Lucas Chess – Play Guide

In Play mode you can start games against an engine of your choice with freely adjustable settings. There are no ratings in this mode and you can use the tutor if you wish (see the Competition guide for more details on the tutor). In Options, General configuration, General, Menu Play, select "Play against an engine." This removes "Opponents for young players" and in fact saves a click every time one starts a game. The program goes directly to the "Play against an engine" window.

Start Game

In Basic configuration, choose your Opponent engine. A great variety of engines to choose from awaits you. For "Limits of engine thinking," select either a fixed time or depth (one shuts off the other). If no selection is made for either, then choose its response time in general, from Very slow to Very fast. (The function of "To humanize the time it takes for the engine to respond" is not known. Perhaps it is a footnote to the setting above.) Choose white, black, or random.

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The next tab to consider is Help configuration.

Choose whether to avail yourself to the tutor's help. How many hints will you allow yourself during the game? How about second chance(s), a formalized offer to take back your last move?

Choose what to show of the tutor's and your opponent's thinking: None, Score, (number of) Movements, or All. The height of the box showing these things can be adjusted (64 is the default but it will not appear if no thinking is displayed).

Whether to show prompting arrows, for yourself or your opponent, is another choice.

If "Option takeback activated" is unchecked, the Takeback button is removed from the toolbar. "Save a summary . . ." will appear in a PGN save of the game.

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Under Time, it is possible to "Activate the time control" with various settings as desired: Total minutes, Seconds added per move, and a bonus for the human player of Extra minutes applied at the start.

"Zeitnot" is a term for time trouble, time pressure, a situation where a player has little time to complete the required moves. One may set an alarm when his or her clock is down to a certain number of seconds. The default is a bizarre imitation of a clicking clock, so be aware that another sound file can be overwritten as ZEITNOT.wav in the Sounds folder wherever the user's data folder is stored.
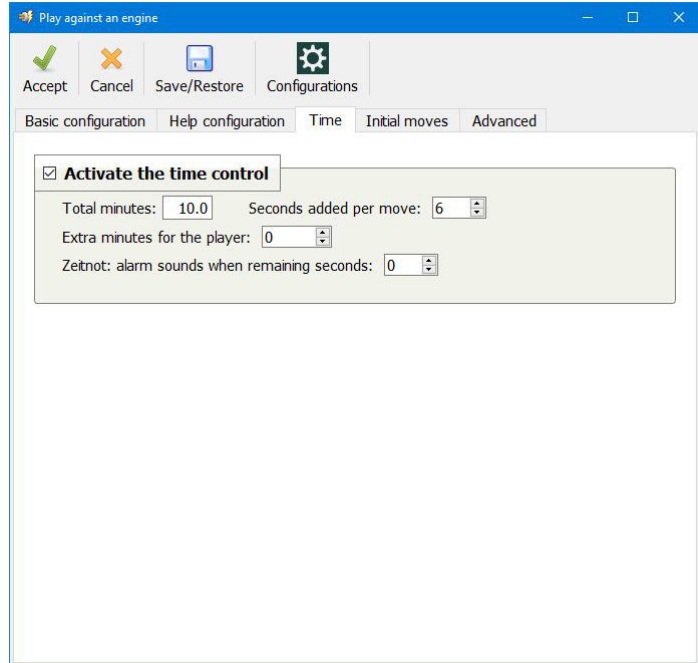
Initial moves is where you do several things. You can set the Start position. A separate window pops up for this purpose:

An Opening can be specified; in a sub-menu, one sees immediate choices or finds them after entering subfolders. Then it is possible to force one side or both to follow it or another opening that the program chooses randomly.
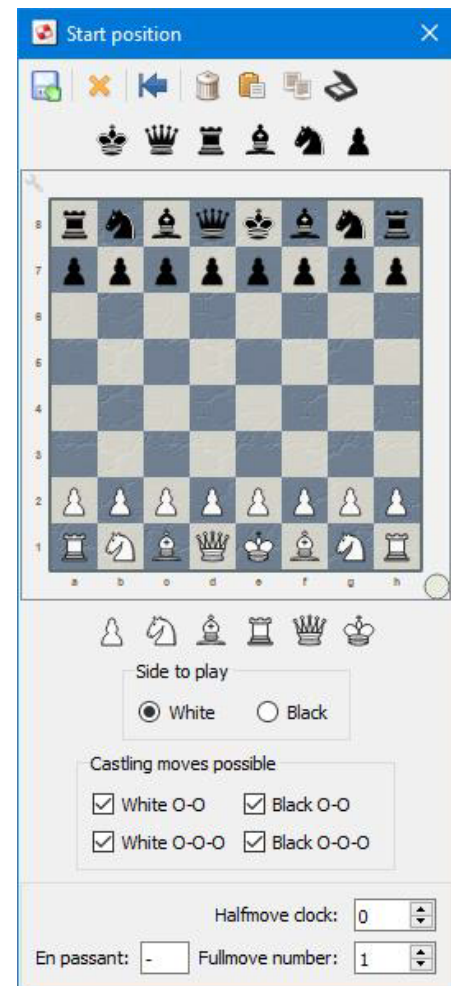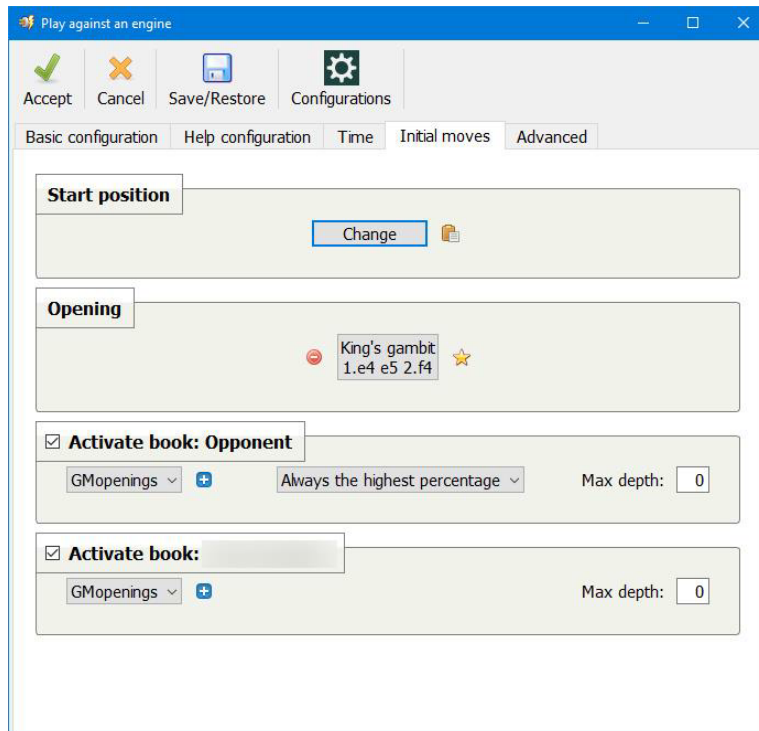
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In the Advanced tab, the only parameter that appears to be alterable is "Resign/draw by engine." By default, it's set for Late but Average may be more optimal; you can always refuse either resignation or draw and continue play. "Set strength" might be available for certain engines.
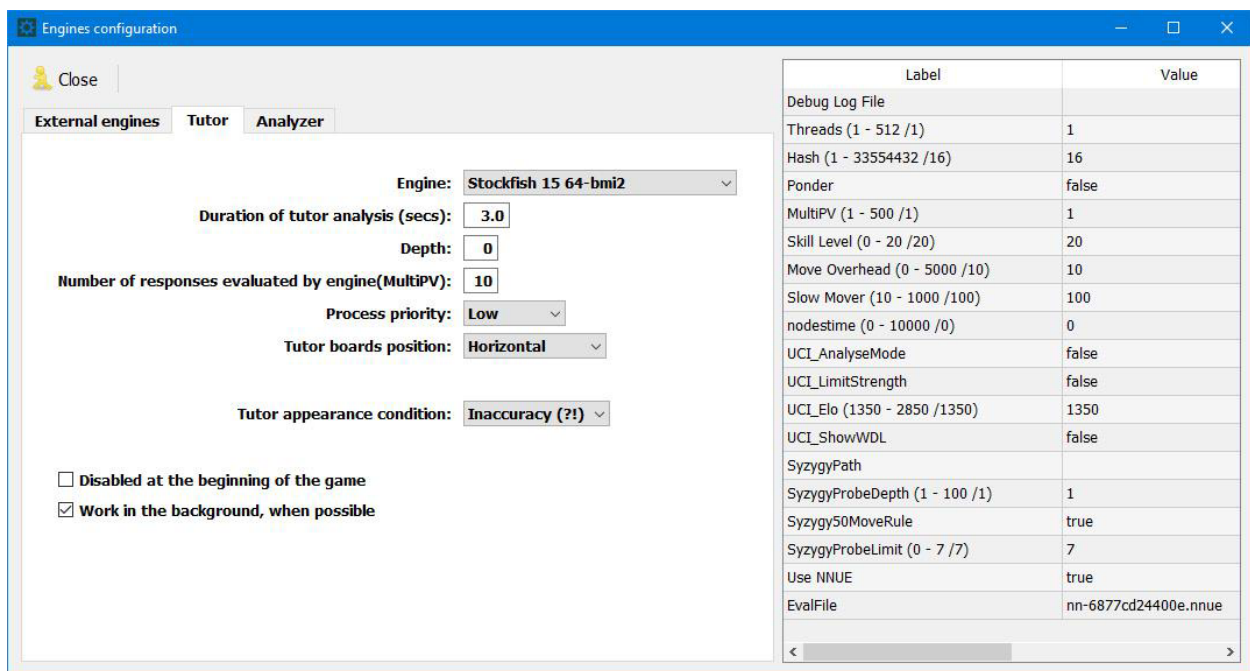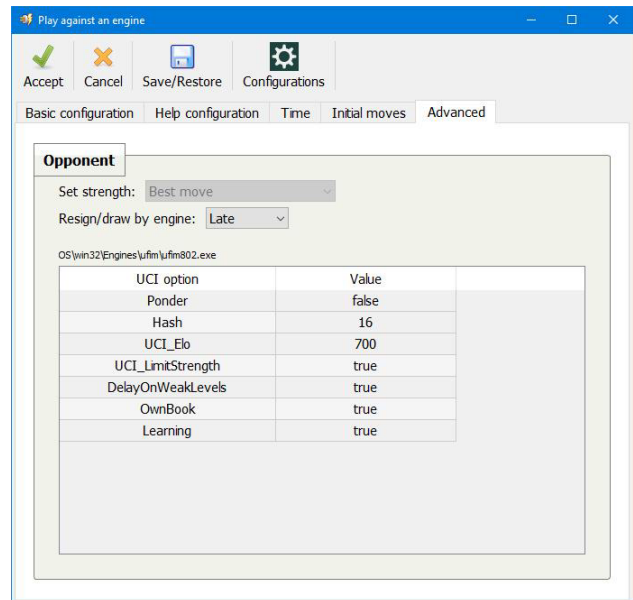
Some other things to consider for game start:

