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Author: J.E.F. Kaan

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2. The OPENING PHASE

When playing chess, all players need to well understand and accept that all phases of the royal game are important: that is, the opening, the middle game, and the endgame. Although the importance of the opening phase is often overestimated by beginners, at higher levels a mastery of the opening in detail will indeed often make the difference between a win or a loss. In this book, the player is gradually acquainted with the opening theory as the explanations of various key principles, which for every level − beginner, intermediate, and advanced − will be given in progressive details.

2.1 Opening principles

Whereas the importance of the opening phase has been known in chess for centuries, the kind of advice given for its success has varied over the ages. Good practical and general advice was given by various grand masters in How to Open a Chess Game (Evans et al. 1974). Some general advice, more for beginners, is given in Ward (2000), wherein a complete list of various opening variations is given, with no recommendations, however, for preferences. The unique approach in this book is to emphasize specific variations in a so-called repertoire for both White and Black, depending on the level of play.

But first we start by mentioning the most common general guidelines for opening play. These guidelines, also mentioned in The Ideas Behind the Chess Openings (Fine [rev] 1989), are certainly useful for beginners, and they follow:

1. Start the game with 1.e4. This leads to ‘Open games’ (tactics!), and also tries to keep the (positional) advantage for White.
2. Move knights before bishops, alternately.
3. Try to occupy the center with pawns.
4. Don’t move the same piece twice in a row (5. Don’t make two pawn moves in a row).
6. Don’t develop the queen to early (especially into the center of the board).
7. Protect your king; almost always ‘castling’ is the best way for this.
8. Try to control the center of the board.
9. Don’t sacrifice any piece without a reason, including pawns.

Although general guidelines like these can be useful for beginners, practical play makes it clear that such rules first of all are simplifications, and secondly, often have exceptions. In addition to the above nine rules for example, it usually is advised to ‘connect’ the rooks on the first lines, which implies the queen is played to the second or third rank, sometimes even further away.

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26 Exceptions apply in the ‘hypermodern’ openings i.e. Grünfeld, Modern, where it occupation of the center is not important but striking out against the enemy’s central pieces usually with pawn breaks.
27 For example 1.Nf3 d5 2.Ng5? as the knight now is moved a second time.. An exception is an opening line as 1.Nf3 1...e5? 2.Nxe5 (a dubious ‘gambit’ for Black).
28 Without a good reason such as re-capturing an enemy piece or pawn. Some exceptional variations also are excluded (also holds true for the other rules).
29 For example 1.e4 c5 2.e5?. For the rest the above exception (in footnote) still applies.
30 As this often brings the valuable queen into danger of tactics, or locking it up by enemy pieces; exceptions are variations such as e.g. Scandinavian for Black.
32 Don’t delay castling too long, and when choosing between queen-side and king-side castling, bear in mind that the king-side is usually the safest option.
33 On resp. the first row for W, and the 8th row for B, after castling. In general, also in the opening phase, the resulting position after a possible move needs to be evaluated according to general criteria, such as material balance, positional considerations (attacks, center dominance, pawns structure, and so on).
As this is quite a sharp variation, we advise beginners to play 4.0-0, to avoid dangerous tactics by White involving, for example, an attack on f2 with ...Bxf2. After 4.0-0, White can maintain a slight advantage, that is after 4...d6 (after 4...Nxd4, simply 5.N xd4 and so on), 5.c3 a6, 6.Bxc6 bxc6, which gives following position:

Now White can play 7. d4 exd4, 8.cxd4 Ba7, 9.Nc3 and has achieved a slightly better position (White has lost his bishop pair, but Black has a double pawn on c7/6, and the pawn on a7 is weak).

**G) 3...Nd4, Bird variation**

With the surprise move 3...Nd4, Black attacks the bishop on b5, as shown above right:

Now the knight on d4 can simply be easily taken: 4.Nxd4 exd4, after which White first castles: 5.0-0. Black can now play ...c6, chasing the bishop away, but White then simply plays 6.Bc4! and has a better position.

