

Chess Openings



DELANCEY
UK SCHOOLS
CHESS CHALLENGE

INTRODUCTION

A game of chess has three parts.

1. The OPENING: the start of the game when you decide where to put your pieces
2. The MIDDLE GAME: what happens once you've got your pieces out
3. The ENDING or ENDGAME: what happens at the end when there are only a few pieces left.

All games have an opening. Most games have a middle game. Some games have an ending.

You need to be good at all parts of the game.

Thousands of books have been written about chess openings. Some are for less experienced players like you. Some are for experts.

Most books are written about what happens when very strong players play each other.

This is different: it starts off by telling you about what happens when children like you – little children and big children – play each other.

Most books give you a lot of moves that you might want to learn off by heart.

This is different: it explains how you need to CALCULATE and UNDERSTAND IDEAS. There will be a few moves you can learn off by heart if you want, but only a few, and, if you don't like them you can avoid them.

When you're reading this you'll need a chess set so that you can play through the moves yourself.

Join me now and find out all about the best ways to start a game of chess.

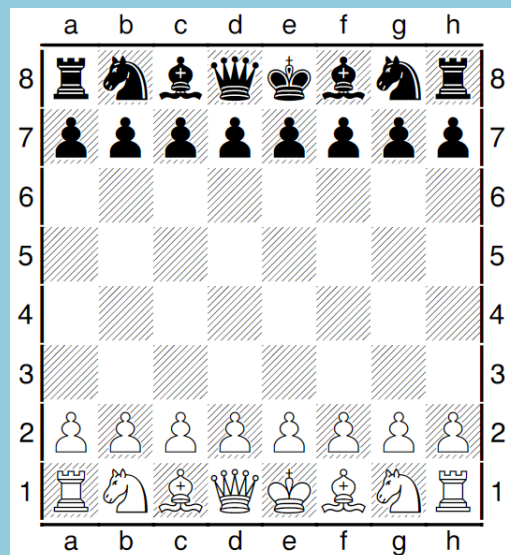
You should also know the values of the pieces:

PAWN = 1 point
KNIGHT = 3 points
BISHOP = 3 points
ROOK = 5 points
QUEEN = 9 points.

You should also understand that, at the end of the game, an advantage of two or more points will usually be enough to win the game, and an advantage of just one point will often be enough.

So one of your most important jobs when you're playing chess is to win points if you can do so safely and, unless you have a very good reason, avoid playing moves that lose points,

Before you get any further, this uses CHESS NOTATION. Each square has a name based on the letter of the FILE followed by the number of the RANK.



Here's how it works:

1. e4 e5

If we move a pawn we just write down the name of the square it moves to. White moves a pawn to the e4 square and Black replies by moving a pawn to the e5 square.

2. Nf3 Nc6

If we move a piece other than a pawn we start by writing the code letter for the piece using a capital letter. N for (k)Night, B for Bishop, R for Rook, Q for Queen or K for King. Both players move a knight on their second move.

3. d4 exd4

We use the letter 'x' to show a capture. If we make a pawn capture we start by writing the letter of the file where our pawn starts. Here, White moves a pawn to d4. Black captures this pawn with the pawn on e5.

4. Nxd4 Nf6

We write a capture by a piece (other than a pawn) with the code letter of the piece, the letter 'x' and the name of the square where the capture takes place.

5. Nc3 Bb4

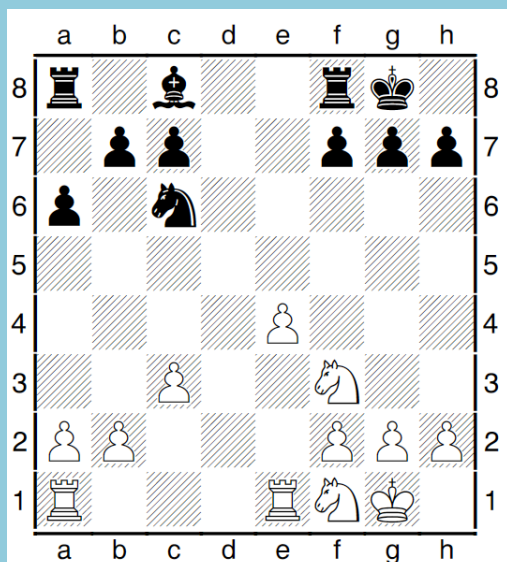
6. Nxc6 Bxc3+

If we play a check we write '+' after the move. If it's checkmate we write '#' after the move.

7. bxc3 bxc6

8. Bd3 O-O

If we castle on the king side we write 'O-O'. If we castle on the queen side we write 'O-O-O'.



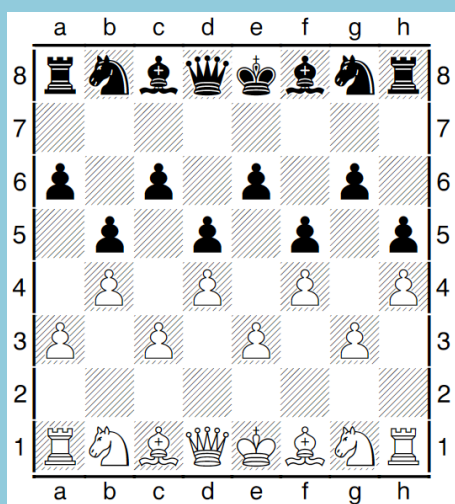
If more than one piece of the same type can move to the same square we have to say which one we're moving.

If White moves a rook to d1 we write either 'Rad1' or 'Red1', using the letter of the file to show which rook is moving.

If White moves a knight to d2 we write either 'N1d2' or 'N3d2'. As the knights are on the same file we use the number of the rank instead.

If we promote a pawn we write the letter of the new piece after the name of the square: for instance, "e8Q".

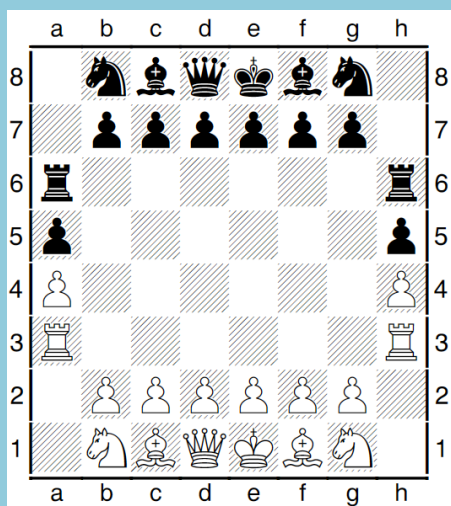
a) Don't make pretty patterns with your pieces.



This is really not a good idea. The idea of chess is to put pieces on good squares, not to make pretty patterns.

If you want to make nice pictures take up painting, not chess.

b) Don't get your rooks out at the start of the game..



Some people feel sorry for their rooks, stuck there in the corner at the start of the game. So they start like this to get them into play quickly.

Again, this is one of the WORST ways to start a game of chess. Rooks are clumsy at the start of the game and if you bring them out like this they'll just get chased round by enemy pawns, knights and bishops.

As you'll see later, rooks only come into their own once pawns have been exchanged.

c) DON'T MOVE YOUR LUCKY PAWN

Chess is a game of skill, not a game of luck. Watch what happens if you try to move your lucky pawn. Get out your chess set and play through the moves on your board.

1. f3

I'll move my lucky f-pawn.

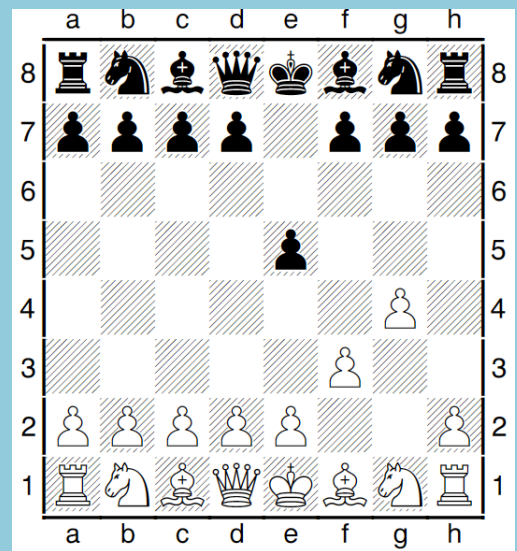
1... e5

Black moves a pawn in the centre of the board, opening lines for the bishop on f8 and the queen on d8.

2. g4

Now I'll move my lucky g-pawn.

Here's the position. Can you work out what Black should play next?



