

# The Novice Roadmap



**Welcome!! You're joining a community with nearly 150 years of history; we can proudly boast that during that time we've had some of Australia's best (and worst!) chess players at the club. Joining the MCC as a Novice can be a daunting task, which is we believe we have a special duty of care to those new to the game. This guide lets you know what to expect from chess at the MCC, and provides a roadmap for someone starting out. It also provides a study plan, gives a list of suitable books for novices, has information on coaches, and online resources for the skills you'll need.**

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## **1. About the club**

The Melbourne chess club is a lively place with events on several days per week. The club is run by a committee of volunteers who administrate over the various activities held at the MCC.

A brief overview:

**Monday night: Tournament Night** (Open tournaments for intermediate to advanced players. Tournament games are played once a week on Monday, over 5 – 9 weeks.)

**Tuesday night: End Game Study Group with Chess-Master Bill Jordan.** One of Australia's strongest players takes participants through interesting end game positions. (Intermediate +)

**Wednesday night: Novice Night!** Hosted by a dedicated MCC Novice, Giles Lean, novice night is the best place to start for newcomers. The games are social, friendly and casual, and you're sure to find players around your level. Starts 6.30pm

**Thursday, Friday & Sunday: Closed.** Check our [Opening Hours](#).

**Saturday Afternoon: The Allegro.** One of the MCC's most popular events. Every week 20 – 40 players compete in a social tournament, from roughly 2-6pm.

### **3. When should I come to the club?**

Start with [Novice Night](#) (Wednesday 6 – 10 pm). Meet the friendly group of novices who play and learn together most Wednesdays of the year.

### **4. Required Chess Skills**

Novices should look to acquire the following skills:

#### **a. The Rules of Chess**

Obviously the starting point is to learn how all the pieces move. Special attention should be paid to: "en passant", "short castling", "long castling", "pawn promotion", "illegal moves", "the starting position", "stalemate" and "checkmate". Check out [wikipedia](#) for this.

#### **b. Chess notation**

"Notation" means writing down the moves of a chess game from

beginning to end. This is a skill not required for social games, but it is required to read a chess book, study or play a competitive game. If you want to improve, you'll need to master this skill. It's much easier than it looks, and you don't have to do it perfectly to begin with! Feel free to take a look at [the wikipedia page](#).

Here is an example of a recorded game:

Official Score Sheet		Chess4Life <small>Teaching life skills through chess</small>		13555 Bel-Red Road Suite 200 Bellevue, WA 98005 425-283-0549 www.chess4life.com	
EVENT <i>Demo</i>			DATE <i>6-30-2006</i>		
ROUND	BOARD	SECTION	OPENING <i>Ruy Lopez</i>		
WHITE (name of player) <i>Raphael</i>		BLACK (name of player) <i>Hians 10</i>			
WHITE	BLACK	WHITE	BLACK		
1	<i>e4</i>	<i>e5</i>		26	
2	<i>Nf3</i>	<i>Nc6</i>		27	
3	<i>Bb5</i>	<i>Nf6</i>		28	
4	<i>Nc3</i>	<i>Bc5</i>		29	
5	<i>O-O</i>	<i>d5</i>		30	
6	<i>exd5</i>	<i>Nxd5</i>		31	
7	<i>Nxd5</i>	<i>Qxd5</i>		32	
8	<i>Bxc6+</i>	<i>bxc6</i>		33	
9	<i>c3</i>	<i>Q-O</i>		34	
10	<i>Ng5</i>	<i>e4</i>		35	
11	<i>d4</i> ?	<i>exd3 (cp) !</i>		36	
12	<i>Qf3</i>	<i>d2</i>		37	
13	<i>Qxd5</i>	<i>dxc1=Q</i>		38	
14	<i>Raxc1</i>	<i>cxd5</i>		39	
15	<i>Ka1</i>	<i>Bb7</i>		40	
16	<i>f4</i>	<i>Rfe8</i>		41	
17	<i>Nh3</i>	<i>Rad8</i>		42	
18	<i>g3</i>	<i>Bc3</i>		43	
19	<i>Rcd1</i>	<i>f6</i>		44	
20	<i>Rfd1</i> ??	<i>d4+</i>		45	
21				46	
22				47	
23	<i>O-1</i>			48	
24				49	
25				50	
RESULTS: <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE WON <input type="checkbox"/> DRAW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BLACK WON					
SIGNATURE <i>X</i>			SIGNATURE <i>X</i>		

