the opening. However, it is not a good choice if black is playing for a win because white can easily force black into very draws positions.

PHILIDOR'S DEFENSE

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6



Philidor's Defense is an opening for black, named after the famous 18th-century player François-André Danican Philidor. Philidor suggested **2... d6** as an alternative to the commonly played **2...Nc6**. It was Philidor who famously said: "... pawns, they are the soul of chess."

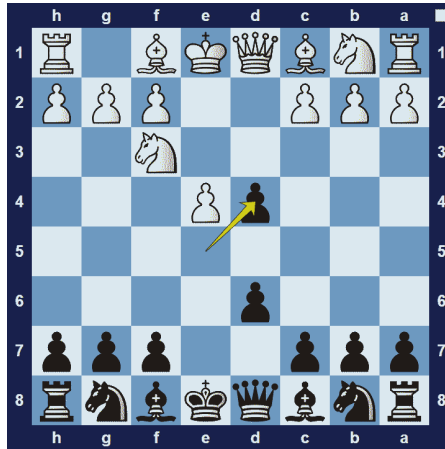
Philidor's Defense Basic Theory

It is rather difficult for white to plan an attack against Philidor's Defense, because black avoids creating any weaknesses in their structure. On the other hand, the pawn on **d6** cramps black's development to some extent. Black typically avoids exchanges and waits for the right moment to launch a counterattack.

A popular variation in Philidor's Defense is the Exchange Variation.

Philidor's Defense Exchange Variation

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 exd4



In the Exchange Variation of Philidor's Defense, black exchanges the central pawns to release tension in the center and to avoid tactical complications. This idea makes sense because tactics usually favor the side with better development. White will enjoy a strong center, whilst black will focus on achieving a strong defense.

The Pros and Cons of Philidor's Defense

Philidor's Defense can be very effective if your goal is to limit white's options. Black's position will also be very solid because there are no weaknesses in the pawn-structure. However, black's dark-square bishop will be rather passive, trapped behind the pawn-structure.

PIRC DEFENSE

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6



The Pirc Defense is an opening for black, named after the Slovenian grandmaster Vasja Pirc.

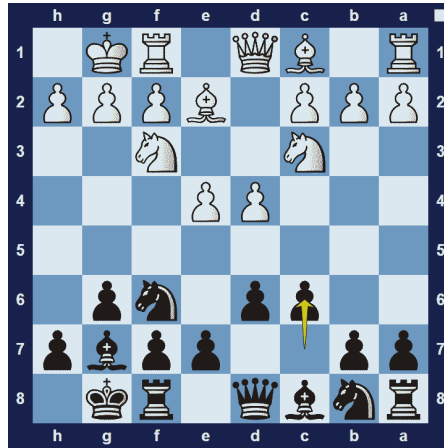
Pirc Defense Basic Theory

The Pirc Defense is another example of hypermodern defense, meaning that black allows white to occupy the center with their pawns. Black's strategy will then be to attack white's center with their minor pieces and to prepare the right moment for counter-strike in the center. As a consequence of playing **d6**, black's dark-square bishop must fianchetto to the **g7**-square in order to develop.

A popular variation in the Pirc Defense is the Classical Variation.

Pirc Defense Classical Variation

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Be2 O-O 6.O-O c6



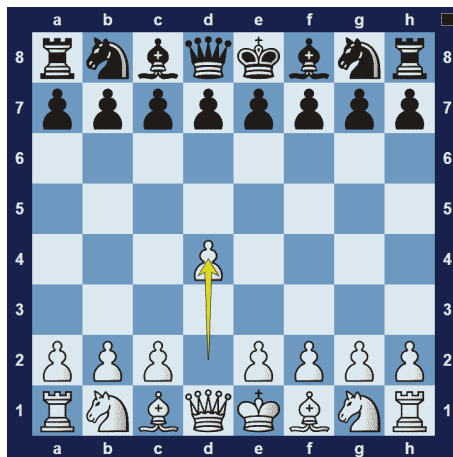
The Classical Variation of the Pirc Defense refers to the way white chooses to deal with black's opening. White doesn't get too ambitious and instead of being provoked into grabbing more territory than they can defend, white simply occupies the center with their d- and e- pawns and develops their minor pieces naturally. This approach is a logical way to deal with hypermodern theory.

The Pros and Cons of the Pirc Defense

The Pirc Defense provokes white to be over-ambitious in the opening. If black succeeds in this, they will have good counter-attacking opportunities. However, if white isn't provoked easily, there are many effective ways to play against the Pirc.

QUEEN'S PAWN GAME

1.d4



The Queen's Pawn Game refers to a family of openings where white starts the game by pushing the pawn in front of their queen, two squares to **d4**.

