Blunder-proofing your chess

A rock that stands on four pillars:

1. Timing – don’t rush any move
2. Looking – for your opponent’s threats – first and last thing you do
3. Seeing – practise tactics (challenge and speed) and **boardsight**
4. Thinking – get into good habits of **choosing** and **checking**

Blunder-proofing your chess

1) Timing – don’t rush

Rushing can bring a GM down much nearer to our level

Use most of your time in most of your games

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2) Looking/checking – for your opponent's threats

First thing you look for

Double-purpose moves

Last thing you look for

How does my chosen move change the position?

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3) Seeing – you can’t see what you don’t know – it’s hard to see what you’re not used to

practice tactics – solve lots, repeatedly

You might be able to solve hard puzzles but miss simple tactics – get your eye in!

find puzzles other than White-to-move-and-win

boardsight

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"One of the most important ideas involving **safety** is that basic tactic skills should be used to prevent an opponent's tactics, not to find winning tactics for oneself!"
[or at least - not just that - DR]
"Unfortunately, I have found that this idea is either misunderstood or continues to fly under the radar.
[...]
...a typical 'Class B' student that I had a few years ago. I suggested he start by studying the basic tactics in John Bain's ***Chess Tactics for Students***, which he subsequently purchased. At the next lesson, he began by politely shoving his copy of the book across the table at me, saying "You've got to be kidding. These problems are way too easy for me!"
I proceeded to examine two recent games he had lost, and it turned out that both losses were primarily due to overlooking, and thus allowing, his opponent to play a basic tactic. After the second game, I said "I don't understand. You said that *Chess Tactics for Students* was too easy for you, but are you saying that the two tactics that caused your losses in these games were more difficult than the tactics in this book?"
The student stared at me for a few seconds. Then he reached across the table, grabbed the book back, and quietly admitted "I see what you mean." To be fair, this student's attitude is typical of most players near his level.
After hearing this story, one could argue that it was not my student's lack of familiarity with the patterns, but his lack of a Real Chess* thought process that was his main problem. And that could be true – thought process and pattern recognition go hand in hand. But it is also undeniable that **the more familiar you are with a pattern, the more you will avoid allowing it for your**

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Why are tactics in books easy to spot but blunders in games hard to avoid?

1. The position occurs outside of a problem, when there is no “red flag” saying the position is winnable

and, even more importantly,

2. When the pattern is going to be created for their opponent by their candidate move and has to be visualized and considered. The pattern is not in the present position, waiting there for them to play.

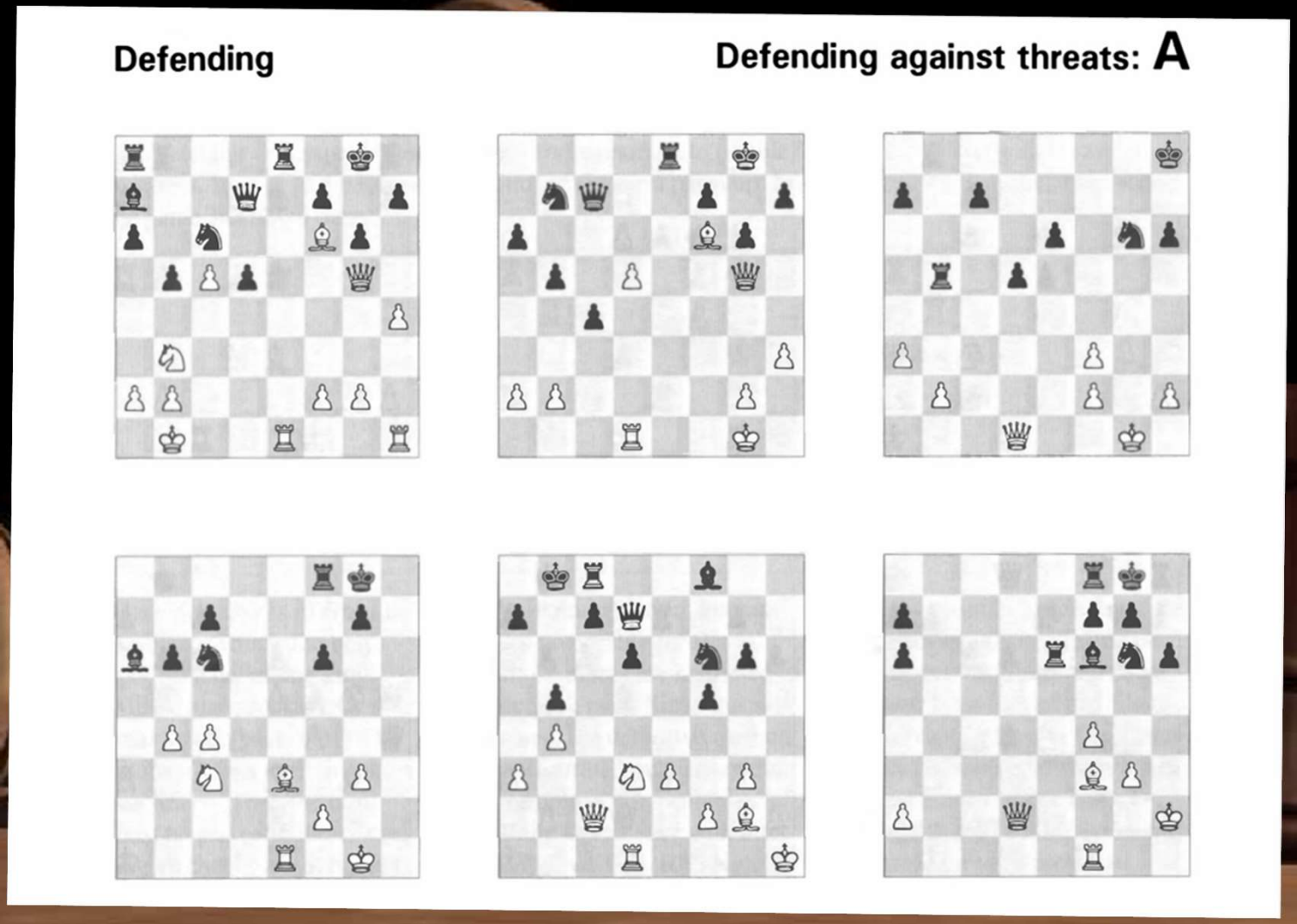
(both HEISMAN)

