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# **The Elshad System For White**



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# Foreword

Dear Reader,

I am very happy that you have purchased my book; but you, too, have reason to be happy. Those of you who a year ago purchased the first book on the Elshad System have asked me many times whether one may also play this system with White? The answer is: Yes!

Indeed, the inventor of this system, Elshad Mamedov, did so himself. He started using his system way back in 1975. The universality of the system is such that it can be played, not only as Black, but also as White. Having absorbed the basic setups and piece maneuvers, you may use Elshad's Opening against any opposition.

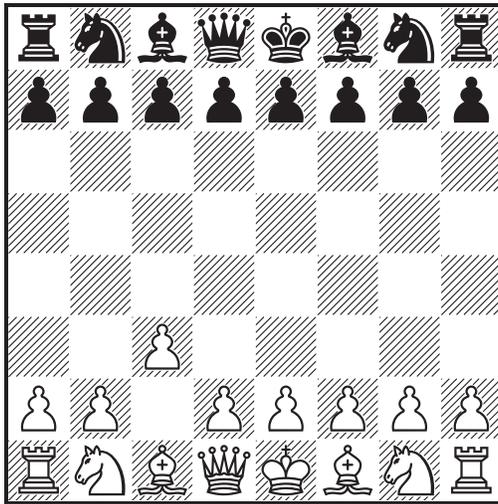
The system works especially well in blitz and rapid games. Why? Very simple: a player who has never before encountered this opening, starts eating up his time because he doesn't understand how to react to it. Is it possible realistically to expect him to do this in a three-minute game? This turns out to be one of our main assets. And fighting psychology is no less important. Our opponent, facing "this trash," gets nervous; if you're playing the game in the park, they might even say something right to your face. They'll consider it necessary to refute this sort of thing and overpress.

In this book, we have presented some of Elshad's games, some of mine, and some by other chessplayers – including a future grandmaster, Vasily Papin. The opening's philosophy is laid out in the Introduction. I have to say: the popularity of Elshad's Opening is enormous! I have even managed to play, over the Internet, a thematic match against FIDE Master Konstantin Kozlov – which I won 5.5-4.5. Thus did I defend this opening's honor!

Discover for yourself this new chess frontier!

# Introduction

## 1.c3



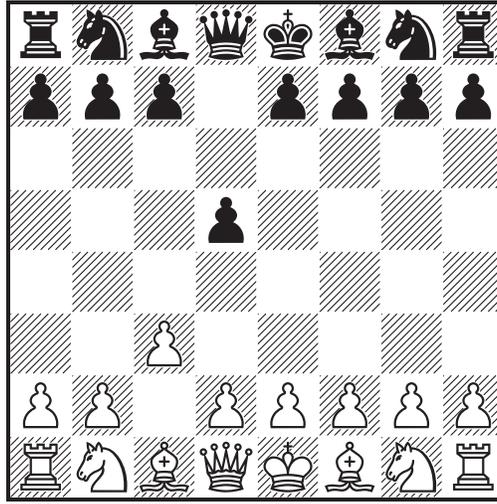
And so, we begin. Naturally, the first time you see this kind of opening move, various feelings begin to come over you: confusion, contempt – anger, even. How can he play such nonsense – and against *me*? Does he think I’m some sort of patzer?

However, strictly speaking, what has happened here? White has simply *declined to advance* his center pawn two spaces as classical theory teaches. Does this mean, then, that he has played an “incorrect” opening move? Not at all. I would agree with those who say that White has forfeited his first-move advantage: so be it. Now Black is offered the opportunity to occupy the center with his own pawn – to move “first,” as it were. Is he ready for this? I don’t think so. In fact, what’s the idea behind having the first move? We have opened a path to the queenside for the queen – and to what end? Slow down; all will be revealed in due course. Every move in Elshad’s Opening will be explained, one at a time.

