

Bring out the light pieces

A lesson plan for coaches, teachers and parents. One big idea: bring your knights and bishops into the game early.

Today's two questions

Which of my pieces can join the game?

Who controls the middle?

TIME	ACTIVITY
0–5 min	Warm-up · the whole group
5–12 min	Play ten moves, then ask who is better
12–15 min	A funny warning: the queen out too early
15–22 min	The middle of the board
22–25 min	Three opening rules
25–35 min	The development game · in pairs
35–42 min	Normal games, pause and ask why
42–45 min	Finish: the children explain

Prepare: one board per pair, one demonstration board, paper and pencils for the points. Times are guidelines. Show the moves of the pieces first if the group is new.

1. Warm-up

5 MINUTES · WHOLE GROUP

Ask two or three questions from the first lesson, and let the children answer out loud. Then ask: "**Which pieces are the light pieces?**" The knights and the bishops.

Why the opening matters

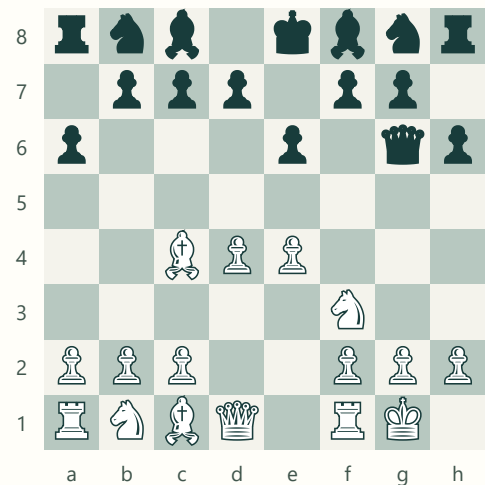
In the first moves, the player who brings more pieces into the game gets more choices and more ways to attack. This lesson makes that idea visible by letting the children **count** it.

2. Play ten moves

7 MINUTES · DEMONSTRATION BOARD

Play these ten moves on the demonstration board. White brings out a knight and a bishop, takes the middle with pawns and castles. Black moves a few pawns and the queen, and leaves the knights and bishops at home.

1. e4 e6 2. Nf3 Qf6 3. Bc4 a6 4. O-O h6 5. d4 Qg6



After ten moves. White: knight f3, bishop c4, castled. Black: queen g6.

Stop the game. Ask:

"Who is better, and how can you tell?"

Count together:

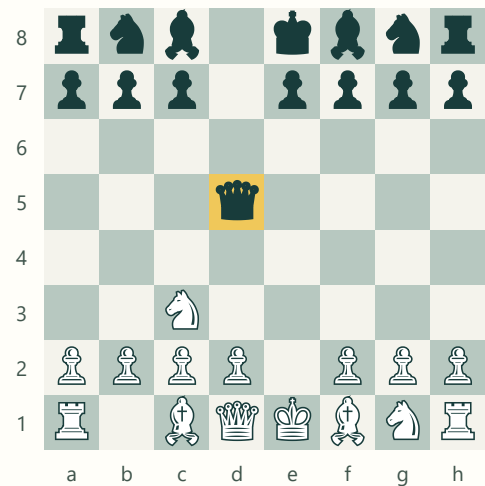
	WHITE	BLACK
Light pieces out	2	0
Light pieces at home	2	4

Answer: White. More pieces in the game means more choices and more ways to attack. This is the secret of the opening.

3. A funny warning

3 MINUTES · DEMONSTRATION BOARD

Show a queen that comes out too early, and let the knights and bishops chase her around the board. Children remember it, and they laugh.



1. e4 d5 2. exd5 Qxd5 3. Nc3: the queen must run.

- 1. Play 1. e4 d5 2. exd5 Qxd5. Black's queen is out already.
- 2. Play 3. Nc3. The knight attacks the queen. Ask: "Where can she go?"
- 3. After 3...Qa5 4. d4, White has developed a piece and taken the middle, while the queen only ran away.

