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How can I practice a specific opening?

To practice a particular opening, click the **Training** button in the menu bar and then click **Game against an engine of your choice**. In the dialog box that appears, select the options you want, such as whether you want to play as white or black, the number of hints, the opponent and tutor engines, and the time control.

Then, in the Opening section at the bottom of the dialog box, click the **Undetermined** button. In the Opening dialog box that appears, use the list box to select a particular opening. With each selection you make, a new list box becomes available, so you can select the exact variation and sub-variation you want to play. Once you have made all your selections, click **Accept** and begin your game.

Note that you cannot choose to play a particular opening in normal, competitive mode (where you are automatically progressed through increasing levels of difficulty).

How do the levels work and how do they differ?

The levels differ in three ways. First, the category levels of the program differ in the number of hints available to you. Once you exhaust the number of hints you can accept, the program will continue to provide hints on weak moves, but you can no longer accept them. Note that takebacks also count as hints: if you choose to change one of your moves using the Takeback button, you will have used up another of your allotted hints.

The number of hints per category level is as follows:

- Beginner: 7 hints
- Amateur: 5 hints
- Master Candidate: 3 hints
- Master: 2 hints
- Grandmaster Candidate: 1 hint, and once you choose to accept the hint (change your move), no further hints will appear
- Grandmaster: no hints

Second, regarding the numerals that appear after the level name (Beginner Level 1, 2, 3, etc.), these show the search depth of the engine. So at Beginner Level 1, the chess engine looks ahead only one move (two plys or half-moves: one move for White, and the following response for Black). At Beginner Level 2, the engine looks ahead two moves or four plys, and so on. As

you improve your play, the engine automatically increases its strength by calculating longer sequences of possible moves to find what it considers the best response.

Third, there is a point system used by the program as you win games. The score for each game is calculated by multiplying the numerical playing level (search depth) by the number of points associated with each category.

The number of points associated with each category is as follows:

- Beginner: 5
- Amateur: 10
- Master Candidate: 20
- Master: 40
- Grandmaster Candidate: 80
- Grandmaster: 160

These calculated scores appear in the titlebar of the Lucas Chess program window and are used to submit your scores (Information menu > Post your score).

When and why do new levels become available?

(Beginner Level 1, 2, 3..., Amateur Level 1, Master Candidate...)

To advance to the next numerical level (that is, the next search-depth level within a category), you must win one game from that engine as White and one as Black. Then you are automatically “promoted” by the program (the engine increases its search depth by one additional move).

When and why do new category levels become available?

(Amateur, Master Candidate, Master, Grandmaster Candidate, Grandmaster)

When you first start the program, only Beginner Level 1 is available by default. Additional levels become available (active selections in the New Game menu) once you have advanced to the next numerical level in the previous category.

So, if you are at Beginner Level 1, no other categories are available. Once you have progressed to Beginner Level 2, you **could** choose to play at Amateur Level 1 as an alternative to continuing in the Beginner category. And once you have reached Beginner Level 4, you could choose to switch to the Amateur category and play until you have reached Amateur Level 3. To advance to a higher level in the new category (Amateur), you first need to return to the previous category (Beginner) and win more games to advance to higher levels there.

Until you have played in a new category, however, you will still see only the first numerical level displayed in the menu. In other words, if you stick to the Beginner levels – regardless of how high the search depth is currently – you will have to start playing the Amateur category at Level 1. The same rules apply for progressing through the numerical levels at each category (winning one game as White and one as Black).

Why should I choose to play in a higher category level?

The only difference in the category levels is the number of hints you are offered (and that you can accept) and the points awarded. There is nothing wrong with staying at a given category and simply allowing the program to progress you to more advanced search depth levels within that category. Selecting a category level is simply a matter of personal preference, and whether you want to continue to be able to accept more (or fewer) hints. However, to better gauge your progress, you may choose to play at the higher category levels, where you will have to play with fewer hints to guide you (or with no hints, at the Grandmaster level).

How do hints and takebacks work?

