

# **365 Steps to Advanced Tactical Mastery**

**Daily bite-sized puzzles to improve  
your tactical ability.**

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# **365 Steps to Advanced Tactical Mastery**

**Daily bite-sized puzzles to improve  
your tactical ability.**

**Thinkers' Chess Academy with  
Grandmaster Thomas Luther  
Volume 6**

**Heinz Brunthaler**

**Thinkers Publishing 2024**



# Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
≈	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⌢	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

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# Introduction

## Requirements for the work with this book:

**You should know the notation** of chess games sufficiently well. In case you are unsure, have a look at the appendix first. There you will find a complete introduction to notation and common chess terminology.

**You should have played chess for at least six months**, better longer, gaining some practical experience. This is not a book for raw beginners, who should first work with our previous book *365 Steps to Tactical Mastery* and learn more about the basics.

You should have a standard size chess set (king's height about 90+ mm and the squares about 5 x 5 cm). If your set is a bit smaller it is sufficient to start with, but it is good to adjust as early as possible to the standard tournament size.

It is not advisable to play with funny or artful chess pieces, such as Mickey Mouse-style, Romans, barbarians or fantasy characters etc. A chess set is inexpensive and can be used for a lifetime. You should not avoid this little investment – it will help you to become a better chess player.

We start off easy for the sake of readers who have not so much experience. Please be patient if you are already stronger. Soon you will find some real challenges!

Always keep in mind that our goal is not to solve as many puzzles as possible, but to learn. Don't be angry or disappointed if you solve fewer than you expected. From every task you could not solve, you learn something new – and that's the most important thing!

You are interested in chess and want to become a better player? The usual way to reach this goal is to start learning. And there's a lot to learn: about the opening with all the tricks and pitfalls, tactics & strategy, the endgame ... it sounds like hundreds of hours of training are waiting for you!

But that's not possible for everyone. You may not have the time or patience to study chess systematically. That will prevent you from becoming a master. But to be a better player, to have more understanding of chess, it's not necessary to work so hard. A little lesson or task every day should improve your chess without too much effort over the period of one year.

## Dear Reader!

In this book we've collected typical positions and situations frequently seen on the board. If you know these, you can avoid a lot of typical mistakes. Or, even better, you can exploit your opponent's mistakes.

We have a main topic for most of the months, e.g. pin and overload, 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> rank, different kinds of pieces and their actions, endgame etc. At least half the month shows exercises on the topic, the others are mixed for variety's sake.

At the beginning you can probably solve the exercises from the diagrams. Later this will not do and it's highly advisable to set up the position on your board. This already helps you to understand as, while we set up a position, we get familiar with the details.

In some positions we ask you to set them up on your board and play them to the end. That's for a good reason. Analyses of hundreds of games of class players (players between rating 1000/class E to 1800/class B, see next page) has shown that a lot of good positions with a clear advantage are not won – and in the worst case even got lost. Learning how to bring superior positions to a winning end is important for your improvement.

Look for a time of the day that you can nearly always look at one of our examples. It need not be long; 10-20 minutes should do. The important thing is, to work a little bit on your chess nearly every day. If you do so, your brain will adapt to chess, making it easier for you to find the right plan or move. Our brain can adapt for every task required regularly; be it multiplication or finding chess moves.

If you do not have the time or are not in the right mood to work on a longer exercise, jump to an easier one and look at the ones you skipped another day.

Always have a good look at the diagram first at the beginning of your little training session. What can you find out about the position? Are there acute threats? Is there something you should keep in mind? Who has the advantage or is the position about equal? After finding out as much as possible, start with the given task of the example or find the answer to the question.

If you have the answer (or at least think so) look at the solution. Follow the moves

of the solution carefully on the diagram. If you are not sure – especially after a few months, when the exercises are more complicated – set up the position on a real board and look again.

We start with easy exercises to enable all readers to have a good start. If you already have some practical experience, you can solve the examples at the beginning quickly until you reach your individual level. But don't skip them. Sometimes there may be something you really must know. In the last months of our year you will find the puzzles hard nuts to crack. We trust that until then you have learned from our book and gained more experience from practical play in this time.

