

Types of center

The center

Types of center

Classical mobile center

Open center

Closed center

The little center

Fixed center

The center in tension

Other types of center



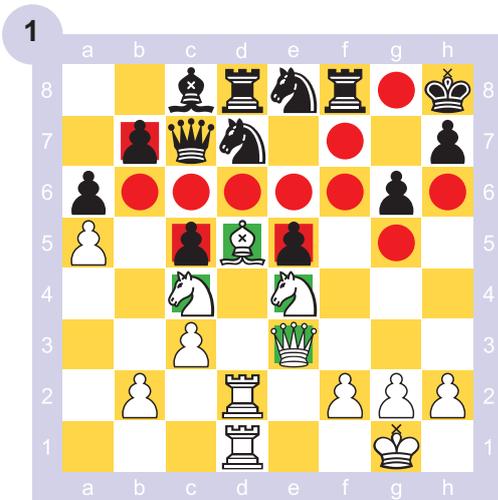


The center

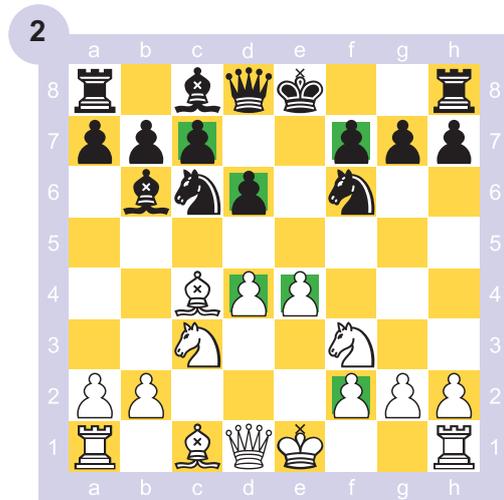
Remember that, as we already explained in the first unit of the “Intermediate 1” book, pawn structure determines the space to move and coordinate the pieces, in addition of giving more or less control of the center of the board.

The **type of center** is set by the position of the central pawns.

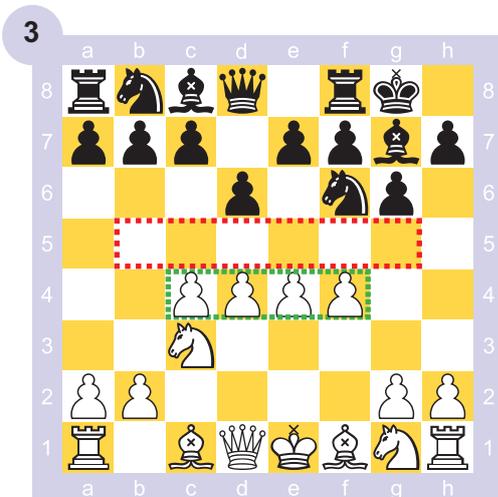
Examples



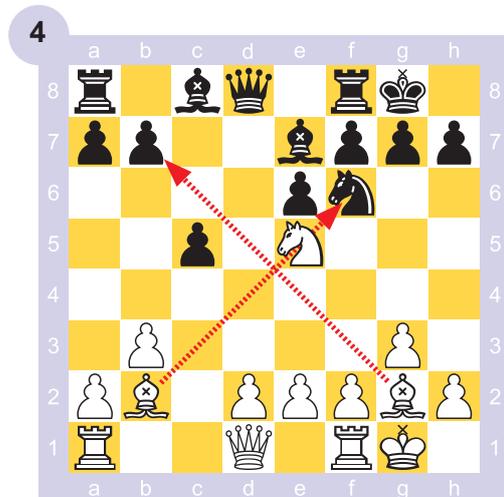
The pieces are more effective when they are placed in central squares. This is why it's important to occupy and control central squares.



Each side's central pawns placement determines the type of center in a given position. Central pawns are part of the pawn's structure.



White's **f** and **c** pawns have also advanced (besides the **e** and **d** pawns) to help in controlling the center, while black has developed his kingside and castled.



Sometimes the control of the center is exerted by long range action of the pieces, not being strictly necessary to occupy it with pawns.

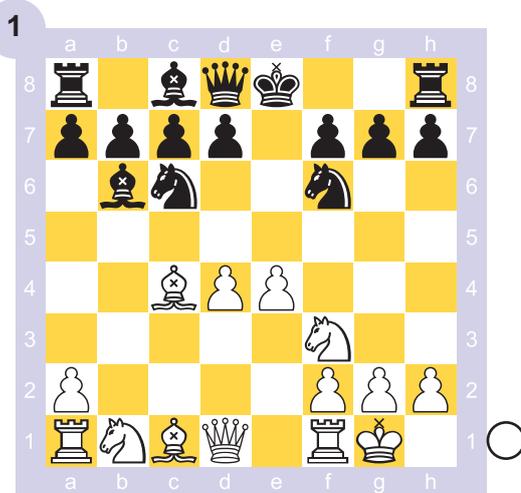


Classical mobile center

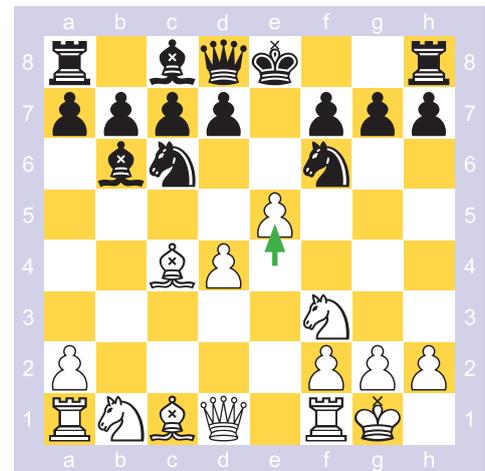
For both players the ideal way to occupy the center is to advance their **d** and **e** pawns two squares, thus dominating the central squares and generating space to move the bishops and the queen.

If those pawns are not blocked by the opponent with a central pawn, then they can continue advancing and we call them mobile pawns.

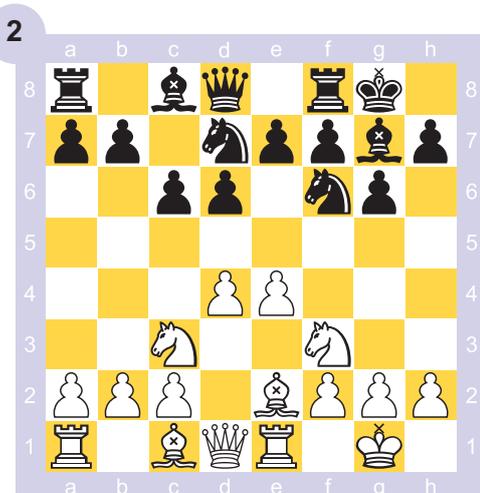
Examples



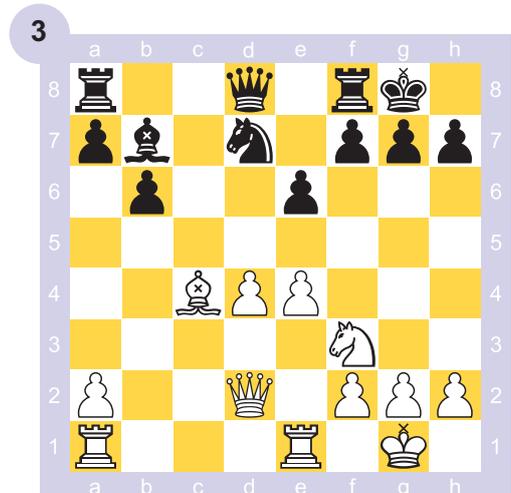
In this position arising from the Evans Gambit, white has created a classical mobile center with his central pawns, by means of a pawn sacrifice.