**H) 3...f5 (Schliemann defense)**

After the sharp move 3...f5?! 4.Nc3 is the recommended move. See position:
It is a so-called queen’s ‘fianchetto’, and as a result of Black’s fianchetto, ...Bb7, with the bishop pointing at g2, White must thus be careful for his king’s safety. A strong move by Black is a subsequent ...Bb4, pinning the knight on c3, but the danger of this pin can be reduced by Nge2!. However, as this would lock in the bishop on f1, it is wise first to play 4.Bd3, and after ...Bb4, play 5.Nge2. This also allows a later f3 pawn move to further protect the pawn on e4.

But after 4.Bd3 the move 4...Nf6 seems better for Black, after which White nevertheless also plays 5.Nge2, for similar reasons (and to enable the f pawn to advance in a later stage). So the general plan in this opening is to develop the bishop on f1 to d3, then playing Nge2! instead of Nf3, also to allow a later f3 that will further protect e4.

Nevertheless, White should still not underestimate Black’s chances, at least for equality. On the other hand, it must be clear that we do not recommend this defense when playing Black, also not against 1.e4. See also the discussion in Chapter 4 for this Owen defense.

3.3.14 Other Black moves after 1.e4

(for example 1...a6 and 1...h6, or ...g5)

The move 1...a6?! is strange sort of flank defense, giving up center control. The idea is to follow up with 2...b5, and then fianchetto the bishop to b7. See the following diagram, which is resulting after 1.e4 a6, 2.d4 b5 3.Bd3! and then 3...Bb7 4.f3 (see diagram above right):

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73 Putting a bishop near a corner, see the glossary for the explanation of such specific chess terms.
3.4.8 Kings Gambit (2.f4)

The old fashioned and 'romantic' Kings-Gambit opening can lead to wild and sharp play, which often is in favor of the White player who has chosen to play this variation. So we advise to decline the gambit with 2...Bc5\textsuperscript{97}. As discussed after the following:

Absolute beginners can decline the gambit with 2...d6, which gives the following position:

A typical way of development for Black now is to first play moves like 3...d6 and then ...Nc6 (if White plays 4.Nf3) to protect the pawn on e5. And thereafter with the move ...Nf6, castling short is prepared.

3.4.9 Center Opening (2.d4)

Not played very often, the Center Opening can be rather dangerous for Black when White aims for gambit play\textsuperscript{99}. A possibility to avoid this, which we recommend for absolute beginners, is to transpose to a Philidor type of position with 2...d6. So White now can transpose to the Philidor opening with 3.Nf3, or exchange queens with 3.dxe5 dxe5 4.Qxd8 Kxd8, and so forth.

Now Black can not castle anymore, but this is not such a big disadvantage because the queens now are now off the board.

\textsuperscript{97} Also advised in [Marin, M. 2007.] More advanced players with Black, when not playing French as advised in chapter 4 might prefer 2...exf4, accepting the gambit, and after 3.Nf3 3...h6! the strong Becker defense.

\textsuperscript{98} After a German chess player, von Bardeleben, who lived from 1861 to 1924.

\textsuperscript{99} For example, after 2...exd4 3.c3 (or 3.Nf3).
For more-advanced players of Black, there is a more complex yet general defense system called the **Hedgehog**, as discussed by Suba (2000). This system is characterized by Black pawns on a6, b6, d6, and e6. It can be used not only against the English, or as part of a Sicilian setup, but also against other White openings, such as the Reti opening (1.Nf3).

Although the **Hedgehog** system is an interesting and rather dependable system, we don't recommend it in general for Black and instead give specific variations when such positions occur.

Should transpositions occur to **Hedgehog** types of formations, we will try to mention this (mostly in the appendix where detailed variations are listed). In the diagram below we see such a **Hedgehog** pawn position for Black, with some typical piece placements. For White, most pieces are left out, but the typical pawn placement would be on e4 and c4.

In the diagram above below, we see such a **Hedgehog** pawn position for Black, with some typical piece placements. For White, most pieces are left out, but the typical pawn placement would be on e4 and c4.

As the last general system to discuss, we show how to play against a relatively new system for Black, namely the **Sniper**, as described by Storey (2011). It is defined by the moves 1...g6 (**Modern defense**), 2...Bg7, and 3...c5. The latter move leads to a Sicilian type of position, and in some cases play could indeed transpose to a sub-variation of the Sicilian Dragon or, in combination with ...d6 by Black and d4 and later d5 by White, to Benoni type of positions. The author Storey claims it can be used against most of White opening moves, and indeed after 1.d4 g6 2.e4 we transpose back to the Modern defense again.

