

Prophylaxis

Chess

Preventing the opponent's plan before pursuing your own.

The habit that most distinguishes strong players from club players.

1

Ask what they threaten

Immediately, next move.

2

Ask what they want

Their plan over the next five moves, not just the next check.

3

Ask what they would play if it were their turn

This is the key question.

4

Consider preventing it

Compare stopping their plan against advancing your own.

5

Then decide

Sometimes your plan is faster. Sometimes prevention wins the game.

COMMON PROPHYLACTIC MOVES

h3 or a3, stopping a pin

Kh1, stepping off a diagonal in advance

Rb1, anticipating pressure on the file

Named by Nimzowitsch. It is what separates a plan from a fantasy — the opponent also gets to move.