

80/20 Tactics Multiplier: The London System

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

Each opening has its own unique tactical patterns. Patterns you need to know to succeed.

IM Eric Rosen's course on the essential tactics in the London System gives you a complete understanding of the typical patterns for both sides. Even if you only play *against* the London System, knowledge of these resources will prove invaluable.

The London System is a flexible opening which White can use virtually against *any* of Black's setups. This makes it the perfect choice for players who prefer to understand key strategic and tactical ideas instead of having to memorize an endless number of theoretical variations.

The aim of this course is to give you a high-level understanding of the typical themes of the London System, and really cement this knowledge in your long-term memory with the included practical tests.

Summary

Introduction: About this course

Part 1: Lessons in the London System

1. London System: Magnus style! (Carlsen - Bosiocic)
2. Grischuk crushes the King's Indian (Grischuk - Khusnutdinov)
3. Organizing your attack (Rosen - NN)
4. Nakamura beats the London in 11 moves (Bareev - Nakamura)
5. Studying new variations with an engine (Stockfish - Rosen)
6. The best line against the London (Juan Carlos Gonzalez Zamora – Viktor Laznicka)
7. Countering the "best line" (Wei Yi – Deac, Bogdan)
8. Setting up a devastating attack (Rosen – Do)
9. Playing the London in bullet (Rosen – NN)

Part 2: Tactics Explained

1. Didn't see that coming...
2. Most famous London tactic
3. Crazy novelty
4. Simple and venomous Nc3
5. Positional and tactical chess combined

6. Activity over material
7. Identifying targets
8. Knockout punch
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10. Capitalizing on the awkward queen
11. Punishing greed
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13. Double attack (piece targets)
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15. Attacking the uncastled king
16. Leveraging the open h-file
17. Most common London trap
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19. Restricting the opponent
20. Pin and win
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27. Taking down the King's Indian setup
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30. Concrete calculation
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32. Capitalizing on an awkward setup
33. Aronian's awesome attack
34. Super GM destroys a master with creative play
35. Positional bind leads to tactical massacre
36. Beating an IM in 9 moves with epic queen sac
37. Look for the counterattack!
38. Black should have castled sooner
39. Unstoppable threat
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41. Don't mess with Naroditsky
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- 46. Super GM Gelfand falls into deep prep
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- 48. Grandmaster makes quick work of amateur
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- 50. Grandmaster brutally attacks 1800

Conclusion

The London System: General Concepts

1. The London System is a chess opening for White which occurs after the moves **1.d4** & **2.Bf4** or **2.Nf3** and **3.Bf4**. You can see the diagram below. The London System is so-called because of its use in a London tournament in 1922.



2. Unlike the Colle System, White develops his dark-squared bishop outside the pawn chain. White's next few moves depend on the setup that Black chooses. Usually, White plays **1.d4**, **2.Bf4** and either **3.e3** or **3.Nf3**. White ends up with a strong, supported pawn on d4, without blocking in the dark-squared bishop. This gives him harmonious development and no real targets for Black to aim at.
3. For many years, a very classical way to play the London System was with slow thematic moves like Nf3, e3, c3, h3, Bd3 or Be2 and 0-0. However, the **2.Bf4** move order allows options such as **3.Nc3** against Black's King's Indian setup, going for immediate center expansion with e2-e4. That's why, according to theory, **2.Bf4** is considered to be more accurate than **2.Nf3**; it leaves White with more options against Black's various setups.
4. One of the most attractive attributes of the London System is that you can play it against *nearly any of Black's setups* – massively reducing the amount of time spent studying openings.
5. This does mean, however, that it's even more important to be familiar with the strategic and tactical motifs. You still need to be familiar with some theory though!
6. Although the London System has a "safe and solid" reputation, you need to be careful with move order. White should avoid playing the first few moves on autopilot. If you play the London System regularly, opponents may recognize if you play an inaccurate move-order to reach the London setup.
7. Black has to be careful when facing the London System. Thanks to the latest theoretical developments, the London System definitely carries a lot of bite in many lines. It is a common for club players to try and develop naturally but end up falling victim to a devastating attack or finding themselves in a strategically lost position.

Part 1: Lessons in the London System

1. In the lines where Black plays with ...d5 and ...Bd6, opting to neutralize White's dark-squared bishop on f4, White is usually well-advised to drop the bishop back to g3. If Black wants to exchange the dark-squared bishops now, White can take back with his h-pawn. This structure often allows White to create threats along the half-open h-file – especially when Black has already castled kingside.
2. In the London System, White usually develops his light-squared bishop to d3 or e2. However, there are some new ideas for White involving developing the bishop to b5. The idea of Bb5 is to exchange the bishop for Black's knight on c6, doubling Black's pawns on the c-file. Next, White attacks these pawns with the maneuver Qd1-a4-e3 and Nd2-b3 (see the diagram below).



