

# PLAYING TECHNIQUE



International Master  
**Witalis Sapis**

# **Playing Technique**



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*I'm the one to do you good,  
Out of sleep, out of food  
Only thinking nights and days,  
How to make the best chess aids...\**

\* in the original version, the fox thought about helping animals...

Jan Wiktor Lesman (Jan Brzechwa)  
"The Mischiefs of Vitalis the Fox"



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# Introduction

## Who is this book for?

This book is for players who feel their games are chaotic. It will help them see chess in a more structured way. In the book, I share my own methods (algorithms) for analyzing the board, which make it easier to understand what is happening across 64 squares.

The book focuses on the tactical aspects of chess. Together with *Chess Master's Strategy* (my previous book) and *Chess Master's Endgame Strategy* (the next in the series), it aims to help chess players build a solid foundation for achieving success in the game. All of my books draw on my own games, experience, and personal insights.

## Goal

This book puts into practice two algorithms I've developed to make chess easier to understand:

1. Identify weaknesses.
2. The order of considering moves.

My goal is to help you improve your gameplay by highlighting the key elements to focus on when choosing your moves.

## About the Author

I shared my achievements in my previous book, but it is not those that make my books unique. What truly matters is a combination of factors, especially my personality type—Protagonist. “People with the ENFJ personality type (Protagonists) feel called to serve a greater purpose in life.

Thoughtful and idealistic, ENFJs strive to have a positive impact on other people and the world around them. These personalities rarely shy away from an opportunity to do the right thing, even when doing so is far from easy.” (<https://www.16personalities.com/enfj-personality>)

I decided to write books because I realized that my knowledge and experience could help many people understand chess better. After all, chess is one of the best models of life. In both chess and life, we constantly solve problems. The skills we develop at the board often prove useful in making life simpler and easier to navigate.

I publish my books independently because publishers don’t offer fair financial terms and try to interfere with the content and cover designs. They want my books to look like others they publish, but my goal is for my books to stand out—both in content and appearance.

## **The Cover**

The book’s cover reflects my other passion in life—music. It was inspired by the cover of the album “Tea For The Tillerman” by my favorite singer, Cat Stevens.

The design was created by Patrycja, whom I want to thank very much :)

The position on the chessboard is a real position from the game Sapis Witalis – Matlak Marek Szczecin 1986.

## **Examples**

1. I have used my own games for two main reasons:

- a) It’s easier to reconstruct my own thought process.
- b) The material is undeniably original.

# Chapter 1

## Identify Weaknesses

This guide is divided into two sections:

- 1) A theoretical section—covering the essential principles you need to follow.
- 2) A practical section—where I demonstrate my method in action during a game.

### 1.1. The Scanner Method

1.1.1. In chess, we often face the question: how to avoid blundering pieces and pawns? While many solutions exist, each has its disadvantages. The method I've created is both logical and consistent, and it can be learned by anyone, regardless of their level of understanding of the game.

1.1.2. The method focuses on identifying critical points on the board that deserve particular attention. In chess terminology, we usually refer to such points as weaknesses. The term “weakness” can be defined in numerous ways, and it can refer either to weak squares or to material weaknesses—pieces and pawns. My method deals exclusively with the latter. I define weakness strictly in mathematical terms.

### 1.2. How to Assess a Position to Spot All Its Weaknesses?

1.2.1. We examine the board using what I call the “scanner method”: from the a-file to the h-file, and from the 1st rank to the 8th rank. The weaknesses are presented in exactly the same order.

## 1.3. Weakness

**1.3.1. A piece or pawn is considered a weakness if it's attacked as many times or more than it's defended.**

1.3.2. Additional conditions:

1.3.2.1. The king cannot be captured, so we must treat his weakness differently. Sometimes, the king's weakness determines the outcome of the game.

1.3.2.2. A piece stuck in an absolute pin (i.e., pinned to the king and unable to make a legal move) doesn't count as an attacker or defender.

