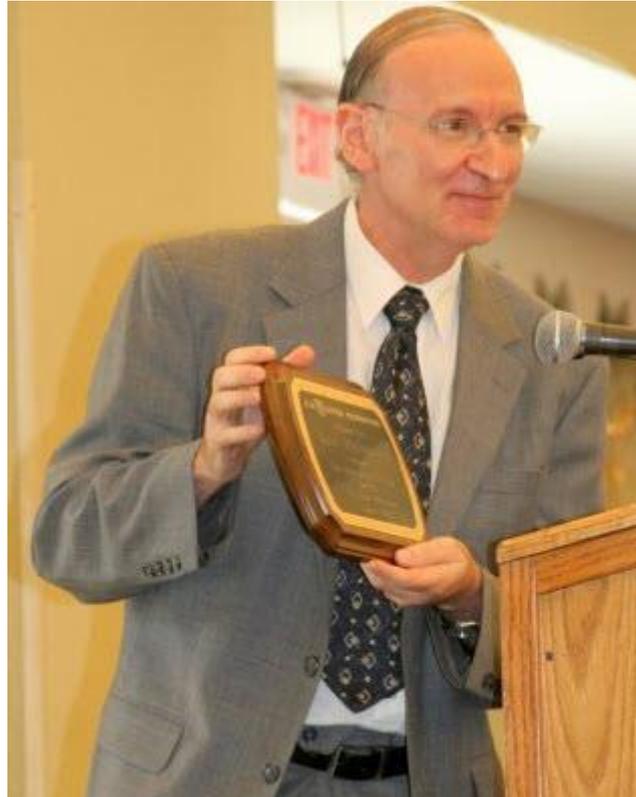


The Internet Chess Club presents

Typical Amateur Mistakes

by Coach Dan Heisman



In this new series by Dan Heisman, our renowned coach shows you the typical mistakes that an amateur can make during a chess game.

In each video, Dan picks two or three games, which feature similar mistakes. And when he talks about mistakes, he doesn't intend to show "typical" mistakes such as leaving a piece en-prise or allowing a double attack. The course is more oriented towards explaining mistakes in thought-process, or mistakes happening because we play too fast, don't consider our opponent's best move, or also when a capture can lead us to think that's the only way to progress in the game.

And this is not all. There are a lot of different ways to go wrong in your game! Putting on the table all his experience, coach Dan Heisman leads us to improve our game dramatically, showing with his clear and easy style how to avoid the most common mistakes we all are prone to make.



This is a Course guide. Use this document to learn more about the series, then watch the videos!

Video 1 - Possible causes and consequences of playing too slowly



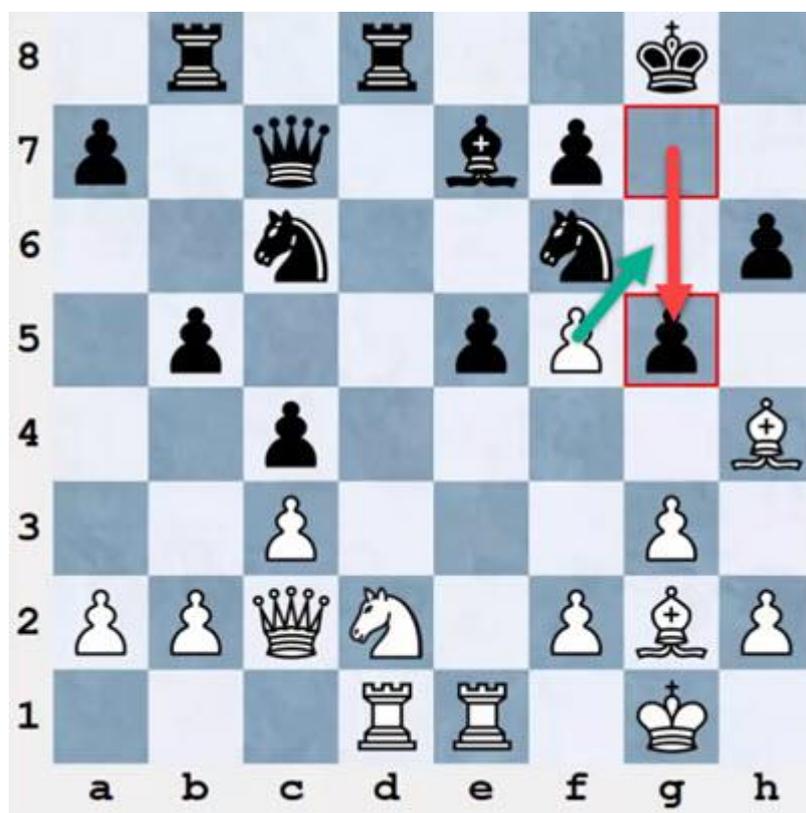
At the amateur level, only 20% of people play at a reasonable time pace. Playing at the right pace is a very important part of chess. Playing too slow means you have no time when you need to think about what's going on, and to make the right decision. When you're playing a game, two things tell you how much time you should invest in a move: what's happening in the position, and the time situation. Checking the time situation means to know which time control you're playing at, the number of the move you're going to play and, of course, the time remaining on your clock. And this is true no matter which time control you are playing: speed game, rapid or classical. It is also important to be able to understand when the move is critical. We want to invest more time thinking on critical moves and save time when the move is non-complicated, such as book moves in the opening.

