

Study Brief: 1000–1500

What this stage is about

Tactics alone stop being enough to climb. You now need a repertoire that gives you positions you actually understand, and you need to start studying your own games rather than only solving puzzles in isolation. This is also the stage where facing 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 c5 — the Sicilian — starts showing up often enough to need a real plan against it.

Weekly plan

- **2 sessions on Tactics**, moving to harder pools and starting Tactic or Not alongside it.
- **2 sessions on openings**, now including anti-Sicilian systems for White.
- **1 session reviewing a recent game of your own** through My Games — this matters as much as any puzzle session now.
- **1 session on Rush or Visualisation**, alternating week to week.
- **Spar against Maia** at the 1200 Elo preset once a week, for realistic human-style resistance rather than engine perfection.

Recommended packs

As White, against the Sicilian:

- Sicilian Alapin and Sicilian Rossolimo/Moscow — two low-theory, high-practical-value ways to meet 1...c5 without taking on the sharpest main lines yet.
- Grand Prix Attack — an aggressive, plan-driven alternative worth having alongside the quieter options above.

As White, more broadly:

- Torre Attack and Trompowsky Attack — both let you reach a plan-based middlegame against almost anything Black plays, without memorising a different reply to every defence.

As Black, against 1.d4:

- Nimzo-Indian Defence, Queen's Indian Defence, and King's Indian Defence — pick one as your main system and keep the other two in view; all three are built around clear strategic ideas rather than forcing lines.

As White, against 1.d4 for Black's benefit to understand too:

- Catalan Opening — worth knowing both sides of, since you'll meet it as Black soon enough.

As Black, against 1.e4:

- Petroff Defence — a genuinely solid equaliser, good to add alongside whatever you're already playing.

Which Train modes to lean on

Tactic or Not earns its place here — distinguishing "there's a tactic" from "there isn't one" is a different, equally important skill from solving one once you know it exists. Keep Rush and Visualisation both active. My Games becomes a real weekly habit from this point on: a single well-reviewed loss, with the move explanations switched on, teaches more than several puzzle sessions.

When you're ready to move up

Move to the 1500–2000 brief once you've picked a real main defence to 1.d4 and are comfortable with your anti-Sicilian choice, your Rush and Tactic or Not scores are both climbing, and your own-game reviews are starting to show recurring strategic mistakes rather than one-off blunders.