

## Italian Game



First developed in the 1600s and perhaps the oldest of chess openings, the Italian Game is reached by the moves 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4. It remained quite popular through the 19th century, but today has been supplanted by the Ruy Lopez as White's favorite choice on the third move. Bc4 eyes Black's potentially weak f7 pawn, but improved defensive technique has shown this to be less dangerous to Black than Bb5. Still, the Italian Game often leads to aggressive, open positions which can be fun to play. This opening is still seen at all levels - and is quite popular among club players.

Popular variations in the Italian Game include the Giuoco Piano, the Two Knights Defense and the Hungarian Defense.

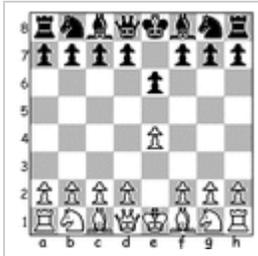
## Sicilian Defense



The Sicilian Defense (1. e4 c5) is currently Black's most popular response to e4, especially at the highest levels of chess. By playing c5, Black immediately fights for the center and attacks d4, but avoids the symmetry of e5. The Sicilian Defense typically leads to a complex and dangerous struggle where both sides can play for a win.

There are many distinct variations in the Sicilian Defense, each of which lead to different types of positions; some of the most popular include the Closed Sicilian, the Classical Sicilian, the Dragon Variation and the Najdorf Variation.

## French Defense



The French Defense (1. e4 e6) concedes central space to White and limits the scope of his king's bishop, but prevents tactics against f7 while allowing Black to have activity on the queenside and counterplay in the center.

After the most typical line of 2. d4 d5, White's e-pawn is immediately pressured, and White must decide how to deal with this - leading to several popular variations. Some of the most common include the Exchange Variation, the Advance Variation, the Tarrasch Variation, the Winawer Variation and the Classical Variation.

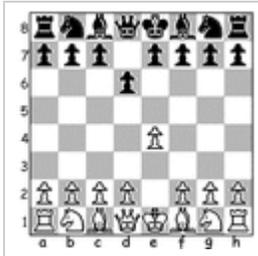
## Caro-Kann Defense



Like the French, the Caro-Kann Defense (1. e4 c6) prepares d5 on Black's second move to challenge White's e4 pawn. The Caro-Kann is extremely solid, but not as dynamic as many of Black's other defenses against e4. Compared to the French, Black has avoided blocking his king's bishop, but will require a second move to play c5 - a source of counterplay in both defenses.

Popular variations in the Caro-Kann include the Classical Variation, the Advance Variation, the Exchange Variation and the Panov-Botvinnik Attack.

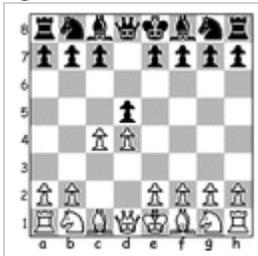
## Pirc Defense



Originally seen as an inferior opening, the Pirc Defense (1. e4 d6) is today known as a solid choice. Black allows White to build an imposing center, then attempts to turn that center into a target for attack.

Some common variations in the Pirc Defense include the Classical System and the Austrian Attack.

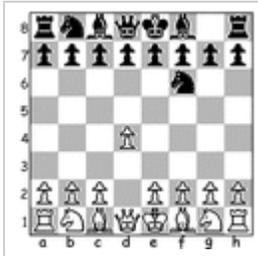
## Queen's Gambit



White players who prefer a quieter, more positional game tend to prefer 1. d4 to 1. e4, after which the c4 break is the best way to play for an advantage (either on the second move or soon after). The Queen's Gambit, marked by the moves 1. d4 d5 2. c4, is one of the oldest known chess openings. This classical approach "offers" a pawn (in reality, Black cannot expect to hold onto the pawn if he chooses to capture it) in exchange for a stronger center.

Black has several options, including the Queen's Gambit Accepted, the Queen's Gambit Declined, and the Slav Defense.

## Indian Defenses



After 1. d4, Black is not obligated to play d5 in response. Today, the most popular response to d4 is Nf6, which leads to a collection of openings known as the Indian Defenses. These openings, while less solid than the classical d5, offer more immediate opportunities for counterplay.

There are many popular lines arising after Nf6, including the King's Indian Defense, the Nimzo-Indian Defense, the Queen's Indian Defense and the Grünfeld Defense.



Ed Scimia began playing competitive chess at age eight, and has been playing tournament chess for nearly 20 years.

### **Experience:**

Ed Scimia is a private chess instructor and USCF tournament director. He was the editor of the USCF's first online newsletter, *Chess Review Online*. His chess accomplishments include first place finishes in the u1200 section of the 2002 World Open and the u1800 section of the 2007 Connecticut State Championships.

### **Education:**

Scimia received a bachelor's degree in Magazine Journalism from Syracuse University in 2003.

### **From Edward Scimia:**

I love chess with a passion - whether it's playing in a local club, competing in a major tournament, organizing a local event, or giving lessons to my students, chess is my life.