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Alexander 9

The engine that calculates.
The teacher that explains — at your level.

Introducing The Master's Verdict, created by FIDE Master Massimiliano Botta

Alexander has always played like a human of your strength: Handicap mode and Avatars make it the sparring partner that fits you. **Alexander 9 now explains like a master, too.** Ask about any position and **The Master's Verdict** tells you, in plain English, what matters and what to do. Set your Elo, and the teacher speaks the language of your level.

The Master's Verdict was created by **FIDE Master Massimiliano Botta**, who has joined the Alexander team. It is the heart of version 9, and the reason for its motto: **the engine that calculates, the teacher that explains.**

9	4	13	8 in 1
plain-language sections in every verdict	levels, from Beginner to Expert: the teacher follows your Elo	classical evaluation elements, each with new advanced modules	CPU-optimised builds in one executable, no network file

01 The Master's Verdict: a teacher inside the engine

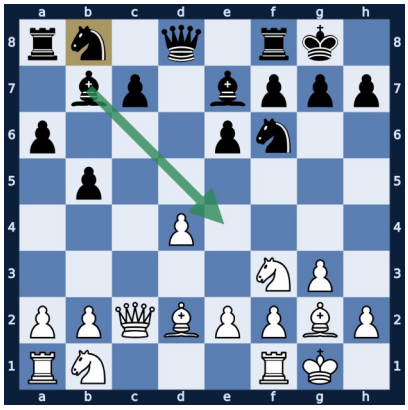
Send `eval` and Alexander 9 opens with a verdict in plain English, addressed to the side to move ("you", "your"). Only after it, behind a clear separator, comes the technical analysis the verdict is built from: the trace you know, now much richer.

Section	What it tells you	How to use it
Overall evaluation	Evaluation and expected score; material; quiet or sharp position; whether it rests on piece activity or on structure; game phase; most likely result; Shashin's advice and zone.	Choose the character of your play: manoeuvring, concrete calculation or defence.
Evaluation factors	The terms in favour of each side, in centipawns, and the prospects in the middlegame against the endgame.	Keep the pieces on, or simplify.
Urgent matters	Check, the opponent's threat (what he would do if you passed), an immediate tactic; otherwise "Nothing urgent".	Deal with it before anything else.
Piece evaluation	Your most and least effective piece (its value here against the normal value of its type), the opponent's problem piece and best unit.	Makogonov's principle: improve your worst piece.

Section	What it tells you	How to use it
Trades and simplification	Whether a queen trade helps; the most useful exchange; the exchanges to avoid.	Choose your trades.
Geometry and structure	Weaknesses, passed pawns, tension and breaks; space and files; key squares.	Find targets, outposts and the files for your rooks.
King safety	Your king and the enemy king: the shield and the attacks around them.	Decide whether to attack or defend first.
The plan	The move to play, with the evaluation after it and why; the alternatives; the next steps; prophylaxis against the opponent's best idea.	The concrete plan for the next moves.
In a nutshell	The position and the plan in one sentence.	The summary to remember.

See it in action

A modern classic, the Open Catalan. This is what Alexander 9 says, word for word (lines shortened where marked […]):



Catalan Opening, Open Variation: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.g3 Be7 5.Bg2 O-O 6.O-O dxc4 7.Qc2 a6 8.Qxc4 b5 9.Qc2 Bb7 10.Bd2. Black to move.

Arrow: …Be4. Highlighted: the knight on b8, the piece to improve.

What a master sees. …Be4 is the main line of theory, the knight on b8 is the piece to bring into play, …c5 has to be prepared and White's Ba5 must be watched.

A full search agrees: at depth 20 Alexander's best move is …Be4, answered by Qc1, as in the books.

ALEXANDER 9 · eval

```
>>> COMPLETE HUMAN EVALUATION (The Master's Verdict) <<<
Seen from Black's side: Black is to move.

EVALUATION FACTORS:
[…] Your prospects are better in the middlegame (+19 cp) than in the
endgame (+3 cp): keep the pieces on and play for the initiative.

PIECE EVALUATION:
Your most effective piece is the bishop on b7 (145% of its normal
value); your least effective is the knight on b8 (98%): improving it is
the first positional task (Makogonov's principle). […]

GEOMETRY AND STRUCTURE:
Pawns: Both structures are healthy, without passed or weak pawns; the
break c5 is premature: prepare it first.
Space and files: White controls more space (+6 cp); your pieces are most
mobile in the center, so play there (Kasparov's principle), while White
is stronger on the queen side; your rooks belong on the half-open d-
file, while White will use the c-file.

THE PLAN:
  1. Play Be4 (your evaluation afterwards: +0.17): it creates threats,
     makes your king safer and improves the placement of the pieces […]
  2. Good alternatives: Nbd7.
  3. Then improve the knight on b8, for example via c6 to b4.
  4. Prophylaxis: watch White's idea Ba5, its most useful move if it had
     a free tempo.

IN A NUTSHELL:
Balanced, sharp position: play Be4 and improve the knight on b8.
```

Designed by a master

FIDE Master **Massimiliano Botta** created The Master's Verdict and is now part of the Alexander team. The verdict follows the order in which a master looks at a position: urgent matters first, then pieces, trades, structure and kings, and finally the plan, ending with one sentence to remember.

