



Novice Nook Quiz

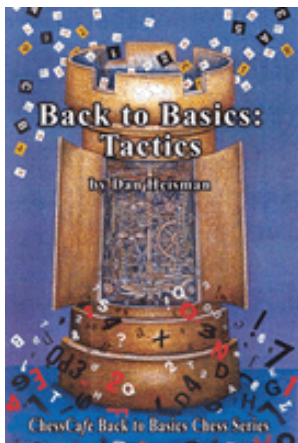
Quote of the Month: *The real test is to see if you can do it.*

I am confident that the readers are familiar with the aims of the Novice Nook column, along with the author's views on achieving long-term chess improvement, so let's check your knowledge with a little quiz. It will be multiple-choice, so it must be easy! The answers at the end are solely based on the opinions of the author.

COLUMNISTS

Novice Nook

Dan Heisman



1. The name Novice Nook means:

- a. The column is only written for novices.
- b. The column is only helpful for novices.
- c. When it comes to improvement, we are all "novices" and can learn something new.
- d. It's a "new" corner where you can find information.

2. A key improvement idea of Novice Nook is:

- a. Counting is a frequently occurring and sometimes surprisingly difficult tactic.
- b. Time Management is an important part of chess play.
- c. Make sure your intended move cannot be trounced by an opponent's reply.
- d. All of the above.

3. "Hope Chess" is:

- a. When you make a bad move and hope your opponent does not see how to refute it.
- b. Your opponent makes a threat that you did not foresee and you hope you can meet it.
- c. When you make a threat and hope your opponent does not see it.
- d. All of the above.

4. "Flip coin" chess is:

- a. You make a move without considering the opponent's threats.
- b. You choose any random candidate move.
- c. You move quickly and the game is decided by chance.
- d. You decide each move by a coin flip.

5. Which tactical motif is most commonly overlooked in my student's games, and often overlooked in general? (Hint: it is less frequent than double attacks and was the subject of an entire column.)

- a. Discovered attacks
- b. Pins
- c. Skewers
- d. Removal of the guard

6. Which of the following Novice Nooks is primarily about practice?

- a. [Finding a Good Instructor](#)
- b. [The Road to Carnegie Hall](#)
- c. [Every Good Chess Player](#)
- d. Let Allen Iverson Show the Way

7. What is the author's feeling about playing fast games to aid improvement?

- a. They are necessary for improvement so long as you play slow games, too.
- b. They are helpful but not necessary for improvement.
- c. They form bad habits and are usually very harmful.
- d. They are addictive and must be avoided.

8. Which of the following is an experience shared by most strong players?

- a. They have played many tournaments against strong opposition, and reviewed their games with strong players.
- b. They have read many annotated games collections.
- c. They have studied tactics extensively, so that they can recognize basic tactics quickly and accurately.
- d. All of the above.

9. Which of the following is *not* part of my Big Five items of primary importance in a basic review of a game?

- a. Basic tactics
- b. Time management
- c. Use of general principles
- d. Following standard opening lines = "tabiyas"

10. What is the most important principle that applies to the endgame?

- a. Try to promote a pawn
- b. Centralize the king
- c. Activate the king
- d. Don't run out of time

11. What is the most important idea on the chessboard?

- a. Activity
- b. Safety
- c. Center Control
- d. Space

12. For amateurs, what is the most important concept that does *not* appear on the board?

- a. Learn something
- b. Have fun
- c. Win
- d. Don't repeatedly make the same mistakes.

13. If your opponent plays an unexpected move, you should:

- a. Respond fast so your nerves do not overcome you.
- b. Respond fast to prove that you are not panicked.
- c. Play slowly even if you get into time trouble.
- d. Play slowly until you overcome your nervousness and are appropriately careful.

14. An important talent an improving chess player should have is:
- a. The ability to not repeatedly make the same mistakes.
 - b. The ability to learn from your losses.
 - c. The ability to calculate quickly and accurately.
 - d. All of the above.
15. The author calls the ability to “see” what is happening on the chessboard:
- a. Board vision
 - b. Tactical vision
 - c. Pattern recognition
 - d. Quick vision
16. When playing speed chess on the Internet, you can maximize your improvement by:
- a. Playing with no time increment to get the most adrenaline rush.
 - b. Playing with the same increment as your national federation’s OTB standard.
 - c. Using the most common time limit to get the most competition.
 - d. Playing five minute blitz, as that is the standard for improvement.
17. Which of the following was *not* a Novice Nook about Counting?
- a. [A Counting Primer](#)
 - b. [The Most Important Tactic](#)
 - c. [Is There a Win?](#)
 - d. [Is It Safe?](#)
18. Which is *not* a skill that would be used on most chess moves?
- a. Analysis
 - b. Evaluation
 - c. Time Management
 - d. Attacking
19. According to the [Theory of Chess Improvement](#), which is most likely to be the missing ingredient when an average player’s improvement is hindered?
- a. Subtracting negatives (stopping things they are doing wrong).
 - b. Adding positives (learning new patterns and ideas).
 - c. Learning more opening lines.
 - d. Learning endgame skills.
20. Which type of chess book is most likely to help intermediate players?
- a. Game collections with many games annotated for instruction.
 - b. Opening books with both generic advice and specific opening lines.
 - c. Basic and intermediate endgame instruction.
 - d. Books on how to think in chess.
21. The most important objective of the opening is:
- a. Center control
 - b. Safe and efficient activation of all the pieces
 - c. King positioning and safety
 - d. Center occupation