1.3.2.3. So, a piece or pawn is considered a weakness if it's:

– neither attacked nor defended

Attack: 0     /     Defense: 0

– attacked once and defended once

Attack: 1     /     Defense: 1

– attacked twice and defended twice

Attack: 2     /     Defense: 2

And so on, and so forth...

1.3.2.4. Other configurations:

**Attack: 1     /     Defense: 0**

**Attack: 2     /     Defense: 1**

**Attack: 3     /     Defense: 2**

These configurations carry a risk of losing the piece, so I've marked them in italics.

**Why is it important to pay attention to pieces or pawns that are attacked as many times as they are defended?**

Because with each move, the piece can be attacked again. And once it's attacked more times than it's defended, it can be captured.

That's why every new attack increases the risk of losing the piece.

Capturing can result in:

- 1) Material loss—if the piece we give up is more valuable than the one we take
- 2) An exchange of pieces—if the piece we give up is of equal value to the one we take
- 3) Material gain—if the piece we give up is less valuable than the one we take

### **1.4. The Value of the Pieces**

1.4.1. There are several ways to assign value to the pieces. The two most common systems are as follows:

|          |   |     |          |   |   |
|----------|---|-----|----------|---|---|
| 1)       |   |     | 2)       |   |   |
| – pawn   | - | 1   | – pawn   | - | 1 |
| – bishop | - | 3   | – bishop | - | 3 |
| – knight | - | 3   | – knight | - | 3 |
| – rook   | - | 4.5 | – rook   | - | 5 |
| – queen  | - | 9   | – queen  | - | 9 |

1.4.2. I personally prefer the first system, in which the queen is worth the same as two rooks or three minor pieces, because I find it more balanced. However, the differences aren't very significant, and material value alone is rarely decisive. A proper evaluation of the position also depends on various positional factors.

## 1.5. Changes

1.5.1. Since each move can alter the structure of weaknesses on the board, it's essential to identify those changes. That's why I've included additional descriptions in the following cases.

1.5.1.1. A piece becomes a weakness.

1.5.1.2. A piece is no longer a weakness.

1.5.1.3. A piece is captured.

## 1.6. Description

1.6.1. The description includes the following elements:

1.6.1.1. Moves from the game

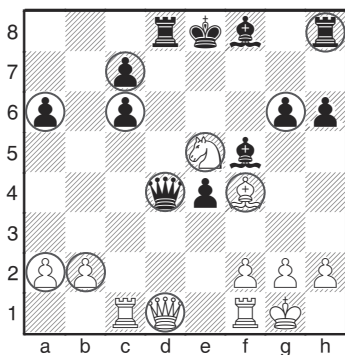
1.6.1.2. Changes

1.6.1.3. Weaknesses

1.6.1.3.1. White's weaknesses

1.6.1.3.2. *Black's weaknesses – in italics*

1.6.1.4. Example:



1.6.1.4.1. I've circled all pieces that are weaknesses.

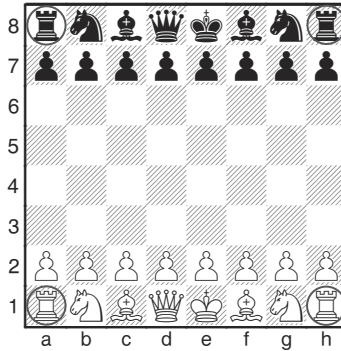
#### 1.6.1.4.2. Weaknesses

| <b>White</b>      |   |                  |   |                   |
|-------------------|---|------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1) a2-pawn        | — | Attack:0         | / | Defense: 0        |
| <b>2) b2-pawn</b> | — | <b>Attack: 1</b> | / | <b>Defense: 0</b> |
| 3) d1-queen       | — | Attack: 2        | / | Defense: 2        |
| 4) e5-knight      | — | Attack: 1        | / | Defense: 1        |
| 5) f4-bishop      | — | Attack: 0        | / | Defense: 0        |

| <b>Black</b>      |   |                         |   |                          |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1) a6-pawn        | — | <i>Attack: 0</i>        | / | <i>Defense: 0</i>        |
| <b>2) c6-pawn</b> | — | <b><i>Attack: 2</i></b> | / | <b><i>Defense: 0</i></b> |
| 3) c7-pawn        | — | <i>Attack: 0</i>        | / | <i>Defense: 0</i>        |
| 4) d4-queen       | — | <i>Attack: 1</i>        | / | <i>Defense: 1</i>        |
| 5) g6-pawn        | — | <i>Attack: 1</i>        | / | <i>Defense: 1</i>        |
| 6) h8-rook        | — | <i>Attack: 0</i>        | / | <i>Defense: 0</i>        |