Yes, Black can get CHECKMATE by playing:

2... Qh4#

Black has won the game in only two moves. This is called FOOL'S MATE because only a fool would play those moves with White. Moving your lucky pawns will only bring you bad luck. Every move must have a reason. If you just play random moves you'll lose very quickly.

2. THE THREE OPENING RULES AND SCHOLAR'S MATE

So if that's what you shouldn't do, what should you do instead?

You can learn them in 30 seconds.

But first you'll have to forget anything anyone else has told you.

1. START BY PUTTING A PAWN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BOARD.
2. GET YOUR KNIGHTS AND BISHOPS OUT AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN. We call this DEVELOPMENT: DEVELOPING your pieces.
3. 3CASTLE QUICKLY TO MAKE YOUR KING SAFE.

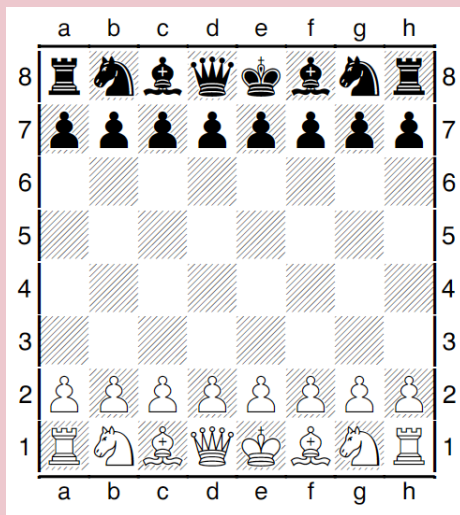
It's now time for a quiz to make sure you've understood what you've learnt about the openings so far.

In each question you'll be given three possible moves you might think about playing in the position on the board.

What you have to do is consider each option carefully and decide which of the three moves you prefer.

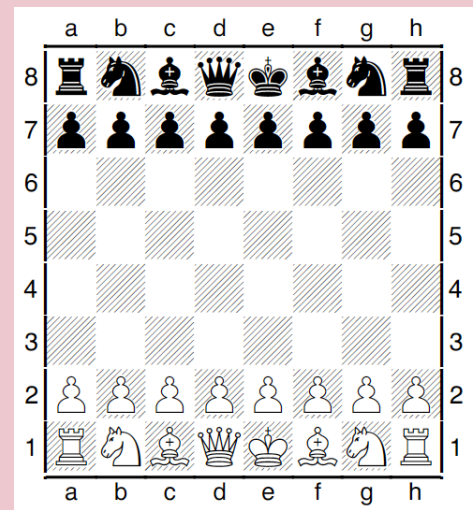
You can either circle or underline your answer.

When you're ready, turn over the page and start the quiz.