Whether you're recording a game, or reading a book, or speaking to someone about chess- this is the language you'll eventually use.

### c. General Principles and the Value of the Pieces.

General Principles are the most important thing a new player can learn. When we aren't sure what the best move in a chess position, we used "general principles" to guide us. You can read a great article on general principles [here](#).

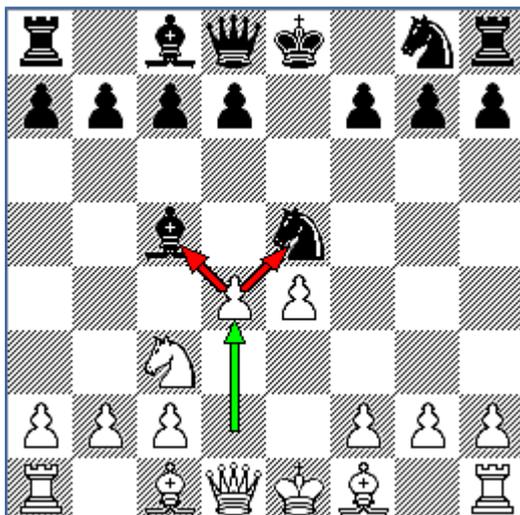
As a general guide, we say the value of the pieces are:

- Queen = 9 points
- Rook = 5 Points

**Bishop = 3 Points**  
**Knight = 3 Points**  
**Pawn = 1 Point**

#### d. Tactics

**"Tactics" are: a short sequence of moves which wins a pawn, piece or checkmates. Examples of tactics are: "The Fork", "The Pin", "The Double-Attack" and so on. Here is an example of "a tactic":**



**In this position, white moved the pawn to d4, "forking" two of black's pieces. Black can only save ONE of the two pieces, so this "tactic" wins a piece for a pawn.**

**You can read a great introduction on tactics [here](#).**

**To improve at seeing tactics we use puzzles. There are books of puzzles for sale at the MCC bookshop, or you can start online at [Chesstempo](#). We estimate you will need to complete the following amount of puzzles to compete on the level listed below:**

**Playing for fun = Simply read the introduction [here](#).**  
**Improving Novice = 100+ practice problems**  
**Saturday Allegro Player = 500-1000+ practice problems**  
**Tournament Player = 1250+ practice problems**  
**Advanced Player = 2500+ practice problems**  
**Expert Player = 7500+ practice problems**  
**Master Player = 10,000+ practice problems**

**Note that puzzles alone won't make you a great player. The numbers above relate to competency in (only) the area of tactics.**

#### e. The Opening

**"The Opening" refers to the start of the game when we bring out our pieces and castle. An important step is to learn "opening principles". Improving players will benefit from reading [this summary](#). One bad habit many new players fall into is *memorising* openings. Chess is a game of ideas not of memory. To start studying the game**

correctly, ask for a recommendation of a book from our bookshop.

#### **f. The Middle Game**

"The Middle Game" refers to the part of the game after we have developed our pieces and the opening phase has finished. Different "principles" apply during the middle game. Once players are confident they have understood opening principles they should read "logical chess move by move" (Irving Chernev) and "Chess Made Easy" by acclaimed Australian Author Cecil Purdy.

#### **g. The End Game**

"The End Game" refers to a position when most of the major pieces have come off the board and the players are trying to promote a pawn to a Queen . We've compiled some quality YouTube lectures from Masters teaching end games. See the Resources section.

