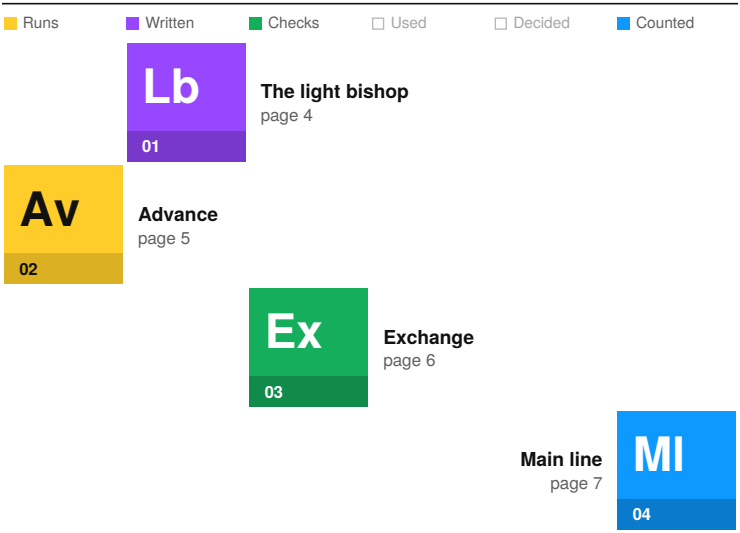
The Caro-Kann for Black

A pocket-sized guide to a solid answer to 1.e4 that you can play as Black.



My friend has a lot of questions.

friend@accidental.info · October 2026 · Version 0.3.0

What is the Caro-Kann?

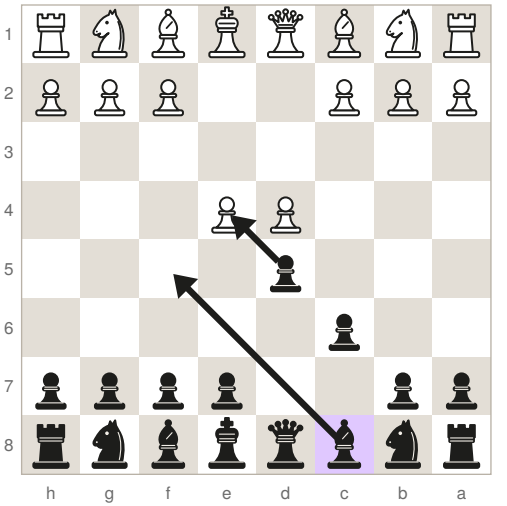
The Caro-Kann is a chess opening for Black that begins 1.e4 c6, usually followed by 2.d4 d5. The c-pawn move prepares …d5, which challenges White's pawn on e4. The Caro-Kann is known for being solid.

The Caro-Kann answers 1.e4 only. Against 1.d4, a simple start is 1…d5, as in An Accidental Guide to: The First Move in Chess, which also explains the notation. An x is a capture, # is checkmate and … marks a move by Black. Every board is seen from Black's side, with the a-file on your right.

You need four terms for the plan.

The light bishop	Black's bishop that starts on c8 and moves on the light squares.
Advance	White pushes the e-pawn to e5.
Exchange	White swaps the e-pawn for your pawn on d5.
Main line	White defends e4 with a knight, you take the pawn, and the knight takes back.

What does Black set up?

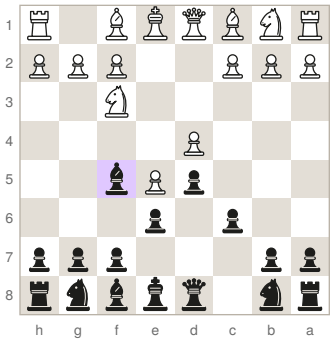


After 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5
The pawn on d5 challenges e4, and the bishop on c8 has an open road to f5.

White has three main choices on move 3. White can push the e-pawn to e5 in the Advance, swap it on d5 in the Exchange, or defend it with a knight in the Main line, and you take on e4. In each line, the light bishop comes out before …e6, then you bring out your other pieces and castle.

The light bishop

Lb
01



After 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nf3 e6

The bishop reached f5 before …e6, so the pawns on c6, d5 and e6 don't block it.

Identify by	Your bishop from c8 on f5 or g4, outside the pawns on c6, d5 and e6.
What	**The light bishop is Black's bishop that starts on c8.** Bring it to f5 or g4 before you play …e6.
So what	**A pawn on e6 would shut the bishop in.** Once the bishop is out, play …e6, bring out your knights and castle.