We will show how to attack this system with White, when starting with 1.e4 and to be consistent with our recommended move against the Modern defense, start with 2.d4 after 1...g6 and then after 2.e4 Bg7 3.Nc3 c5 we get the Modern/Sniper position as shown below:

White now plays 4.dxc5! and will gain a much better position. So in this setup with the White knight on c3, the **Sniper** is harmless because after 4...Bxc3 5.bxc3 Nc6 6.Bd3 Qa5 7.Rb1 !\(^{117}\) ±, White gets a better position.

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\[^{117}\] For example, after 7...Qxc5 8.Nf3 Qxc3 9.Bd2 Qg7 10.0-0 Nf6 11.Qc1 Ng4 12.Qa3 ± and so on.
Now 14.b4! is a strong move for White, also from a statistical point of view.

So our current judgment on this position is positive for White, but how much is unclear until more analysis is done (and more games played in this line).

In the line with 12...Qd7 13.Bc2 h6, White will keep a slight advantage with 14.Nf1 and the usual plan of playing Ng3.

And lastly, with 12...exd4 13.cxd4 Na5 14.Bc2, White also keeps an advantage.

(E3e) 3) RL Breyer, 9...Nb8

After 9...Nb8, the Breyer variation. We achieve the following position (above right):

The aim of this – for beginners a rather odd-looking move – for Black is to enable the move ...c7c5 and to bring the knight from b8 to d7 and the bishop from c8 to b7.

In fact, because the later position of the knight on d7, supporting the knight on f6, turns out to be useful for Black, it is a rather strong defense.

We recommend building up the attack slowly with 10.d3! Then after 10...Nbd7 11.Nbd2, we get the following position:

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159 See the appendix for further moves.


161 As in the game Kokarev-Matlakov (2009).
By playing 3.Bb5 instead of 3.d4, we also avoid the complicated and sharp Kalashnikov variation (with the move ...e5), which is not easy for White to play\(^{199}\).

And by playing after 3.Bb5 with accuracy, White can also get a slight edge in these systems. For further info, see the Appendix and/or the book Bologan (2011). After 3.Bb5, Black most often plays 3...g6\(^{200}\), and by simply adhering to general opening principles and keeping a strong position in the center, White should be able to come out of this opening with no difficulties\(^{201}\).

(B) Sicilian, 2...d6!

If 2...d6 is played, the main move is 3.d4 but also good is 3.Bb5, the Moscow Attack. Recommended when your level is somewhere between beginner and intermediate, to avoid the complicated and sharp variations after 3.d4, such as the Najdorf and the Dragon. Then after (3.Bb5) 3...Nc6 you get the Rossolimo by transposition; a variation which already was discussed. And after 3...Bd7! 4.Bxd7 Qxd7 5.c4! White gets reasonably good play\(^{202}\). Finally after 3...Nd7 5.d4 Nf6 6.Nc3 cxd4 7.Qxd4 a6 8.Bxd7 Bxd7 9.Bg5 White gets a slight advantage.

After 3.d4, recommended for more advanced -but still intermediate- players, play follows with ...cxd4 4.Nxd4, after which Black usually plays 4...Nf6.

After this move, 4...Nf6, White is advised to follow the common lines with 5.Nc3, which gives the following quite common position:

![Sicilian 2..d6 after 5.Nc3](image)

The White d pawn has been exchanged against the Black c pawn, and as a result Black has an open c line, which can be useful for the rook on a8 on a later stage. After a later ...Rac8. White still occupies the center with a knight on d4, but this knight can be easily chased away. White has an open d line, which sometimes is very useful during long castling, after which a rook on d1 has an open line. Such a theme often is seen in the Dragon, (with variation occurs after 5...g6).

In the above position (after 3.d4 3...cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 the three main\(^{203}\) moves for Black are these (next page):

199 The sharp Sveshnikov system also is avoided here, but it can still occur as transposition of the Taimanov after 2...e6; see further on under (C).