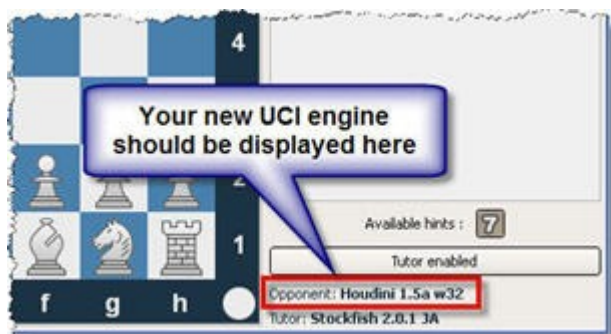
When playing rated games, the number of hints (or takebacks) you get is tied to the category level you are playing (Beginner, Amateur, etc.).

However, if you use the Training function – for example, to select a particular opening to practice against the computer – then the number of hints is essentially unlimited. In the “Game against an engine of your choice” dialog box, you can choose the number of hints available, up to a maximum of 99. You can also use the Takeback check box to control that function. If the Takeback box is filled (has a check mark in it), you can take back as many moves as you like, without limit. However, if the box is cleared, then you only have as many takebacks allowed as you have hints. Once you have used up all your allotted takebacks, the Takeback button disappears from the menu bar.

Can I play Lucas Chess with other chess engines?

You can install additional UCI engines in Lucas Chess. To do so, start in the main window of Lucas Chess (not the game window) and follow these steps:

1. Click **Options > External Engines**.
2. In the External Engines dialog box, click **New**, browse to the folder containing the engine you have downloaded, select it, and then click **Open**.
3. In the engine’s dialog box that appears, review the settings, make any changes you want, and then click **Accept**.
4. Click **Save** to close the External Engines dialog box.
5. Click Training > Game against an engine of your choice.
6. In the Engines area of the dialog box, click the **Opponent** list box and select the UCI engine you installed. Any additional engines you install will have an asterisk (*) next to the engine name.
7. Make any other selections you want (such as opening or tutor engine) and click **Accept** to close the “Game against...” dialog box.
8. The game board appears and you can begin playing against the new chess engine you installed.
9. In the bottom right of the chessboard interface, the opponent and tutor engines (if applicable) are displayed. You should see the name of your new engine in the Opponent field. If another engine name is displayed, repeat the preceding steps carefully, and be sure to select the new engine as the opponent.



Note: you can also select any UCI engine you install in Lucas Chess as the default tutor. In the main Lucas Chess window, click Options > Configuration. In the Configuration dialog box, click the Tutor list box and select the engine you want to use as the default tutor. (You can also change the window style and language here.) Click Accept to close the dialog box. The Lucas Chess window will close and then launch again with the new preferences saved.

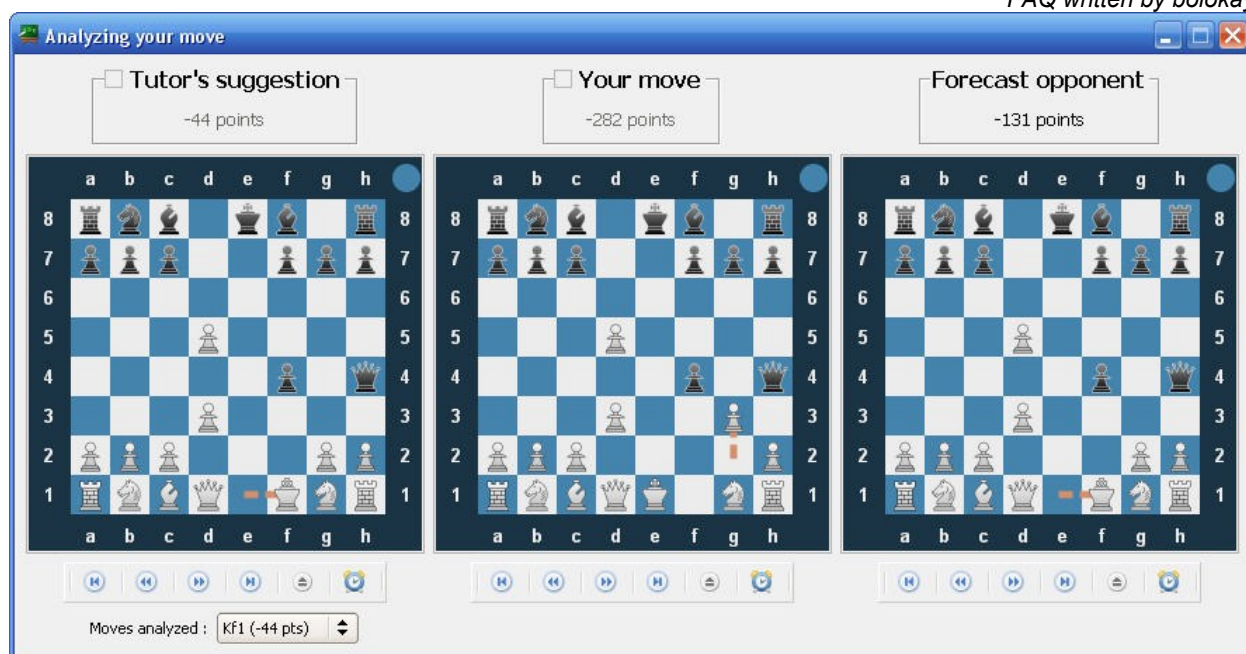
How can I make best use of the tutor's advice?

