

# Analyse your own games



Depending on the time and energy available...

1. Make notes immediately after the game about what you were thinking – rejected moves, overlooked replies, evaluations...
2. Later, review the moves and the notes – what could be improved? Are there lessons for next time?
3. Among the could-do-betters and lessons-for-next-times, are there common themes in your games?



# Key idea

The moves represent only a fraction of all that happened between your ears during the game - if you just get a computer to look at the moves, you are missing an opportunity to review and learn.

e.g. huge difference between *Did you overlook a move or decide against it?*

Different answers will push you towards different types of study.

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1. Make some notes after the game as soon as you can.
2. What were you thinking? First of all, try and write down the main things you thought about during the game. Who was better or worse at each stage? (+- ± ± = ♯ ♯ -+) Which moves were you sure of, which were you unsure of? Which moves were good or not so good? (!! ! !? ?! ? ??) What were the alternative moves you thought about? Can you tell the story of the game in a couple of sentences?  
This records your own thoughts, and you can come back and do the rest later.
3. What does the textbook say? Which side turned off the main line of the opening first? You might want to look up what you should have played in the opening. You don't have to become an expert, but it's a good goal always to have your opponent be the one who runs out of book moves first.
4. Did anything go wrong? Next, try and find improvements — of the alternative moves you thought about, do you now think any of them were better than what you played? Can you find a better move than any of the ones you thought about at the time? Focus on (a) big mistakes not little ones, and (b) positions where the evaluation changed significantly (winning → equal, equal → losing). These moments where the expected result changes are the ones to learn from.
5. Better next time? If you find some improvements in your later play, try and remember the lesson for later games. Improvement comes from fixing the causes of errors, not learning extra book moves or noticing a tactic.

# Analyse your own games



When you have a group of reviewed games:

## Classify your mistakes by type

For each serious error, label it e.g. *Tactical mistake, Positional misunderstanding, Wrong or absent plan, Time trouble / too fast, Opening knowledge, Endgame technique.*

## Turn 'better next time' lessons into rules or reminders

e.g. "Don't push flank pawns when behind in development",  
"In endgames, activate the king earlier — no need to castle"

## Track recurring themes across games

Keep a simple list of common issues (e.g. "missed back-rank tactics," "overoptimistic attacks"). Patterns matter more than individual blunders.

And a hard question: why did you make that mistake? If you can answer that question, you can think about a cure.

# Analyse your own games



**And most importantly:**

**You can do all this on paper or using a computer.**

**BUT**

**Only turn on a chess engine to check your conclusions**

**Use the engine to:**

- **Confirm or refute your analysis**
- **Reveal tactical shots you missed**
- **Suggest better plans**

**Don't just click through moves — pause and understand why the engine prefers something (not always easy)**

**If you are doing the thinking, your thinking can improve. If the computer is doing all the work, then I can expect only the computer to improve!**



# 10-minute *post mortem*

1. Enter moves into Lichess study
2. Run a computer evaluation over it
3. Examine evaluation chart to see the 'story'
  - Is it what you thought?
4. Find and attend to blunders
5. Find and attend to mistakes
6. Find and try and understand turning points, critical moments
7. Try and decide on at least one lesson for next time
  - Keep a log of 'lessons for next time'

# 30-minute *post mortem*



## RECOLLECTION

1. Enter moves into Lichess study
2. Add variations and alternative moves you remember thinking about
3. Add as many “!” and “±” as you remember thinking about

## REASSESSMENT

4. Now, reconsider. Add more moves, more judgements and try and understand now what you didn't understand then
5. Decide on 'lessons for next time'
6. Perhaps also:
  - Run a computer evaluation over it
  - Examine evaluation chart to see the 'story'
    - Is it what you thought?
  - Find and attend to blunders
  - Find and attend to mistakes
7. Definitely: Keep a log of 'lessons for next time'



# Further study

**Dan Heisman, *The Improving Annotator***

**ChessDojo on YouTube:**

***How to annotate your games***

***Dojo Game Annotations***

***My Best Annotated Game***

***The path to 1800 on chess.com***

**<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLH4ID9b6Zgbdbsmd4jompnhgk6lCc9A>**