200 And then e.g. 4.0-0 (4.Bxc6 is advised in the book by Bologan but requires more positional understanding) ...Bg7 5.d3 as listed in the footnote below. Another option is 3...e6! but after 4.Bxc6 bxc6 5.d3! White still can achieve a slight advantage (...d5 6.c4! ±). And after 3...d6 4.0-0 Bd7 5.c3 a6 6.Ba4 White is clearly better.

201 For example 4.0-0 Bg7 5.d3 Nf6 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.h3 and so on ±

202 After 5...g6! (5...Nc6 6.Nc3 g6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bg7 9.Be3 Nf6 10.f3! ±) 6.Nc3Bg7 7.0-0 Nc6! 8.d3 ±/=
Such lines with 4...a6 are discussed in more detail in Persson (2005). Although interesting and original play may result, Black’s play is rather risky because he doesn’t acquire control of the center. And indeed, after 5.Bc4\(^ {257}\) Nf6 6.0-0 Nxe4 7.Bxf7+!, White achieves an advantage.

We thus may usually expect Black to transpose to the Pirc type of play with 4...Nf6, instead of 4...a6. Because in the situation with 4...a6, after 5...b5, White plays 6.Bf3! instead of Nf3 and has a better position, so then 5...Nf6 (tp. to Pirc) would have been better for Black. Just as with the Yugoslav attack against the Sicilian Dragon.

The best plan for White against such Pirc variations with ...Nf6 appears to be a setup with 5.Be3, and there-after 6.h3 (or 6.f3 if Nf3 has not been played), to avoid ...Ng4 and to prepare Qd2. Such an approach is shown in the following diagram (above right):

With the plan of playing h3, castling long, and a subsequent Bh6, to attack the Black fianchetto position.

4.3.11 Alekhine\(^ {258}\) variation 1.e4 Nf6 2.e5

And after 2...Nd5 3.d4.

Avoiding unconventional Alekhine variations, such as with 3.c4 or Vienna with 3.Nc3

Below is a picture of the former Russian world champion, Alekhine, known for his bold tactical style and ability to create complicated and sharp positions:

Fig. 7. GM Alexander Alekhine

\(^ {257}\) In Persson (2005), only 4.Be2 or 4.a4 are mentioned, but 4.Bc4 seems stronger. For example after 5...e6 (instead of 5...Nf6) 6.0-0 Ne7 7.Be3 \(\pm\).

\(^ {258}\) A more Western spelling is ‘Aljechin,’ but to be consistent, we will use ‘Alekhine,’ both for the chess player and for this variation.
(A4) French Exchange, 3.exd5

The French Exchange variation has a drawish reputation and thus is not so dangerous for Black. After the obvious Black reply 3...exd5, White usually develops with moves like 4.Nf3 and 5.Bd3 or Be2, whereby Black initially should do the same, that is ...Nf6 and ...Bd6 and then castle short.

Thereafter it depends on the skills of the players how the game will develop (for more moves see the appendix).

(A5) French, other 3rd moves

After 3.Bd3, the rare Schlechter variation, Black plays 3...dxe4, and after 4.Bxe4 4...Nf6 and so on, Black can equalize quite easily.

The dubious Dieter-Duhm gambit is 3.c4?!.

After 3...dxe4 4.Nc3 Nf6, Black has won a pawn, and White has not much compensation.

4.4.2 French Defense, sidelines for 2nd move

After (1.e4 e6) 2.Nc3, we simply play 2...d5. Then after 3.d4, we achieve the Winawer again by transposition (as we advised 3...Bb4 at the intermediate level).

After 2.Nf3?! we also play 2...d5, and now White cannot – or should not – play 3.d4?, because we then simply take the pawn on e4 with ...dxe4. So Black usually plays 3.exd5, which leads to the Exchange variation by transposition, or 3...e5, and after 3...c5 4.c3 (4.d4 Nc6 5.c3 tp) 5.d4 Nc6, it leads to the Advance variation.

After 2.f4!? we get the Labourdonnaiss variation, and we then advise 2...d5!

After 3.exd5 exd5, Black obtains a good position. And after 3.e5?! Black can develop his knight with 3...Nh6! to a good position.

