

# Ruy López Opening

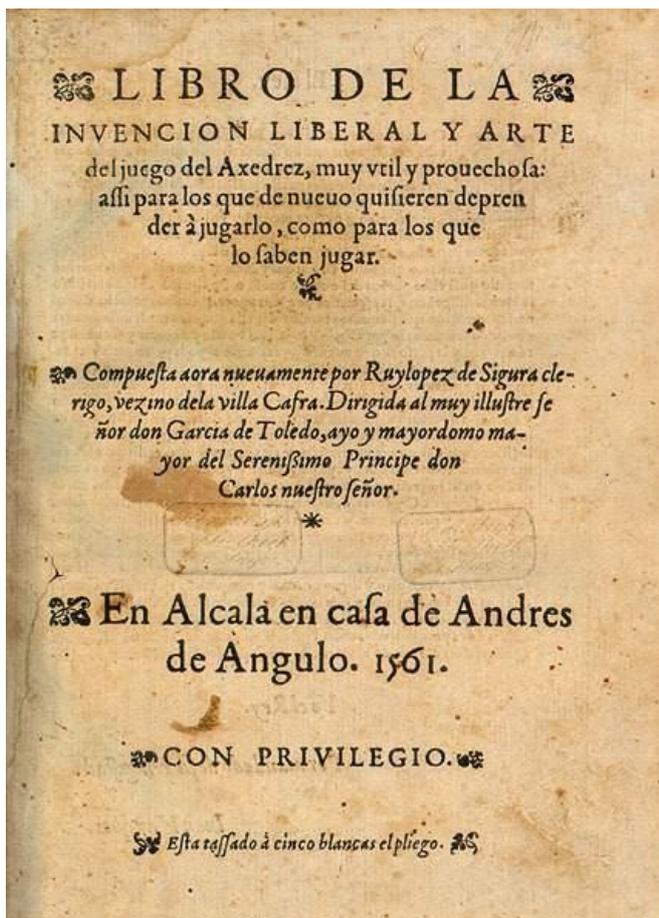
**Rodrigo (Ruy) López de Segura** (c. 1530 – c. 1580) was a Spanish priest and later [bishop](#) in [Segura](#) whose 1561 book [Libro de la invención liberal y arte del juego del Axedrez](#) was one of the first definitive books about modern [chess](#) play in Europe, preceded by [Pedro Damiano](#)'s 1512 book, [Luis Ramírez de Lucena](#)'s 1497 book (the oldest surviving printed book on chess), or the [Göttingen manuscript](#) (authorship and exact date of the manuscript are unknown).

He was born in [Zafra](#) near [Badajoz](#), and he studied and lived in [Salamanca](#). In 1560 he won a match against [Leonardo di Bona](#) in Rome. In 1574–75, Ruy López lost the first known international master [chess tournament](#), which was held, at the invitation of [King Philip II of Spain](#), at the Royal Court of Spain in [El Escorial](#), close to Madrid, to Leonardo di Bona, a Calabrian lawyer, and to [Paolo Boi](#), but placing ahead of 4th (and last) place finisher [Alfonso Ceron](#).

The [Ruy Lopez Opening](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5) is named after him, as is a variation in the [Petroff Defence](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 Qe7). For more theory, see next pages.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruy\\_L%C3%B3pez\\_de\\_Segura](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruy_L%C3%B3pez_de_Segura) (Wikipedia)

<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessplayer?pid=78728> (Chessgames)



title page

**Libro de la invención liberal y arte del juego del axedrez** (translation: *Book of the liberal invention and art of the game of chess*) is one of the first books published about modern [chess](#) in [Europe](#), after [Pedro Damiano](#)'s 1512 book. It was written by [Spanish](#) priest [Ruy López de Segura](#) in 1561 and published in [Alcalá de Henares](#).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libro\\_de\\_la\\_invencion\\_liberal\\_y\\_arte\\_del\\_juego\\_del\\_axedrez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libro_de_la_invencion_liberal_y_arte_del_juego_del_axedrez)

The **Ruy Lopez** ([/ru.ɪ 'loʊpeɪz/](#); Spanish pronunciation: ['ruj 'lopeθ/'lopes]), also called the **Spanish Opening** or **Spanish Game**, is a [chess opening](#) characterised by the moves:

1. [e4 e5](#)
2. [Nf3 Nc6](#)
3. [Bb5](#)

The Ruy Lopez is named after 16th-century Spanish bishop [Ruy López de Segura](#). It is one of the most popular chess openings, with such a vast number of variations that in the [Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings](#) (ECO) all codes from C60 to C99 are assigned to them.

The opening is named after the 16th-century Spanish bishop [Ruy López de Segura](#), who made a systematic study of this and other openings in the 150-page book on chess *Libro del Ajedrez*, written in 1561.

Although it bears his name, this particular opening was included in the → [Göttingen manuscript](#), which dates from c. 1490.