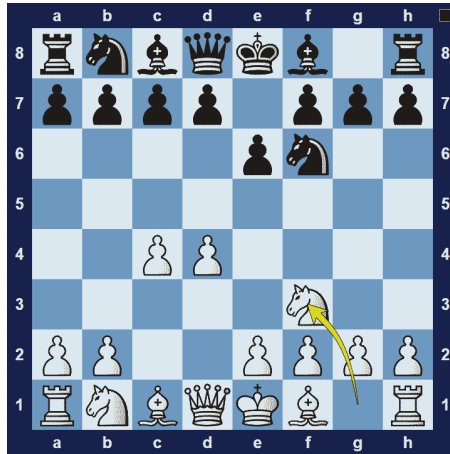
Queen's Pawn Game Basic Theory

The family of Queen's Pawn Openings usually leads to slower development (as compared to King's Pawn Openings). One reason for this is that the pawn on **d4** is already defended by the queen, whereas with **1.e4**, the pawn would not be defended yet. This implies that Queen's Pawn Openings are generally, but not always, less tactical and more strategic in nature than King's Pawn Opening. On the other hand, Queen's Pawn Openings can give white a little more time to play for strategic advantages.

A popular variation in the Queen's Pawn Game is the Anti-Nimzo-Indian.

Queen's Pawn Game Anti-Nimzo-Indian

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3



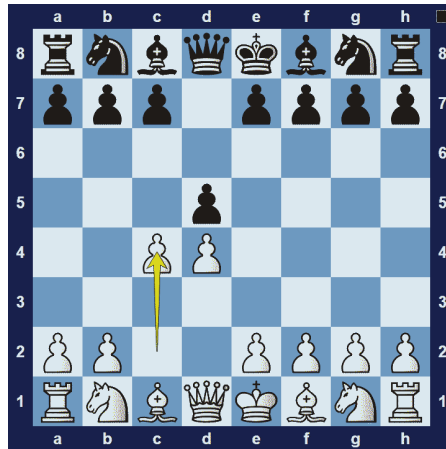
White wants to avoid the annoying pin that will be created on their knight after the moves **3.Nc3 Bb4** (the Nimzo-Indian). Therefore, instead of playing **3.Nc3**, white goes for **3.Nf3** (the Anti-Nimzo-Indian) and will respond to **3... Bb4+** with **4.Bd2**.

The Pros and Cons of the Queen's Pawn Game

The Queen's Pawn Game family of openings is generally slower, less tactical and more strategic in nature (compared to King's Pawn Game openings). In Queen's Pawn openings white gets more opportunities to create long-term pressure, but a quick attack on black isn't likely and king-side development will be slow.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT

1.d4 d5 2.c4



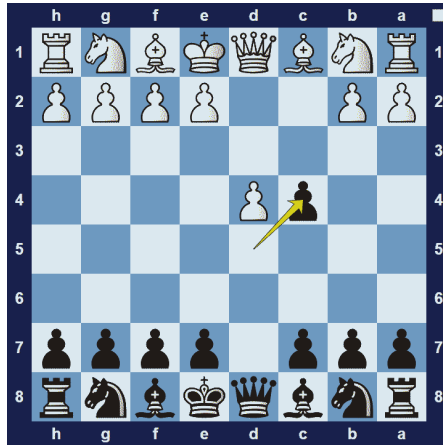
The Queen's Gambit is an opening for white, named after the early pawn-sacrifice offered on the queen-side of the board.

Queen's Gambit Basic Theory

Although the Queen's Gambit is a very dynamic opening, the concept behind it is simple and logical: White wants to exchange their flank-pawn (c-pawn) for a central pawn (d-pawn). If black accepts the gambit, white will then have two central pawns against black's one central pawn. The Queen's Gambit is not a true gambit opening though, because white will typically regain the pawn since black can't hold onto it in a favorable manner.

Queen's Gambit Accepted

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4



The Queen's Gambit Accepted is an opening for black that starts with the moves **1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4**, named after the fact that black accepts the gambit.

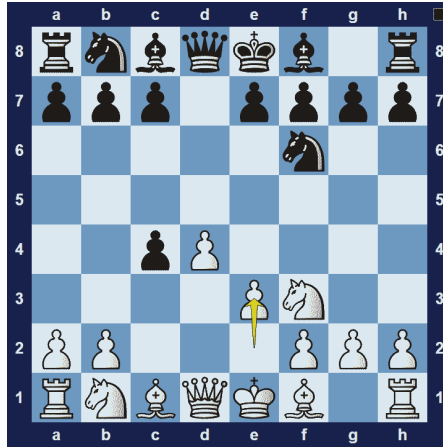
Queen's Gambit Accepted Basic Theory

When black accepts the gambit, they generally also accept that they will not try to save the pawn. Instead, black will focus on development and typically plan to gain time and space on the queen-side.

A popular variation in the Queen's Gambit Accepted is the Main Line.

Queen's Gambit Accepted Main Line

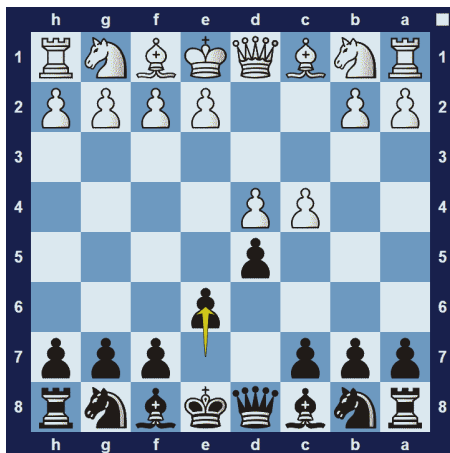
1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.d3



In the Queen's-Gambit Accepted Main Line, white delays **Nc3**, in favor of **Nf3**, because their first priority is to prevent the possibility of black playing **e7-e5**. The next objective then is to attack and capture the pawn on **c4**, by playing **e3**. Black typically won't waste time trying to defend it, but will later try to gain time and space on the queen-side with moves like **c5**, **a6** and **b5** (hitting the white bishop on **c4**).

Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6



The Queen's Gambit Declined is an opening for black that starts with the moves **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6**, named after the fact that black declines the gambit.

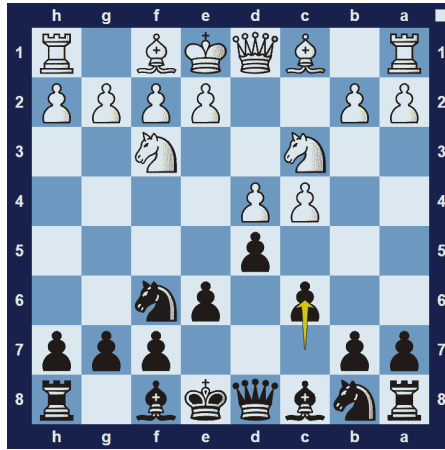
Queen's Gambit Declined Basic Theory

By declining white's offer, black indicates that they want to keep their pawn on **d5** and will even reinforce the **d5**-pawn by playing **e6**.

A popular variation in the Queen's Gambit Declined is the Semi-Slav Variation.

Queen's Gambit Declined Semi-Slav Variation

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 c6



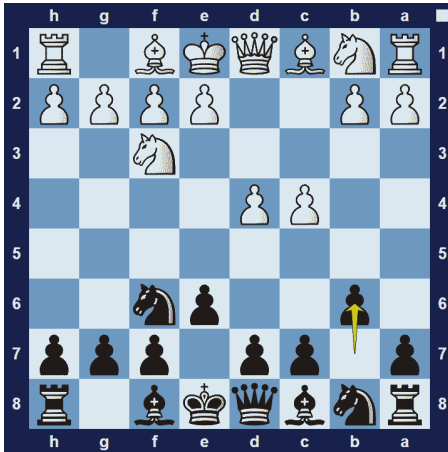
In the Queen's Gambit Declined Semi-Slav Variation, black intends to capture the white pawn on **c4**—and hold on to it by supporting it with **b5** on the next move. This idea can be quite effective and white will usually try to save the pawn, i.e. by playing **e3**.

The Pros and Cons of the Queen's Gambit

Whereas Queen's Pawn openings are generally known to be slower than King's Pawn openings, the Queen's Gambit picks up the speed and fights for the center right away. Even though there are many solid responses that black can choose from, this opening is very popular on all levels of play.

QUEEN'S INDIAN DEFENSE

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6



The Queen's Indian Defense is an opening for black that starts with the moves **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6**. The Queen's Indian is regarded as the sister opening of the Nimzo-Indian opening because in both openings black wants to take control of the **e4-square**.

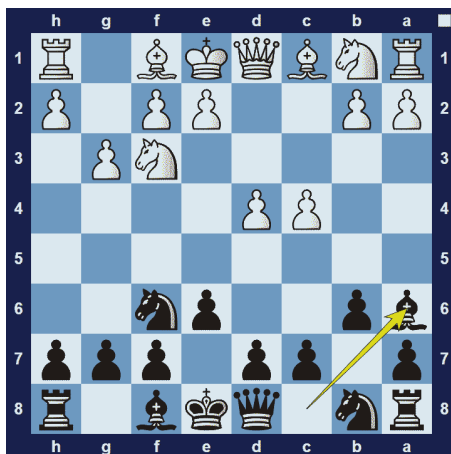
Queen's Indian Defense Basic Theory

In typical hypermodern style, black won't occupy the center with pawns but instead focuses on piece development. If white avoids the Nimzo-Indian Defense with **3.Nf3**, black will fianchetto their queen's bishop with the idea to control the light central squares, particularly the **e4-square**. Since black's position will be a bit cramped, black will usually try to exchange a few minor pieces in order to create a bit more space. However, white can get a good position if they can control the **e4-square** in a favorable manner.

A popular variation in the Queen's Indian Defense is the Fianchetto Variation.

Queen's Indian Defense Fianchetto Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6



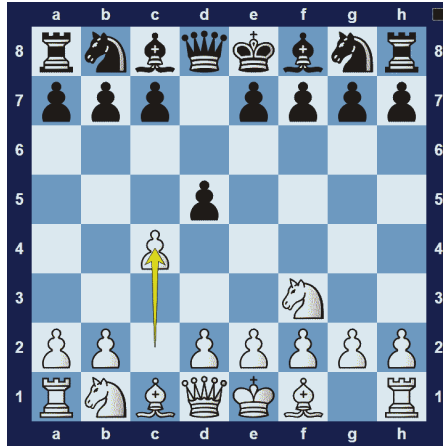
The Fianchetto Variation of the Queen's Indian (also called the Modern Main Line) refers to white's idea to neutralize black's light-square bishop, by developing their own bishop to this diagonal as well, with **Bg2**. In this case black may opt to rather play **Ba6**, hitting the **c4**-pawn and taking advantage of the fact that white will be weakened on the **f1-a6** diagonal.

