

# Become a Chess Champion Volume 2

Definitive Edition

By Bryan Tillis



**Palm Beach Chess**

Palm Beach Chess  
[www.palmbeachchess.com](http://www.palmbeachchess.com)

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# Foreword Definitive Edition

As a certified teacher, lifelong chess player, and ardent student of chess, I want to help students obtain all the benefits of this great game. A complete chess player studies properly and understands the fundamentals which create the basis for all future growth. Every master was once a beginner and every journey begins with a single step. Become a Chess Champion will be the first step for many on their road to mastery.

The idea of a book as a synopsis of my curriculum first began to take shape in 2015 as I wrote lesson plans for my site [fundamentalchesslessons.com](http://fundamentalchesslessons.com). The basis of the curriculum developed from my experience as a teacher to hundreds of students with no knowledge of chess at Franklin Academy in Palm Beach Gardens. With classes ranging from Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade daily for two years a system of trial and error was developed for the initial concepts for learning chess. This text was built upon the answering of a question: How can a young player learn valuable life skills and improve in the most efficient way possible through playing chess?

It is essential, from a psychological perspective, to know what to learn in chess, how to study chess, and how exactly the learning process takes place for maximum benefits. I want to help you become a champion, but to each person that term means something different. If you wish to beat your parent, terrific! If you wish to be the best in your school or state, excellent! If you wish to become the World Chess Champion . . . well, you have a long road ahead, but this foundation will help you reach your goals.

This book will give you the fundamental ideation for playing chess without any bad habits to unlearn. The process will take students through learning initial piece movement all the way culminating into how to prepare for your first tournament and what to expect in competition. Before starting your journey with the text, the reader must understand how to achieve maximum benefits. The following notes provide advice on the process of studying properly. The greatest takeaway from Become a Chess Champion is that with any endeavor the learner must be fully engaged in their own learning process, and be an *Active Learner* in that process.

## How to Study

### **Have complete concentration on the task.**

Turn off your phone, videos, music, little brothers, etc.

### **When you are struggling with an idea, do not move on until you understand the concept.**

Imagine putting together a bookcase. You decide you want to follow the instructions for 90 percent of the construction. When you struggle with an idea or concept, you are missing the details, like nails, which lead to poor construction.

### **Use chess boards, not digital screens when possible.**

People are naturally tactile learners; we love to touch and engage. When you're working on the computer, you have far less engagement—in other words, *passive learning*. It is important to move the pieces. When you're analyzing a game, have two boards. It will help immensely when you are going through a game and you will be able to quickly reset to the main game position.

### **Talk to yourself.**

I do realize that this statement got a giggle from some of you. Notation, or chess language, must be mastered. Anytime you are calculating, verbalize it in your mind. You will be actively training another part of your brain to focus on chess.

### **Make your own notes.**

While studying chess materials, I have always found that collecting ideas helps with retention, especially when showing off those ideas to others and why I chose them. When you put an emotional basis into what you are learning, another area of the brain gets excited about the source material. If you put information in your own words, you will always have better retention.

### **Repeat the lessons.**

Think of chess as a foreign language. Learning Spanish or other languages is often a 3-step process:

- 1) The teacher tells you something.
- 2) The student interacts with the teacher about the concept.
- 3) The student demonstrates mastery of the concept without teacher assistance.

You will not have 100 percent recall without repetition; study the lessons several times and actively participate in your learning.

### **Establish a routine.**

How often does someone do a daily activity before it becomes habit? Recent research by a team at University College London believes that they have uncovered just how long (on average) it takes for something to become habitual. They state that it does not take just 21 days, as many thought in the past, to form a habit; rather they believe it takes an average of *66 days!*

### **Set goals.**

Do you want to play chess just for fun, try tournament chess, or become a Master? What do you want from chess? According to mindtools.com, “Top-level athletes, successful businesspeople, and achievers in all fields all set *goals*. *Setting goals* gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation.”.

I sincerely hope this text will be of great benefit to students, coaches, and parents.



**National Master Bryan Tillis**

June 6, 2018

Palm Beach Gardens

# Foreword

In today's age of information, few stones of knowledge have been left unturned. With a working Internet connection and a few keystrokes, you can begin learning a language, watch a silent film from the 1920s, master Navajo rug weaving, read Harry Potter in Indonesian, or listen to Franklin Delano Roosevelt affirm that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. But perhaps even FDR would have found the sheer breadth of knowledge that is available for consumption in every conceivable shape and form to be rather frightening indeed.

The game of chess has benefited immensely from the technological revolution. Nowadays, an ambitious chess player has access to every type of resource, from engines to tactics trainers to books to elite coaches. It should come as no surprise that chess players of every level are incomparably stronger nowadays than their counterparts of 30 or 40 years ago. We know more, we learn more (and better), we see more, and we play more!

And yet, amidst this sea of training tools and cutting-edge technology, transitioning from the beginner stage remains as difficult (if not more difficult) as ever. Put simply, **the vast majority of chess training tools are aimed toward club player level and above.** Now, this statement might strike you as absurd. What about the thousands of books written specifically for beginners, such as the highly acclaimed volumes *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess* and *How to Beat Your Dad at Chess*? What about the countless Internet resources, such as Chess.com's excellent beginner course? What about chess coaches who claim to have a system that will push you toward chess mastery in a matter of months?

I hear you, but let me share one of my own recent experiences that led me to make this claim. A few months ago, I was contacted by the father of a very talented young girl (let us refer to her as Emily) in my area. He explained that Emily is rated around 900, has been playing chess for 1.5 years or so, and would like an experienced

coach to guide her further improvement. I did not have much experience in beginner chess instruction, but I nonetheless decided to take up the challenge.

A few days before our first lesson, I decided to come up with some books and training tools that Emily would read and engage with on her own and with her father. I searched the deepest and darkest corners of my bookshelves, dug through the backwaters of my memory, but—to my utter amazement—I came up empty-handed. And then something occurred to me: As a beginner, I was mostly taught by my brother and father, both of whom were very dedicated to seeing me through to the next level. My early chess development mostly consisted of training game after training game with my brother, and puzzle after puzzle from Laszlo Polgar's renowned book of chess problems.

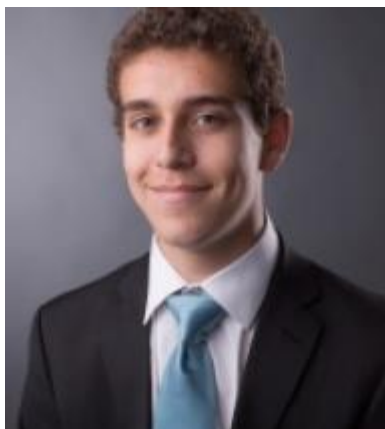
The scary thing is that on a metacognitive level, I cannot say for sure how I moved past the beginner stage; perhaps I attribute most of my improvement to my family's dedication and to my talent for the game. Surprising as it may sound, I have yet to come across a program or individual resource that single-handedly benefits a chess beginner in an enduring and meaningful way. As I quickly found out while searching the Internet (and my dusty bookshelves), even the most renowned beginner chess books usually resemble a tactical anthology rather than a comprehensive improvement course. The content may be (and often is) first-rate, and the writing may be (and often is) highly engaging, but puzzles alone are far from sufficient to aid a chess beginner on his long journey toward Grandmasterdom.

The book you are holding in your hands will be an irreplaceable companion on this daunting journey. What the authors have produced is a truly groundbreaking piece of chess literature, a book that is far and away the best resource for chess beginners I have come across in my 15 years of chess experience. Where others fall into the mold of timeworn puzzles and hackneyed general principles, Bryan provides the reader with a nuanced training program that touches on virtually every concept, every idea, and every principle that an ambitious beginner must internalize in order to move on to the next level. Didactic, highly applicable instruction—the kind that is rarely seen in

modern chess literature—is beautifully interwoven with original examples, crystal-clear explanations, and general passages that describe the benefits of chess for many facets of life.

It is well known that expertise and effective pedagogy are often mutually exclusive; as someone gets better at what he does, he often loses the metacognitive understanding of how he became so good. It appears that the authors have found a way to reverse this trend; Bryan’s understanding of the way a beginner’s mind works is peerless. Put simply, he understands what you do not understand, and he knows how to make you understand (pew, that is a lot of understands . . .). Bryan is an expert in the field of education as well as in the field of chess, and in this book he brings this dual expertise to bear in full force.

Whether you are just beginning your chess journey and aspire someday to be world champion, you have come to the right place. It is now time for me to step aside, and let Bryan work his magic. And it is time for you to turn the page and dig in.



**Grand Master Daniel Naroditsky**  
October 28, 2016  
Stanford, California



# Introduction for Parents and Educators

We have the great privilege of working at a school that integrates chess into its curriculum. This privilege, however, is often greeted by eye rolls, questions, or excuses why chess isn't as important as core subjects. More often than not, when you're teaching at a school or approaching your administration about chess, you will be greeted by teachers and administrators who question the value of a "game." In a memorable scene from the movie *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, you see a boy's father get into an argument with a teacher. She states:

"I'm sure he's very good at this chess thing, but it worries me. If I could make an analogy . . . to, say, pinochle."

Unfortunately this type of ignorance is seen all too often. As chess professionals and certified educators, we hope to sway these apprehensions and show the true value of chess for all students. In teaching chess, we have the great opportunity to integrate active learning seamlessly into our lessons.

## What Educators Say

**Chess helps with overall academics and teaches discipline when implemented properly.**

The article "Chess Improves Academic Performance" from the New York City Schools Chess Program features a number of testimonies from school principals, including the following: "Not only have the reading and math skills of these children soared, their ability to socialize has increased substantially, too. Our studies have shown that incidents of suspension and outside altercations have decreased by at least 60 percent since these children became interested in chess."

**Chess helps students with special needs connect and socialize.**

Rob Roy of Connecticut states the following: "Children with special problems can also learn chess. I taught a successful course for emotionally and educationally disadvantaged children in the Waterbury schools and used chess as a way for them to

learn and practice self-control. It was like turning on switches in their heads. You see the child looking at a problem, breaking it down, and then putting the whole thing back together. The process involves recall, analysis, judgment, and abstract reasoning.”

### **Overall, how does chess help?**

1. Chess accommodates all modality strengths.
2. Chess provides a mass quantity of practical problems for practice.
3. Chess offers instant rewards and punishments for problem solving.
4. Chess creates a pattern of thinking using the scientific method. The chess-playing student becomes familiar with looking at all options for the desired result.
5. Chess has the ability to teach children that education is fun. A learning environment organized around games has direct positive outcomes for student desire to learn.
6. Chess offers controlled competition, which fosters interest and promotes mental alertness. Furthermore, it challenges all students regardless of age, race, gender, religion, or any social demographic.

In this book you will find many examples and tips for teachers and parents to use with their aspiring chess champions. Let’s take a look at what active learning is and why it is so much more valuable than passive learning in using this text.

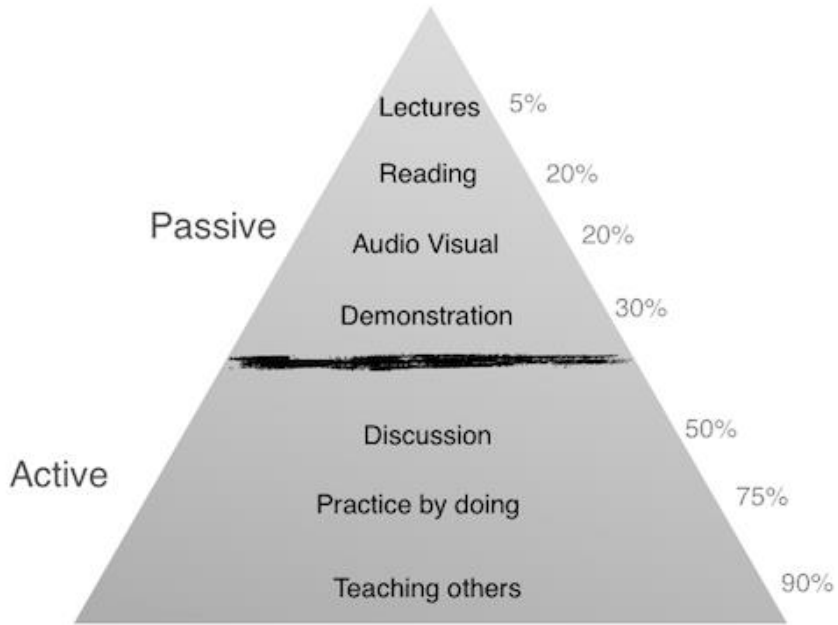
## **The Learning Process: Passive versus Active Learning**

Passive learning is a method of instruction in which students receive information from the teacher and through some form of memorization or rote learning that requires the students to retain as much information as possible.

