

Planning for Success in Chess.

The overall aim for any chess player at the outset of a game is to win !

However, given factors such as :-

- the complexity of the game; and
- the playing strength of your opponent;

winning games requires a considerable degree of concentration and skill.

In order to reach the ultimate aim of winning the game, you need to plan how you are going to achieve this aim in every game you play.

So you need a framework for your plan which might include the following ideas :-

- **Opening moves :**
 - move your central pawns and your pieces off the back rank as early as possible;
 - try to aim your pieces at the centre of the board;
 - as a general rule castle quickly.
- **Middle Game:** Decide on a plan for the middle game which might involve :-
 - Launching an attack against the opposing king by moving pieces or pawns towards the kings position or aiming pieces at the king;
 - Move rooks to open files (files which are not blocked by pieces or pawns). A “half open file” is one which is not blocked by your pawn, but your opponent has a pawn on the file. This pawn could become a target for your pieces;
 - Place the queen on the same ranks or files as rooks or on the same diagonals as bishops;
 - Aim pieces at an opposing piece or pawn so that you are attacking that piece or pawn with more pieces than your opponent is defending it with (this is called overloading);
 - Look for checks and captures; and

- When considering your move, try to guess what move your opponent might make in response and then look ahead to what you would do then. So :-
 - put yourself in your opponents position and try to see the game from her point of view; and
 - try to look two or three moves ahead;
- **In summary try to :-**
 - **assess the best squares on the board for your pieces; and**
 - **use them together rather than just move one piece constantly.**

If you get into the habit of trying to do the above during games, you will find that you “see more of the board” and improve the quality of your chess playing. The above ideas are not the only ones that could apply during a game, but they represent a good starting point to helping you to think more deeply about what you are trying to achieve during a game. It is better to concentrate on a few main ideas at this stage and to follow up with more ideas later.

End Games:

During end games, the players are usually trying to get a pawn to the end of board so as to get an additional piece to win the game.

In the end game most pieces have been swapped off, so the king can often become the most important piece. He needs to accompany pawns in their journey to the other end of the board or block opposing pawns advancing down the board. There are a whole range of ideas that can be considered in end games depending on what minor pieces remain on the board and the position of kings and pawns.

We will consider endgames in more details later.