In this video, Dan Heisman explains what the three main reasons are for one to play too slow:

- You're afraid to make a mistake;
- You see two possible variations, and you can't decide which one is the best;
- You underestimate how much time you'll need later in the game when the positions are critical.

With examples and watching the clock over the board, Dan will instruct you on how to be extremely aware and careful about your time management.

Therefore, any player can miss an easy tactic, and you should always check carefully, to see if you're missing something, but don't abandon the idea of exploiting your opponent's slips! Check out this position:



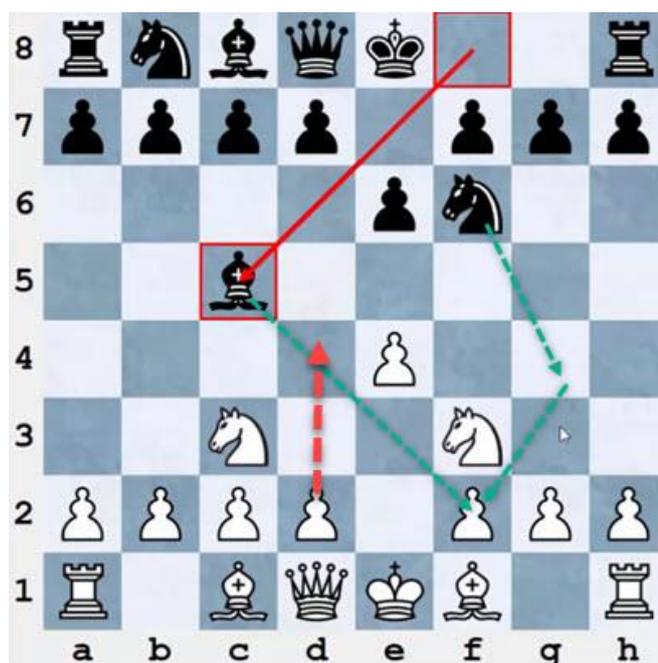
Black, a 1600 rated player, just played g5?? forgetting that after White takes his pawn en-passant, he's lost. Too good to be true? No, not at all. This kind of situation happens all the time, and Dan Heisman in this video shows us examples of how to pay attention to these slips, ready to jump on them and take the lead in the game.

Video 3 - Too Fast and Strategy Different When Way Ahead



What is it that makes us play too fast? There are a lot of reasons, from being sure about our knowledge of the opening to anxiety to inexperience.

Dan, in this video, shows us how dangerous it can be to move too fast, especially in the opening. Amateurs tend to make a typical mistake when playing too fast. It's what Dan calls "AWL" error: Attacking with something Worth Less. Here is an example:



Black plays Bc5, probably thinking that then he will be able to attack the f2 pawn by advancing his knight to g4. But he makes his move without giving it a second thought: if White plays d4, he's losing a tempo, and White is the master of the center.

Again, it's important to give every move its right time and to check our position, before hurrying in and give our opponent a chance to react with a move that will damage our structure.

The second important topic Dan addresses in this video is how to play when you're way ahead in the game. Getting greedy or wanting to completely destroy your enemy's forces sometimes can be very counter-productive. Take your time to assess the position, especially when you are under attack, although your forces are overwhelming!

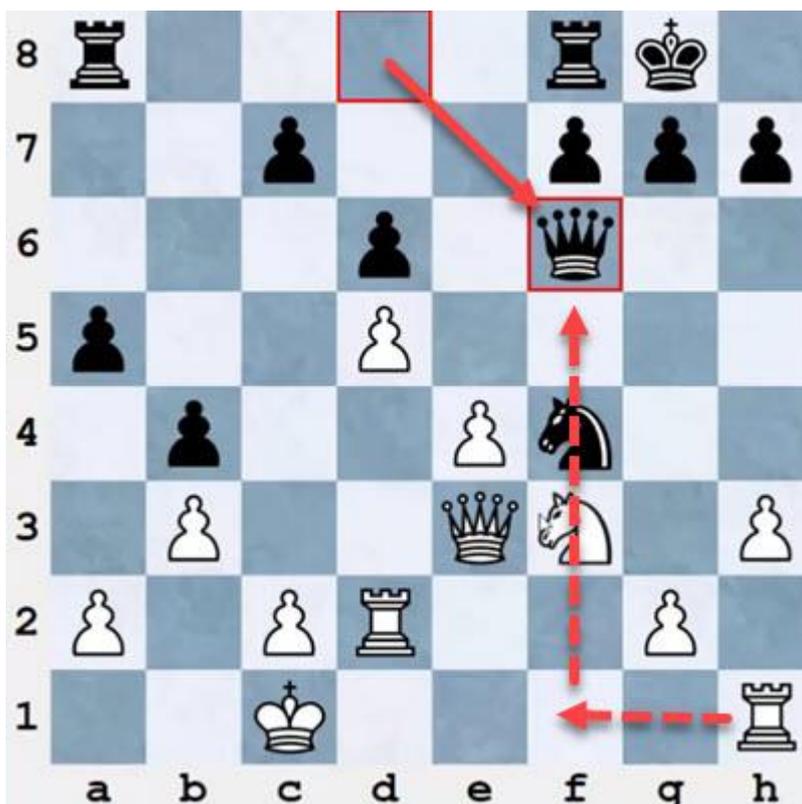
The six things to do when you are way ahead in the game are:

1. Think defense first (don't play passively though!)
2. Keep it simple: complications favor the player who's behind
3. Trade piece, not necessarily pawns
4. Use all your pieces all the time
5. Don't worry about little things (doubled pawns, for example)
6. Avoid unnecessary time trouble

These six pieces of advice are to be treasured and remembered all the time when it happens we're playing a piece up, or anyway, our advantage is overwhelming.

