

Cor van Wijgerden

Learning chess

**Manual for
independent learners**

Step 6

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Preface

The Step by Step learning system is a method of learning to play. It has been successfully adopted by many chess clubs and schools in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, USA and Australia. Slowly but steadily the method is gaining popularity throughout the world.

The whole course consists of five manuals, specifically for chess teachers, trainers (the first steps also for parents), and twenty three workbooks that can be used by the students themselves.

This book appeared in 1999 in Dutch. For the English translation the 3rd revised and expanded edition from 2010 was used.

The 6th Step manual differs in some respects from the previous ones. Firstly, the target group has changed. This book is not a manual for trainers, but a self-study manual for anyone interested, the independent learner.

Secondly, Rob Brunia disappeared as a co-author. In the initial phase of developing the method (we started in 1985, the first books appeared in 1987) we worked closely together. In 1991 Rob's professional duties (he coached high-gifted children) duties compelled him to end our cooperation. At the end of 2004 Rob approached me to re-start the cooperation.

Unfortunately, this was not to be: on the 9th of January 2005, Brunia died of a brain haemorrhage, 57 years old.

It is advisable to go through this manual in combination with workbook Step 6. You can find more exercises (1296) on the same theme's in Step 6 extra. Solutions for both workbooks can be found at:

www.stappenmethode.nl/en/solutions.php

Twenty-nine books have already been translated into English. You will find updated information on our website at: www.stappenmethode.nl/en

For more information, please contact info@stappenmethode.nl

Cor van Wijgerden
Coevorden, December 2016

Step 6

Working through this book in combination with the Step 6 workbook which goes with it is only of any use if the first five steps have been properly mastered and the level of you own games is up to it. Those who have been working through the Steps with a good trainer have an advantage here.

A good trainer has been insisting on the following four areas from the Steps method:

- a lesson from the manual
- practice with the workbook
- a lot of practice in the form of games
- discussion / analysis of the games you played

We shall take as our starting point that you are going on to work independently with Step 6. You still have a trainer? So much the better, since he or she can offer help when you feel you need it.

What should you be expecting? The level of difficulty of the material is once more a notch higher than in the preceding Step. Strategy is a subject which will be dealt with in depth. It is a subject which is difficult for everybody, as we always find, and above all the exercises in the workbook. You will also come up against endgame exercises in many chapters. The study of such exercises is particularly important for improving playing strength. Tactics are dealt with in only one chapter.

The above mentioned areas are now considered in order.

Studying a lesson

Work through the lessons thoroughly. Studying chess books is very different from reading comics. When you are playing through games and game fragments make use of a real chess board and pieces. At the moments when side lines are shown, start by analysing on your own (partly in your head) and then compare your analysis with that in the book. You will learn more that way than by playing through analyses, when you will be tempted to imagine that you have understood everything. Pay particular attention to the general rules which are laid down (e.g. on page 9). You can make good use of such rules in your own games, even if the position is totally different.

When you are studying a specific subject it is much more useful to concentrate on it and learn how to master it than knowing a little about various different subjects. That will not help you much in your own games. World Champion Capablanca hit the nail on the head: “I may not know a lot, but I have mastered what I do know”.

Solving the exercises

You should only look at the workbook in conjunction with the instruction manual. If all you do is solving the exercises, then you are not working in the best possible way.

After the heading ‘WORKBOOK’ every lesson contains indications as to what you should pay attention to when solving the exercises. You can also make good use of these solving strategies in your own games.

Playing

Try to play as many serious games as you can, best of all against stronger players. But not only that, because winning is also important so that you keep on enjoying your chess. Always analyse after each game with your opponent, even if the latter is clearly weaker than you. After all, you appreciate when a stronger player who has just defeated you over the board takes time to look through the game with you. Explaining to a weaker player what went wrong also has its good points.

Training games against friends are fun and are useful too. They bring you more than spending a lunchtime playing rapid chess against each other (though that too makes sense as long as the thinking time is at least 5 or 10 minutes). These blitz games often lead to interesting positions which you can analyse together.

