

Coach M's Fall 2025 Puzzle Sheet

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After attempting this activity, check your solutions with the provided key and let me know how you do!

I'm so much looking forward to continuing working with you in 2025 and seeing you all continue to climb the ranks, grow stronger, and achieve your chess goals!

All the best! Sincerely, Coach M

P.S. (*) Visit my website:

http://drmtutoring.com/en_US/chess-tutoring/

for more Chess Worksheets & Resources.

Sincerely,

Dr. J. Mandelkern (Coach M)

Coach M's Tip: If a puzzle position is proving too difficult, then set this position up on a physical chess board. After you've formulated your solutions for each position, check your work with the answers given in the back of the worksheet and/or by loading up the PGN file in an analysis board and switching on a chess engine. For each position given, the object is to either give the best move, identify the best line of play, or simply best answer the given chess question. Below is a scoring rubric.

NOTE: Some positions may have multiple solutions. The theme of this chess activity is the well-known "Queenside Bind" plan described in the classic chess book, "The Ideas Behind Chess Openings", written by Reuben Fine and published in 1943 (1st ed.).

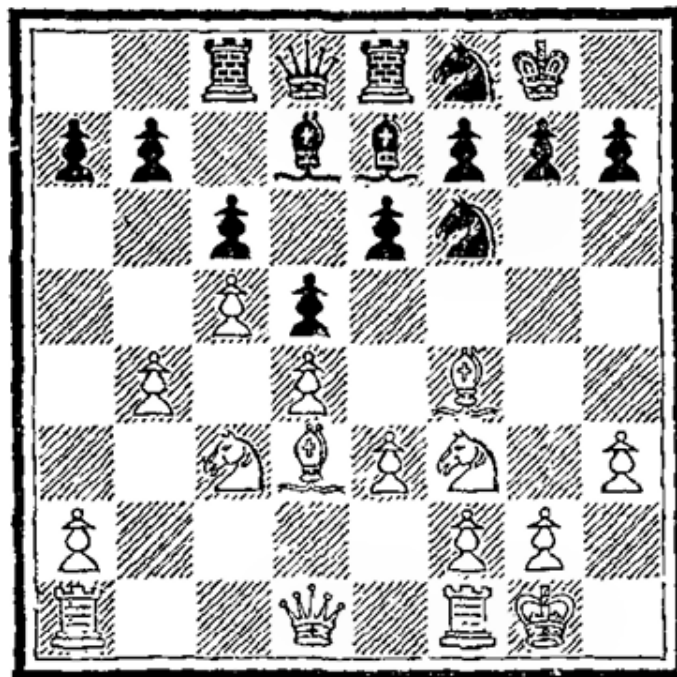
Scoring Rubric:

5/5 + BONUS CORRECT	Super Grandmaster	Elo: 2700+
Miss only 1	FM/IM/Grandmaster	Elo: 2300-2700
Miss 2	Expert/Master	Elo: 2000-2300
Miss 3	Advanced Player/Class A	Elo: 1800-2000
Miss 4	Stronger Intermediate Player, Class B	Elo: 1600-1800
Miss 5	Improving Beginner-Intermediate Player, Class E/Class D/Class C	Elo: 1000-1600
0/6	Absolute Beginner	Elo: 600-1000

Background: The term “queenside bind” appears in Reuben Fine’s book, “The Ideas Behind Chess Openings”, as one of the primary methods for white to achieve an opening edge within the queen’s pawn game. Below is the excerpt from this book mentioning this plan:

In 21A we have the *Q-side bind*. Here White’s advantage lies on the Q-side. By the eventual advance P—Kt5, he will weaken Black’s Q-side Pawns, enter with his Rook or minor piece, sooner or later secure something tangible. Black’s defenses in the present position are at best palliatives; it is likely that he is already lost against exact play. There is one good way to counteract such a set-up: don’t let it happen. If Black is prepared to react with P—K4 the moment White tries P—B5, the Q-side bind can never become effective.

No. 21A



Q-side Bind.

Referring to the above diagram, several telltale signs of an effective queenside bind plan (for white) are shown.

Namely, from a Queen's Gambit Declined (QGD) opening, white "pushed past" with their c-pawn, playing c4-c5, and followed-up by successfully consolidating the queenside space edge conferred by this pawn advance.

As a result of the bind, black is helpless to fend off white's impending queenside pawn assault spearheaded by the b-pawn & also supported by white's minor and heavy pieces. At least in the diagrammed position, black does not possess sufficient defensive resources nor is there sufficient counterplay elsewhere on the board.

