THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD

RANK 5 OF 8

BLUE BELT

STUDENT BOOK

THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD™

Twelve weeks. Your play measured against the engine. A fifth rank, earned.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

BOOK 5 OF 8 · COMPETITOR TIER

Written by Moheb Girgis, FIDE National Instructor

Chess that produces evidence.

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THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD

Eight ranks. One board. Total mastery.

THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD™

Blue Belt

Student Book

Competitor · Rank 5 of 8 · Book 5 of 8



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Written by Moheb Girgis, FIDE National Instructor · FIDE ID 39935400

The Eight Ranks Method · New York

This book belongs to _____

Site _____

Cycle _____

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Blue Belt Student Book
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First edition, 2026 · Version 1.2
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Every chess position in this book has been checked by a chess engine (Stockfish) or is completely solved.

The Eight Ranks Method is designed to produce evidence aligned to the six attributes of the New York State Portrait of a Graduate.
Not issued, approved or endorsed by the New York State Education Department or any school district. Schools decide how to use its reports.

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How to read a diagram

Every diagram is drawn from White's side: White's pieces start at the bottom, Black's at the top. The letters a to h name the files (the columns) from left to right; the numbers 1 to 8 name the ranks (the rows) from bottom to top. A square is its file letter and its rank number, so the bottom-left corner is a1 and the top-right corner is h8. The small square beside the board shows whose move it is: a white square at the bottom right means White to move, a black square at the top right means Black to move.

Piece	Letter	Symbol
King	K	♔ ♚
Queen	Q	♕ ♛
Rook	R	♖ ♜
Bishop	B	♗ ♝
Knight	N	♘ ♞
Pawn	(no letter)	♙ ♟

A move is written as the piece letter and the square it goes to: Nf3 means a knight moves to f3; e4 means a pawn moves to e4. x means a capture (Bxe5), + means check, # means checkmate, O-O is castling on the king's side and O-O-O on the queen's side, e8=Q means a pawn promotes to a queen. Sometimes the starting square is written too, with a dash: d7-d5 means the pawn on d7 moves to d5, and a plan written b2-b4-b5 means the b-pawn goes from b2 to b4 and then to b5. This is standard algebraic notation, the notation of Appendix C of the FIDE Laws of Chess; the Laws print castling with the figure zero (0-0 and 0-0-0) and promotion without the equals sign (e8Q), and this book uses the letter O and the equals sign, as most English chess books do.

Chess piece drawings by Colin M. L. Burnett, used under the BSD license.

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How to use this book

Blue belt is the first Competitor rank: three clocked games on Rank Day, a five-minute Game Review to the group, and labs that use outside data (an opening explorer, an engine, a tablebase). You learn to choose a repertoire with numbers, to keep an exchange ledger, to build an evaluation function and test it, to budget your clock from data, and to play the two rook endings every tournament player must know. Exercises end each chapter, with answers. Your exhibit is the Human vs Engine Report.

This book covers one twelve-week cycle; Blue takes at least two, and in the second you work through it again with new positions. Take one chapter every two weeks. In the first week, read the chapter, play through its worked example (and the Try it tasks in Chapter 2), and do the exercises on a real board. In the second week, do the STEM lab for that chapter and bring the page to the instructor. Each chapter starts with three objectives. Each chapter ends with a progress check; answer it with the book closed, then check your answers. The Review box brings back ideas from earlier chapters and from Green Belt, so do not skip it. If a chapter felt hard, read the Help box and do its small task. If it felt easy, do the Stretch box. The Game Lab pages are for your own four clocked games; fill one in within a week of each game. The family corner gives your family one question to ask you each week. Your exhibit, the Human vs Engine Report: draft in week 9, final in week 11. Rank Day comes after week 12; at the end of the first cycle it gives a report, not a new rank. The readiness list in the chapter pages tells you what ready means.

The twelve weeks: weeks 1-2 Chapter 1 and Lab B1.1; weeks 3-4 Chapter 2 and Lab B2.1; weeks 5-6 Chapter 3 and Lab B3.1; weeks 7-8 Chapter 4 and Lab B4.1; week 9 exhibit draft and Chapter 5; week 10 Lab B5.1; week 11 exhibit final and service part two complete; week 12 Rank Day.

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Everything for one cycle

One book carries one twelve-week cycle. Here is what is inside it, counted.

Chapters	5, one for each pillar, each with its worked example and exercises, a Help box, a Stretch box and a progress check
Review boxes	4, one at the start of Chapters 2 to 5
STEM labs	5, one for each chapter, each with its seven parts and its standards footer
Diagrams	64, every one drawn from a verified position
Model games	2, real games played through move by move with questions
Textbook endings	4 named endings, each with its method and a line to play
Puzzle practice and endgame drills	36 positions: 30 completely solved, 6 engine-verified (Stockfish)
Game Lab pages	4 game records to fill in with your own games
Family corners	5, one question for each chapter (one every two weeks) for the adult at home
Glossary	61 chess words explained
Practice quiz	20 questions in the four Rank Day forms, with answers
Exhibit of Evidence	Human vs Engine Report

The licensed site provides: the instructor, the boards and sets, the clocks, the Rank Day papers (the Knowledge Quiz and the Puzzle Set, seen only on Rank Day), the scoring, the Rank Progress Report within two weeks of Rank Day, and the certificate and rank at the ceremony. This book is yours to write in and keep.

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LAUNCH

CHAPTER 1 · PILLAR 1 · OPENINGS AND DEVELOPMENT

A repertoire from statistics

By the end of this chapter you will be able to

- Read the win, draw and loss counts for a move in a free opening explorer.
- Turn the counts into percentages and say why a large sample tells you more.
- Choose one opening line with data and keep it for ten games before you judge it.