Also:

3. Players like thinking of their own ideas more than their opponents’.
4. There are often stretches of a game where tactics are hardly present, and you turn off your burglar alarm.

Blunder-proofing your chess

defensive puzzles (Steps, Cheng)



Defending

Defending against threats: A

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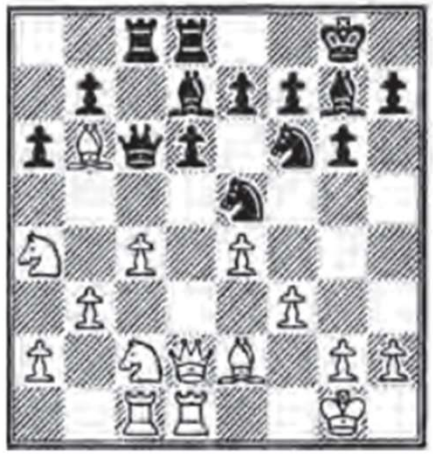
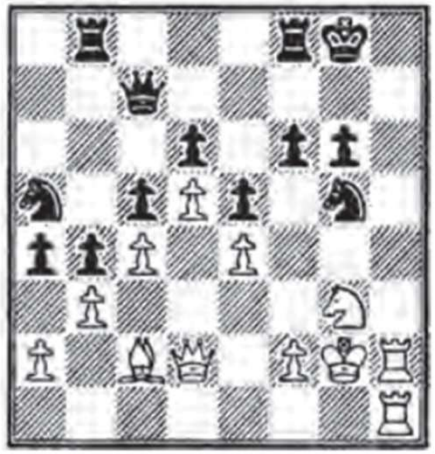
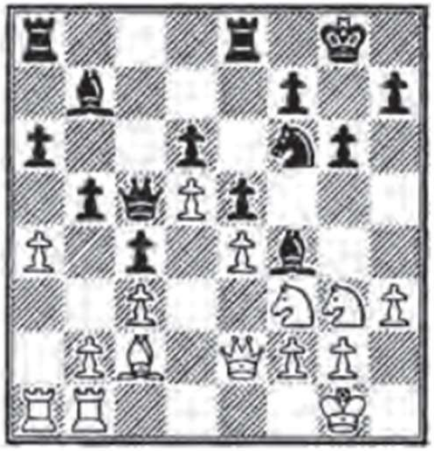
- defensive puzzles (Steps, Cheng)