1.6.1.4.3. At this stage of the game, White has five weaknesses, while Black has six. Two of these—the b2- and c6-pawns—are directly vulnerable to capture. The other weaknesses are balanced.

□ Sapis Witalis  
 ■ Paćko Krzysztof  
 Gdansk, 1982



## Weaknesses

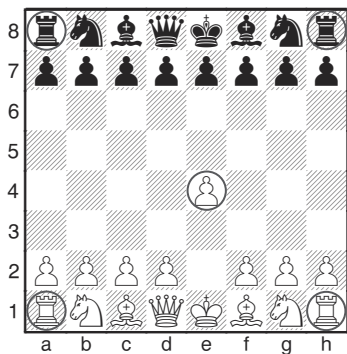
### White

- 1) a1-rook — Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 2) h1-rook — Attack: 0 / Defense: 0

### Black

- 1) a8-rook — Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 2) h8-rook — Attack: 0 / Defense: 0

1.e4



### Changes

1) New weakness: pawn on e4.

### Weaknesses

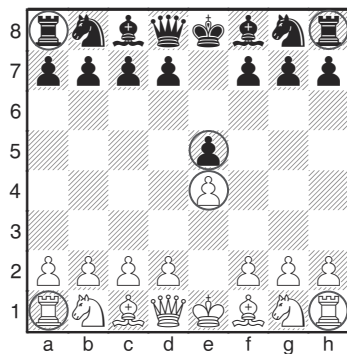
#### White

- 1) a1-rook – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 2) e4-pawn – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 3) h1-rook – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0

#### Black

- 1) a8-rook – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 2) h8-rook – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0

1...e5



### Changes

1) New weakness: pawn on e5.

### Weaknesses

#### White

- 1) a1-rook – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 2) e4-pawn – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 3) h1-rook – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0

#### Black

- 1) a8-rook – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 2) e5-pawn – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0
- 3) h8-rook – Attack: 0 / Defense: 0

# Chapter 2

## The Order of Considering Moves

2.1. We consider moves in an order that reflects how likely they are to help us find the best solution. Sometimes, a check can initiate a forcing sequence that ends in checkmate. By examining checks first, we're more likely to notice such checkmates. The most powerful pieces usually pose the biggest threats, so we start by considering their moves first.

When capturing, our goal is to gain the biggest material advantage possible, so going after the most valuable pieces makes perfect sense. Sometimes, a specific type of move isn't available, or doesn't produce the expected result. At other times, a line might be too complex to calculate—in such cases, we move on to the next candidate move. We stop considering moves as soon as we find a satisfactory solution, unless we have plenty of time and a gut feeling that a better one might exist. In general, it's good to remember: “better is the enemy of good.”

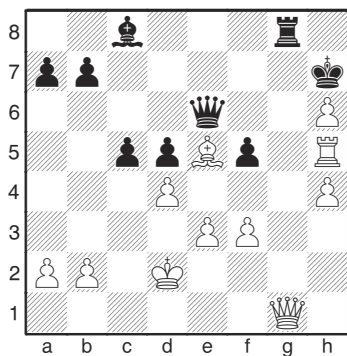
### **2.2. We consider moves in the following order:**

- a) checks with capture
- b) checks
- c) captures
- d) attacking moves
- e) other moves

Other moves often involve various strategic ideas, which I covered in my book *Chess Master's Strategy*. An expanded version of that book—written together with GM Bartłomiej Macieja—is called *Chess Strategy Explained*.