Players

A verdict at your level: set your Elo and read the concepts you actually work with.

Coaches

Explanations graded by level for training positions, and the evaluation matrix to go deeper.

Developers

The classical trace printed unchanged, plus clearly delimited new blocks: older parsers keep working.

02 A teacher at your level

In Handicap mode (`UCI_LimitStrength` or `LimitStrength_CB`, with `UCI_Elo`) Alexander evaluates only what a player of that strength takes into account, and the verdict follows. New concepts arrive as you grow:

School	Elo	What the teacher adds
Beginner	up to 1999	The essentials: material, the pieces, mobility, king safety, threats and space.
Intermediate	2000–2199	Pawn structure and passed pawns.
Advanced	2200–2399	Winnable: the initiative.
Expert	2400 and above	Material imbalances.

Without the limit, Alexander evaluates, and explains, every term. The same four schools now also choose the games of the Lichess live book (section 05).

03 Under the hood: everything you knew, and more

The technical part is the trace of the previous versions, with the classical modules of the Metrics Table printed unchanged, so existing tools keep working. Around them, Alexander 9 adds clearly delimited new blocks:

Block	What's new
Advanced General Modules	Side to move and its win probability, the strategic outlook of the Shashin zone, the phase advantage (middlegame against endgame).
Detailed Evaluation Matrix	Every term for White and for Black, the net advantage, middlegame and endgame, and the raw total.
Advanced modules of each element	Diagnostics (outposts, open files, blockades, colour complexes…), what changes in simplified scenarios such as a queen trade, and an OTB Strategic Synthesis (Theory / Action).
King Safety & Threats subelements	Pawn shelter and attackers, hanging pieces, forks and pins for each colour, with their audit and the effect of a queen trade.
Advanced Makogonov modules	Where to reroute the worst piece (in the endgame, the king too) and the most valuable piece.

Block	What's new
Legal moves	Every move now valued with the quiet evaluation: a capture no longer looks winning when the recapture is on the board.
Counterfactual Analysis: Plans	Piece values by ablation and their efficiency; trade advisor; threats (what the opponent would do if you passed); candidate plans with a two-ply check; pawn breaks and tension; Makogonov manoeuvres; the opponent's ideas.

Also fixed: the trace no longer takes the lazy exits of the evaluation, so mobility, king safety, threats and space are always computed, even in unbalanced positions. The formal specification of the classical modules is in doc/AlexanderTraceSpecification.docx.

04 Honest by design

- **Static, and it says so.** `eval` does not search. Values come from the classical evaluation, and every "what if" (a move, a trade, a pass) is settled by a small quiescence search: captures that do not lose material, evasions in check. Deep tactics remain the job of the search (`go`), so the plan of the verdict can differ from the engine's best move.
- **Now also in check.** The verdict focuses on the answer to the check, and the technical part is flagged as indicative. In previous versions the output in check was a single line.
- **Instant.** The whole analysis, verdict included, takes a few milliseconds.

05 More in Alexander 9

- **Stockfish 19 alignment.** Search, threads, NUMA and shared memory, Syzygy probing: Alexander 9 follows the latest Stockfish generation, around its classical evaluation and Shashin logic.
- **Universal build.** The universal x86-64 build (`universal.sh`, `universal.bat`) packs 8 CPU-optimised builds (x86-64, SSE4.1-POPCNT, AVX2, BMI2, AVX-VNNI, AVX-512, VNNI-512, AVX-512 ICL) into one executable that picks the right one at start-up. With a classical evaluation, there is no network file to carry around.
- **Live book, up to date.** New `LiveBook Lichess Token` option: since March 2026 the Lichess opening explorer answers only authenticated requests, and a personal token without scopes is enough. New `LiveBook Timeout` option. The Lichess live book now uses only the games of players in the engine's rating band, from 1200–1999 for a Beginner to 2500 and more for an Expert.
- **Fixes.** Avatars, and self Q-learning when Alexander runs under cutechess.

06 Try it in thirty seconds

In any UCI console, or in the engine window of your GUI:

```
setoption name UCI_LimitStrength value true   # optional: the teacher at your level
setoption name UCI_Elo value 2100
position startpos moves d2d4 g8f6 c2c4 e7e6   # or: position fen <FEN>
eval   # the Master's Verdict first, then the details
```

Programs should read the output up to the `readyok` that answers an `isready` sent right after `eval`. The new blocks are delimited, so parsers written for the older trace can skip them.

07 One family, one language

ShashChess 42, Alexander's sibling with a neural network, ships its own Master's Verdict at Stockfish 19 strength. The Alexander Avatar Analyzer builds the Avatar of a player from his games, and a player card with the positions to study: each one now opens Alexander's verdict at the player's level, with ShashChess's second opinion from International Master level up.

08 Acknowledgements

- **FIDE Master Massimiliano Botta**, for The Master's Verdict: the teacher inside Alexander 9.
- **Intel**, for the hardware support: developing and validating an engine at this level takes enterprise-grade computing power.
- **The Alexander team and testers**, for the games and the positions behind every release.
- **The Stockfish developers and community**, for the foundation Alexander is built on.

Alexander 9

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Download and documentation: github.com/amchess/Alexander

Avatars and player cards: github.com/amchess/alexander-avatar-analyzer