Analysing your games

Get used to analysing all your games. With a good trainer, with a stronger player or on your own. Of course a chess program on your computer can also be helpful, but only after you have done the work; then you can compare variations and check your analysis. Reading analysis while entering your game into the computer does not make much sense. When you do this the information does not get any deeper than into your short-term memory. You will hardly be able to take in new insights properly.

Improving your playing strength

This is the interesting section, because who would not want to become a stronger player? After all the effort (study, solving exercises, playing,

analysing) we expect to have learned to play better chess. If your Elo continues to rise (this should be by 50 to 100 Elo per year), then you have been studying effectively and there is no reason to change the way you are going about studying chess. Unfortunately reality does not always come up to expectations. You aren't making progress and so feel less inclined to carry on your chess training.

You might come to the conclusion that you do not have enough talent, but that is unlikely. If you have reached Step 6, you should have no problems adding a few more hundred Elo points to your rating. It is much more likely that you have been studying inefficiently or even in the wrong way (for the sake of simplicity, let us admit that the causes might lie on a personal level).

From your rating you can more or less tell what progress you are making. However, becoming obsessed with the Elo rating is not a good idea. When he introduced the system in 1970, Prof. Arpad Elo took care to point out that the rating represents an average taken over a specific period in time. Points are of course lost after a defeat, but naturally that does not mean that you have become a weaker player! Perhaps you learned a lot from your defeat (“you learn the most from your losses!”).

Playing better chess means above all making fewer and fewer mistakes. The greatest profit lies in being able to eliminate one's own weaknesses. You can only find your weaknesses by specifically looking for them. That is more effective than buying yet another new book and working through it. You make mistakes when playing games and solving exercises. They can be of many different sorts, or perhaps it is always the same type of error which keeps cropping up. For that reason it is useful to divide the mistakes into groups. Give the mistakes a name (e.g. overlooking an X-ray defence), and create a (coded) list. Over time you will build up a picture of which mistakes you are making most often. A fifth mistake in visualisation is a clear indication of a problem. Or you keep on missing a tactical exchange of pieces? Pay a lot of attention to this subject and do some work on it. It might be a good idea to get a lower Step out of your bookcase in order to do so. There is no shame in that!

There can also often be problems of a mental or another nature. Resigning too soon, over-confidence, being disappointed after a mistake, over-estimating the opponent, stubbornness, bad time management and much more can be holding you back. Everybody must decide for herself or himself what is important and so everybody should draw up his or her own list.

Flick through this book and take a look at what you fancy and what you think you can learn a lot from. The mistakes in your games will be a clear indication of what subject you should be starting with.

The chapter on tactics is simple for those who have worked through all three workbooks for each of the other Steps. The chapters on strategic themes are relatively more demanding and require more of an effort. But a real chess player will not be put off by them.

Have a lot of fun studying and solving the exercises! The best of luck!



Die Stappenmethode

Die Originalfassung der Stufenmethode ist holländisch.
In deutscher Fassung liegen vor:

Handbuch für Schachtrainer

Stufe 1, Stufe 2, Stufe 3, Stufe 4, Stufe 5



Arbeitsbuch

Basis Arbeitsbuch:

Vorstufe 1, Vorstufe 2, Stufe 1, Stufe 2, Stufe 3, Stufe 4, Stufe 5, Stufe 6

Extra Arbeitsbuch:

Stufe 1 extra, Stufe 2 extra, Stufe 3 extra, Stufe 4 extra, Stufe 5 extra, Stufe 6 extra

Plus Arbeitsbuch:

Stufe 1 plus, Stufe 2 plus, Stufe 3 plus, Stufe 4 plus, Stufe 5 plus

Mix Arbeitsbuch:

Stufe 1 mix, Stufe 2 mix, Stufe 3 mix, Stufe 4 mix, Stufe 5 mix

Vorausdenken Arbeitsbuch:

Stufe 2 Vorausdenken

Handbuch zum Selbststudium

Stufe 6

Software (nur Windows)

Chess Tutor Stufe 1, Stufe 2 und Stufe 3
(CD oder Download).