The Pros and Cons of the Queen's-Indian Defense

The Queen's-Indian Defense is a highly respected opening amongst top-level players. Black avoids weaknesses in their pawn-structure and their pieces usually finds good squares. As with all hypermodern openings though, white will enjoy a space-advantage if they manage to effectively defend the extra territory.

RÉTI OPENING

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4



The Réti Opening is an opening for white, named after the Czechoslovakian chess player, Richard Réti, who defeated José Raúl Capablanca, the reigning world champion at the time, with this opening.

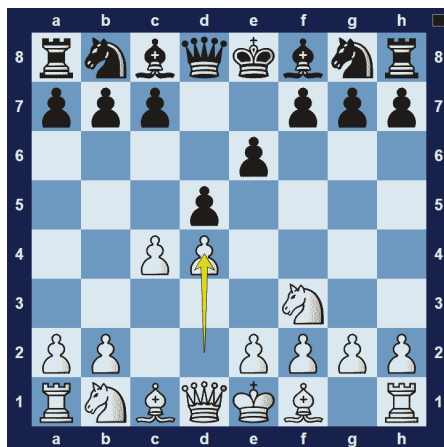
Réti Opening Basic Theory

Unlike most other openings, the Réti is not a specific but rather a set of themes that characterize the opening. In modern times the Réti Opening refers to white playing **Nf3**, **c4**, fianchettoes at least one bishop and does not play an early **d4**. whereas black plays **1...d5**.

A popular variation in the Réti Opening is the Queen's Gambit (Transposed).

Réti Opening / Queen's Gambit Declined (Transposed)

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d4



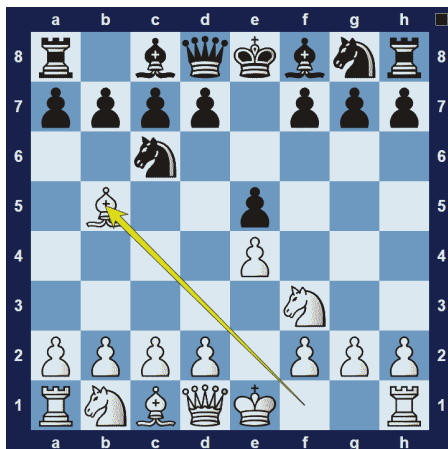
The Réti Opening often transposes to another opening, typically into the Queen's Gambit Declined. The player with the white pieces could even pretend to play the Réti Opening (starting with the moves **Nf3** and **c4**) in order to trick their opponent into playing the Queen's Gambit.

The Pros and Cons of the Réti Opening

A main advantage of the Réti Opening is that it is very flexible and allows white to easily transpose into other openings. The downside is that black also gets a lot of the same flexibility.

RUY LOPEZ

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5



The Ruy Lopez is an opening for white, named after a Spanish priest, Ruy López de Segura. Ruy Lopez wrote a book on this and other openings. However, the Ruy Lopez only gained traction in the mid 19th century—when Russian theoretician Carl Jaenisch popularized its use.

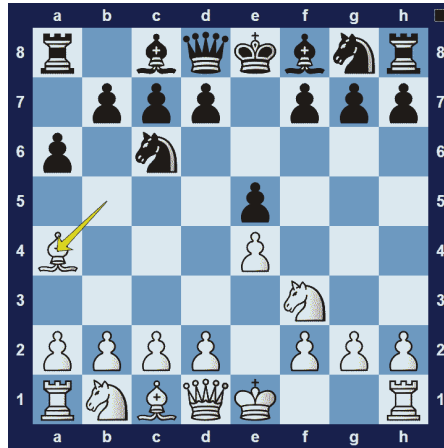
Ruy Lopez Basic Theory

After 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6, the move 3.Bb5 is the Ruy Lopez. At its most basic level, the purpose of this move is to add pressure on the e5-square by attacking its main defender (the knight on c6). White is even threatening to win the pawn on e5. It doesn't work right away though, because after 3... a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.Nxe5, black can play 5... Qd4, attacking the white knight and pawn on e4.

A popular variation in the Ruy Lopez is the Closed Defense.

Ruy Lopez Closed Defense

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4



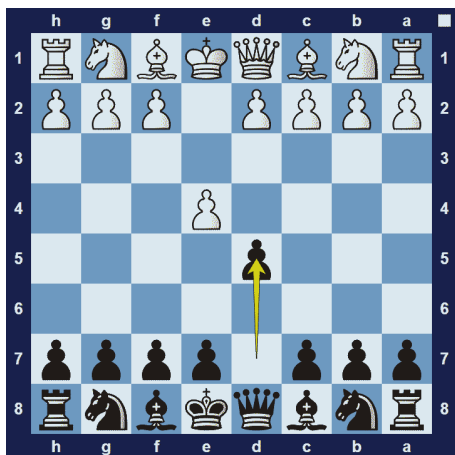
In the Ruy Lopez Closed Defense variation, after **3... a6**, white retreats the bishop to **a4**. Black will typically develop further with **4...Nf6**, **5... Be7** and **6... b5**, hitting the white bishop again and gaining space on the queen-side.

