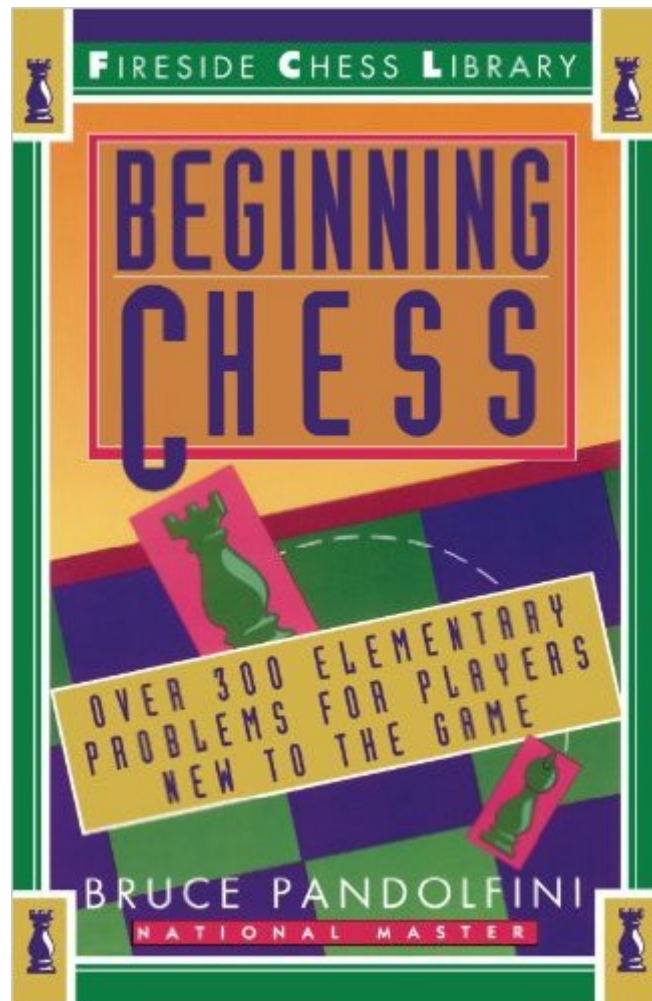


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Beginning Chess: Over 300 Elementary Problems For Players New To The Game



Synopsis

Now even beginners can reap the rewards of Pandolfini's acclaimed teaching system. Over 300 problems, tailored to beginning players, encompass everything a player needs to learn, from the basic rules and vocabulary to the moves of various chessmen to sophisticated strategies. 300 line drawings.

Book Information

Age Range: 5 and up

Paperback: 272 pages

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Customer Reviews

BEGINNING CHESS contains a fair number of the types of positions with simple tactical themes that the "just beyond" the very beginning stage player should learn. Not a lot but not a bad bang for the buck! There really isn't a lot of material here (i.e. like Reinfeld's 1001 Winning Chess Sacrifices and Combinations or Winning Chess Traps), but it is just enough to make a satisfactory book worthy for the "advanced beginner". Not at the top of my list, but still a worthwhile work.

If you are past the stage of having learned the basic rules of chess then you are ready to embark of the adventure of learning chess strategy. And, what is most likely to result in wins and losses for an advanced beginner is not having a deep knowledge of openings or endgames, but TACTICS! If you were thinking of getting one of those 5,000 combination and tactics books you should hold off because you will be overwhelmed with a lot of postions that are not likely to come up in your games. Getting a book on basic chess tactics, containing the likely tactics you are going to see in play is most useful. Now there are a variety of ways and books to accomplish this. "Beginning Chess: Over 300 Elementary Problems" is a good starting place. Then you might consider one of the dozens of

more complicated tactics books (such as "Winning Chess Tactics") or even a book containing opening tactics by getting an opening trap book (such as "Winning Chess Traps for Juniors" or "101 Opening Traps"). This is one of Mr. Pandolfini's best books.

The collection of tactical puzzles in this book are the easiest that I have ever seen. Most of the problems are 1 move tactics such moving a knight to fork two pieces. Some of the problems simply involve capturing a piece that is hanging. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but unless you have just learned the game it probably will be too simple for you. But if you have just learned how the pieces move, this will be a great start on the way to starting to solve tactical problems, which are a key to becoming a better player. I am not familiar with many other tactics books that are this simple. A 1400 rated player could probably go through the whole book in an hour. It is probably even more simple than Bobby Fischer Teaches chess. But while that book focuses mostly on back rank checkmates, this covers different positions, with diagram after diagram for you to find the best move. One nice thing is that in the end he doesn't just give the answer, he briefly explains why it is the answer. So instead of just saying "Nf6", he says "Nf6 forking the king and queen". Most tactics books, even for beginners just give the answer, and no explanation about why it is the answer, if you don't see it.

The 300 problems in this book give practice in the major chess tactics: fork, skewer, pin, discovery, mate in 1, etc. For each problem, there is one move which is clearly the best move for white, and the learner's task is to find it, the faster the better. The fact that the winning tactics are randomly arranged helps the learner not to get into a response set where for example a mate is expected from every position. The low difficulty level of the problems makes this book a pleasure -- you come to a quick solution and move on. But while doing so, you're improving your ability to find winning moves quickly, the sorts of winning moves that are missed over and over in games by players who are not just novices. Getting very fast at fairly elementary problems is a crucial learning technique, advocated by the "precision teaching" practitioners for good reason: this technique produces very positive competence outcomes. Those who are put off by the word "Beginning" in the title should try finding the winning moves in these exercises in an average of ten seconds or less. If you can do this, you're way beyond the rank of beginner. I tend to agree with Pandolfini's classification for the ones who can do this: "You've been giving private lessons." I think this book is useful not just for chess competitors, but also as an aid for youth who are learning problem-solving and thinking skills in general. Without having to become chess experts first, such learners can get lots of practice in

planning ahead and experiencing the gratification of finding the winning move. They can take advantage of the problem-solving and spatial relations practice chess offers, through quick, instructive, and non-frustrating exercises. This deceptively simple book is great teaching, fun to use, and a mind-stretcher. It ranks at the top of all the chess books I have seen.

I enjoyed this chess primer a great deal. I'd say it has more to offer beginners than "Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess," by Bobby Fischer, though not as much as "The Complete Idiot's Guide To Chess," by Patrick Wolff. Still, I'd rank it close to my all-time favorite, "The Right Way To Play Chess" by D. Brine Pritchard. As is the norm with chess primers, Mr. Pandolfini gives brief sections and descriptions of the board, the pawns and pieces, how they move and capture, how a game is won or drawn, etc. Then he engages in brief essays of chess tactics. He discusses the main tactics that beginners should know, including the pin, fork, skewer, discovered attack, and undermine. The section on rules, how to play, and tactics take up the first part of the book, written in 30 short sections. You'll breeze through them quickly. Then you get to the second part, in which you have a chance to put the theory into practice by trying to figure out the best move to 300 puzzles, divided into 30 tests of ten puzzles each. 300 may sound like a lot, but each puzzle has just a few pieces and/or pawns on the diagrams. The idea is to build your tactical awareness and peripheral vision, if I may. If you have time to do one test a day, you can finish in a month. I had to dock this book one star because only a handful of the puzzles have checkmate as the objective. I agree with Bobby Fischer's notion that, since checkmate is the object of the game, it seems the most natural and logical place to start. Had Mr. Pandolfini provided more mating--not just tactical--puzzles to solve, this could have been a truly great chess primer. Alas, it's merely good. For a more thorough study of how to checkmate, I recommend A.J. Gillam's "Simple Checkmates." It complements Mr. Pandolfini's book nicely.

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