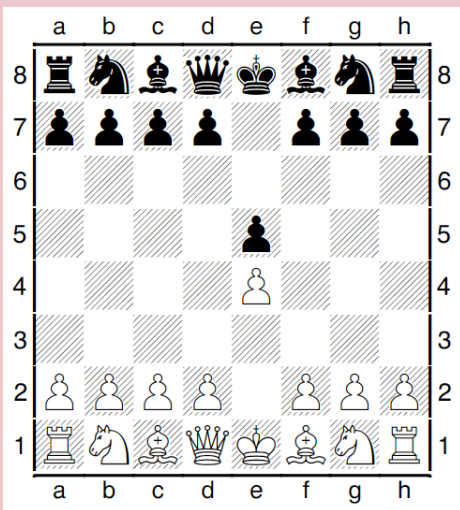
Q1. Choose a move for White

- a) e4 b) h4 c) Na3



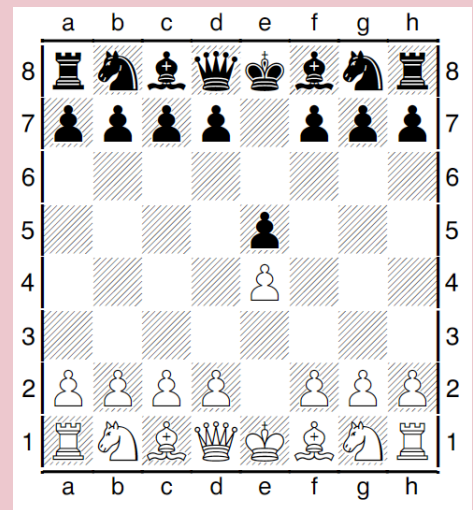
Q2. Choose a move for White

- a) a4 b) Nh3 c) d4



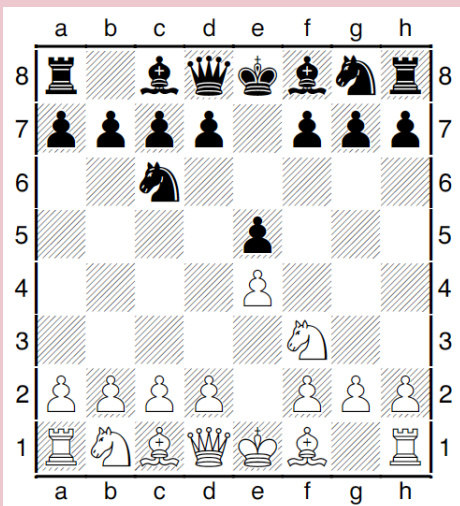
Q3. Choose a move for White

- a) a3 b) Nf3 c) Qg4



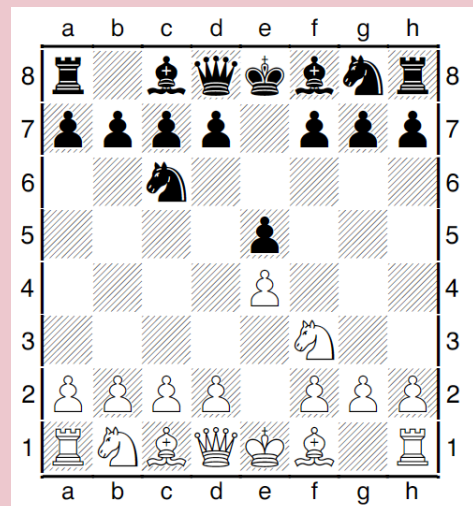
Q4. Choose a move for White

- a) Bc4 b) Na3 c) g4



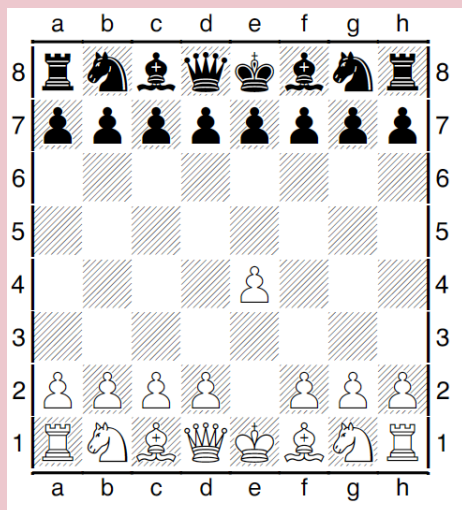
Q5. Choose a move for White

- a) Bb5 b) Ng1 c) a4



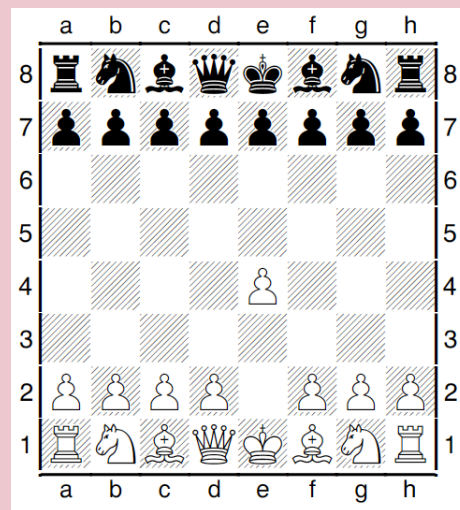
Q6. Choose a move for White

- a) Bd3 b) Nc3 c) h3



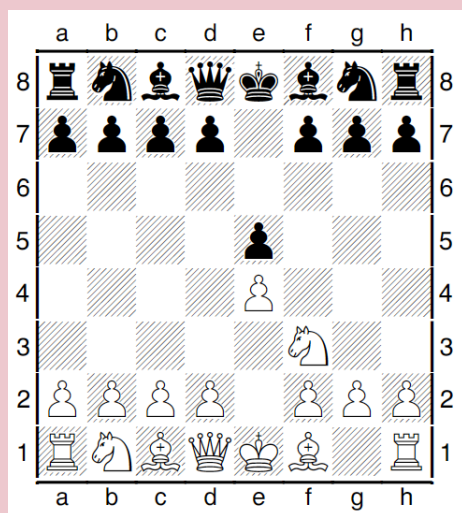
Q7. Choose a move for Black

a) h5 b) e5 c) a5



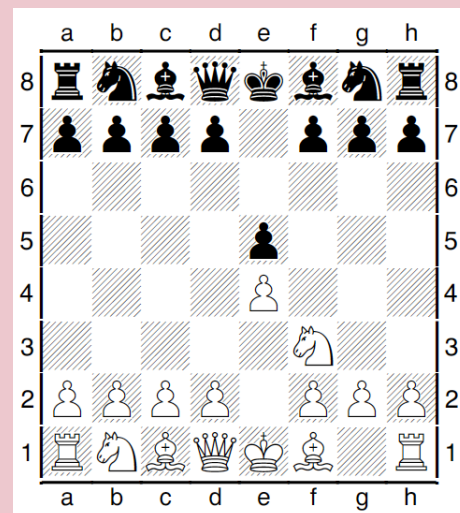
Q8. Choose a move for Black

a) Nh6 b) c5 c) Na6



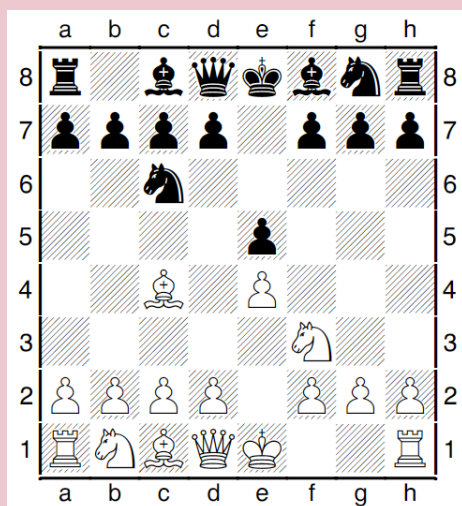
Q9. Choose a move for Black

a) a6 b) g5 c) Nc6



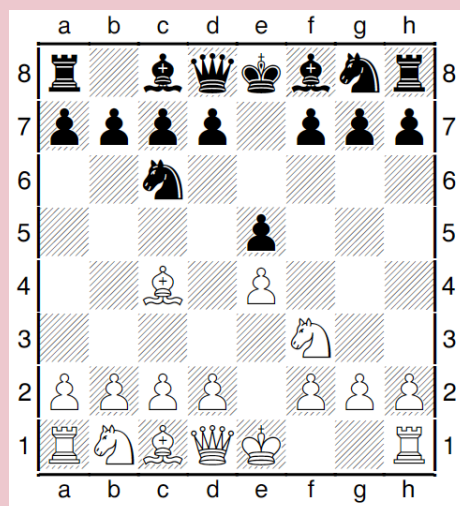
Q10. Choose a move for Black

a) d6 b) h5 c) Qf6



Q11. Choose a move for Black

a) Bc5 b) Qe7 c) Nh6



Q12. Choose a move for Black

a) a6 b) Nb4 c) Bc5

That wasn't so hard to understand, was it?

In this game Black follows our three rules. Let's see what happens.

1. e4

White starts off by moving the pawn in front of his king two squares. This is one of the best ways to start the game, and the easiest move for those who, like you, are just learning about the openings.

Why is it a good move?

- It gains SPACE. Space is very important in chess, especially at the start of the game. The more space you control the easier it will be to move your pieces round the board. So start by moving this pawn two squares, not one square.
- It helps control the CENTRE. Chess is like football: you need to control the midfield, not the wings. At the start of the game you should be playing moves that help you gain control of the middle of the board.
- It opens lines for your bishop on f1 and your queen to move out whenever they want to do so. You should be trying to get your knights and bishops off the back rank quickly.
- It leaves you one move nearer CASTLING by letting you DEVELOP your bishop on f1.

1... e5

Black copies White. Again, an excellent move, for exactly the same reasons as White's move was excellent.

2. Qh5

White brings the queen out along the diagonal, as far as she can go. I didn't say you should bring your queen out at the start of the game, though.

2... Nc6

Black follows my advice and moves a knight towards the centre of the board.

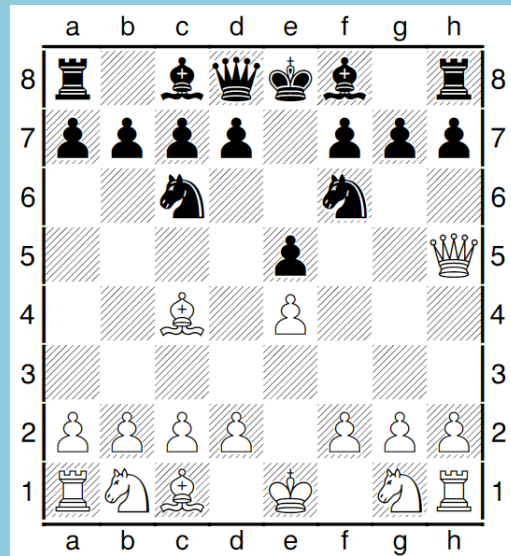
3. Bc4

Now White gets the idea and moves the bishop from f1 to c4.

3... Nf6

Black again follows my advice and brings the other knight into the game. Better still, the white queen is now in danger.

Here's the position. What do you think White should play next? Stop and work out your answer before reading on.



4. Qxf7#

Oh dear! Something seems to have gone wrong. Black followed my advice, but White won the game by checkmate in just four moves.

This is called SCHOLAR'S MATE (or the FOUR MOVE CHECKMATE). A scholar is someone who goes to school, and this checkmate happens over and over again every week in school chess clubs.

So what happened? I forgot to tell you the most important rule of all. You have to remember this rule every move of every game you play, not just in the opening but in the middle game and ending as well.

That rule is that you must avoid playing moves that let your opponent checkmate you. You must also avoid playing moves that let your opponent win points unless you have a very good reason.

So you must look at your opponent's last move and work out whether there's a THREAT you have to meet. You also have to make sure every move you play is safe.

It's very easy to forget about this at the start of the game and just think about getting your pieces out.

Let's start the game again and try to find a better move for Black.

1. e4 e5

2. Qh5

White creates a THREAT: to capture the pawn on e5 for free. Now you have to be careful. If, for instance, you play 2... g6 to threaten the white queen, White will play 3. Qxe5+, which is now a FORK, giving check and also THREATENING the rook on h8. So it's best for you to DEFEND this pawn.

2... Nc6

This is the best way to defend the e-pawn. Black develops a knight towards the centre.

3. Bc4

The red flag is flying. The black king is in danger! Look at how the white bishop and queen are both targeting the pawn on f7. You have to stop and defend the pawn before doing anything else. You could DEFEND the pawn again, for example by Qe7 or Qf6, or you could block the queen's line of attack by playing:

3... g6

Let's see how the game might continue.

4. Qf3

The red flag is flying again. The black king is in danger again! The white queen is threatening CHECKMATE from a different direction. A good move is to black the queen again:

4... Nf6

5. g4

White has another sneaky plan: to play 6. g5, trying to drive the knight away. Black has to act fast! Let's threaten the white queen!

5... Nd4

A very strong move! It's now White who has to be very careful. Can you spot what Black could play after 6. Qe3? Yes, 6... Nxc2+ is a TRIPLE FORK, checking the white king as well as threatening both the queen on e3 and the rook on a1. So instead the white queen goes back home, her tail between her legs.

6. Qd1 Nxe4

Black now captures a pawn safely. White's next move is a mistake:

7. f3 Qh4+

White has opened the FATAL DIAGONAL. The black queen seizes her opportunity.

8. Kf1 Qf2#

It's CHECKMATE: Black has won the game in only 8 moves.

A lot of children get scared when they see their opponent bring the queen out early. Heroes don't get scared, though. If you're careful to watch the pawn on f7 you'll probably end up in a good position.

You might also meet 2. Qf3, heading for f7 in a different direction. This is easy. There's no threat to meet so just play 2... Nf6. 2. Bc4 is a good move for White, but again you should play 2... Nf6 in reply. Now if the white queen goes to f3 she'll just be blocked, and if she goes to h5 you'll be very happy to capture her!

You might want to try playing for Scholar's Mate yourself if you're white. You'll probably win a few quick games against careless opponents, but I still wouldn't recommend it.

So we're not going to go for checkmate in four moves. We're going to remember the four opening rules and try to do better next time. While we're at it we're going to add a fifth rule which also applies throughout the game.

1. CONTROL THE CENTRE
2. DEVELOP OUR KNIGHTS AND BISHOPS
3. CASTLE TO MAKE OUR KING SAFE
4. MEET YOUR OPPONENT'S THREATS
5. MAKE SURE YOUR MOVE IS SAFE BEFORE YOU PLAY IT

Now we have five opening rules, and before we look at another game, it's time for some more quiz questions.

