

## Chess 012: Strategy and Tactics for 1200 – 1500 Players Pretest SOLUTION

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The purpose of this pretest is to give potential students an idea of what the level of this class will be and what their strength is relative to the class.

Each problem is worth 1 point if you find the correct move.

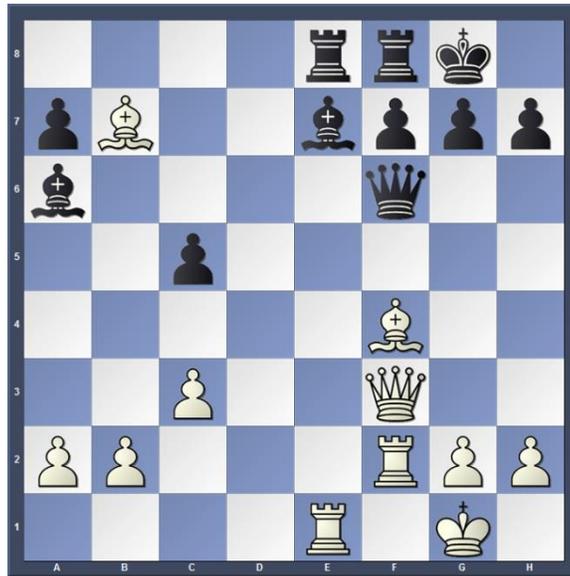
You are part of the targeted pool of students if you score between 3 and 7 points on this pretest. If you score less than 3, then this class might be advanced for you and if you score more than 7, then this class may be a bit basic for you.

**You are allowed to spend only 30 seconds per problem.**

This pretest should not be taken too seriously; however, if you score 0 or 10, then this course is not for you.

I am still designing this class but I am optimizing it for players in the 1200 to 1500 USCF / FIDE rating range. There will be several optional homework assignments in addition to the required coursework. This means while the core of the class will focus at the 1200 – 1500 level, there will be additional content to explore for both higher rated and lower rated players!

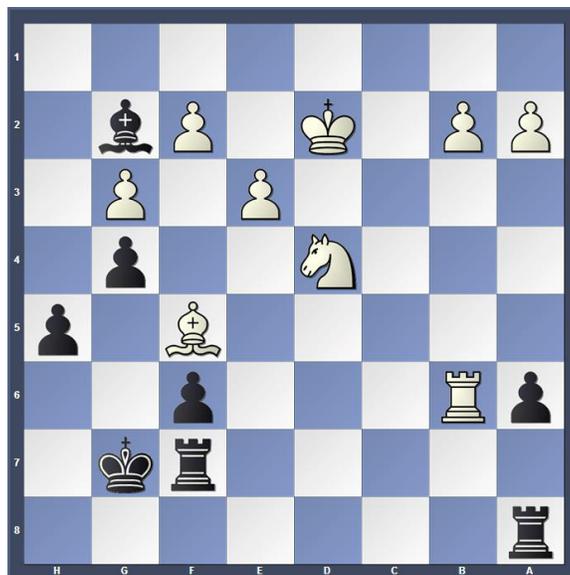
### Problem 1: White to Move



**Solution:** White's best move is the forceful **1.Bxa6**. After 1.Bxa6, Black is forced to recapture with 1...Qxa6. After 2.Rfe2, Black is forced to cope with a dangerous pin. White will win the bishop for free. For example, 2...Qf6 3.Bg3 Qxf3 4.gxf3 h6 5.Rxe7 gives White a free bishop.

This problem required basic calculation of forcing moves. After finding 1.Bxa6 Qxa6 2.Rfe2, it is evident that Black's bishop is paralyzed and destined to perish.

### Problem 2: Black to Move



**Solution:** Black's best move and only good move is **1...Rb7!** Black is up the exchange so has a material advantage. However, White's pieces are well placed and currently dominating Black's pieces, especially

the rooks. Black's rooks are passively placed. The a6 pawn is weak and attacked. It almost seems like White is better. However, 1...Rb7 solves all of the problems by forcing an exchange of the rooks. With the white rook off the board, White's pressure is gone. Black's remaining rook will spring to life. The reason 1...Rb7 forces the exchange is because otherwise, 2...Rxb2 wins a free pawn and activates Black's rook leading to a lost position for White.

This problem required understanding what your problem is. You had to figure out what you want. If you realized that a trade of rooks would be highly beneficial, finding 1...Rb7 wouldn't be difficult.

### Problem 3: White to Move



**Solution:** White's best move is **1.h4**, prophylaxis! White has both a material and positional advantage in this position. Black's king is weak. However, if White is not careful, Black may get away with cheap threats against White's king. By playing 1.h4, ALL of Black's potential counter play disappears. After that, Black just has to sit around for a few more moves and get trampled.

This problem assesses strategic understanding. It is good to stop your opponent's play while keeping yours alive!