The **Göttingen manuscript** is the earliest known work devoted entirely to modern [chess](#). It is a [Latin](#) text of 33 leaves held at the [University of Göttingen](#). A quarto parchment manuscript of 33 leaves, ff. 1–15a are a discussion of twelve [chess openings](#), f. 16 is blank, and ff. 17–31b are a selection of thirty [chess problems](#), one on each page with a diagram and solution. *Authorship and exact date of the manuscript are unknown.*

Similarities to [Lucena's Repeticion de Amores e Arte de Axedres con CL iuegos de partido](#) (c. 1497) have led some scholars to surmise that it was written by Lucena or that it was one of Lucena's sources. Although the manuscript is generally assumed to be older than Lucena's work, this is not established. The manuscript has been ascribed possible writing dates of 1500–1505 or 1471.

The manuscript is exclusively devoted to [modern chess](#) (using the modern [rules](#) of movement for the [pawn](#), [bishop](#), and [queen](#), although [castling](#) had not yet taken its current form), and no mention is made of the earlier form. The rules are not explained, so the manuscript must have been written at a time and place when the new rules were well established. The addressee of the manuscript is not named, but was evidently a nobleman of high rank. Some particulars of the manuscript suggest that the author was from [Spain](#) or [Portugal](#) and that it was copied at some point in [France](#).

The attention paid to the opening in the manuscript reflected the greater importance of study of the early part of the game caused by the changes to the movement of the pieces in modern chess. The old game tended to develop slowly, with victory often achieved by capturing all enemy pieces to the bare king. The modern game developed much more quickly due to the new ability of the pawn to make an initial move of two squares, and the greatly enhanced powers of the bishop and queen. [Checkmate](#) became a more common end to the game, and study was required to develop early attacks and defend against them.

The twelve openings in the manuscript include four attacks in which the Prince to whom the work is addressed is the first player, and eight defences where he is the second player. They include one example each of 1.c4 ([English Opening](#)) and 1.f4 ([Bird's Opening](#)), two examples of 1.d4 ([Queen's Pawn Openings](#)) including a [Queen's Gambit](#), and eight examples of 1.e4 ([King's Pawn Openings](#)). Every King's Pawn Opening included is a [Double King's Pawn Opening](#) as Black always responds to 1.e4 with 1...e5. One example of the [Bishop's Opening](#) (2.Bc4) is given. The other seven King's Pawn Openings are [King's Knight Openings](#) (2.Nf3), to which the author seems to suggest that 2...Nc6 is the best defence. Although no evaluation of the resulting positions is given, some of the examples continue well into the middle game; the eighth is given through move 33.

In the order in which they appear in the manuscript, the openings are:

1. [Damiano Defence](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 f6)
2. [Philidor Defence](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6), example favoring White
3. [Giuoco Piano](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5)
4. [Petrov Defence](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6)
5. [Bishop's Opening](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Bc4)
6. [Ruy Lopez](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Bc5 Classical Defence)
7. [Ponziani Opening](#) (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.c3)
8. Philidor Defence, example favoring Black
9. [Queen's Gambit Accepted](#) (1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4)
10. 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 Bf5 (a form of the [London System](#))
11. [Bird's Opening](#) (1.f4)
12. [English Opening](#) (1.c4)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6ttingen\\_manuscript](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6ttingen_manuscript)

However, popular use of the Ruy Lopez opening did not develop until the mid-19th century, when [Carl Jaenisch](#), a Russian theoretician, "rediscovered" its potential. The opening remains the most commonly used amongst the [open games](#) in master play; it has been adopted by almost all players during their careers, many of whom have played it with both colours. Due to the difficulty for Black to achieve equality, a common nickname for the opening is "The Spanish Torture".

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruy\\_Lopez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruy_Lopez)

### Opening Explorer:

<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/explorer?node=21724&move=3.5&moves=e4.e5.Nf3.Nc6.Bb5&nodes=21720.21721.21722.21723.21724> (Chessgames)

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Blog comment on the Opening:

It is triply ironic that the << Spanish Opening >>, which begins 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5, is often called the Ruy López. In 1561 the Spanish priest described this opening systematically in his book, *Libro de la invención liberal y arte del juego del Axedrez*.

López wrote this book in part to refute the first European chess book by Portugal's Damiano fifty years earlier.

If you do not recognize the word for 'chess' in his title, this is because López was following the lead of Damiano, who claimed that the game was invented by Xerxes of ancient Persia, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish word for chess being 'axedrez' after Xerxes.

It is difficult to overestimate Ruy López' impact on chess. The 1890 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* claims, "of López it may be said that he was the first who merits the name of chess analyst, as he gives reasons for his different variations in the openings, and for holding different opinions from his predecessor Damiano."

It was Ruy López who introduced the word 'gambit' and it was he who proposed the modern 50-move draw rule that exists today.

But López was known as much for his play as for his influential book. Centuries before Philidor astonished Europe with his displays of blindfold chess, Ruy López also demonstrated that ability. He attained such fame for his chess skill that King Philip II of Spain gave him a gold rook on a chain as a gift. And Ruy López is sometimes described as the first unofficial World Champion of Chess, an honor also sometimes afforded to the great Philidor.

