

80/20 Tactics Multiplier: Trompowsky Attack

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If you want to know an opening, you should be familiar with its typical positional ideas and remember the most important theoretical lines. But this is not enough.

Every opening has its own stock of tactical motifs. Therefore, you also have to know the typical tactical patterns that frequently occur in your opening.

GM Levy Rozman's course on the essential patterns in the Trompowsky Attack gives you a complete understanding of typical tactical and strategic patterns for both sides.

The Trompowsky Attack is a strategically and dynamically complex opening full of tactical possibilities. Both sides have a multitude of tactical shots and ideas at their disposal thanks to the different asymmetrical pawn structures and imbalances which occur from the different variations.

Thus, it is a perfect opening for players who prefer to understand key strategic and tactical ideas rather than memorize an endless amount of theoretical variations.

The aim of this course is to investigate all the common variations which can arise from the Trompowsky Attack, to improve your understanding of the typical themes in the opening, as well as cementing that knowledge through the included quizzes featuring carefully selected test positions.

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The Trompowsky Attack: General Concepts

1. The Trompowsky Attack is a chess opening for White which starts with the moves **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5** (see the diagram below).



The opening is named after the Brazilian chess player Octávio Trompowsky who popularized it in the first half of the 20th century.

Looking at the history of the Trompowsky Attack, it is also key to note that the opening had a huge increase in popularity in the 1990s, when several English GMs – most notably GM Julian Hodgson – experimented with it. Even England's number one player, Michael Adams, started to play it from time to time with decent results.

2. The Trompowsky Attack is one of the less-usual Queen's Pawn Openings which allows White to sidestep many of the main lines after **2.c4** or **2.Nf3**.

Playing it can be a vital alternative for all 1.d4-players who are tired of repeatedly entering the highly theoretical terrain of all the main lines Black can choose from. For Black players who play the Grunfeld Defense, the King's Indian Defense, the Nimzo-Indian, the Slav Defense and so on, their opening knowledge often ends as early as move two.

3. That said, the Trompowsky Attack is an aggressive chess opening and leads to original play. It's a perfect opening for creative players who like to play positions which are less theoretical, involve many tricky lines and are rich in possibilities for both sides.

Hence, if you have only a little amount of time that you can spend on studying chess openings, but still want to play for an opening advantage with White, the Trompowsky is a clever choice.

4. Some might say that the Trompowsky Attack is an opening where White threatens to give up the bishop pair as early as move 2. However, it's far from irrational to play the move **2.Bg5**. Truly, the Trompowsky Attack is an opening outside of conventional wisdom. Yet, with the move **2.Bg5**, White threatens to damage White's pawn structure by capturing on f6. If Black allows this capture, there is an immediate imbalance which allows White to use make use of his own assets to play for the full point.
5. When you choose to play the Trompowsky Attack, you should be aware of some key strategic features of this opening. First of all, White plays against the bishop pair or with a knight vs a bishop in this opening. That said, as a Trompowsky-player, you should study these imbalances. When playing against the bishop pair, for example, you need to understand exactly where your compensation is.

It's also key to know about White's two main weaknesses in the position:

- The weak pawn on b2
- The weakness of the dark-squares

First of all, the b2-pawn often becomes a target for Black as White brings out his dark-squared bishop from c1 (which protects the b2-pawn) very early and often exchanges it. Hence, you need to learn how to deal with different threats against the b2-pawn. When does White have to defend this pawn and when can he offer it up in gambit style?

Secondly, the weakness of the dark-squares is an important strategic feature when White exchanges his dark-squared bishop against a Black knight and Black keeps his dark-squared bishop on the board.

If you want to play the Trompowsky, you need to learn the strategies which allow you to keep Black's dark-squared bishop passive and harmless.

6. It needs to be said that the Trompowsky Attack leads to plenty of unforced variations. Both sides have a wide range of moves and setups at their disposal. Knowing concrete theory is less important than in the mainlines after **1.d4**. This makes the Trompowsky Attack a perfect weapon for players who seek a complex and strategic fight with the White pieces.

That's why it is even more important to be familiar with the most important strategic and tactical motifs. However, at the same time, this does not mean that you don't have to be familiar with any theory at all. Of course, there is also plenty of theory in the Trompowsky Attack, but, in general, the character of the opening is a lot less forced.

