

# Candidate moves



Blunders and oversights

Failure to consider relevant moves

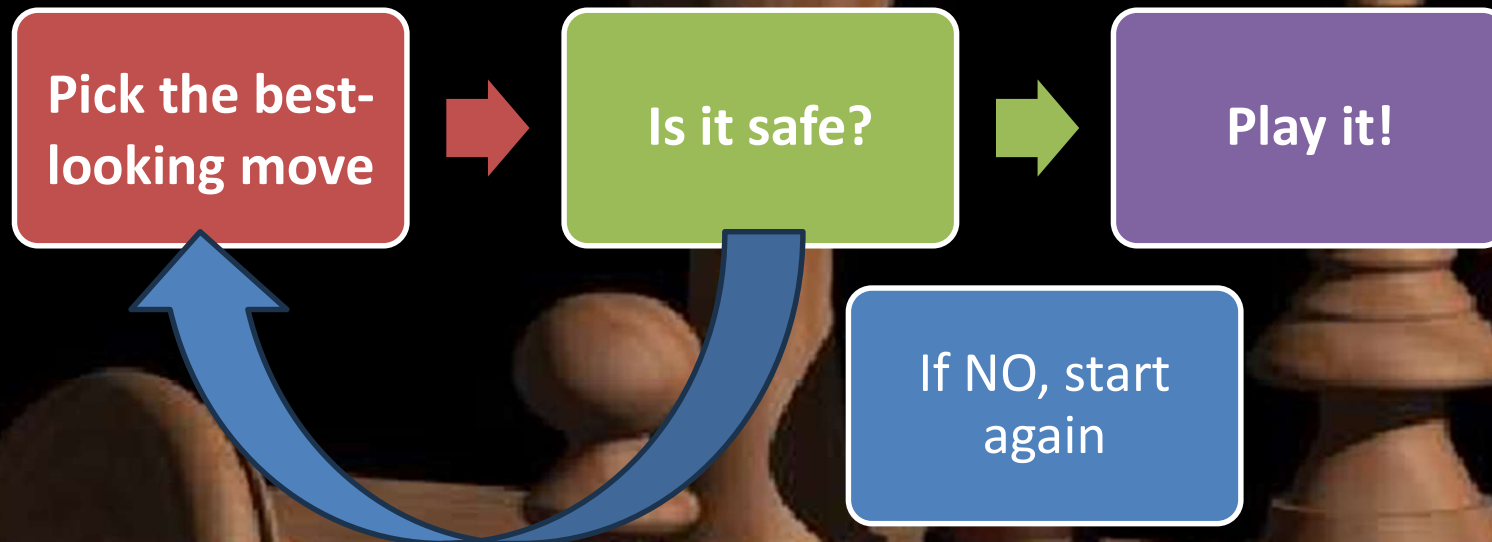
A course of treatment for blunders =

- Slow down
- Look for threats
- Tactics practice
  1. aiming for speed
  2. aiming for depth
  3. aiming for imagination)
- Check before moving  
(‘through the eyes of a patzer’)