Video 4 - "Why did my opponent make that move?"

What happens when you ask yourself, “Why did my opponent make this move?”? There is a problem here: asking that is not sufficient. It’s better to ask oneself a different question. Let’s see an example.





Typical Amateur Mistakes by Dan Heisman

Black just played Qf6. White asks himself why Black played that move, and the answer is quite easy: to protect the Knight in f4. So, what would be a good idea now? Moving the h Rook to f1! to remove the Knight from f3 and force Black to defend his Knight in f4 again. Good plan, right?

Unfortunately, White missed that after Rf1, he is getting checkmated by Black's move Qa1#.

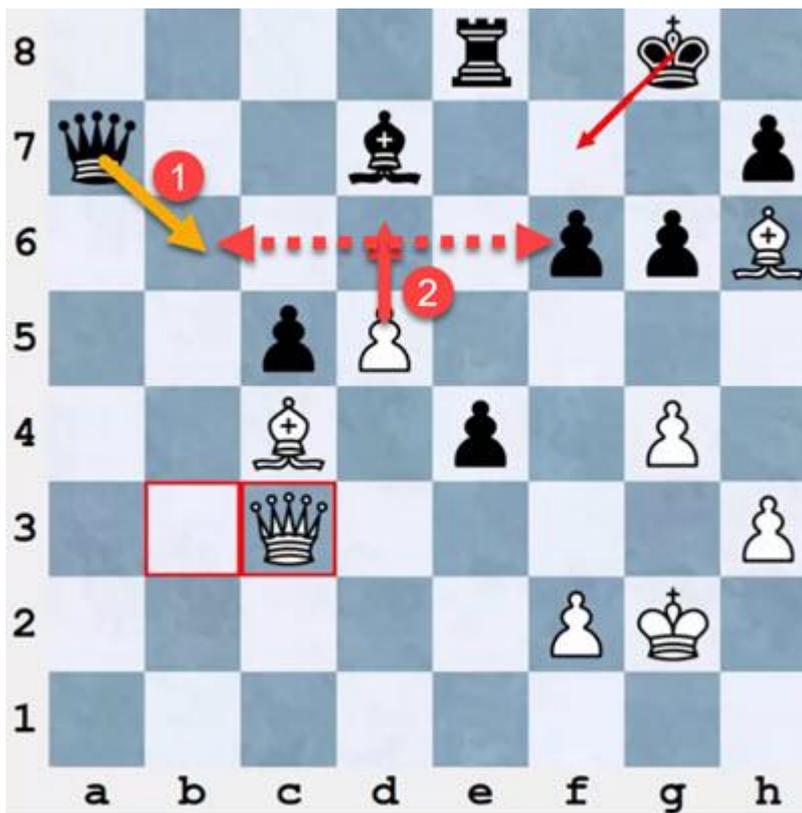
The right question to ask oneself is not "why my opponent made that move?". Instead, the question we should always ask ourselves is, "What are ALL the things that move can do?".

A great piece of advice by coach Dan Heisman!

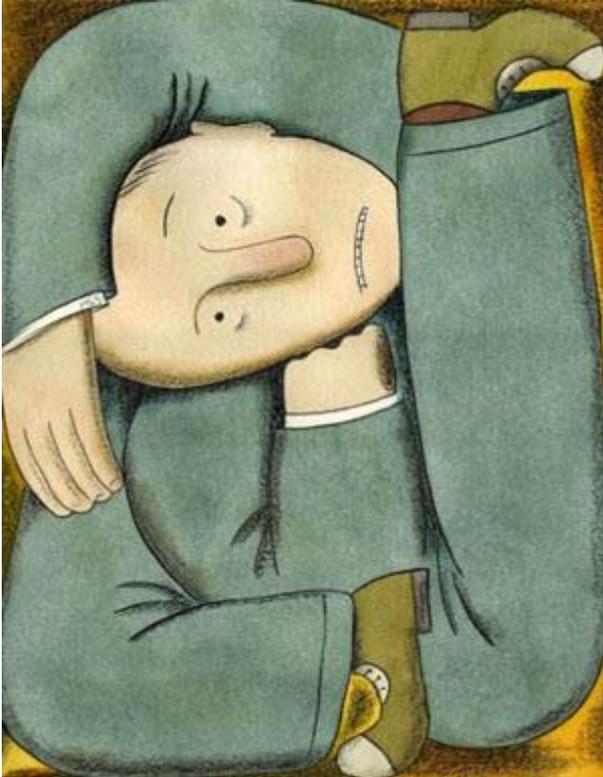
Video 5 – Hope Chess

During a chess game, you can make a bad move and hope your opponent doesn't see its refutation; you can set up a threat, and hope your opponent doesn't see it, and so forth. But this is not what Dan Heisman meant when he popularized the “hope Chess” concept, more than 20 years ago.