7. Black also has to be careful when facing the Trompowsky Attack. Thanks to the theoretical developments over recent years, the Trompowsky Attack definitely carries some theoretical bite in many lines. It is a common occurrence that club players try to develop naturally against it and soon find themselves in a strategically lost position. They lose the game without even understanding why.
8. Moreover, you often get positions from the Trompowsky Attack which might be objectively equal, but a lot easier to play for White from a practical point of view. This is a factor which must not be underestimated. Today, many club players don't take the time to closely evaluate positions and variations on their own, but only take a brief look at the engine's evaluation. This is a huge misconception as even when the computer says the position is equal you always have to prove that you can hold the balance at the board. However, this is what many club players aren't capable of.
9. Apart from this general knowledge on the Trompowsky Attack, IM Levy Rozman suggests you constantly follow the games of strong players in the openings you want to play. It is a wise decision to regularly check the games of the world's leading experts or your favorite players in this opening.

You can watch their approaches against different opening setups and become familiar with the key concepts, latest trends or opening novelties. It is also key to know the classics in the opening you play.

10. If you choose to play the Trompowsky Attack today, you are in the comfortable situation of being able to choose from several strong players to follow.

Nowadays, one of the biggest experts in the Trompowsky Attack is the World Champion himself, Magnus Carlsen. He played this opening against many of the world's best players with decent results. Most notably, he even used the Trompowsky Attack in his World Championship Match against Sergey Karjakin in 2016 (see the diagram below).



The game started with the moves **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 d5 3.e3 c5 4.Bxf6 gxf6 5.dxc5**.

Apart from Magnus Carlsen, there are several other opening experts. The English GM Richard Pert wrote an excellent repertoire book on the Trompowsky Attack for the publishing house Quality Chess which provides you with state-of-the-art theory on this opening. Two other English GMs, Mark Hebden and Julian Hodgson, are also experts in this opening. It's instructive to study their games, too.

Finally, you can also study the games of Dmitry Andreikin, Hikaru Nakamura, Nikita Vitiugov and Timur Gareev.

The Trompowsky Attack: Tactics and Strategies Explained

Analyzing the Trompowsky Attack can be a good starting point to learn tactics, because many lines lead to sharp, tactical struggles. In this course, IM Levy Rozman analyzes typical motifs for White.

The following guidelines will help you to prepare and execute tactical operations:

1. **Coordination:** Remember that tactics occur when pieces are in the right places, on active squares. When you have the right structure, with pieces working well together, you will find the tactical shots that decide games.
2. **Development:** Generally speaking, you need to be aware that every tactic begins with the idea of having as many of your pieces involved in the game as possible. Development is key. Combinations in the opening mainly occur because one side is behind in development. When your opponent's king stays for too long in the center, for example, look for central breakthroughs and open up the position.
3. **Piece Activity:** The concept of active piece play is of paramount importance in the Trompowsky Attack: Bring your pieces together so that they all support each other and work as a unit. This means that you need to prepare your tactics. Get your pieces working together. Put the pieces on their most active squares - tactics don't appear from thin air, so play actively in order to create the opportunities. This is the secret to successful tactics in the Trompowsky Attack - keeping the pressure up.
4. **Prioritize Piece Activity over Material:** If you have the better piece mobility with active pieces, then being materially down doesn't matter as much - if the opponent's pieces are not working to their full potential then they may as well not be on the board anyway!
5. **Identifying targets in the opponent's position:** A simple tactical concept which leads you to find more targets in your own games is to always try to identify pieces or squares which may be exploitable. This can help you to spot the not-so-obvious moves. In some positions, it can be tough to find tactics. Therefore, it helps to know what your opponent's typical weaknesses are when playing this opening.

With these guidelines in mind, it's time to look at some of the most important and recurring tactical and strategic motifs in the Trompowsky Attack:

1. **Opening Traps:** The Trompowsky is a tricky opening which leads to non-standard positions early on. It often happens that both players are out of their preparation after only a few moves. This also increases the risk of falling into opening traps. First of all, it's key to notice that one of the most tricky moves Black can play against **2.Bg5** is **2...c6**.

"Loose pieces drop off." This is what the famous English book author GM John Nunn once said. When playing the Trompowsky Attack, we should keep in mind that the bishop on g5 is an unprotected piece. If White follows up with **3.e3** after **2...c6**, he immediately falls for a winning opening trap for Black. The move **3...Qa5+** wins a piece for Black (see the diagram below).



2. **Early Tactics:** In contrast to the last point, it's often White who can play for early tactical shots in the Trompowsky Attack. A nice illustration is the position after **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 d5 3.Bxf6 gxf6 4.c4 dxc4** (the main move for Black) **5.e3 c5 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.Nc3!** (see the diagram below).



The move **7.Nc3** is a relatively new idea for White to bring out the pieces as quickly as possible. If Black captures the knight, he immediately falls for an opening trap which wins the game for White. **7...dxc3? 8.Bxf7+! Kxf7 9.Qxd8** (see the diagram below). White wins the Black queen.



3. **Unprepared Black Players:** The Trompowsky Attack is often used to surprise the Black player and catch him off guard. It often happens that Black has to play on his own very early on.