Some of the suggested moves don't make sense to me.

After you make a weak move in your game (and the tutor feature is enabled), the tutor window or hint window appears (this window is actually called Analyzing your move).

The tutor window contains three small chessboards. The first board displays the tutor's suggested move, the second shows the move you just made, and the third shows the move the chess engine you are playing against expected you to make (called "Forecast opponent"). Frequently, the tutor's suggested move and the "Forecast opponent" move will be the same; chess engines often tend to think alike. Most of the time, you will want to focus your attention on the first chessboard in the tutor window: the Tutor's suggestion.

If you want to accept the tutor's suggested move instead of the move you made, click the **Tutor's suggestion** check box. If you want to disregard the hint and stay with your move, click the **Your move** check box. You return to your game and the move you selected is made.

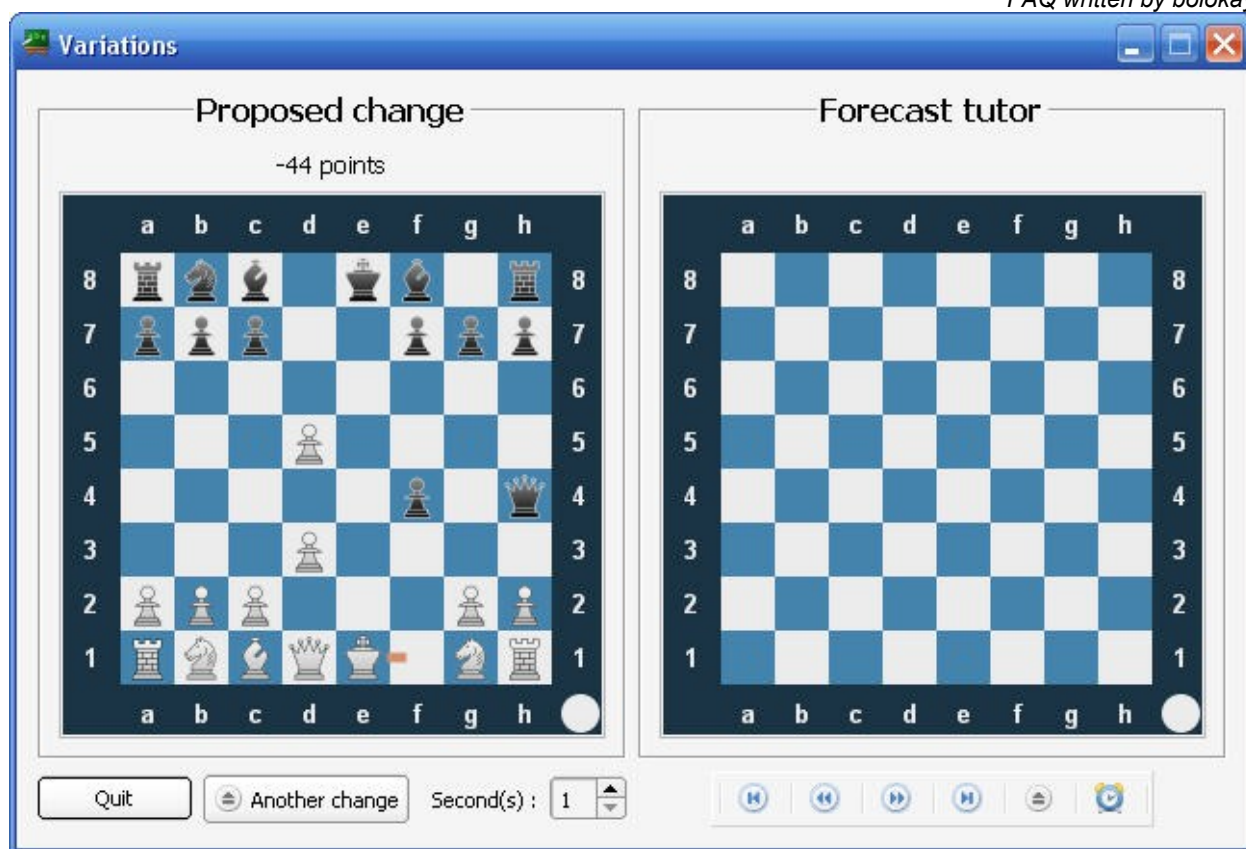


To make the best use of the tutor's advice and to understand the reasons behind some of the suggested moves, you will need to use the VCR-style toolbar beneath each of the mini-chessboards in the tutor window.