22. "GTS" stands for:

- a. General Time Strategy
- b. Good Tactics Study
- c. Go To Sleep in the endgame
- d. Getting Tough and Speedy

23. With regard to assumptions about your *opponent's* moves:

- a. In analysis assume the next move will be best and also assume his previous move was best.
- b. In analysis assume the next move will be best, but assume the last move might have been a mistake.
- c. In analysis assume the next move will be a mistake, but assume his previous move was best.
- d. In analysis assume the next move will be a mistake and assume the last move might have been a mistake.

24. The definition of "evaluation" used in Novice Nook is:

- a. The value of each piece in a given situation.
- b. Determining if one move is better than another.
- c. Who stands better, how much, and why?
- d. What is the best plan?

25. Of the four main criteria for evaluation, in general the least important one is:

- a. Pawn structure
- b. The activity of all the pieces
- c. King safety
- d. Material

26. The skill that most differentiates players rated under 2000 is:

- a. Analysis
- b. Evaluation
- c. Opening knowledge
- d. Endgame knowledge

27. A skill that clearly differentiates very strong players is:

- a. Analysis
- b. Evaluation
- c. Opening knowledge
- d. Endgame knowledge

28. The one essential thing a 2000 rated player needs to get to 2200 and beyond:

- a. Better time management.
- b. Better opening knowledge.
- c. Play many stronger players and analyze with them.
- d. Better endgame knowledge.

29. If your sole goal is improvement, what opening is the best to play?

- a. It does not matter that much.
- b. The one that best suits your style.

- c. The one that helps you work on your weaknesses.
- d. The one with which you feel the most comfortable.

30. A common OTB mistake is:

- a. Playing too fast.
- b. Playing too slow.
- c. Playing the opening like the middlegame.
- d. All of the above.

31. Which of the following is a good definition of Counting?

- a. Making sure no sequence of exchanges on any square would lose material.
- b. Knowing the real value of the pieces.
- c. Knowing the relative value of the pieces in each position.
- d. Making sure every piece is guarded at least as many times as it is attacked.

32. What is the author's view of chess books?

- a. Necessary, but not the only tool for improvement.
- b. Fun to read, but not very helpful for improvement.
- c. The main improvement tool.
- d. The main improvement tool, but only if you include DVDs and CDs.

33. Where would you likely get the most improvement, per unit time:

- a. Playing many speed games on the Internet and looking up your openings.
- b. Playing in weekend over-the-board tournaments and reviewing your games with strong players and opponents.
- c. Reading a good chess book.
- d. Playing a slow game and then looking up the opening.

34. Which of the following is *not* one of the author's most original Novice Nooks?

- a. [It's Not Really Winning a Tempo!](#)
- b. [King + Pawn vs. King](#)
- c. [The Principle of Symmetry](#)
- d. [The Two Move Triggers](#)

35. What does the top of the uppermost sign say in my teaching den?

- a. "Beware all who enter here."
- b. "If you are not having fun you are in the wrong place."
- c. "I am just your guide – you are going to do all the work!"
- d. "Beware of the dogs!"

36. What is the first part of the thought process espoused in the Novice Nook [Making Chess Simple](#)?

- a. Is my opponent's move safe?
- b. What does my opponent's move do?
- c. What are all my opponent's move's threats?
- d. What are my candidate moves?

37. What is the highest rating an instructor can make a student?

- a. Within 500 rating points of the instructor.
- b. Within 300 rating points of the instructor.
- c. Within 150 rating points of the instructor.
- d. Higher than instructor's rating.

38. Although all of the following *could* be a critical decision, which is least likely to be?

- a. One involving a decision on whether to trade queens.
- b. One involving a decision on whether to create an open file.
- c. One involving a decision on which piece to capture.
- d. One involving a decision on which piece to recapture.

39. What is a player's goal each move?

- a. Find a move that makes your position better.
- b. Find the best move you can, given the time constraints.
- c. Find the absolute best move.
- d. To checkmate or win material.

40. Usually in chess it is a bad idea to do "nothing," such as move your king back and forth, but there is one fairly common case where doing nothing should be considered:

- a. In the opening if you don't know what to do.
- b. In the middlegame to win a tempo.
- c. In the endgame if neither you nor your opponent can win, so long as you don't do anything rash.
- d. In the endgame if you don't know what to do.

41. In which situation would you usually rely on general principles, instead of specific analysis?

- a. When you are in the endgame.
- b. When you have a simple tactical decision.
- c. When it is so complicated you can't analyze as well as stronger players.
- d. When you have a non-critical, non-tactical move.

