

International Chess School “Main Module” Program

First of all, the Main Module is divided in 2 parts:

Months 1-9 = positional understanding; without this, calculation is fruitless

Month 10-13 = calculation and analysis; without which real progress is impossible.

Month	Subject
1	<i>Think Like a Strong Player</i>
2	<i>Watch the 2 Centers</i>
3 - 4	<i>Master Piece Play</i>
5 – 6	<i>Master Pawn Play</i>
7 – 8	<i>Pawn Structures Explained</i>
9	<i>Advanced Fighting Strategies</i>
10 – 13	<i>The Art of a Master: Analysis</i>

Month 1 = “Think Like a Strong Player”

From the very first month, we present to you the correct way of thinking in chess. You will learn about the *TO DO* list, *consequences* of moves, *recognizing real threats*, and what you have to do after your opponent’s moves.

The correct thinking method you are learning now is of utmost importance in improving your chess. Throughout the entire 13 month course, we make use of this way of thinking when annotating games and giving explanations. Consequently you too will start to think like a strong player.

You will learn how to evaluate a position correctly when material is the same and how to evaluate positions with material imbalances.

Making decisions in chess is a simple yet practical guide for choosing the best moves. This lesson already tells you what you should look for in every position → *the plan of play*.

Before starting our course, you can go through a test that is meant to measure players’ strength up to 2300 rating. The test is extremely hard and very few students have been successful in more than 50% of the examples. That should not discourage students as they already know that their chess is not yet perfect. The idea is to make a comparison between their chess understanding upon starting and the final tests.

Tactics: The first lesson of tactics will present important initial instruction that will serve as a basis for a player’s entire career including important elements such as board visualization and the forms of tactical interactions between pieces.

Month 2 = “The 2 centers”

In this month we study the 2 “centers” in chess: the real center and the central figure in chess, the king.

You will learn to correctly evaluate the king’s safety, one of the most important criteria of general positional assessment. We present the pluses and minuses of all the possible pawn structures in front of the king so you’ll know where and how to attack or if the attack has any chance of success.

You will learn to evaluate the role of pieces that attack and defend: correct placements, defects that can be exploited, direct or tricky routes to bring pieces into attack or defense.

The central pawn structure is most important when deciding on a plan of play. We present the 5 types of the center with the specific middlegame strategy for each and for both players. The large number of examples will help you to spot similarities and main strategies of positions characterized by the same kind of center.

Tactics: A good player must see the board, pieces and correct moves with his mind’s eyes so we start board visualization training.

Months 3 – 4 = “Master Piece Play”

You will learn specific strategies for each piece: where to place them, how to increase their qualitative value, how to use them in attack or defense. An exhaustive set of concrete and practical instructions for each chess piece will show you how to fight for an advantage.

Here we will also study how to obtain and how to exploit a lead in development, local force superiority, better piece collaboration, and an opponent’s piece out of play.

You will learn another way to evaluate a position by making a comparison between the qualitative values of the pieces.

During Month 4, we offer a large set of problems chosen for each strategy studied during Month 3. Your personal work finding correct answers together with our instructive solutions will consolidate the information you have learned and improve your technique.

Tactics: calculation is a tool that a chess player uses on almost every move to reach his goals in a given position. You will learn how to calculate variations in complicated positions and how to improve your “ability to calculate” (Month 3).

Tactics: In Month 4 we investigate the sources of committing bad moves (mistakes) and we give instructions on how to eliminate them from your play.

Months 5 – 6 = “Master Pawn Play”

You will learn to create weak pawns and weak squares in your opponent’s camp and to avoid weaknesses in your own position.

You will learn the importance of the space advantage (the most important advantage in chess): methods to obtain this advantage, how to exploit it, local space advantage and methods to fight against advanced enemy pawns.

You will also learn to recognize an immobile pawn structure and to aim for a dynamic formation.

You will learn how to create and use the power of passed pawns; we will analyze both advantages and drawbacks. The blockade and pawn majorities are also studied.