Active learning is a process that engages students through activities that promote problem solving, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

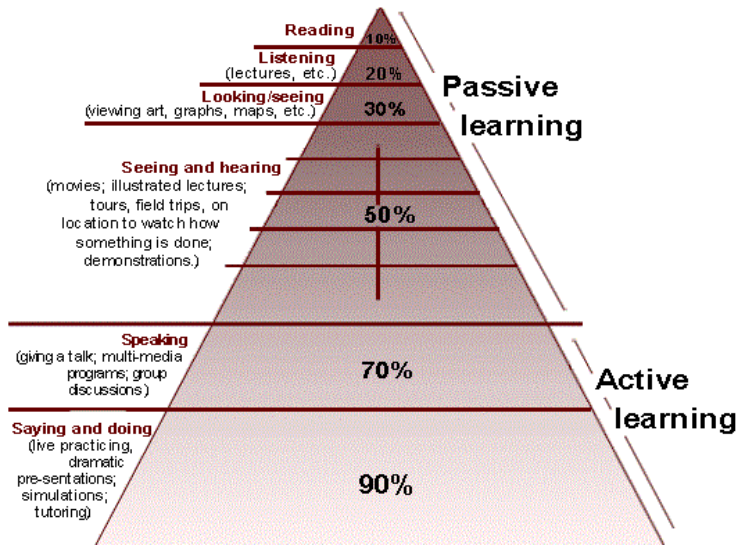
American educationalist Edgar Dale developed the Cone of Experience, also known as the Learning Triangle, in the 1940s. It shows a great representation of how to best engage in your self-learning process:

### How much you retain: The Learning Triangle



Observe this diagram: 75 percent retain information by doing, and 90 percent retain information by teaching others. We really like pyramids, let this sink in:

*Chess is a game of doing and teaching.*



The authors of this book have improved immensely both in their chess ratings and credentials after becoming full-time chess teachers. You can feel the pieces; you can practice over and over without tangible consequence. It is a safe haven to learn. If you make a mistake in a chess game, you instantly learn from it and play again. In order to not make that same mistake, you must require yourself to think before you move. If you can apply even a portion of this idea in life, you will live a much more successful life. The most successful teachers are those who teach what they love and who teach their students to mentor and respect each other.

## **Recommendations for Teaching the Materials in This Book and Beyond**

### **Attitude**

What you say and how you say it make all the difference. The potential of your chess player's success is critical in her beliefs.

### **Mentoring**

Teaching the game of chess isn't about just another game. This wonderful game can instill so many lessons for these students. Don't be afraid to make a difference. The greatest joy as a teacher is seeing your students come back to you year after year and remind you of how you made their life better. Provide your students with information, advice, guidance, and tangible support. Be their guide in times of uncertainty. Supportive relationships can help us overcome anything.

### **Understanding**

Not many young players have the capacity to learn everything in one sitting. It is recommended that we play games while learning, which allows the student to have fun during the learning process. It would be a travesty when teaching chess to a child to not allow them fun. Developmental psychologists have shown that the attention span/focus of a child can be roughly measured by the number of years they are old converted to minutes. If a child is 5 years old, at a maximum often their attention on one topic is only 5 minutes. It is a process to teach young children to play chess, but do not be discouraged; just keep working and take note of small steps forward.

# Bibliography

## Publications

Ferguson. *Teacher's Guide Research and Benefits of Chess*. Quadcitychess, 1995.

Just. *USCF Rule Book*, 6th Edition. Random House, 2014.

Kotov and Nunn. *Think Like a Grandmaster*. Batsford, 2012.

Lamprecht and Müller. *Fundamental Chess Endings*. Gambit Publications, 2001.

Nimzowitsch and Hays. *My System*. Hays Publishing, 1991.

## Electronic/Internet Resources

Brainyquote.com

Chess.com

ChessBase 14

Chessgames.com

FIDE Handbook

Stockfishchess.org

USCF Member Service Area

# Chess Board

8	a8	b8	c8	d8	e8	f8	g8	h8
7	a7	b7	c7	d7	e7	f7	g7	h7
6	a6	b6	c6	d6	e6	f6	g6	h6
5	a5	b5	c5	d5	e5	f5	g5	h5
4	a4	b4	c4	d4	e4	f4	g4	h4
3	a3	b3	c3	d3	e3	f3	g3	h3
2	a2	b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2	h2
1	a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	f1	g1	h1
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h

## Analysis Symbols for Reference

+	Check	=	Even position: White and Black have more or less equal chances.
#	Checkmate	∞	Unclear: It is unclear who has an advantage. This is often used when a position is highly asymmetrical, such as Black having a ruined pawn structure but dangerous active piece-play.
=	Draw or Equality in the Position	+/=	Slight advantage: White has slightly better chances.
0-0	Castle Kingside	+/-	Advantage: White has much better chances.
0-0-0	Castle Queenside	+−	Decisive advantage: White has a winning advantage.
1-0	White Wins	↑	Initiative: Indicates an advantage in initiative.
0-1	Black Wins	⇌	Counterplay: Indicates that the player has counterplay.
½-½	Drawn Game		
!	Good Move		
?	Questionable Move		
!!	Excellent Move		
??	Horrible Move (Blunder)		

# Chapter 1: The Board and Pieces

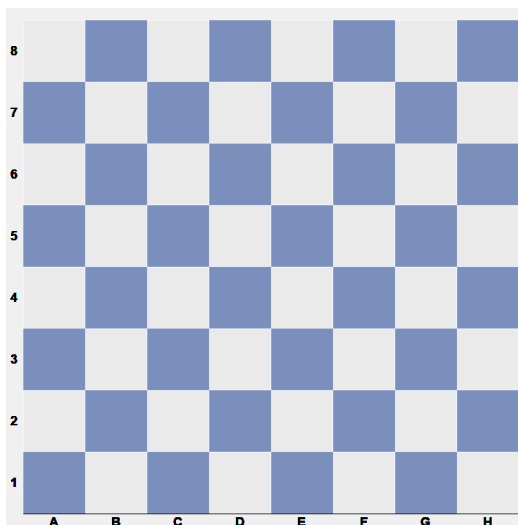
“Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying the basic fundamentals.”

—Jim Rohn, American entrepreneur

**Authors’ Note:** *Many of you may be picking up this book with some knowledge of chess already. While we encourage you to read through the first few chapters, if you feel you already have mastery of the basic concepts of the game, feel free to skip ahead to chapter 7. If you are able to correctly answer all of the Review questions there with full understanding, you are ready to move on to chapter 8. If you are not, start from here.*

The journey of learning the fundamentals of any practice is immensely important. We will help guide you through that journey while providing you the best core foundation toward chess mastery.

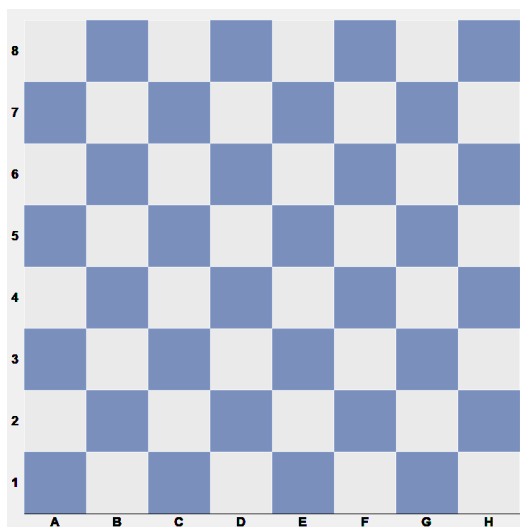
Our journey begins with the most essential piece of equipment: the board. The board is not just a piece of equipment for the game, however; it is the ground on which our pieces stand. The chess board is made up of an 8 x 8 grid totaling 64 squares. This chapter will explore the importance of not just having a board but also understanding the importance of the board itself. After we fully understand our “battleground,” we will meet our soldiers.



Webster’s Dictionary defines a chess boards as “a board used in chess that has 64 squares in two colors.” This overgeneralization does not, however, provide any guidance on what a chess board truly is.

Our definition of a chess board is this: a grid of 64 squares of alternating colors by which chess pieces travel with intention. The board consists of eight horizontal ranks (labeled 1–8) and eight vertical files (labeled a–h) for said pieces to reach their full potential but requiring the restriction of these pieces to a confined space.

Without the board, there is no chess. Let us now look at a board to understand.



It is important to note that when you're setting up the board properly, the letters should always be in front of the chess players and the numbers on the side.

**Teacher Tip:** *You can use the easy-to-remember saying “Letters in front, numbers on the side; this is how we set up every time.”*

If your chess board does not have notation, that's perfectly fine; just make sure a light square is in the bottom right corner.

**Teacher Tip:** *You can use the easy-to-remember saying “white on right.”*

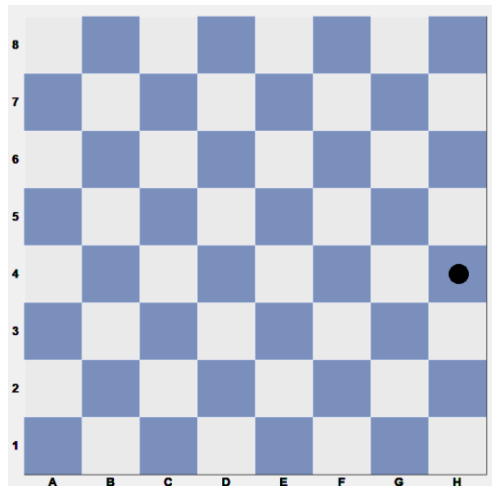
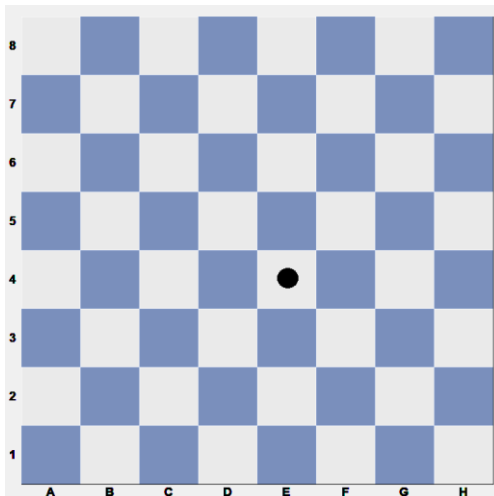
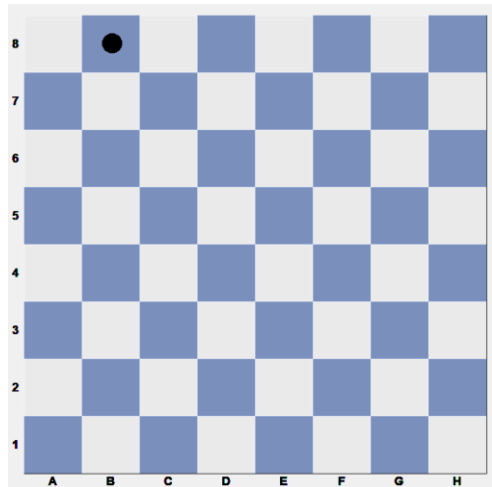
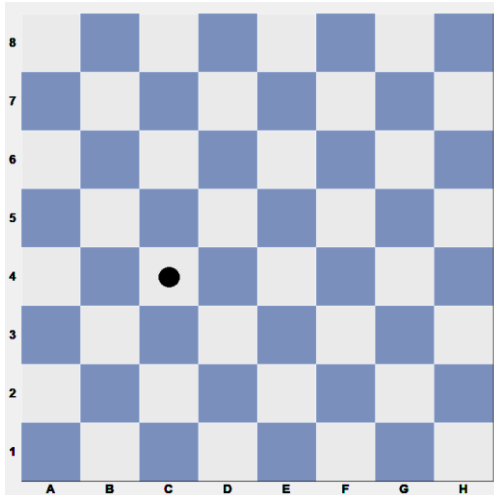
You may be asking, “Why does the board have coordinates? In the household game Battleship, it makes perfect sense, but why do I need it for chess?”

The coordinates on a chess board are the “language” of chess. Officially called *notation*, we can use the letters and numbers to read, write, and even talk about chess. Later in this book, we can even use notation to help us remember specific strategies or ideas. Just like history, in chess if the ideas are not written, they often will be lost. Notation mastery will be essential to solving problems later in this book, so let's get started understanding the most common notation method—algebraic notation—and then dive into the board and the pieces.



