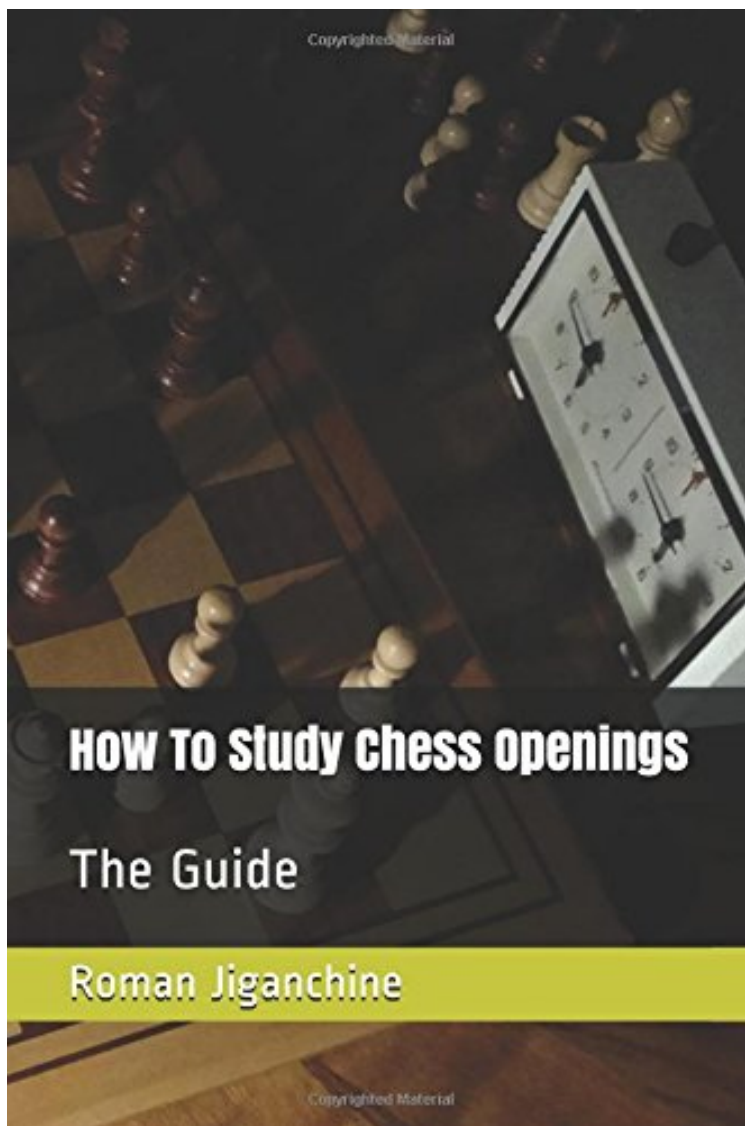


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There is an interesting paradox in the chess community - many coaches and teachers warn players of all levels against the excessive obsession with opening theory and yet the vast majority of chess materials in digital or printed form are dedicated to specific opening variations or positions. While everyone admits that memorizing variations will never guarantee success in over the board or online encounters, there is clearly a demand for products that help chess players of all levels to successfully navigate through the first stage of the game. At the same time, there is a lack of detailed discussion regarding how seasoned players (expert level and above) structure their work on chess openings, store their analysis, come up with new ideas, prepare for tournament games and so on. Rather than provide another set of variations, key positions and critical games in a specific opening area, this book is meant to fill this gap and help the reader to make sense from all the information that is out there and save as much time and energy as possible, while still building a bulletproof opening repertoire. The book is aimed at any chess player who wants to improve their opening play and is looking for some guidance in that area. Despite the large proliferation of computer chess software, there is a lack of explanation for how to tie to it effectively to one's study of openings. In the most advanced book on the subject, 'Opening Preparation', published in 1990s, the renowned coach Mark Dvoretsky, while giving great coverage for other topics, described the system for storing opening analysis on paper cards, with a side note that this was outdated and software should be used instead and that this was a large topic deserving a separate discussion. Since then there was a deafening silence on the subject in chess books, at least partially inspiring this publication, which outlines the system for storing opening analysis that served the author well for almost a decade. The goal of the book is to help the reader to increase their creativity in the opening phase of the game - both at home and during the games - whether you are a serious tournament player, or just play chess for fun at a club or on the Internet. Most of the plans and ideas are coming from Grandmaster games, with additional examples of preparation from the author's own master level games. Whether you enjoy opening preparation already, or it is your weak spot, I hope the book will give you some food for thought and practical suggestions applicable immediately upon reading the book. If rather than remember exact opening moves from the book examples, the reader is instead inspired to come up with their own ideas - the author's mission will be quite accomplished! Good opening preparation is all about picking the right direction for opening research and investing time into fine-tuning the understanding of favourable positions that are most likely to occur in our games. The basic premise throughout the book is to base one's opening preparation on 3 E's: Enjoyable - the positions that you analyze during opening preparation should appeal to your chess taste, and the process itself should feel pleasant and creative. See the section on 'Creativity' for more details. Effective - ultimately it should bring good results during tournament games, and be targeted at the positions that are most likely to occur on the board. This is covered under sections on Cutting Opponent's Options, Transpositions, and so on. Our choice of opening variations is more likely to make our work effective than anything else. Efficient - this not as important as effectiveness, but we still don't want to waste time and analysis, so various computer tools are suggested to optimize the 'how' of opening analysis, save our work, and efficiently retrieve it.