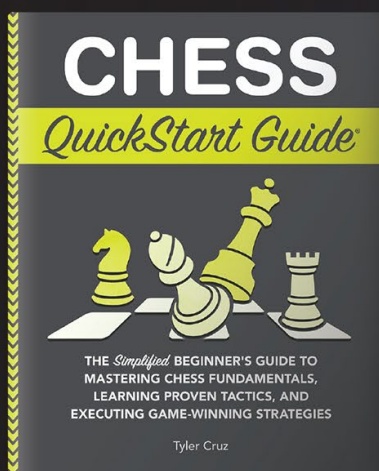

Questions To Ask Yourself Cheat Sheet



Digital Asset for:



QUICKSTARTGUIDES.COM

TALKING TO YOURSELF

A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHILE PLAYING

As a chess streamer and YouTuber, I vocalize the internal monologue I have with myself while playing a game so that viewers can hear my thought processes.

I believe that all experienced chess players have such an inner conversation with themselves. Asking yourself questions (and trying to answer them) while you play is a great way to stay focused, spot weaknesses, and come up with strategical ideas.

Here is a list of some questions that you should try to ask yourself. It is not an exhaustive list, so feel free to add in your own questions. Also, do not feel the need to ask yourself every single question on every move, as this is not a checklist that you must follow, but a general guide to help get you start asking important questions to yourself while you play.

IS THE MOVE I'M ABOUT TO MAKE A BLUNDER?

While it seems like an obvious question and almost silly to ask, it's also the most important! After you have a move in mind, before you make the actual move, visualize the board with your move having been made and make sure that you didn't miss anything obvious such as allowing one of your pieces to be immediately captured.

In chess, we refer to this as a "blunder check"—a quick scan of the board to ensure that you aren't overlooking anything obvious. Asking yourself this simple question alone will save you from making many mistakes on the board!

WHY DID MY OPPONENT MAKE THEIR LAST MOVE?

This is another obvious question to ask oneself, but I don't think I'm going out on a limb to say that beginners often forget to consider their opponent's last move. In fact, even some experienced players sometimes get so absorbed in their own plans and ideas that they ignore or dismiss their opponents'.

Are they threatening one of your pieces immediately? Are they trying to castle? Are they setting up a trap?

You might not always be able to understand or come up with a logical reason behind your opponent's move, but it's still worth asking.

ARE ALL MY PIECES DEVELOPED AND ACTIVE?

In chess, piece activity is vitally important. Have you developed all your pieces off their starting squares? The minor pieces (knights and bishops) should take priority, followed by the major pieces (queen and rooks). Are they all actively placed on good squares that give them mobility and control of the board?

If not, then you know what to do!

IS MY KING SAFE?

If your king gets checkmated, you lose the game—simple as that. Therefore, king safety is always paramount.

If you haven't castled yet, or even prepared to castle, then that probably be on the top of your list of priorities. If you can't castle, already castled, or in the rare case where castling will make your king less safe, find other ways to keep your king safe, such as moving it to safer waters or bringing in additional protection.

DOES MY OPPONENT HAVE ANY WEAKNESSES?

In the middle game (after you have developed your pieces, castled, and have some control of the center), a lot of beginners don't know how to continue.

One way is to look for weaknesses in your opponent's position. They could come in many forms, but here are some ideas to look for: an uncastled or weak king, unprotected pieces, isolated or backward pawns, tactical opportunities, back-rank mate threats, etc.

Once you have identified a weakness (or hopefully more than one!), you can then seek out to exploit it.

DO I HAVE ANY WEAKNESSES?

Ideally as chess players we try to avoid creating any weaknesses in the first place, but inevitably they will occur. Asking yourself if you have any weaknesses in your position will alert you to it, which means you can then work on fixing that weakness.

For example, if you have weak doubled pawns, you could attempt to trade one off. If your king is not safe, make sure it is. If your position is cramped and you need more space, seek out to trade pieces or find a way to gain more space.

You can think of identifying and tending to your weaknesses and preventative measures as akin to patching up leaks in a boat before they possibly become bigger problems, ensuring smooth sailing ahead.

WHAT IS MY WORST-PLACED PIECE?

This is a slightly more advanced question you can ask yourself, so it's further down this list, but it's a great question to ask yourself when you don't know what to do.

Look at all your pieces and try to identify your worst-placed piece. How do you know what your worst-placed piece is? Well, do you have a piece that is still on its original starting square? Perhaps you have a knight on the edge of the board (or worse, the corner!), a bishop that is blocked by your pawns, or a rook that is on the other side of the board and not participating in the attack.

Whichever piece it is, once you've identified it, simply try to improve it by bringing it to a better square. Incremental improvements such as these will help strengthen your position.

IF I COULD TRANSPORT THIS PIECE ANYWHERE ON THE BOARD, WHERE WOULD I PUT IT?

This is another advanced question, and is therefore not high on our priority list, but is useful when you're in a position and don't know what to do. You don't want to ask this question until you have developed all your pieces, have your king safe, and have asked yourself all the other questions above first.

It also often goes hand-in-hand with the previous question of *"What is my worst-placed piece?"*

In this thought experiment, you find a piece that you'd like to improve (often it makes sense for it to be your worst-placed piece), and then imagine a genie granted you a wish to place it anywhere (within a reasonable expectation) on the board. For example, you might have a knight off near the corner doing nothing, but see that you could place it on a lovely square that is supported by one of your pawns that would give a lot of control of the board. It may take 2-3 moves to get there, but that's okay—the journey will be worth it in most cases!