When you play chess, you try to make safe moves. The only way you have to know if your move is safe, is to visualize it before you actually move the piece, and ask yourself: “what are all my opponent's dangerous moves?”. The dangerous moves would be checks, captures, and threats; and you should make it sure that for any of those you have a safe answer. If you don't, and your opponent on the next move poses an unstoppable threat to you, that's what Dan Heisman calls Hope Chess. Let's see an example.



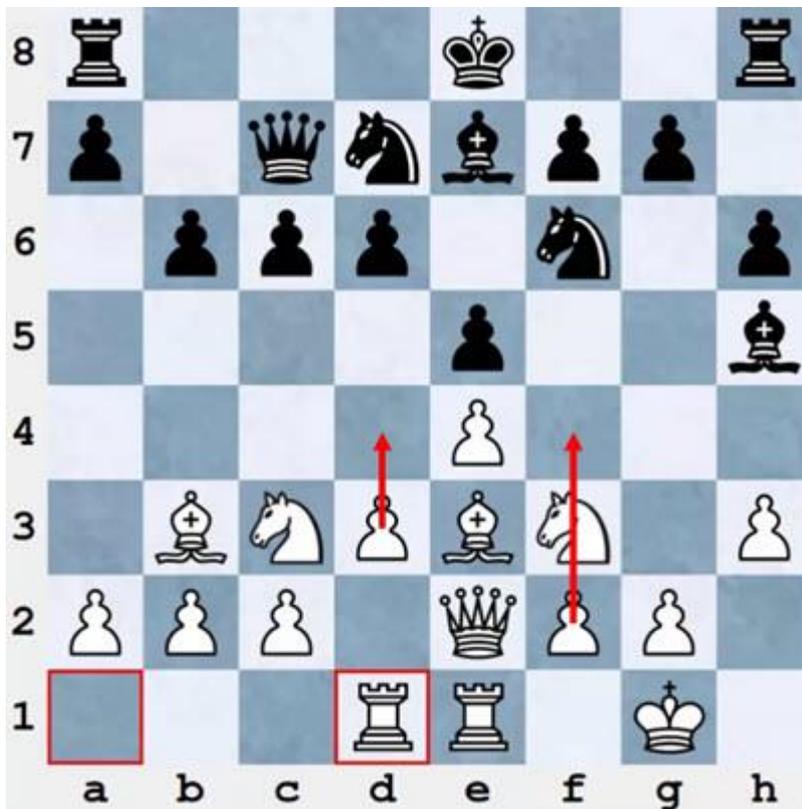
Black is way ahead here, but he makes a typical “Hope Chess” mistake. The only move that would be safe in this situation is Kf7, but Black, hoping to protect the f6 pawn, moves Qb6? A terrible blunder! After White's d6+ Black is lost. The pawn in d6 blocks the Queen, which is now out of play. White checkmated Black in a few moves. Don't hope; calculate! 😊

Video 6 – Getting cramped and Sneaky Pins

A typical mistake at the amateur level is that of getting cramped in the opening. It happens when, probably fearing terrible consequences, we miss to make “breaking” moves. We tend to “stay safe” in our half part of the board, missing some natural “opening” moves that would allow our game to become dynamic and full of possibilities.

Often, getting cramped is the result of placing pieces in front of our pawns when it’s not strictly necessary.

Here is a typical cramped position:

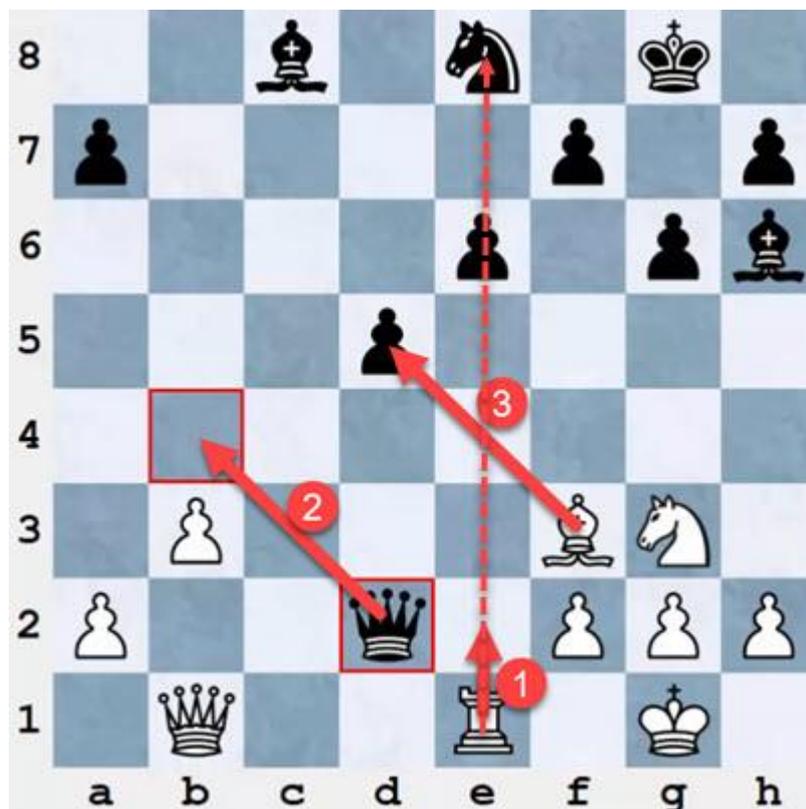


White missed the two breaking moves d4 and f4. Also, he placed his Knight in front of the f2 pawn, making it impossible to break, at least for now.