## Activity 1: Visualization and Board Vision

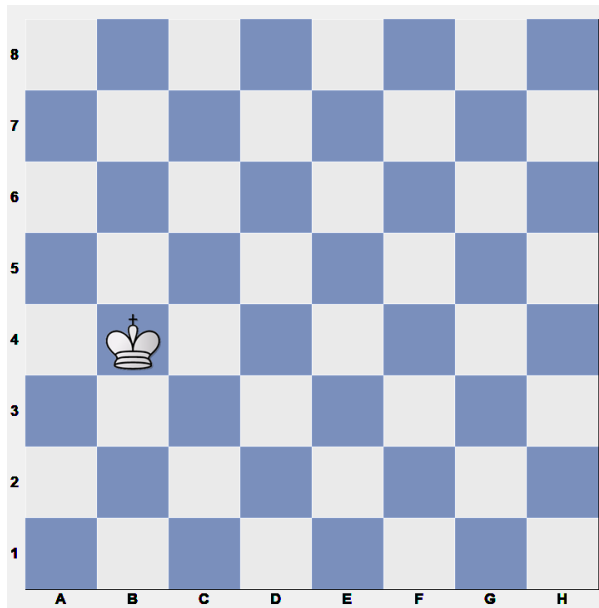
Our first activity will help you master an understanding of the board itself and gain a “vision” for use of chess notation. The objective of this activity is to identify the assigned squares as quickly as possible. To start you may use the notation on the side of the board, but once you have mastered that, attempt to do it without looking at the letters and numbers.



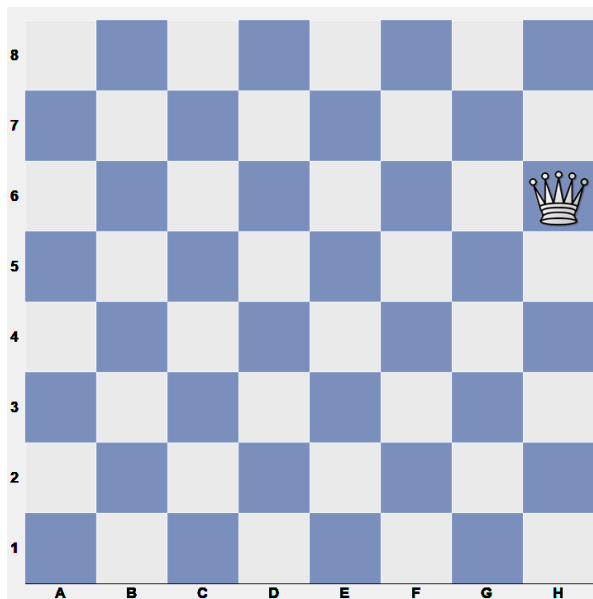
**Teacher Tip:** Now that you have had some practice with this activity, we recommend using your own chess board to create your own puzzles. Have a friend or family member name a square (for example, a5, e4, or c7) and time yourself to see how fast you can point to 10 random squares

**Pro Tip:** Any good training method shows improvement. Be sure to write down your results and try to beat your best time. If you don't know what you did, how can you know that you are improving?

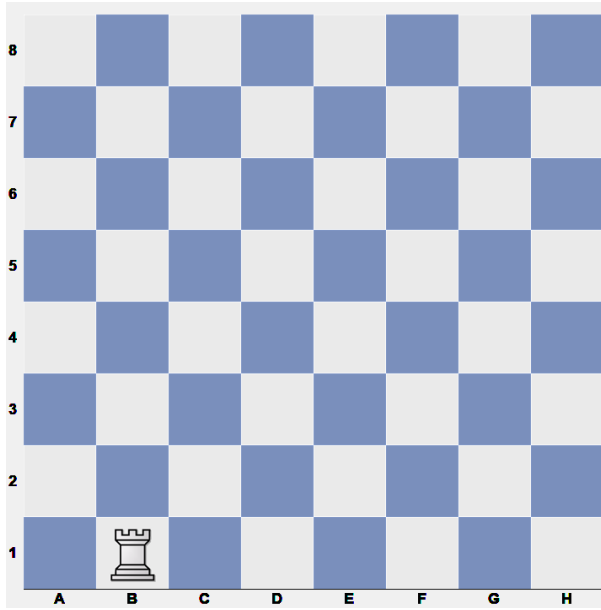
## The Pieces



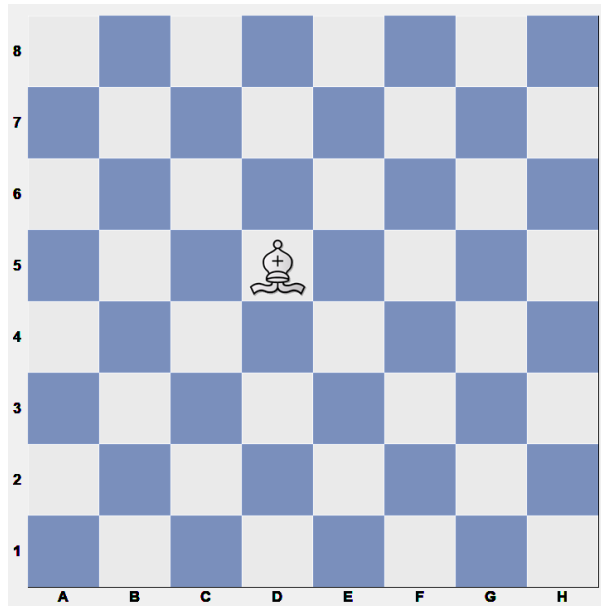
The most important piece on the board is the King. In algebraic chess notation, we write the king as K, so in this example the notation is Kb4 as the king just moved to the b4 square. We use the first letter of a piece to signify which piece is there.



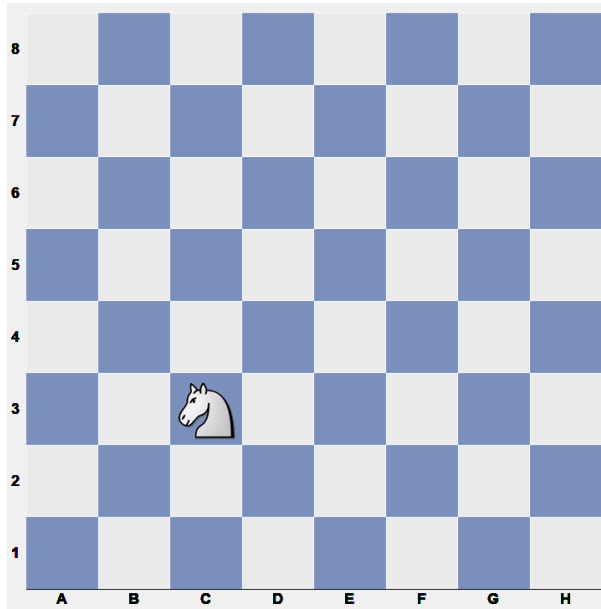
The Queen: Qh6



The Rook: Rb1

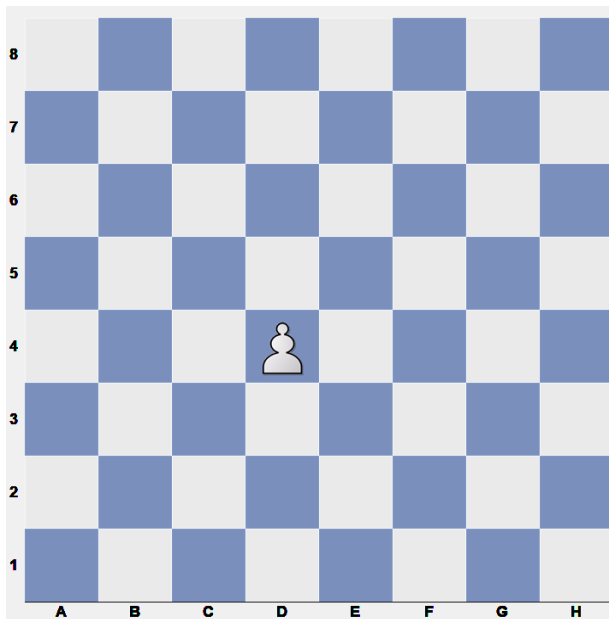


The Bishop: Bd5



The Knight: Nc3

In chess notation we use the letter N to signify the Knight, the King is K.

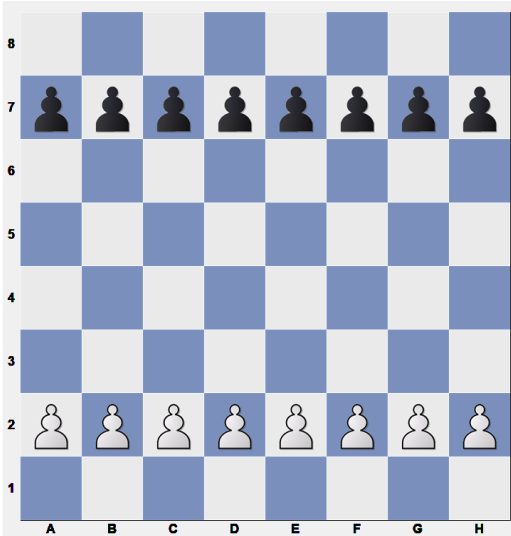


The Pawn: d4

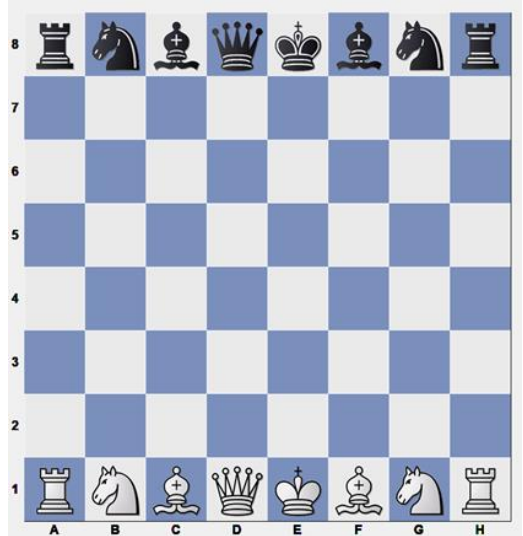
Pawns get no respect in chess notation until they make it to the other side of the board (which we will learn about later). When a pawn moves, you simply write the square that they move to; in this case we would just write d4.

## Board Setup

The initial position of chess can be broken down into two images:



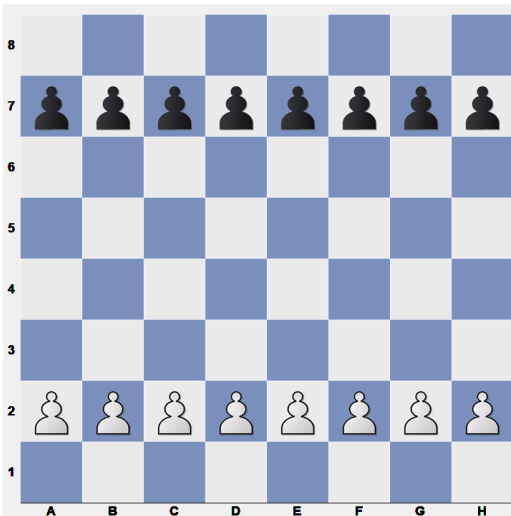
The first row



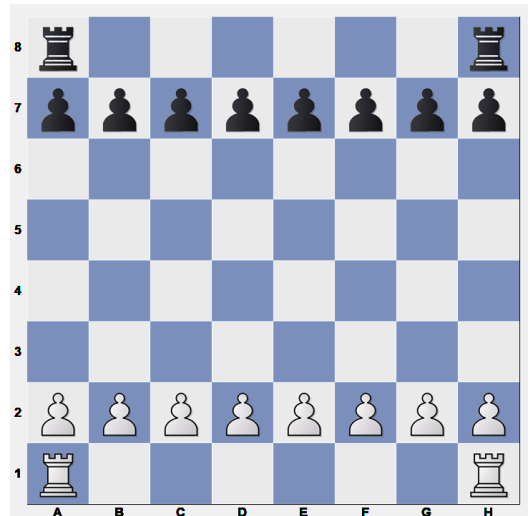
The back row

Now let's learn how to set up the board. We will start from the corner and work our way toward the "Royalty," the most important pieces.