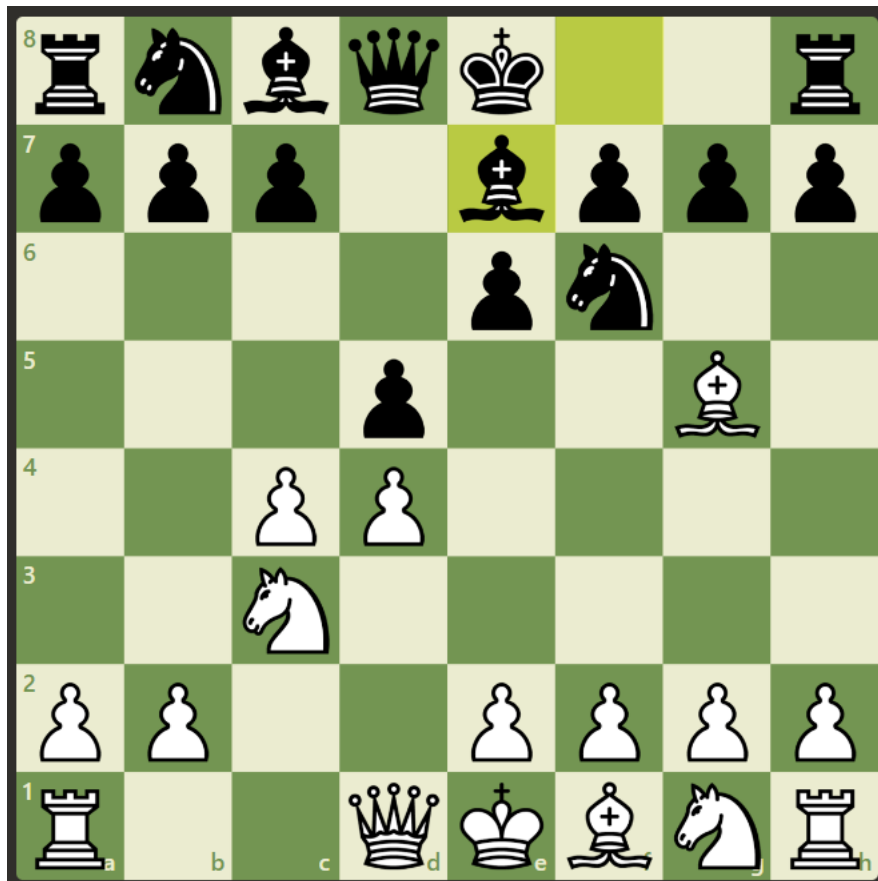
In fact, the bind shown above is so effective that white is already strategically winning despite there being no piece or pawn trades and regardless of who has the move in the diagrammed position (White is winning the above position with best play regardless of whether it is white or black to move.).

Your task for the positions below will center around this important theoretical plan, the queenside bind, and specifically determining when to go for this plan and when to refrain from doing so.

Good Luck and Do Your Best!

1. To Queenside Bind or not? White to play.

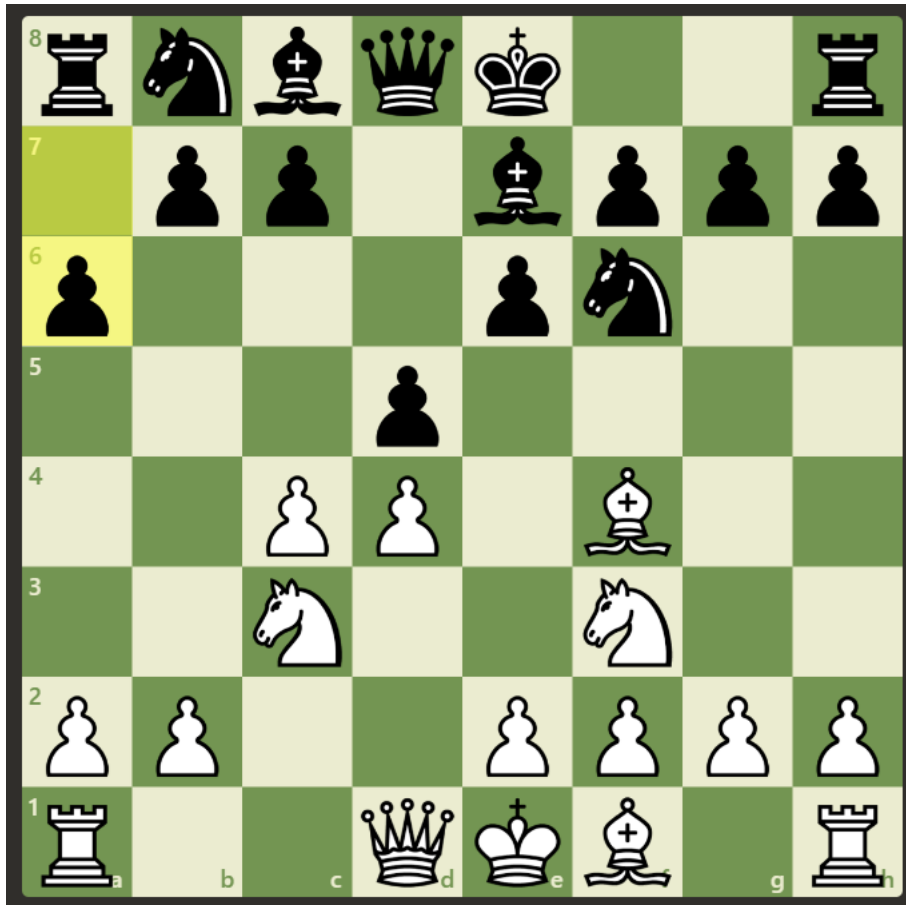
(Difficulty Level: Easy: 2/10)