He is cramped, and normally such positions favor his opponent, who can maneuver around, increasing the pressure.

Another mistake Dan shows in this video, is missing a sneaky pin.

We know the meaning of pinning a piece, but missing a sneaky pin can lead to disaster. Here is an example:

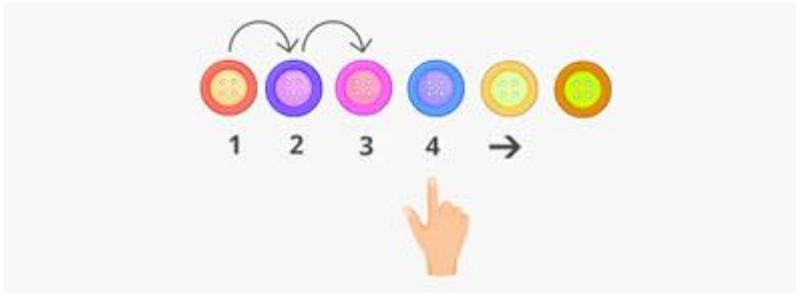


White forces Black's queen to move away, with Re2. Black misses that abandoning control over the d5 pawn leads to the execution of the sneaky pin, with Bxd5! And the Black Knight in e8 is lost is Black recaptures the pawn in d5 with exd5.

This kind of pin is not to be overlooked, though sometimes, especially in time trouble, it can be difficult to spot.

Again, always ask yourself, "what are ALL the things my opponent's move can do?".

Video 7 – Counting Errors

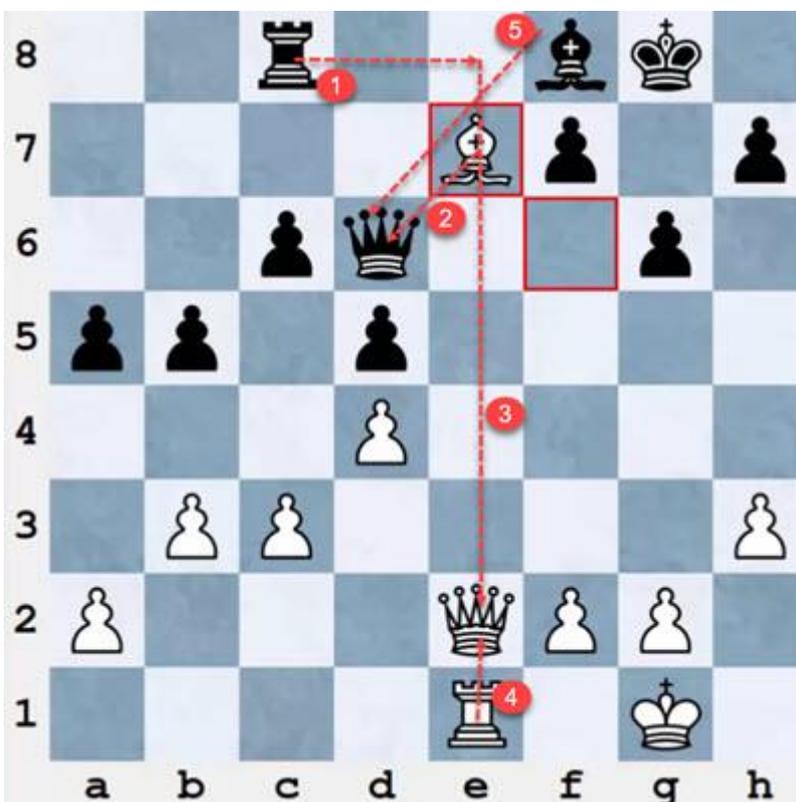


What is a Counting Error?

Counting is the tactic of calculating any series of exchanges to see if they win or lose material. So a Counting error is allowing a series of exchanges that unnecessarily loses (more) material.

Counting can be a bit hard when the variation is long, but it is essential to take time, try all the possible replies to your moves in the sequence, and avoid counting mistakes.

