

Now, it's time to put your new understanding to the challenge. We have included 12 "Skill Sets" — sets of 8 puzzles to build your ability to recognize key tactical patterns. The problems are similar to those in the previous chapters, but the types of problems are all mixed together. For each puzzle, it's your job to discover the best move: a free piece, checkmate, pin, skewer or fork. The answers to each problem will include additional information to develop further your tactical skills and your general chess knowledge.

You should try these puzzles without a chessboard, training your mind to visualize candidate moves and your opponent's possible responses. Follow the steps in the "Move Analysis Flowchart" (page 3) as you decide on your answer.

There are 2 ways to go through these puzzles. You should do both.



Quick Study: Allow yourself no more than 30 seconds for each puzzle in the skill set. (That's just 4 minutes for all 8 problems.) Then, check your answers.



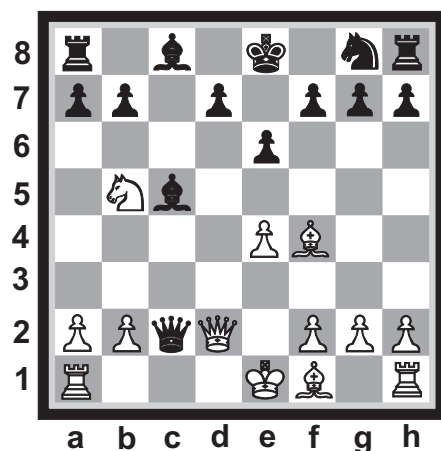
Concentrated Study: Focus on each position as you would in a real chess game. Use the "Puzzle Analysis Think Sheet" (page 5) to list and consider candidate moves. Spend a few minutes on a puzzle, just as you might on a crucial move in a game you're playing. If you can't see the solution at that point, move on to the next problem. Wait until you've completed all 8 puzzles before checking the answers.

Spend as much time as you need to study the answers. You may want to set up a chessboard to follow through the analysis or to test some of your own choices.

Here are some examples and their answers to show you how the skill set puzzles are set up. Think about each puzzle before you look at the answer.

Example 1:

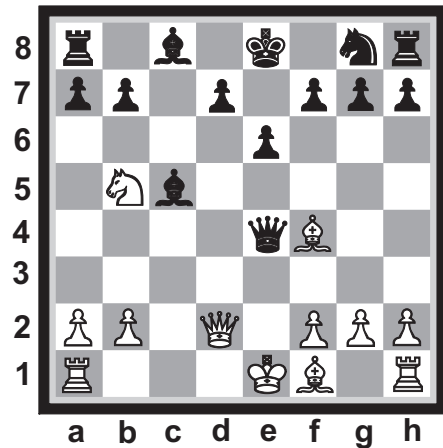
1. What's Black's best move?



1. ... _____



Black's best move is:

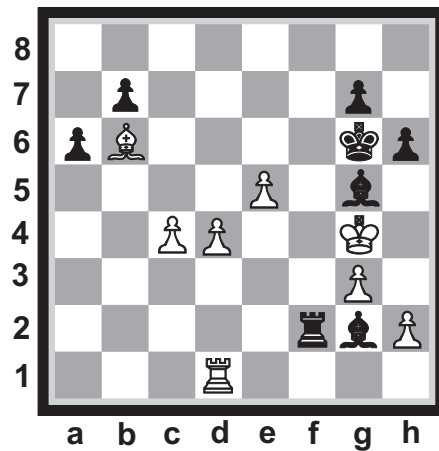


1. ... **Qxe4+**

With this move, Black moves the Queen to safety, checks White's King and gains a free Pawn

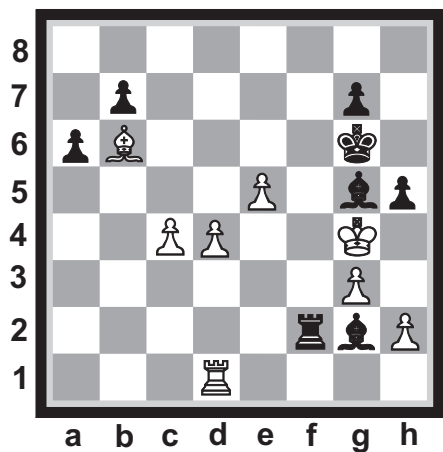
Example 2:

2. What's Black's best move?



1. ... _____

Black's best move is:



1. ... **h5#**

The White King may as well be trapped on the back rank because it can't move back — the Black Rook and Bishop on the 2nd rank block the 3rd rank. The Black Bishop on the 5th rank holds the 4th rank; and, the Black King holds the 5th rank.

Analysis: Before Black's move, the White King had no safe squares available. Black just needed to check the King without opening any possible escape squares. Always look to see where your opponent's King can move.