In the first set of questions you have to find a good move: a move that wins something (even just a

pawn is worth having) or gets CHECKMATE.

To solve these puzzles look for CHECKS and CAPTURES.

First, look for CHECKS to see if you can find a CHECKMATE.

Then look for CAPTURES to see if you can take an enemy piece for free, or take a stronger piece with a weaker piece.

In the rest of the questions you'll have three moves to choose from. The most important thing of all in these questions is to make sure you don't lose points or get CHECKMATED.

So your first job is to look at the board and see if your opponent has a THREAT. If so, you'll have to choose wisely. Select a move which meets your opponent's threat.

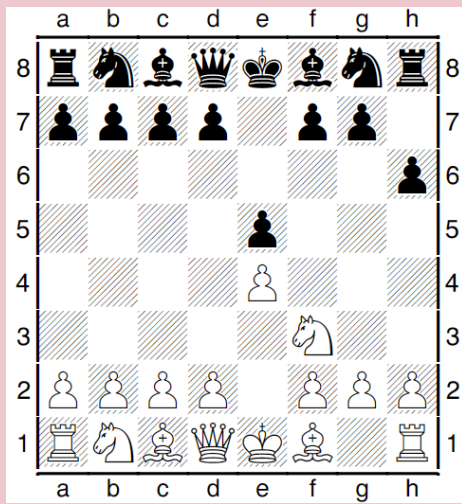
If your opponent doesn't have a THREAT you'll have more choice. But you'll still have to be careful. You'll have to make sure that you're not playing a move that isn't safe.

You might have the chance to play a move that WINS POINTS safely. If so, you should play this move.

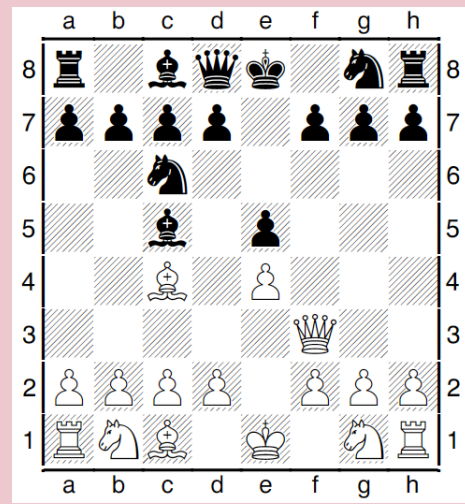
If you can't win something and you have more than one move that doesn't lose anything, then you consider the first three rules above and select the move that is best for controlling the centre, developing your knights and bishops to good squares, and getting ready to castle.

You'll also learn some more ideas about what makes a good opening move from these questions. If you don't always find the best moves, don't worry. Look at the answers and you'll learn a lot.

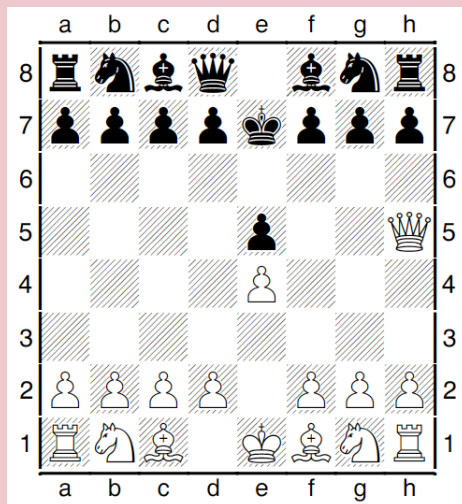
When you're ready, turn over the page.