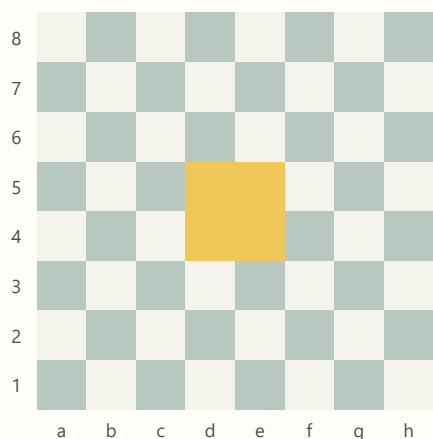
Message: keep the queen at home for now. Each queen move that gets chased costs time.

4. The middle of the board

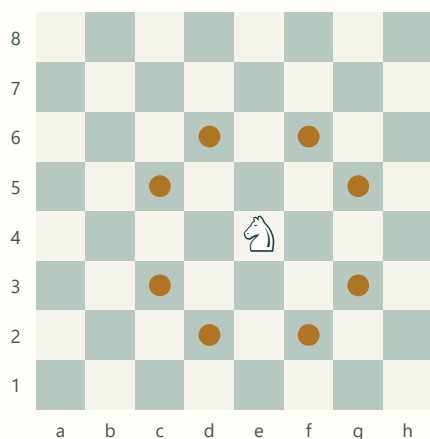
7 MINUTES · DIAGRAMS

The middle is four squares: **d4, e4, d5 and e5**. Colour them yellow on your diagram.

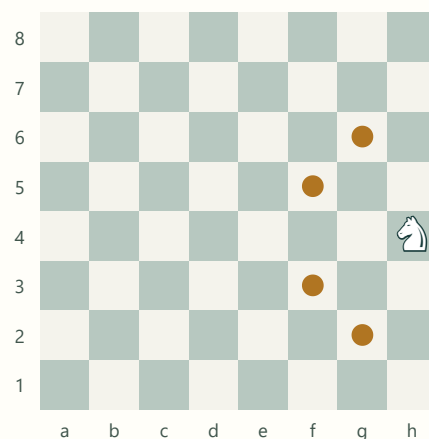
A player **controls** a square by standing on it, or by attacking it so the opponent does not dare to move there.



The middle. d4, e4, d5, e5.



Knight in the middle. Eight possible jumps.



Knight on the edge. Here only four jumps; in a corner just two.

How to see who controls the middle

Go through the four squares one at a time and ask: **"Who stands here, or who attacks it?"** The player who has more of the four squares controls the middle.

5. Three opening rules

3 MINUTES · WRITE THEM ON THE BOARD

1

Bring out knights and bishops first

2

Take the middle with pawns

3

Castle early to keep the king safe

Bonus rule, if you like: do not move the same piece twice in the opening.

6. The development game

10 MINUTES · IN PAIRS

The children play in pairs, but only the **first eight moves for each side**. Then they stop and count points.

POINTS	WHAT
+1	for every knight or bishop that is out
+1	for every pawn on d4, e4, d5 or e5
+2	for castling
-1	for each unnecessary second move with the same piece

The player with the most points **wins the opening**. This gives the children a competition and clear feedback, without any difficult calculation.

Example: the demonstration game. White: two pieces out (2) + pawns on d4 and e4 (2) + castling (2) = **6**. Black: the queen moved twice (-1) = **-1**.

7. Normal games

7 MINUTES · IN PAIRS

Let the children play normal games and think about the three rules. Walk around, pause two or three games, and ask: "**Who is better now, and why?**"

8. Finish

3 MINUTES · WHOLE GROUP

Ask two children to show a position and explain who is better. When children explain it to each other, it sticks.

For the next lesson

Keep one topic for next time: **when to capture a piece, and when not to**. Count how many pieces attack a square and how many defend it.

Checklist for the children

- ☐ Both knights are out
- ☐ Both bishops are out
- ☐ A pawn in the middle
- ☐ I have castled
- ☐ My queen is not out too early

This is our own suggested lesson plan, not an official chess federation course. Diagrams created for this lesson.