#### Problem 4: White to Move



**Solution:** 1.Nxc6 wins the game. This is purely a tactics problem. White has an overwhelming lead in development while Black is not castled. Searching for a knock-out is logical. 1.Nxc6 threatens a mate-in-one on d8 and also attacks Black's queen. Black is lost.

This problem tests your ability to find tactics when they exist.

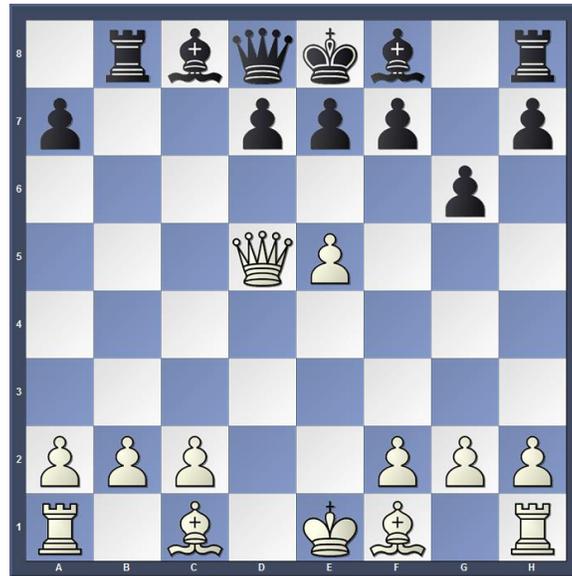
#### Problem 5: Black to Move



**Solution:** Black's best and only move is 1...Bxf3. Every other move leads to material loss for Black.

This problem checks your ability to identify the key problem (skewer by White's rook) and solve it!

### Problem 6: White to Move



**Solution:** White's best move is the exciting **1.e6!!** This move threatens a mate-in-one while enabling Qe5 fork! 1.e6 Bg7 2.fxe7 messes up Black's king and wins a pawn.

This was a relatively difficult problem. You need to make sure you analyze the forcing moves and be aware of targets! Of course it ultimately comes down to tactical vision here.

### Problem 7: White to Move



**Solution:** White's best move is **1.b4!** It is one thing to know what you want and another thing to know how to get it! Most students understood that attacking Black's king was the right idea. However, most students guessed 1.a3 (playable but unnecessary) and 1.h3 (afraid of threats that don't exist). The correct plan is going 1.b4 followed by 2.b5. The key is realizing that 1.b4 Nxb4 is losing for Black. For example, 2.Rab1 Nc6 3.Qb3 (or 3.Rxb7) is lost for Black. Other continuations are winning for White as

well. It is important to realize how beneficial that open b-file will be. Black cannot defend as efficiently as White can attack in this position due to how all the pieces are placed.

This was a hard problem. Players must be able to identify the right idea and figure out how to best initiate the queenside attack. This problem required some calculation and/or understanding of how useful the b-file will be.

### Problem 8: White to Move



**Solution:** The best move is **1.Nd5**. Black has several ideas. Black would like to go d5 soon, if allowed to do so or even tickle White's pieces by playing a move like ...Bc4 followed by pawn storm on the queenside. There is no immediate need to do so, but 1.Nd5 stops most of Black's ideas. The knight is well placed on d5 and is an amazing blockader. This restricts Black's pieces. This move also frees White's c-pawn. Placing the pawn on c3 is solid for White as it counters Black's dark squared bishop and reduces the impact of Black's c8 rook. The c3 move also addresses annoyances such as a future ...Nb4 from black.

There are other acceptable moves such as 1.Qd2 and 1.Be2 but these are not as strong as 1.Nd5.

This problem assessed late opening / early middlegame strategy.

### Problem 9: Black to Move



**Solution:** Black's best move is **1...Bh3!!**. Moves like 1...c5 and 1...Bg4 were suggested by many students but 1...Bh3 is by far the best. This is a forcing move that leaves White speechless. 1...Bh3 2.Bxh3 Nxf3+ is game over. Variations like 1...Bh3 2.Nfxd3 Bxg2 3.Rg1 exd4 also result in a tragedy for White.

There were many acceptable moves for Black but this problem was just testing your tactical vision. Analyzing forcing moves is important!

### Problem 10: White to Move



**Solution:** The best and only move is **1.Qc5**. White has back rank issues. For example 1.Bxb2 Rf2+ wins for Black. 1.Qd1 Rf1+ 2.Qxf1 Rxf1+ 3.Rxf1 Qxd4 is also winning for Black. The only move that solves all of White's problems is 1.Qc5. This move protects both the bishop and the c1 rook. Possible continuations would be 1.Qc5 Rf1+ 2.Rxf1 Rxf1+ 3.Bg1 or 1.Qc5 Qxc1+ 2.Qxc1 Rf1+ 3.Qxf1 Rxf1+ 4.Bg1.

This problem tests your ability to calculate!