The previous position allows white to advance his **e** pawn in order to gain space in the center and, at the same time, attack black's knight on f6



In this position from Pirc's Defence, white has formed the classical mobile center without sacrificing material. For the time being, black will not dispute white the control of the center.



White established the classical mobile center following one variation of the Semi-Tarrasch Defence. White may advance, when the time is right, either the **d** or the **e** pawn.

1

Point out the move that allows the creation of a classical mobile center. The side to move is indicated by a circle on the right.

1

e3 Bd2 e4

2

Qb3 cxd4 Nxd4

3

g6 e6 e5

4

cxd4 Nxd4 Bg5

5

d4 e5 c4

6

g3 e3 e4

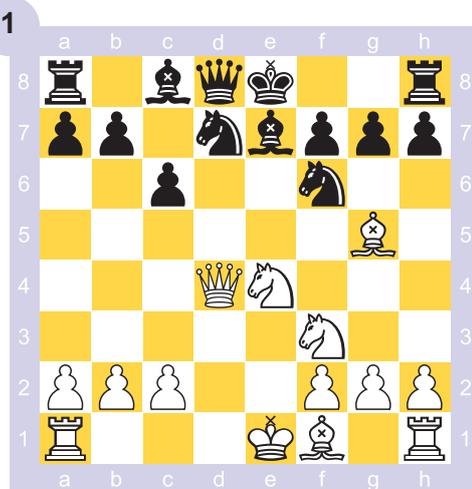


Open center

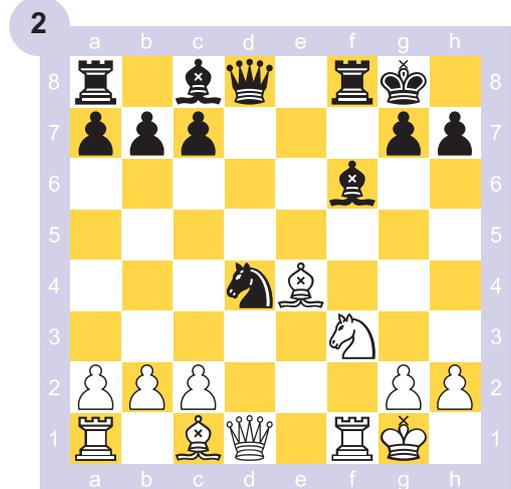
The center is open when there are no pawns in the center of the board. The open center leaves many free lines (files, ranks and diagonals) and squares that pieces can use.

In this type of center, mainly the pieces take care of dominating the central squares, either by direct occupation or long range action.

Examples

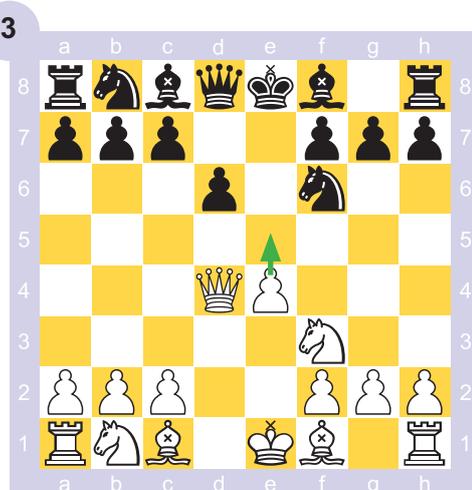


Following the elimination of the **d** and **e** pawns the center becomes open. The **d** and **e** files are open and the bishop's diagonals are free. White exerts greater control on the center.



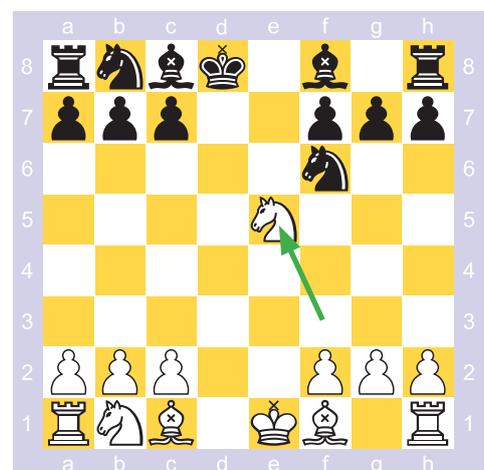
In this case the **d**, **e** and **f** pawns have been eliminated, thus the center becomes open.

But here none of the two sides enjoys a clear advantage in the control of the center.



With his next move, white strives for a central pawn exchange, after which the center will be opened.

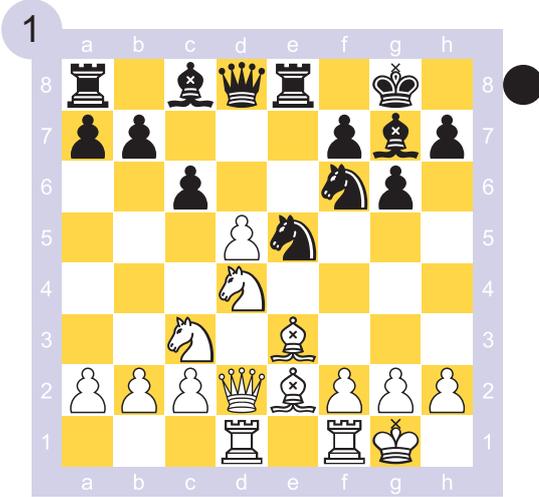
1.e5 dx e5 2.Qxd8+ Kxd8 3.Nxe5



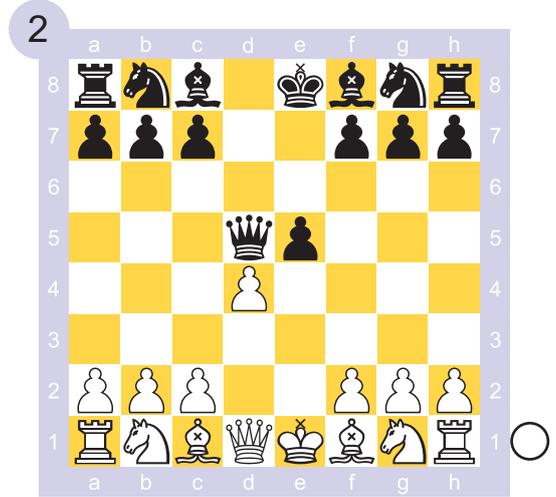
After the exchanges, none of the sides obtains superiority in the control of the center. The position is about equal.

