Charles Hertan

Power Chess for Kids

Learn How to Think Ahead and Become
One of the Best Players in Your School

New In Chess 2011

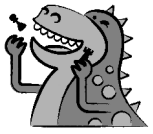
Contents

Meet the Main Characters

Four fun characters in this book will help you learn **power moves** and think ahead like a pro:

Zort from Zugzwang

Zort is a teenaged computer from the planet Zugzwang. His favorite hobbies are chess, facebook and googling. Zort thinks his planet is boring, because only computers live there, they all look kind of alike, and they aren't much fun. Zort was googling images of kids playing on planet Earth, and fell in love with these exotic creatures. When he found out I was writing a kids' book, he wanted to help. As luck would have it, there was one way he could help a lot. Thinking two moves ahead is hard for us humans, so I thought it was unfair that many kids' books expect you to play through 5-move long variations! Hard for us, but easy for computers, who have a big advantage: a perfect picture of the board in their 'minds', after every move! Zort had a great idea: when a variation in the book is longer than two or three moves, he will use his computer **board sight** to show you the key positions.



The Dinosaurs

'The Dinosaurs' is a nickname for players in the first great chess tournaments, from the 1850's to the 1890's. Why do I call them that? Well, besides being old, they played like dinosaurs: awkward and crude, but also deadly! They didn't like draws, so they went for the kill every game, even in bad positions. This made for exciting chess, full of tactics and great power moves. At first I worried some kids might find these old games boring, but Zort reminded me that most kids love dinosaurs. Plus, think how cool it is that you can look in a book or database and find games that were played 150 years ago! Wouldn't it be *awesome* if one of your games was in a book in the year 2159? If you study and practice hard enough, it really might be!

Power Chess Kids

Lots of kids' chess books don't answer the questions kids really want to know! So you, the chess kids of the world, have a voice in this book to make comments and ask typical questions that kids of different ages ask when I teach these power moves.

The Chess Professor

The chess professor will help answer kids' questions and give you important winning tips.

Introduction

Three Skills You Need to Be One of the Best Players in Your School

What are the first three things you should study to become a tiger at chess? The list might surprise you:

1. Know the **basic checkmates**.
2. Learn the key **master tactics** for checkmate and winning material.
3. Work on **thinking one and a half moves ahead**.

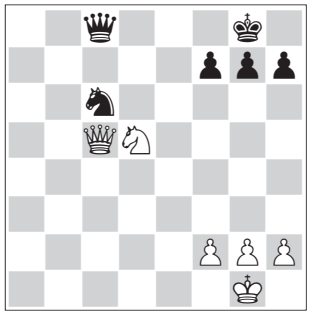
In this book we will work mostly on numbers two and three, but you will improve your skills on #1 too. Why doesn't this book focus more on basic checkmates? Well, there are lots of good kids' books on checkmate, but not many that teach all the power move tactics that help you think ahead and win games.

Here's another secret:
Learning master tactics is the best way to sharpen *all* three basic skills.

How can learning tactics help me think ahead?

Good question! Master tactics help you think ahead in two ways. You learn to recognize patterns that help you find winning moves quickly. Then you start calculating to see how you can make these patterns work in your games.

❑



White can win this position, but only if he knows master tactics and sees **1.5 power moves** ahead! ('one move' in chess means your move, plus your opponent's reply. Your move only is called a 'half move'). Most kids in your school wouldn't know what to do in the diagram. If they've studied pins, they might look at 1.♘e7+ or 1.♘b4, to attack the pinned black knight. But 1.♘e7+?? loses to 1...♘xe7 protecting the queen, and if 2.♕xe7 ♕c1+ mates on the back rank. 1.♘b4 is a little better, but Black can escape the pin with, for example, 1...♕e8!, threatening the same mate.

After reading this book, you will be able to find the winning move in about five seconds: **1.♕xc6! ♕xc6 2.♘e7+** regains the queen and keeps an extra knight.

To find this, you only need to see 1.5 power moves ahead – your move, your opponent's best answer, and your winning second play. But most kids wouldn't even consider 1.♕xc6! because it gives the queen. Knowledge of master tactics helps you find this winning pattern easily, by thinking – 'If only I could get rid of his knight, my knight could fork his king and queen. Hey, what if I just take it! Then if he takes back, I still have the win!'

The ability to recognize the **fork trick** by calculating ahead is the only possible way to win this even position, unless your opponent makes a terrible mistake!

That's pretty cool, but what's a power move?

A **power move** is a winning master tactic that requires thinking ahead – one and a half moves or even a bit more. When you start finding these strong moves in your games, you will be a very dangerous player.