Launch This chapter ends with STEM Lab B1.1: Opening Statistics.

1.1 Counts, percentages and sample size

An opening explorer shows, for a position, how many games continued with each move and how they ended. Convert counts to percentages before comparing. **Worked example:** 800 White wins, 700 draws and 500 Black wins in 2,000 games are 40, 35 and 25 percent (each count ÷ 2,000 × 100). A move played 20 times with 60 percent wins tells you almost nothing; a move played 20,000 times with 52 percent tells you something, because a small sample swings with luck. The lab (B1.1) has you record the counts for two moves and write a sentence about the sample.

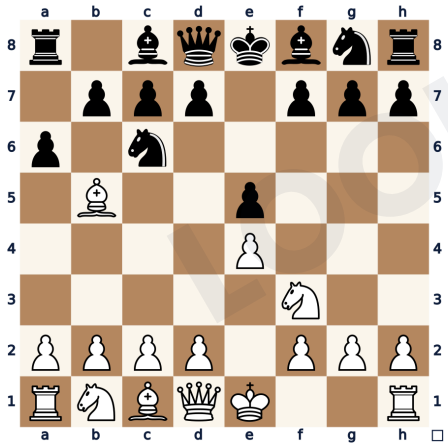


Diagram 1.1. The Ruy Lopez after 3...a6, White to move. In the explorer, compare 4.Ba4 with 4.Bxc6: counts, percentages, sample size.

1.2 A line is a choice, not a belief

Choose the line whose numbers hold up in large samples and whose plans you can explain at move ten. Then play it for ten games before you judge it. Switching after one loss is the most common Blue belt mistake.

1.3 Exercises

1. A move has 1,240 games: 530 White wins, 410 draws, 300 Black wins. Compute the three percentages.

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2. Two moves: A has 60 percent in 50 games, B has 54 percent in 30,000 games. Which do you trust more, and why in one sentence?
3. For Diagram 1.1, write White's plan after 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.O-O Be7 in two sentences.

Answers: 1. 42.7 percent, 33.1 percent, 24.2 percent (rounded; they sum to 100). 2. B; a sample of 30,000 is far less likely to be swung by luck than a sample of 50, even though A's number is bigger. 3. White keeps the bishop with Ba4 and castles. Then White plays Re1 and c3 to prepare d4, and the bishop often drops back to b3 or c2 to keep aiming at Black's kingside. White keeps the tension in the center.

HELP · IF THIS FELT HARD

Reread section 1.1 and the two practice lines in Lab B1.1. Then take one move from the explorer and turn its three counts into percentages; check that they add up to about 100. This is counting, not magic, and each time you do it, it gets faster.

STRETCH · IF THIS FELT EASY

Pick the opening you play most as Black. In the explorer, compare your usual reply with one other reply: counts, percentages and sample size. Write two sentences that say which line you will keep and why, using the numbers.

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PROGRESS CHECK · CHAPTER 1

1. A move has 1,240 games: 530 White wins, 410 draws and 300 Black wins. What are the three percentages?
2. Move A scores 60 percent in 50 games. Move B scores 54 percent in 30,000 games. Which number do you trust more, and why?
3. In your own words, why should you play a new line for ten games before you judge it?
4. In Diagram 1.1, after 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.O-O Be7, what is White's plan?
5. The explorer shows 3...Nf6 at 48 percent for Black in 9,000 games and 3...Be7 at 55 percent in 120 games. Which number would you act on, and why?

Answers are in the back of the book.

FAMILY CORNER · WHAT TO ASK YOUR LEARNER THIS WEEK

Can you show me how you turn a count of wins into a percentage?

A good answer sounds like: Your learner divides the count by the total games and multiplies by 100. Then they add that a number from a few games means less than one from thousands.

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CHAPTER 2 · PILLAR 2 · TACTICS AND CALCULATION

The exchange ledger and the sacrifice

By the end of this chapter you will be able to

- Keep a debit-and-credit ledger through a whole capture sequence.
- Count the attackers and the defenders before the first capture.
- Estimate the value of a sacrifice when it has two possible outcomes.

Strike This chapter ends with STEM Lab B2.1: The Exchange Ledger.

REVIEW · THREE QUESTIONS FROM EARLIER

1. Chapter 1 of this book Why do you turn counts into percentages before you compare two moves?
2. Chapter 1 of this book How many games should you play a new line before you judge it?
3. Green Belt, Chapter 2 What is removal of the defender?

Answers are in the back of the book.

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2.1 The ledger

Piece values (1, 3, 3, 5, 9) are a measuring scale. Through a sequence of captures, write each capture as a debit or a credit and total the column at the stable end. The ledger stops you from counting only the first capture. Count attackers and defenders before the first capture: if the defenders equal the attackers, the last piece to capture is usually lost.

Worked example. White Nf3 and Re1 attack a pawn on e5; Black Nc6 defends it. 1.Nxe5 (+1) Nxe5 (−3, total −2) 2.Rxe5 (+3, total +1). Stable end: White +1, one pawn. Two attackers beat one defender, so White's last capture stands.

Try it 1. White Rd1, Nc3, Bb3 attack d5; Black Nf6, Be6, Rd8 defend it. Write the ledger if White starts 1.Nxd5 and both sides recapture to the end. Is the capture good? **Try it 2.** A sacrifice wins a rook (net +2) 70 percent of the time and loses a knight for a pawn (net −2) otherwise. Compute the expected value. (Answers with the exercises.)

2.2 Sacrifices with two outcomes

A sacrifice gives material for something else: a mate, a draw, an attack. When the outcome is uncertain, estimate: if the sacrifice wins half the time and loses a piece (3 points) the other half, the expected value is 0.5 × the gain − 0.5 × 3; compare that with the quiet move. Blue belt players write the estimate; Purple belt players decide with it.

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