2

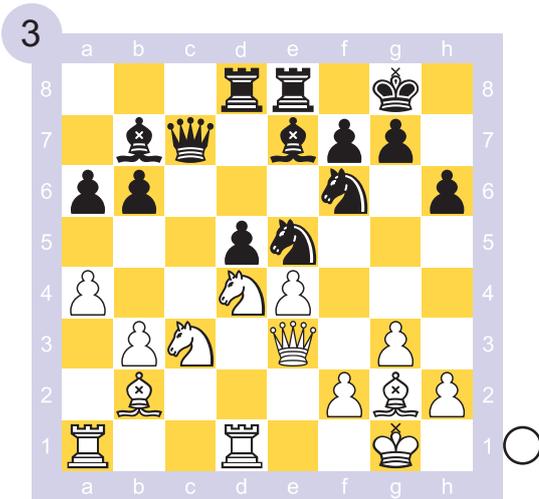
Point out the move that results in an open center.
The side to move is indicated by a circle on the right.



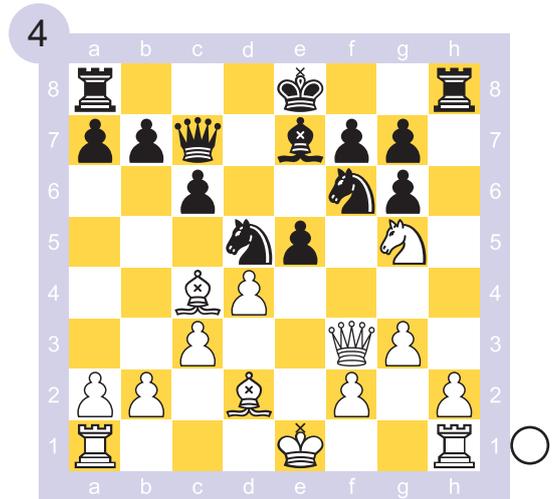
cxd5 c5 Nxd5



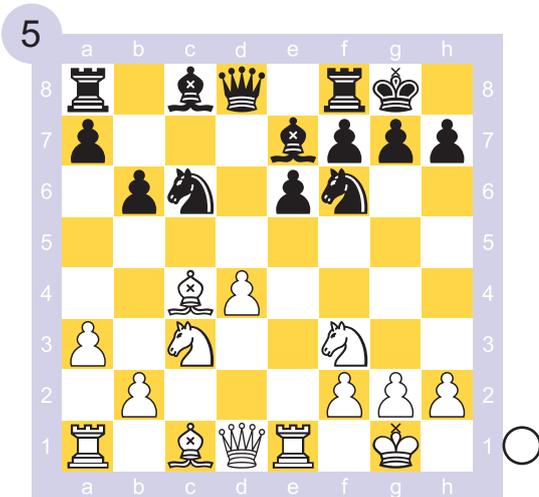
dx e5 c4 Nc3



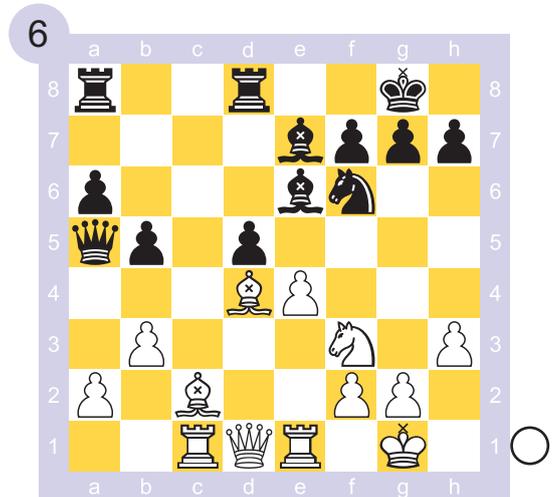
f3 h3 exd5



dx e5 0-0 Bxd5



Ne5 Bg5 d5



e5 Bxf6 exd5

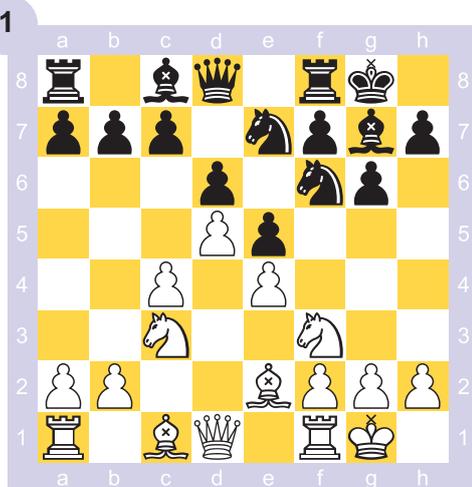


Closed center

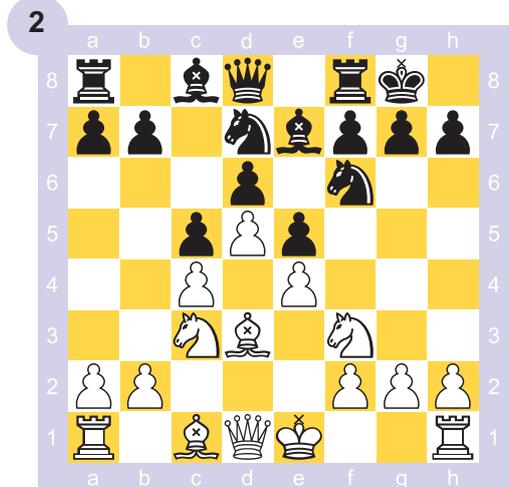
The center is closed when the central pawns are mutually blocked, thus preventing their movement.

This type of center leaves few lines for the movement of the pieces. Mainly the pawns control the center and offensive actions usually take place in the flanks. A closed center can become totally or partially open, by means of exchanges.