If more than one setup is regularly used, they can be saved using the Save/Restore button. The program remembers the last start setup, however, so this may not be usually necessary.

Configurations is for tinkering with the engines. External engines can be added and the Tutor and Analyzer engines are maintained here:

Engine processing time limits are set in seconds and/or depth. "MultiPV" is multiple position values. It's a way of defining how wide (as opposed to deep) you want the engine to go when tutoring and analyzing. More multiPV lines of play will slow down the engine significantly, so unless there is a need to change this, it would be best to leave it alone. Same with Process priority.

How do you want the Tutor boards positioned? When do you want the Tutor to appear, after a Blunder, Mistake, Inaccuracy, or Always? Do you prefer not to see it in the beginning of a game?

A background process is a computer job running behind the scenes, without user intervention. That sounds right for the Tutor, so leave "Work in the background, when possible" checked.

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During the Game

If you have selected an opening sequence in the game setup, you will be forced to play that line. For training purposes you get no indication of the next correct move before you make it, but if you try to make a different move, a pointer will show up to signal the correct continuation. Your opponent will of course make the appropriate move automatically.

These are the toolbar buttons available when it is your turn to play:
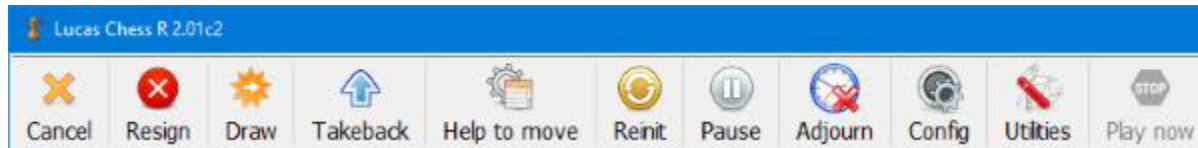
And this is displayed when your opponent is thinking; pretty much just a demand to "Play now":

Cancel – This negates the game entirely, as if it never happened.