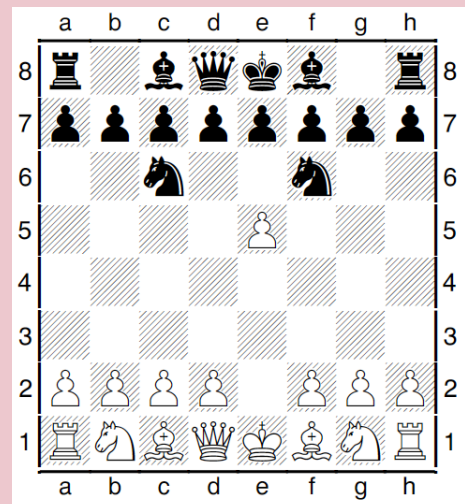
Q13. Choose a move for White



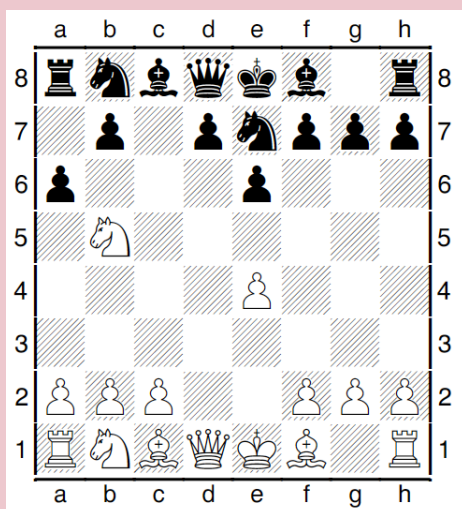
Q14. Choose a move for White



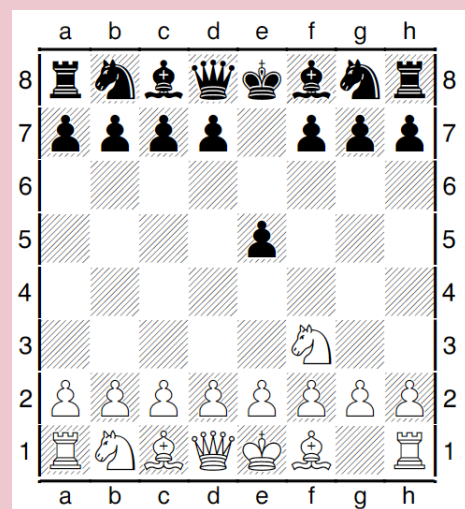
Q15. Choose a move for White



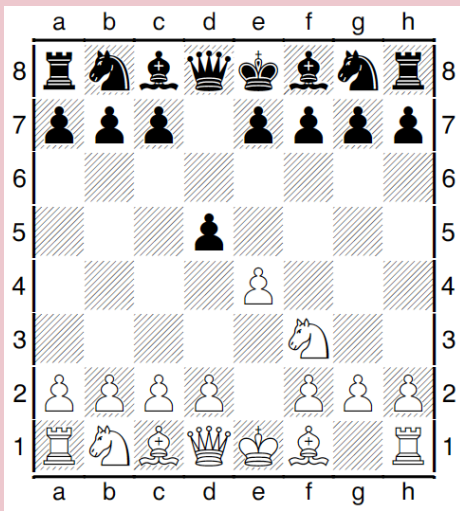
Q16. Choose a move for White



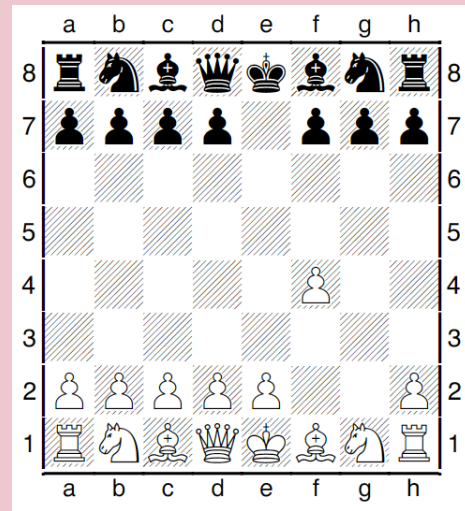
Q17. Choose a move for White



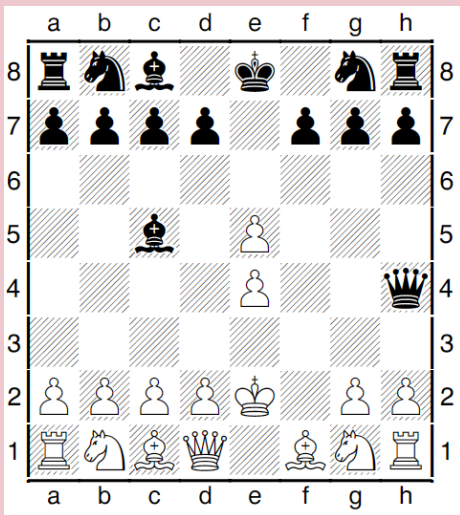
Q18. Choose a move for White



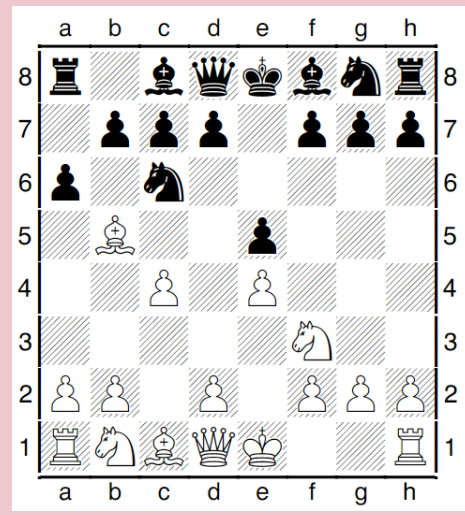
Q19. Choose a move for Black



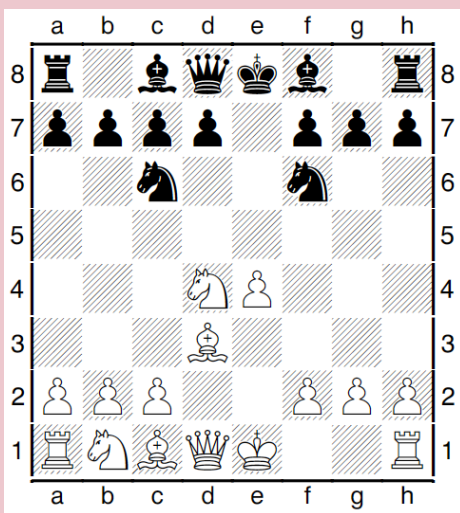
Q20. Choose a move for Black



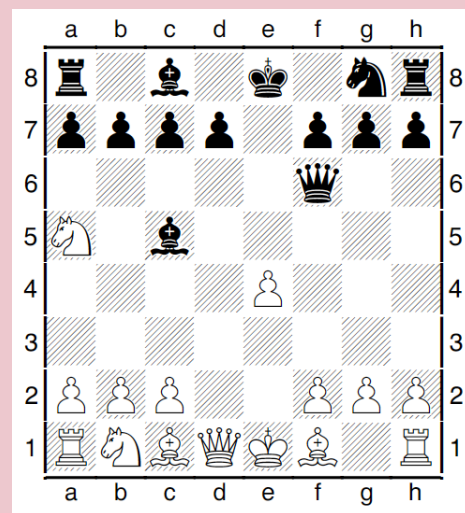
Q21. Choose a move for Black



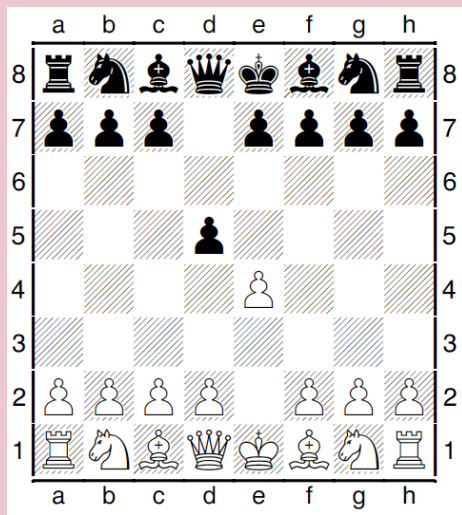
Q22. Choose a move for Black



Q23. Choose a move for Black

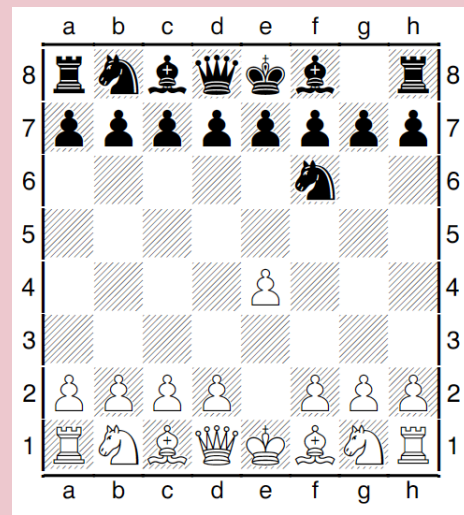


Q24. Choose a move for Black



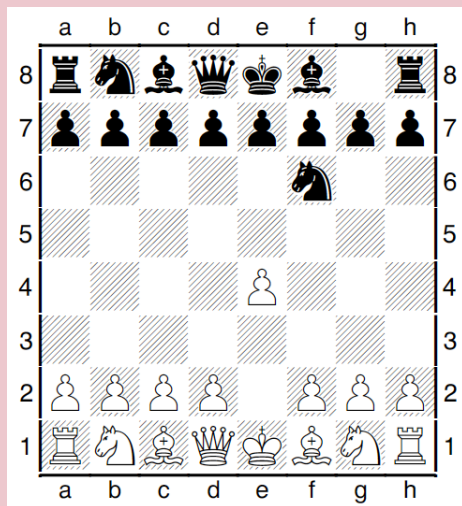
Q25. Choose a move for White

a) Nf3 b) Bc4 c) exd5



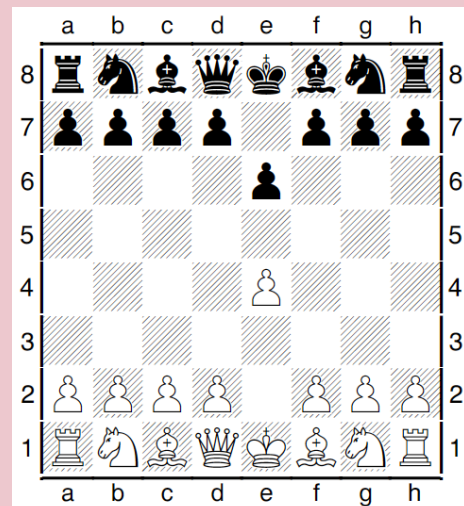
Q26. Choose a move for White

a) Nc3 b) Nf3 c) Bb5



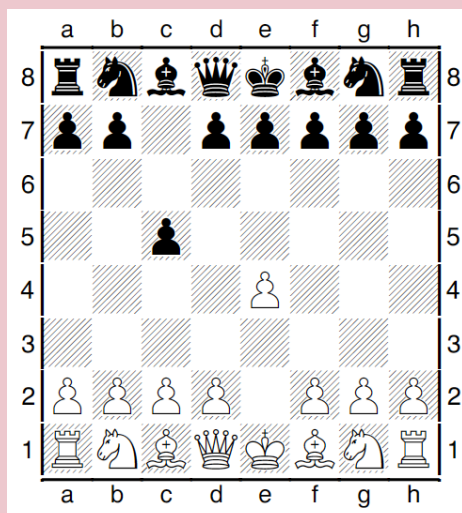
Q27. Choose a move for White

