

What’s the purpose of this series?

The purpose of this series is to acquaint you with the common types of blunders that occur in the game of chess, and help you prevent them.

For each type of blunder, we will show you a simple idea. We will give you puzzles to solve to help you recognize the blunder. Then we will provide a game for you to play through to give you practice in recognizing this type of blunder under playing conditions. And finally, we will provide hints on how to reduce the number of these blunders, thereby improving your level of play.

What is a blunder?

Chess games are filled with blunders. Even master games contain blunders of varying degrees.

To blunder means, “**to make a careless mistake.**” One can make a careless mistake for any of a number of reasons. Let’s take a look at a few of the most common reasons.

What are the most common types of blunders?

Because there are so many reasons to blunder, let’s make things easier by placing them in the following categories:

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| I) | Simple Blunder | - Loss from a single immediate attack |
| II) | Intermediate Blunder | - Loss from a single deferred attack |
| III) | Tactical Blunder | - Loss from a double attack |
| IV) | Positional Pawn Blunder | - Pawn and square weaknesses |
| V) | Positional Piece Blunder | - Weak vs. strong pieces |
| VI) | Strategical Blunder | - Incorrect or poor plan |

Are there other types of blunders?

There are many more types of mistakes that one can make in the game of chess, such as psychological blunders and attitudinal blunders. But, blunders of these types are beyond the scope of this series and for the most part can eventually display themselves on the board in the types already listed above.

Let's now look at the first blunder category – the Simple Blunder. Other issues in this series will continue the discussion and we will eventually work our way through the other types.

What is a Simple Blunder?

A simple blunder is a move that results in an immediate loss from your opponent's single attack.

A simple blunder can be where you:

Type-1: Place a piece on a square where it can be taken for nothing.

Type-2: Place your piece on a square where it could be taken with a piece of lower value.

Type-3: Capture a piece of lower value without realizing it is protected.

Type-4: Leave a piece on a square that is now being attacked

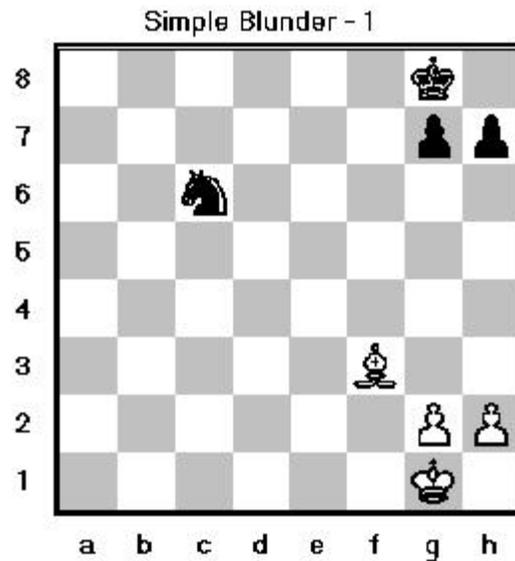
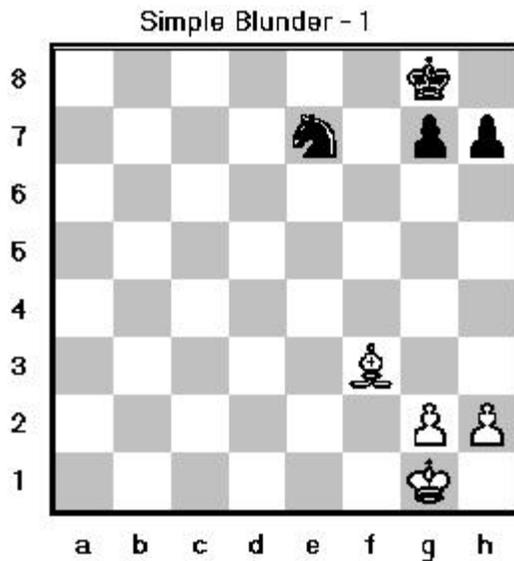
Type-5: Leave a piece on a square where it can be taken by a piece of lower value

The Type-1 Simple Blunder:

Let's now take a closer look at the Type-1 Simple Blunder.

This type of blunder occurs most often in beginner games and can be the bane of parents and coaches of young children. However, as we will see, even Grandmasters have lost games as a result of this pest.

On the next page, Figure 1 and Figure 2 show an example of leaving a piece on a square where it can be taken for free. The fancy term for this is referred to as leaving a piece "*en prise*."