Resign – You can always resign and the program cheerfully accepts once it asks if you're sure.

Draw – You can always offer a draw, but the program is not always amenable; it may not agree.

Takeback – This option will not appear if it has been turned off during the game setup.

Help to move - This gives you an engine analysis of the current position with a list of possible moves ordered by the ratings the engine has assigned them. Each continuation can also be put on an analysis board where you can play around with the position and get a better idea of where it leads. This button appears even if Takeback is disabled.

Reinit – This asks whether to restart the game. There appears to be no penalty for doing so.

Pause – There really is no reason to use this button unless time controls have been enabled.

Adjourn – Clicking this button stops and saves the game. Then it asks if you want to exit Lucas Chess. If you do, then an Adjournments button will be shown when the program is opened again. The button will be shown even if the program is not ended. Click to resume the adjourned game.

Config – A variety of things: Show/hide PGN information, captured material, and analysis arrow; turn the game into Blindfold chess; activate Sounds options; tinker with the Engines configuration; Enable window on top; Enable drawing graphics with the right-mouse button (see the section on Director board graphics below); Save engines log (in the EngineLogs folder wherever the user's data folder is stored); and, if the going is getting too tough (or too easy), Change opponent. You can change sides, change engines, and tweak the engine's performance.
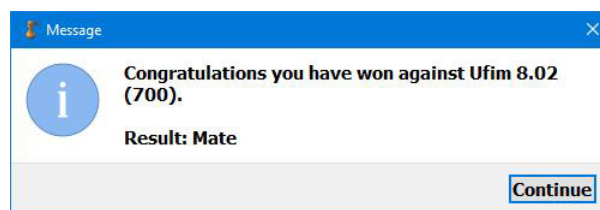
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Utilities – Save the game in various ways; activate Kibitzers (more on that below), Play current position (which is not necessarily redundant, as one may change game startup settings in mid-game using this capability); Analyze (see the Tools guide); Remove (ratings, comments, etc.); Replay game, which can also be done in mid-game but be mindful that the clock continues to run (hit End, then Pause and Continue to resume the game); Play instead of me (for one turn only); Moves tree, in which the player may map out and notate various alternative moves in the current position, with or without the help of the Tutor; and Consult a book, if applicable.

If the PGN information window is open (shortcut: right-click move list), one may apply a Rating to a move which, in his or her judgment, was a Good move (!), Mistake (?), Brilliant move (!!); Blunder (??); Interesting move (!?); or Dubious move (?!). Also, there are theme labels that may be applied, like "Advanced pawn," "Exposed king," "Skewer," and "Zugzwang" (a situation in a chess game in which a player is forced to make an undesirable or disadvantageous move). In addition, the player can build, analyze, and save Variations on each move.

If all goes well, the game ends in victory, forcing Resign or Mate! (Hopefully against a stronger opponent than this, however):

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Director

Use the Director window to apply graphics to the board in any of the game's positions.

Press any Function key from F1 through F10 to open the Director window. Colored arrows, boxes, and circles can be drawn on the board to highlight aspects of a position.

Press the desired Function key or click the shape to select it, then apply it to the board using the left mouse button. There is also the ability to use the right mouse button by itself or with Alt, Shift, or Ctrl to draw the corresponding shape.

Also, when in Director Mode, Shift+Alt+Right Mouse allows user to choose a piece to add.

If you want your markup to be saved, make sure you tick the checkbox at the bottom of the Director window.