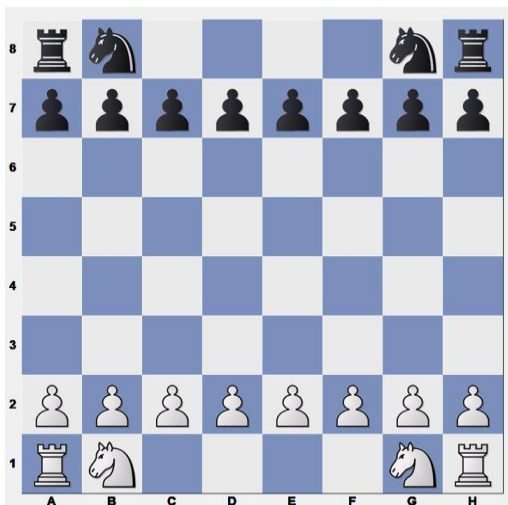
*The board is always set up shortest to tallest.*



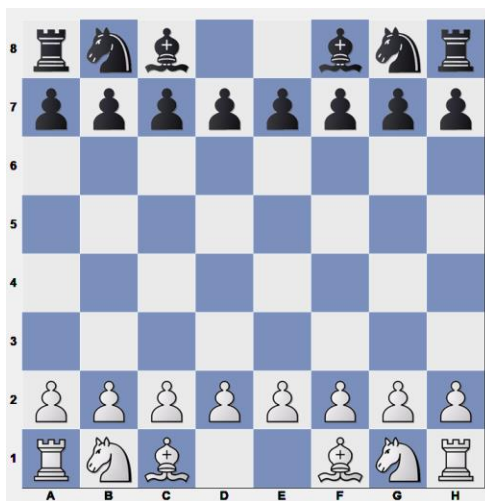
Pawns



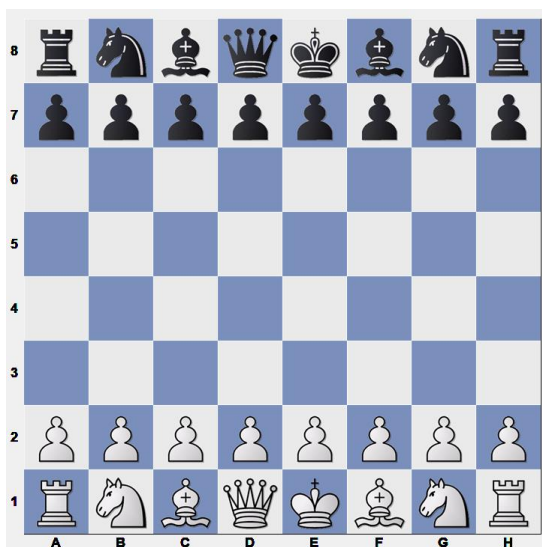
Rooks



Knights



Bishops



With the King and the Queen in the center

It is important to note that when setting up the Queen and the King that the Queen always goes on her own color (the White Queen on a light square and the Black Queen on a dark square). We like to say that “the dress matches the shoes.”

In chess dialect we always refer to squares as light and dark regardless of square color.

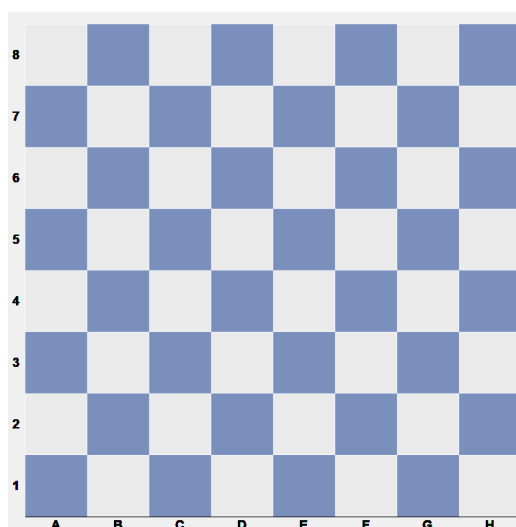
**Teacher Tip:** Be sure to have multiple representations in the room (demonstration boards, pictures, and real chess boards set up correctly as examples).

**Teacher Tip:** In order to develop mastery of board setup, make a game out of who can set up the board the fastest accurately without any pieces falling on the floor. It is a good idea before bringing the pieces out to talk about the pieces with reverence as many students see them as toys and will turn a King into a rocket ship in a blink of an eye. In our time working with young students, we have seen many a broken King due to students picking them up by the cross; that is why we pick up all pieces at their midpoint.

**Pro Tip:** For notation purposes later, notice that the White pieces should be set up on the side of the board where the bottom left hand square is **a1 (dark square)** whereas the Black pieces will have **h8 (dark square)**.

Now that we have seen step by step how to set up a board, let's get some repetition in to establish it in your memory.

### Activity 2: Piece Placement and Q & A



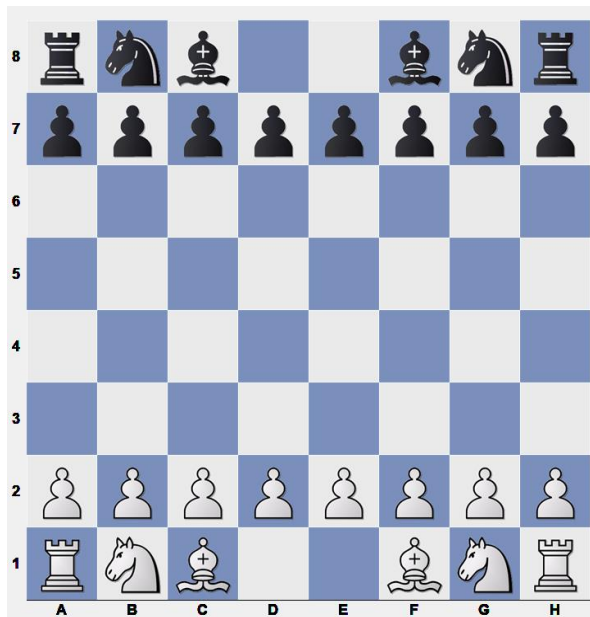
Now that you have mastered board setup, you should be able to answer some questions.

**Authors' Note:** With this and every test throughout the book, attempt to answer the questions on your own before looking at the answers!

## Test

As teachers we advocate light testing and feel that in the necessary chapters, it accomplishes the following:

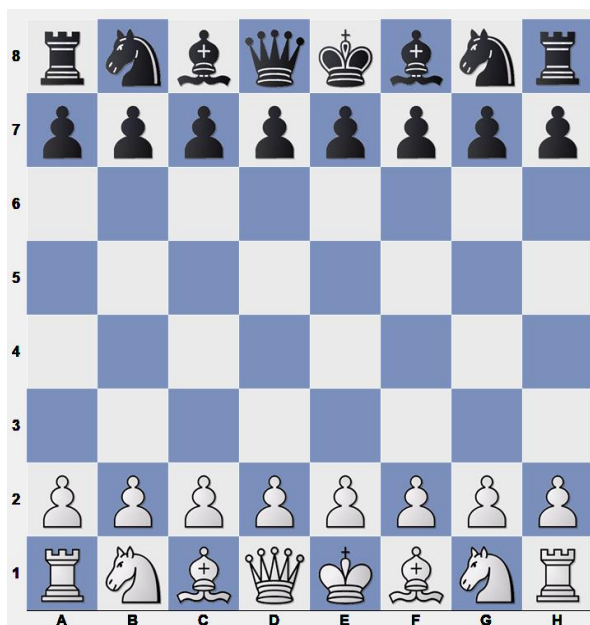
- To see if you are learning
- To see how well the book is teaching you
- To check your attention to detail
- To keep you motivated



1. When you are initially setting up the board, what squares do the White and Black Kings belong on?
2. What are the side-to-side rows and columns called?
3. What is the actual name of the piece that looks like a horse?
4. What is the actual name of the piece that looks like a castle?



## Knowledge Check



1. Remember: “Her shoes match her dress.” The Queen always goes on her own color. So the White Queen is on d1, the Black Queen is on d8, the White King is on e1, and the Black King is on e8.
2. Ranks in chess go from side to side: 1st rank, 2nd rank, etc. Files are the columns: a-file, b-file, etc.
3. The Knight!
4. The Rook!

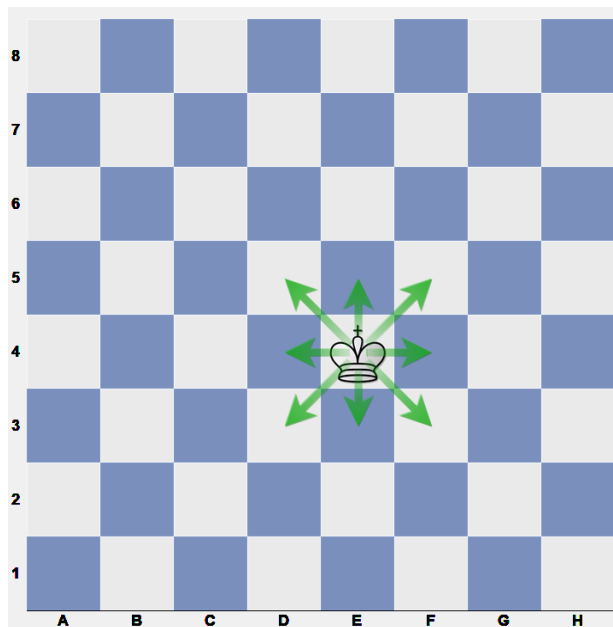
***Authors’ Note:*** If you can identify all pieces by name and can correctly place them on your chess board, you have successfully mastered chapter 1. If you are still having trouble, we encourage you to go back through and review before moving on.

# Chapter 2: The King and the Queen

In this chapter we will start to dive into the rules of chess. We will look into the specific movements of the King and Queen and how they relate to the board, which we learned about in chapter 1. While learning about our royalty, we will explore piece movement, describe capturing enemy pieces, and define 3 important terms that will reoccur throughout the book: check, checkmate, and stalemate.

## The King

In chess, the king is the most important piece! The object of the game of chess is to threaten the opponent's king in such a way that escaping danger is impossible (checkmate).



Rules and tips for using the King include the following:

Do's:

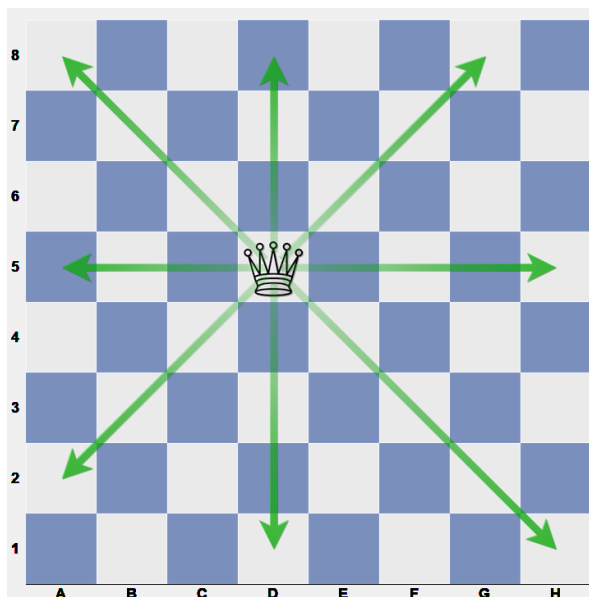
1. The King may move one square in any direction (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally).
2. Kings may attack any chess piece other than the opposing king.
3. Kings like to stay hidden during the majority of the game to avoid danger.
4. Kings can become powerful helpers when there are few pieces left on the board.

Don'ts:

1. The King may never move into danger (a square attacked by opposing pieces).
2. Kings may never be next to each other in any direction (they can't "touch").
3. Kings can never stay in danger.
4. The King may never be taken.

## The Queen

In chess, the most powerful piece is the Queen. She has far greater abilities than the King and any other piece, as we will see in later chapters.



Rules and tips for using the Queen include the following:

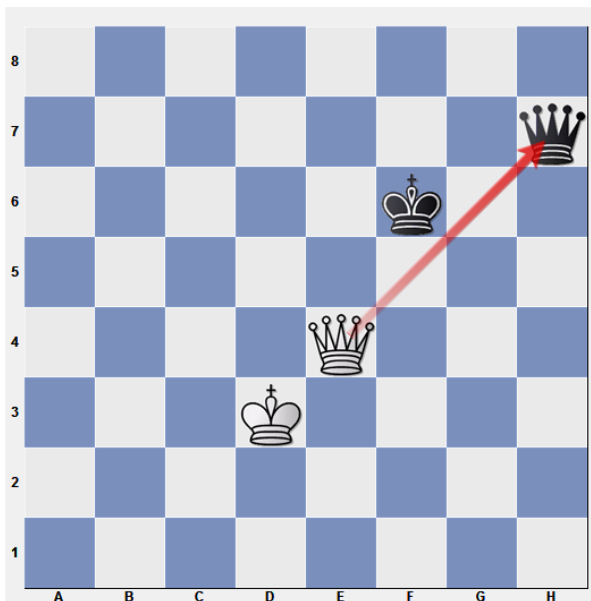
Do's:

1. The Queen may move any number of squares in any direction (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally).
2. The Queen may attack or be attacked by any other chess piece.
3. To capture, the Queen takes the place of the piece it lands on, and you may remove the captured piece from the board.

