

## Step 4 Extra - Guidance

The “Steps Method” is a highly regarded learning and training tool developed in Holland. The workbooks contain puzzles to be solved rather than instructional content – so they should be seen as a training tool rather than a guidebook.

All positions are white to move – ***except where there is a black blob to the right of the board which indicates it is black to move.***

Step 4 Extra contains 22 topics across 4 broad themes

- 1) Tactics
- 2) Endgame
- 3) Mating patterns
- 4) Defence

The focus is mostly on tactics (winning material) and checkmating patterns as these are the most essential skills to build early in a player’s development. However greater emphasis is placed on the endgame compared to previous Steps and we begin to drill in to some specific attacking patterns against the enemy King.

### How to Solve

The “score trackers” on the website contain the suggested schedule for completion of each section plus the total score available per page. Each question is worth 2 points.

The suggested schedule is as follows:

January 2020	Pages 2 - 11
February 2020	Pages 12 - 21
March 2020	Pages 22 - 32
April 2020	Pages 33 - 45
May 2020	Pages 46 - 56

Some students uncomfortable with notation may prefer to draw the move directly in the workbook. This is OK but we suggest not to do this unless absolutely necessary.

Ideally students should write down their solutions using standard chess notation in a separate notepad and workbook which is kept safe. The reason is twofold:

Firstly it is good practice to write down variations to practice notation but also because the act of writing down the moves slows you down and gets you to consider the position more carefully.

Secondly, by not writing the solution in the workbook means you can re-use the workbook and practice those pages you didn’t score so well on.

***Each page should take approximately 15 – 60 minutes to complete.*** If it is taking less time than this check you are writing down the solutions thoroughly and that you are checking for your opponent's best defence and the alternatives. Part of the purpose of the exercises is to treat them as a real position from a game and not to just write down the first promising move that comes to mind.

### **Additional material and support**

We will publish some supplemental material in the middle of each study month. This will include guidance notes, additional exercises and some video guides.

Students may prefer to complete the workbooks at their own pace – ie faster than the suggested schedule. This is fine!

### **Scoring**

Students (or parents) should mark their own answers – they can be found using the link below.

[https://www.stappenmethode.nl/lesmateriaal/step4e\\_2.pdf](https://www.stappenmethode.nl/lesmateriaal/step4e_2.pdf)

2 points for correct key move (first move) plus relevant follow up lines

1 point if key move found but missed a follow up – or a potential defence for the opponent

The majority of answers in Step 4 are two movers (ie “your move, opponents response, your second move”) but there are a few “3-movers” as well so the difficulty starts to increase compared to previous Steps.

Use the “score tracker” (downloaded from the website) to input the score for each question.

Students should be aiming for a high %. If this isn't achieved then more work needs to be done at this level.

<50%	-	Finding the going too tough, probably worth going back a step
50 – 69%	-	Has grasped the concepts but needs more consistency
70 – 84%	-	Getting there – but a little more accuracy required
85 – 94%	-	Good. Ready to move forward but still worth repeating the workbook
> 95%	-	Excellent – ready to move forward

### **Woodpecker Method**

The quick explanation of the Woodpecker Method is that you need to solve a large number of puzzles in a row; then solve the same puzzles again and again, only faster. It's not a lazy shortcut to success – hard work is required. But the reward can be re-programming your unconscious mind. Benefits include sharper tactical vision, fewer blunders, better play when in time trouble and improved intuition.

Once the workbook has been completed we suggest the student attempts to complete it again – only this time much faster. We don't suggest moving onto the next step until the student is able to consistently score 85%+ at this level.