The Pros and Cons of the Ruy Lopez Opening

The Ruy Lopez Opening combines the features of typical King's Pawn openings with the features of typical Queen's Pawn openings. This means white gets to develop and castle quickly, but also gets some long-term pressure. The downside is that there is a lot of complex theory to learn because black has many options to choose from.

SCANDINAVIAN DEFENSE

1.e4 d5



The Scandinavian Defense (or Center Counter Defense, or Center Counter Game) is an opening for black, named after Scandinavian masters who proved the opening is playable for black. One of them, Ludvig Collijn, consistently responded to 1.e4 with 1... d5, at the first Nordic Chess Championship held in Stockholm 1897.

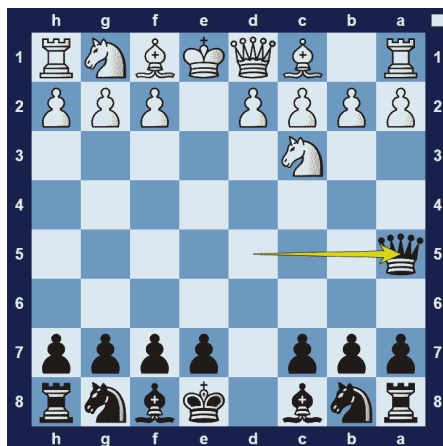
Scandinavian Defense Basic Theory

1.e4 d5, the Scandinavian Defense, appears to be a very attacking opening for black. However, it is in fact rather passive, at least in the early stages of the game. Black's development will be slow and white can develop freely. However, since the opening is also very solid for black (because they have no weaknesses in their pawn-structure), it will be difficult for white to plan an attack. At a later stage then, black can aim to take advantage of any weaknesses in white's structure.

A popular variation in the Scandinavian Defense is the Main Line.

Scandinavian Defense Main Line

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qa5



3... Qa5, the Main Line of the Scandinavian Defense, is a logical square for the black queen. She will be safe there, for the moment. White will typically place their dark-square bishop on **d2** and prepare a discovered attack against black's queen. Black will, in the meantime, play **c6**—to create a safe square for the queen on **c7**, whilst also preventing **Nb5** or **Nd5**.

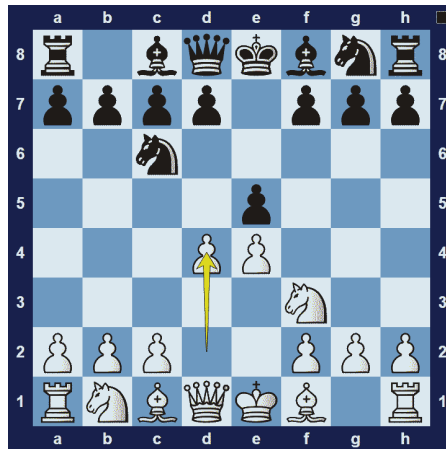
The moves **3... Qd6** or **3... Qd8** are also popular, depending on what black wants to achieve.

The Pros and Cons of the Scandinavian Defense

The Scandinavian Defense can be annoying for white because it forces them to play the opening on black's terms. Black can usually find good squares for all their pieces and the integrity of their pawn-structure will be strong. On the other hand, white gets a significant lead in development and extra space. Black's position will typically become more promising as the game continues—if they can survive without weakening their structure. Against strong players, black must be well-versed in the Scandinavian Defense—or risk being crushed quickly.

SCOTCH GAME

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4



The Scotch Game is an opening for white. The opening got its name from a correspondence match played in 1824 between Edinburgh (Scotland) and London.

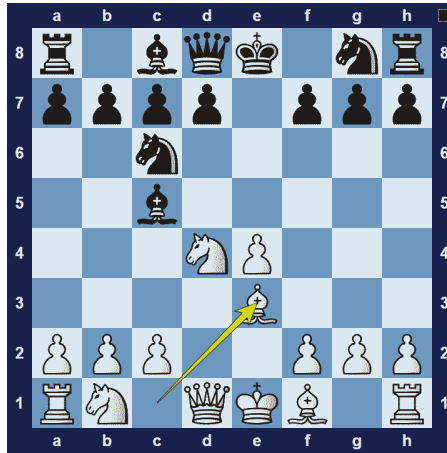
Scotch Game Basic Theory

In the Scotch Game, white's first objective is to open up the center by forcing black to exchange their e-pawn for white's d-pawn. This will ensure that white obtains a space advantage in the center. Then, white will put black under pressure by developing quickly and using the open lines to create attacking opportunities.

A popular variation in the Scotch Game is the Classical Variation.

Scotch Game Classical Variation

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd5 Bc5 5.Be3



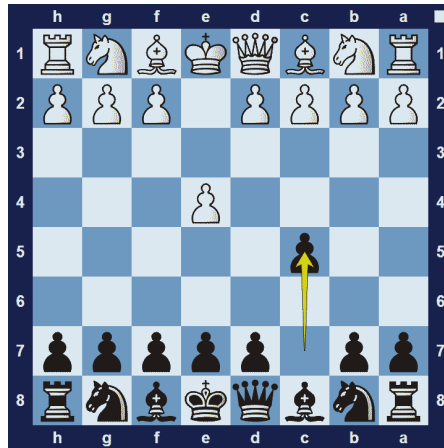
The Classical Variation of the Scotch Game is a popular approach for black. By playing **4.Bc5**, black develops a piece with tempo, threatening to capture the white knight on d4. If white plays **5.Nxc6**, then **5...Qf6** (not **5... dxc6?** **6.Qxd8+**). After **5... Qf6**, black is threatening **6... Qxf2#** as well as **6... dxc6** and black is doing just fine.