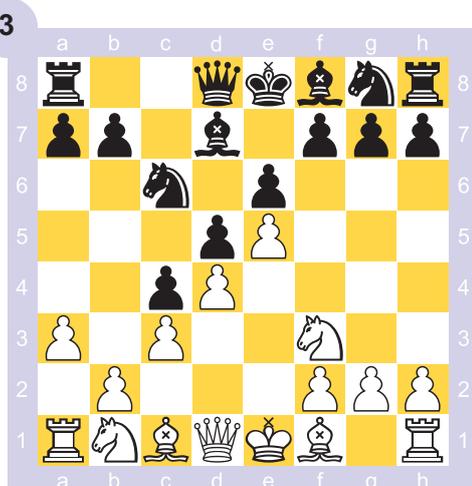
Examples



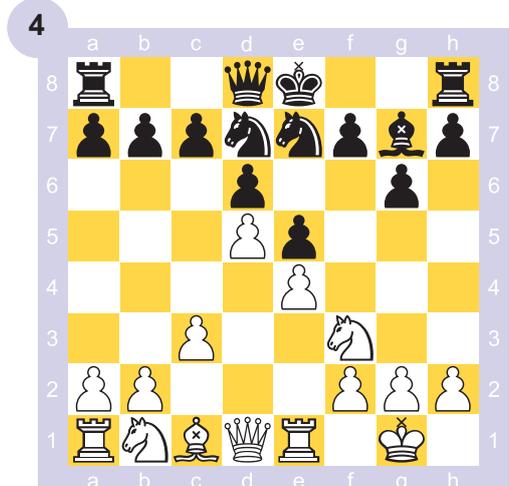
In this position from the King's Indian Defence white usually attacks on the queenside through a timely c4-c5 advance, while black usually does it in the kingside by opportunely advancing f7-f5.



In this position from the Benoni Defence, besides the d and e pawns being blocked, the c pawns are also blocked. Both sides will start an offensive on the flanks.



In this position from the French Defence the center is closed because the d and e pawns are mutually being blocked. Additionally the c pawns are blocking each other.



In this position from the Spanish Opening, the center is also closed, with a pawn structure that resembles that of diagram 1 in this page.

3

Point out the move that results in a closed center.
The side to move is indicated by a circle on the right.

1

Chessboard 1: White to move. Moves: dxe5, d5, 0-0.

2

Chessboard 2: Black to move. Moves: Bd3, exd5, e5.

3

Chessboard 3: Black to move. Moves: d5, dxe5, Be7.

4

Chessboard 4: White to move. Moves: Be3, dxe5, d5.

5

Chessboard 5: Black to move. Moves: exd4, e4, Qe7.

6

Chessboard 6: White to move. Moves: dxe5, h3, d5.

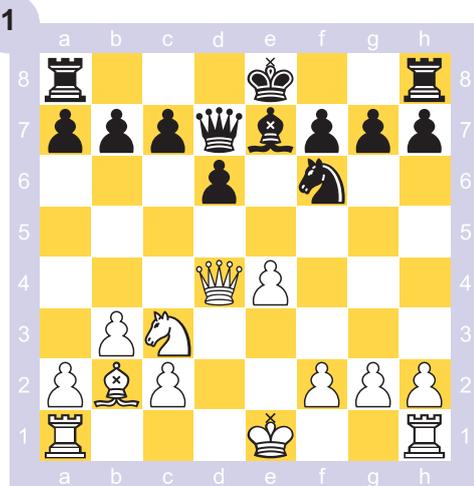


The little center

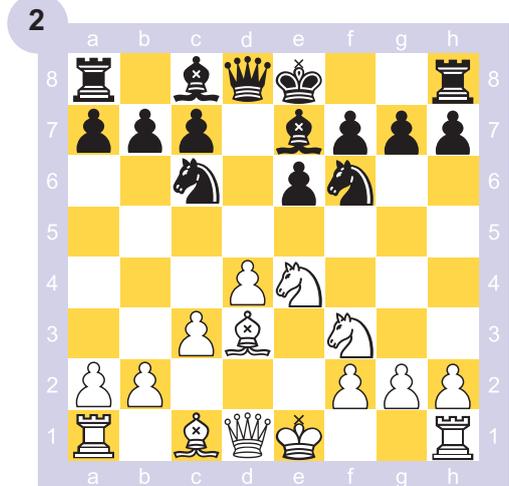
The central disposition known as little center originates when in the **d** and **e** files there is only a white pawn on e4 and a black pawn on d6 (or the mirror image disposition, white pawn on d4 and black pawn on e6)

The little center leaves one semi-open central file for white and another one for black. White enjoys more space and a better control of the center of the board.

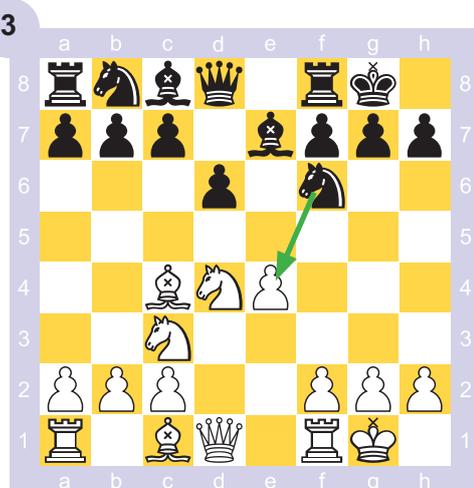
Examples



In this position arising from the Stenitz Variation of the Spanish Opening, you can observe a little center with all the previously mentioned characteristics.

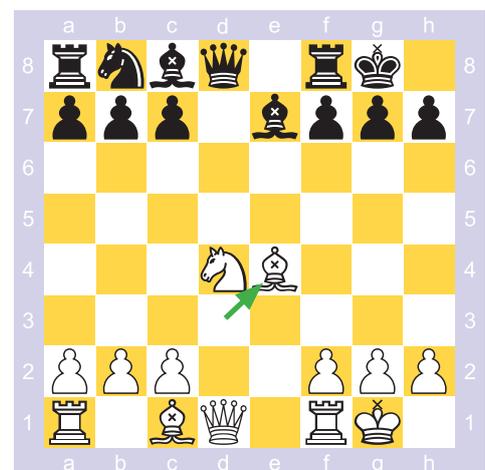


In this position belonging to the French Defence, the little center is formed symmetrically, compared to the previous diagram, with a white pawn on d4 and a black pawn on e6.



One way to exchange the central pawns would be:

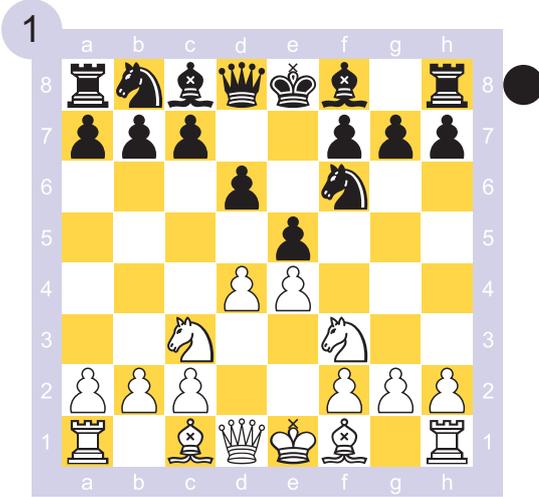
- 1... Nxe4 2.Nxe4 (2.Bxf7+ Rxf7
- 3.Nxe4 leads to a satisfactory position for black) d5 4.Bd3 dxe4 5.Bxe4.