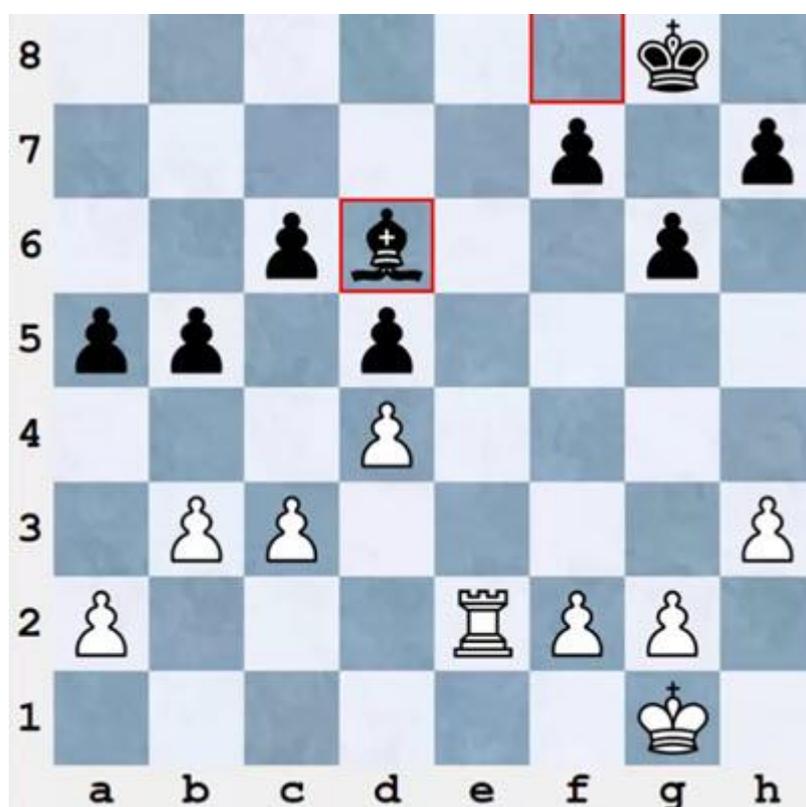
Here is an example of wrong counting:



Black, in this position, sees the possibility to attack the White's bishop in e7 and, thinking only 40 seconds, moves Re8. It is a terrible mistake because White takes Black's Queen first, and after the exchanges, Black remains with a Bishop, against White's Rook. In such an endgame, with the pawns on the queen-side exposed and unprotected, this results in a total disaster for Black.

Using more time probably Black would have seen that White could take the Queen, and then that at the end of the Counting, Black would find himself lost.

Here is the position after the exchanges:



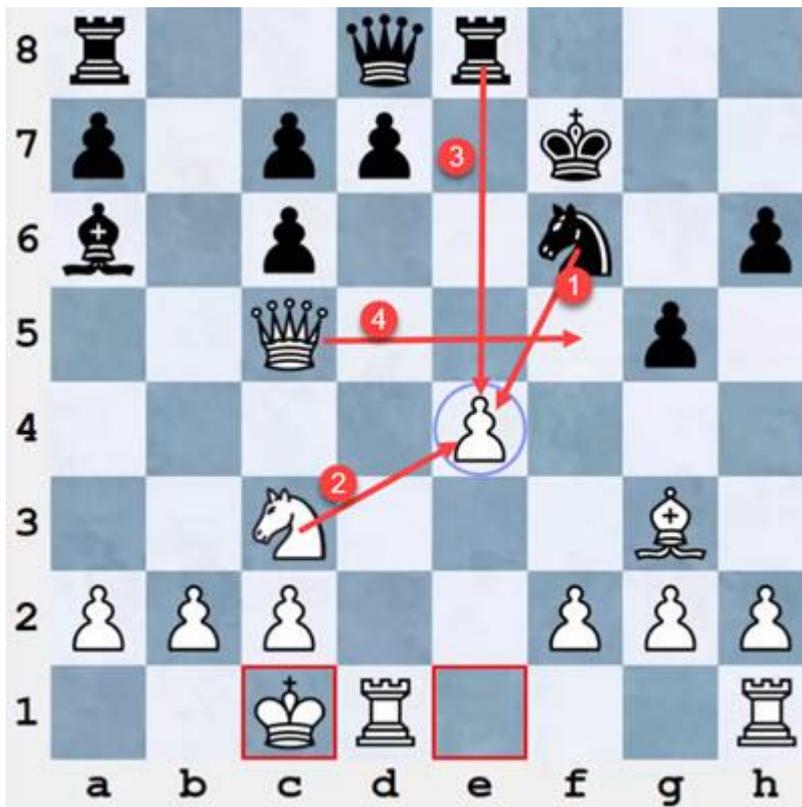
At this point, White is almost forced to win, and indeed he does so, in a more few moves.

Counting is a serious part of the game, and we should always pay attention to the consequences of a wrong counting sequence!

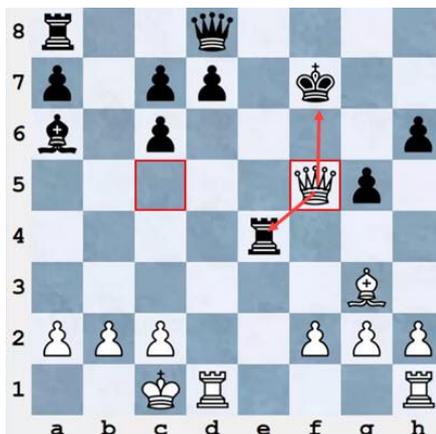
Video 8 – Hope Chess – Part 2

In this video, Dan Heisman gets back to one of the most serious and common mistakes in amateurs' games: Hope Chess. What Dan means by Hope Chess, as we said in chapter 5, is making a move without checking to see if all opponent replies of checks, captures, or threats can be met next move.

