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U14/U18 training day

Levels

- ▶ 1 Minor
- ▶ 2 Intermediate
- ▶ 3 Major
- ▶ 4 Open

Khmelnitsky

- ▶ - skills develop rather evenly from 830 to 900 player (very same shape), with natural ability for calculations and no, to very little, knowledge about opening phase. Of course, standard endgame positions are likely to be unknown.
- ▶ - 1000 player gets some clues at tactics and related stuff (attack, defence, recognizing threats)
- ▶ - 1200 player has developed clues in strategy and standard endgame positions
- ▶ - 1400 player is a better attacker and went on developing knowledge about standard endgame positions
- ▶ - 1600 player developed tactical skills including sacrifice
- ▶ - 1800 player went on with tactics and better endgame knowledge
- ▶ - 2000 player is a better defender and attacker
- ▶ - 2200 player shows evidence of a breakthrough with strategy, plus reinforced endgame mastery
- ▶ - 2400 player is very balanced, with strategy, opening and middlegame as most enhanced areas. Beware the strong defender and counterattacker!

Chess ideas

- ▶ 1) *I've heard of it!*
- ▶ 2) *I know what it is and could explain it to someone else.*
- ▶ 3) *I understand enough to make use of the idea in a game.*
- ▶ 4) *I never fail to notice the feature in a game, and rarely (if ever) make a bad choice of plan based on it.*
 - ▶ I suspect we're all OK at (1) but aren't all at (4) yet. (3) is a fair goal.

Level 1 Minor

- ▶ The games of Minor players are often marred by tactical oversights, and the games are often decided that way. Is there any point in commenting further? Yes, because of two very important reasons:
 - ▶ firstly, Alexander's observation that blunders only occur in losing positions (not always, but more than a grain of truth), and
 - ▶ secondly, that there are other things about their games which could be improved by greater understanding, even while blunders may appear.
- ▶ In the opening, development is often started well and general rules are followed (e.g. move each piece once) but is at times too straightforward and is not always complete.
- ▶ After this the game may appear episodic, with not all the pieces being used to effect.
- ▶ In the endgame there may be some caution about using the King and theory is often not properly understood, but can win and advance pawns properly.



Targets for Level 1

- ▶ You should know and follow the basic opening 'rules'. You should have a basic opening repertoire which consists of a mainstream White opening system, a sound defence to 1.e4 and a sound defence to 1.d4
- ▶ You should know all the basic tactical patterns (do you?) and be able to spot them and work out simple forcing sequences in 2-move puzzles. You should be working on good thinking habits to avoid blunders.
- ▶ You should know the basic positional elements and have a good understanding of development, attacking and defending, and how to play when winning and losing.
- ▶ You should be able to evaluate and get the right result in most simple K+P endgames. You understand the need to play actively, especially with K and R.



Resources for Level 1

- ▶ Opening: [secret opening webpage](#)
- ▶ Tactics: [Lichess puzzles](#), [Gambit Instructive Chess Puzzles](#)
- ▶ Strategy: [positional elements webpage](#), [Chernev Logical Chess](#), [Dunnington Can you be a positional chess genius? 5-point problems](#),
- ▶ Endgame: [Littlewood's ABC](#), [Icelandic Endgame Challenge BRONZE](#)
- ▶ Other: [Webb Chess for Tigers](#)



Level 2 Intermediate

- ▶ Intermediate players are usually pretty efficient - solid, get their pieces out properly, play sensibly against odd moves and have mastered the King's-side hack.
- ▶ There is a tendency to adopt fortress-like defensive blockades in the middle-game, and may overlook unobvious moves, or tactics in quiet positions.
- ▶ They know basic book wins in the endgame but may only defend rather than seeking counterplay.



Targets for Level 2

- ▶ You should know and follow the basic opening rules and understand how and when they are revealed in your chosen opening systems. Your opening repertoire should include replies for when Black dodges your main White opening (semi-open or Indian defences) and some plans for meeting unusual openings.
- ▶ You should know all the basic and more unusual tactical patterns and be able to spot them and work out forcing sequences in 2-3-move puzzles. You should have some idea about what clues there are in a position and have strategies for finding solutions.
- ▶ You should be able to make a good positional assessment of a position and make a plan based on it.
- ▶ You should be able to evaluate and get the right result in most simple endgames. You understand the importance of weak pawns and can plan to take advantage of them.