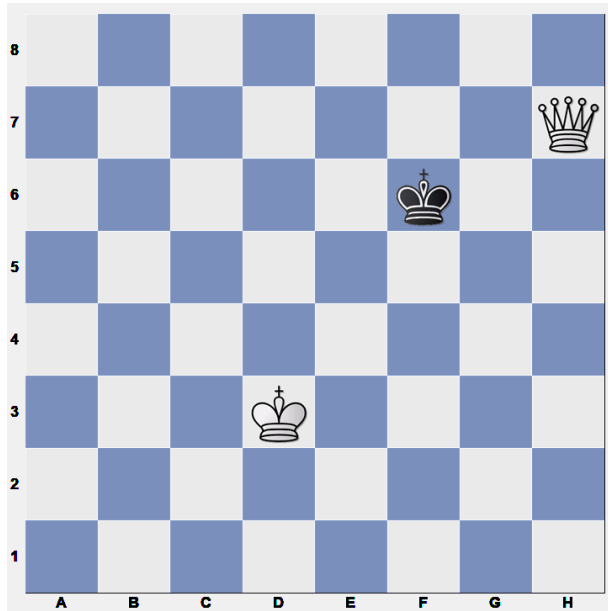
Don'ts:

1. The Queen may never jump over pieces.
2. The Queen may never move in zigzag lines, only straight or diagonal ones.

An example of capturing is this:



In this position, with it being White's turn to move, White's Queen may capture Black's:



When capturing a piece in chess, you occupy the square of the captured piece, and the captured piece remains off to the side of the chess board.

## Rules of Chess

Before we begin working on checkmates, here are the rules we need to follow:

1. White always moves first at the start of a game, and we proceed to take turns back and forth until the game ends in one of three results: win, lose, or draw.
2. A person cannot capture his own piece, and you may never “pass” your turn.
3. You can resign (give up) or offer a draw to your opponent at any time.

**Teacher Tip:** *It is a good habit to start using tournament rules right from the start.*

*In tournament chess we use the Touch Move Rule: If you touch a piece and you are allowed to move it, you are required to move it.*

*We also use the Touch Takes Rule: If you touch your opponent’s piece (either with your hand or your chess piece) and you are allowed to capture it, you must.*

## Rules of Check

When a player's king is attacked by an opposing piece, it is said to be "in check."

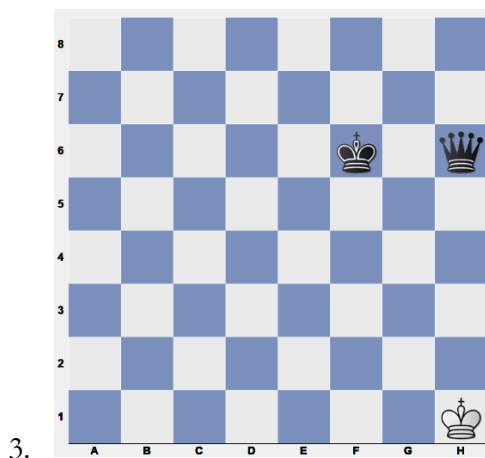
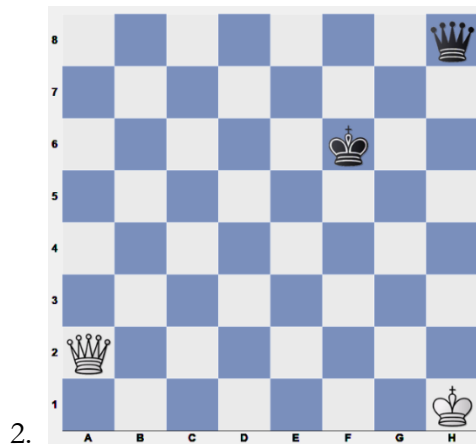
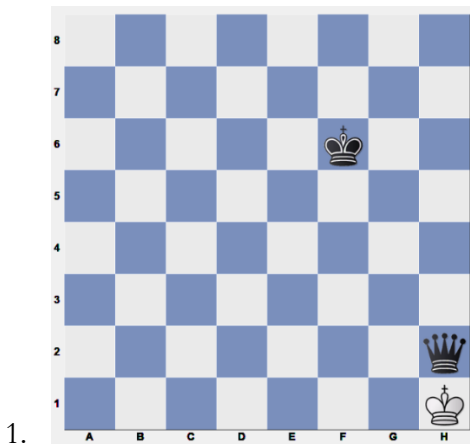
**Author's Note:** *It was once common to announce check when the king was attacked on the board. It is now considered a noise distraction in tournaments and it is discouraged from speaking outside of the rules in Chapter 13.*

The King may *never* be captured in chess.

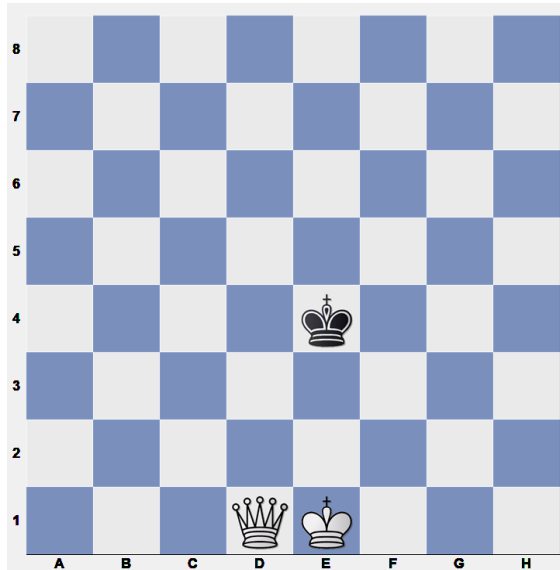
The King may *never* move into check.

Anytime a player is in check, he must deal with the check immediately by using one of the following three ways (Remember C.P.R):

- 1) **Capture** the attacking piece (as long as you aren't moving into check).
- 2) **Protect** the King by blocking the attack with one of your other pieces.
- 3) **Run away** from the attack with your King.

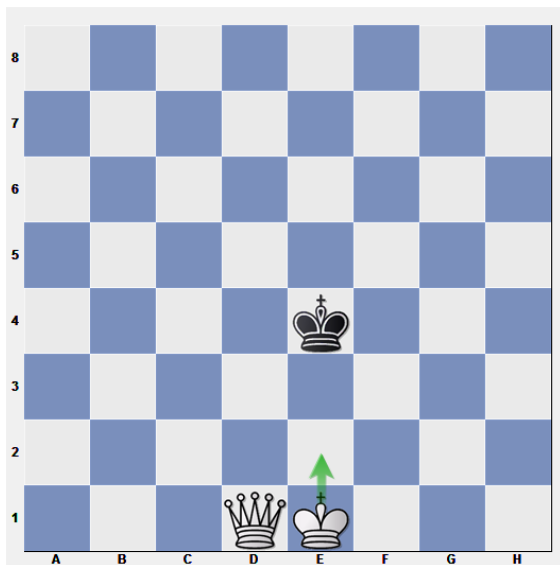


## Checkmate: Winning a Game of Chess

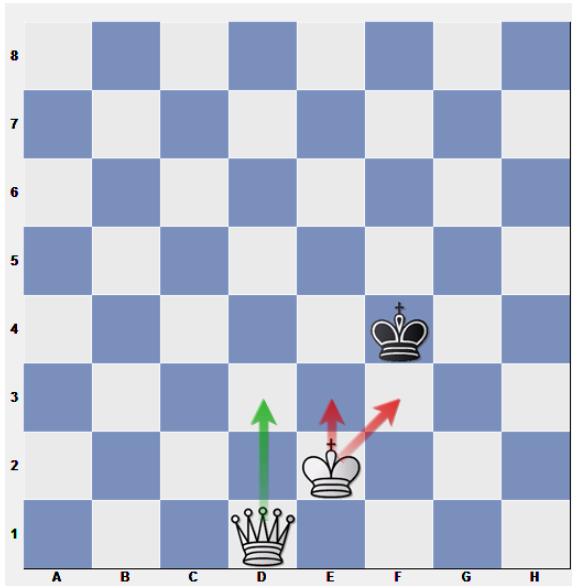


There are many methods to checkmating with the King and the Queen, the method chosen will help you when learning the more complicated checkmates in the later chapters.

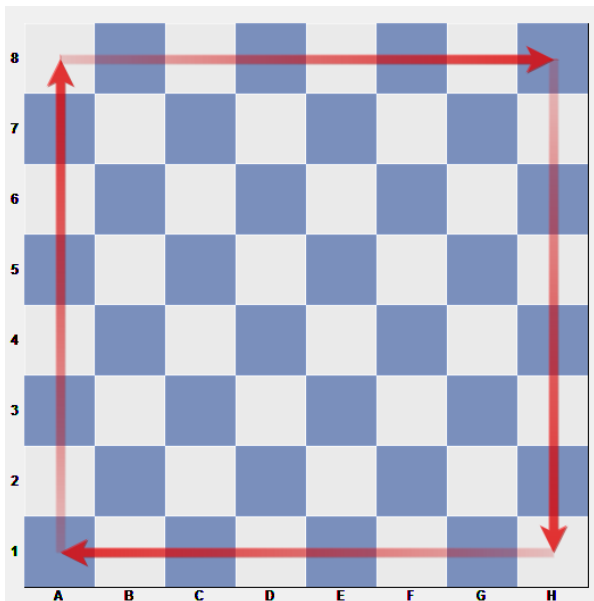
**Step 1:** Always bring your King as close to the enemy's king as possible. If your King is more than 1 square away (in any direction), then bring it closer.



**Step 2:** If your King cannot be any closer, bring your Queen as close as possible to the enemy's King (while staying protected).



Repeat Steps 1 and 2 until the opposing King is on any side rank or file of the board (H file, A file, 8th rank, or 1st rank).



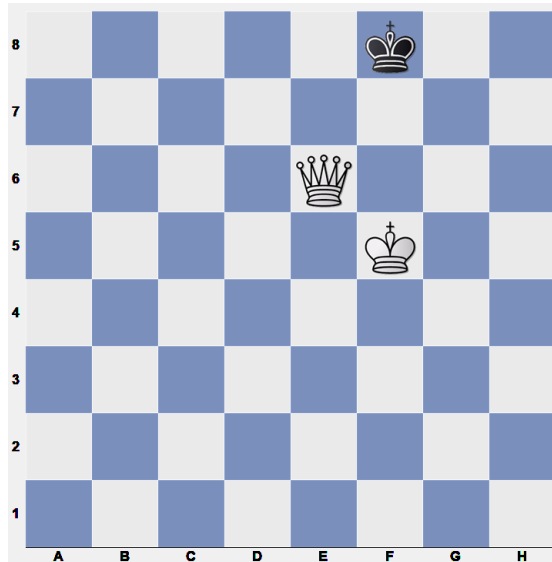
The Edge of the Board



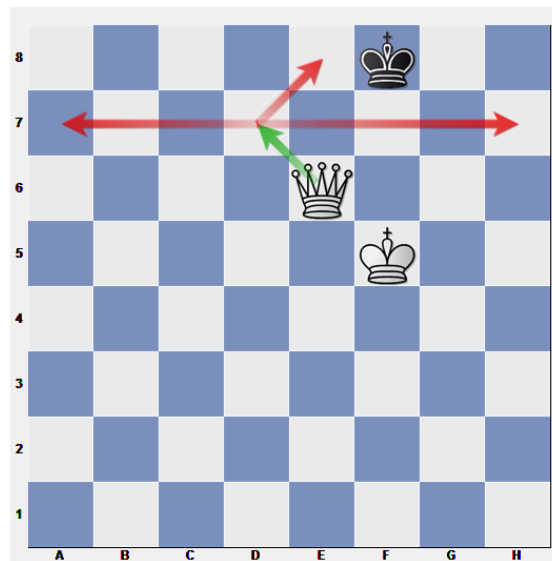
**Step 3:** When the King is on the edge of the board, use your Queen to build a wall of checks.

**An Important Note!**

When building the wall, make sure your opponent's King can still make a legal move!