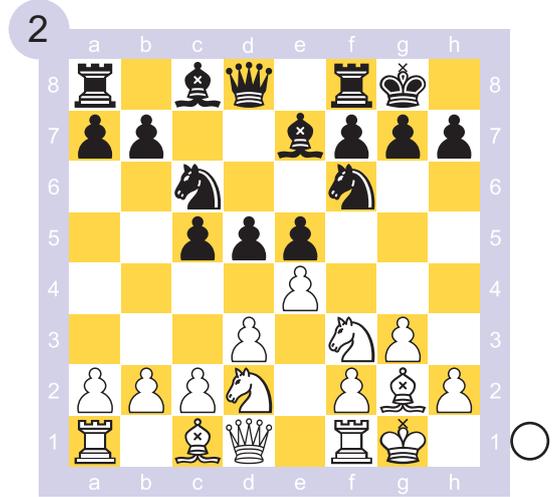
With this momentary knight sacrifice followed by a double threat, black manages to transform the little center into an open center.

4

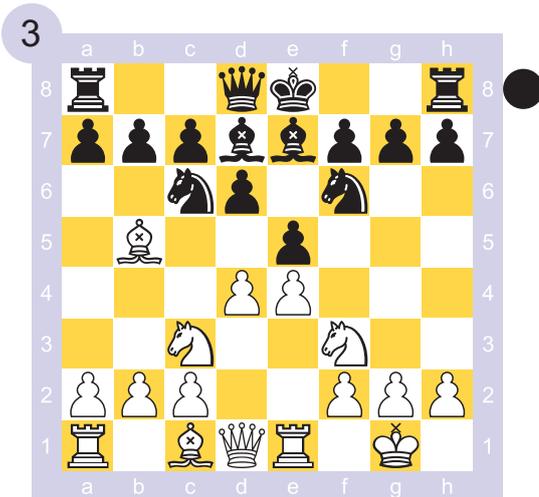
Point out the move that results in a little center.
The side to move is indicated by a circle on the right.



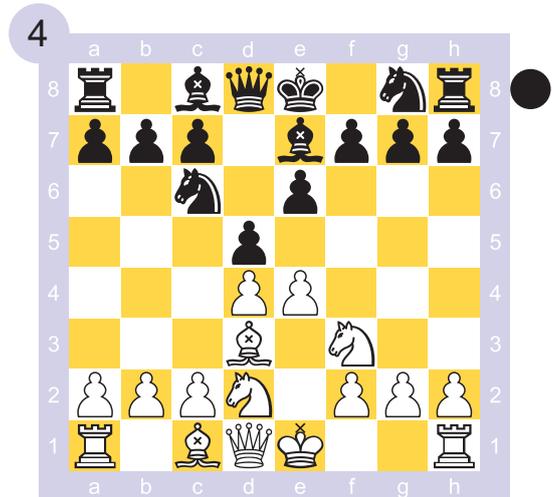
Nbd7 exd4 Nc6



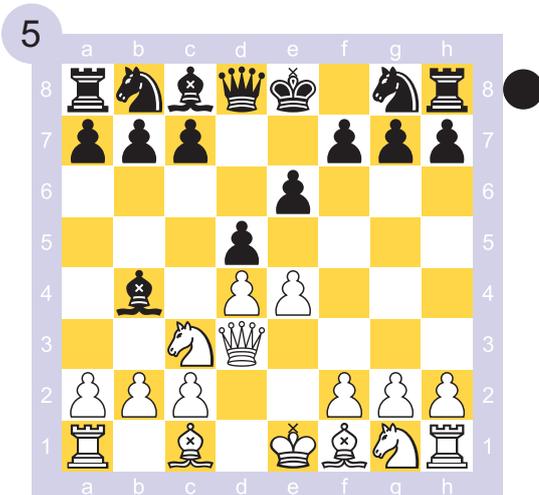
c3 Re1 exd5



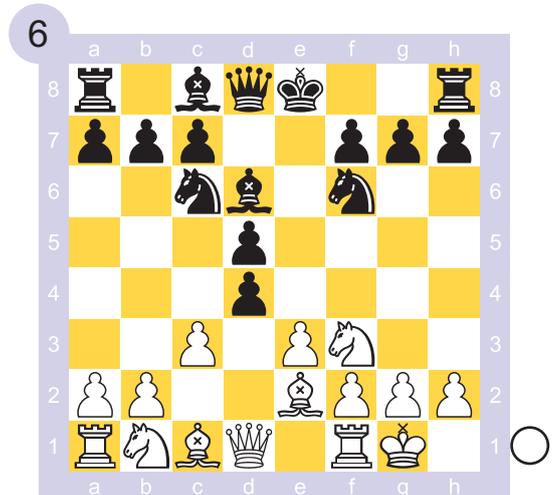
exd4 0-0 a6



Nf6 dxe4 Nb4



c5 dxe4 Nf6



cxd4 exd4 Nxd4

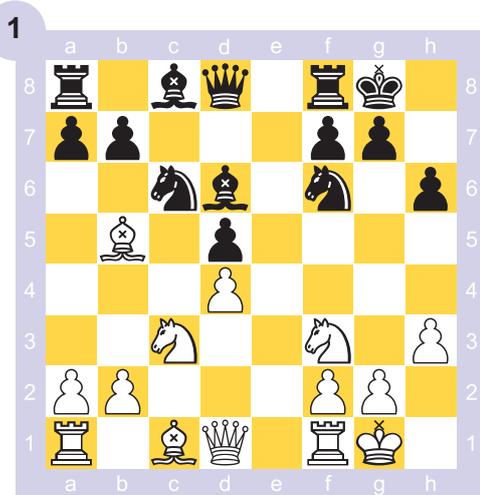


Fixed center

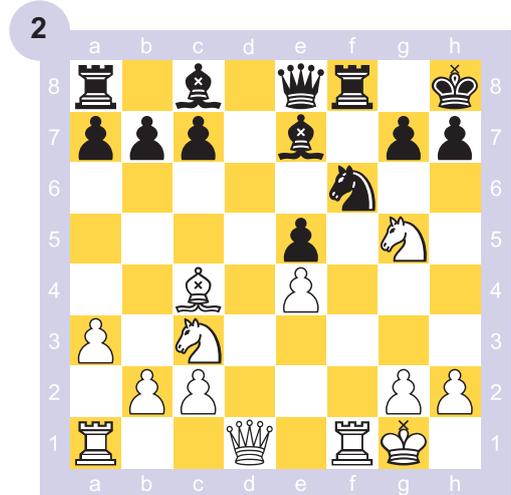
It is said that the center is fixed when both sides are left with only one central pawn, blocked by that of their opponent (white's d4 vs. black's d5 or white's e4 vs. black's e5). Those pawns are isolated.