Right-click any of the arrows or shapes on the left of the Director window to change them, either substituting another shape or editing the characteristics of the existing shape.
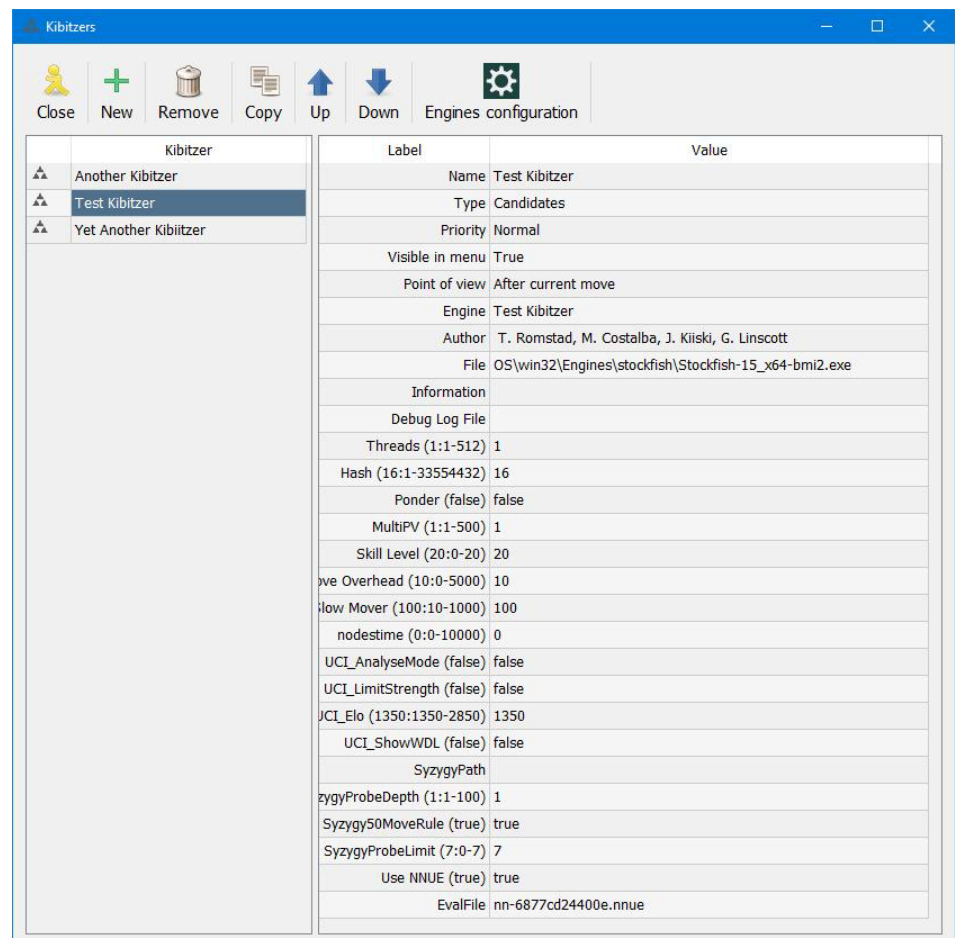
Kibitzers

Another interesting possibility during the game is to add a kibitzer. You can use any engine to watch over the following types of moves: Candidates, Best move, Best move in one line, Stockfish evaluation, and Threats. Unsure of what the differences are among these? Join the crowd. You could do some research and testing to find out, or you could leave the setting on the default Candidates. "In abstract strategy board games, candidate moves are moves which, upon initial observation of the position, seem to warrant further analysis." Well alright then. Sounds good.

It's the same for all of the other settings which go beyond the ken of the average chess player. Want to enjoy chess? Want to learn as well? Then don't waste time fussing with kibitzer settings. Most of the engines that you could select for the task seem to do a good job just as they are.