a) e5 b) d4 c) f4



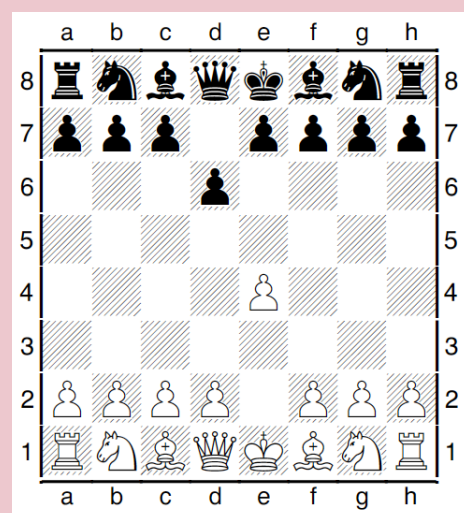
Q28. Choose a move for White

a) Nf3 b) Bc4 c) d4



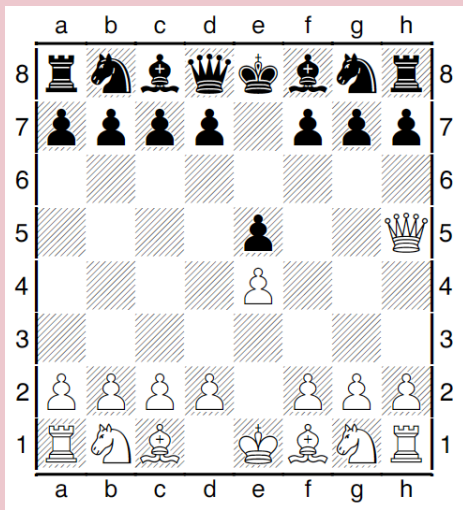
Q29. Choose a move for White

a) Nh3 b) Nf3 c) Qh5

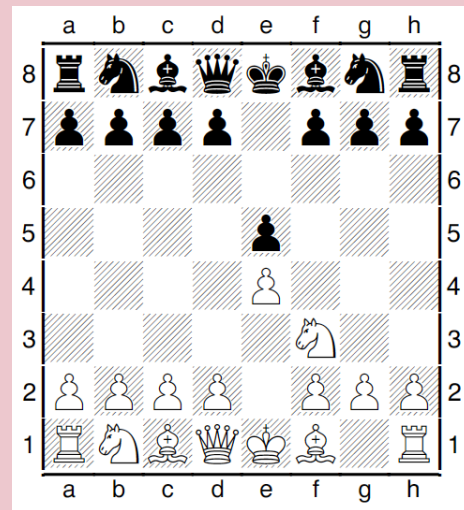


Q30. Choose a move for White

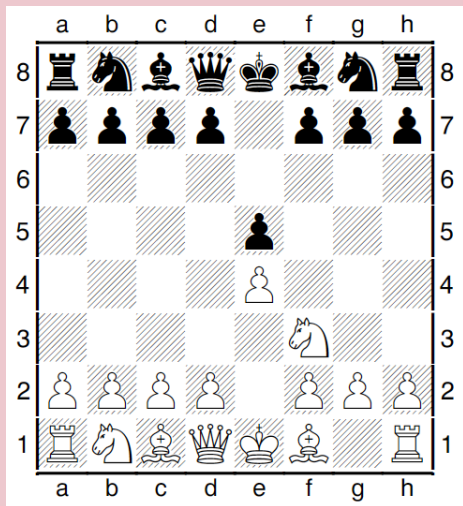
a) d4 b) Bb5+ c) Qg4



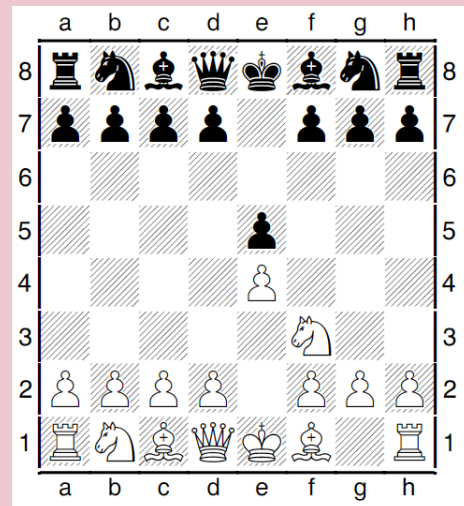
Q31. Choose a move for Black
a) g6 b) Nc6 c) Bc5



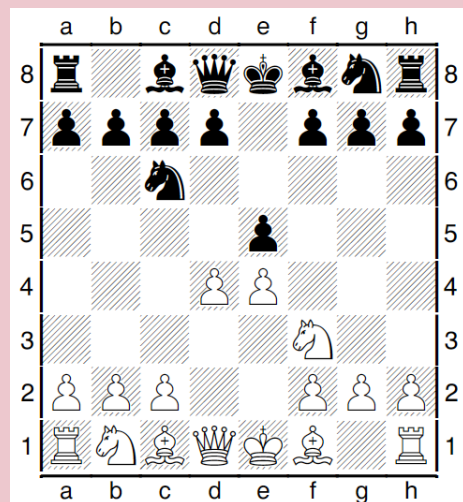
Q32. Choose a move for Black
a) g6 b) Nc6 c) Bc5



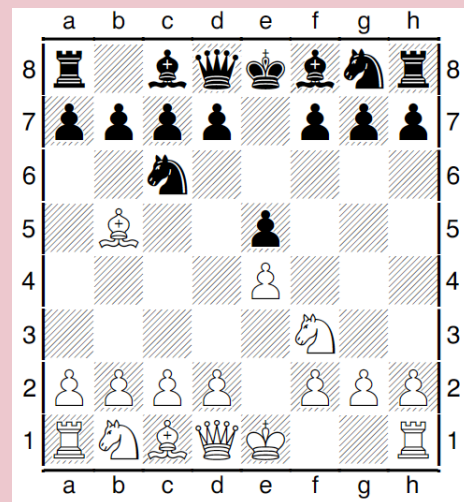
Q33. Choose a move for Black
a) Nf6 b) Ne7 c) Nh6



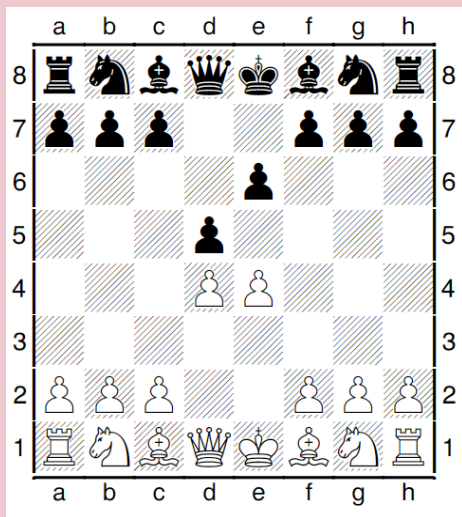
Q34. Choose a move for Black
a) Qh4 b) Qf6 c) d6



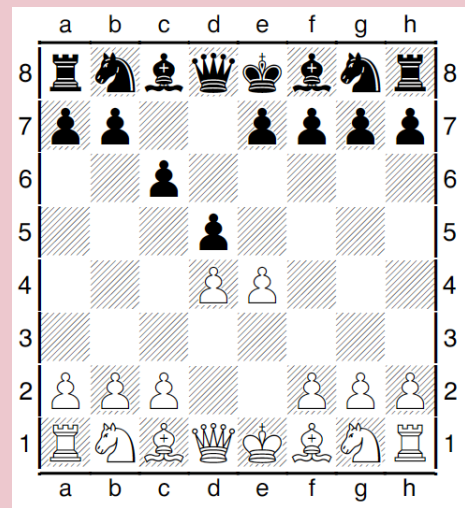
Q35. Choose a move for Black
a) Bb4+ b) a6 c) exd4



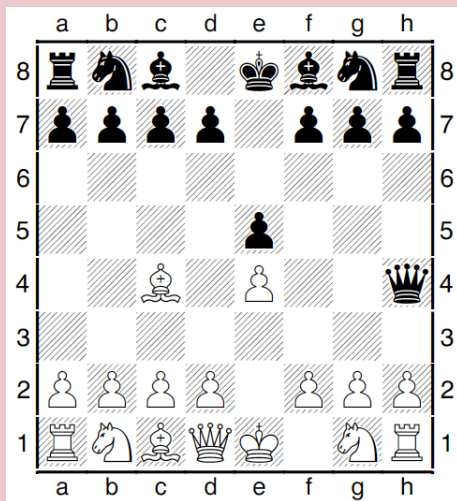
Q36. Choose a move for Black
a) a6 b) Nb4 c) Bb4



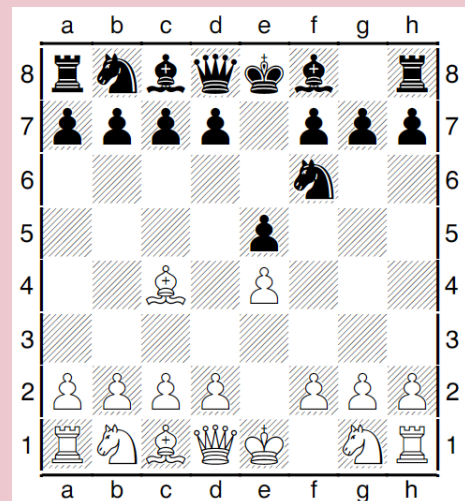
Q37. Choose a move for White
a) Nc3 b) Nf3 c) Bb5+



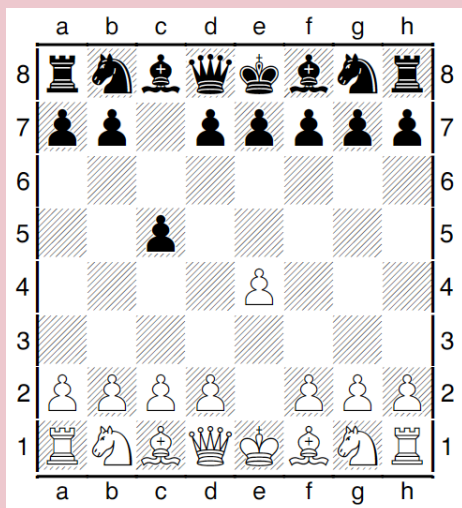
Q38. Choose a move for White
a) Qh5 b) Bg5 c) e5