A good illustration is the game Carlstedt – Reinhard, Heusenstamm 2017. The game is

started with the moves **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 Ne4 3.h4 h6** (see the diagram below). This move is usually a sign that the Black player has not studied this line and does not know how to react to it.)



The game continued with **4.Bf4 e6 5.e3 d5 6.Bd3 Bd6 7.Ne2 Nf6 8.Nd2 b6 9.c3 Bxf4 10.Nxf4 Qd7 11.Nf3 c6 12.Ne5 Qc7 13.Nh5** (see the diagram below).



White has a strong initiative on the kingside. The game ended quickly. **13...Nxe5 14.Qxe5 Bb7? 15.Nxf7** 1:0 (see the diagram below).



Black can't recapture with the queen in view of Bg6, winning the Black queen.

4. **Miniatures:** One of the great advantages of playing the Trompowsky Attack is that you have the chance to play many miniatures by knocking your opponent out in the opening stage.

If you want to win games that quickly, you need to have a killer instinct at the chessboard. Your tactical brain needs to be in good shape and – once you have the initiative – you constantly need to look for knockout punches that finish the game.

The game Istratescu – Veys from 2014 shows how quickly an unprepared Black player can collapse in the Trompowsky Attack.

The game started with the moves **1.d4 d5 2.Bg5** (this move order is called the "Pseudo-Trompowsky". However, the game quickly transposes to a Trompowsky Attack.) **2...Nf6 3.Bxf6 exf6 4.e3 Bd6 5.c4!** (White immediately puts pressure on the Black pawn on d5.) **5...dxc4 6.Bc4 0-0 7.Nc3 c5?** (see the diagram below).



The move **7...c5** look natural, but it's already a tactical mistake which Istratescu makes use of. **8.dxc5! Bxc5 9.Bxf7+! Kxf7** (9...Rxf7? 10.Qxd8+) **10.Qh5+** (see the diagram below).



The bishop on c5 is unprotected. White wins back the bishop on c5 with dividends. **10...Kg8 11.Qxc5 b6 12.Qc4+ Rf7 13.Rd1 Qe8 14.Nb5 Ba6?** (see the diagram below).



Again, White can exploit the weak f7-square with a combination which ends the game.
15.Qxf7+! Kxf7 16.Nd6+ Ke7 17.Nxe8 Kxe8 18.Nf3 (see the diagram below). White is an exchange and a pawn up. Black resigned two moves later.



5. **Surprising Kingside Attacks:** Often in the Trompowsky attack, White has a lot of pressure on the kingside and many pieces are directed against Black's king on the kingside. Yet, there are also positions in which Black's king looks relatively safe at first glance, but soon falls victim to an attack.

In the game Pilavov – Lingur, White launched a surprising kingside attack (see the diagram below).

White played the surprising **10.Qa4!** The idea is to transfer the queen over to the kingside along the 4th rank. Suddenly, it becomes obvious that it's not easy for Black to deal with this threat.



After **10...Bf5 11.Qh4 h5** this is a typical idea for the defender. Black tries to close the h-file by pushing his h-pawn. If White wants to open the h-file, he needs to capture the h-pawn en passant. Then, however, Black can use the White h-pawn as an umbrella to save his king. **12.gxh6 Bf6** (see the diagram below).



It's not obvious how White can continue his attack. In the game, White found a convincing way to seal the deal. **13.Qg3 Nc6 14.e4! Be6 15.e5 Bh8 16.h7+ Kg7** (see the diagram below).



By pushing his e-pawn, White forced the Black bishop to go back to h8. On g7, the king is vulnerable to a queen check on h6. **17.Ng5 Qc7 18.Qh4 Qxe5+ Nge4** (see the diagram below). White threatens mate on h6. Black resigned.



6. **Kingside Weaknesses:** Apart from these surprising kingside attacks, it's a common feature in the Trompowsky Attack that Black has certain weaknesses on the kingside that White can exploit.

The variation after **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 d5 3.Bxf6 gxf6** (see the diagram below) is known as one of the best defensive setups Black can play against the Trompowsky Attack.



Yet, it's key to notice that Black won't have an easy time to find a safe square for his king in this line as the kingside pawn structure is already shattered.

In the game Fier – Avdhoot from 2017 (see the diagram below), White showed how

make use of the Black kingside weaknesses in the middlegame.