In Figure 1, the Black knight is on e7. If the Black knight moves to c6, as shown in Figure 2, then the White bishop on f3 can capture it for nothing because the square c6 is not defended by another Black piece.

What do you need to do to discover a Type-1 blunder?

It is very important to watch where your opponent puts his pieces. If you are attacking a piece or pawn that is undefended, and there are no other tricks or traps, then you take it for free.

Step 1) See if your opponent has any unguarded pieces

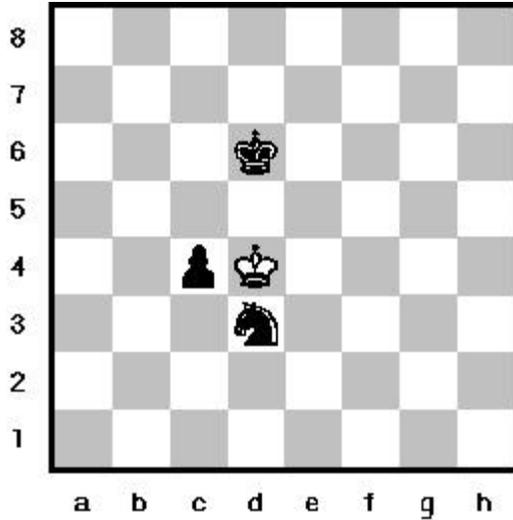
Step 2) Look for one of your pieces attacking the unguarded piece

Step 3) Check for tricks so as to avoid other types of blunders

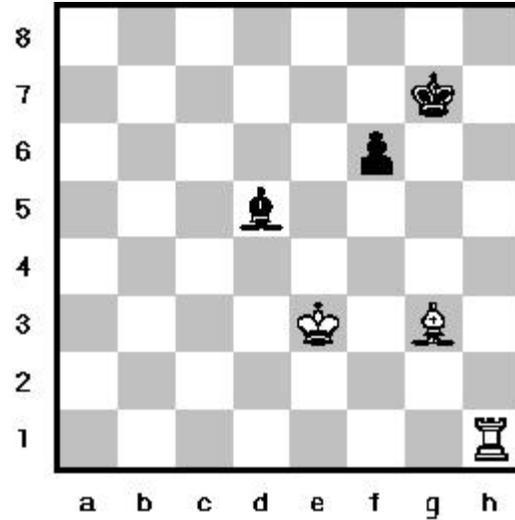
Step 4) If it looks safe, then take the unguarded piece

Practice Example Diagrams:

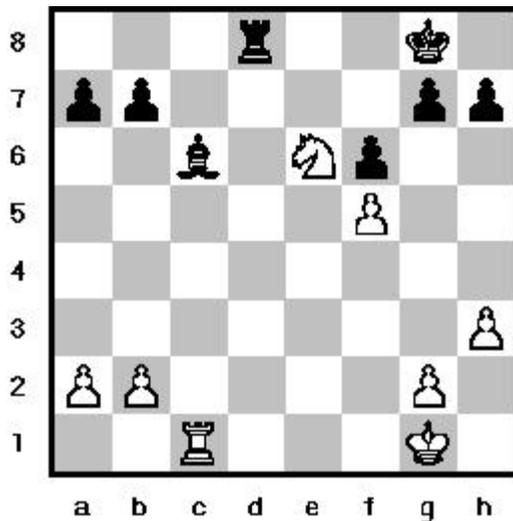
The following diagrams give you practice in looking for your opponent's Simple Type-1 blunders. In each diagram look for the piece that can be taken for free.



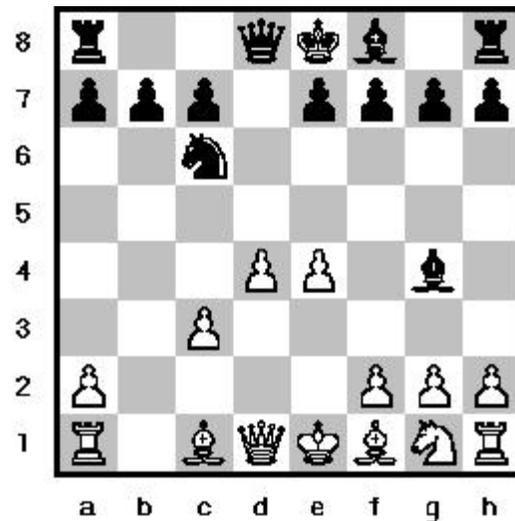
1. White to Move



2. Black to Move



3. White to Move



4. White to Move

NOTE: Answers to exercises are at the end of this article

Example Game displaying Simple Type-1 Blunder:

Spraggett,K (2629) – LeSiege,A (2660) [B85]

Canadian Closed (Round 6), 2002

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 e6 7.0-0 Be7 8.f4 0-0 9.Be3 Nc6 10.Kh1 Qc7 11.Qe1 Nxd4 12.Bxd4 b5 13.a3 Bb7 14.Qg3 Bc6 15.Rad1 Rad8 16.Bf3 a5 17.Rfe1 b4 18.axb4 axb4 19.Nd5 exd5 20.exd5 Ba8 21.Rxe7 Qxe7 22.Re1 Qxe1+ 23.Qxe1 Nxd5 24.Qg3 f6 25.Be4 Rfe8 26.Bd3 Re7 27.Qh4 h6 28.Qg3 Rde8 29.h3 Kf8 30.f5 Rd8 31.Kg1 Bc6 32.Kf2 Rb7 33.Bc4 Ne7 34.Qd3 Rbb8 35.g4 Be8 36.Qe3 Bf7 37.Bxf6 gxf6 38.Qxh6+ Ke8 39.Bb5+ Rxb5 40.Qxf6 Rc5 41.c3 bxc3 42.bxc3 Nd5 43.Qh8+ Ke7 44.Qh4+ Nf6 0-1

Let's take a look at the position (see Diagram G1) after Black has made move 38 ...Ke8.

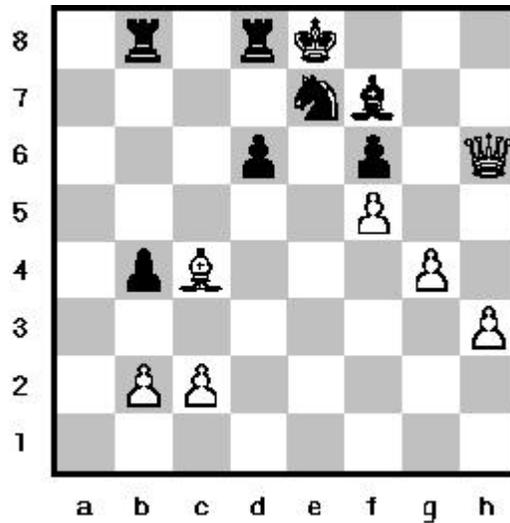


Diagram G1: White to move

Fritz 8 indicates that the plan to win for White in this position is to place the White bishop on e6, move the White queen off the h-file and then walk the White h-pawn in to get a second queen.

However, for some reason GM Spraggett played 39. Bb5+ instead. As you can see from Diagram G2, the White bishop is *en prise* and can be taken for free.

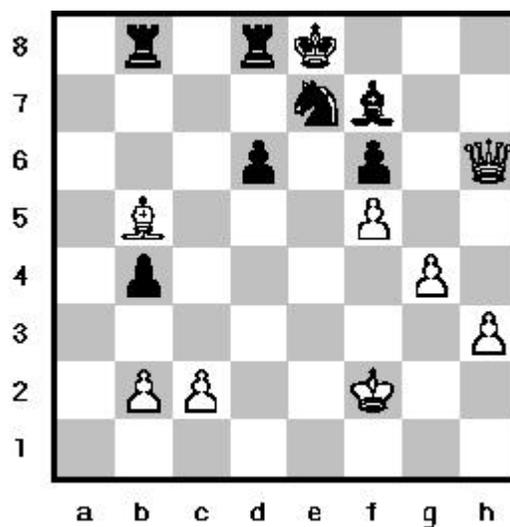


Diagram G2: After 39 with Black to Move

How do I avoid Simple Type-1 Blunders?

The example game just goes to show you that even Grandmasters are occasionally susceptible to making the simplest of blunders.

So how do we as average players try to avoid making these types of mistakes? It takes discipline, but the answer is to do the following before each and every move you make:

Ask yourself,

Question 1) “What is my opponent threatening?”

Question 2) “Is my move going to be safe?”

Question 1 is intended to make you aware of the pieces that your opponent is attacking. Question 2 is to make you aware of the squares he controls.

Next time we will continue our look into the fascinating world of blunders. So, until then, play well, watch out for Simple Type-1 Blunders and ask your two questions before each and every move you make.

Answers to Example Exercises:

- 1) Kxc4
- 2) Bxh1
- 3) Nxd8
- 4) Qxg4