In this type of center there will always be, at least, two open files (a central one and the adjacent bishop file).

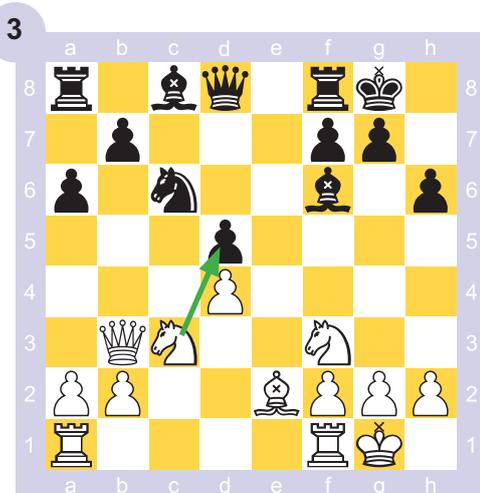
Examples



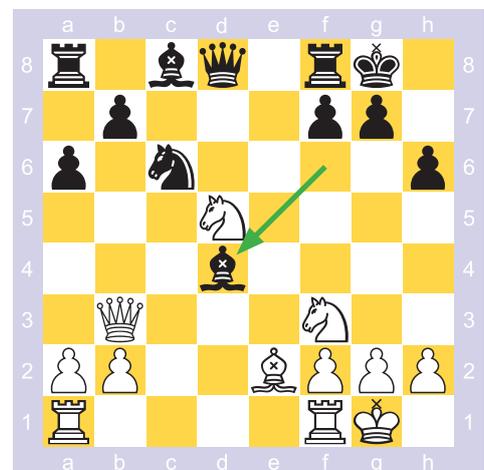
This fixed center is formed by white's pawn on d4 and black's d5 pawn. Next to both these pawns there are two open files, e and c ones.



This other fixed center is formed by white's e4 pawn and black's e5 pawn. In this case the two open columns are d and f.



Sometimes a fixed center can turn into an open one. For this to happen both central pawns must be captured, for example: 1.Nxd5 Bxd4.



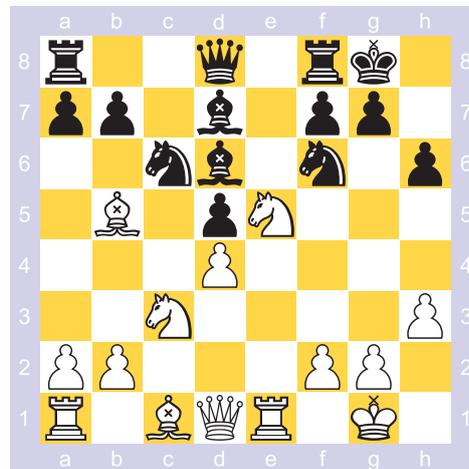
The fixed center turned, after both captures, into a completely open center.

5

Point out to which move of the following opening sequence belongs each comment.

N°	□	■
1	c4	Nf6
2	Nf3	e6
3	d4	d5
4	e3	c5
5	Nc3	Nc6
6	cxd5	exd5
7	Bb5	Bd6
8	0-0	0-0
9	h3	cxd4
10	exd4	h6
11	Re1	Bd7
12	Ne5	
13		
14		

Final position



N°	□	■
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After this move two different pawn exchanges are possible.

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This knight move by black keeps symmetry for now.

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White executes a first exchange of pawns in the center.

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Black captures on d5 with a pawn. He could have taken on d5 with the knight (Semi -Tarrasch Defence variation).

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White prevents black's queen bishop from pinning the knight on f3.

--	--	--

After this move from white the center becomes fixed.

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White takes advantage of the outpost offered by the d4 pawn on e5. This is typical for the positions with a fixed center. White has a slight advantage.

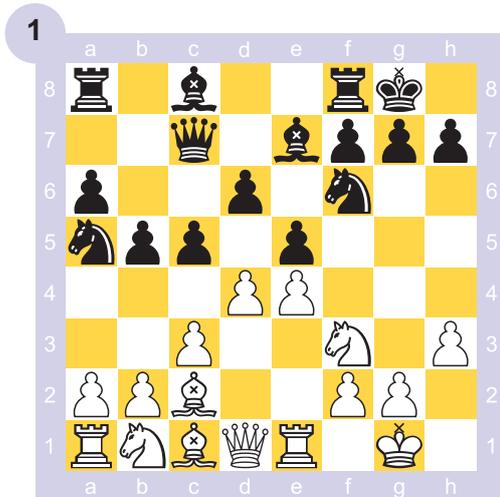


Center in tension

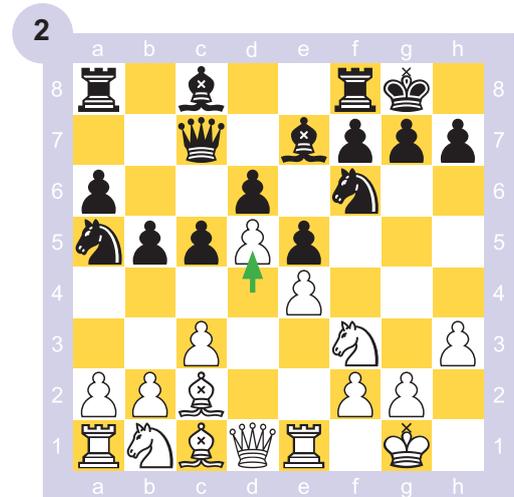
There are moments in which several pawn exchanges in the center are possible, therefore the type of center is not defined yet.

The center will be in tension as long as the pawn exchanges remain unresolved.

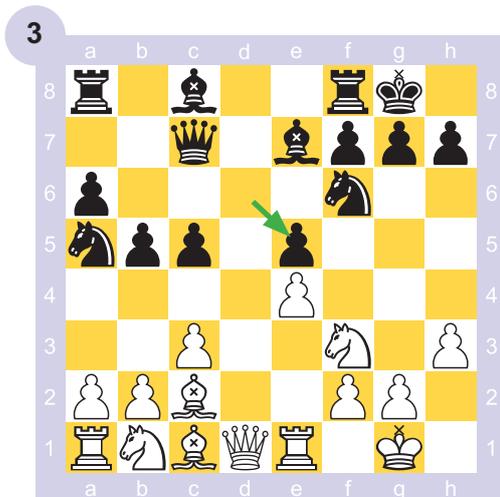
Example



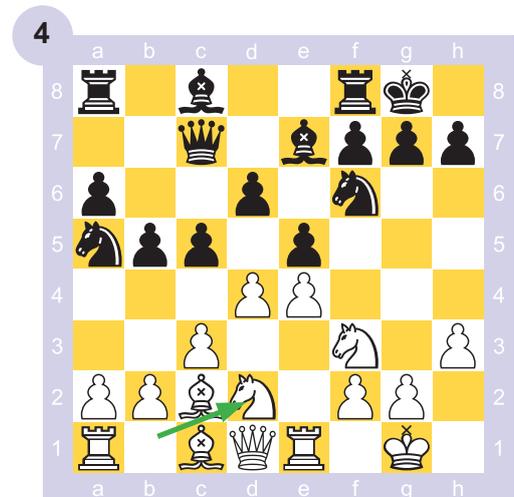
In this typical position of the Spanish Opening, the center is in tension because white has several ways to define the situation in the center of the board.