But really, what is Black to do now? The replies 1...e5 or 1...d5 seem logical now. Also, 1...♘f6 or 1...c5 are sometimes played here. For now, we’ll take these in order:

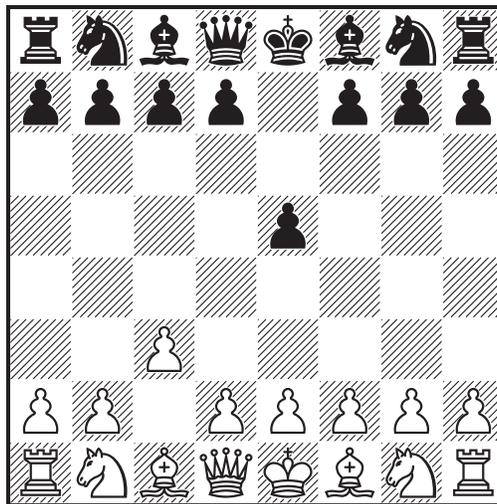
## Introduction

**1...d5**



By far the most natural response. Why? Well, if only because 1.c3 would make it a Closed Game. Also, because not everyone would respond to 1.e4 with 1...e5. Of course, now Black would clearly want to set another pawn up in the center next move. We have no objection to this.

1) 1...e5:



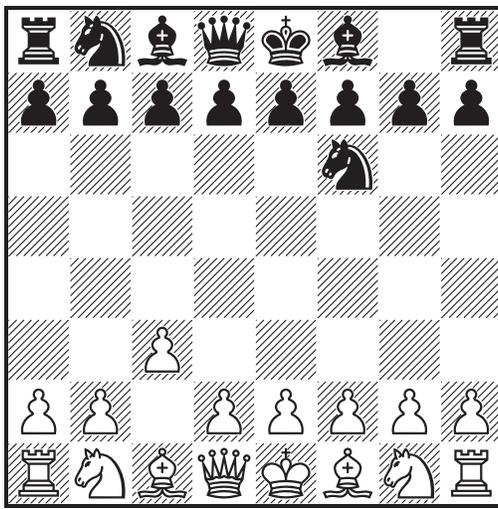
Certainly, this is an excellent opening move. White keeps playing his game. First, he brings the queen out to the fourth rank.

2.♔a4 (hah! – Black is prevented from following up with 2...d5 right away) 2...♘f6. Naturally. Now White is at a crossroads: he

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could play 3.e4, which sometimes brings positions reminiscent of Ponziani's Opening; however, Elshad's concept sets out something completely different in this variation. We might continue his plan of preparing h2-h3 and g2-g4, with a kingside attack. Each of these approaches will have its own chapter.

2) 1...♘f6:



A universal reply. Black waits to see what his opponent does. Will he go back to theoretical lines? No!

2.♙a4 g6

Setting up a nice, safe house for the king – anyway, that's what it looks like for Black.

3.d3 ♕g7 4.g4

Still not looking too dangerous.

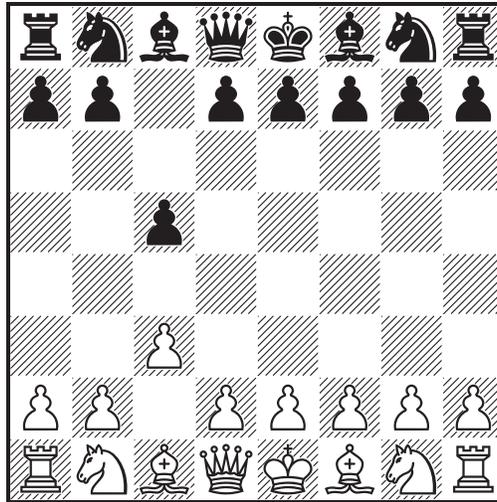
4...0-0 5.g5 ♘d5 6.♕g2 ♘b6 7.♙f4

Not to h4 right away. First we must let the pawn move forward.