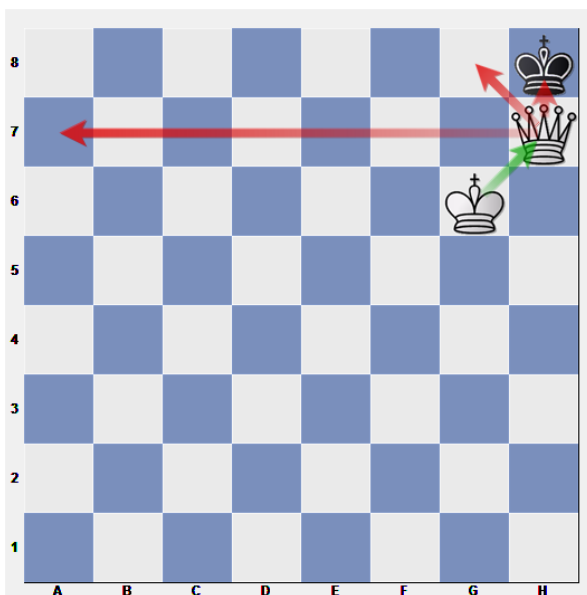
We always need to question: Step 1, Step 2, or Step 3? In the above diagram if white follows Step 1 we run into Stalemate turning an easy win into a devastating Draw.



The Queen can move to d7 to build the wall (e7 would, but the Queen would be free).

**Step 4:** Once you have built your wall bring your king directly in front of the opposing king getting the ‘opposition’ at which point move your queen to check the opposing king delivering checkmate.

Leaving your opponent two squares (in his box) to move back and forth in assures victory.



**Teacher Tip:** Remind your students of the steps:

1. King closer
2. Queen closer
3. Build a wall
4. Checkmate!

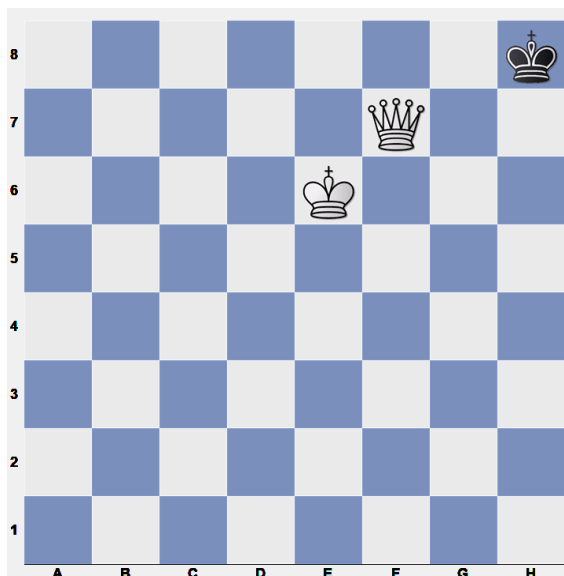
### Activity 1: Checkmate Practice

Remember, with each activity in the book, the only way to truly master the content is by doing. The following link can be found via chess.com where you can practice playing against the computer (if you do not have a human partner available).

All of the checkmates in the text can be practiced on chess.com and we strongly suggest using the free resources.

## CHECKMATE PRACTICE

Repetition is the only way students will remember how to complete this checkmate.



**Stalemate: An Introduction:** Black To Move?!

As we have learned, a King may never move himself into check. In this situation the game is over because the Black King cannot move, but being that the King is not in danger, White did not checkmate Black so the game is drawn (a tie).

**Pro Tip:** *When the defending King begins to run out of squares, make sure you are not stalemating!*

### Activity 2: Checkmate Practice

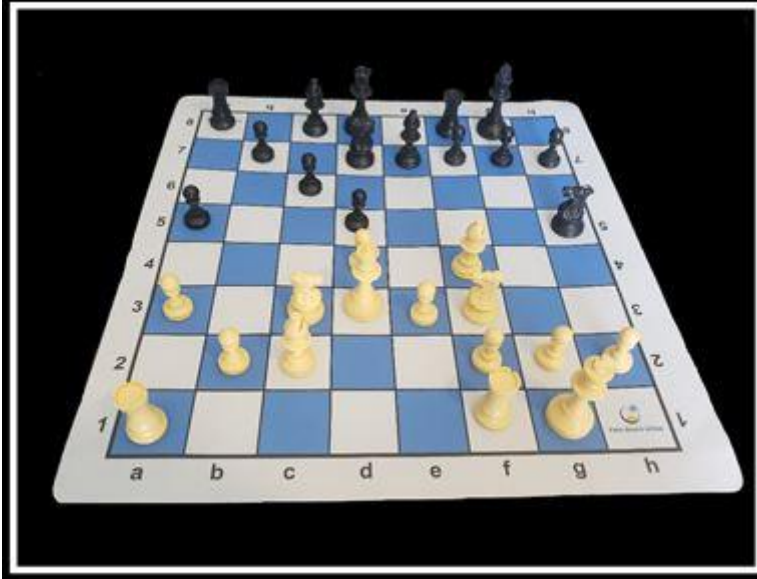
In every checkmate in this book, you can apply the following activity for maximum retention of ideas.

The chess clock can be a great tool to time yourself in practicing checkmates and other related chess practices. If you do not have your own chess clock, there are many great free smartphone chess clock apps that will work just as well for learning about the clock and practicing your new skills.

After practicing and successfully completing the King and Queen checkmate using the earlier guidelines, begin with five minutes for you and five minutes for your opponent. At the end of each successful attempt, write down the amount of time it took to successfully complete the checkmate. In our classroom experience, we have found that students who can perform the checkmate under pressure (one minute or less on the clock) have mastered the activity and ideas.

**Teacher Tip:** Student competition is fostered with this activity in a group. Make note of the fastest times and have your students try to make it on to the leader board. They will repeat the checkmate numerous times for mastery with increased motivation to beat the high score!

Be sure to have the student train on both sides—not only learning piece movement but practicing with the concept of check and experiencing the three results of chess: win, loss, and draw.



White to play and win, in all positions if we do not defend our King we can lose on the spot!

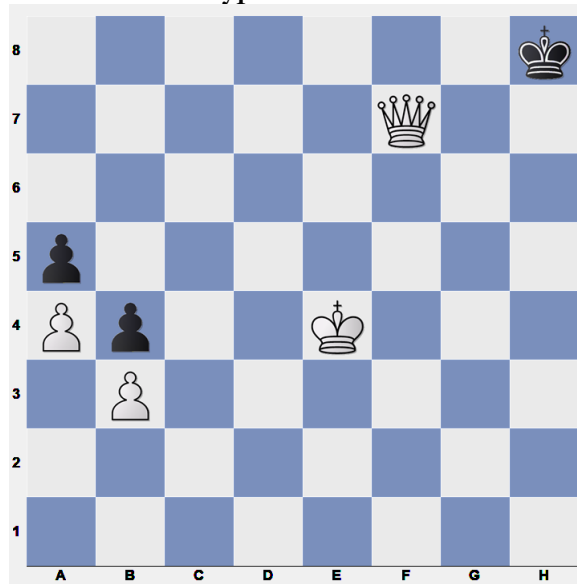
**Tournament Tip:** When using a chess clock, use only **one hand** while playing.

When taking notation and using the chess clock, the order:

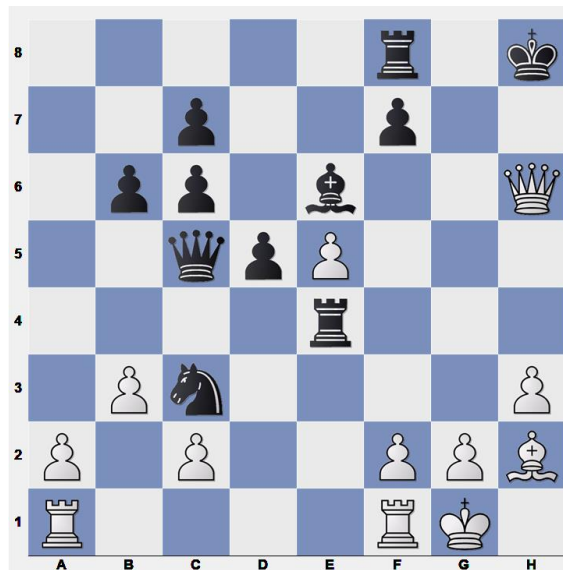
1. Make your move,
2. Press the clock
3. Write down your move

If you use this order, you will write down the move on your opponent's time and save precious seconds that add up over the course of a 40-plus-move game.

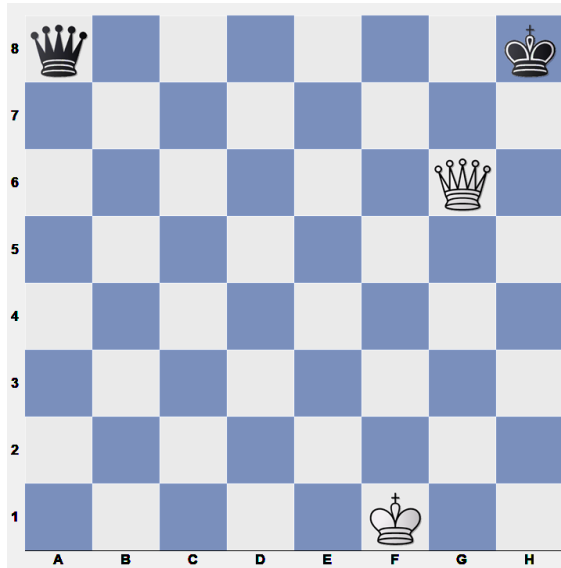
## Types of Draw



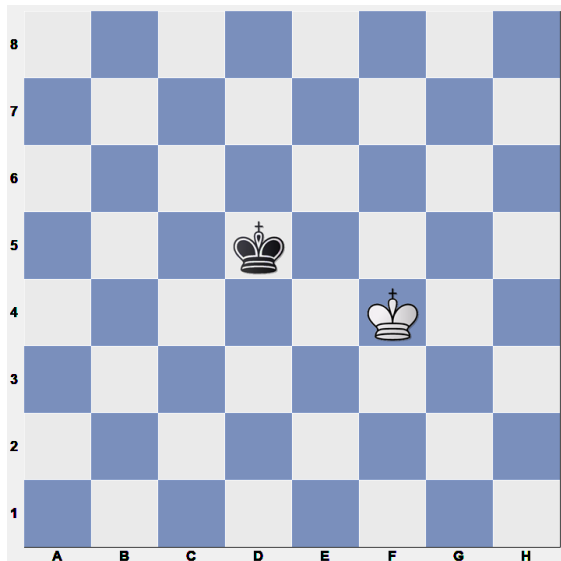
**Stalemate:** Occurs when one player has no legal moves and it is his turn.



**3-Position Repetition:** When the exact same position occurs 3 times during a game. In this position, White is a piece down and has no wish to continue the fight. He will continually check the Black King with the Queen by repeating moves **1...Kg8 2.Qg5+ Kh8 3.Qh6+** with draw agreed.



**50-Move Rule:** When 50 moves have been played without a Pawn move or any capture. In this position, the exact same position is not repeated 3 times, but 50 moves have been played without a Pawn movement or piece capture, so the game is drawn.



**Draw by Insufficient Material:** There are many cases where the attacking side does not have enough material to perform checkmate. In this position, we know that Kings can never place themselves in check. This game is drawn as neither King can affect his counterpart.

**Draw by Agreement:** At any point in time, a player may offer a draw to the other player, who has the option to accept it (and the game ends) or decline it (and the game continues).

### Draw Offering Etiquette

How to properly offer a Draw:

1. Make your move
2. *Before* pressing the clock; offer the draw to your opponent: “I offer a Draw”
3. Once you offer the draw, then press the clock.

Poor Etiquette when offering a Draw:

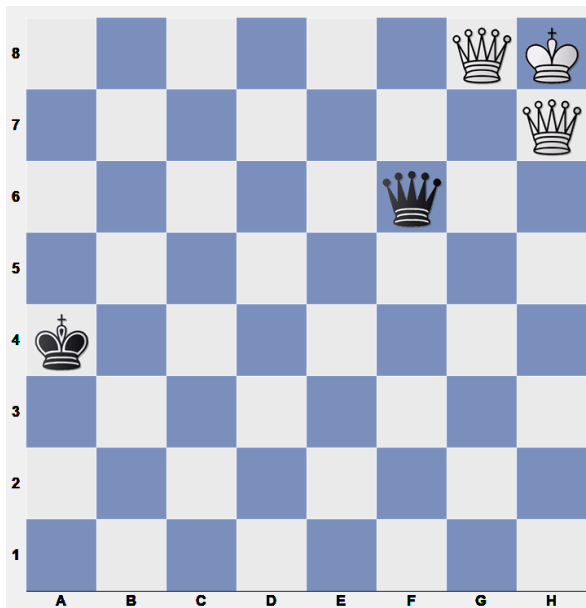
1. Do not extend your hand, that means nothing and is awkward (it’s seen in the film *Searching for Bobby Fischer*). Shake hands once the draw is agreed, as seen in the following photo.



Vishwanathan Anand (15th World Champion)

2. Do not offer the draw on your opponent’s time; that is a distraction and improper.
3. Do not spam draw offers to your opponent (more than two offers in a game is inappropriate).
4. Do not offer a draw when in a dead lost position.