Demo: www.chesstutor.eu

Die deutschen Bücher und CDs können Sie

bestellen bei: www.ischach.com oder www.stappenmethode.de

Auf der Website finden Sie den aktuellen Stand und die Preisliste:

www.stappenmethode.de und www.chesstutor.eu



1

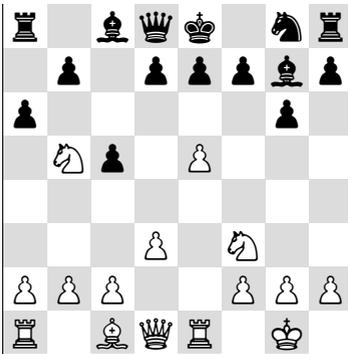
King in the middle

In the first chapter the most important role is played by the unsafe position of the king. In the game which follows, the king remains on its own in the middle of the board without a single defender near it.

*Rossolimo-Romanenko
Bad Gastein 1948*

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5
g6 4. 0-0 Bg7 5. Re1 Nf6 6.
Nc3 Nd4? 7. e5 Ng8 8. d3
Nxb5 9. Nxb5 a6?**

It is dangerous to have one of your opponent's knights in your half of the board, so it is chased away.



So far Black has made several mistakes. He:

- has neglected the three golden rules
- has made a wrong exchange
- has made an unnecessary pawn move

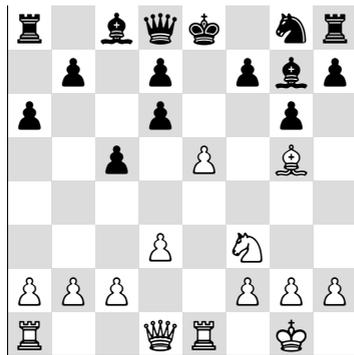
White can exploit the position of the black king by means of a knight sacrifice. As will become apparent, a king in the middle of the board will be in a much more dangerous position than one which has castled.

10. Nd6+ exd6

It is better to decline the offer with 10. ... Kf8, although White is then clearly better after 11. Ne4 b6 12. d4 because of his superior development.

11. Bg5!

An over-hasty capture on d6 would not achieve anything; White first brings his bishop into play with tempo in order to prevent Black from interposing with f6.



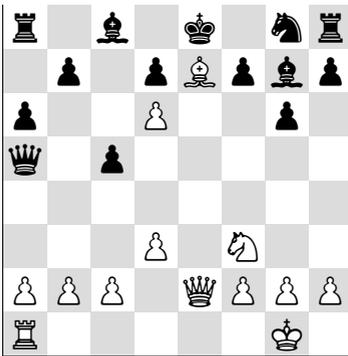
Black now has two squares for his queen, each of which has its advantages and disadvantages. First there is the win after 11. ...

Qb6. White has the neat exchanges
 12. exd6+ Kf8 13. Re8+!! Kxe8
 14. Qe2+ Kf8 15. Be7+ Ke8 16.
 Re1.

After this quiet attacking move,
 there is no possible defence, e.g.
 after 16. ... Bf8 there is the deci-
 sive 17. Bg5+ Be7 18. Qxe7+
 Nxe7 19. Rxe7+ Kf8 20. Bh6+
 Kg8 21. Re8#.

The continuation in the game is
 very beautiful.

**11. ... Qa5 12. exd6+ Kf8 13.
 Re8+ Kxe8 14. Qe2+ Kf8
 15. Be7+ Ke8**



16. Bd8+!!

The bishop move makes the alter-
 native 16. Re1 superfluous. This
 move also wins: 16. ... Qxe1+
 (forced) 17. Qxe1 f6. Black has
 sufficient material, but cannot
 move: 18. Bxf6+ Kf8 19. Bxg7+
 Kxg7 20. Qe5+ Nf6 21. Qe7+ Kh6
 22. Qxf6, and Black is soon mated
 after 23. g4.

16. ... Kxd8 17. Ng5

Black resigned. The only way to
 defend against the mate on f7 is by

17. ... Nh6, but then he is mated
 on e7.