7...♘c6 8.h4 d5 9.h5 e5 10.♙h4, and we are back on the main road. In a practical game, the threat of h5xg6 is unstoppable.

3) 1...c5:

## Introduction

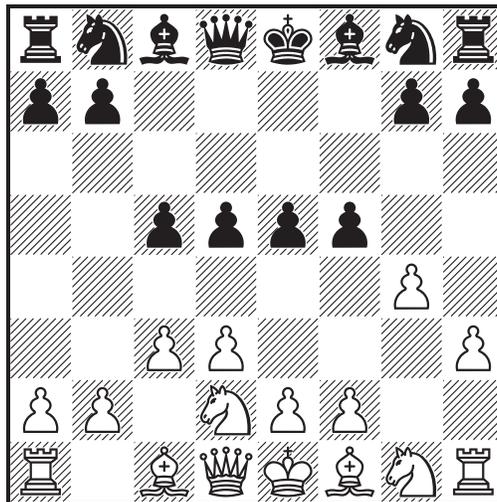


Welcome to the strategic department in the Elshad. In this variation, Black occupies way too much space.

2.d3

Humble. Of course, White could (and should) also play ♔d1-a4.

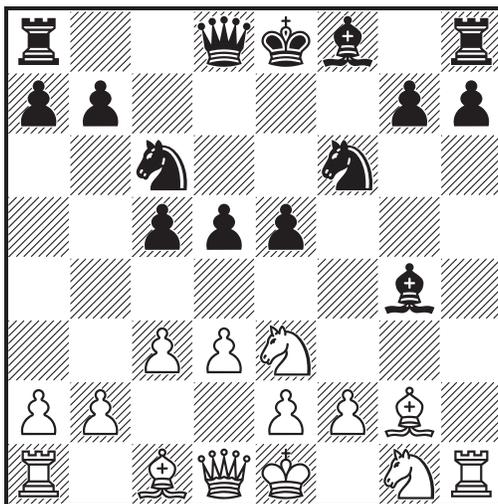
2...d5 3.♘d2 e5 4.h3 f5 5.g4:



There's a novelty for you! Isn't the pawn hanging? Why not take it? Undoubtedly, that's what Black is thinking. Meanwhile, time is rushing past, especially when you're playing on the Internet at three minutes a game, with no increment.

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5...fxg4 6.hxg4 ♔xg4 7.♕g2 ♖f6 8.♗f1 ♘c6 9.♘e3:



Some of White's ideas start to emerge. The d5-pawn is clearly weak. It may also be attacked by the white queen from b3. And Black certainly doesn't want to cede the light-squared bishop, because those squares around his king would be decisively weakened.

9...♔e6

Everything appears to be under control! But Black is sadly mistaken!

10.♘h3

The knight moves precisely this way, so as not to block his g2-bishop. The threat is ♘g5.

10...h6

Black feels safe now – but only for a second. He thinks that he has prevented ♘g5.

11.♘g5

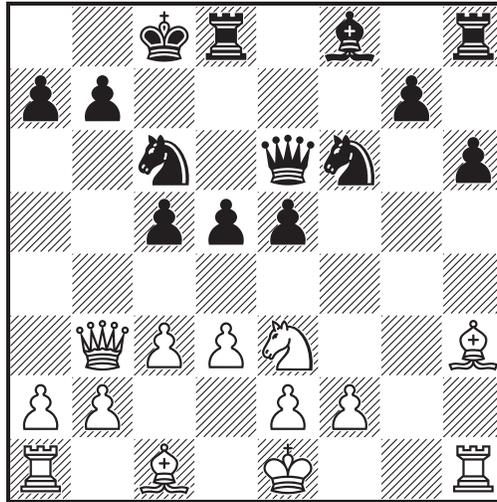
And here's Elshad's Surprise!

11...♔d7 (of course, not 11...hxg5 12.♖xh8) 12.♘xe6 ♔xe6 13.♔b3.