### 3-Position Repetition (Eventually) Example:



1.Qhg7 Qh4+ 2.Q8h7 Qd8+ 3.Qgg8 draw offered and accepted

**Pro Tip:** *When to offer a draw? Only offer a draw when you have an advantage and you know you cannot win. In the preceding example, White cannot make progress, so he offers a draw.*

**Pro Tip:** *When do you accept draw offers? Never take draws! The development of a chess player is cheated by accepting draw offers. Our suggestion to our students as chess coaches is to ask yourself a question when an opponent offers a draw: Do I like my position better? If you answer this question yes, play on; if no, accept the draw.*

The beginning of the game in chapter 1 to the end of the game with checkmate in chapter 2. The starting position in a game of chess is symmetrical, perfect...much can be said of perfection in relation to our great game:

“March on. Do not tarry. To go forward is to move toward perfection. March on, and fear not the thorns, or the sharp stones on life's path.:

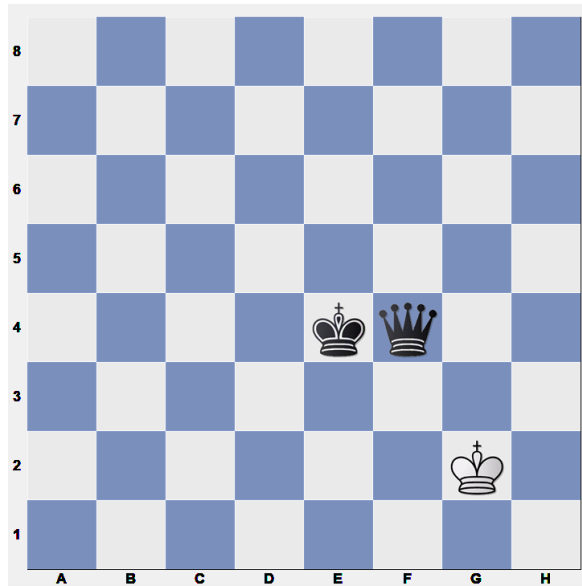
Khalil Gibran

Now that you have mastered movement of the Queen and the King and the concepts of check, checkmate, and stalemate, you should be able to answer some questions.

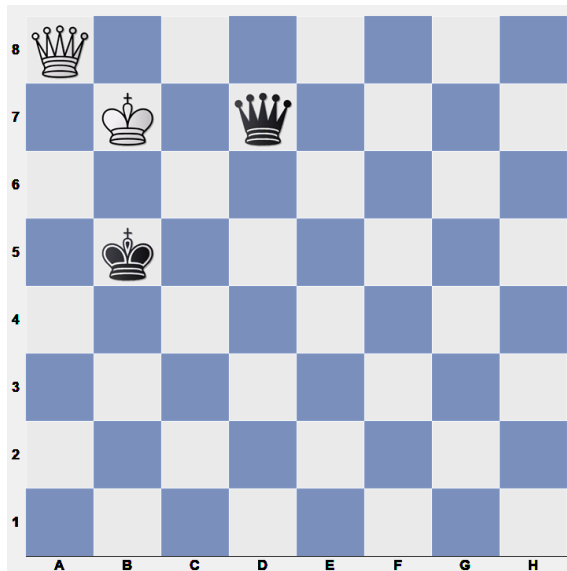


## Test

1. May you capture the King in chess, or does the game end in a different way?



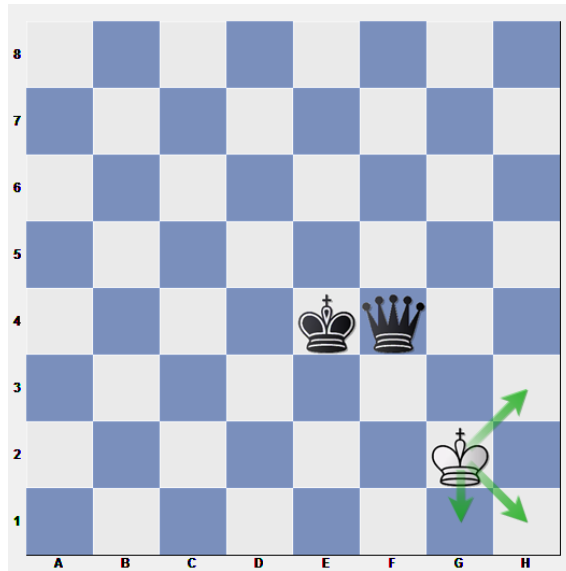
2. What squares can the King move to in this above position?



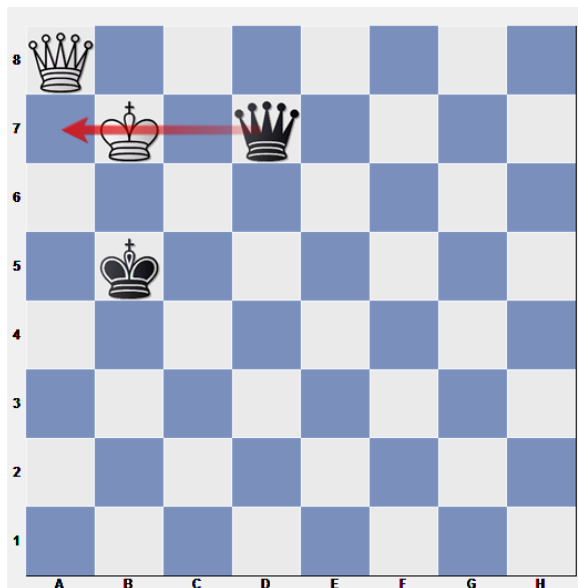
3. Can White move his Queen to check the Black King in the preceding position?

## Knowledge Check

1. You can never, ever, capture a King! Go back and review checkmate and the ways a game can end in a draw if you are still confused.



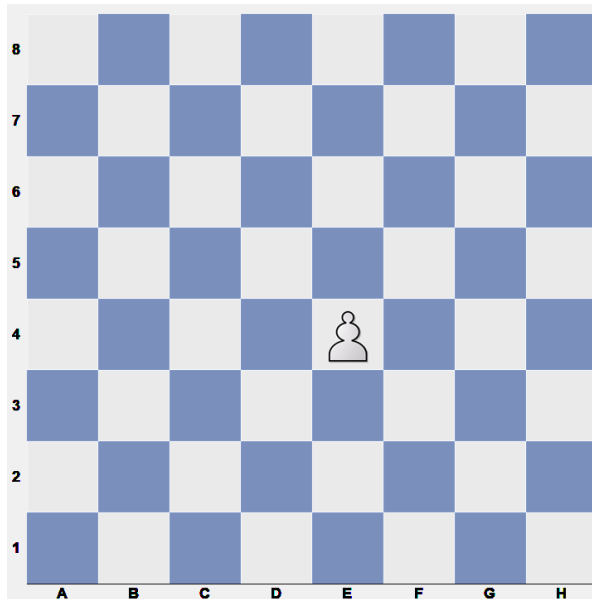
2. The King can legally move to the h3, h1, and g1 squares. All other King moves would be moving the King into check.



3. White cannot move the Queen at all. The White King is in check and must get out of check.

# Chapter 3: The King and the Pawn

## The Pawn



In chess, the Pawns usually get the reputation of the weakest piece. This “weak” piece has the potential to become a Queen if he embarks on a journey to make it to the other side of the board.

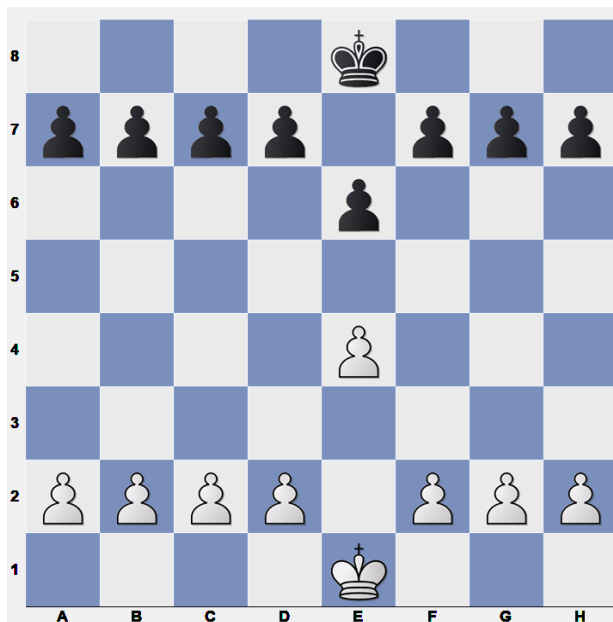
Pawn movement rules and limitations include the following:

1. The Pawn on its initial move can move 1 or 2 squares forward; after that, it can move only 1 square forward.
2. Pawns, when coming in contact with enemy forces, can affect them only 1 square diagonally.
3. When a Pawn makes it to the other side of the board, you promote it to become a Queen, Rook, Knight, or Bishop. Typically you want the Queen as it is the strongest piece.
4. A Pawn can never jump over pieces and cannot move forward with another piece directly in front of it.



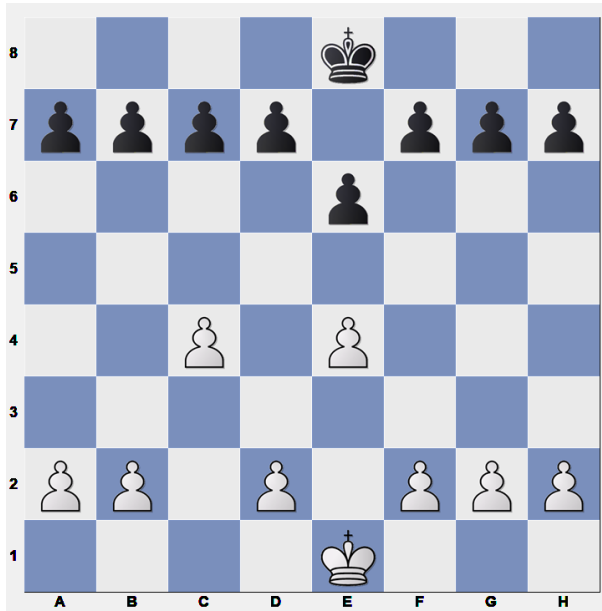
Fearless, moving onward toward the destination

### Initial Movement



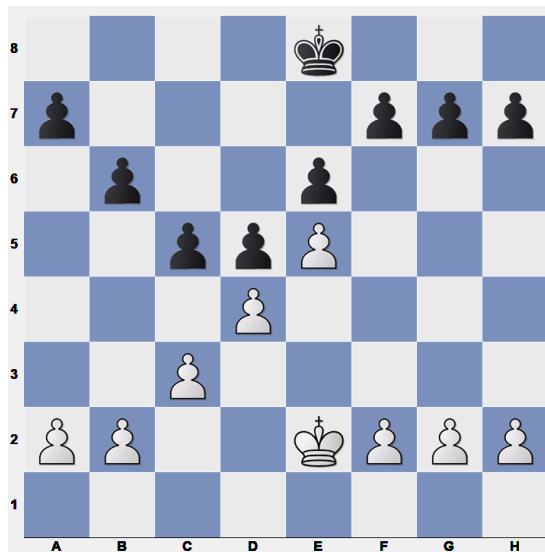
In this diagram, White elected to move his Pawn 2 squares on the initial move, and Black only 1.

**Teacher Tip:** Students occasionally get confused about how many Pawns can go 2 squares on their first movement; they believe that only on only the very first move of the game that a Pawn can move two squares. Any Pawn on its first movement of the game can move two squares.



*The c-Pawn moves two squares as well using its option to move twice on the first move.*

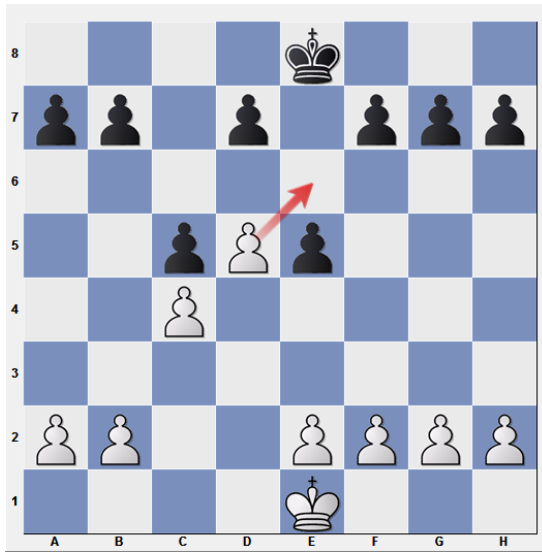
### Capturing



In this diagram, there is only one capture available to White. White can play dxc5 (the Pawn on d4 is capturing the pawn on c5).

