My Chess Family

Why the centre matters in chess

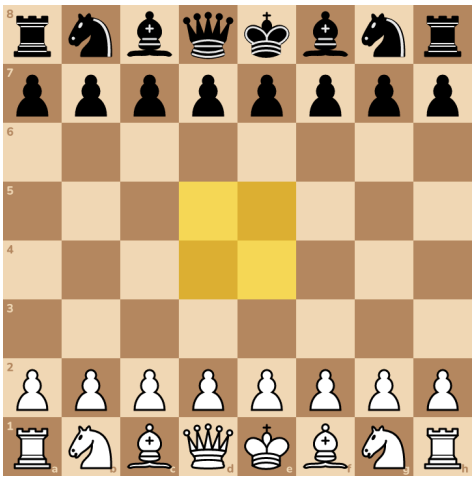
Try each question on a real board, then check the answers at the end of the sheet.

The centre

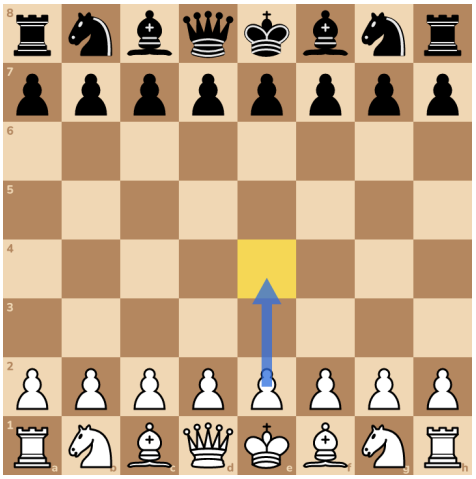
The start of a game is called the opening. A few simple ideas help you start well.



These four squares in the middle are the centre. Pieces in the centre can reach more of the board.



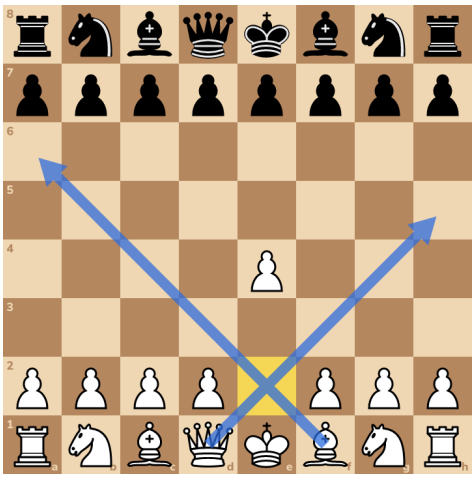
Try it 1. A great first move. Push the pawn in front of your king two squares, into the centre!



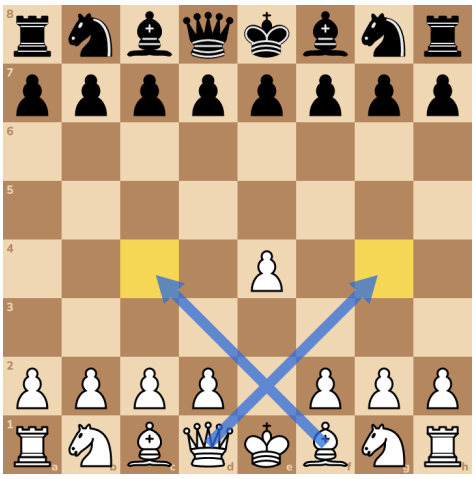
Your pawn on e4 controls d5 and f5. If a black piece lands there, your pawn can take it.



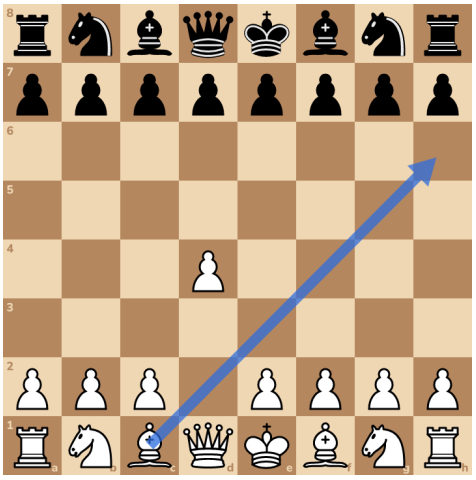
Your pawn stands in the centre. And look, it has opened two paths. Your bishop and your queen can come out now.