Here is another clear example of Hope Chess:



In this position, Black, with a big Hope Chess mistake, takes the pawn in e4. As you can see from the sequence, the result is disastrous:



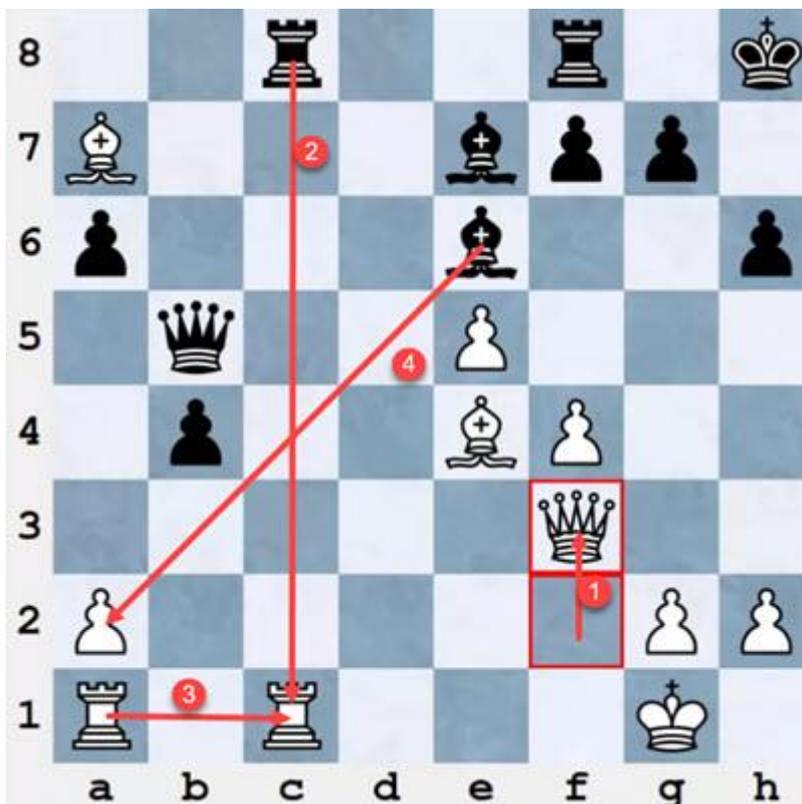
Video 9 - Removal of the guard



Removing the guard is a simple chess concept. When a piece is guarding another piece or a pawn, is forced to move away from its guard position, your opponent may take advantage of the “weakness” that such a move creates.

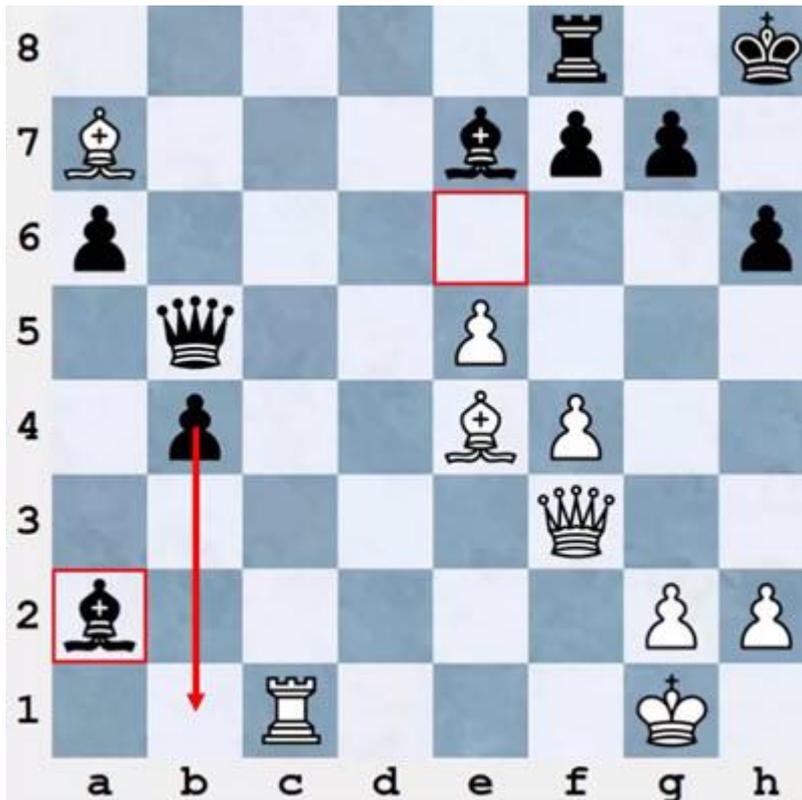
Now, if we remove the guard in a non-forced way, here we are: it is a mistake, and coach Dan Heisman shows us what the consequences may be when we make this kind of mistake.

Here is a simple sequence to explain a typical “non-forced removal of the guard:



White moves Qf3, removing – indirectly, but that’s it – the guard to the pawn in a2.

Now the sequence is quite simple for Black: Rxc1 and when white recaptures with his Rook, the removal of the guard is complete. Now Black can take in a2 with his Bishop, and his b4 pawn becomes very dangerous, with a sort of highway to heaven in front of it.