# Typical amateur thinking process

- ▶ Picking a move and trying to prove it's the best, not picking the best move



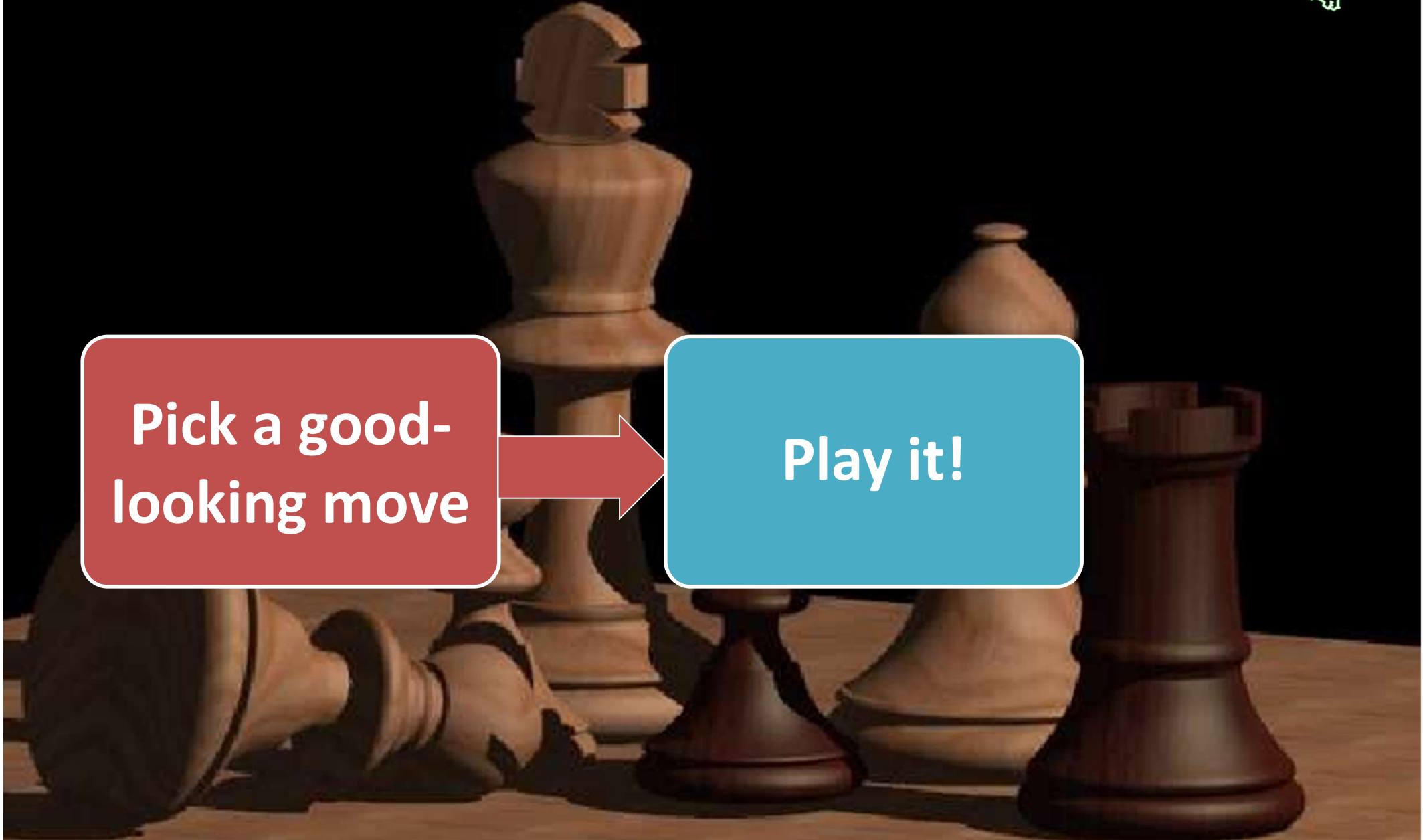


# And sometimes...

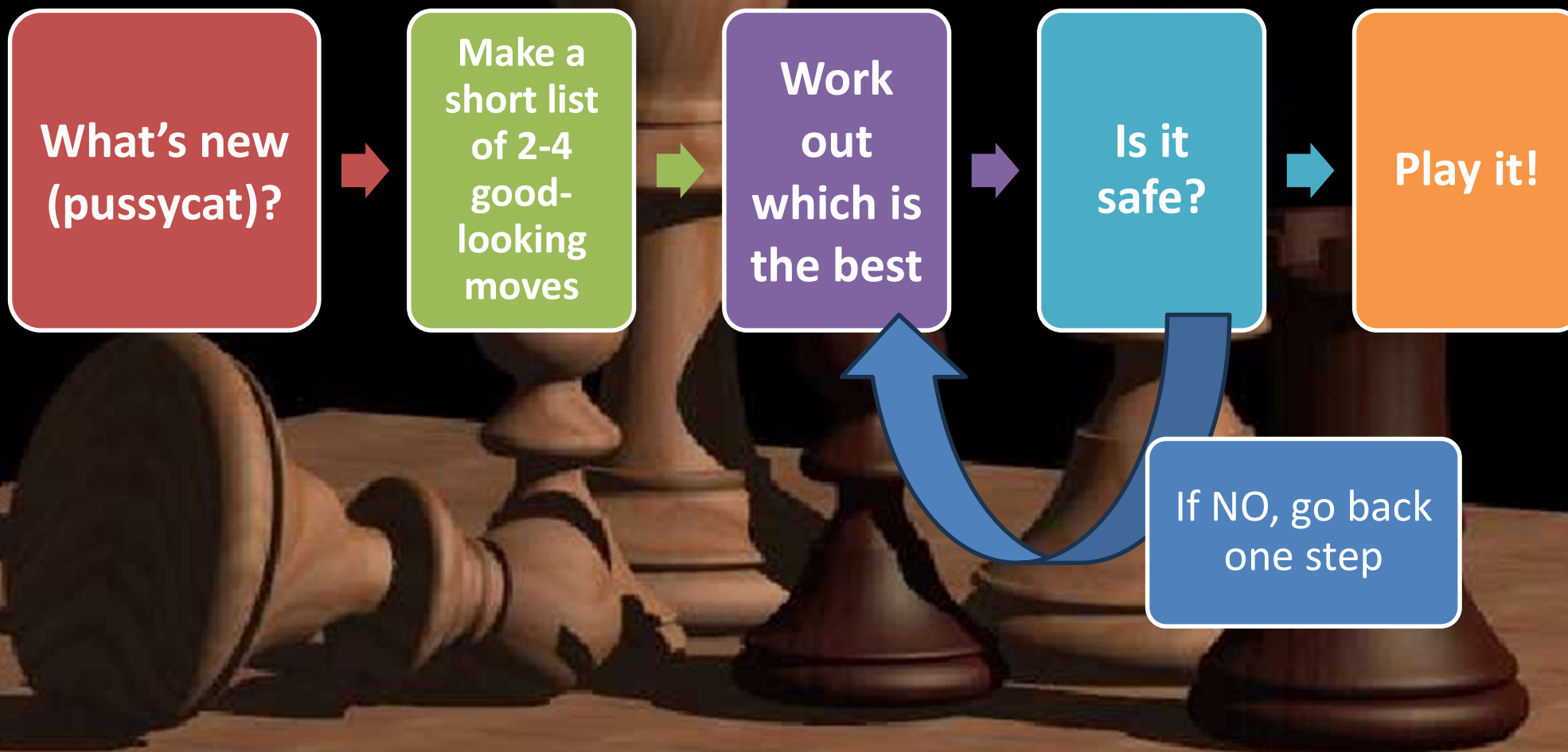
Pick a good-looking move



Play it!



# Better thinking process



# Candidate Moves



Treatment for oversights/  
narrow-mindedness =

Slow down

Look for threats and opportunities

Check before moving

Practice...

Looking for threats

Selecting candidate moves

1. aiming for speed

2. aiming for depth

3. aiming for imagination

0 | Van der Wiel, John TH 2520

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“Let us repeat once more the methods by which we can increase our combinative skill:

“(1) by careful examination of the different types and by a clear understanding of their motives and their premises

“(2) By memorising a number of outstanding as well as of common examples and solutions

“(3) Frequent repetition (in thought, if possible) of important combinations, so as to develop the imagination.”

- Euwe, *Strategy and Tactics in Chess*



# Hard moves to see

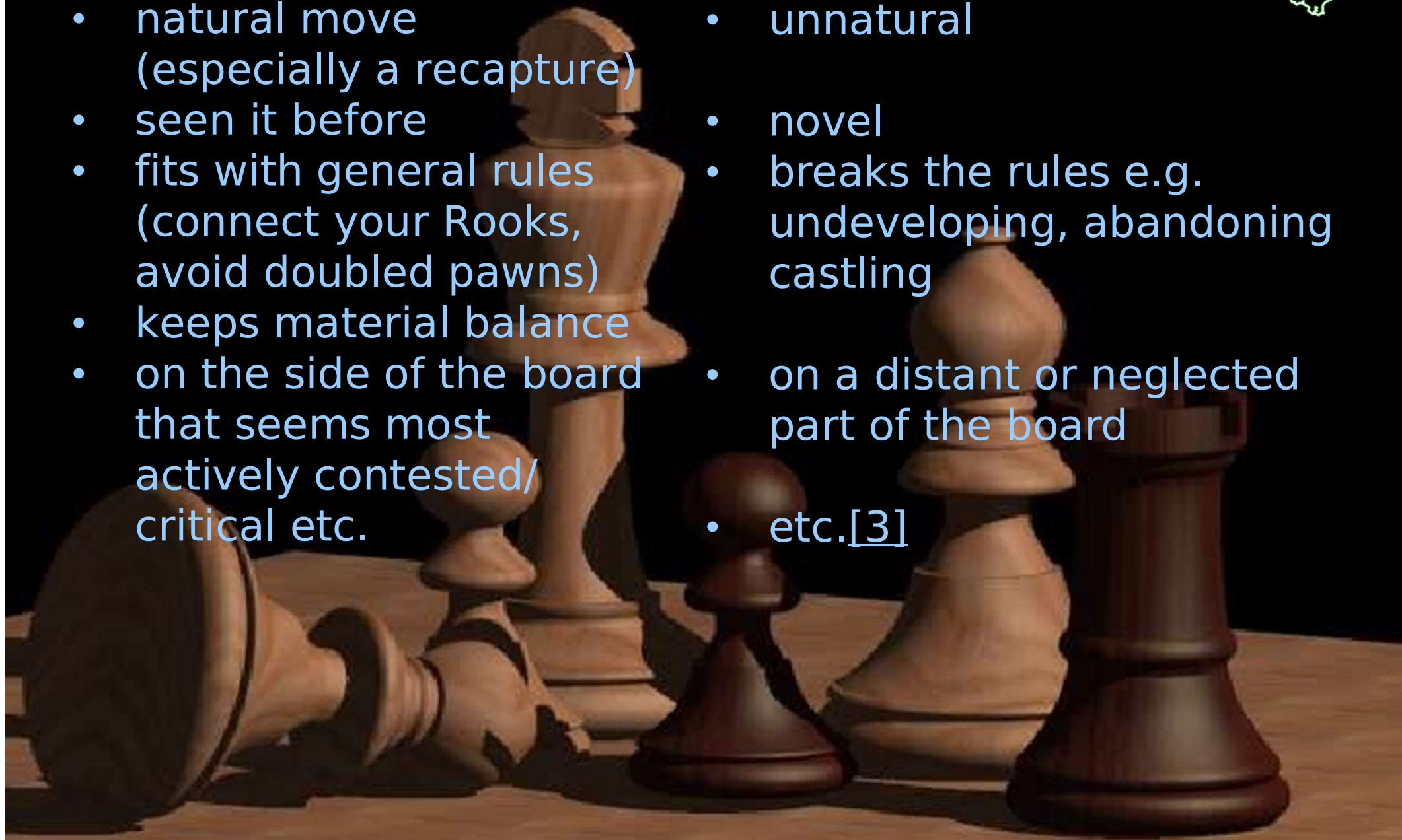
John Nunn offers a short but helpful list of 'hard moves to see' in his *Secrets of Practical Chess* - they include switchback moves, collinear moves, and hesitation moves.

