

Gungahlin Junior Chess Club

The Stronger Army Wins

In Chess having the stronger army is usually enough to win. Why? Because if you have stronger pieces than your opponent you are able to control more of the board, making harder for them to find safe squares. Then you can usually use your extra pieces to capture more of your opponents pieces, before finally checkmating the defenceless king.

It is important to realise that having the bigger army isn't the same as having the stronger army. One player could have 2 extra pawns while the other player has an extra Queen. As you will soon find out a Queen is worth a lot more than 2 pawns. So it is important to have an idea of the value of each of your pieces.

The Value of Pieces

Once you start playing lots of chess you will soon realise that some pieces can do more than other pieces. The mighty Queen is able to move to most parts of the board very quickly, while the lowly pawn plods along, moving forward one or 2 squares at a time. Based on what each piece can do, we can give each piece a value.

Starting from the smallest first we get

- ♙ = 1 point
- ♘ = 3 points
- ♗ = 3 points
- ♖ = 5 points
- ♕ = 9 points

Notice that the King isn't included in the list. This is because the King can never be captured, only checkmated, so we can never trade it for any other piece.

So when we start the game the value of our army is 39 points. As the game progresses we sometimes need to decide whether it is a good idea to trade one of our pieces for an opponents. Knowing what each piece is worth helps us work out whether it is a good trade or a bad trade.

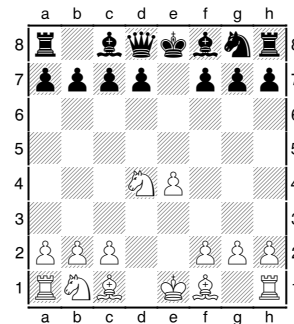
Good Trades

The best sort of trade is when we capture an opponents piece and they cannot capture back. When we do this we reduce the size of our opponents army without any risk to ourselves. Here is a simple example.

1.d4 e5 2.dxe5

Here we capture the Black pawn on e5 and no Black piece or pawn can take back.

Sometimes when we capture a piece our opponent can take back. In this case it is better to take a stronger piece with a weaker piece. For example **1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.Qxd4 Nc6 4.Nf3 Nxd4 5.Nxd4**



Even though each side has made 2 captures, Black has captured a stronger piece, the Queen, with a weaker piece, the Knight. So Black has reduced Whites army by 10 points (a pawn and a queen), while White has only captured 4 points (a knight and a pawn). Between two good players, Black has enough extra force to win the game.

Even Trades

Even Trades are the most common kind of captures in chess. Normally an even trade is when you capture a piece of the same type, and then you opponent takes the capturing piece. Queens taking Queens, or Pawns taking Pawns are usually even trades. Even though Bishop and Knights are different pieces, they can be traded for each other, as they are worth the same. Eg **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6** Here the strength of the armies are still the same.

Bad Trades

A Bad Trade is when you give away a stronger piece for a weaker piece. Sometimes it is just leaving a piece where it can be taken for free or by a weaker piece. Sometimes it is capturing a weaker piece that is defended. **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Nxe5 dxe5** is an example of a bad trade. While you have taken a pawn, you have given away a Knight.

To become a winning chess player you need to avoid bad trades, and lookout for good ones!