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# RECOMMENDED BOOK LISTS

Questions about this page? [Contact me](#), thanks!

The following are book sets or lists of books of a certain type, such as I recommend for homework to my students.

## TACTICS

TACTICS SETS: [What makes for a great tactics set](#) to form the basis for all later play? I claim:

1. All of the problems have to be easy enough to eventually be solved on recognition, within reason. They also have to be basic enough to either be single motif, or very easy double motif. They should be building blocks for more difficult problems.
2. Most of the problems are to win material not checkmate. In chess most games are won by attrition, not checkmates with equal material (what percentage of the games has the reader won with checkmate from a position of even material?). So a problem set that is 75% or more material wins ("X to play and win") and less than 25% checkmates seems about right.
3. Most of the problems are from normal looking positions that may occur frequently in games. No crazy positions; instead lots of problems featuring trapped pieces, removal of the guards, double attacks - normal stuff - not too many queen sacrifices, etc.

I discuss tactical sets and goals at length in [this Youtube video](#).

Obviously, great sets can come in the form of books, CD's, DVD's, flashcards - the form is not important for content. However, interactive hints, scoring, timing, etc by software can add effectiveness to any grade content. Online sites with basic tactics explained: [Predator at the Chessboard](#) or the interactive [Chess Tempo](#). To emulate the Bain level on [Chess Tempo](#), set the level of problems to ~900-1250.

Another site with MANY basic problems from several books (hopefully all legal) is [Improve Your Chess Tactics](#) by Coffey.

Need explanation of how tactics work? I suggest *Starting Out: Chess Tactics and Checkmates* by Ward, *Power Chess for Kids* by Hertan, & my videos on [The Seeds of Tactical Destruction](#) and another two: [video2 on Seeds](#) and [video3 on more Seeds](#).

Email from a student: "I've worked nearly 7,000 tactics problems on the website and have achieved a rating of 1451 max. This seems to help my tactical vision a great deal. Remember the tournament I've been playing in since August? The official results are finally on USCF. My rating went from 1306 -> 1457. I have you to thank for this. The training and Novice Nooks have helped tremendously! Tonight I'm getting my first trophy for first place under 1400 :-)"

## "Dvoretsky" Set

*A set of tactics books which together may contain 97% of the ~2,000 basic tactics patterns* (\*= good four to start):

- [Chess Tactics for Students](#) \* - John Bain (can do repetitively - for details on how to do this book, see my [Book Recommendation](#) page)
- [Everyone's First Chess Workbook](#) \* - FM Peter Giannatos (added in 2021) - also a [Chessable Course](#)!
- *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess* \* - Bobby Fischer and Margulies
- [Starting out: Chess Tactics and Checkmates](#) \*- Chris Ward
- [Power Chess for Kids](#) Vol 1 & 2 - Hertan - Very helpful books about how to find AND combine basic forcing moves!, easier than Hertan's also very good *Forcing Chess Moves*; check out Hertan's helpful essay "Adventure and Sportsmanship" on p.13, but his key exception on p.19 has exceptions itself!
- *Winning Chess Strategy for Kids* - Jeff Coakley (a great author) - this book is more about strategy than a puzzle book but has lots of puzzles, too.
- *The Chess Tactics Workbook* - Al Wolum
- *Back to Basic: Tactics* - Dan Heisman (4th printing 2021)
- *The Winning Way* - Bruce Pandolfini (more difficult to find)

Need more basic patterns? Throw in:

- *Checkmate for Children* by Kevin Stark has an excellent array of basic checkmate patterns
- *The Art of the Checkmate* by Renaud and Kahn
- *Winning Chess Traps* - Irving Chernev (older book)
- *Winning Chess Tactics* - Seirawan & Silman - not a great problem set, but good explanations of tactical motifs -

in that sense similar to the more advanced *Learn Chess Tactics* by Nunn

A book with book strategy and tactics (and no hint of what the problem requires is ***Practical Chess***

***Exercises*** by Cheng - An interesting idea with 600 positions from games where all you are given is that there is a best move. It could be the only saving defensive tactic, play and win, or a positional idea.

Video on [why using these puzzles to reject your candidate moves](#) is the main idea for studying basic tactics

IM David Pruess's [interesting insights](#) on the 2,000 basic patterns

Dvoretsky denies the idea of 2,000 basic patterns came from him (link no longer working and removed)

## More Books with Tactical Problems:

*Anthology of Chess Combinations* - Matanovic

*Chess Tactics for Champions* - S.Polgar and Truong - includes an entire section on tactics to save the game (defensive)

*Chess Combinations of the World Champions* - Tangborn

*Combination Challenge* - Hays and Hall

*John Nunn's Chess Puzzle Book* - Nunn - *each problem checked by computer. - Excellent but very difficult.*

*Sharpen Your Tactics* - Lein and Archangelsky

*Blunders and Brilliances* - Mullen and Moss - Positions where masters resigned where they were not losing (now a [new book!](#)) is worth the price alone!