Month 6 is dedicated to reinforcing the theoretical knowledge you got during Month 5 by means of many exercises. Find the solution to every problem and then compare with our well explained solutions.

Tactics: In Month 5, this section is dedicated to pawn combinations.

Tactics: In Month 6, you will learn how to defend inferior, even desperate, positions. We will present techniques called “active defense”, “defense in the trenches”, “creation of confusion” and “the bluff”.

Months 7 – 8 = “Pawn Structures Explained”

Play in the middlegame is greatly influenced by pawn structure. In these two months we thoroughly study the most frequent pawn formations in chess: isolated pawns, hanging pawns, isolated pawn couple, all pawn phalanxes, static centers, various blocked structures and dynamic structures.

As many positions can be framed by one of these typical pawn structures, you will learn how to play the complex middlegame, from general ideas to small finesses.

Tactics: You will study the tactical collaboration between pieces which will help you to make decisions in complicated positions.

Month 9 = “Advanced Fighting Strategies”

In the last month of the first part of the Main Module, you will learn more about modern dynamic play: the mobility of the pieces, piece dynamics, initiative, and cooperation between pieces and pawns.

An important positional technique is comprehensively explained: prophylaxis. You will learn how to be “bad” to your opponent, anticipating and thwarting his intentions from his small threats to his key plans. In fact, you will make him to lose the game.

Months 10 – 13 = “The Art of a Master: Analysis”

Botvinnik said: “*What does the art of a master consist in? Essentially, it is his capacity of analyzing a position*” and he also said “*who aims to become a remarkable player should perfect the domain of analysis*”.

If Botvinnik did not convince you, maybe the words of one of the strongest players of all times, Kasparov, will have a greater impact upon you: “*I think that (other things being equal) the analytical method of studying chess must give you a colossal advantage over chess pragmatism, and that there can be no certainty in chess without analysis.*”.

After the first 9 months, the students should have gained a good positional understanding. This constitutes the basis for further time and work they will need to allocate to the domain of analysis. Without a certain level of positional understanding, this work would be painful and, at best, worthless.

So, the second part of our course is perhaps the most important stage of preparation for serious improvement. Here we are focusing on developing your analytical skills by having selected hundreds of positions for you to analyze.

It will by no means be easy to work in this second part. However, this work is or will become pleasant and, in the end, you will improve your game tremendously. Of this, the great World Champions assure us.

Every week for 4 months, you will have 2 sets of problems. Every one of the 32 tests consists in:

1. 2 x simple tactical exercises (total: 10 minutes)

These are just to warm up your brain for the rest of the work.

2. 1 x position that requires concrete calculation of variations (total: 20 minutes)

This position requires a lot of calculation. You will have to find all candidate moves, calculate all the variations and come to a conclusion about the best move.

There is a big difference between these problems and commonly seen “combinations” where there is a decisive continuation. Here, the player is supposed to find the best continuations but this is not necessarily “winning”... exactly like the reality of competitive chess.

3. 4 x positions for analysis (total: 90 minutes)

The core of this advanced part of the “Main Module” is the **128 positions for analysis**. They consist in complicated *positional* struggles. First of all you need to do a correct evaluation of the position and, then, of course, you should find the best continuation which improves your position. Some solutions can lead to a win, but more often the battle remains open or, sometimes, you need to find the most practical chance to save the game.

Of course, we will assist you by thoroughly annotating solutions which will make light work of these positions. Moreover, every problem has a neat “hint” that can be used by less advanced players to put them onto the right direction.

Technique of play

Technique of play may seem very easy for some players but the hardest part for others. For example, if you take a book of annotated games you will often find a long series of un-annotated moves even though the author thought he explained everything important to you. Those moves were normal for the author of the book but, in fact, they are not at all clear to you. Therefore, we address this deficit and will provide commentary for “obvious” moves in games where others say “the rest is a matter of technique”.

We wish you Success!