Also possible is the move 2.d3, the King's Indian attack in the French, often followed with the move g3 and a king's fianchetto we first advise Black to play 2...d5 and after for example 3.Nbd2, the most usual move, 3...Nf6! as shown in the position below:

Then White can play 4.e5! and after 4...Nfd7 5.f4 c5 Black has equalized.

After 2.b3?!, the French Reti variation Black plays 2...d5 and after 3.Bb2! dxe4 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.Qe2 Be7 Black is a tiny bit better. Finally after 2.c4?! the Steiner variation Black simply plays 2...d5 and gets an equal position after 3.exd5 exd5 4.exd5 Nf6.

Other second moves are dubious for White.

\[286\] After 3.Qe2 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.g3 c5! =

\[287\] White can also play a gambit move here, namely, with 4.Qb3?! the Orthoschnapp gambit. After 4...dxe4 5.Bc4 Black can best play 5...Qd7! and after e.g. 6.Nc3 ...Nf6 7.d3 Nc6 Black maintains a better position.

\[288\] After 2.Bc4 d5! 3.exd5 exd5 4.Bb3 Black is slightly better; after 2.\{Qe2, the French Alapin\} variation, Black plays 2...c5! in Sicilian style. And after 2.Be3?!, known as the French Chigorin variation, but in fact a dubious gambit, Black simply plays 2...dxe4 and after 3.c3 4.Nf6 has won a pawn.
Fig 8. Some more building blocks (*artist's impression*)
8.h3! d5 9.e5 Ne4 10.Qe2 the position is approximately equal, because White has achieved compensation for the lost pawn by dominating the center.

(A) 2) Smith Morra 5...e6

Now after 6.0-0! (instead of 6.a3) ...Nc6 7.c4! the position has transposed to the variation discussed above under 1).

(A) 3) Smith Morra 5...g6

Finally after 5...g6 White plays 6.a3! which gives a position as shown below:

Then after 6...bxa3 7.Nxa3 White has good chances for an attack because of much better development. For example after 7...Bg7 8.0-0-0 9.Bd2 and so on.

B) Smith Morra

After (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.b4) 3...Nf6 we get a position as shown below.

Now White simply plays 4.bxc5 and after 4...Nxe4 5.cxd6 Nc6 6.d4 gets a slightly better position. Because after 6...exd6 7.Bd3 and then for example 7...d5 8.0-0 White has a lead in development and Black has an isolated queen's pawn on d5.

5.3.2 Smith Morra gambit (after 2...e6 3.d4)

If Black plays the move 2...e6 in the Sicilian (after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3) then in this chapter we advise to aim for a Smith-Morra gambit, namely, after 3...cxd4 4.c3, instead of the more normal move 4.Nxd4.

The resulting position is shown on the next page:
6.1 1.d4! Nf6  Introduction

After 1...Nf6 White plays 2.c4, after which Black can play 2...e6, 2...g6! (Grünfeld or King's-Indian), 2...c6 which will transpose to Slav variations, 2...c5 (Benoni)\(^{354}\), 2...Nc6?! (Knight's-Tango), and some other playable moves.

Such other playable but more rare second moves for Black are 2...d6 (Old Indian, possible transposition (tp) to King's-Indian), 2...b6 (Queen's-Indian accelerated) 2...Nc6 (Trevitz-Trajkovich) and 2...e5 (Budapest gambit). For these moves we will not give detailed analysis but instead just give the main moves, achieving an advantage for White.

With our advised move 2.c4, the conventional setup which in our latest analysis is a bit better than 2.Nf3 \(^{355}\), we also achieve good play against such less conventional defenses.

The move with 2.Nf3 can lead to for example the Torre attack (with Bg5) but in this opening, although probably easier to play than the Catalan, we have not found any significant fundamental advantage for White in case of best play that is if Black plays the best responsive moves. And other moves than 2.c4 or 2.Nf3 for White we consider inferior because Black with solid positional play should be able to get easy equality or even an advantage.

We start with the main move for Black, 2...e6. Now if White would play 3.Nc3, after ...Bb4! we get the Nimzo-Indian; we already have given these lines when discussing our repertoire for Black against d4 in Chapter 4.

And as the 'Nimzo' is a strong defense\(^{356}\) we do not recommend this move 3.Nc3 for White.