42. Upon the first move of the game where you are uncertain whether it is a book-move, you should:

- a. Panic and move fast, since you don't know what to do.
- b. Follow general principles and don't take too much time.
- c. Play very carefully, as this is the first critical move of the game.
- d. Try to recall a similar book move and play fairly quickly.

43. If your goal is improvement and you can choose your opponents, the best mix is:

- a. All opponents rated lower than you to win and build your confidence.
- b. All opponents rated higher than you, so that you can learn from the experience.
- c. Just play – it does not matter who, if you get experience and learn from your mistakes.
- d. Mostly opponents rated somewhat higher, but some lower rated ones to build technique and confidence.

44. Your opponent has blundered a pawn in the opening for no compensation; everything else being equal, where should you castle?

- a. On the kingside.
- b. On the queenside.

- c. On the same side as your opponent.
- d. On the opposite side of your opponent.

45. Which of the following is generally *not* a good reason for making a threat?

- a. If your opponent cannot meet it.
- b. If the move that makes the threat does more for you than the best move that parries the threat does for your opponent.
- c. If you wish your opponent might miss the threat.
- d. If you are losing badly and need to complicate the position.

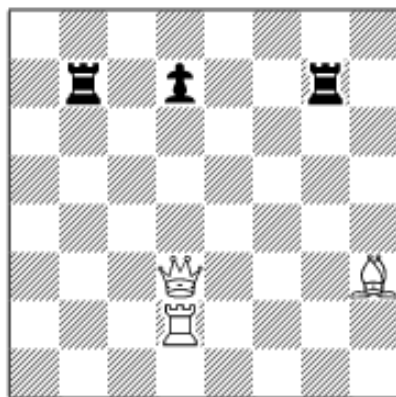
My answers: 1.c 2.d 3.b 4.a 5.d 6.b 7.a 8.d 9.d 10.c 11.b 12.b 13.d 14.d 15.a 16.b 17.c 18.d 19.a 20.a 21.b 22.c 23.b 24.c 25.a 26.a 27.b 28.c 29.c 30.d 31.a 32.a 33.b 34.b 35.b 36.a 37.d 38.b 39.b 40.c 41.d 42.c 43.d 44.c 45.c

Question I've been missing tactical shots recently, even though I've done over 15,000 tactics puzzles online. I have been doing some serious thinking as to why this is happening. Tiredness may be part of the problem, but I wondered if simply not looking at all checks, captures, and threats is the main reason *or* whether the main reason is failing to see the "seeds of tactical destruction"? Do you think I may be practicing tactics more in quantity than quality? For example, when solving tactics problems I already know there is a tactic and so noticing the seeds is not necessarily the trigger that a tactic is present. Perhaps I need to slow down on the chess tactics server and start focusing more on the seeds. Thanks for your help!

Answer You are on the right track, and bring up an important issue. In order to find tactics that you can employ against your opponent, you must start by asking yourself on each move "[Is it Safe?](#)" Meaning: "are all the squares affected by the move safe?" Start by treating each move as if your opponent has blundered and it *is* a "tactics" problem. When you are satisfied that everything is safe, then you have to "settle" for just finding the best move in the given time constraints. And, yes, using the "Seeds" ([The Seeds of Tactical Destruction](#); [Revisiting the Seeds of Tactical Destruction](#)) provides cues as to possible areas of non-safety.

In order to find – and prevent – tactics that your opponent can do to you, it is not enough to recognize patterns. You have to avoid playing "Hope Chess"; i.e. you have to ask for each of your candidate moves: "If I make this move, does my opponent have a check, capture, or threat in reply that defeats it?" If so, you have to discard that candidate. No amount of tactical work can substitute for this thought process, but if you have the right thought process it will augment it.

Question The second example in last month's column was confusing to me at first, because you wrote that the d7-pawn is safe.



Yet, after 1.Bxd7, Black can't recapture, because 1...Rbxd7 2.Qxd7 Rxd7 3.Rxd7, leaves White ahead by a rook! (You know, it's the pieces left on the board that count.) Of course, I soon realized what this example was about. I thought it might be clearer to present a position with balanced material, but then these "non-participating" pieces could also make things confusing. So perhaps your position is the best way of presenting the idea after all.

Answer I purposely don't put other pieces on the board, to allow the reader to only focus on the pertinent pieces and to avoid accidentally creating other issues within the position. The key is to assume that material is otherwise even.

Given this, then:

- after Bxd7, White is up a pawn
- after Rbx7, Black is up a bishop for a pawn
- after Qxd7, White is up the exchange and a pawn
- after Rxd7, Black is up a queen for the exchange and a pawn
- after Rxd7, Black has won a queen and a bishop for two rooks and a pawn

So the pawn is safe, since if White captures it, then Black can finish ahead in material providing he plays correctly.

Dan welcomes readers' questions; he is a full-time instructor on the ICC as Phillytutor.

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