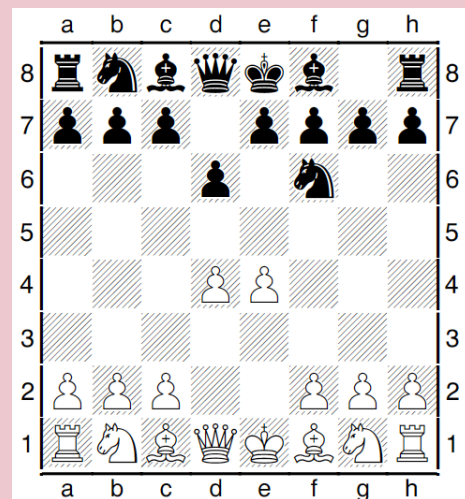
Q39. Choose a move for White
a) g3 b) d3 c) c3



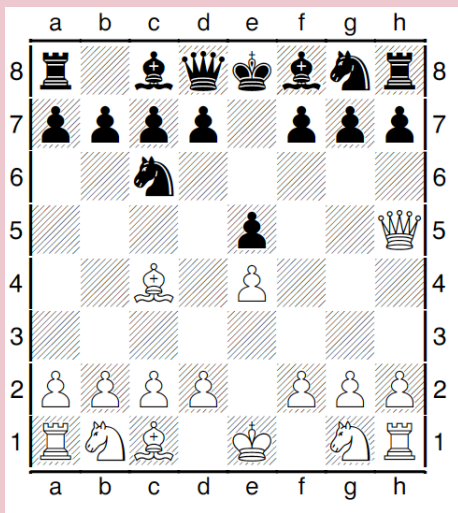
Q40. Choose a move for White
a) Qh5 b) f3 c) Nc3



Q41. Choose a move for White
a) Nh3 b) Nf3 c) Qh5

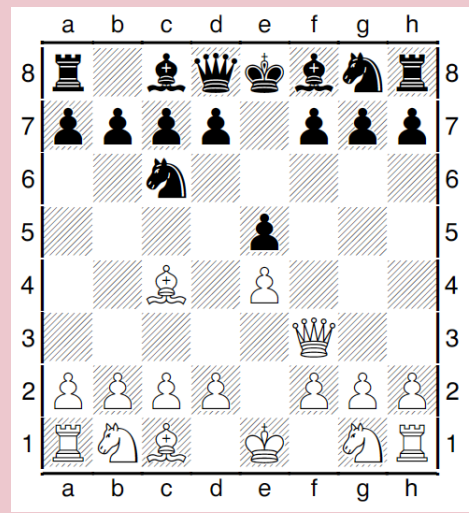


Q42. Choose a move for White
a) Nc3 b) e5 c) Bg5



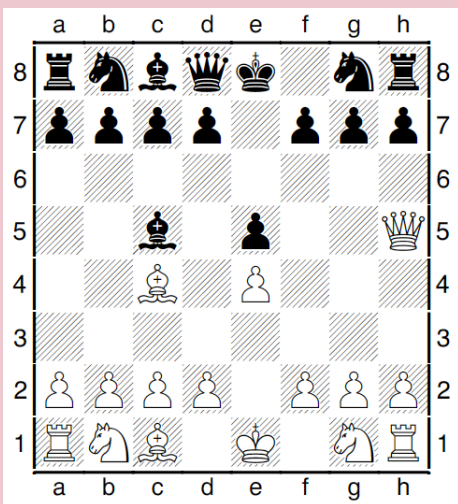
Q43. Choose a move for Black

a) Nf6 b) Nd4 c) g6



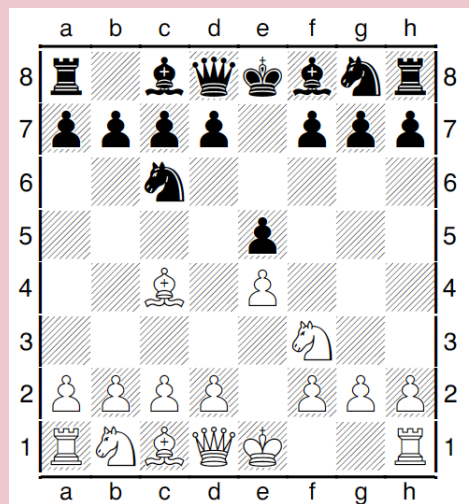
Q44. Choose a move for Black

a) Nf6 b) Nd4 c) g6



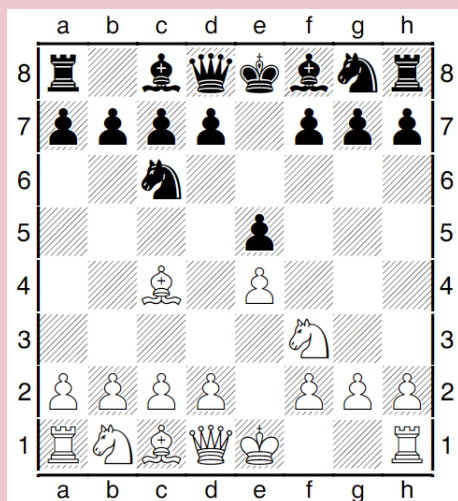
Q45. Choose a move for Black

a) Nf6 b) Qe7 c) g6



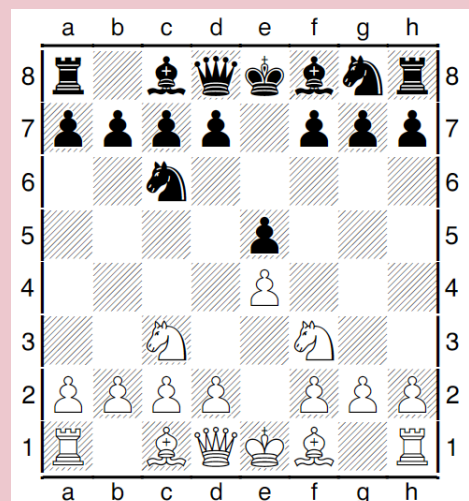
Q46. Choose a move for Black

a) Bc5 b) Bb4 c) Ba3



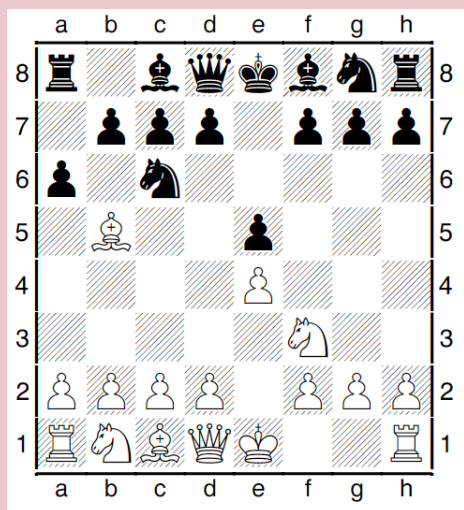
Q47. Choose a move for Black

a) Ne7 b) Nf6 c) Nh6

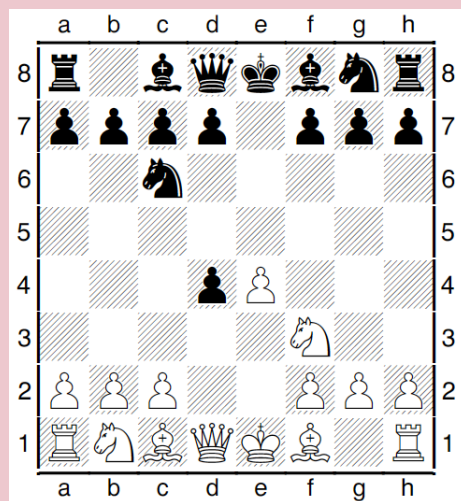


Q48. Choose a move for Black

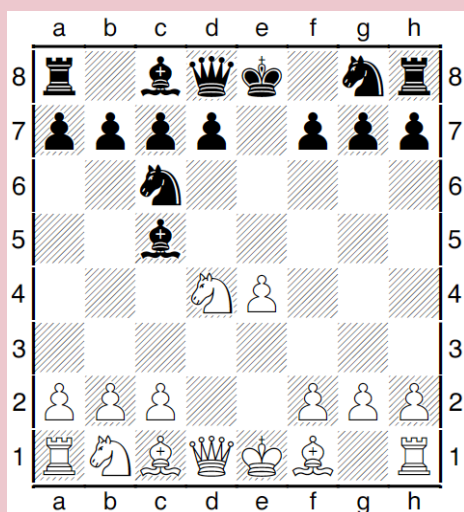
a) Nd4 b) Qf6 c) Nf6



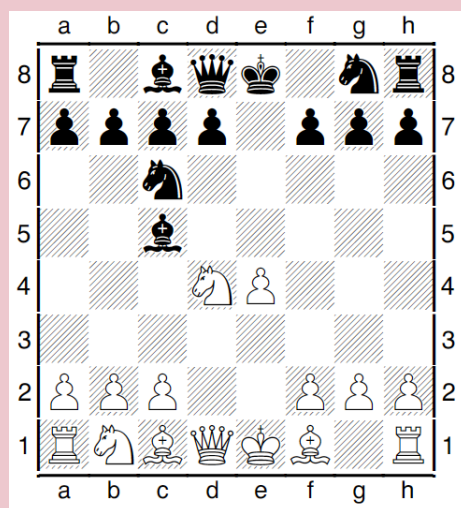
Q49. Choose a move for White
a) 0-0 b) Nc3 c) Ba4