However, the first documented international master-level tournament which was held in Madrid in 1575, and that tournament was **not won by Ruy López**, but by an Italian with the magnificent name of **Leonardo di Bona da Cutri**. Followers of Ruy López will justly point to a short game in which he makes the Italian master appear to play like a beginner:

Ruy López de Segura vs. L di Bona da Cutri  
World's First International Chess Tournament | Madrid | 1575 | ECO: C30 | 1-0

1. e4 e5 2. f4 d6 3. Bc4 c6 4. Nf3 Bg4 5. fxe5 dxe5 6. Bxf7+ Kxf7 7. Nxe5+ Ke8 8. Qxg4 Nf6 9. Qe6+ Qe7 10. Qc8+ Qd8 11. Qxd8+ Kxd8 12. Nf7+

The game above is interesting because it shows López' fondness for the King's Gambit opening, which was first described in his famous book. I began above by saying that it is triply ironic that the Ruy López is named after this famous Spanish priest. The first irony comes from the fact that Ruy López favored 2... d6 to 2...Nc6 as the best way to defend the e5 pawn after 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3, i.e. he liked Philidor's Opening over the Ruy López. It has been speculated that López' view was influenced by jealousy over the success of the earlier book by his predecessor Damiano, who preferred 2...Nc6, the very move in the Ruy López Opening!

The second irony (or is this already the third, given Damiano's view?) is that in seven of the eleven 2...Nc6 games described by Ruy López, he ends by saying that Black has the better position, which is a bit odd for someone who claims that 2...Nc6 is not the best move for Black. Here is one such Ruy López opening as described by none other than Ruy López de Segura, as he was known *after becoming the bishop of Segura*, Spain.

At the end of this opening López writes, "And the Black has a better game than his opponent." I would have to agree with Ruy López' assessment that Black has the better game. However, it is important to note that Ruy López did not suggest the best moves for White in this opening, and history has proven him wrong in his assessment of 2...Nc6 vs. 2...d6, thus validating the Ruy López opening after all and against the beliefs of Ruy López himself in a third and final irony.

<https://www.chess.com/blog/kurtgodden/ruy-loacuteppez-on-the-ruy-loacuteppez>



Partita a scacchi tra [Ruy Lopez](#) e [Leonardo da Cutro](#) alla Corte di Spagna (Source: Wikipedia)

Luigi Mussini was an Italian painter. He painted a relatively well known picture, called *Una sfida scacchistica alla Corte del Re di Spagna*, the painting depicts Leonardo di Cutri's demolition of Ruy Lopez at the court of Philip II.

Leonardo da Cutri, better known under the cognomen of "Il Puttino," went purposely to → Madrid to play at Chess with the famous bishop Ruy Lopez, who in his time was considered as the chief of Chess-players.

The contest took place at the royal palace in the presence of Philip the Second, and the Italian player triumphed over his formidable adversary, for which he received from that monarch valuable gifts. (From *The British Chess Magazine*, October, 1882. p. 334)

Watch out Batgirl's great historical bit:

<https://www.chess.com/blog/batgirl/a-chess-painting>

**Giovanni Leonardo di Bona** or **Giovanni Leonardo da Cutri** (both given names can be seen also in the reversed order **Leonardo Giovanni**), known as **Il Puttino** (*Italian Small Child*) (1542–1597), was an early [Italian chess](#) master.

Giovanni Leonardo was born in [Cutro](#), [Calabria](#). He studied law in [Rome](#). In 1560, he lost a match to [Ruy López](#) in Rome. In 1566–1572, he travelled and played chess in [Rome](#), [Genoa](#), [Marseille](#), [Barcelona](#). He had played many times against [Paolo Boi](#) in Italy and they were regarded as being equal in strength.

Giovanni Leonardo di Bona won the first known international master tournament in the history of chess in → [Madrid](#) in 1575, therefore becoming the strongest chess master of the time.

After their success at the [Court of Spain](#), Leonardo and Paolo Boi, both travelled, although separately, to [Lisbon](#), where they tested their chess skill against *Il Moro*, the eminent chess champion of [King Don Sebastian, of Portugal](#). Again, they both succeeded, first Leonardo, soon followed by Paolo Boi, in defeating Il Moro.

And again the King was generous with his rewards. After this triumph, Giovanni Leonardo di Bona, having been called the wandering knight (*Il Cavaliere errante*) by King Don Sebastian, left Portugal to return to Italy and settle in [Naples](#) where he became the chess master for the Prince of [Bisignano](#).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni\\_Leonardo\\_Di\\_Bona](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Leonardo_Di_Bona) (Wikipedia)

<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessplayer?pid=77044> (Chessgames)

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#### Footnotes – First Chess Tournaments:

The **first known communal** chess tournament happened already **in 1467 in Heidelberg**:

<https://www.schachburg.de/threads/2201-Das-Schachturnier-in-Heidelberg-1467>

The **first international master-level** tournament **in 1575 in Madrid** was a singular event.

It's thus considered that **the first modern international** tournament was held **in 1851 in London**, nota bene held in a knock-out format.