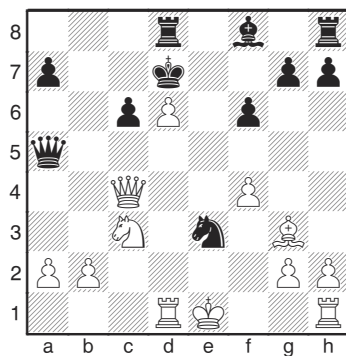
**2.3. When several captures are available, we consider them based on the value of the captured piece—starting with the most valuable.**

**Puzzle 117**



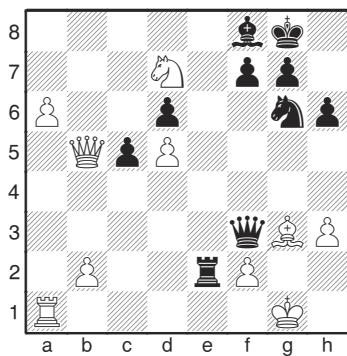
White to move

**Puzzle 119**



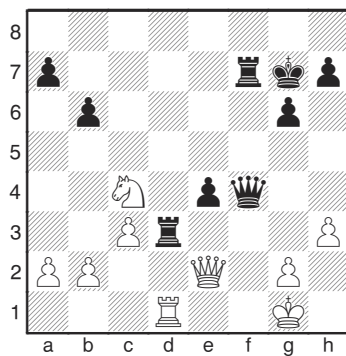
White to move

**Puzzle 118**



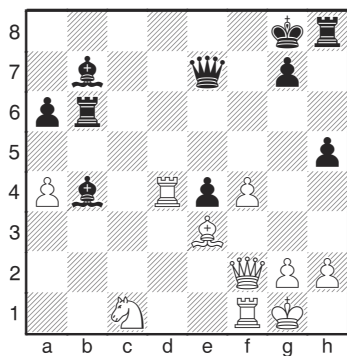
White to move

**Puzzle 120**



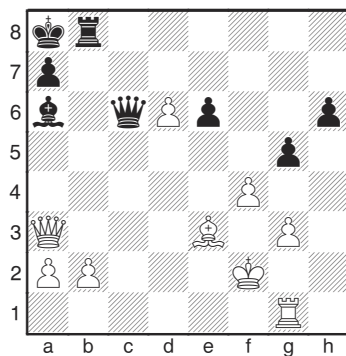
Black to move

**Puzzle 121**



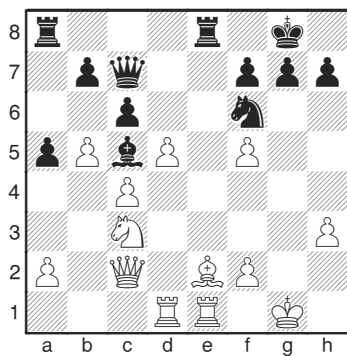
White to move

**Puzzle 123**



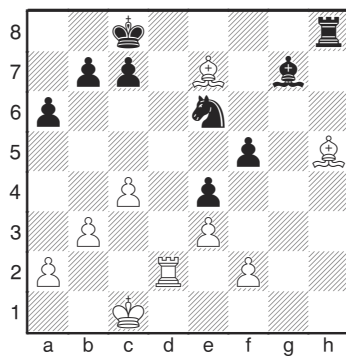
Black to move

**Puzzle 122**



Black to move

**Puzzle 124**



White to move

### Puzzle 117

□ Sapis Witalis

■ Matlak Marek

Bielsko-Biała, 1984

#### *I. Weaknesses:*

A poorly placed king.

a7, c5

#### *II. Order:*

a) 1.Qxg8+ Qxg8 loses the queen

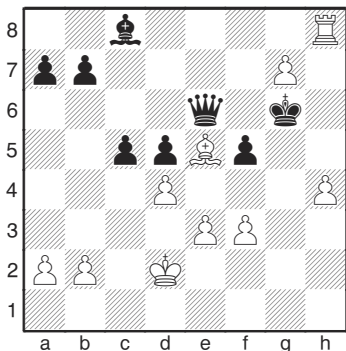
b) 1.Qg7+

#### *III. Solution:*

**1.Qg7+ Rxg7 2.hxg7+ Kg6 3.Rh8**

We get a new queen and end up with an extra rook.