3. In the positions where Black builds up with an early ...g6 and ...d5, White can go for a quick kingside attack with h2-h4-h5. These lines show the London System can be a strong attacking opening.
4. A common middlegame idea for White is to open the center with e3-e4. Once the center opens up, White is often better prepared for the resulting tactics. Remember: Even in a seemingly calm opening like the London System, you need to seize the initiative early on.
5. Where Black plays ...d5, the e5 square becomes an important outpost for White. White often gets a pawn on e5 after exchanging on e5. This pawn often gives White good attacking chances on the kingside.
6. Some of the best lines for Black against the London System involve an early ...Qb6, attacking b2.
7. IM Eric Rosen makes some suggestions on how to study openings efficiently. First of all, study openings with the latest databases and search for high level games in the variation you're investigating. Secondly, it is useful to back up your analysis with the help of strong chess engines like Stockfish. Modern engines allow you to find many hidden resources. Thirdly, IM Eric Rosen advises you play out positions against a computer. Play *as Black* to see how an engine plays your position. This is especially useful in positions where you sacrifice material. The engines will show you where your compensation lies!
8. After **1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 c6 3.Nf3 Qb6**, the computer suggests sacrificing the b2 pawn with **4.Nbd2** as a good line. If you're unsure about the compensation White has, play the move **4...Qxb2** and try to defend the position with Black against a strong engine!
9. Another good idea to check the games of the world's leading experts in this opening. You can watch how they deal with different setups and become familiar with the key concepts, latest trends and opening novelties. For the London System, you can look at the games of GM Boris Grachev, GM Gata Kamsky and Super GMs Magnus Carlsen, Levon Aronian and Wei Yi.
10. Follow your favorite players and try to understand different variations by analyzing their games. Figure out the key motifs, moments and ideas by looking at how they approach each line

11. To illustrate this point, IM Eric Rosen takes a look at one of the top recommendations for Black. This line is the reason the London System was once considered to be toothless and even dangerous for White if he does not play accurately. The variation starts after the moves **1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Qb6 6.Qb3 c4 7.Qc2 Bf5!** (see diagram).

It looks like Black has blundered his bishop, but White can't take as **8.Qxf5 Qxb2** and White loses the rook on a1. If White retreats his queen with **8.Qc1**, Black is already better. He can go for the bishop pair with **8...Nh5** and quickly open the position with **...f6** and **...e5**.



12. With this in mind, you can search for improvements for White with the help of databases and engines. White can avoid this position with the right move order. After **1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 c5 4.c3** (White can also go for 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.Nbd2 here) **Nc6**, the best move for White is not the logical **5.Nf3**, but the move **5.Nd2!** This prevents White's rook from being trapped in certain lines. If Black continues with **5...Qb6**, White can go for the same line and play **6.Qb3 c4 7.Qc2**. Now the big difference is that **7...Bf5** is not playable as it can simply be captured by the queen. **7...Qxb2** is not a threat any more thanks to **8.Rb1**.



Part 2: Tactics Explained

1. Analyzing the London System can be a good way to learn tactics. There are many different structures which can arise. White often relies on subtle tactical ideas to achieve his aims.
2. It is essential to understand the key concepts and recurring themes of your opening first. It doesn't make sense to learn long theoretical lines by heart if you haven't been introduced to typical recurring patterns like the various kingside attacking chances.
3. **Coordination:** 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 tactical shots that decide games.
4. **Development:** Generally speaking, tactics begin when as many of your pieces as possible are involved in the game. Development is key.
5. **Piece Activity:** The concept of active piece play is very important in the London System. Bring your pieces together so they support each other and work as a unit. This means 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 London System - keeping the pressure up.
6. **Prioritize Piece Activity over Material:** If your pieces are more active than your opponent's, being down materially doesn't matter as much. If their pieces are not working to their full potential then they may as well not be on the board anyway!
7. **Identifying targets in the opponent's position:** A simple tactical concept can help you find more targets in your games is to identify pieces or squares which might be exploitable. This can help you to spot hidden moves.

If White searches for vulnerable targets in Black's position, the unprotected knight on c6 and Black's relatively weak king come to mind. White finds a way to exploit these two weaknesses with the move 1.Nxc4! dxc4 2.Qe4!, attacking the knight on c6 and threatening mate in two.

8. **Loose pieces drop off:** This famous general rule by John Nunn also applies for the London System – even early in the opening. When you're playing chess and your opponent puts a piece on a square where it is not



defended, watch out for potential captures and targets. In many cases, an undefended piece can lead to a simple tactic.

Here we see a typical tactical idea from the London System. Black's bishop is unprotected on d6. White exploits this with **1.Nxf7!**

9. **Hard-to-see-moves:** In chess, some moves are harder to spot than others - for humans at least! That's why it's key to think outside the box and look for moves you wouldn't normally consider. Sometimes you just need to look one move deeper. Try to make to tactics work based on calculation. Be hesitant to reject a line, especially a forcing line. Make sure you have looked deep enough.