If white opts to advance the pawn to d5, a closed center will arise. All following actions will take place on the flanks.



If white chooses to exchange 1.dxe5 dxe5, the resulting center will be very similar to the fixed center, with the difference that there is only one open column, the d one.



If white decides to carry on his development by means of 1.Nbd2, the center remains in tension. Black can choose to maintain the tension in the center or to initiate exchanges.

6

Point out the move that results in tension in the center.
The side to move is indicated by a circle on the right.

1

0-0 d3 d4

2

f4 e4 axb5

3

e5 g6 e6

4

d3 d4 a4

5

d5 d6 Qc7

6

Be2 d4 d3

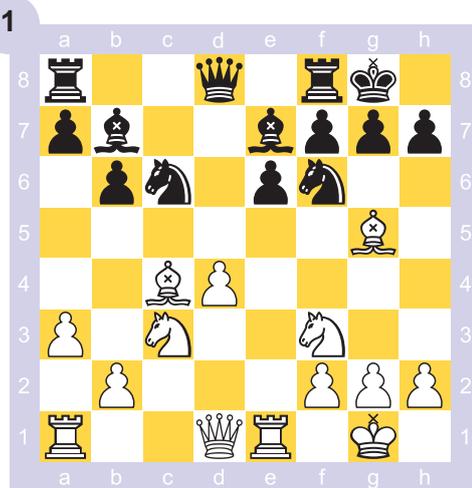


Other types of center

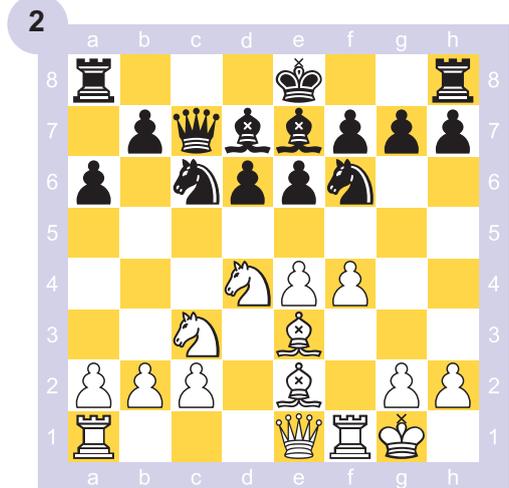
There are other pawn structures which don't fit any of the previously mentioned types of center.

Next we will look at four different types of center which are relatively frequent in the openings.

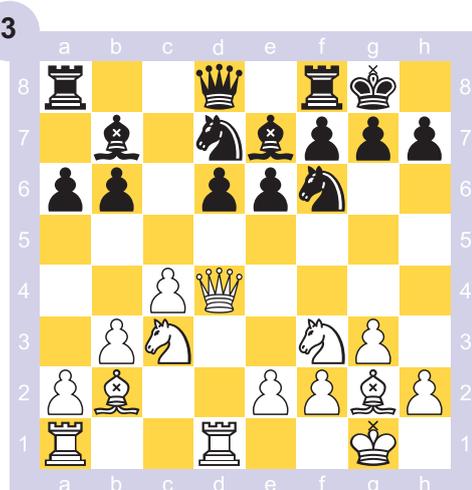
Examples



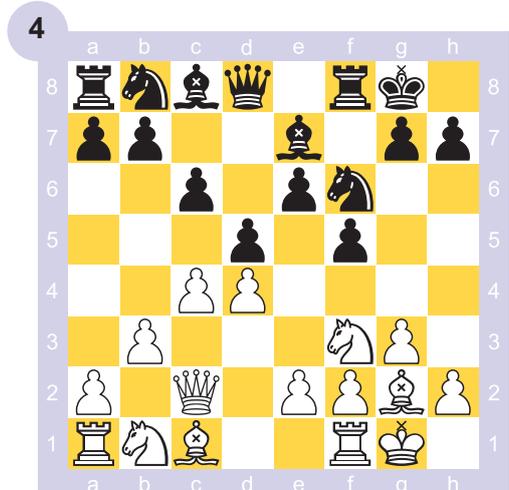
This position is typical for some openings starting 1.d4. The center is not completely open even if there are lots of open lines. The d pawn, which is isolated, occupies an important central square.



This type of center arises in many variations of the Sicilian Defence, not being either open or closed. White has more space at his disposal and each side has a semi-open file.



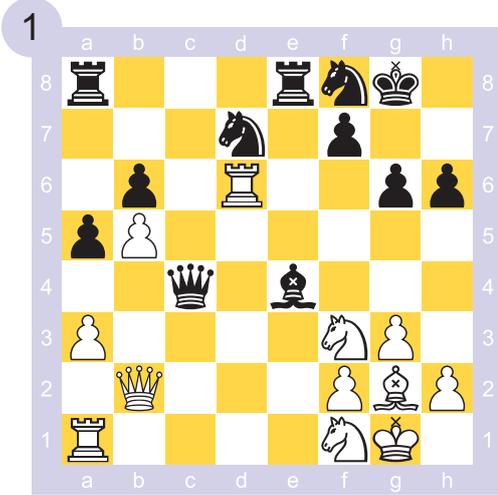
This black pawn structure is known as "The Hedgehog". White has more space but he cannot get close to black's pawns, which are ready to advance at the right time.



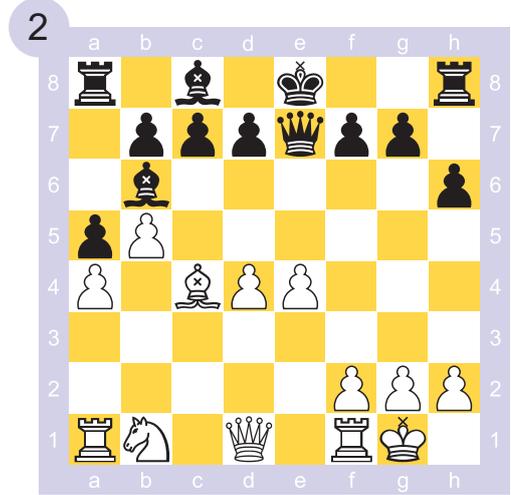
This black pawn structure is called "Stonewall" with pawns on c6, d5, e6 and f5. Black exerts strong control over the e4 square but his e5 square is weak and his queen's bishop is limited by his own pawns.