The Pros and Cons of the Scotch Game

By choosing to play the Scotch Game, white will almost certainly enjoy a space-advantage in the center. However, if black defends well, white may find it difficult to maintain pressure and black may even counter-attack on the semi-open e-file.

SICILIAN DEFENSE

1.e4 c5



The Sicilian Defense is an opening for black, named after Sicily, a region in Italy, since the earliest noted on the opening were recorded by the Italian chess players Giulio Polerio and Gioachino Greco.

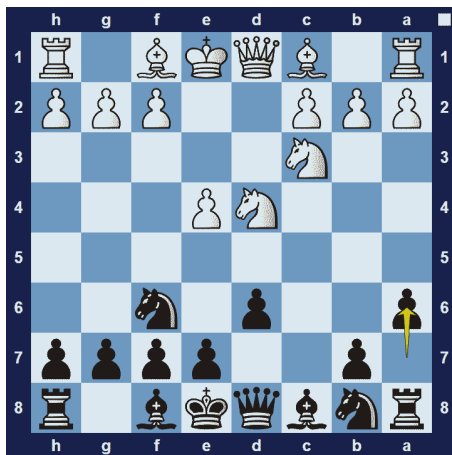
Sicilian Defense Basic Theory

In the Sicilian Defense, black upsets the balance in the position on their very first move, which declares they are ready for a fight.

The Sicilian Defense is a counter-attacking opening where the players typically attack on opposite sides of the board. Black typically expands on the queen-side with ...a6 and ...b5, and play along the semi-open c-file. And since black's c-pawn has moved, black will typically castle to the short side. White, on the other hand, will seek to crash through the center—into black's position—or potentially launch an attack on black's king-side. White's strategy will be very effective if black fails to defend the center.

Sicilian Defense Najdorf Variation

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6



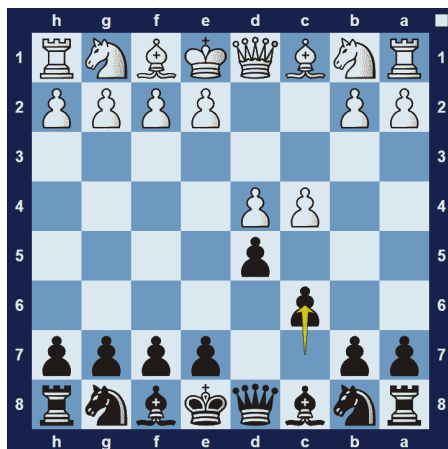
The Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian Defense is characterized by the move **5...a6**. This move controls the **b5**-square and prevents white's pieces to use the **b5** square. **5.. a6** also support **...b5**, after which black could develop their light-square bishop on **b7**. White gets a temporary lead in development and extra space. But since black's position is free of weaknesses, white will find it difficult to plan an attack on black's position.

The Pros and Cons of the Sicilian Defense

Practitioners of the Sicilian Defense typically want to creates unbalanced positions—which the Sicilian Defense does from the very first move. Since the opening gives black good attacking chances, it is a logical choice when black wants to play for a win. The downside is that white has many continuations to choose from and therefore black needs to study a lot of theory if they want to employ the Sicilian Defense with confidence.

SLAV DEFENSE

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6



The Slav Defense is an opening for black that got its name thanks to a number of Slavic chess masters who helped develop the theory of this opening.

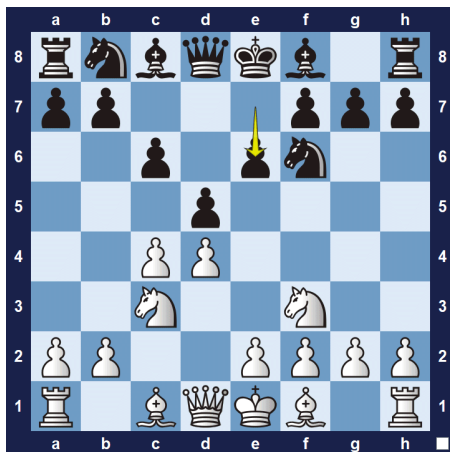
Slav Defense Basic Theory

The theory of the Slav Defense was developed by top players who longed for a solid opening against one of white's most popular openings, the Queen's Gambit. One problem they had to solve, was the fact that many other defenses rely on an early **e7-e6**, resulting in a bad light-squared bishop (stuck behind the e6-pawn). In the main lines of the Slav Defense, black overcomes this problem by supporting the **d5**-pawn with their c-pawn, instead of the e-pawn, making it possible for the light-square bishop to develop freely.

A popular variation in the Slav Defense is the Semi-Slav.