The diagram above shows an interesting middlegame position which arose from the London System. White has a decisive blow at his disposal: **1.Bg6!** is winning here. However, this move is easy to overlook as it allows a pawn to capture a minor piece. This is why many players would not even consider it.

10. **Kingside Attack:** White often gets a lot of pressure on the kingside and many pieces are directed against Black's king. A well-defended pawn on e5 – which often appears after an exchange of knights on this square - can become a strong attacking unit. The e5 pawn kicks away Black's key defending piece – the knight on f6.

11. **Be aware of the whole board:** Don't miss ideas by being too focused on one side of the board. The London System is known for the many kingside attacks White gets. However, sometimes the action takes place on the queenside, even if the focus lies on the kingside.

Many players enjoy the London System for the various kingside attacking chances it offers. Here, Black just played the move **1...Nh5**, trying to eliminate the f4 bishop. White, however, has an easy way to exploit the position of the unprotected knight on h5 if he also considers Black's position on the queenside. After **2.Bxb8 Rxb8 3.Qe5!** White wins a piece. The rook on b8 and the knight on h5 are both attacked. Don't just focus on the kingside - stay flexible in thinking.

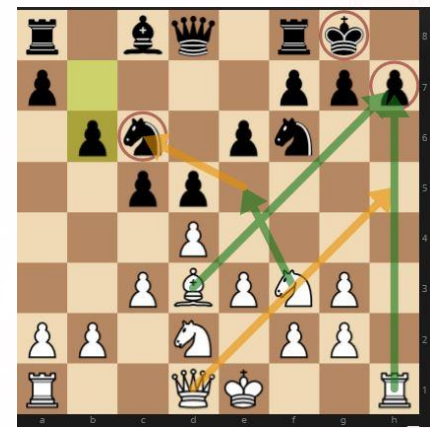


12. **Poisoned b-pawn:** In the London System, many tactics are connected with Black taking on b2 after he played the move ...Qb6. White can often sacrifice the

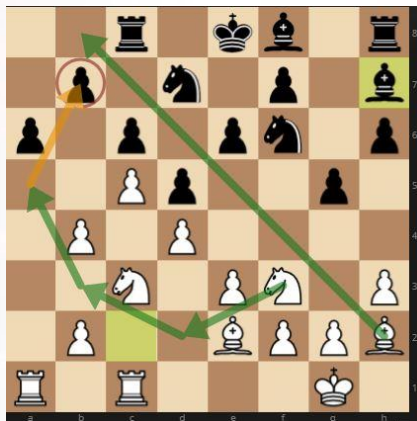
b-pawn by playing the moves Na3 or Nc3 with the idea of playing Nb5 and, later, trapping the queen.

13. **Half-open h-file:** The half-open h-file can be a powerful attacking tool for White. White should sometimes delay castling to keep this option available (with a rook on the h-file). In many variations, Black plays ...Bd6 and, after White drops his bishop back to g3, takes on g3. The h-file opens and gives White attacking opportunities.

White has attacking chances along the half-open h-file. Surprisingly, there is an immediate win for White here. White can play **1.Ne5! Bb7** (1...Nxe5 dxe5 loses for Black as the knight on f6, which has to protect the h7-square, is attacked.) **2.Bxh7+! Nxh7 3.Qh5!+-**



14. **Queenside play:** In the London System, games are not only decided on the kingside. If Black goes for a Slav structure with the moves ...d5, ...c6 and ...Bf5, for example, the



strongest plan for White is to play with c4 and Qb3, attacking the pawn of b7 and putting pressure on d5. A sample line goes **1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Nf6 3.e3 c6 4.c4 Bf5 5.Nc3 Nbd7 6.Qb3**. Black defends with **6...Qb6** but the exchange of queens (**7.c5 Qxb3 8.axb3**) is advantageous for White. White's plan of b4-b5 is very strong and, even if Black stops this, the maneuver Nd2-Nb3-Na5 gives White the advantage. In combination with the powerful bishop on f4, controlling the h2-b8-diagonal, this is a key motif in these structures.

The position above is typical for the London System. Black has a hard time defending the pawn on b7.

Overlap between positional chess and tactics: Often, you need to use tactics to make your strategic ideas work. To illustrate this point, let's take a look at an example:

White wants to avoid the unfavorable piece trade on f4. However, it is not easy to find a safe square for the bishop. So White uses tactics to get this done with **1.Bc7!** The idea is that the bishop can't be attacked on c7 immediately as **1...Rc8 2.Rxa7! Rxc7 3.Ra8+!** Therefore, Black has to play **1...a6** first. Now, however, White can play the move **2.h3** and drop his bishop back to the safe h2-square if necessary. Bishop to c7 is a positional move avoiding a trade which benefits Black... but White uses tactics to make it work.



15. **Move order tricks:** Be aware of move order tricks and early opening traps in the London System. Although the London System is a safe and solid opening, you can't switch off.

For example, there is an early opening trap after the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 c5 3.Nf3? (see the diagram below). Black has the strong 3...e5! After 4.Bxe5 Qa5+!, Black wins a piece.