*Tactical Chess Training* - Shamkovich and Cartier

*Tactical Targets in Chess* - Vol I - Pongo

*Test Your Chess IQ, First Challenge* - Livshitz

## Game Collections ("instructive game anthologies" = game books

written for the explicit purpose of helping the reader, at a certain level, improve.

Most "X's Best Games" books are not written primarily for instructive purposes)

Recommended [\*Instructive Game Anthologies\*](#) (in roughly ascending order of difficulty):

- [Logical Chess Move by Move](#) - Irving Chernev
- [The World's Most Instructive Amateur Game Book](#) - Heisman
- *Chess: The Art of Logical Thinking* - Neil McDonald
- (Note: the non-anthology *A First Book of Morphy* by del Rosario can be read [here](#))
- *Simple Attacking Plans* - Wilson - contains a variety of master-master, master-amateur & amateur-amateur games
- *The Most Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played* - Irving Chernev
- *The Art of Planning in Chess* - Neil McDonald
- *Winning Chess Brilliances* - Yasser Seirawan

- *Chess Master vs. Chess Amateur* - Euwe and Meiden
- Best Lessons of a Chess Coach - Weeramantry and Eusebi
- [\*50 Essential Chess Lessons\*](#) - Steve Giddins
- *Chess Success: Planning After the Opening* - Neil McDonald
- (*Chess Strategy for Club Players* - Grooten can be read here - it has mostly games but some game snippets)
- *The Giants of Strategy* - Neil McDonald
- *50 Ways to Win at Chess* - Steve Giddins (after this book I would go to individual game collections)
- *Understanding Chess Middlegames* - John Nunn - Even though some of the games omit openings, this book is similar to *Most Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played* in that the games are organized by themes, and thus very helpful.
- *Giants of the Power Play* - Neil McDonald - the final of this excellent five-book set
- *Sacrifice and Initiative in Chess* - Sokolov - a fitting follow-up to *The Art of Attack* by Vukovich
- *Attack!* - The Subtle Art of Winning Brilliantly - Neil McDonald - now a 6th book for this list by the GM, new in 2021
- *Pressure Play* - Neil McDonald - another McDonald book?! - The annotations are really good, so I had to include...
- *Understanding Chess Move by Move* - John Nunn
- [\*Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces\*](#) - Igor Stohl
- *Zurich 1953* - David Bronstein

Also, the [Everyman "Move by Move" series](#) has a large element of instructive information, somewhat advanced on the average.

IM David Pruess's [interesting insights](#) on Silman's suggestions about how many games you need to review (in the middle of the linked page)

## Individual Game Collections *(chronological order)*

- [\*Paul Morphy - A Modern Perspective\*](#) - Beim (*A First Book of Morphy* - del Rosario is much less advanced)
- *Marshall's Best Games of Chess* - Frank J. Marshall
- *Alekhine's Best Games of Chess (2 volumes)* - Alexander Alekhine
- *The Road to the Top* and *The Quest for Perfection* - Paul Keres series
- *My Sixty Memorable Games* - Bobby Fischer
- *Larsen's Best Games of Chess* - Bent Larsen
- *Life and Games of Michael Tal* - Michael Tal
- *Jon Speelman's Best Games* - Jon Speelman

- *My Great Predecessor Series* - Garry Kasparov

<http://www.chess.com/article/view/the-best-chess-books-ever>

**Silman Book Reading Order** Silman wrote to me: *"My recommended order (though all stand alone):*

- 1) *Read Reassess Your Chess through page 52. Then put it away!* [Dan's note: You can skip this 1st step with the 4th ed. of *How to Reassess Your Chess*]
- 2) *Read all of The Amateur's Mind.*
- 3) *Read the rest of How to Reassess Your Chess.*
- 4) *Read The Workbook.*

*And yes, you have to start people out with tactics and the basic mates else they will get shredded instantly."* - IM Jeremy Silman in an e-mail to Dan, 11/16/2001.

**Aggaard Book Reading Order** (*pre-"Quality Chess" books; \*best of the series*)

- 1) *Excelling at Chess*
- 2) *Excelling at Chess Calculation*
- 3) *Excelling at Technical Chess*
- 4) *Excelling at Combinational Play\**
- 5) *Excelling at Positional Chess\**
- 6) *Practical Chess Defence\**

*I also recommend my two DVDs on the attack from ChessBase.*

- IM Jacob Aggaard in an e-mail to Dan 8/18/2006

If you decide to shop at Amazon (especially good for used books), please take the link below to give me referral credit, thanks!



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