Slav Defense Semi-Slav

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6



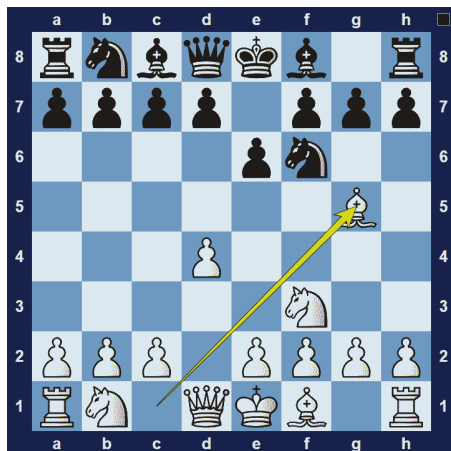
Variations where black plays **c7-c6** and then **e7-e6**, before developing the light-square bishop, is known as the Semi-Slav Defense. The Semi-Slav is actually a complex opening that combines ideas from the Queen's Gambit Declined with that of the Slav Defense.

The Pros and Cons of the Slav Defense

The Slav Defense was partly designed to solve the problem black often has with the locked-in light-square bishop. However, the solution creates a new problem—black's knight on b8 is deprived of its natural development square and black's overall development will be slower. Even so, black's pawn-structure has no weaknesses and the Slav Defense is known for being a very solid opening for black.

TORRE ATTACK

1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bg5



The Torre Attack is an opening system for white, named after the Mexican grandmaster Carlos Torre, who often played this opening and even beat former World Champion Emanuel Lasker with it.

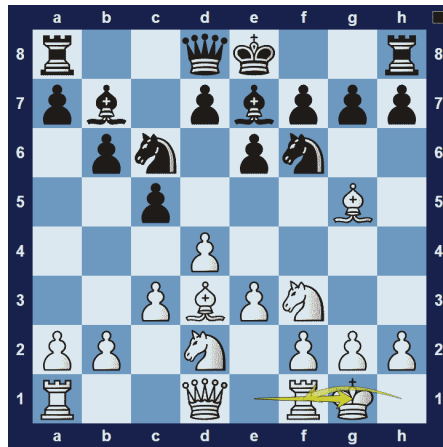
Torre Attack Basic Theory

The Torre Attack is a system opening that is in fact very similar to the London System. In the Torre Attack, white's dark-square bishop goes to **g5** (in the London System this bishop goes to **f4**). White aims to occupy the center with pawns and prepares to play **e3-e4** once the square is supported from a knight on **d2**, a bishop on **d3** and, possibly, a rook on **e1**. Another common idea is to attack on the kingside, starting with **Ne5** and then **f4**.

A popular variation in the Torre Attack is the Classical Defense.

Torre Attack Classical Defense

The Torre Attack Setup against black's Classical Defense:



The Torre Attack Classical Defense is characterized by the move **c7-c5**. Black uses their c-pawn to put pressure on white's d-pawn. This move, as well as black's future moves—**b6**, **Bb7** and **d5**, makes it much harder for white to eventually play **e3-e4**.

The Pros and Cons of the Torre Attack

The Torre Attack is a system opening and for studying very little theory, white get easy development, a solid center and some attacking chances. However, since white doesn't create any tension in the center, there are many ways a well-prepared opponent can make it difficult for white to prove any advantage.

TWO KNIGHTS DEFENSE

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6



The Two Knights Defense (sometimes referred to as the Chigorin Counter-Attack) is an opening for black, named after the fact that black develops both knights before moving a bishop.

Two Knights Defense Basic Theory

If black plays the Two Knights Defense, they are (usually) either ignorant of the Fried Liver Attack, or they want to tempt white to try it. If white isn't tempted though, the game will most likely transpose into a variation of the Italian Game, Giuoco Pianissimo.

Note: If black wants to play the Two Knights Defense, it is imperative that they know how to deal with the Fried Liver Attack.

FRIED LIVER ATTACK

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nc6 4.Ng5!? threatening Nxf7.



Black must be very well versed in the theory of the Fried Liver Attack if they want to survive the onslaught. For example, after 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Nxd5? (Na5 is correct) 6.Nxf7!? Kxf7 7.Qf3+ black is in an almost losing position.

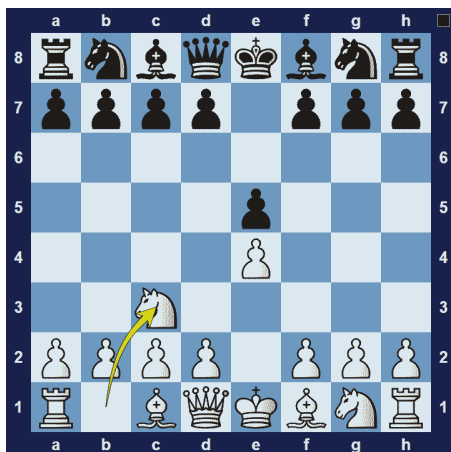
Note that if black played 3... Bc5, then 4.Ng5? can be met with Qxg5. Or 3... Bc5 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.Ng5 0-0 is good for black.,

The Pros and Cons of the Two Knights Defense

The Two Knights Defense tempts white to play the Fried Liver Attack. If black knows how to defend against the Fried Liver, they will get a playable position. But if black is unfamiliar with the best variation against the Fried Liver, they may get destroyed quickly. Also, black won't get much of the action if white chooses to play a slow, strategic game.