The buttons from left to right on the toolbar are named First move, Previous move, Next move, Last move, Analysis of variation, and Timed movement. You can use the first three buttons to move back and forth through the variation suggested by the tutor. The fourth button will jump to the last move in the variation (the final position). The sixth button is the **Timed movement** button, and looks like an alarm clock. If you want to animate the whole sequence of moves in the tutor's proposed variation – rather than click through each move individually – click the **Timed movement** button. It functions like the play button on a video player.

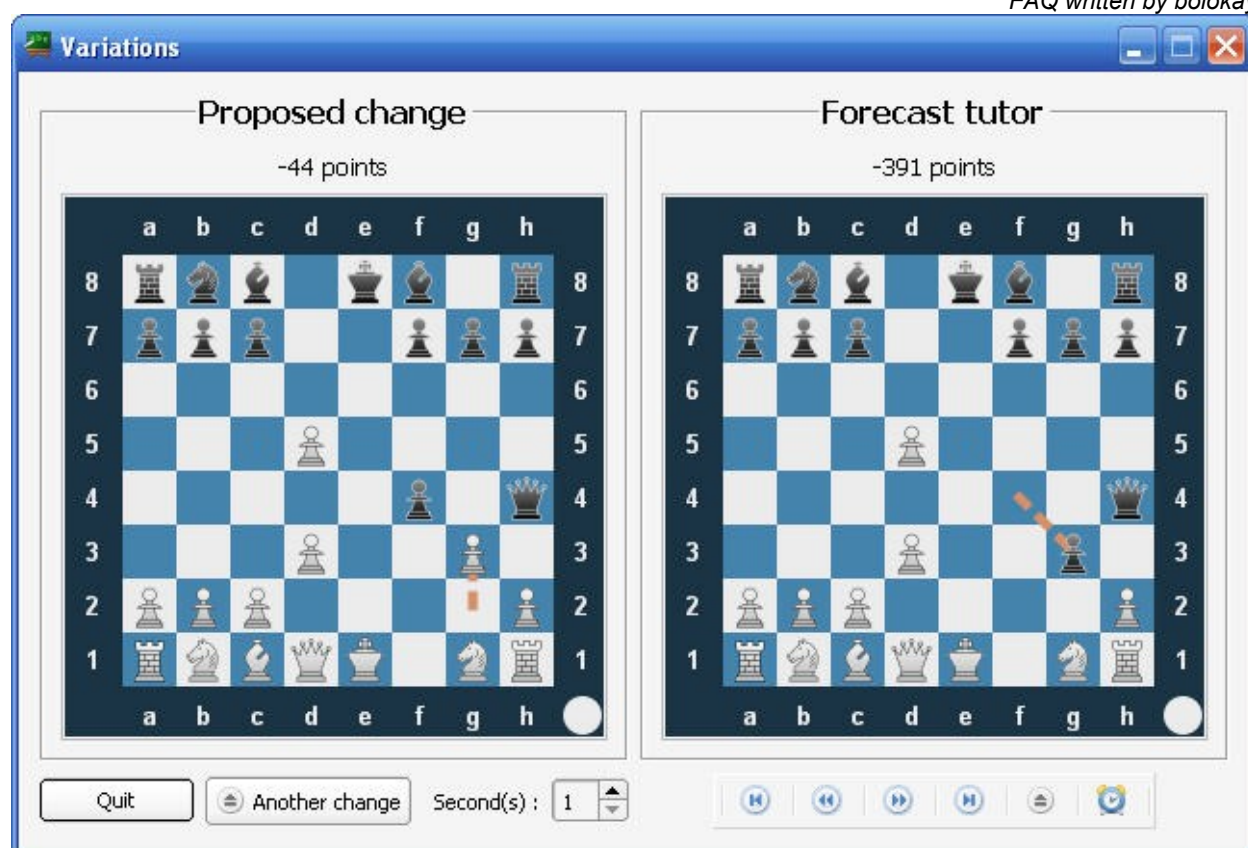
The fifth button is the **Analysis of variation** button. If you click this button, a Variations window appears. The Variations window allows you to try out different moves within a variation suggested by the tutor. Experimenting with "candidate" moves this way can be helpful when you are trying to understand the moves the tutor is suggesting. If you can't see the reason for a certain move, try replacing it with another move in the Variations window.