If you often cannot solve exercises – especially, if you are a class E or class D player – don't worry or be disappointed. The intention of this book is not to make it easy for you to solve most exercises. That would probably give you a good feeling but won't make you stronger. From every exercise you **cannot** solve, you learn something new, while everything you solve is to some part only repetition of already accumulated knowledge. Be brave and patient and endure some frustration! Don't forget that the way to improvement has its price!

And now let's start a year of fun with chess!

Classification of chess players:

Below rating 1000 - Beginner, very inexperienced player;

1000 - 1200 - Class E

1201 - 1400 - Class D

1401 - 1600 - Class C That's the average of all organized players!

1601 - 1800 - Class B

1801 - 2000 - Class A

2001 - 2200 - Expert level Less than 3 - 5% of all organized players  
come up to this level!



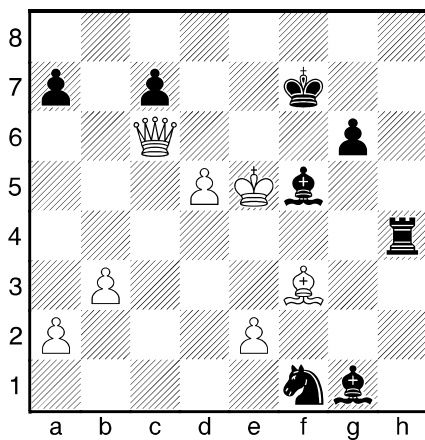
## Month 1

### No. 1 - 30

We start with easy questions. Can you do something – or, more to the point, even if you can – should you do it?

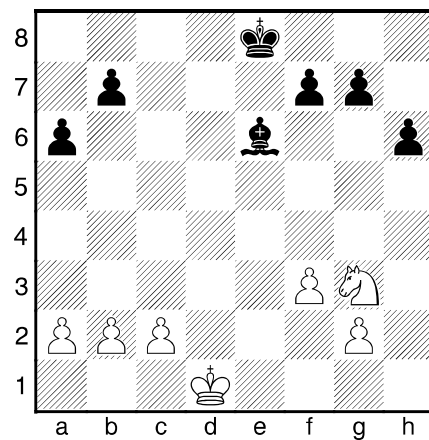
Don't rush to decisions. Always look at the whole position; not only at the part where the "action" is!

If you already have some experience and find the first examples too easy, solve them quickly in a row until you find your level.



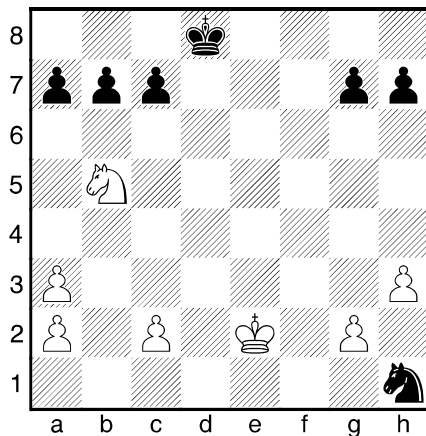
1. ○ / ●

We start with an easy task.  
Have a look at the board  
and find out what both  
sides can do!



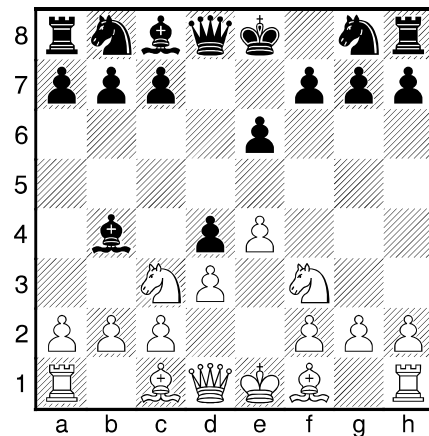
2. ●

White's last move Ke2–d1 ignored  
that the pawn on a2 is not pro-  
tected. What do you think? A blun-  
der or a trap?