## Introduction

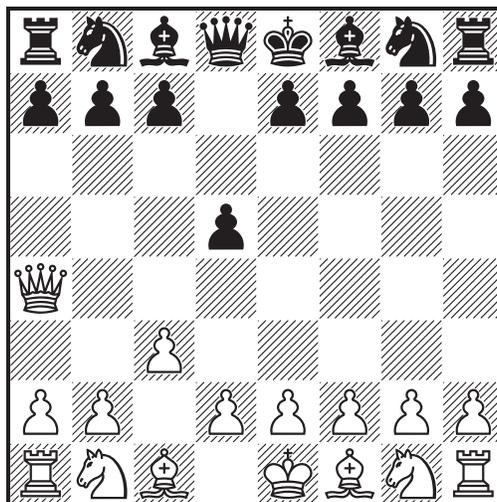
The d5-pawn is now attacked three times. Many players now commit the decisive error of... castling.

13...0-0-0 14.♔h3:



And the queen drops: *la commedia è finita!* How can one lose a game in just fifteen moves, after making nothing but good progress? The answer is that, in the opening, we need to play concretely. But how do we do this while the clock is ticking? When we have but three minutes for the entire game? Well, let our opponents think about that; whereas in this book, I give White a full guide to navigating through the ideas. In certain circumstances, you will manage to beat whomever you like. Grandmasters, even.

2.♙a4+

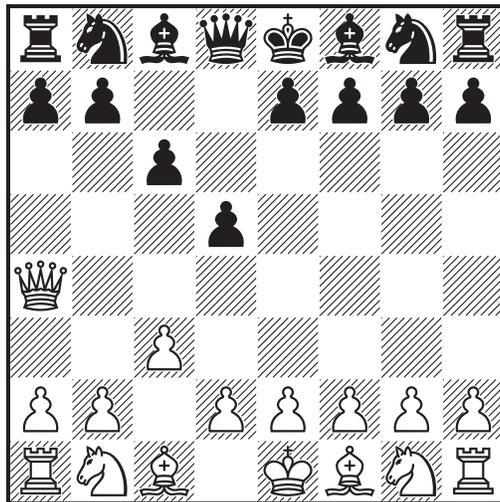


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Your basic move in this opening. It looks like pure ineptness: an early queen move instead of a “classical” occupation of the center with pawns, or bringing out the minor pieces first. What does White achieve by this? You can be almost one hundred percent certain that your opponent is seeing this position for the first time in his life. Thinking himself “disrespected,” he will want to punish you for such play. He’ll start thinking, and thinking, and thinking how to do it – all the while with his time winding down in blitz or rapid chess. Even in a game with a classical time control, though, a refutation does not seem possible. Yes, according to theory, Black shouldn’t have any problems, but in practice he’ll have quite a few of them.

So we have brought our queen out to a4. Why? It couldn’t be just to give check... Well, of course not. Our queen plans to redeploy in short order to the king’s wing. It would be especially good for it to end up at h4, but only after the h-pawn reaches h5. So we avoid blocking the fourth rank with pawns or pieces. Our opponent doesn’t know this; and he usually brings his pieces out simply and normally, to their typical squares.

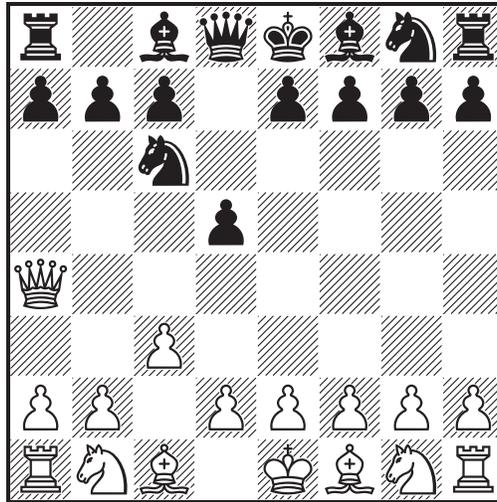
### 2...c6



One of several normal moves. Having buttressed the d5-pawn, Black can bravely face the future. Other possible moves in this position are 2...♘c6, 2...♘d7, and even 2...♙d7.