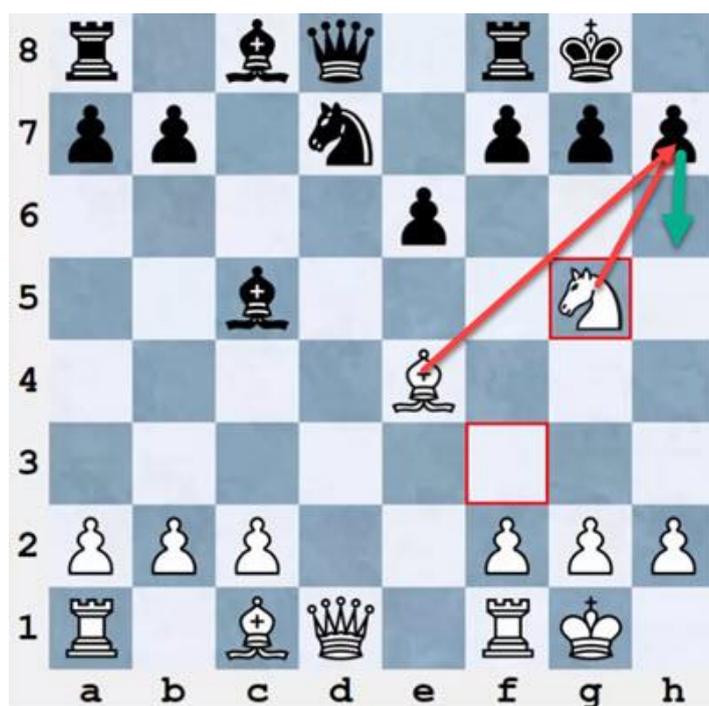
Spotting such a combination is not hard if we pay attention to the removal of the guard concept, and all its possibilities. In this particular case, the White’s rook in a1 was also overloaded, having to defend at the same time the pawn in a2 and the rook in c1. Black noticed that and was able to take advantage of the situation.

Black, thinking that the pawn in e6 guards the d5 square, moves his Bishop there, but the pawn is pinned to the Rook in c8! The mistake costs Black a Bishop and the game.

Video 11 – Try for too much



Sometimes, for several reasons, we let our desire to be incisive and winning take away our patience and our calculation skills. And, inevitably, we make mistakes, trying too much. The consequences can be, in the best cases, the loss of a tempo; but in the worst scenarios, “trying too much” can lead to losing the game altogether. Let’s see a “light” case. It’s a very amateurish situation, but it explains well the concept:

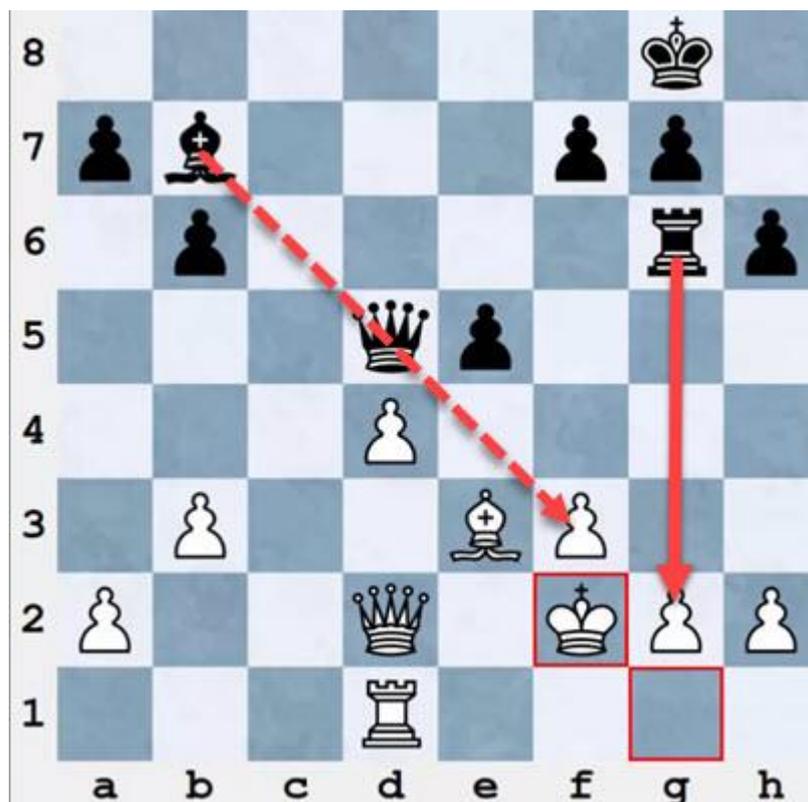


White sees the possibility to attack the h7 pawn, and in a very early phase of the game, decides to play Ng5. The Knight is protected by the White Queen, but this doesn't justify such a useless move! What happens after the natural and obvious Black's h6? White is forced to take back his "too much" pseudo-attack.

There are other situations where we keep moving already developed pieces, to harass one of the heavy pieces of our opponent, forgetting to develop our pieces, thus getting into worst positions. The basic principles of the game sometimes seem to disappear in favor of an elusive advantage, that only we can see.

In the video, Coach Dan Heisman shows us an amazing game, in which both players go for way too much. It's a highly instructive game, where subtle mistakes turn the tables more than once.

Here is the moment Black, who is winning, tries too much and allows White to draw the game:



Here Black, who's got the advantage, decides to sac the Rook, and plays R_xg2+? which leads to a perpetual check, that's much less than what Black could have got out of the position. But it doesn't end here! Watch the video, and see what happened in this crazy game.

Video 12 – Summary

In the last video of the series, Coach Dan Heisman summarizes the errors he's been showing in the previous videos, analyzing two model games.