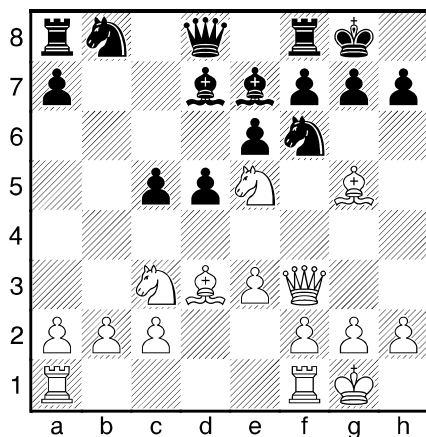
3. ○ / ●

Can White capture the pawn on a7? And can Black's knight escape?



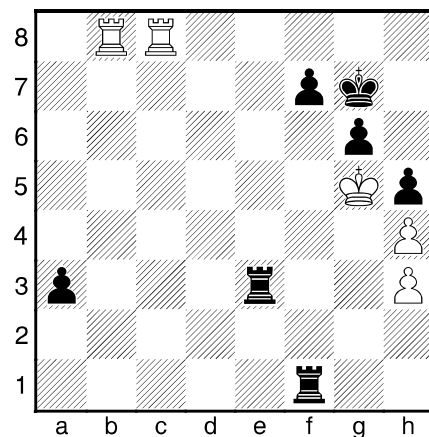
4.

Oh no! White wasn't concentrating and their pinned knight is attacked. Is the game already as good as lost?



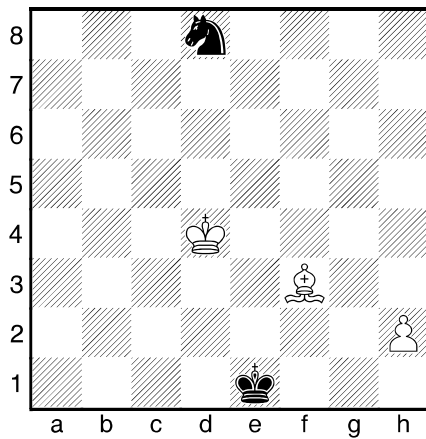
5. ●

Black was a little afraid of the white attack and decided to drive the bishop away with 1...c5-c4. Do you agree?



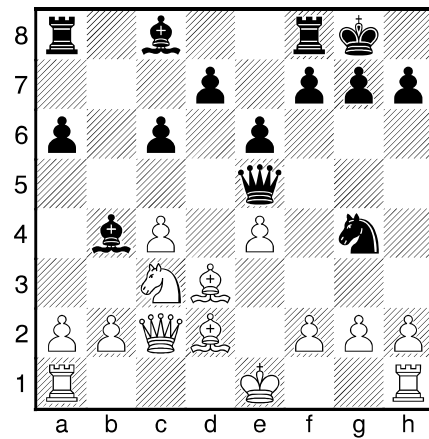
6. ○ / ●

Would you prefer White or Black in this position?



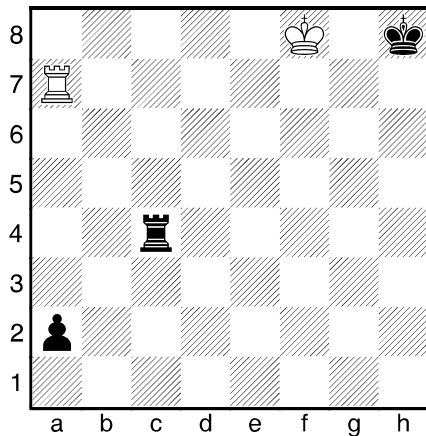
7.

Can White promote their last pawn and win the game? Find the best and quickest way!



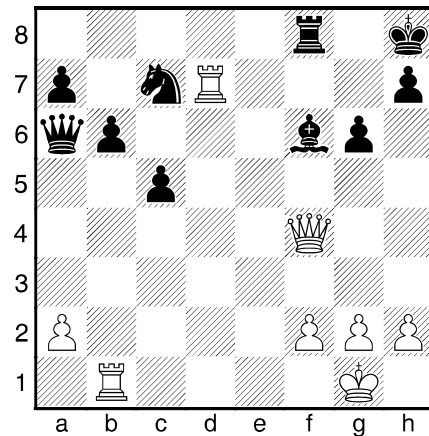
8.