Field marks

White plays	You play
Any third move.	**Bishop out, then …e6.**

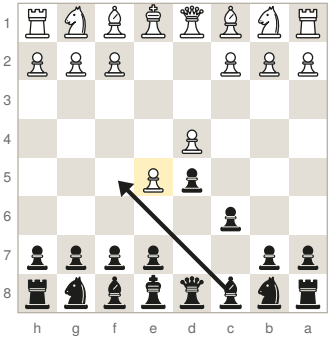
Confused with

The French Defense

The Caro-Kann begins 1.e4 c6, which leaves the bishop's road open. The French Defense begins 1.e4 e6, where the pawn can block the bishop on c8.

Advance

Av
02



After 3.e5
White's pawn has reached e5. Move the bishop from c8 to f5 before playing …e6.

Identify by
White's e-pawn on e5, next to your pawn on d5.

What
The Advance is White pushing the e-pawn to e5, which gains space.

So what
The bishop comes out with 3…Bf5, before …e6 can block it. After …e6, your bishop on f8 supports …c5, which attacks White's pawn on d4.

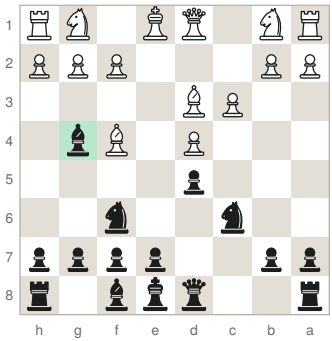
Field marks

White plays	You play
3.e5.	**3…Bf5, then …e6 and …c5.**

Confused with
Ex **Exchange**
The Advance moves White's e-pawn forward to e5. The Exchange uses that pawn to capture on d5 instead.

Exchange

Ex
03



After 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 Bg4

White's bishop on d3 stops …Bf5, so your light bishop goes to g4 instead.

Identify by	White's e-pawn gone and your c-pawn on d5.
What	**The Exchange is White swapping pawns with 3.exd5.** Take back with 3…cxd5.
So what	**Taking with the c-pawn frees c6 for your knight.** If White plays 4.Bd3 to stop …Bf5, put the light bishop on g4 instead.

Field marks

White plays	You play
3.exd5.	**3…cxd5, then …Nc6 and …Nf6.**

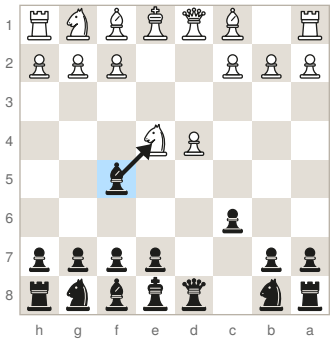
Confused with

The Panov Attack

The Exchange goes on quietly with 4.Bd3. The Panov Attack starts with 4.c4 instead, and White's c-pawn then attacks your pawn on d5.

Main line

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04



After 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5
Your bishop comes out to f5 and attacks the knight that took back on e4.

Identify by	White's knight on e4 after the pawns are exchanged.
What	**The Main line is White defending e4 with a knight.** After 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4, play 4…Bf5.
So what	**The bishop comes out and attacks the knight.** After 5.Ng3 Bg6, White often pushes h4. Answer with …h6, so the bishop can drop back to h7.

Field marks

White plays	You play
3.Nc3 or 3.Nd2.	**3…dxe4, then 4…Bf5.**

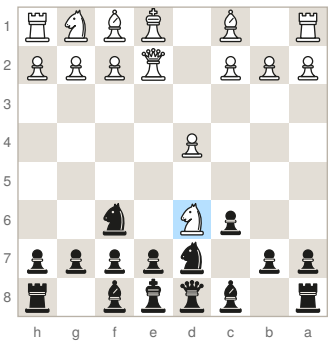
Confused with **3.Nd2**

Both 3.Nc3 and 3.Nd2 defend e4. After 3…dxe4 4.Nxe4 they usually reach the same position.

Which traps should you avoid?

Three traps catch a natural-looking move.

5.Qe2 and 6.Nd6	If you play 4…Nd7 instead of 4…Bf5, meet 5.Qe2 with 5…Ndf6. After 5…Ngf6, 6.Nd6 is checkmate.
h4 and h5	In the Main line, play …h6 when White plays h4 against your bishop on g6. The bishop can then retreat to h7.
h4 and g4	In the Advance, answer 4.h4 with 4…h5. After 4…e6, White traps the bishop with 5.g4 Be4 6.f3 Bg6 7.h5.



After 4…Nd7 5.Qe2 Ngf6 6.Nd6#

Checkmate. Your own pieces box in the king, and taking with the e7 pawn would open the e-file to White's queen.

Sources

These public sources were checked on 22 October 2026.

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Lb Av Ex Ml

An Accidental Guide to…

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A pocket-sized guide to a solid answer to 1.e4 that you can play as Black.
Written and reviewed by a person. AI does the grunt work. Set in TeX Gyre Heros and Newsreader.
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