*Promotion, Decoy*



### Puzzle 118

□ Sapis Witalis

■ Obodczuk Andrei

Kołobrzeg, 2003

#### *I. Weaknesses:*

c5, d6, Re2, Qf3

#### *II. Order:*

a) 1.Nf6+ gxf6 loses the knight

b) 1.Qxe2

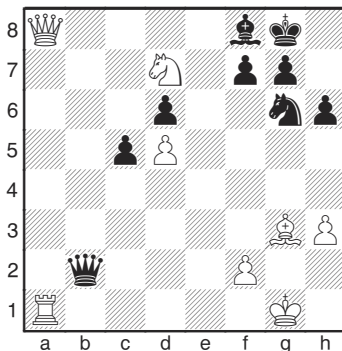
#### *III. Solution:*

**1.Qxe2 Qxe2 2.a7 Qxb2 3.a8Q**

We win the rook.

1.a7 Nf4 2.Bxf4 Qxf2+ 3.Kh1 Qg2#  
loses for White.

*Deflection*



## Puzzle 119

□ Sapis Witalis

■ Ostrowski Tadeusz

Świdnica, 1997

### *I. Weaknesses:*

A poorly placed king.

Qa5, c6, Ne3, Rh8

### *II. Order:*

a) 1.Qxc6+ Kxc6 loses the queen

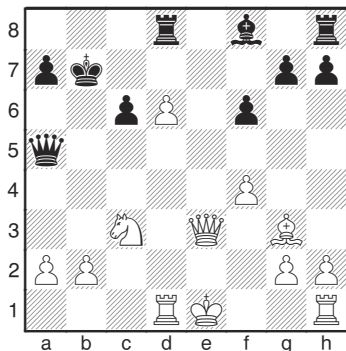
b) 1.Qf7+

### *III. Solution:*

1.Qf7+ Kc8 2.Qe6+ Kb7 3.Qxe3

We win the knight.

*Fork, Decoy*



## Puzzle 120

□ Piórecki Marek

■ Sapis Witalis

Świebodzin, 1983

### *I. Weaknesses:*

a2, c3, Nc4, Rd1, Qe2, h3

### *II. Order:*

a) 1...Rxd1+ piece exchange

b) 1...Qf2+

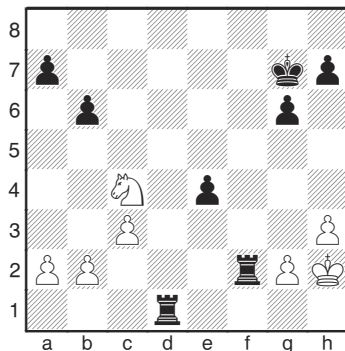
### *III. Solution:*

1...Qf2+ 2.Qxf2 Rxd1+ 3.Kh2

Rxf2

We win the rook.

*Deflection*



### Puzzle 121

□ Sapis Witalis

■ Piskorz Henryk

Bierutowice, 1981

#### *I. Weaknesses:*

Rb6

#### *II. Order:*

a) 1.Rd8+ Qxd8 piece exchange

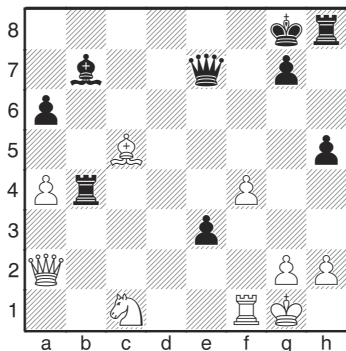
b) 1.Rxb4

#### *III. Solution:*

1.Rxb4 Rxb4 2.Bc5 e3 3.Qa2+

We win the bishop.

*Fork, Decoy*



### Puzzle 122

□ Barwiński Dionizy

■ Sapis Witalis

Lublin, 2007

#### *I. Weaknesses:*

A poorly placed king.