7

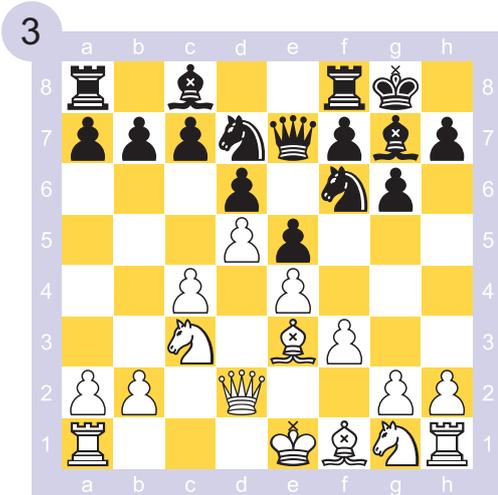
Point out to which move of the following opening sequence belongs each comment.



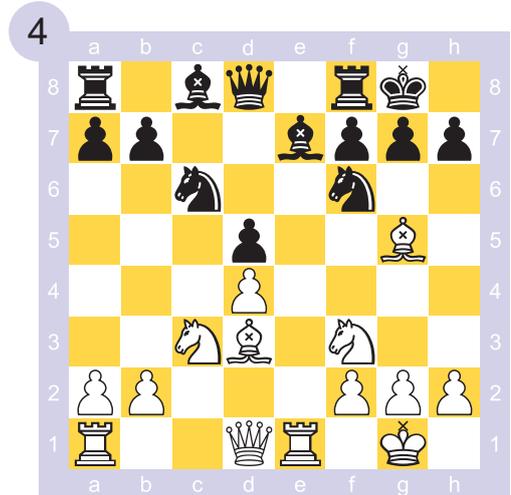
Open center Center in tension The little center



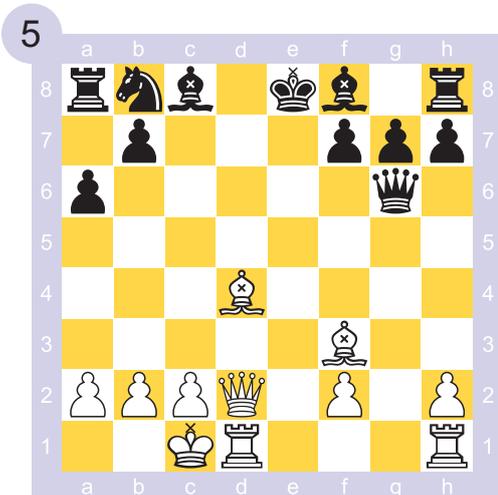
Open center Classical mobile center The little center



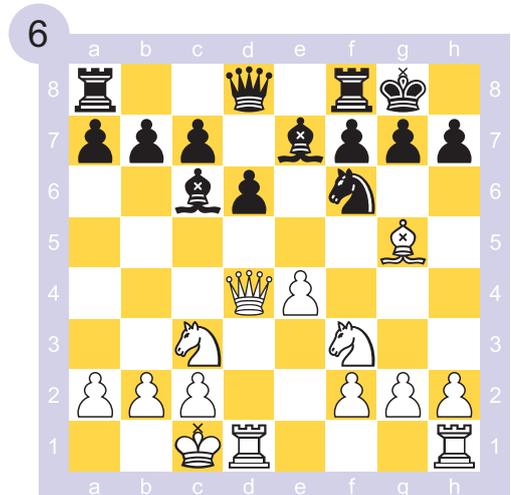
Open center Closed center Fixed center



Fixed center Closed center The little center



Fixed center Center in tension Open center



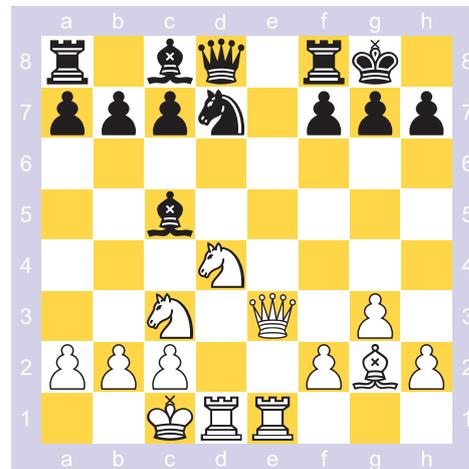
Open center The little center Classical mobile center

A

Point out to which move of the following opening sequence belongs each comment.

N°	□	■
1	e4	e5
2	Nf3	d6
3	d4	exd4
4	Nxd4	Nf6
5	Nc3	Be7
6	g3	d5
7	exd5	Nxd5
8	Bd2	Nb4
9	Be3	Nd5
10	Qd3	Nxe3
11	Qxe3	0-0
12	0-0-0	Bc5
13	Bg2	Nd7
14	Rhe1	

Final position



N°	□	■
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White immediately occupies the center with his d pawn, proposing an exchange of central pawns.

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Black exchanges central pawns thus forming the “small center”. The main alternative is defending the center with Nd7.

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Black quickly counters in the center, proposing the exchange of central pawns.

--	--	--

White agrees to the elimination of the central pawns. One alternative would be to advance e4-e5..

--	--	--

With this capture the transformation of the small center into an open center is completed.

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White’s last move completes the development of all his pieces, meanwhile his opponent has yet to finalize it. White has a greater control of the center.

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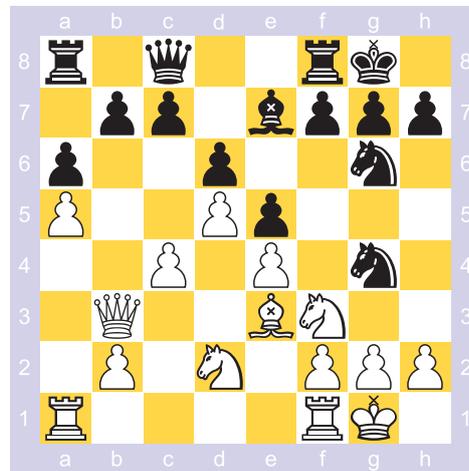
This move is meant to prevent the doubling of a pawn on c3.

B

Point out to which move of the following opening sequence belongs each comment.

N°	□	■
1	e4	e5
2	Nf3	Nc6
3	Bb5	Nge7
4	c3	d6
5	d4	Bd7
6	0-0	Ng6
7	Be3	Be7
8	d5	Nb8
9	Qb3	Qc8
10	Bxd7+	Nxd7
11	a4	0-0
12	a5	a6
13	Nbd2	Nf6
14	c4	Ng4

Final position



N°	□	■
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The occupation of the center with the **d** pawn is prepared.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The bishop interposes between the pinned knight and the king.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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This pawn initiates an expansion on the queen's flank, which is meant to win space in this part of the board.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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After this move tension builds up in the center.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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This move gives rise to the Spanish Opening.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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This pawn strengthens the center and prepares a future break in the queen's bishop file.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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This advance transforms the center in tension into a closed one.