

# The First Fifteen Moves

Chess

A checklist for the opening phase, whichever opening you play.

*Independent of the specific opening.*

1

## Moves 1–4: stake the centre

A centre pawn, and develop a knight toward it.

2

## Moves 4–8: minor pieces

Both knights and both bishops to active squares.

3

## Moves 6–10: castle

Earlier if the position is open.

4

## Moves 10–14: connect the rooks

Queen off the back rank, rooks to open or half-open files.

5

## By move 15: form a plan

Based on the pawn structure, not on a general urge to attack.

### SELF-CHECK AT MOVE 15

Every minor piece developed?

King castled?

Rooks connected?

Anything hanging?

If you cannot answer yes to the first three by move fifteen, the opening did not go well, whatever the evaluation says.