

**BASIC SKILLS EXAM FOR:**  
**GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GOOD OPENING AND EARLY MIDDLEGAME PLAY**

Introduction: There are 4 broad goals of almost any chess opening. They are:

**#1: To develop all of your pieces off of their original squares.**

**#2: To control the center of the board.**

**#3: To castle early.**

**#4: To connect your rooks.**

**I. OPENING: DEVELOPMENT**

1. It is more important to develop your ( **PIECES** ) than your pawns.
2. ( **Wing** ) ( Central ) pawn moves are not normally developing moves; they are useful only when they help to develop your pieces.
6. Do not block your QP or KP from moving by moving either of your bishops to ( **Q3 & K3** ) or ( Q2 & K2 ).
8. Develop your ( **minor** ) (major) pieces before your (minor) ( **major** ) pieces.
9. You should not move your queen out early if she can be attacked by the opponent's ( **minor** ) (major) pieces and central pawns.
11. It is important that all of your ( **minor** ) ( major ) pieces and your queen be developed off of their original back rank so that your rooks are ( "**CONNECTED**" ) & thus guard each other.
12. Don't move any ( **developed** ) ( undeveloped ) piece twice until you have moved every piece [not pawns] at least once each.
13. The one big exception to the above rule is this: it is important to move such a piece twice if it is to immediately ( **CAPTURE** ) material or to prevent your opponent from ( **CAPTURING** ) material.
14. Determine the best ( **SQUARE** ) for a piece and develop it there once and for all.
15. If you develop ( a developed ) ( **an undeveloped** ) piece that ( **ATTACKS** ) something, you will generally gain time.
16. You can generally complete the development of all of your pieces, have at least one of your pawns supported in the Primary Center, and be safely castled in no more than ( **8 -15** ) moves.
17. Do not begin an ( **ATTACK** ) until all of your pieces are developed.

**II. OPENING: THE CENTER**

18. Strive to control the ( **CENTER** ) of the board.

**III. OPENING: CASTLING**

24. **RULE:** Castle early. **REASON:** To get your ( **KING** ) into safety and your ( **ROOK** ) into play when a central file becomes open.

25. **WHY FAILING TO CASTLE IS USUALLY BAD:** Reason #1: You will be unable to fully fight for control of any central files that become open because your unmoved and uncastled rook will often be stuck on the ( **CORNER** ) square.

26. Reason #2: Your ( **KING** ) will be much more exposed to the attacks of your opponent's pieces near the center of the board.

#### IV. OPENING AND EARLY MIDDLEGAME: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

31. ( **CONNECTED** ) rooks are rooks of the same color that guard each other.

32. Such rooks are important because they can support each other as they fight for control of any ( **FILE** ) that may open up.

36. Avoid making too ( **many** ) ( few ) pawn moves - especially those in front of your ( **CASTLED** ) king.

37. In general, if you're not certain whether a particular pawn move is good or bad, then ( do ) ( **don't** ) make it.

39. A bishop is a slightly to somewhat better piece than a ( **KNIGHT** ) in most positions.

40. However, trading a bishop for a ( **KNIGHT** ) by doubling the opponent's ( **PAWNS** ) is usually an okay thing to do.

41. In most cases where both players have an equal position, ( **EQUAL** ) exchanges of material do not hurt you. So, do not go out of your way to avoid them; they hurt your opponent just as much as they do you!

42. Almost always it is smart to win ( **MATERIAL** ).

45. If you see that an opponent's pawn or piece can be ( **CAPTURED** ) without immediate danger, then ( **CAPTURE** ) it!

46. Do not ( trade ) ( **sacrifice** ) material without a clear and good reason.

48. Ask yourself two questions.

Question #1: Did my opponent's last move ( **ATTACK** ) any of my pieces or pawns?

51. Question #2: If so, then what can I do about this ( **THREAT** )?

#### ON EXCHANGING:

52. When you are ahead in material, ( **seek** ) ( avoid ) exchanges.

53. When you are behind in material, ( seek ) ( **avoid** ) exchanges.

56. When you avoid exchanges, it's usually best to avoid them by stepping to the ( **SIDE** ) whenever possible, instead of retreating backwards.

57. However, if the only way to avoid an exchange is by a space-losing retreat back to your starting ( **RANK** ), then it is generally better for you to go ahead and exchange.

58. An equal exchange of ( **QUEENS** ) kills approximately 70% of the average attack.

**MISCELLANEOUS TIPS:**

59. Don't give pointless ( **CHECKS** ) that have no good follow-up.

60. When you are attacking your opponent's king, use as ( few ) ( **many** ) of your pieces as possible.

61. Combine your attacks by using 2 or more ( **PIECES** ); not an individual ( **PIECE** ) attacking by itself.

62. Look for ways to use Forks and ( **DOUBLE** )-Attacks against your opponent; he will often find it impossible to defend two attacked chessmen in only one turn.

63. Always look for ways to ( **PIN** ) down your opponent's pieces with your pieces - particularly against his king or his queen.