#### **h. Strategy (advanced concept)**

The term "strategy" in chess, relates to long-term planning. Strategy is an advanced concept. We include it in this guide so you can learn important vocabulary.

#### **i. Positional Chess (advanced concept)**

"Positional Chess" focuses on recognising weaknesses in your opponents position and playing against those weaknesses. An example of a "positional weakness" could be: "An isolated pawn", "A Backward Pawn", "A Space Disadvantage", "A Bad Bishop" and so on.

#### **j. Thought Process**

A thought process is a step by step process you go through before making a move. A good thought process will help you pick out key features of the position, identify good moves and plans, and avoid costly blunders. We suggest the following thought process:

**Step 1: Look at your opponent's last move. Ask yourself the following questions:**

- a. What squares or pieces are now attacked?**
- b. If their move attacks something: how many times is it attacked, and how many times is it defended?**
- c. If the attacked piece isn't defended enough times will you:**
  - 1. Move it?**
  - 2. Defend it?**
  - 3. Leave it and counter attack?**

**d. What squares or pieces are *no longer defended* by the piece that moved? Can you make a move that exploits your opponent's move?**

**e. What is your opponent's idea?**

**Has their last move put pressure on a key defender?**

**Threatened to take take over the centre?**

**Step 2: Are there any tactics in the position? Look for pins, forks etc.**

**Step 3: If there are no immediate threats ask yourself which are your worst placed pieces (your pieces that are contributing the least) and think of how you can improve them).**

**Step 4: Come up with a short plan. "Develop your worst piece" is a bit simplistic. If you can develop it with an idea (for example to assist you in controlling the centre) you're likely to find good moves.**

**Step 5: When you have decided on a move. Re-check that it's not a blunder. Make sure you're not moving to a square that's attacked or that you're not leaving something undefended by moving the piece.**

#### **k. Chess Etiquette**

**Most chess etiquette is common sense:**

- **Don't distract your opponent when they are thinking.**
- **Shake hands before and after competitive games.**
- **Offer to discuss the game after if you feel like it and have time.**

**Some less obvious chess etiquette:**

- **If you want to adjust your pieces do so when it's your move.**
- **You can't use any external help when playing a game. This includes discussing your game while it's in progress, or even writing down your own ideas on a piece of paper. Tournament chess is just your mind and the board.**
- **"Touch Move, Touch Take": In competitive chess if you touch a piece you must move it. Likewise if you touch an opponent's piece, if it's possible you must take it. Touch move does not apply if you cannot legally move the piece.**
- **In a competitive game if you knock a piece over when making a move you should adjust the pieces on your time, before pressing the clock to finish your move.**

#### **4. Ready to Improve!?**

##### **a. The Novice Pathway**

**We want our improving players to have a good idea of where they're at and what they can do to improve their chess. The following pathway is designed help you through:**

# NOVICE NIGHT

Start by coming in on Wednesday evenings between 6–10pm. Play social games at an easy pace and get acquainted with the game.

# START THE STUDY PLAN

The more you understand, the more you'll enjoy the game. Consider purchasing a novice book from the bookshop. We recommend you begin with “Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess”.

# THE SATURDAY

# ALLEGRO

Starts at 2pm every Saturday. 7 games, 15 minutes per player.

# STUDY GROUP / COACHING

Now that you're getting into intermediate– advanced territory, you should think about playing open tournaments. Before you do, consider coming to FIDE Master Bill Jordan's study group on Tuesday evening. You can also get yourself a private coach for around \$30 – \$40 an hour.

# OPEN TOURNAMENTS

Time to play a competitive tournament! You'll record your games so you can study them afterwards. Enjoy the thrill, don't be too hard on yourself and keep up the good work!