The bishop can slide out along one path, and the queen along the other. Before, the pawn on e2 was in the way.



Here's a new position. Pushing the pawn in front of your queen, to d4, is a great first move too. It opens a path for the other bishop.

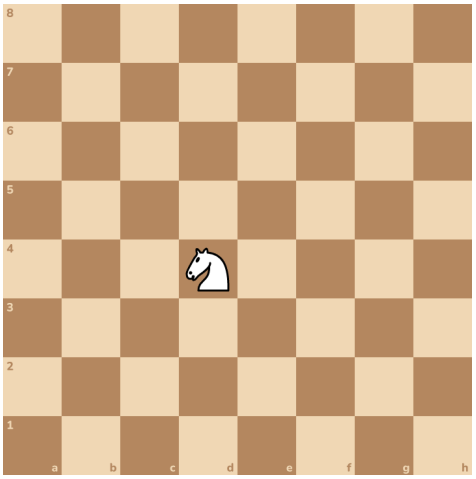


Try it 2. Which two squares does your pawn on d4 control?

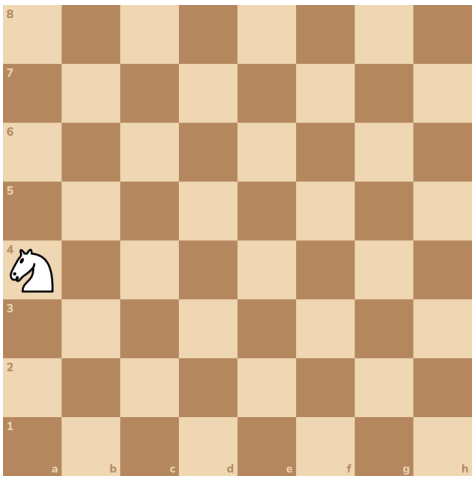
A: c5 and e5 **B: d5 and e5**

C: c4 and e4

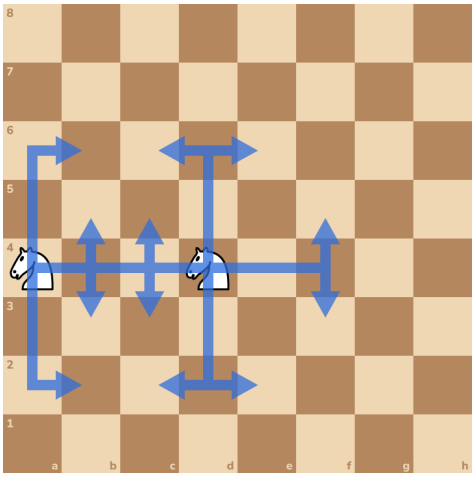
Try it 3. Here's a new position. Point to every square this knight in the centre can jump to.



Try it 4. Now point to every square this knight on the edge can jump to.



Eight squares in the centre, only four on the edge! A knight on the edge can't do much.



Try it 5. Where is a knight strongest?

A: Centre **B: Edge** **C: Corner**

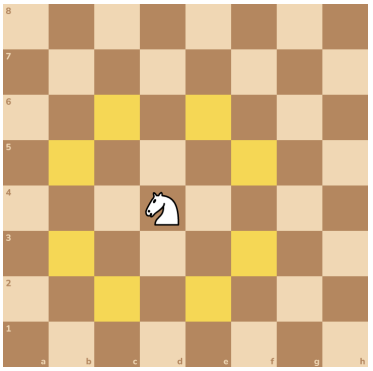
Answers

1. e4

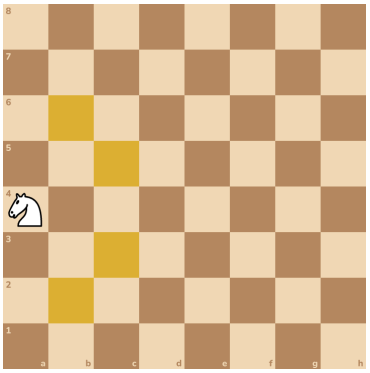


2. A: c5 and e5

3. b5, c6, e6, f5, f3, e2, c2, b3



4. b6, c5, c3, b2



5. A: Centre