The player with White has made
 clever use of well-known attacking
 rules:

- bring about access to the oppo-
 sng king
- bring up his pieces
- use a combination as a weapon
 (attraction and discovered check)
- develop with tempo

Other useful rules which occur in
 the next game fragment are:

- prevent the exchange of attack-
 ing pieces
- maintain the tension
- provoke weaknesses
- keep the opposing king in the
 middle



Black is threatening to bring his
 king to safety by castling. The first
 move is obvious.

1. Re1

Black has five moves which are
 worth considering. The first moves
 are those which protect the bishop.

- 1) 1. ... Qc7
- 2) 1. ... Nf5
- 3) 1. ... Qd7
- 4) 1. ... Qc6
- 5) 1. ... Kf8

Defence 1

1. ... Qc7 2. Bg5

It is generally a good thing to provoke a weakness, although the immediate 2. Bf4 also wins. After 2. ... Rd8 3. Rad1 0-0 (3. ... Kf8 4. Rxe7 Kxe7 5. Qg5+ Kf8 6. Bxd6+ Rxd6 7. Qe5!) 4. Rxe7 Qxe7 5. Bxd6 Qf6 White has a technically won position.

2. ... f6 3. Bf4 Rd8 4. Rad1 Kf8 5. Nd4

White's advantage is decisive.

Defence 2

1. ... Nf5 2. Re5

The knight on f5 must be done away with. That is possible with 2. g4. This move also wins but it weakens the position of the king. That does not matter here, but if pieces can also do the attacking, that is what should be done.

2. ... g6 3. Bg5 Kf8 4. Rxe7! Nxe7 5. Bxe7+ Kxe7 6. Qe5+ Qe6 7. Qc5+ Kf6 8. Qc3+

White wins the queen.

Defence 3

1. ... Qd7 2. Bg5

The white position is also very good after 2. Bf4 Nc8 3. Qxd7+ Kxd7 4. Rac1. By provoking f6

White gets a serious advantage. Temporarily, short castling is not possible and sometimes White has a check on h5.

2. ... f6 3. Bf4 0-0-0

The king is not safe on the queenside, but the alternatives are no better: 3. ... Nc8 4. Qb3, followed by 5. Rad1 or 3. ... Rd8 4. Rad1, and Black goes down because of the pins.

4. Rac1+ Kb8 5. Rcd1

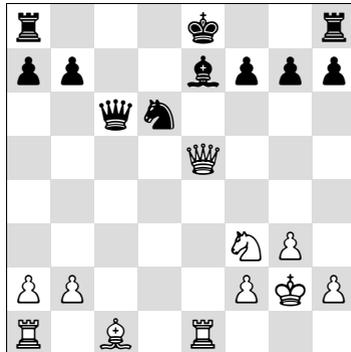
White wins material.

Defence 4

This move aims at exchanging off the most important white attacking piece.

1. ... Qc6 2. Qg5!

White naturally avoids the exchange. In doing so he avoids a very nasty subtlety.



An extra diagram for the tempting looking move 2. Qe5?. This queen move is very inaccurate, because after 2. ... 0-0! White may not take on e7 on account of 3. ... Rae8.

2. ... Qd7 3. Bf4

WORKBOOK

The way to get the best out of this chapter is of course to use what you have learned in your own games. For that reason, let us once more list the rules of thumb for the attacking side:

- Bring your pieces into play.
- Create access to the opposing king.
- Use combinations as a weapon (the pin is particularly useful in this respect).
- Avoid the exchange of your attacking pieces (though sometimes exchanging queens is appropriate if by doing so you win material).
- Keep up the tension.
- Recognise positions where there are typical sacrifices (e6, b5, f7).
- Keep an eye out for the e8-h5 diagonal and the weakness of the f7-square.
- Provoke (new) weaknesses.
- Keep the opposing king in the middle.
- Look for mating patterns (e.g. a mate involving diagonals).
- If the king moves, it can no longer castle! (You won't be the first person who occasionally forgets this.)

Apply these rules when you solve the exercises too.

2: *Attacking the king – King in the middle: A*

3: *Attacking the king – King in the middle: B*

Of course, this does not mean that the defender has absolutely no hope. He must:

- Simply not open the position when he is behind in development.
- Escape with the king.
- Give up (or return) material.
- Watch out for tactical options which allow him to castle.
- Exchange off important attacking pieces.