**Depending on how hard you work, this process should take 3-12 months.**

## **b. Study plan & Resources:**

**Novice books at our bookshop:**

- **Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess Bobby Fischer**
- **Logical Chess move by move Irving Chernev**
- **Chess Made Easy Cecil Purdy**

**Proceed in this order:**

**Step 1 Chess Made Easy.**

**Step 2 Read general principles article [here](#).**

**Step 3 Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess.**

**Step 4 Complete five fifteen tactical puzzles per day [here](#).**

**Step 5 Logical Chess move by move.**

**Step 6 [Watch](#) FM Grant Szuveges 10 minute talks on [YouTube](#).**

**Step 7 Watch the following end game tutorials:**

**[a. The opposition](#)**

**[b. Learn to checkmate with Queen & King vs King](#)**

**[c. Learn to checkmate with Rook & King vs King](#)**

**[d. A "3 vs 3 pawn breakthrough"](#)**

**[e. The outside passed pawn: how to convert with an extra pawn.](#)**

**Step 8 Some YouTube pages you may find useful or interesting:**

**[a. Melbourne Chess Club YouTube Channel.](#)**

**[b. St. Louis Chess Club & Scholastic Centre.](#)**

**[c. Grandmaster Susan Polgar's talks for juniors.](#)**

**[d. Irobichess' youtube page.](#)**

**Step 9 Have a look around for yourself on YouTube or the web.**

**Step 10 Talk to more experienced players at the club.**

**Other resources:**

**[a. YouTube: The Pin](#)**

**[b. YouTube: The Double-Attack](#)**

**[c. YouTube: The Back-Rank Checkmate](#)**

**[d. YouTube: Removing the Defender](#)**

**[e. YouTube: How to write down the moves \(skip to 2.15\)](#)**

## **6. Membership**

**Novice night is free for members and \$5 for non-members.**

**Annual membership at the MCC:**

**Working Adult: \$170**

**Concession Adult: \$120**

**Junior: \$80**

**You can sign up as a member at any time. Please speak to a committee member or email [melbchessclub@gmail.com](mailto:melbchessclub@gmail.com)**  
**Chess Vocabulary**

- **Blitz** = Speed chess, usually with 5 minutes per game.
- **Rapid** = Medium paced chess: each player has 15 – 25 minutes
- **Slow Play** = Tournament chess where players record the moves and play rated games. Usual time controls are 90 minutes per game plus a 30 second 'increment'
- **Increment** = An amount of time that is added on to a players' clock each time he/she makes a move.
- **ACF** = Australian Chess Federation
- **FIDE** = International Chess Body
- **Rating** = A number assigned to a player based on his/her results in tournament play.
- **Swiss** = A Swiss is a type of tournament. In a "Swiss" event, players play opponents based on their results. If you win, you'll play stronger opponents, if you lose, you'll play weaker ones.
- **Titled Player**: A "FIDE", "International", or "Grand" Master.
- **Blunder** – A serious error which loses the game.
- **Forced** = A sequence where a player must make certain moves.
- **"Bad" Bishop** = A Bishop that is wedged behind your own pawns, or a bishop that is on the same colour squares as all your pawns and has little freedom.
- **"Good" Bishop** = A Bishop with good freedom to move, not inhibited by your own pawns.
- **Gambit** = Sacrificing a pawn for 'initiative'
- **Initiative** = "Having the initiative" means you are calling the shots in a position. A player with "the initiative" is usually attacking, making threats which his opponent must concentrate on defending.
- **Kibitzing** = When players are analysing a game, "a kibitzer" is a player who contributes to the discussion (note: this can be welcomed by the players or unwelcome!)
- **Passed Pawn** = A pawn which cannot be opposed by one your opponent's pawns on the way to promoting.
- **Isolated Pawn** = A pawn with no pawns on the files next to it.
- **Backward Pawn** = A pawn that is behind the rest of your pawns, and as a result cannot be protected by other pawns.
- **Patzer** = A poor chess player
- **"Hack-Attack"** = "Hacking" at the castled King position by advancing pawns towards it.
- **Simplifying** = Trading pieces off the board.
- **King-Side** = The half of the board the King starts on.
- **Queen-Side** = The half of the board the Queen starts on.