Should white go for the queenside bind here with c4-c5?

2. To Queenside Bind or not? White to play.

(Difficulty Level: Easy: 2/10)



Should white go for the queenside bind here with c4-c5?

3. Has the Queenside Bind been stymied by black's gridlock strategy?

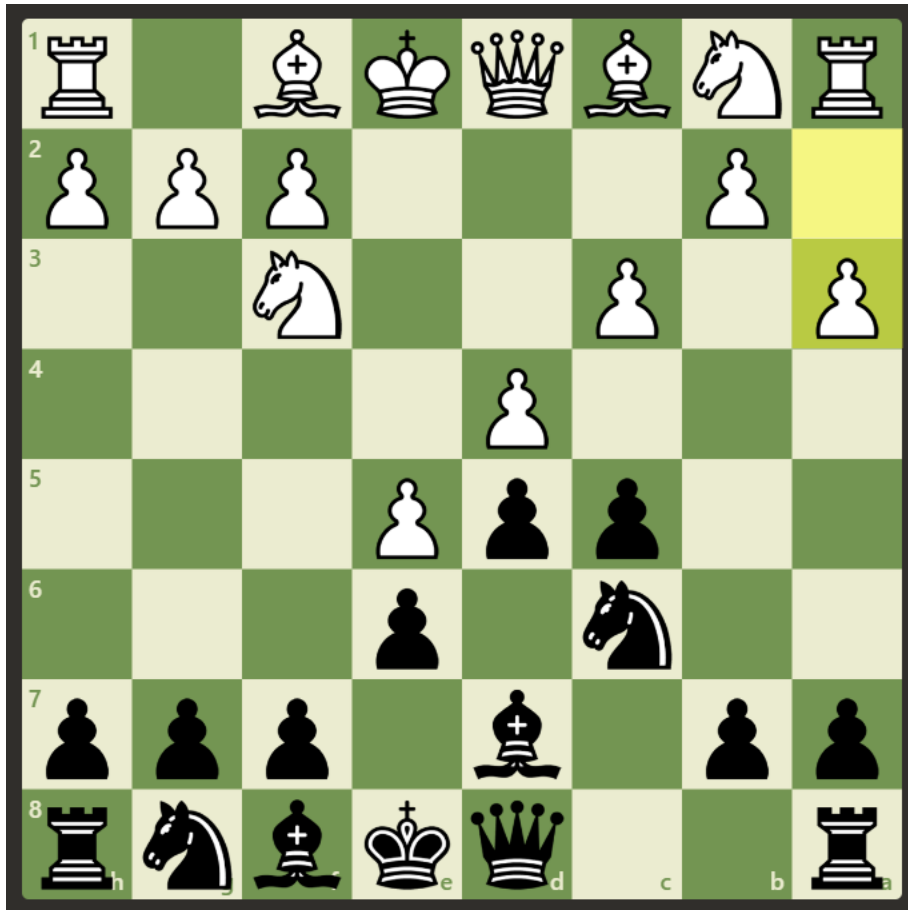
White to play. In this position, can white break through?