To castle or not to castle – is that the question? And how to defend the pawn on h2?



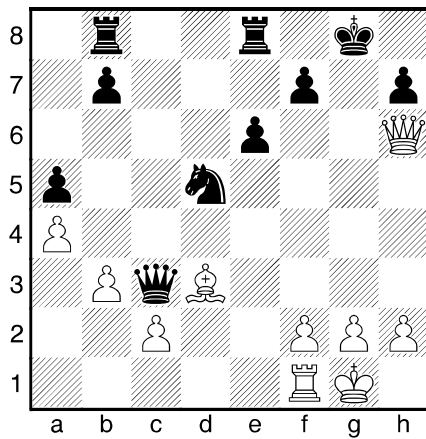
9. ●

Black can defend his pawn with ... ♖c4–c2, but how to promote him? Is it only a draw?



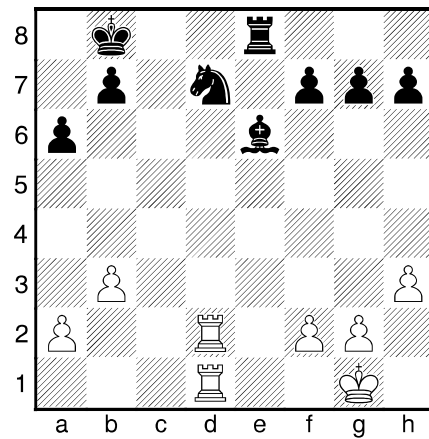
10. ●

16-year-old Garry Kasparov (elo 2595) smashed his opponent IM Josef Pribyl in the EU Team Championship with one move: Can you "kick it like Garry?"



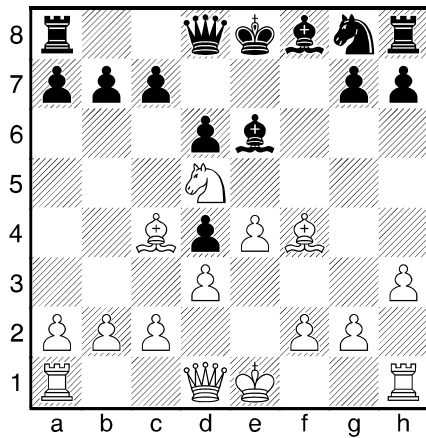
11.

How should White take the pawn on h7? With queen or bishop?



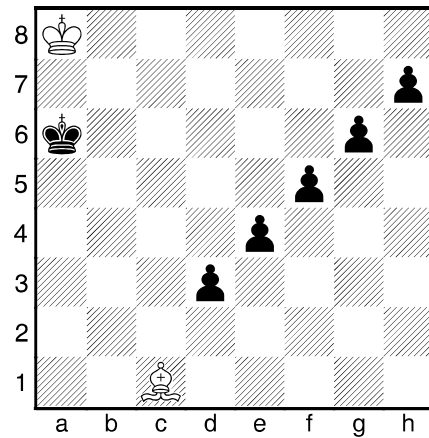
12. ●

Is it a good idea to exchange the rook for the two black pieces?



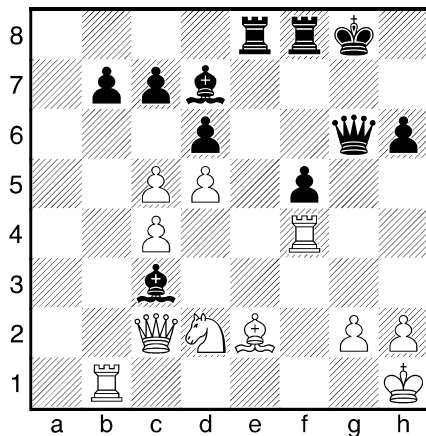
13.

Black's last move was ...♖c8-e6, looking for exchanges. Was this the right idea? Did Black have a better move?