2. White to move



5. White to move



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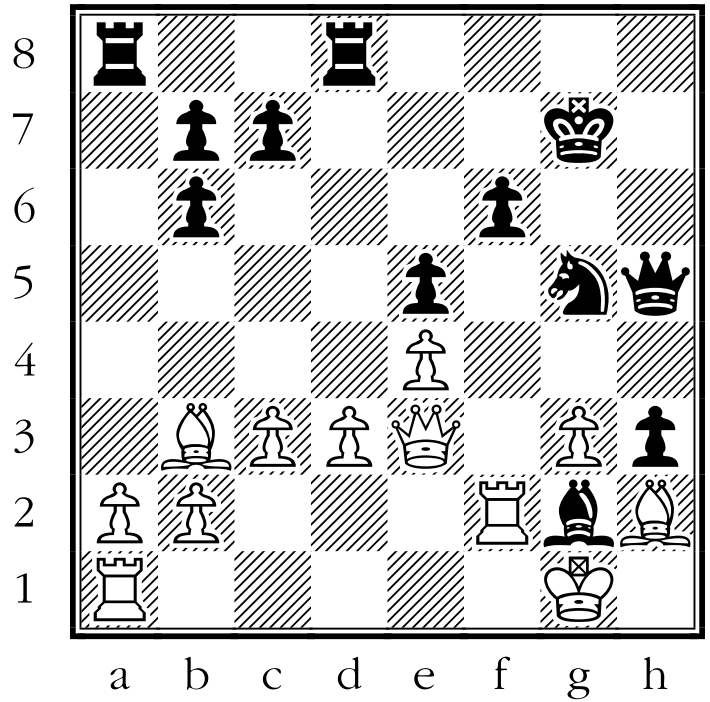
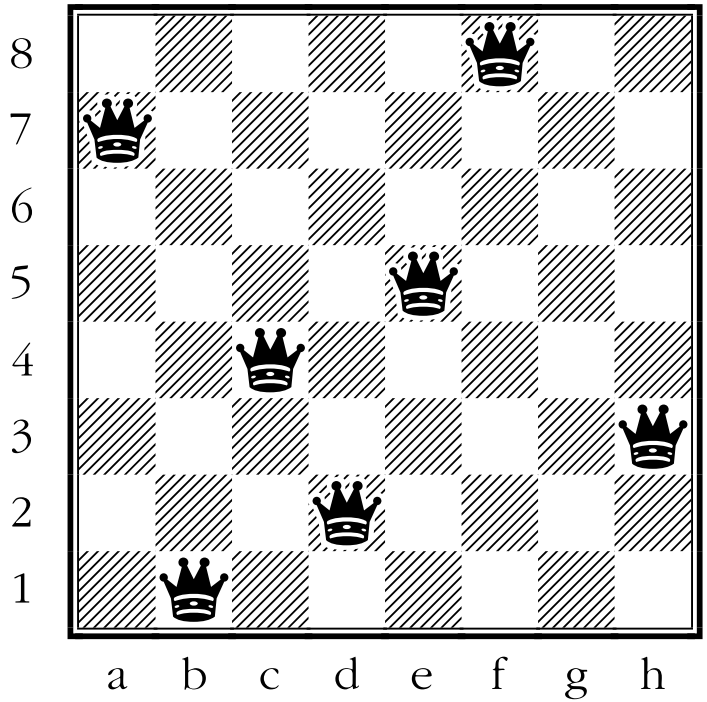
- boardsight (counting attacks, 8 queens)





12 solutions (-->92)

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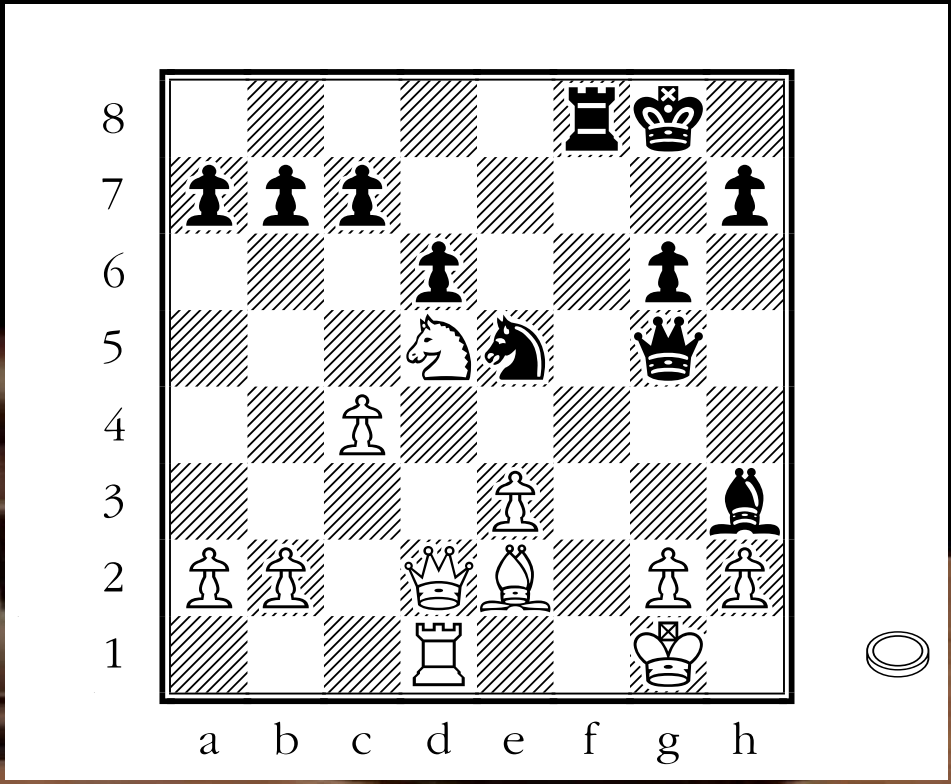
4) Thinking – get into good habits

Check once more after choosing a move

Really check – try and look afresh



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