



Tina's Top Ten Tips to Win at Chess*

OPENING

1. **CONTROL THE CENTER** of the board (battlefield), especially in the opening. If possible, always move pieces toward the center, not the edges, of the board. They control more squares this way, and have more choices for their next moves.
2. **DON'T MOVE A PIECE TWICE IN THE OPENING** unless you have to in order to save it, or if your opponent "hangs" a piece for you to take (see #7). Focus on getting all your pieces developed. No piece should be out fighting alone. The only pawns you should move in the opening are the center pawns or pawns that help you develop. **NEVER USE A "STRATEGY" OF A PAWN—ONLY BATTLE— WE SHOULD NEVER SEE A "PAWN LINE" ON THE BOARD** with all the back-row pieces undeveloped.
3. **PROTECT YOUR K** in the opening by **CASTLING** after you've developed your minor pieces (see #2). Castling to the K side usually affords the best protection, soonest. Don't wait until your K is threatened — it is illegal to castle out of, through, or into check. Be sure to leave your pawns on that side of the board in place to protect the K. They are not in the center anyway (see #1) — only move them to deal with threats or to *fianchetto* a B, which both develops B and gives a safety escape for K.
4. **DON'T MOVE YOUR Q OR Rs OUT EARLY.** Don't try for a Fool's or Scholar's Mate (2 or 4 move Checkmate) against an opponent who has the slightest idea how to play chess. You will bring your Q out too early, and if your opponent doesn't fall for the quick mate, your Q will be chased and maybe lost. Rs and Qs are the easiest pieces to use for Checkmating, so try to save especially the Rs for your Endgame (#10)!

MIDDLE GAME

5. **REMEMBER YOUR PIECE VALUE, AND DON'T MAKE BAD TRADES.** Remember, every piece has a value (relative to pawns) based on its power on the board. Pawns are worth 1, Ns and Bs are worth 3, Rs are worth 5, and Qs are worth 9 (Ks are infinity — lose him, lose the game). Winning a chess game is not based on point totals — point value just tells you **how** to choose good trades. **NEVER TRADE A HIGHER VALUE PIECE FOR A LOWER VALUE PIECE** if you can avoid it. **Qs should only be given up in exchange for the opponent's Q!** (Like every rule in chess, there are exceptions. You can sacrifice your Q to give checkmate! Save that exception for at least a couple of years ...).
6. **ALWAYS THINK AT LEAST TWO MOVES IN ADVANCE. This is the #1 key to winning chess** because **you won't be able to follow the other tips correctly if you are not thinking and analyzing every move!** Before you make your move, ask yourself what you think your opponent **will do** in reaction. **When practicing, say these things out loud to help you think.** As you improve, you will be able to think more moves ahead to analyze what series of moves might follow your move, so you can choose the best possible move. **THINKING TAKES TIME!** Chess is not a speed game, even if timed. Take the time you need to analyze the board and the possibilities before you choose the best and then move! **NEVER TOUCH A PIECE UNTIL YOU ARE CERTAIN YOU WANT TO MOVE IT.** Tournaments use the "touch move" rule — you touch it, you must move it. **SIT ON YOUR HANDS**, if necessary, to prevent impulsive moves!

THINK-THINK-THINK-THINK-THINK-THINK-THINK-THINK-THINK-THINK-MOVE

*Adopted with thanks, and adapted, from Tina Schweiss' Hampton Roads Chess Assn.



- 7. NEVER "HANG" A PIECE.** The easiest way to lose a chess game is to give up your pieces and get nothing in exchange. **ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOUR PIECES ARE PROTECTING EACH OTHER.** That way your opponent has to choose: taking your piece may mean losing his or her piece —a trade (see #5). If you leave a piece on the board completely unprotected, your opponent gets to take it, and you can't capture back. Ensuring you don't hang a piece relies on careful thinking (see #6)!

END GAME

- 8. REMEMBER, IF YOUR K IS IN CHECK, YOUR ONLY LEGAL MOVE IS TO GET OUT OF CHECK.** There are **THREE WAYS TO GET OUT OF CHECK — THINK "CBA"**. **C = CAPTURE.** Capture the piece attacking your king with one of your other pieces. **B = BLOCK.** Move another piece between your king and the attacking piece to block the check. **A = AWAY.** Move your K to another square to get away from the check. **IF YOU CANNOT DO ANY OF THE ABC'S, IT IS CHECKMATE (you lose).** **A CHESS GAME NEVER ENDS WITH A PLAYER ACTUALLY CAPTURING THE OPPONENT'S K — IT JUST ENDS BY ELIMINATING THE ABCs and SAYING "CHECKMATE"** (game over). If you actually capture the K, it means your opponent made an illegal move by failing to get out of check on his or her last move. **You are required to tell your opponent or the tournament director that the move was illegal,** and the move must be replayed. While not required, you should always say "CHECK" when you check your opponent's K. **Chess rules do not allow you to hope your opponent won't see check or won't make a move to get out of check, and then you capture the K. You must CheckMATE to win.**
- 9. YOUR K IS A FIGHTING PIECE IN THE ENDGAME.** Remember that in the Opening, you protected your K by Castling him safely into the corner, surrounded by his pawns and R (see #3). In the endgame (see #10), this may be the most dangerous place for him to be (he's trapped / cornered). When most of the pieces are off the board and the focus is on checkmating, get your K into the center of the board where he is safer (not trapped), and remember, **HE CAN CAPTURE PIECES, TOO, except the Q!** Your K does not have to run away from your opponent's pieces, **USE HIM TO ATTACK.** For example, he can come up beside a pawn that is trapped by being face-to-face with one of your pawns, and capture from the side or the back. This can free your pawn up to advance and get promoted (Q), which often results in winning the game. K can also attack Rs by going to a square diagonally next to the R, Ns by moving K next to N, or Bs by moving K next to B on a square opposite its color. Ks can never be right next to each other on the board —this would be illegal (see #8), as they'd be checking each other.
- 10. TO CHECKMATE THE K, PUSH HIM TO THE EDGE OF THE BOARD.** It is very hard to checkmate in the center of the board. Use two or more pieces to drive the K to one of the board's edges, where he is trapped and can be easily checkmated. The easiest pieces to use for this are Rs and Qs (see #4) — so try to save them for the Endgame. It is harder to checkmate with a B or a N, but it can be done. If you have a R and a Q, two Rs, or two Qs (a promoted pawn) left on the board, use one of them to cut off the escape row so the K is forced to move toward the edge (That is, build a wall or a box for the enemy K). Next, use your other piece to check the K, forcing him closer to the edge. Leave that piece to block while the other piece checks and forces K back. Continue this "ladder" or "leapfrog" pattern until the K is on the edge of the board, and you Checkmate. There are many other ways to Checkmate, but this is the easiest. Just remember **PUSH YOUR OPPONENT'S K TO THE EDGE OF THE BOARD, TRAP HIM THERE WITH ONE OF YOUR PIECES, THEN FIGURE OUT HOW TO LINE UP YOUR OTHER PIECES TO CHECKMATE.** Remember, **if you have the K trapped but not in check, and your opponent can't make a legal move with any of the pieces he or she has left on the board, it is STALEMATE. That gets you a draw (1/2 point) in a game you should have won (1 point), so be careful not to trap without checking the enemy K!** But if you are the one whose K is being chased to the edge, try to find a way to get your K trapped with no legal move, but not in check, so you get a draw (1/2 point) instead of a loss (0 points)!

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