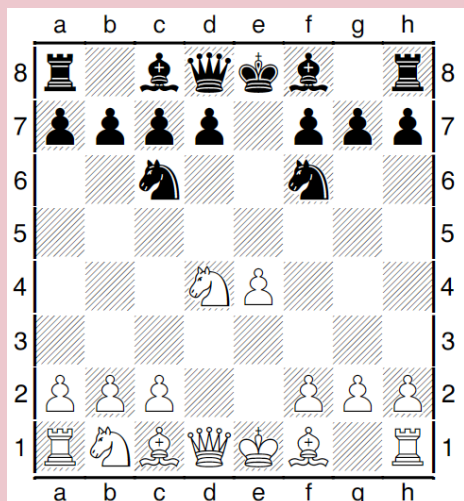
Q50. Choose a move for White
a) Nxd4 b) Nc3 c) B



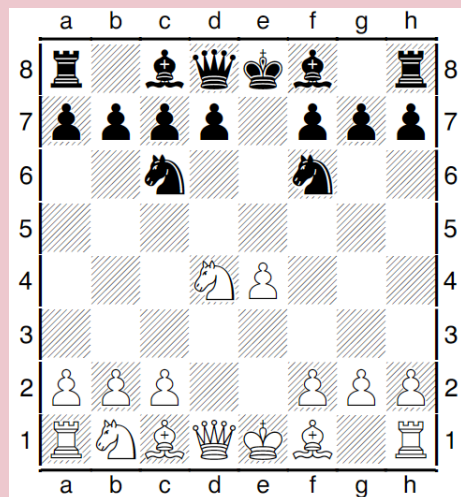
Q51. Choose a move for White
a) Nc3 b) Be3 c) Bc4



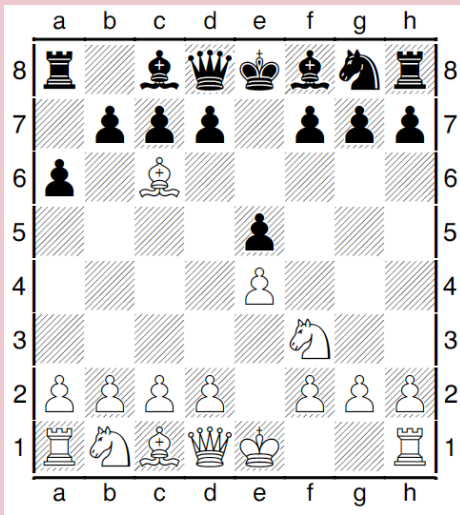
Q52. Choose a move for White
a) Nb3 b) Ne6 c) Qh5



Q53. Choose a move for White
a) Nc3 b) Bd3 c) Qf3

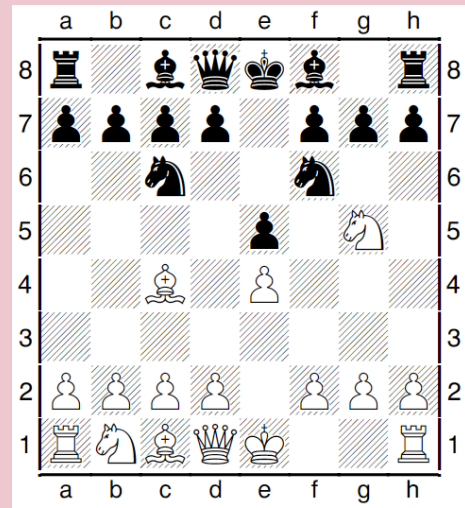


Q54. Choose a move for White
a) e5 b) Bb5 c) Nxc6



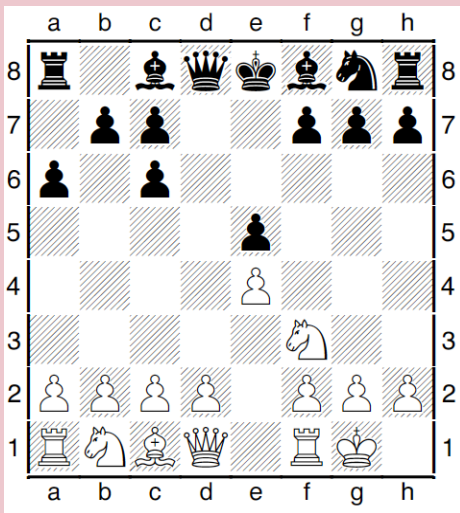
Q55. Choose a move for Black

- a) Nf6 b) Bc5 c) dxc6



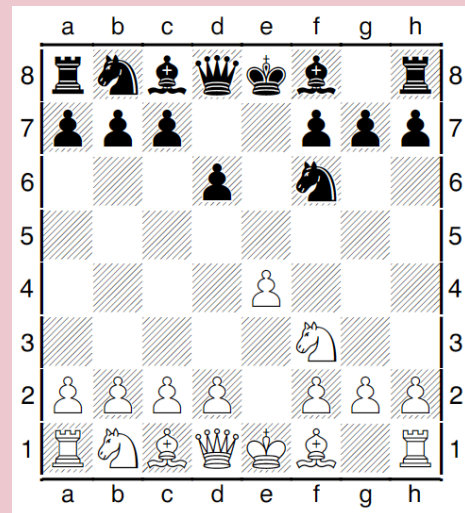
Q56. Choose a move for Black

- a) d6 b) d5 c) Qe7



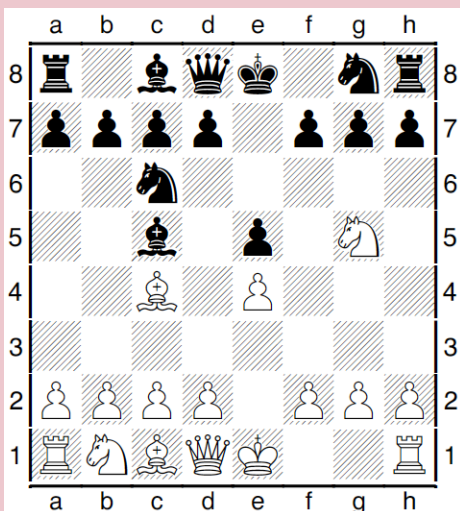
Q57. Choose a move for Black

- a) Nf6 b) Bd6 c) Qg5



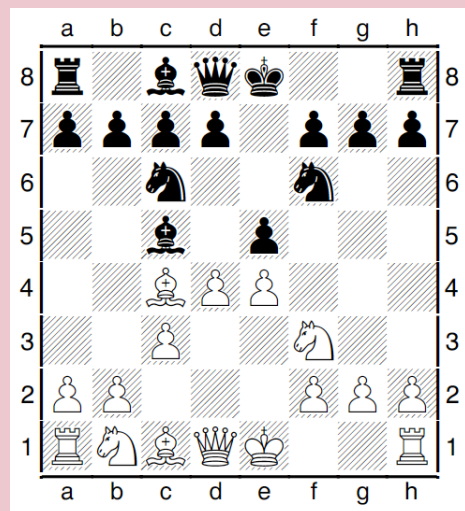
Q58. Choose a move for Black

- a) Nxe4 b) Nc6 c) Bg4



Q59. Choose a move for Black

- a) Qxg5 b) d5 c) h6



Q60. Choose a move for Black

- a) d6 b) Nxe4 c) exd4+

Many people think chess is about learning moves off by heart. Some of it is, but most of it is about learning and understanding ideas.

There are some tactical ideas which happen over and over again at the start of the game. If you know them you'll be able to win games quickly. If you don't know them you'll lose a lot of games quickly.

You have to think about getting your pieces out quickly in the opening, but you also have to think about TACTICS and CHECKMATES all the time.

If you understand these ideas you'll find it much easier to understand what's happening in the opening and why the moves are played.