2...♘c6:

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It is most natural to develop the knight. But in this line, Black defends his d5-pawn insecurely.

3.d3

Creating a corridor for the b1-knight to go through d2 and on to f1. Now, why does it want to go to f1? Hold on a bit, this will soon become clear.

3...e5

All according to plan. If your opponent lets you, you should occupy the center with pawns.

4.h3

Few would believe at this stage that this move will serve as an escape square down the line. What is clear is that White is preparing to play g2-g4.

4...♘f6

Contrary to White's play, Black does not intend to refrain from normal piece development.

Instead, Black may try 4...f5, apparently preventing White from playing g2-g4. But no, that's exactly what we're going to play: 5.g4!.

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In fact, even without the queen on a4, we could still play g2-g4, sacrificing a pawn. This is one of the most interesting twists of the Elshad Opening.

Play might continue 5...fxg4 6.hxg4 ♖f6 7.g5 (the black pieces are feeling most uncomfortable) 7...♗d7 8.♙g2 ♖b6 9.♕h4. The white queen arrives on Black's kingside. Just a minute ago, things were OK for Black; now, there's a conflagration on the board. There is no guidepost in classical theory for this kind of situation. What to do? How do I play this? Time's a-wastin', and Black is getting nervous.

5.g4

The pawn is prepared to go still further, to g5. When that happens, keep in mind that the white bishop will soon come out to g2, keeping a constant watch on the d5-pawn .

5...h6

Well, that does it: Black can breathe freely now. For the time being, the threat of g4-g5 is prevented. And now, it looks like he can prepare to castle. But Black still doesn't know that the h6-pawn will soon become a major problem. It's precisely that pawn that will become the focus of White's attack.

6.♙g2 ♙e7 7.♗d2 0-0

It's pretty much all over; Black has fallen. Formally, everything appears to be in order, he's still breathing. But no human could possibly make 15 consecutive best moves. We are playing against humans and so we will focus our attack on them.

8.♗f1

The knight goes to g3. Why? It's all very simple: the black monarch has already castled on the kingside. There is no longer any point in bringing the knight to e3 when we can carry out a direct attack on the king. From the g3 square, the knight will aim at the

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vital squares f5 and h5. And we're going to batter down his castled position with g4-g5.

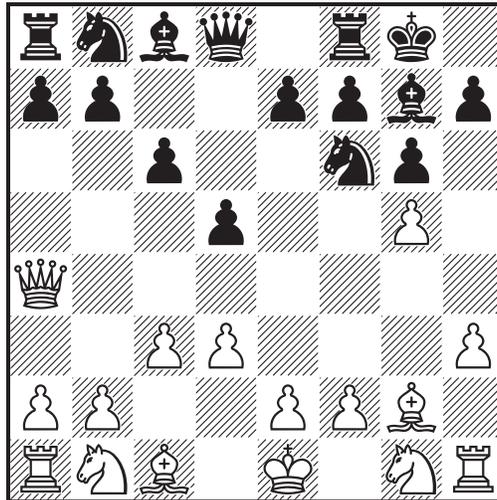
### 3.d3

To control the fourth rank, and to facilitate the transfer of the knight to f1 via d2.

### 3...♞f6 4.h3 g6

One of Black's possible ways to develop. It looks quite secure.