Qc2, f2, h3

#### *II. Order:*

a) 1...Bxf2+

b) 1...Qg3+

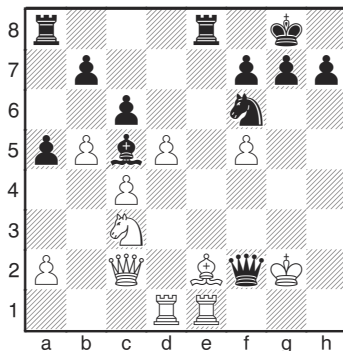
#### *III. Solution:*

1...Qg3+ 2.Kh1 Qxh3+ 3.Kg1

Qg3+ 4.Kh1 Qh4+ 4.Kg2 Qxf2+

with a mating attack. Another winning line is 1...Bxf2+ 2.Kxf2 Qh2+ 3.Kf3 Qxh3+ 4.Kf2 Ng4+ 5.Bxg4 Qh2+, and Black wins the queen.

*Pin*



## Puzzle 123

□ Borkowski Franciszek

■ Sapis Witalis

Hradec Kralove, 1987

### *I. Weaknesses:*

A poorly placed king.

b2, d6

### *II. Order:*

a) 1...Rxb2+ 2.Qxb2 loses the rook

b) 1...Qc2+

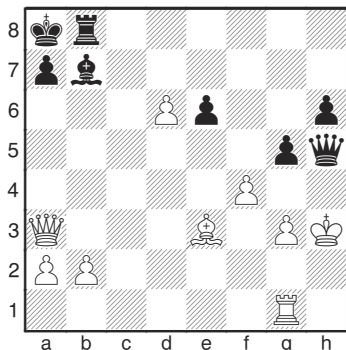
### *III. Solution:*

1...Qc2+ 2.Kf3 Bb7+ 3.Kg4 Qe2+

4.Kh3 Qh5#

We deliver checkmate.

*Decoy*



## Puzzle 124

□ Sapis Witalis

■ Dobosz Henryk

Lublin, 1999

### *I. Weaknesses:*

Ne6, f5

### *II. Order:*

a) 1.Rd8+ Nxd8 loses the rook

b) 1.Bf7

### *III. Solution:*

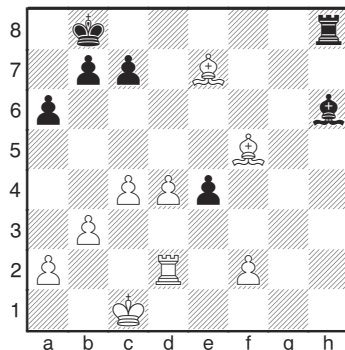
1.Bf7 Nd4 (1...Nd8 2.Bxd8 Rxd8

3.Be6+) 2.exd4 Bh6 3.Be6+ Kb8

4.Bxf5

We win two pieces for a rook.

*Restriction, Decoy*



## Afterword

*"As Vitalis in his burrow sat  
Of his forehead rubbed some sweat.  
– Doesn't seem to be that great!  
Once or twice his tail he spun,  
And then sadly said: – It's done!"*

Jan Wiktor Lesman (Jan Brzechwa)  
"The Mischiefs of Vitalis the Fox"



# Learn with Fox Witalis!



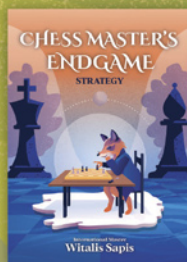
## PLAYING TECHNIQUE

The fox will teach you how to look at the chessboard to avoid losing pieces (and pawns). And also, in what order to consider moves so you don't miss a simple win.



## CHESS MASTER'S STRATEGY

The fox will convince you that learning strategy doesn't have to be difficult. Since (contrary to appearances) you can't calculate everything, strategy will greatly help you improve your game level.



## CHESS MASTER'S ENDGAME STRATEGY

The fox will teach you endgame and strategies for playing them. This will be useful throughout your chess career.