What's so great about thinking 1.5 moves ahead? My friend says he can see *ten* moves ahead!

Well, kids say lots of things when they're trying to impress their friends, you know, like 'my dad once swallowed a whole alligator!' But... that's just silly.

The great Hungarian grandmaster Richard Réti once admitted that he usually looked only two moves ahead! When kids say they see five moves ahead, what they're really saying is 'I see the next five moves I'd like to play in my dreams, if the other guy rolls over and plays dead!'

But when a grandmaster says he sees two moves ahead, he means he sees the best moves for *both* sides. That's much harder than it sounds! Consider this: in the first one and a half moves of a game, there are close to 10,000 different possibilities!!

OMG! Then how can *anyone* find the best 1.5 moves?

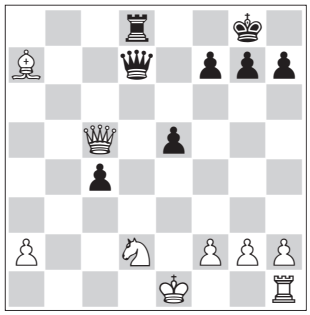
When you get better, you will learn to weed out 'silly' moves and just consider a few important ones. Studying master tactics helps a lot, teaching you which **power moves** to look out for. A master always checks for these winning tactics first. If he can't find one, he looks for a good *positional* move to improve his pieces a little bit.

So how far ahead do most kids *really* analyze?

A chess teacher from England named Richard James tested a whole bunch of kids from different school chess clubs, from young kids to older teenagers. He gave them many tactical positions to solve, and this is what he found:

Most kids think just one half of a move ahead. They only see what *they* want to do! Mr. James calls this kind of thinking, 'I go there, then I go there...' because it leaves out something very important: the opponent's best answer!

Michal Scheichenost-Daniel Obdrzalek, Morava U-12, 2008



This position is from a kids' tournament. White achieved a totally won position, but understandably, he got mixed up. He wanted to hang onto his knight without leaving his bishop unprotected, so he thought he had the perfect solution: **1.♘xc4??**. But poor Michal was using Mr. James' 'I go there, then I go there' thinking, and forgot to calculate Black's most forcing reply, **1...♕d1#!**(I bet you saw that one coming!).

How would a master have played it? Well, trying to hang onto everything with 1.♕e3 or 1.♕a5 is OK, but after 1...c3! he will still have to give up one of his pieces to avoid back rank mate. After considering a few purposeful options, a master would find 1.0-0! ♕xd2 2.♕xc4, returning one of the pieces to remove all danger and reach an easily won endgame with the extra bishop and passed a-pawn.

I'm still not sure about your list of the three things I need to become a powerful chess player. What about studying openings and endgames?

Well, those are important too, but you need to learn master tactics first.

Power moves will help you win in all stages of the game! Many kids place much too much importance on openings. In the great Soviet School of chess, students studied only master tactics and endgames for the first year! If you learn a few basic opening principles like developing quickly and controlling the center, and learn the few most important basic endgame checkmates, you will still be one of the best players in your school if you practice thinking 1.5 power moves ahead.

I promise!

Power Trick #3:
Takes Takes Bang!

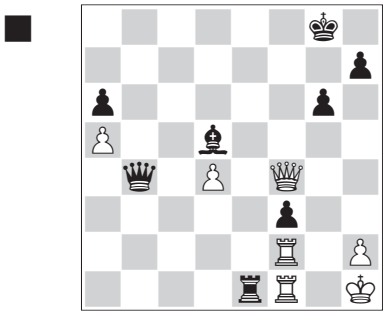
Here's the best way to start thinking one and a half power moves ahead. Let's say you have a chance to take a protected piece or make a trade. In some games, you may have chances like that almost every turn!

Here's what I want you to do: try looking 1.5 power moves ahead, by saying: 'If I take, he takes back, and *then* what can I do?' Answering this simple question is going to win you lots of chess games.

Really?

Sure! It works for the masters, and it will work for you too. The trick is to work on your board sight so you can visualize any winning second moves after the two captures on move one.

Stefansson-Kasparov, Reykjavik 1995



Did you use the values? Ex-World Champion Garry Kasparov is down a rook for bishop and pawn (one point). How does he think about this position?

A trade is possible, so he must start by calculating: **1...♖xf1+** (Takes) **2.♖xf1** (Takes)...

