
Practice or study?

Posted by Sciurus - 2007/06/19 17:33

Hi! I am wondering if studying chess is all that effective for improvement, particularly for beginner-intermediate level players.

Do you think it is best to spend a lot of time doing tactics problems, studying endgames, etc. or is it better to just play a lot of games to learn from experience?

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Re:Practice or study?

Posted by dwv16 - 2007/06/20 18:52

You won't get any better if you don't study - at least your own games to see where you went wrong. This doesn't apply if you're the next Capablanca - who probably studied a lot more than he let on. Fischer and Kasparov are both known for the incredible amount of study they put in. That said, if you just want to play, then play.

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Re:Practice or study?

Posted by Sciurus - 2007/06/21 08:12

I totally agree that analyzing your own games, particularly the lost ones, is one if not the most important thing to do in order to improve.

However, what about things like tactics? On one hand, studying tactics by solving problems from a book gives you only one side of the issue because it does not train you much to look for threats your opponent makes (at least not with most of the problem sets I know) and you already know that there is some tactical theme to find, which does not apply in many game positions. On the other hand, I doubt that I could have "invented" all these neat little tactical tricks on my own just from playing a lot and learning from my own mistakes.

By the way, where did you get the information on Capablanca, Fischer, and Kasparov from? It would be interesting to find out how they learned chess!

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Re:Practice or study?

Posted by dwv16 - 2007/06/21 09:22

You are right about tactics, but probably the only way to begin learning them is to be given problems where you know what theme is there, and first learn to spot it, followed by problems where you know some theme is there and have to figure out which one. The theory is that if you do this enough sooner or later you will be able to spot when tactical themes exist in your own games, both for and against you. In my case it remains a theory, at least spotting tactics against me!

As for the historical info I've seen it a few places, but the following link to an interview with Kramnik covers it pretty well.

<http://www.kramnik.com/eng/interviews/getinterview.aspx?id=61>

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Re:Practice or study?

Posted by Sciurus - 2007/06/21 11:58

dwv16 wrote:

The theory is that if you do this enough sooner or later you will be able to spot when tactical themes exist in your own games, both for and against you. In my case it remains a theory, at least spotting tactics against me!

I also think that it is important to build up a certain number of tactics pattern to be able to recognize tactics during games. And building this recognition skill is probably most effectively done by studying - doing tactics problems, that is.

However, I see in my current games that I don't blunder because I encounter complicated tactics that I did not practice before (at least not in most of my games). In contrary, when I blunder, I sometimes even hang a piece! I come more and more to the believe, that at my current level I can gain most by learning to play carefully at each and every move. And I don't see how I can learn this by studying. The only solution I see there is to gain experience by playing many games.

Thanks for the link! The interview is really great and gives a good overview on ALL chess world champions.

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Re:Practice or study?

Posted by dwv16 - 2007/06/21 14:22

I agree that playing carefully is the absolute most important thing, and the only way to get better at doing that is - as you say - striving to do it game after game after game. It is especially difficult for an impulsive guy like me, so maybe if I do develop patience it will transfer into my real life.

Glad you liked the link.

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Re:Practice or study?

Posted by Scirus - 2007/06/22 08:40

dwv16 wrote:

I agree that playing carefully is the absolute most important thing, and the only way to get better at doing that is - as you say - striving to do it game after game after game. It is especially difficult for an impulsive guy like me, so maybe if I do develop patience it will transfer into my real life.

Glad you liked the link.

It certainly requires a lot of discipline. I think of myself as a very patient person. However, I have problems concentrating enough during chess games and once the attention is gone, the blunders come!

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