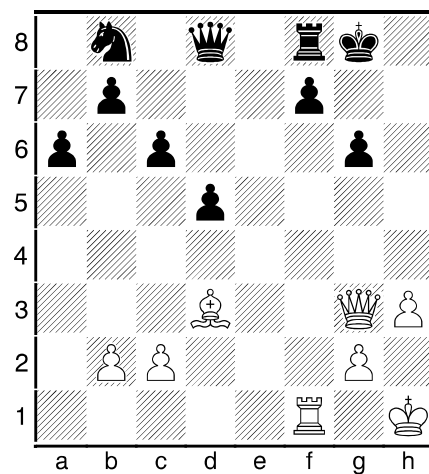
14. ●

Can the bishop stop the pawns from promotion?



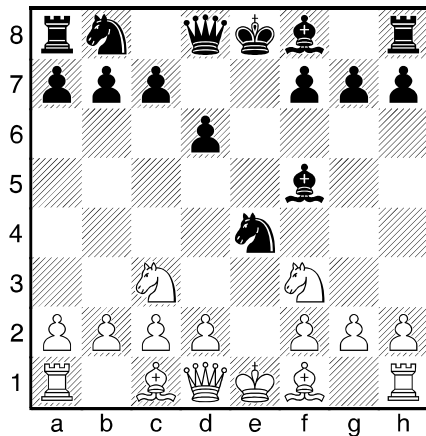
15.

With his last move ...♖a8-e8 Black attacked the bishop on e2, looking for counter play or some exchanges. What did they miss?



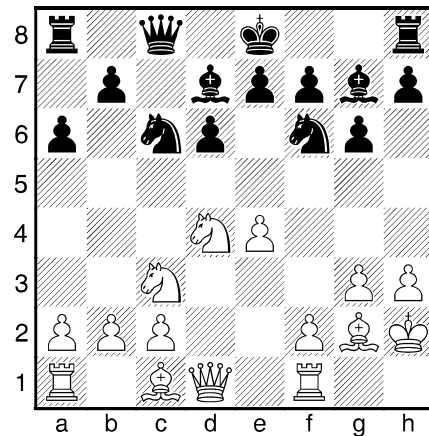
16.

With two pawns down the end-game is probably lost for White. Can they avoid defeat?



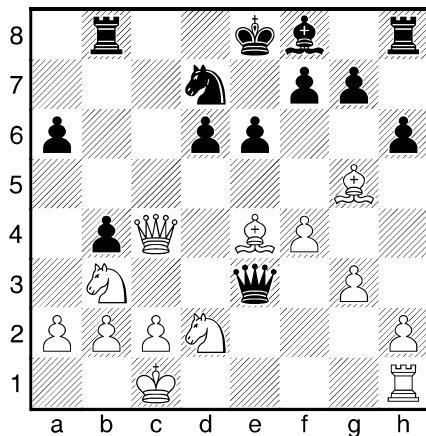
17.

Black has played a bit too boldly. How can that be punished?



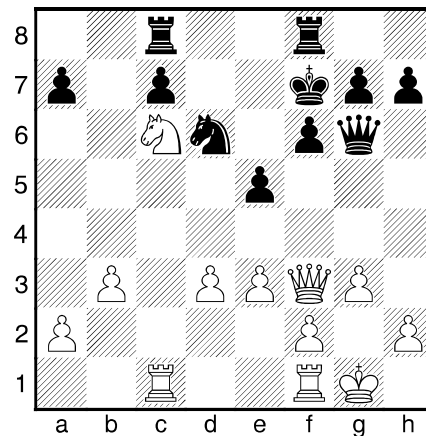
18. ●

With his last move ♔g1-h2 White defended the pawn on h3. The pawn is saved but what has White missed?



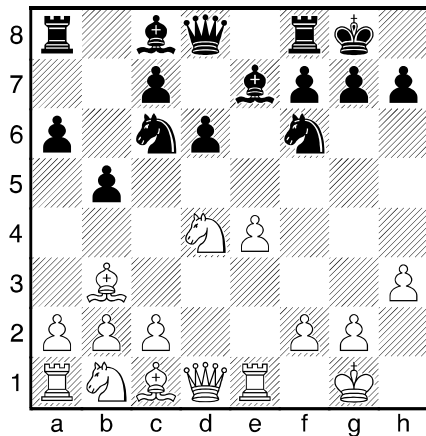
19.