(Difficulty Level: Medium: 4/10)



4. Can black also use a Queenside Bind? Black to play.

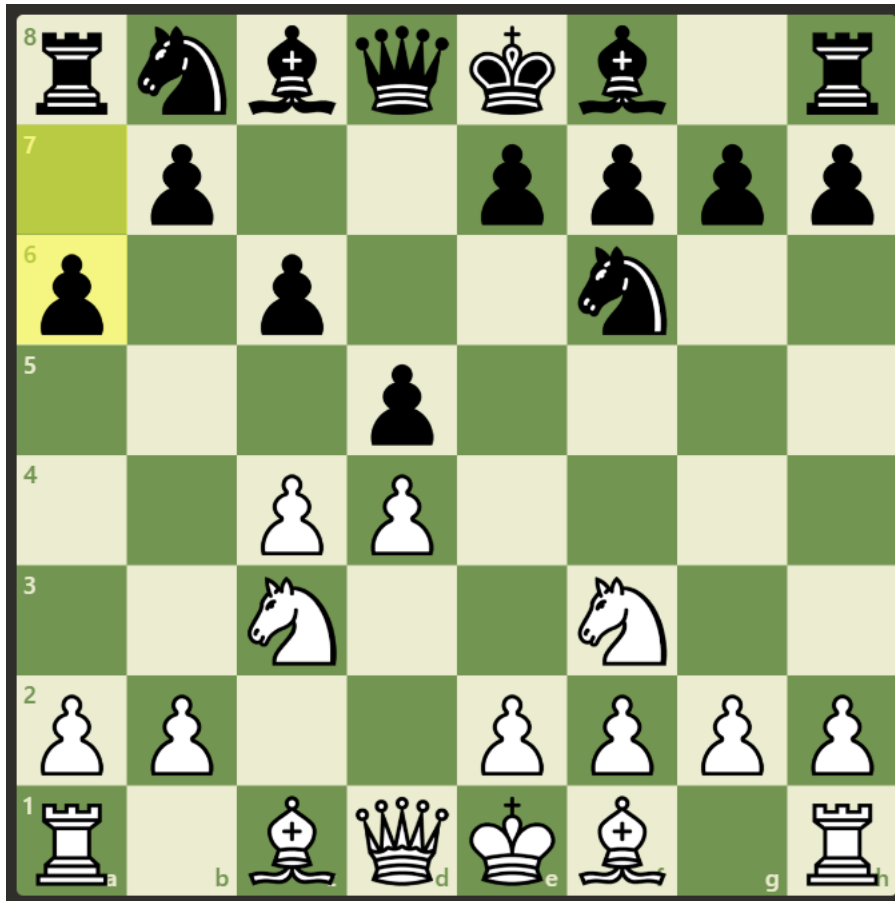
(Difficulty Level: Medium: 4/10)



Should black attempt a queenside bind here with c5-c4?

5. To Queenside Bind or not? White to play.

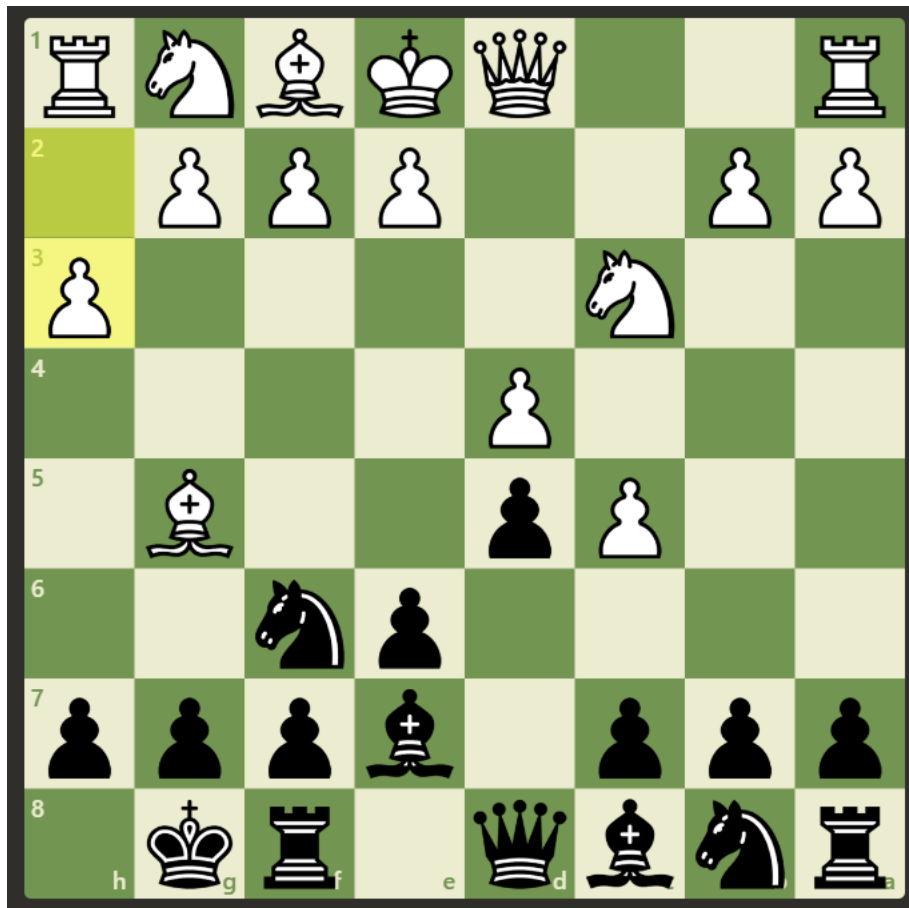
(Difficulty Level: Medium: 4/10)



