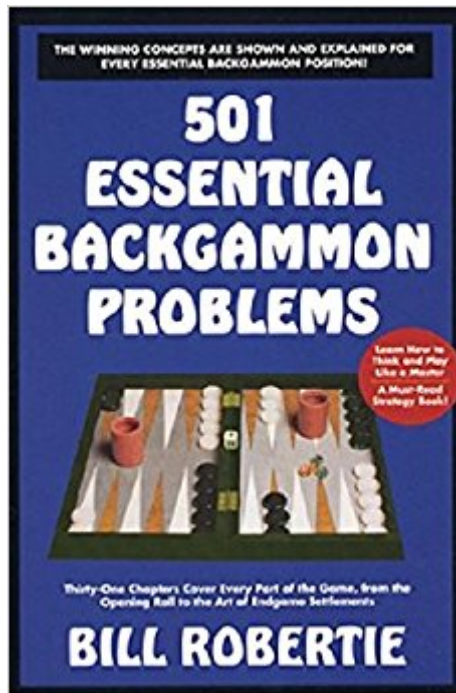


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# 501 Essential Backgammon Problems



## Synopsis

This comprehensive backgammon book challenges the reader with 501 essential problems to transform him into a thinking, aggressive pro-level player. Strategies and situation cover every aspect of the game, from playing positions to doubling maneuvers. Everything is carefully explained and illustrated so that the reader understands all the concepts.

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## Customer Reviews

This comprehensive backgammon book challenges the reader with 501 essential problems to transform him into a thinking, aggressive pro-level player. Strategies and situation cover every aspect of the game, from playing positions to doubling maneuvers. Everything is carefully explained and illustrated so that the reader understands all the concepts.

Terrific analysis of backgammon situations that run the gamut. I especially liked the chapter dealing with "races," with astute analysis of when you double, drop, or take.

The reviews for this book are good, so I don't want to repeat their analysis. What I will add is why I have given/sold/recommended this book to dozens of struggling backgammon players. There are only a couple paragraphs before each chapter. You "read" it like you "read" the chess puzzle in a newspaper. Backgammon is primarily a money game, although tournament play is very popular with strong players. This book is for money play. This book will save you a \*lot\* of money as you learn. For beginners, the first time through, many of the positions will seem impossibly difficult to

understand. The cube decisions may be mystifying. But go through it twice before you judge it. You will see results in your play. Magriel's book, Backgammon, is still the best starter book for basic strategy and understanding themes in backgammon. There are better (specialized) advanced backgammon books. I have seen no backgammon book, however, which can more quickly get a players' game to improve dramatically. Its fun, and its easy to go through. For intermediate/advanced players, many of the positions are easy, but also great reminders of the need for understanding transitional positions, especially backgames where you hit a loose checker. Critiques: there are not enough end game positions, yes, there are many positions where more alternatives should be given, but this is a "bathroom" book, it is not intended to be a critical analysis of every situation. What 501 does is present the game's complexities in a broad range of positional types, and let you solve a maze of problems, leading to a much better understanding of the game. If you play, or are learning backgammon, get this book and put it in the bathroom. Read it for 5 minutes a day. (12-18 problems is a good average). Supplement this with a good backgammon program, whether the free gnu backgammon, or one of the commercial apps. Within a few months, your game will be dramatically better.

I have many backgammon books to compare this one against. The information is great, and the problems and responses are well thought out, but the layout of the information becomes a tiresome excersize in flipping pages back and forth between the image of the board and the question/answer many pages away. I enjoyed the problems, and learned a good deal of strategy but the book should be more straightforward, with the illustration right at the page of the reading, so it would be easy to refer back to it. A small problem for the amount of information the book contains, but a problem that tends to detract from the learning experience.

in process of reading. So far, I find it excellent for forcing me to see alternative moves while thinking about best placement. Now I am interested in probability.

i keep going back to this book to relearn what it has taught me! backgammon is easy when the dice go your way. this book puts you in tough positions and tight spots and helps you get out of them. makes me a much more robust player.

The 501 positions examine your approach to the game from beginning to end. Robertie's solutions so closely mirror my JellyFish Tutor recommendations that I have simply dropped the examples into

JellyFish and only consult the book when I have a disagreement with the bot. Therein is the second value in this book for me: Robertie's analysis is succinct and sticks to themes over theory. When I do perhaps 50 positions quickly, only noting where I differ from the bot, and then read Robertie's suggestions for these positions, I usually find a recurring theme pointing to a weakness in my game. For me, this book is ultimately what I've made of it, Robertie has provided the necessary resources and I recommend this book as such.

As I start to read Bill Robertie's latest book, 501 Essential Backgammon Problems, I am informed in the preface that he is the world's best backgammon player. So far so good. For those of you unaware, Robertie, former two time world champion, has already written many books on backgammon and together with Kent Goulding co-published the sadly now defunct, but at the time premier magazine "Inside Backgammon". As the title suggests, it is a compilation of 501 problems, split 360 checker plays v 141 cube actions. (67 doubles 74 redoubles). After the introductory chapters covering notation/probability/basic doubling strategy etc, there are 26 chapters covering many of the important concepts in backgammon from the opening to the bearoff. These are: The Opening, Flexibility, The Middle Game, The 5-point, One Man Back, Priming Games, Connectivity, Hit Or Not?, Crunch Positions, Action Doubles, Late Game Blitz, Post-Blitz Turnaround Games, Ace-Point Games Back Games, The Containment, Game Post-Ace-Point Games, Saving The Gammon, The Race, Various Endgames, Bearing Off Against Contact, The Blitz, Breaking Anchor, Too Good To Double?, Playing For A Gammon, The Bearoff, Holding Games, The book manages to cram the 501 positions and analyses into 384 pages of a book measuring just 23x15cms. This is achieved by squashing the diagrams with the effect of making the checkers oval. The problems in each chapter are all bunched together first and the solutions at the end of the chapter hence cutting down on the need to avoid looking at the analysis. It's target audience is everybody from beginner to expert level. The only group that maybe wouldn't find many parts of this book valuable would be world class players. The problems are typical of positions that appear in everyday backgammon and not unusual or tricky positions that an expert may get wrong. The difficulty of the problems range from very easy to hard with the majority in the intermediate/advanced level. My guess is that the book would be suitable to players ranked up to elo 1900 on F.I.B.S. or Gamesgrid. Robertie has attempted to create a book of reference positions whose characteristics the reader can hopefully remember and apply and adapt over the board and for each problem, he typically gives a succinct 8-10 line analysis. There are no references to any of the neural net backgammon programs in the book. I checked all the positions by rollout and did discover some disagreements between the bots'

conclusions and Robertie's analysis. There were around 12 cube problems whose equity differed by more than 0.04 and also some checker play differences. Some of those positions would make good reading for the more expert players. My only major criticism on the book is that in some of the checker play problems Robertie doesn't analyse all the potential choices or rejects one when in fact the equities are quite close. The reasoning behind this maybe that that the merits of that checker play do not fit in with the theme of the chapter or are too complex. And on a personal note I prefer to see the pip count in diagrams. Overall an excellent book suitable for either beginners who have learned the very basics or a good refresher book for more advanced players. Marks out of ten 8.5.

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