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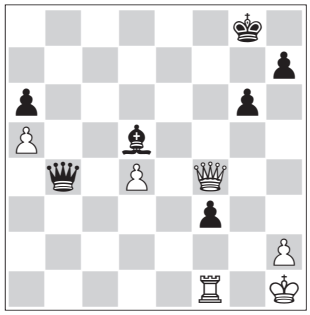
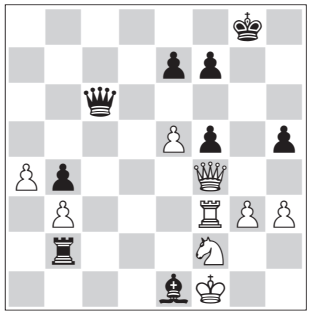


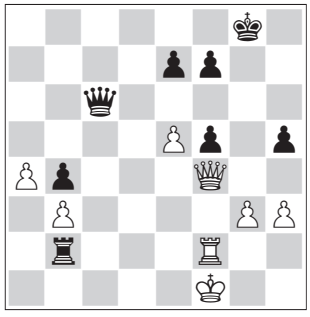
2...f2+ (Bang!!) This tremendous power move uncovers a check by the bishop, while also defending the white ♔'s escape square g1. Mate next! By finding a winning tactic after the trade, Garry knocked off a strong grandmaster.

Rodriguez Lopez-Vassallo Barroche, Corrado Villalba, 2008



This one looks tricky, but Black uses great *board sight* to discover that making a trade opens a winning line for his queen:

1...♗xf2! (Takes) **2.♖xf2** (Takes)

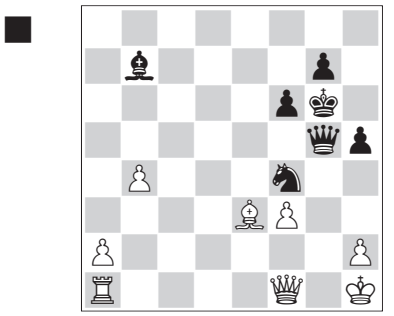


2...♕h1#! (Bang!).

Sneaky Pins 2:
Square Invasions

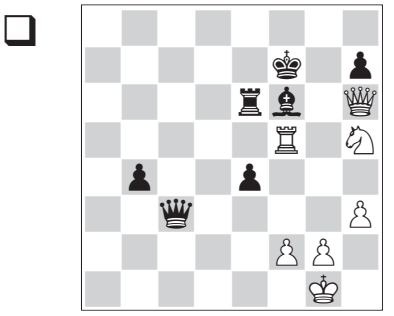
Masters don't overlook sneaky-pinned piece captures too often, but even they miss enemy pieces entering key attacking squares that look guarded, but aren't thanks to a sneaky pin. It's easier to notice that your piece is attacked, than to see that a key *square* is left open. But these sneaky square invasions can be just as powerful as taking a piece, often leading to big material gain or mate!

Naiditsch-Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2006



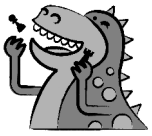
Magnus is down an exchange and a pawn, but he sees that his queen can enter a crushing square that looks off-limits. The sneaky invasion **1...♕g4!** exploits the ♗b7's absolute pin on the f-pawn to threaten the killer check 2...♗xf3+. If 2.h3 ♕g3! closes the white ♔'s air hole on h2; 3.♗xf4 ♗xf3+ 4.♕xf3 ♕xf3+ and 5...♕xf4 wins the queen for just a rook, so White resigned.

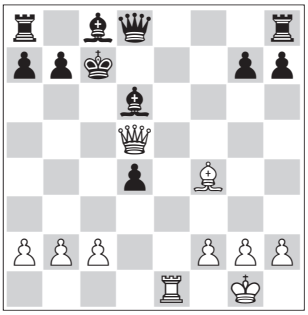
F. Bruno-Van den Bersselaar, Gibraltar 2009



Instead of just taking the h-pawn, White uses the paralysis of the pinned ♗f6 to enter an 'impossible' square and pry the black king from the defense of his bishop: **1.♕g7+!** wins instantly.

Morphy-NN, New Orleans 1850





Paul Morphy, 'the king of the dinosaurs', was famed as a deadly attacker, but he was also way ahead of his peers in understanding positions, and was great at endgames. Here, access to a sneaky key square led to a pretty mate in 3:

1.♕c5+! ♔b8

1...♔d7 2.♕xd6#.

2.♕xd6+ ♕xd6 3.♗xd6#

Check Moves Takes Takes Bang!

Right-o! If you can see that far ahead, your opponents are toast.

Isn't this earth-object a cooked piece of bread?

Yeah right, Zort, just pop your opponent in the toaster! LOL!