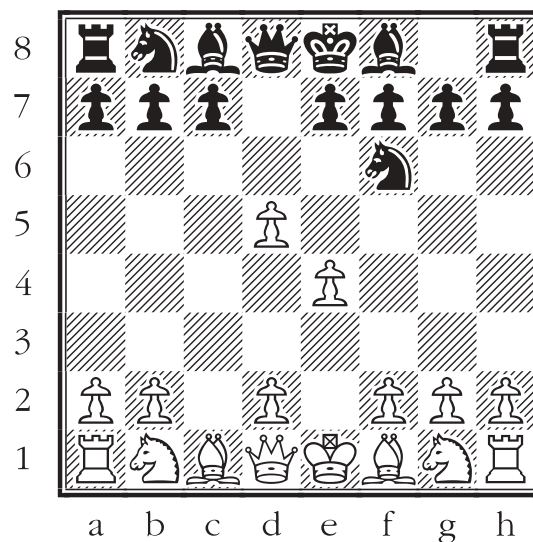


What's a Trap?

Whether you are hunting bears, mice, or unsuspecting chess opponents, the one thing you need to set a successful trap is *bait*. Since the offer of meat or cheese probably won't tempt the player sitting opposite you (unless he or she is really hungry!), you will need something else to entice them with. To a chess player, the offer of a free pawn or, dare I say, a free queen, can often prove so irresistible, that the sea of poison surrounding the piece is not discovered until it is too late. Yes, there are few things in chess as gratifying as setting a trap, and then having your opponent fall into it.

The Dictionary defines a TRAP as: *A stratagem for catching or tricking an unwary person*. The key word here is *unwary*. Because we humans are inherently lazy, we tend to take the path of least resistance. If we see a move that looks like it wins something, we often just go for it rather than spend several minutes calculating all the different ramifications of our decision. The problem is chess is way too complicated of a game to reward such rash decision making. Indeed, chess is a game of intense and constant evaluations and reevaluations. These evaluations of the position help us decide which piece to move. If we make an incorrect or improper evaluation, then it follows that our decision (i.e. chess move) will not be best.

For example, after the moves **1. c4 d5 2. cxd5 Nf6**, White threw out the bait: **3. e4** (See Diagram)



Black to move

And Black, who couldn't resist, snapped it up: **3...Nxe4??**, only to find that his poor knight had fallen into a deadly trap: **4. Qa4+!** followed by **5. Qxe4** winning the stranded steed. A check, which picks up a loose (undefended) piece is a common theme which you will see throughout this book.

Where did Black go wrong? Black had forgotten the old saying, "*There are no free lunches.*" Anytime your opponent offers you "something for nothing," instead of getting excited, assuming it was a blunder and immediately grabbing the offered material, your first reaction should be one of suspicion. If in fact it was a blunder, you'll have plenty of time for celebrating your "gift" later. First though, one eyebrow should immediately be raised. Secondly, you should start asking yourself the following questions:

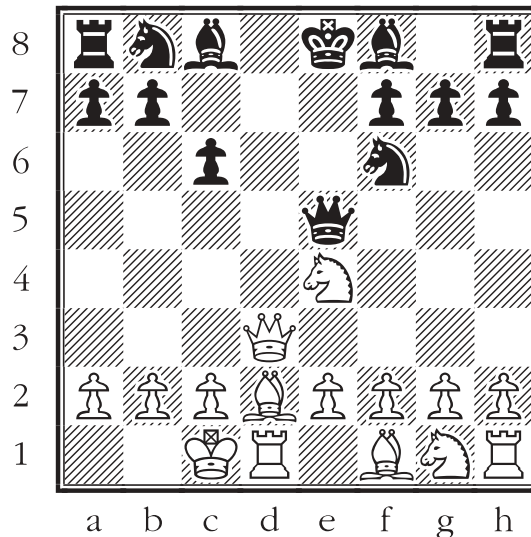
7 Critical Questions to Ask Yourself *Before* Grabbing Material

1. "Why would my opponent give me this piece?"
2. "If I take it, what move will he follow up with?"
3. "What pieces can now come into play that couldn't before this move was made?"
4. "What new lines (diagonals, ranks or files) have opened up for my opponent?"
5. "What squares that the capturing piece is now guarding will no longer be guarded once I take the material?"
6. "Does he have any checks (or discovered checks!) that win back the material with advantage?" (i.e., are any of my pieces loose or insufficiently protected?)
7. "Will taking the material draw one of my pieces away from the defense of my king?" (And if so, how can my opponent take advantage of this? Can he checkmate me!?)

Running these 7 questions through your mind **BEFORE** grabbing material is the best way to prevent any nasty accidents from occurring. If, after you have taken a look at each possibility one by one, and you still don't see any danger, then by all means go ahead and

grab the material. It could just be that your opponent did indeed blunder away a piece. And the few minutes you spent going through the list of questions will certainly be time well spent, and will even give you ideas for your follow up moves.

Sometimes, even Grandmasters forget to ask themselves these vital questions... and they too get punished!



Black to move

The position above is from the famous game between Reti-Tartakover (Vienna 1910). Apparently the offer of a free knight proved too much for Grandmaster Tartakover, and instead of stopping to ask himself WHY his famous opponent would allow him to win a knight (and going through some of the critical questions listed on the previous page), he simply snapped it off: **1...Nxe4??** The idea that he could get mated in this position obviously never even entered his mind. Yet, sure enough, after the stunning reply **2. Qd8+!! Kxd8 3. Bg5++! Ke8 4. Rd8#** (or 3...Kc7 4. Bd8#) GM Tartakover found himself on the wrong end of a brilliancy (for the full game, see Trap #19).

LAZINESS

Probably the #1 reason chess players fall into traps is *l-a-z-i-n-e-s-s*. They simply can't be bothered to work it all out so, if after a cursory glance everything seems okay, they simply grab the material and hope for the best. Take a look at the diagram at the top of the next page.

If you like what you've read and you want to read more, please purchase the book and it will be sent out to you within 48 hours!