

GARRY'S CHESS FUNDAMENTALS

CHAPTER REVIEW

"If you don't feel that this game can unleash your creative potential, then you're already on the losing side."

—Garry Kasparov

SUBCHAPTERS

- Strategy and Tactics
- Your Personal Playing Style
- Pattern Recognition
- Even in Chess, Timing Is Everything
- Sensing the Important Moments
- A Game With Two Players
- Make Your Opponent Squirm
- Solve Using a Board

A key component to Garry's mastery of chess is the way he views each game as an exercise in psychology. Garry has developed a keen sense of observation to assess his strengths, and design a game that best benefits his instincts while exploiting his opponent's psychological deficiencies. Chess has no universal strategy. Tactics abound, with opportunities and pitfalls for both players. A sharp position is one with a narrow path forward, often with just one move on each turn to avoid disaster. In contrast, quiet positions might have three or four reasonable moves and strategic maneuvering is paramount. Like everything in life, the game is about making decisions.

While you may have limited knowledge of your opponent, you have unrestricted access to yourself and your own style of play. To begin, examine your instincts, and discover what type of game best suits your creativity. Practice pattern recognition by repeatedly reviewing common themes. Strong players use their experience to inform their tactical and strategic decisions. You might see what looks like a strong and natural continuation, but remember that a formidable opponent will expect these logical moves. Look for opportunities to embrace creativity and surprise, as an uncomfortable opponent is more likely to make mistakes. Garry recommends preparing regularly with a physical chessboard if you're going to be playing in tournaments, even if you do most of your study and practice on a computer. Otherwise, your ability to visualize "OTB" (over the board) can be negatively affected.

Don't forget that chess is a two-player game. Your strategy may be undone by your opponent if you don't disguise your true intentions and create multiple threats. Even if your opponent reacts to your main threat, it may give you the opportunity to make progress elsewhere.

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GARRY'S DOUBLE CHECK

- “I mean no insult by calling great positional players ‘inaction heroes,’ because winning is what matters and there are no extra points for swashbuckling style. World Champions like Karpov, and especially the 9th World Champion, Tigran Petrosian, were brilliant at playing quietly until their opponents slipped up.”
- “Playing a game of chess is like trying to paint a masterpiece while someone is tugging at your sleeve. It’s a sport at the end of the day, a competition. You can’t expect everything to go just as you like.”

LEARN MORE

- One of Garry’s first mentors was Mikhail Botvinnik, a Soviet and Russian International Grandmaster and World Chess Champion for three different periods from 1948 to 1963. Working as an electrical engineer and computer scientist at the same time, he was one of the very few professional chess players who achieved distinction in another career while playing top-class competitive chess. Known as the “Patriarch of Soviet chess,” Botvinnik believed the more patterns you learn, the more tools you have at your disposal as a competitive player. Garry applied Botvinnik’s disciplined research and rigorous training methods throughout his career. Read up on some of Botvinnik’s famous games and play along [here](#).
- Boris Spassky, the tenth World Chess Champion, held the title from 1969 to 1972. Garry says Boris theorized that the strength of a player could be determined by his/her ability to identify the climax of a game. This means sensing the most critical moments of the game, when an opportunity or threat is hidden and the position deserves extra time and concentration.
- Garry lost the 2000 World Championship match in London to Russia’s Vladimir Kramnik with a score of 6.5–8.5, with two losses and thirteen draws.

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- Have you ever wondered why we time chess matches? In the early days of the game, chess could be a game of physical endurance with some players making their moves quickly while others pondered for hours. Chess clocks became part of the game in the 19th century, although primarily used in tournament chess, to ease the strain on players and bring tournaments to an exciting close. Read about the first chess clock and other important moments in chess history [here](#).
- For a real test of your wits, and your hand speed, try blitz chess. In blitz, or speed chess, the players start with as little as five minutes on the clock for the entire game. Learn more about speed chess [here](#). Bullet Chess is even quicker at just 1 minute per game. To learn more about bullet chess, read Hikaru Nakamura and Bruce Harper's [*Bullet Chess: One Minute to Mate*](#).
- German mathematician, philosopher, and 27-year World Chess Champion Emanuel Lasker believed every match was a psychological struggle. Lasker's insight enabled him to understand his opponent's weaknesses even better than they did, and to shift the game into positions where those weaknesses would be exposed. Garry says the goal of this approach is to strategically make your opponent increasingly uncomfortable by playing to their "psychological deficiencies." Learn more about Lasker, the [great German cerebral warrior](#).

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