

Outline for a 20-minute basic chess course.

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The purpose of this document is to provide an outline for a chess lesson that touches on many of the fundamental concepts that people who have never studied the game are often unaware of. The goal is to demonstrate that there is science to the game and that with proper guidance and individual effort, significant improvement can be obtained. From my personal experience in spending time with people attending the MetroWest chess club for the first time who are "walking in of the street", i.e. never played rated chess, the points covered in this document are almost always a source of amazement and revelation.

I. The Ideal Development

- A. With the pieces in their starting positions, show the ideal play if only one side were to move. That is, if white, show d4 and e4 with Nc3 and Nf3.
- B. Tell them "Nights on the rim are dim" and show them why.
- C. Develop the Bishops, move the Queen out, Castle and explain how the Rooks are very powerful when connected.
- D. Explain the concept that the more pieces that are developed, the more you can attack with.
- E. Explain that as a general rule, it is wise to never move or have to move a piece twice in the opening. Relate this by showing that every time you move the same piece, your opponent is most likely getting another piece developed and hence is more ready to attack than you.
- F. Tell them that a way to measure being ahead or behind in development is to count the number of pieces by both sides that have been moved off of their original squares. Explain how the difference is equivalent to free moves.

II. Control of the Center

- A. With the pieces in the ideal development position, show them how the pawns and the Knights control the center.
- B. Visually demonstrate with your hands over the center of the board how as the control of the center gets wider, it leaves only the outside edges for the enemy to attack.

III. The ideal defense for the King, the King side Castled position with the Knight posted on the Bishop file.

- A. Demonstrate how the Knight protects against the easiest attack made by the opponent, the attack on the Rook pawn.
- B. Demonstrate how the Knight protects the squares that the opponents Queen can directly move to from it's starting position.

IV. Maintaining the integrity of the castled king

- A. Demonstrate how moving the Rook pawn provides a target for the Bishop to possibly sacrifice itself to open up the King to attack.
- B. At this time, relate this to the fact that there is an inclination for people to want to "kick" the Bishop with that Rook pawn to relieve a pin of their Knight against their Queen. Show that the pin can generally be relieved by their own Bishop without violating the integrity of their castled King and that kicking the Bishop doesn't really do anything.
- C. Show how moving the Knight pawn makes landing spaces for the opponents pieces and unprotects the Knight if it is on the Bishop file.

V. Point values and Counting in combinations

- A. Go over the relative value of each piece.
- B. Explain that depending on the position, Knights or Bishops may be more important in the endgame. For this reason, trading off the Bishops early in the game is usually avoided, unless it is for a very active piece. I.e. bad Bishop for good Bishop or Knight.
- C. Go over the simple method of counting how many times that a square is being attacked by each side to determine who is going to come out ahead. Don't forget to take into account their relative worth.
- D. Mention that pieces should always be moved to squares where they are protected, if possible, to avoid dropping the piece because it was loose.
- E. If time permits, try to demonstrate what happens when pieces are "over extended"