Resources for Level 2

- ▶ Opening:
- ▶ Tactics: Lichess puzzles, *Gambit Instructive Chess Puzzles*
- ▶ Strategy: Dunnington *Can you be a positional chess genius?* 10-point problems, Chernev's *Most Instructive Games*
- ▶ Endgame: Littlewood's *ABC*, Icelandic *Endgame Challenge BRONZE/SILVER*, Giddins *Greatest Endgames*
- ▶ Other: *Gambit Mammoth Book of Chess Games*



Level 3 Major

- ▶ *You should have a more sophisticated sense of the opening rules and their exceptions. Your opening knowledge should have some depth to it now and perhaps also some stylistic consistency e.g. playing several systems with f3.*
- ▶ *You should know all the tactical patterns and be able to spot them and work out mixed, complicated and unusual forcing sequences in 2-3-move puzzles. You should have a good about what clues there are in a position and have more strategies for finding solutions.*
- ▶ *You should be able to identify the key features of a position and make an accurate evaluation of it. You should be able to make and carry out a simple plan.*
- ▶ *You can play effectively in winning or better endgames with several pawns on the board. You know how to play for a draw.*



Targets for Level 3

- ▶ Major players usually have a well-worked-out opening repertoire and can set their opponents problems in each phase of the game. Even 200-grade players cannot dismiss the better Major contenders as easy prey.
- ▶ There are standard plans and "clockwork" attacks which the Major player understands and plays well. Where a solid formation is adopted there is usually also a view to some flexibility and keeping the pieces at least potentially active.
- ▶ They will seek counterplay and know how to limit the play of their opponents.
- ▶ They usually notice all the relevant features of the position even if they choose the wrong move/plan.



Resources for Level 3

- ▶ Opening: Chessable basic repertoires, *Everyman Starting Out...* series
- ▶ Tactics: Lichess puzzles, *Gambit Instructive Chess Puzzles*
- ▶ Strategy: Dunnington *Can you be a positional chess genius?* 15-point problems, Botvinnik's games
- ▶ Endgame: Littlewood's ABC, Icelandic Endgame Challenge SILVER
- ▶ Other: Nunn *Secrets of Practical Chess*, *Khmelnitsky Chess Exam and Training Guide*



Level 4 Open

- ▶ The Open player is an alert player of openings - they will often know some of the theory outside their own repertoire, and play their own lines with some depth - in fact, they play any sort of position pretty well.
- ▶ They are beginning to master the art of analysis, being able to sustain assessment of a main line with variations throughout a tactical game, and in complex positions can isolate a theme and crystallise it. They defend much better than weaker players and swindle well.
- ▶ In the endgame they do know a bit of theory, and can calculate well enough to improvise a strategy for unknown positions. How often I have embarked optimistically on a slightly worse endgame against county-strength players, only to be ground down without mercy.
- ▶ I often feel there are three games to be played at this level before you can secure the whole or half- point: once in the opening, middle and endgame.
- ▶ Obviously there are still things that separate the lower from the higher (approaching 2200) boards of open tournaments: things like judging positions on their merits rather than by analogy, and the coordination of their pieces. And of course, all the common threads (depth of analysis, thinking for the opponent, knowledge of theory) can all be expected to be stronger in the better player.



Targets for Level 4 Open

- ▶ You should have a broad understanding of a range of different opening systems and their historical development e.g. from open games, to closed games and half-open defences, to Indian defences and hypermodern systems. Your opening repertoire could now develop some alternatives for days when you want a surprise or a change.
- ▶ You should know all the tactical patterns and be able to spot them and work out mixed, complicated and unusual forcing sequences in 3-4-move puzzles.
- ▶ You should be able to identify the key features of a position and make an accurate evaluation of it. You should be able to make and carry out a series of plans in a game and adjust your manoeuvres according to resistance.
- ▶ You can keep control in winning or better endgames with several pawns on the board. You know how to play for a draw with and without counterplay.



Resources for Level 4

- ▶ Opening: *Play the...* series (Everyman), *Chessable Lifetime Repertoires*
- ▶ Tactics: Lichess puzzles, *Gambit Instructive Chess Puzzles*
- ▶ Strategy: Gelfand *Decision-making*
- ▶ Endgame: Littlewood's ABC, Icelandic Endgame Challenge SILVER/GOLD, *Carlsen's Endgame Technique*
- ▶ Other: Nunn *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, Aagaard *Grandmaster Preparation*