Find the quick end to the game!  
**Luther (2515) – Touzanne (2330)**  
 GM tournament Lippstadt 1994



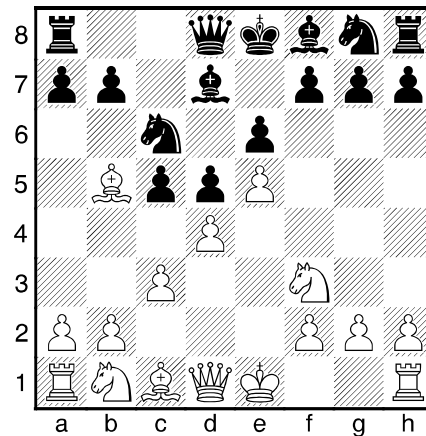
20.

What can White do in this position?



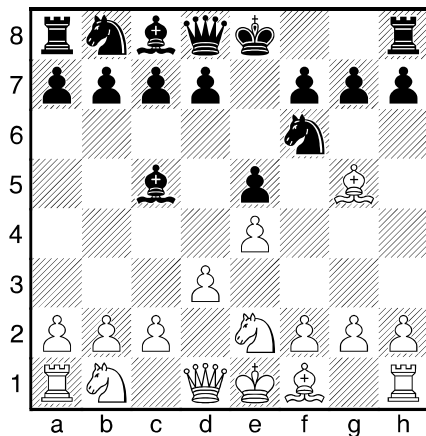
21. ●

What would you suggest for Black?  
 Developing with ...♗c8–b7/d7 or  
 ...♖f8–e8? Or exchange on d4? Or  
 something else?



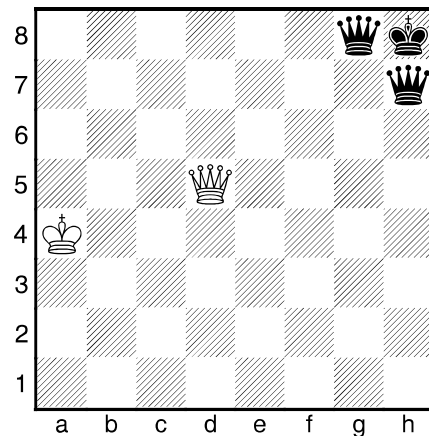
22. ●

White answered Black's last  
 move ... ♗c8–d7 with ♘g1–f3.  
 Was this okay or not?



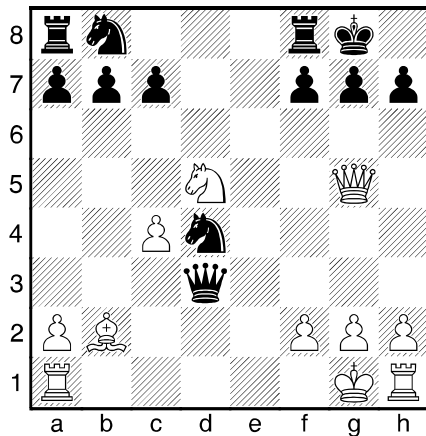
23. ●

After the strange move ♖g1-e2, White pinned the knight on f6 with ♗c1-g5. Why was this a mistake?



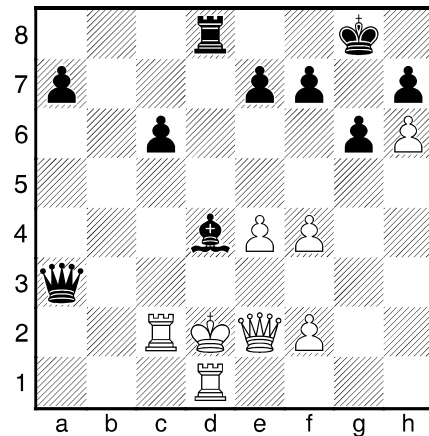
24.

My student Nan had just promoted his pawn to a second queen and was sure he was winning. Is this a justified optimism?



25. ●

White played ♘c3-d5, hoping for a mating attack (on g7), or ♘xc7. What has he missed?



26. ●

The deadliest weapon of the attacker is the double check. Can you use it here?