### 5.g4 ♔g7 6.♔g2 0-0 7.g5



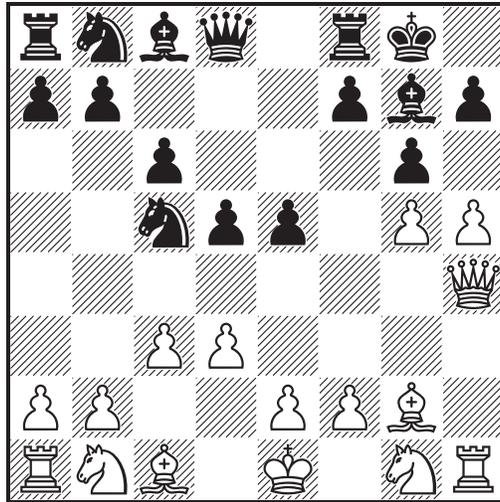
Here's yet another important crossroads. Which way will the knight go?

### 7...♞h5

A quick reaction; this is quite often the way it's played. But Black remains unaware of White's vital threat.

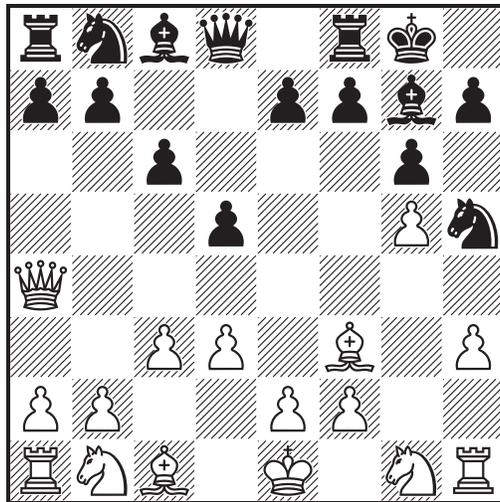
7...♞fd7 is possible, but then White carries out a direct storm with his h-pawn, for example 8.h4 e5 9.h5 ♞c5 10.♚h4:

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The culmination! White has fully carried out his opening intentions. The threat of h5xg6 is now unstoppable. You can see how to play the attack correctly from this position by analyzing the appropriate games.

**8. ♖f3**



Here it is!! Black's knight has nowhere to retreat, and White will play ♖xh5. Next the queen goes to h4, and White's knight enters via b1-d2-f1-g3-h5.

**8...c5 9. ♖xh5 gxh5 10. ♔h4 ♖f5 11. ♘d2 ♖g6 12. ♗f1 ♘d7 13. ♗g3 ♜e8 14. ♗xh5**

There will be games along these lines in this book.

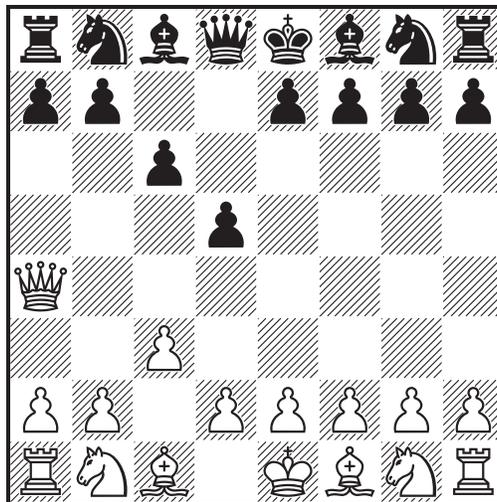
## Chapter 1

# Black Plays ...d7-d5, Thinking “Closed Game”

**1. nemtsevguru (2405) – durdevic (2253)**

lichess.org, 2 November 2017

**1.c3 d5 2.♔a4+ c6**



One of Black’s best approaches to the Elshad Opening in this position – especially when considering that White plans to play g2-g4 and then develop his light-squared bishop to g2. Black would like to construct what is known in Russia as the “panzer” formation [*named after German tanks – Ed.*], consisting of pawns at c6, d5, and e5.

### **3.h3**

One might also play g2-g4! at once. The text move is a little more subtle. At the moment, Black is clearly thinking that he’s playing a “fool,” or else a drunkard if the game is on the Internet. Because understanding, on the fly, what’s on White’s mind would be im-