Also, after a possible 3.Nf3, Black can defend strongly with 3...b6, leading to the Queen's-Indian, which -although maybe more cramped and more difficult to play for Black, still is a solid defense when played correctly, as we found with extensive computer analysis.

Nevertheless, for players who are not so advanced and who just started with 1.d4 instead of 1.e4, we recommend to play 3.Nf3\(^{357}\) instead of 3.g3. The latter will lead to the more positional Catalan variation- or Benoni Fianchetto -, which we will describe in detail in the appendix, which might be interesting for more advanced players at 'expert level'.

The former option of 3.Nf3 can lead to either the Queen's-Indian defense if Black plays 3...b6 or the QGD variations\(^{358}\) if Black plays 3...d5 instead (as in 6.2). Thus in subchapter 6.1.1 we will show some main variations for the Queen's-Indian, in particular the 'best' defense for Black as found by our analysis. Whereby we will show how White can try to maintain at least a slight positional advantage against almost every possible defense.

\(^{354}\) Or 1...c5 and then 2.d5 transposition to Benoni.

\(^{355}\) Advised by GM Nigel Davies, for people switching from 1.e4 to 1.d4; after 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 is possible, but our recommendation for 2.c4 after 1.Nf6 is based on a subtle difference, namely to avoid strong sub-variations of the Grünfeld defense after 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6! =

\(^{356}\) Even when playing 4.Qc2! (after 3...Bb4) because then after 4...0-0 5.Nf3 d5! 6.a3 Bxc3 7.Qxc3 dxc4 8.Qxe4 b6 Black seems to be able to equalize.

\(^{357}\) We prefer this move 3.Nf3 above 3.Nc3 because after 3...Bb4 Black obtains a strong defense with the Nimzo-Indian variation.

\(^{358}\) An advantage for the -not yet- highly advanced players in choosing the option of 3.Nf3 is that after the -quite common- response of the move 3...d5 by Black, leading to typical QGD variations as discussed in 6.2, White will be able to maintain a positional advantage in all situations.
White now plays 7.d5 after which there are two playable moves for Black, namely, 7...e6 or 7...Bg4.

After 7...e6 8.Bg5 h6 9.Be3 Ng4 10.Bf4 g5 11.Bc1 exd5 12.exd5 Nd7 13.0-0 ± and White is slightly better.

And after 7...Bg4?! 8.0-0 Nbd7 9.h3 Bxf3 10.Bxf3 Ne8 11.Qc2 ± and White is clearly better.

**B4) King's Indian, 6...Na6**

After 6...Na6 6.0-0 we get the following position:

Now after 7...e5 8.Be3! exd4 9.Nxd4 Nc5 10.f3 Re8 11.Qd2 ± and White is better.

---

404 After 7...c5?! 8.e5! and White is better.
The black knight on h5 now is not well positioned but after Black brings it back to f6 with 7...Nh6, White has gained a 'tempo' with 8.Rac1. The game now can continue with for example 8...g6 9.h3 Ne4! (or...Bg7 10.Bf4 ±) 10.Bf4 Bg7 11.e3 ± and White has gained a slight advantage.

C2) Chebanenko Slav, 5.c5 g6

Another good move for Black is 5...g6, after which White develops in a similar way as above under A), namely, with 6.Bf4 but after 6...Nh5 (or ...Bg7 7.h3! ±) White now plays 7.Bg5! (instead of 7.Bd2) and then after 7...Bg7 8.e4!N 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Be2 White has gained a slight advantage again.

C3) Chebanenko Slav, 5.c5 b6

After 5...b6 White simply plays 6.cxb6 and after 6...Qxb6 (...Nbd7?! 7.Bf4 Nxb6 8.Ne5! ±) 7.Qc2! we get the following position:

---

Now Black can play 7...g6 or 7...e6. After 7...g6 8.Bf4!N White has gained a slight advantage. And after 7...e6 8.g3!N White also gets a significantly better position.

D) Slav (tp Grünfeld/Schlechter) 4...g6

After the move 4...g6 in the previously discussed Slav variation we transpose to the Schlechter variation of the Grünfeld defense, which 'normally' is achieved with the move order 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 c6:
And after, for example the moves 5...dxc4 6.e3 Nbd7 7.Bxc4 White will achieve a tangible advantage.