These categories are mostly about the geometry and mechanics of the moves, and the vocabulary draws on problem terminology.

# Easy and hard moves to spot



- natural move (especially a recapture)
- seen it before
- fits with general rules (connect your Rooks, avoid doubled pawns)
- keeps material balance
- on the side of the board that seems most actively contested/critical etc.
- unnatural
- novel
- breaks the rules e.g. undeveloping, abandoning castling
- on a distant or neglected part of the board
- etc.[3]



# Hard moves for the rest of us to see!



- Long moves
- backwards moves (especially when attacking)
- intermezzi
- creeping moves
- sacrifices in general
- 'silent' (non-capturing) sacrifices
- Previously impossible moves
- Previously unreasonable moves
- Moving the apparently immovable  
e.g. pinned pieces and backward pawns.

In fact, we can find examples of Grandmasters missing all these types of moves, as well as club players...

# Tips for generating relevant candidate moves



- What is a possible drawback of my opponent's last move?
- Looking as if through the eyes of a slightly better patzer
- Andersson's Rule: Improve your worst-placed piece (including: open a file for your Rooks)
- Working backwards from your goal/plan: what helps?
- Can you ignore a threat and play your move/plan anyway?
- Prophylaxis (or avoids counterplay)



# Aagaard's one tip and three questions

- Always try to choose between at least two moves

*1. What are the weaknesses?  
(potential targets)*

*2. What is the worst piece?  
(improve position)*

*3. What is my opponent intending?  
(prophylaxis)*

# More tips



- Be a scientist not a lawyer — you're trying to find the best move among alternatives, not to prove one move works. Look at all moves briefly at the outset — you may hit on the best move, or see an idea in the context of one variation that makes a different move work
- Use The process of elimination (e.g. if one method of escaping check is hopeless, you can play the alternative without hesitation — example in *Chess for Tigers* by Simon Webb)
- Comparison method (this move is in no variation worse and is often better than an alternative)
- Doing the urgent first
- Doing the less committal first
- If you are considering a commitment (piece sacrifice?), do you have an emergency exit (e.g. perpetual check)?
- Taking the clearest or safest path
- Have a sense of what the evaluation of your current position is, and what it is after the best move you have considered so far – if it matches (e.g. keeps a small edge), it's good enough

# More tips



- Trying different move orders
- Which move is easier for your side to play, or which suits your style better, or which is psychologically unpleasant for your opponent (e.g. if they are short of time, a non-forcing move that limits their activity might make their heart sink)
- A bird in the hand... Short, concrete plans are better than longer, vaguer ones (which tend to get derailed by your opponent's short concrete plans).
- And always: consider your opponent's best reply, and think of less obvious moves for them as well as you, and consider particularly their options right at the start of the analysis — have you made an unwarranted assumption?
- “When you see a good move – wait, and try and think of a better one.” (attrib. Lasker, perhaps Ponziani)
- “When you see a good move for you or your opponent – wait, and try and think of a better one.”

# More tips



- Aagaard *Excelling at Chess Calculation* Chapter 2
- Aagaard *Grandmaster Preparation: Calculation* Chapter 1
- Examples of unusual moves (Tim Krabbe & John Emms *The Most Amazing Chess Moves Ever Played*)
- Chess studies
- Ernst *Find Your Next Move* New in Chess/Chessable
- <https://www.chessable.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Candidate-Moves-Research-Paper-final-version-April-15-2024-Chessable-science-team.pdf>