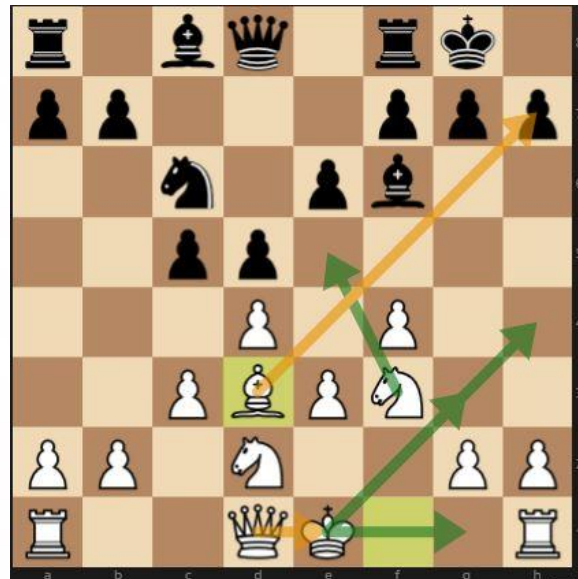
In the position at hand, Black brought his king to h8. However, White launches a winning attack with **18.Ng5!** (threatening mate on h7) **18...fxg5** **19.Rh3** (see the diagram below).



The White rook joins the attack. Mate is unavoidable. The game ended after **19...Be4** **20.Nxe4** **Kg7** **21.Qh6+** **Kg8** **22.Qxh7** mate.

7. **Improved Stonewall Formation:** In some variations of the Trompowsky Attack, White can transpose into improved lines of other openings.

For example, after the moves **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 e6 3.e3 d5 4.Nd2 Be7 5.Bxf6 Bxf6 6.f4 0-0 7.c3 c5 8.Ngf3 Nc6 9.Bd3** (see the diagram below), White transposes to an improved version of a Stonewall, where he has his dark-squared bishop (the problem piece) already exchanged.



8. **Positional Play:** Not all variations in the Trompowsky lead to crushing attacks. In some lines, White goes for a more positional strategy. In the line after **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 d5 3.Bxf6 exf6** (see the diagram below), for example, White's aim is to put positional pressure on Black's pawn on d5 with moves like c4, Nc3, g3 and Bg2.



9. **Light-Square Domination:** In the Trompowsky Attack, White usually gives up his dark-squared bishop early, but often finds a good square for his light-squared bishop.

We've seen this important aspect in the game The game Istratescu – Veys from 2014, where White brought his bishop to c4 early on and soon had the chance to attack Black on the light-squares with **9.Bxf7+!** (see the diagram below).



10. **Space Advantage:** In the lines where Black plays with an early ...c5, White often gets a space advantage by pushing the d-pawn to d5. White can support his d-pawn with

moves like e2-e4 and Black is often left with a cramped position.

In the game Lora – Sepulveda from 2014, White won a nice miniature by simply grabbing space right from the start. After 14 moves, White already had a huge space advantage (see the diagram below).

White continued with **15.g4! Bh4+ 16.Kd2 Nf6 17.Qc6! Qxc6 18.bxc6 Nb8 19.Nb6!** (see the diagram below).



Black is helpless and had to resign two moves later.

11. **Shutting Down the Bishop Pair:** It's a common occurrence in the Trompowsky Attack that White plays against the bishop pair. It's key to get a feeling as to what extent you can open the position with White to still keep the Black bishops boxed in. In any event, it's crucial to not let the Black bishop pair count.

In the game Porras Mateo – Masferrer Niubo from 2015, for example, White managed to play a very nice positional game. Let's take a look at the position after Black's 19th move.



Black's bishops are poorly placed and don't have an active purpose. White reached a winning position by simply improving his pieces. **20.Nc1 Rg8 21.Nd3** (The knight heads towards the beautiful outpost on c5.) **21...f6 22.Rb3 Rb8 23.Ra3 Rxb2? 24.Rxb2 Qxb2 25.Nc5!** (see the diagram below).



Black is lost. White not only threatens to take the bishop on d7, but also to trap the queen on a3 with Rb3. Black resigned.

12. **The Misplaced Black Queen on b2:** The b2-pawn is a key weakness for White in the Trompowsky Attack. In some lines (like the Vaganian Gambit), Black grabs this pawn very early in the game. Yet, White usually gets good compensation for the pawn. It's key to notice that the Black queen is misplaced on b2 and often needs a long time to come back – if she can at all.

In the game Smerdon – Womacka, White made use of this fact. The game started with the moves **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 Ne4 3.Bf4 c5 4.f3 Qa5+ 5.c3 Nf6 6.d5 Qb6** (Black attacks the pawn on b2) **7.e4!?** (White gambits the pawn on b2) **7...Qxb2 8.Nd2 Qxc3** (see the diagram below).



Black is two pawns up, but White has a very interesting move at hand which does not allow the White queen to come back. **9.Bc7!** (see the diagram below). This move does not allow the Black queen to escape to a5 or e5. IM Levy Rozman explains all the complications which arise from this line in the course. However, it's safe to say that the Black queen will have a very hard time to come back to safety.