------------------------------------------------------

Another unusual 4th move is 4...Nc6?! after which White achieves an advantage with 5.a3! and then for example 5...a6!? 6.e3 and so on.

------------------------------------------------------

And after 4...b6?! 6.cxd5! exd5 6.Bg5 Be7 7.e3 White also is achieving a significant advantage.

B) QGD, Slav Defense, 3...c6

After (1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4) 3...c6 White again should play 4.Nc3 which gives the following position (above right):

Note that this is an exact transposition to the Slav or Semi-Slav (after 4...e6) as discussed earlier in sub-chapter 6.1.4 with the move order 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3. So we refer to this rather extensive sub-chapter, for all resulting variations.

C) (QGD) tp QGA 3...dxc4

After (1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4) 3...dxc4 we get a transposition to a known variation of the Queen's Gambit Accepted495 (QGA) with the following starting position:

495 With the move order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6.
But Black can also play **A) 3...e5?!** or **B) 3...Qa5** which we discuss below.

**A) Old Benoni, 3.Nc3 e5**

After (1.d4 c5 2.d5 Nf6 3.Nc3) 3...e5?! White can play 4.Nf3 or 4.e4. After 4.Nf3 e4 5.Ng5 would be complicated, so we prefer the more simple **4.e4** which gives the following position:

![Chess Board Image]

Old Benoni, 4.e4

Now Black usually continues with 4...d6 and after **5.Nf3 Be7 6.h3 Nbd7** White plays **7.a4!** to prevent a queen-side attack by Black. And now Black can play moves as 7...Ng8 or simply 7...0-0 but White keeps having a better position.

**B) Old Benoni, 3.Nc3 Qa5**

After 3...Qa5 the **Benoni/Woozle defense** White simply plays **4.Bd2**, threatening the Black queen, and then continues developing his king-side with moves as Nf3 and will get a better position.

![Chess Board Image]

Old Benoni, 2...e6 3.e4

Now, after 3...Nf6 **4.dxe6 dxe6 5.Qxd8 Kxd8 6.Nc3** White gets better play because Black cannot castle anymore.

And after **3...d6** **4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bd3 Be7 6.c4 Nbd7 7.Nc3** White also is significantly better.

**6.3.3. Old Benoni, (1.d4 c5 2.d5) 2...e6**

After 2...e6 White plays **3.e4!** which gives the following position:

![Chess Board Image]

Now, after **3...Nf6 4.dxe6 dxe6 5.Qxd8 Kxd8 6.Nc3** White gets better play because Black cannot castle anymore.

And after **3...d6** **4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bd3 Be7 6.c4 Nbd7 7.Nc3** White also is significantly better.

**6.3.4. Old Benoni, 2...e5?!**

Finally, after (1.d4 c5 2.d5) **2...e5?!** White plays **3.Nc3** and after **3...d6** (or 3...Nf6 4.e4 d6 tp) **4.e4 Nf6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Be2** White gets better play because of the cramped position for Black.

---

528 Sometimes the gambit 3...b5?! is played but this is refuted by 4.Nxb5 and after 4...Qa5 5.Nc3± and so on

529 After **3.e4** Nf6 we would transpose to the **Modern Benoni**, as described earlier in 6.1.3, paragraph C). Whereby we showed that White can achieve a slight advantage. Even better however in this situation is for White to play **3.e4!** as indicated above.

530 After **3...exd5 4.exd5 d6 5.e4 Ne7 6.Nf3 Bg4 7.Bd3** White is clearly better.
A 1.3 Positional evaluation

There are many excellent books available about middle game theory yet this is not the topic of this book. For more info the reader is referred to books such as for example [Kotov, A, 1978] or [Euwe & Kramer, 1964].

Yet it can be argued that with recent advances in computer chess, modern chess programs, so called 'engines' with built-in evaluation routines already are capable of providing satisfactory evaluations of the end positions of the basic opening variations, as given in the book. In such a way, using a new top chess champion program, namely Houdini (3), we have come to the evaluations given in the appendix for the main lines. And after considerable analysis, it is an encouraging fact that quite often the same or similar lines were found as the 'main' or 'best' lines as given in reference books, as listed in the Bibliography.

