

WINNING CHESS TACTICS

By

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CHESS ELEVATION

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Introduction

In the first book in the series, *Play Winning Chess*, I discussed the history of chess and introduced the basic rules and strategies of the game. Teaching chess to beginners is an exercise in creativity. The teacher can go about the task in myriad ways. Some teachers might explain the rules and how the pieces move and then use the world's great chess games, especially their own, as examples. Others might focus on how to play certain openings or how to checkmate. Though all of these methods may eventually lead to an understanding of the basics, some methods produce quicker results than others.

In *Play Winning Chess*, I chose the most direct path. I broke down the game of chess into its *four elements* – force, time, space and pawn structure – and showed how these elements can be combined to produce a number of principles of play. I deduced these principles from studying thousands of master games. Understanding the four elements helps you understand the moves of the masters and inspires you to formulate plans of action in your own games.

After you've grasped the basics, it's time to go to the next level of chess and explore the world of *tactics*. Only then can you fully appreciate the beautiful combinations that a mastery of tactics allows you to create. Whereas teaching beginner-level chess takes creativity, teaching tactics is a matter of conveying classical knowledge. The teacher can package this knowledge and spin it out in a variety of ways, but the knowledge is basically the same.

Winning Chess Tactics won't teach you anything about tactics and combinations that the chess world doesn't already know. However, I've found that accessing this knowledge about these concepts can be anything but easy. Few of the books that teach combinative play explain tactics and combinations in an instructive manner. The exceptions tend to be for more advanced players, making a study of this subject rather difficult for those with less experience. In this book, I divide tactics into themes, which I thoroughly explain and illustrate. Each chapter starts out with a discussion of the basic forms of the theme and progresses to increasingly more complex examples. This teaching technique allows for easy learning at the lower levels but also continues instruction right up to master class.

My goal is to enlighten beginner and tournament player alike!

Teaching for such a range of strength of players has its drawbacks. For example, I don't stop to explain every chess term that I need to use, and as a result beginners will have it a little tougher here than in *Play Winning Chess*.

I expect you to have some basic chess knowledge. In particular, you should know:

- how the pieces move
- the rules of the game
- how to read and write algebraic chess notation
- how to count the force (the value of the pieces)
- basic chess terminology
- the four elements of chess and their associated principles, as expounded in *Play Winning Chess*

I strongly recommend a detailed study of the material in these pages for any aspiring chess player. After all, as nice as it is to admire the artistic combinations that the great chess players have given us, it's much more satisfying to create them ourselves! And I hope this book will be the tool that allows you this satisfaction.

While you are studying tactics and combinations, you might find yourself spending long hours alone, huddled over your chessboard. As soon as you're ready, I advise you to get out and test your skills against those of other chess enthusiasts. Though reading this book will not guarantee that you'll win, it might start you on your way to a championship.

The sport of chess is remarkably well organized; in fact, few sports have such a large international network of players. Local clubs, states, and national federations organize club championships, state championships and national championships. A scoring system of 1 point for a victory, $\frac{1}{2}$ for a draw and 0 for a loss allows contestants to gradually attain Master, FIDE Master, International Master and Grandmaster status.

The 200 or so national federations, including the US Chess Federation, all belong to the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE), which organizes the World Championships. The World Championships are contested for millions of dollars!

So join your local club, enter and win tournaments, and who knows, you might manage to bag yourself a championship. And even if you don't feel like doing so, you can try honing your skills online!

Happy hunting!

Yasser Seirawan,
St. Louis November 2025

CHAPTER 10

Clearance Sacrifice



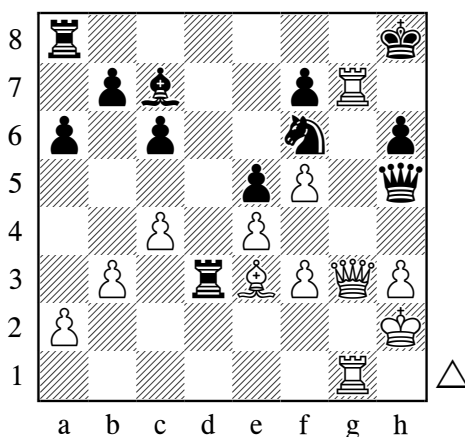
Imagine this situation: you have an opportunity to make a substantial move – a move that's strong enough to win material or perhaps even checkmate. The catch is that one of your own pieces is in the way, and taking the time to move the obstruction to a safe square will give your opponent the chance to mount a defense.

The solution to this dilemma is to sacrifice the obstructing piece! Known as a *clearance sacrifice*, this tactic forces your opponent to take the obstructing piece, thereby vacating the square of your dreams and forestalling any defensive measures.