In the Variations window, there are two chessboards. The first one is called Proposed change. This board will display the same position as on the Tutor's suggestion board, *at the same point in the variation that you navigated to* (in the tutor window) using the VCR-style buttons. The second board in the Variations window is called Forecast tutor, and initially it will be empty.



In the example above, you can see that the tutor is suggesting that White moves his king to f1 in this position (notice the orange dashed line, which is very short in this example because the destination square is only one square away). If you wanted to know why the engine thinks this is a good move, you can use this Variations window to try another move and see what the refutation might be.

So in this example, imagine you wanted to know why blocking the check with your g-pawn is **not** recommended. Use the Proposed change chessboard to make that move (g2-g3). Once you do, the Forecast tutor chessboard displays the new position, *after Black's reply to your new move*. Now, you can use the VCR-style buttons under the Forecast tutor board to play through the subsequent variation.



The graphic above shows our alternate move g3 and Black's reply to it, which is fxg3, as shown on the Forecast tutor board. You can play through the rest of the variation on the Forecast tutor board to see what the outcome will be. Then, you can compare this variation with the one proposed by the tutor in the tutor window (starting with Kf1, in our example). This way, you can experiment with different candidate moves and the resulting variations without affecting your actual game.

How do I back up my preferences and data?

All user data for Lucas Chess are stored in the program's UsrData folder. By default, after installing the program, the folder is found here: C:\Program Files\AjedrezLucas\UsrData. To back up your data, simply copy the UsrData folder to another drive or burn to a CD or DVD. If you want to use Lucas Chess on another computer and retain your settings/rating, simply install Lucas Chess on that computer and replace the contents of the UsrData folder with the ones you backed up. (Be sure the program is not running when you overwrite the contents of this folder.)

What information is submitted when I post my scores?

You can post your scores to enter the Lucas Chess rating competition (strictly for fun). To do so, click **Information > Post your score** in the main program window.

The information that will be sent to the Lucas Chess website includes:

- Your alias – this does not have to match the name in the program, and you can change it as often as you like.

- Scores. Use the check boxes to send only the Lucas-Elo scores or ratings for each engine and category you have played (or both). If you clear both check boxes, your previously submitted scores will be deleted from the website.
- The current date and time.
- User ID. When you install the program, you create an ID based on the current date and time and a random number to ensure that all IDs are different. This feature allows you to change your alias/nickname without having duplicate records posted on the site.

★ Post your score

Alias :

Information about sent data:

Alias: you want to appear in the ranking.
Id: unique ID, created with a random number and the date where the program was used for the first time.
Current date: the current date where data were sent.
Data are sent to the web site (data are sent crypted).

☒ Ratings: for each engine and category.
☒ Lucas-Elo