A 1.4 Developing a repertoire

In conventional opening books like NCO [Nunn, J., et al, 1999], BCO, ECO, MCO, and FCO\(^\text{541}\), the opening lines are given with evaluations like ±, ±, +−, =, etc., as determined by human, often GM chess players. For an average chess player it is impossible to remember such lines from memory.

Thus, it is recommended for beginning chess players to develop a solid repertoire, understand the basic opening principles of such lines, and concentrate on tactics, middle game strategy. But although many\(^\text{542}\) lines are given in such books, it is not known to the average chess player how to find the best choice from such lines.

This means that generally it is not known how to develop a rational and sound opening repertoire, based on the known opening theory in books like NCO, etc. If the chess player could select the "best", i.e. most successful opening lines, from such books, he could concentrate on these lines, and thus develop a repertoire.

In this book, such work for average chess players has been done, and those lines have been found which are most likely to give success, i.e. an opening advantage for White, even with the best possible defense by Black.

\(^{541}\) Resp. (GM) Nunn's Chess Openings, Batsford C.O., Encyclopedia of Chess Openings, Modern C.O., and Fundamental C.O. The NCO book probably is the best quality for advanced players, whereby the FCO book by Dutch GM Paul vd Sterren is suitable for intermediate players. A drawback of all such books however is that they do not contain advised B/W repertoires.

\(^{542}\) In fact a huge number of lines when the foot notes are also taken into account
\[ \text{Table with Moves and Evaluations} \]

615 Usually the Kalashnikov is played with first 4. e5 (instead of 4. d6) and then 5. Nb5 d6 6. Nc3 a6 and so on.
616 After 5. Nf6 Black is transposing to the Richter Rauzer (see above, with 5. Bg5 etc.)
617 After 5. d6! tp to Richter Rauzer (6. Bg5 Bd7 etc.)
619 Bxf5 14. exf5 Rad8 15. Qh5 ±
620 And then 13. Ne7 14. Nxb5! Bg7! 15. Nc3 etc. ±
622 3.. Qa5 4. Nf3 Nf6 5. Bc4! Bg4 (.. Nc6 6. 0-0 Bg4 7. h3 etc tp) 6. h3 Bb5 7. 0-0 Nc6 (Nbd7 8. d4 e6 9. a3 ± e.g.
624 3.. Nxd5? 4. e4! (and after Nf6 or Nb6 5. Nf3 and White is ahead in development) ±
625 Or 8.. g6 9. b3 Bg7 10. Ne2N! ± (in Pecotic-Maestre, 2000, White played 10. Ba3 and lost, but Ne2 is much better)
626 Beginners should play 2. Nf3, which after 2.e5 3. Bb5 leads to Ruy Lopez by transposition; in case of 2.. d6?! then
627 White can get a positional advantage after: 3.d4 Nf6 3. Bb5 Bd7 4. Nc3 e5 5. Be3 etc. ±
List of highest ratings on the Internet Chess Club (ICC) including computers, August 2013(*) nr 1 in standard and Bullet, bookbuilder(C) using Quad HP computer Q9300, Houdini engine.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Blitz 698</th>
<th>Bullet 599</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2933 bookbuilder(C)</td>
<td>3450 Zigfrid(GM)</td>
<td>2894 bookbuilder(C)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2922 DesertCat(C)</td>
<td>3363 AndreAgassi</td>
<td>2876 DesertCat(C)</td>
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<td>3345 brookercestello(C)</td>
<td>2789 Anesthesia(C)</td>
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<td>2533 BountyHunter(C)</td>
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<td>2545 jasrom</td>
<td>3111 BlitzorDDD(GM)</td>
<td>2365 PazificDreams(IM)</td>
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</table>

(*) in May 2014 Bookbuilder(C) was nr 1 again (after sometimes a few little setbacks) with standard, now with a Xeon cpu, 4 cores, 8 threads, mainly with the latest (open source) Stockfish engine.

698 ICC Blitz ratings are inflated for humans as they usually don't play computers, and some computers like brookercestello(C) only play against humans in blitz and thus artificially inflate their blitz rating. So competing in this field was beyond my scope of developing a best opening repertoire.

699 With very fast time controls, for example two (or one) minute for the whole game.