How can you force your opponent to capture the piece, even though this action will lead to his doom? The best way is to check your opponent's king with the obstructing piece, which forces a response. The next best way is to capture something with it. If your opponent does not recapture, you will have gained a material advantage.

Georgy Lisitsin – Evgeny Zagoriansky

USSR 1936



Here is an example of the most compelling method, a checking move. White is mounting a strong attack down the g-file. If his rook were not on g7, he could make a brilliant checkmate with ♔g7. The problem here is to jettison the obstructing rook and clear the g7-square, without giving Black the time to stop the desired checkmate.

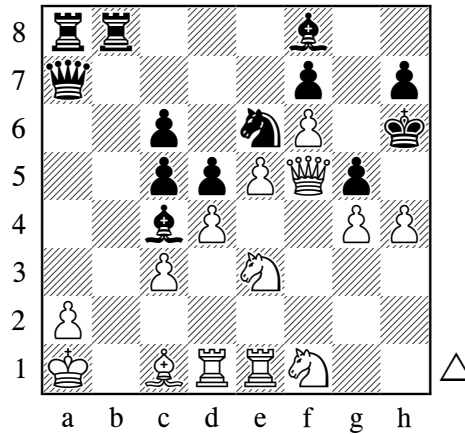
Because 1.♖g8?? fails to 1...♖xg8 and 1.♖xf7 ♔xf7 allows Black to defend the g7-square, White must find a more forcing variation. This is where the clearance check comes in.

1.♖h7†!

Black resigned; he must take the rook and so has no time to stop the checkmate: 1...♔xh7
2.♔g7#

1–0

Illustrative Example 93



This example is a bit more complex. Both kings are in terrible trouble.

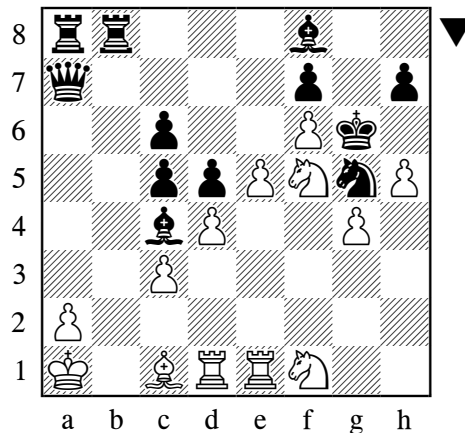
Black threatens to checkmate on a2, and defenses like 1.♖d2 fail to 1...♙xa2†! 2.♖xa2 ♖xa2#. Clearly, White has to get to Black's king first.

White notices that if the white queen were not on f5, he could play the powerful ♜f5†. Checks are the only threats that will keep Black from dropping the axe, so White moves his queen out of the way with a forcing check:

1.♙xg5†!

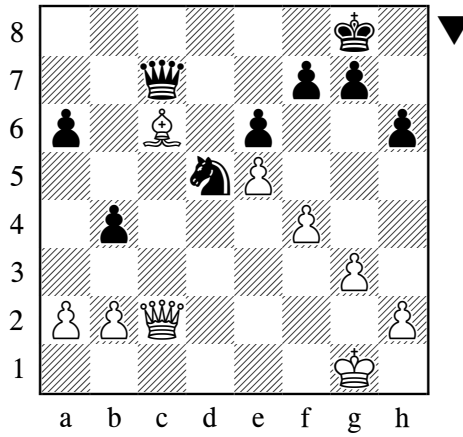
The f5-square is now vacant, and Black must take the white queen.

1...♜xg5 2.♜f5† ♜g6 3.h5#



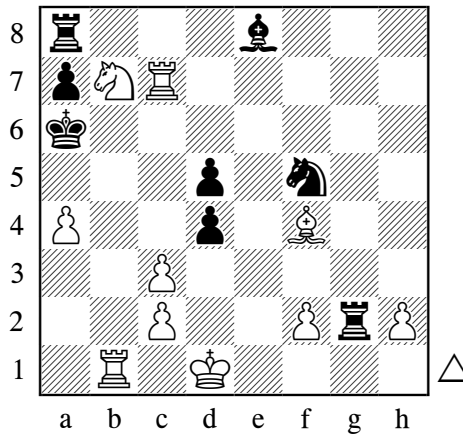
This series of checks prevents Black from making the one move he needed to win the game.

Exercise 81



White's bishop is the target. Here's a hint: look for a fork. Good luck!

Exercise 82



White has a forced checkmate possibility, but one of his pieces is in the way. Which one is it, and how can he get rid of it?