Should white go for the queenside bind here with c4-c5?

BONUS: Give the best line of play & evaluate: White to play.

(Difficulty Level: Hard: 9/10)



This is the first position where white has gone too early with a queenside bind and thus can be duly punished. Give the whole line of play for black to exploit this faulty queenside bind.

Including the text move h3, with best play, the next (3) (best) moves for each player will be:

1. h3 _____

2. _____

3. _____

The evaluation after these moves is:

Select Full game links/Solutions/PGN/Image Files

1. No! Here the queenside bind attempt is unjustified and ineffective. After c5?, black can punish this faulty bind attempt with b6! before or after castling as shown in the model game. White is unable to maintain & consolidate the space edge on the queenside.

Game link: <https://www.chess.com/game/live/28034364541>

2. Yes, go for it! Here c5! is an effective plan against black's set-up and this plan leads to an edge for white. Note: All of e3, cxd, and Qc2 are also sufficient for a comfortable opening edge for white.

Game link: <https://www.chess.com/game/live/142985455336>

3. Nxb5! easily breaks through black's gridlock strategy and confers to white a clearly winning advantage (+3). Here's an illustration of how the sacrifice pans out.

Game link: <https://www.chess.com/game/live/142985455336>

4. Yes, go for it! Here, in this main line of the French Defense, Advance Variation, Paulsen, Euwe Variation, c4! is a strong move which restricts white's ability to make the pawn thrust, b2-b4, which if achieved here, could significantly restrict black's queenside play. However, after black's effective queenside binding move c4!, b4?! would be wholly ineffective for white and confer upon black a half-pawn edge.

5. Yes, go for it! Here, in this main line of the Slav Defense, Modern, Chameleon Variation, c5! is a strong move which restricts black's ability to make the pawn thrust, b7-b5, which if achieved here after say black prefaces with dxc, could significantly accelerate black's queenside play and completely free black's game. However, after white's effective queenside binding move c5!, b7-b5?! would be poor for black while b7-b6!? still confers upon white a comfortable edge of +.4.

BONUS: Kudos if you found **1... b6! 2. cxb c5! (slightly stronger than axb) 3. Bxa Nc6! (slighter stronger than cxd and considerably stronger than Rxa) 4. e3**. This best line of play gives black an advantage of ~ -0.7 . If you found the line **1... b6! 2. b4? a5! 3. a3 axb 4. axb**, this line gives black a commanding edge of -3 . If you found the line **1... b6! 2. cxb axb 3. e3 Ne4 4. Bxe7**, this line gives black a significant edge of ~ -0.5 though less than the optimal line for black.

Illustrative Game (PGN):

[Event "gianluck2004 vs. chesscoachtaipei"]

[Site "Chess.com"]

[Date "2021-10-15"]

[White "gianluck2004"]

[Black "chesscoachtaipei"]

[Result "0-1"]

[WhiteElo "1815"]

[BlackElo "2310"]

[TimeControl "standard"]

[Termination "chesscoachtaipei won by resignation"]

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Bg5 d5 4. Nc3 Be7 5. c5? O-O 6. h3 b6! 7. b4 a5 8. a3 axb4 9. axb4 Rxa1 10. Qxa1 Nc6 11. Nf3 Nxb4 12. Qb2 bxc5 13. dxc5 Bxc5 14. e3 h6 15. Bxf6 Qxf6 16. Be2 Na2 17. Qxa2 Qxc3+ 18. Qd2 Bb4 19. Qxc3 Bxc3+ 20. Kd1 Bd7 21. Kc2 Bf6 22. Rc1 c5 23. Kd2 Rc8 0-1

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