

## How to Analyze Your Games

By GM Jesse Kraai, IM David Pruess, and IM Kostya Kavutskiy

Reviewed by Pranav Srinivasula

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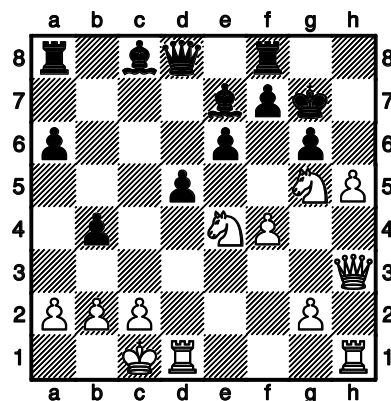


GM Jesse Kraai, IM David Pruess, and IM Kostya Kavutskiy wrote the book, *How to Analyze Your Games: A ChessDojo Guide*, with the help of their experiences from their chess careers. The book includes an easy introduction that helps the reader understand why the authors wrote the book, and explains analysis in four different parts, one from Kraai, Pruess, Kavutskiy, and an end section with analyzed games from ChessDojo member rating groups.

The author, GM Jesse Kraai, discusses why analyzing games is crucial for improvement, clearly illustrating three ways it can help: time/tempo, material, and understanding the quality of your position. He says analysis can help lower-rated players understand where they blunder and learn not to give pieces away by hanging them, as well as see when their opponent hangs material and capitalize on it. Analysis can help you determine when an opponent gives you a tempo and enables you to practice using time to your advantage in a real game. Analysis can help you evaluate a position in a game more easily and more accurately. He also discusses how analysis can aid in all three phases of the game: the opening, tactics, and endgame. Kraai says that analyzing your opening or opening structure can help you identify what positions you excel in, what you struggle with, and learn about early, middlegame plans. Analysis can enhance your tactics by helping you understand when to stop analyzing a position in a game, as you have likely already practiced it during the analysis of other games. It can also help in endgames, because, by that time, both you and your opponent are tired, so experiencing an endgame through analysis can help you understand your position better and find winning or drawing moves. He discusses how to enhance your analysis, including the steps taken during the game and after. For example, Kraai writes timestamps in games and spends a week analyzing each game, first taking notes on paper and then transferring them to the computer. Kraai then proceeds to show the analysis steps taken by other players, ranging from 800-rated to 2000-rated. The book didn't include the steps for analysis of lower-rated players, but it did show examples of their analyzed games later in the book.

IM David Pruess discusses how to assist new analysts in analyzing their games. He provides specific directions on what each player, regardless of rating group (from 100 to titled players), should do before, during, and after analysis. For example, 800-rated players shouldn't spend as much time on openings, but more on easy tactics they might have missed.

IM Kostya Kavutskiy discusses how to use engines while analyzing. He recommends that people under 1600 should not analyze with a computer and should mostly analyze only on paper. He explains the basics of computer analysis and what the analysis symbols and numbers mean. For example,  $-0.25$  to  $+0.25$  means equal, but  $+1.5$  and higher is winning for white, and  $-1.5$  and lower is winning for black. He also says the engine can find moves humans will never see, so the engine isn't always helpful. He provides examples of this, like in this position:



The winning move here is Qg3, and it is the only viable option. White is winning decisively according to the computer, but only has one winning move. A move that requires a lot of calculation and is a move most humans wouldn't find, because you're down a piece and must play a non-forcing move. Kavutskiy also includes a few more games that demonstrate the usefulness of engines, such as spotting tactics and tactical ideas. The computer also helps you improve your evaluation skills in games. He provides tips for analysis, such as feeding your moves in before analyzing. Also, compare your move to the computer, if you are confused about why one is better. Lastly, he provides tips on what to use for analysis, including LiChess, En Croissant, Chessify, and Chessbase, along with their pros and cons. He says Stockfish is the best engine for most players' analyses.

Lastly, the book showcases games from all rating groups, ranging from 100 to over 2400 FIDE. These games have been self-analyzed and submitted by *ChessDojo* players. There are some key differences you can see from a 100-rated player's analysis and all the levels in between up to a GM's analysis. For example, one of the 200-rated players' analyses stated that a Queen on d3 was attacking its pawn on h1, which is impossible because a pawn cannot be on h1. In a later section, an 1800 Lichess player adds a variation and thoughts on a move where he missed a check, resulting in the win of a pawn. In a 1610's game, the player explains why he played a move he thought was inaccurate, but with a good, albeit not too deep, variation. In a 2100's game, he includes why he plays a sideline of the opening because he knows his opponent usually plays mainlines. The GM's game included timestamps for every move, along with detailed explanations for each move and concise variations that made it easy to read and understand.

The book is published in both hardback and paperback editions. The hardback cover is smooth. The paper also feels good. The binding is good, but the book can be bent and thus could easily be damaged. Kindle and Forward Chess both offer the book. Finally, the book is published independently by Chess Dojo itself.

Overall, the book is excellent for learning the correct way to analyze. It is meant for early intermediate to advanced players, as it may be a bit challenging for beginners.