During the game, go to Utilities, click Kibitzers, and select either one that you know and like to use or click Edition and set up a new one with a different engine. Just make sure that it has all of these weird settings (a handful of engines do not), then leave them all alone!
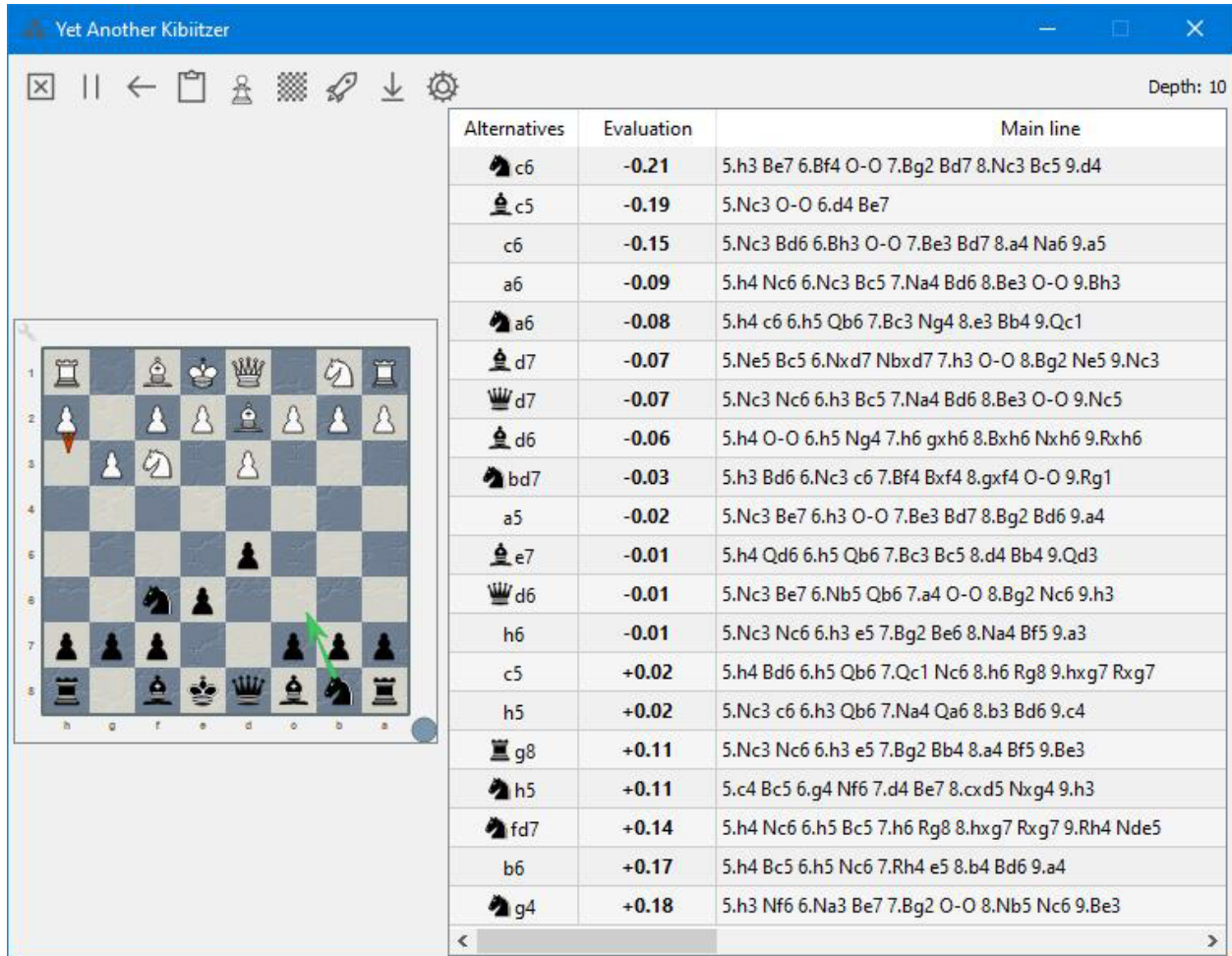
The kibitzer will then display its analysis in a separate window with a board, move indicators and a list of continuations and their evaluations. While this window is open and the engine continues to ponder

Label	Value
Name	Test Kibitzer
Type	Candidates
Priority	Normal
Visible in menu	True
Point of view	After current move
Engine	Test Kibitzer
Author	T. Romstad, M. Costalba, J. Kiiski, G. Linscott
File	OS\win32\Engines\stockfish\Stockfish-15_x64-bmi2.exe
Information	
Debug Log File	
Threads (1:1-512)	1
Hash (16:1-33554432)	16
Ponder (false)	false
MultiPV (1:1-500)	1
Skill Level (20:0-20)	20
ove Overhead (10:0-5000)	10
Slow Mover (100:10-1000)	100
nodestime (0:0-10000)	0
UCI_AnalyseMode (false)	false
UCI_LimitStrength (false)	false
JCI_Elo (1350:1350-2850)	1350
UCI_ShowWDL (false)	false
SyzygyPath	
zygyProbeDepth (1:1-100)	1
Syzygy50MoveRule (true)	true
SyzygyProbeLimit (7:0-7)	7
Use NNUE (true)	true
EvalFile	nn-6877cd24400e.nnue

the position, you can see the increasing search depth in the upper right corner. The suggestions dynamically change as the engine looks further into the game and re-evaluates the possibilities. Remember, a positive (+) evaluation benefits white. If you are playing white, that's good. If you are playing black, that's bad. You want moves with a negative (-) evaluation instead.

Wait for the kibitzer's sage advice (while keeping an eye on the clock, if applicable) and follow it! Or not.

Save

At any point during the game, it may be saved. Surely at the conclusion? (That depends on the outcome, perhaps.) One may wish to do so in a variety of ways, as shown here:

See the Tools guide for more information about setting up a database and managing it.