

The Analytical Thinking Process

A Practical Thinking Guide For Developing Chess Players

Learn the powerful thinking methods that will help you find good moves consistently.

by Louis Holtzhausen

INTRODUCTION: The Analytical Thinking Process for Chess Players

Chess is about finding good moves. To that end, **The Analytical Thinking Process** is based on the premise that a good move is a move that makes progress towards your objectives and/or prevents your opponent from achieving the same.

The Analytical Thinking Process will introduce you to highly efficient and effective thinking methods that help you achieve your objectives by means of 3 important processes:

1. Evaluation
2. Planning (Strategy)
3. Calculation

Evaluation is the process whereby you compare the progress you've made towards your objectives to the progress your opponent has made in the same. The evaluation process will also help you understand the need of the position and help you find plausible candidate moves.

Planning is the process whereby you identify a relevant strategy based on the needs of the position. An effective planning process relies on the evaluation method to gather important information about the position. At the same time you will rely on your calculation skill to verify whether your idea is tactically safe.

Calculation is the process whereby you foresee all the critical variations and tactics that exist in the current position, as well as variations that will be possible as a result of the candidate move/s you are considering.

The 3 Aspects of an Effective Chess Thinking Process



Evaluation >>

Use the 5-step evaluation method to evaluate the position:

1. Compare Material
2. Compare King-safety
3. Compare Piece-development
4. Compare Centre-control
5. Compare Pawn-structure

Note: The evaluation method represents the 5 most important objectives in chess and therefore also reveals much of the information you will need when deciding on your strategy.

Strategy (Planning)

Identify a relevant strategy based on the stage of the game and the need of the position:

1. Determine the needs of the position based on your evaluation.
2. Recall the fundamental objectives to the stage of the game you are in
3. Identify all candidate moves that serve your objectives or prevents your opponent from achieving the same.

Note: You can rely on your intuition to choose the best candidate move, but you must always verify your thoughts by calculating the consequences of it.

<< Calculation

Use the 5-step calculation method to check all the tactics in the position:

1. Find opponent's threats
2. Identify targets and motifs
3. Calculate all the checks
4. Calculate all the captures
5. Calculate all tempo-moves

Note: Discovering tactical resources and critical variations in the position will affect how you prioritize your objectives in the planning-stage.

Read: [Why Visualization Is the Most Important Skill in Chess](#)

Fundamental objectives at each stage of the game

When you are thinking about your next move, you should focus your attention on the *needs of the position*.

The first consideration in determining the need of the position is the *stage of the game*. The table below reveals the *fundamental objectives* in each of the 3 stages of the game. Let it guide your thinking in the right direction and help you make moves that serve a strong purpose.

Opening Stage	Middlegame Stage	Endgame Stage
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop your pieces to useful squares, as quickly as possible.2. Get your king safe (usually by castling early-on in the game).3. Prepare a safe square for the queen. (Besides the king - she is the piece most vulnerable to threats from enemy pieces.)4. Connect the rooks. (Rooks are stronger when connected.)5. Start the fight for control over central squares.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Continue to optimize the roles of all your pieces.2. Plan a coordinated attack in the area of the board where your pieces can be effective.3. Prophylaxis: Prevent your opponent from executing their best ideas. (This also means you must find what they are!)4. Neutralize the roles of your opponent's best pieces.5. Try to trade your pieces that don't serve useful roles.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Maximize the activity of each remaining piece, including the king.2. Avoid exchanging pawns that have potential to be promoted.3. Capture weak enemy pawns or force your opponent to defend them.4. Play on both sides of the board if you have an advantage.5. Use passed pawns to promote or to force enemy pieces into passive defense.

More ideas to keep in mind: Whenever possible, use tempo-moves to improve your position. At all times, be aware of the threats and tactics that exist in the position. Use tactical combinations, not only to win material but also to achieve positional objectives. Absorb all the new information (consequences) presented by your opponent's last move before thinking about your own. Strive to always make moves that serve a useful purpose and gives your opponent problems to solve.