VIENNA GAME

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3



The Vienna Game is an opening for white. In the 1890's, this opening was very popular in Vienna, Austria.

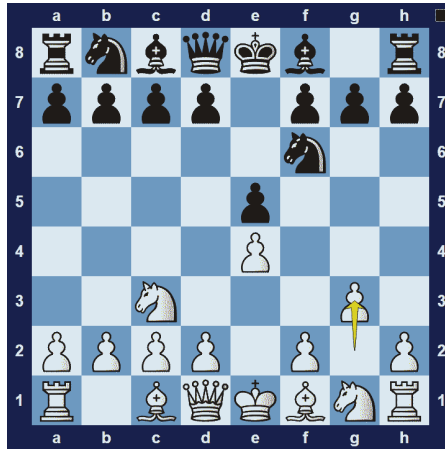
Vienna Game Basic Theory

In the Vienna Game opening, white does not play the almost expected **2.Nf3**, but instead develops the other knight, **3.Nc3**, with the intent to possibly play **f2-f4** on the 3rd move. In some variations then, the Vienna Game can be seen as a delayed King's Gambit.

A popular variation in the Vienna Game is the Mieses Variation.

Vienna Game Mises Variation

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3



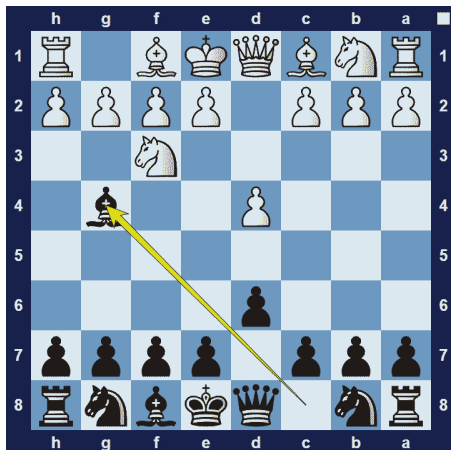
Black's most common response to **2.Nc3** is **2... Nf6** (the Falkbeer Variation), where top level players may feel that **3.f4 d5!?** is too risky for white. White may decide to rather play **3.g3** to fianchetto his light-square bishop on the king-side, known as the Mises Variation of the Vienna Game.

The Pros and Cons of the Vienna Game

The Vienna Game sidesteps many of black's opening choices and therefore avoids a lot of theory. White's strategy is also fairly simple to execute. However, since **2.Nc3** doesn't threaten anything (as compared to **2.Nf3** threatening **3.Nxe5**) there is less pressure on black and they can be more flexible in how they choose to defend.

WADE DEFENSE

1.d4 d6 2.Nf3 Bg4



The Wade Defense is an opening for black, named after the British International Master Bob Wade, who often played this opening during his chess career. Modern Grandmasters Peter Svidler and Micheal Adams also played this opening on more than just a few occasions.

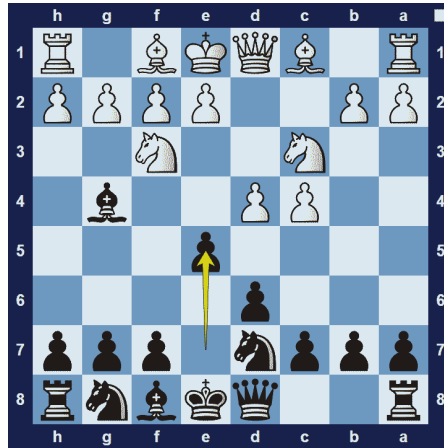
Wade Defense Basic Theory

Right from the word go, black's light-square bishop exerts some annoying influence on white's knight. This implies that black may have in mind to fight for the d4- and e5-squares.

A popular variation in the Wade Defense is the Main Line.

Wade Defense Main Line

1.d4 d6 2.Nf3 Bg4 3.c4 Nbd7 4.Nc3 e5



The fact that black plays **3... Nd7** is more evidence that they want to counter-strike in the center with **e7-e5** (the Wade Defense Main Line).

The Pros and Cons of the Wade Defense

Even though The Wade Defense opening is played surprisingly often, there is very little-known theory on it. Modern computer engines (and database statistics) suggest that either **3.e4**, **3.c4** or **3.Nc3** should be good for white.

How Many Chess Openings are There?

There are over 9 million possible positions after only 3 moves by either side. The vast majority of these moves will of course be nonsensical. In fact, only a small percentage of all chess openings are officially named (and even then, not all of them are actually good). *The Oxford Companion to Chess* recognized 1327 named openings and variations. Over time this number will grow as chess players experiment with new variations.

Keep in mind that the different chess openings all strive to achieve the primary objectives of the opening—to control the center, to develop the pieces, to get the king safe and to achieve a playable middle-game position. Over time, chess players devised unique plans to achieve these objectives—which led to the rise of many openings.

How Many Chess Openings Should I Know?

It's practically impossible to attain an in-depth knowledge of each and every respectable opening that exists. That is why many chess players opt to develop their own opening repertoire by studying a limited set of chess openings. However, it will boost your confidence to know the basics of all popular openings, and that is what you can learn on this page.

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