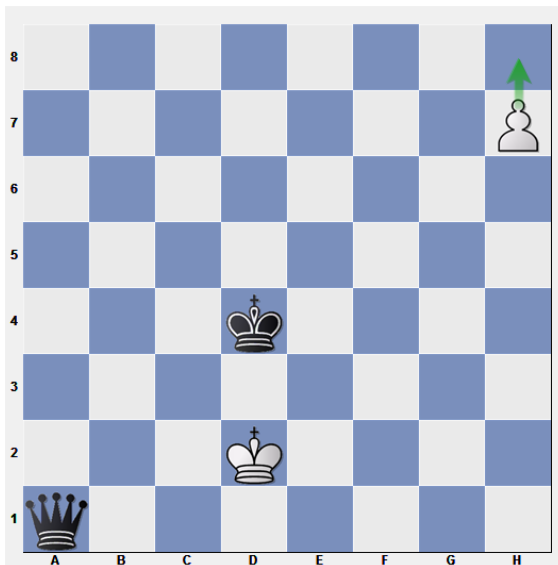
**Teacher Tip:** *A common issue is students believe that Pawns can capture forward as their movement is typically 1 or 2 squares. Be sure to elaborate on the concept of 1 square diagonally, or it takes in a V.*

## En Passant



En passant can occur only when a player moves his Pawn 2 squares on its initial movement and that move places his Pawn next to an opponent's Pawn. When this happens, the opposing player has the option to use his Pawn to take the moved pawn "en passant" or "in passing" as if the pawn had only moved 1 square. This option to capture the pawn is available for only 1 turn.

## Promotion



The last rule with Pawns is promotion. As Pawns can never go backward and are the weakest pieces, they are rewarded for making it to the opposite end of the board.

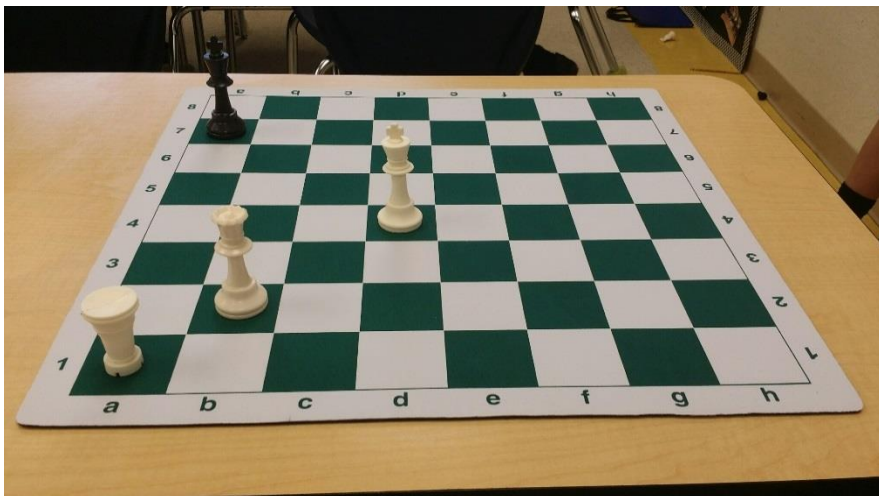
The Pawn becomes a piece of the player's choosing:

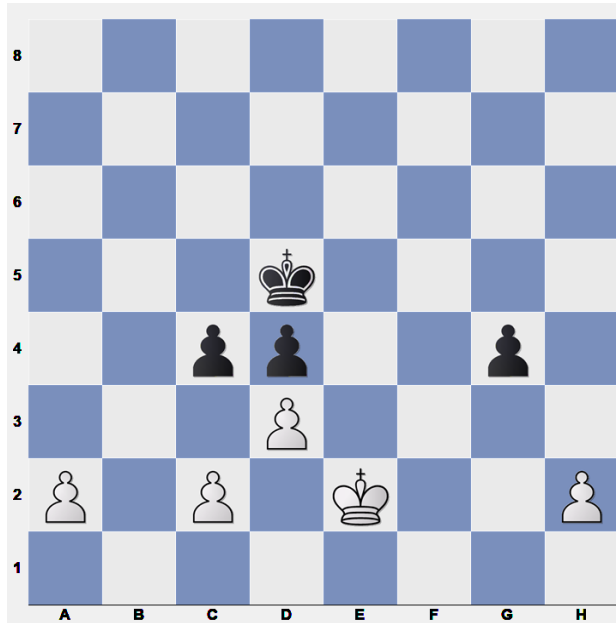
- Queen
- Rook
- Knight
- Bishop

In most cases the person promoting the Pawn will want a Queen as she is the most powerful piece.

**Pro Tip:** One common misconception is that a side can have only 1 Queen on the board at a time; this is incorrect. In many standard tournament sets, an extra Queen comes with the set to accommodate the promotion rule.

**Teacher Tip:** Students love to get as many Queens as possible, so have them ready. Also, when a Queen is unavailable, you may turn a Rook upside down to symbolically represent a Queen.





In this position, White has 4 Pawns on the board. Let's consider all of our options:

1. The Pawn on a2 has the option to move 1 (a3) or 2 (a4) squares.
2. The c2 Pawn has only 1 option: moving forward 1 square. Remember that Pawns cannot capture forward (only 1 square diagonally).
3. The d3 Pawn has only 1 option: capturing the c4 Pawn (which would be check!).
4. The Pawn on h2 can also move to h3 or h4; if it moves to h4, remember the en passant rule.

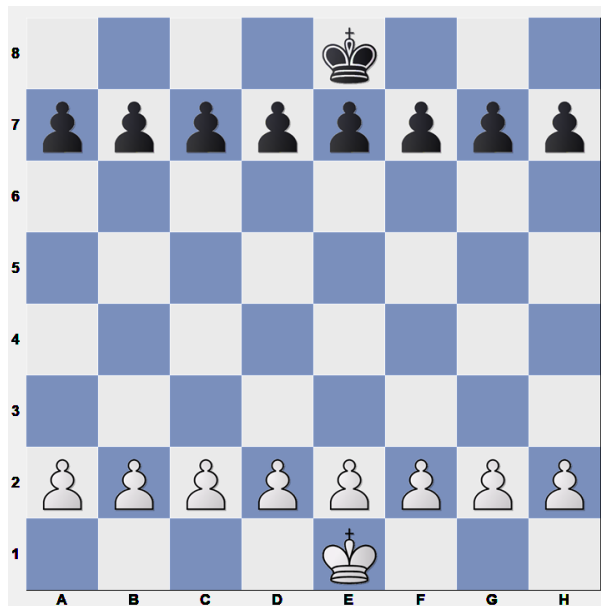
**Teacher Tip:** *Once you have mastered the Pawn, you're nearly halfway toward chess piece mastery. Keep it up!*

“Pawns not only create the sketch for the whole painting, they are also the soil, the foundation of any positions.”

Anatoly Karpov 12<sup>th</sup> World Champion



## Activity 1: Pawn War



The activity is won by checkmate just as a normal chess game, and all normal chess rules apply, allowing a student to gain valuable experience while having fun playing.

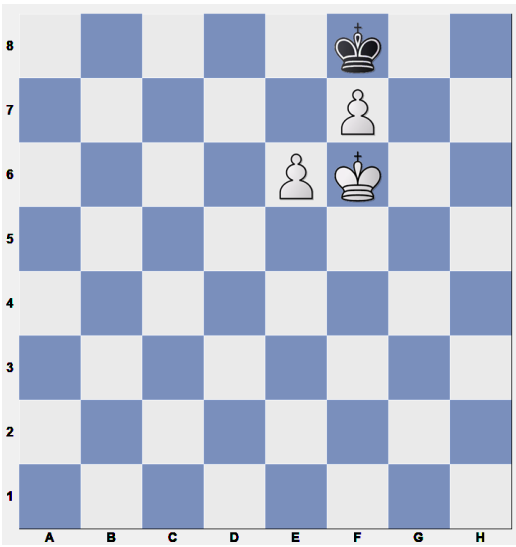
“I hated every minute of training, but I said, Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.”

Muhammad Ali – ‘The Greatest’

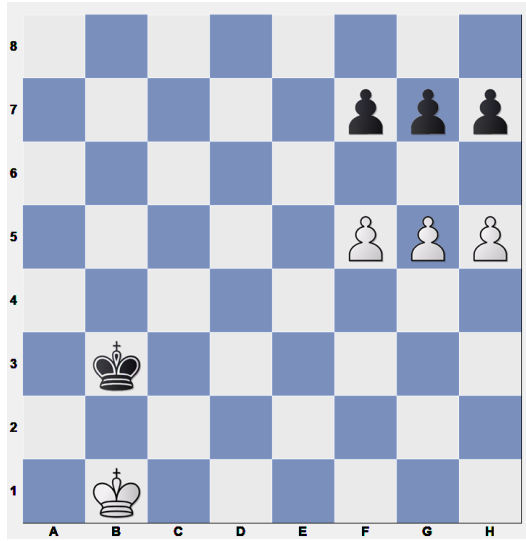
***Pro Tip:*** White always goes first in chess and in Pawn War.

***Teacher Tip:*** If you are struggling with the King and Queen checkmate, refer back to the section and try again!

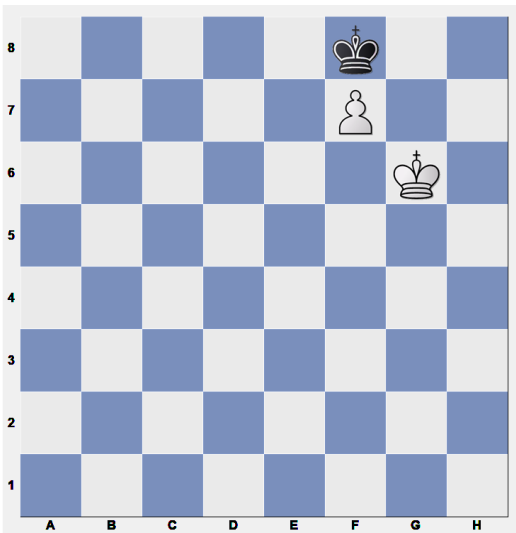
## Test



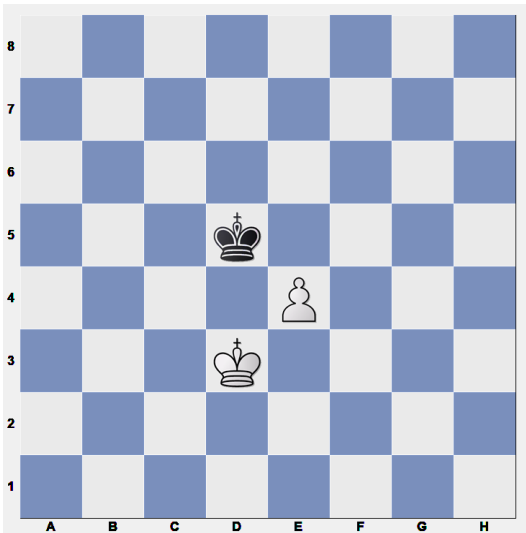
1. What is the best move for White? Why?



2. What is the best move for White?



3. It is White's turn to move; can he win? take the King?



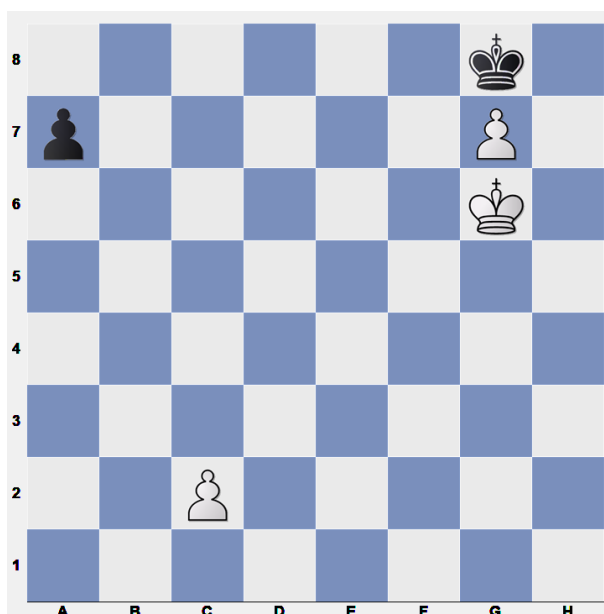
4. In this position, can the Pawn take the King?

**Directions:** Students are to answer the problems in this section (where applicable) and onwards in chess notation. It is important to practice and respect chess language!

## Knowledge Check

1. **1.e7#** The Pawn move wins the game on the spot. Checkmate!
2. It looks like White is in a tough spot; it seems like Black's King can slowly walk toward White's pawn mass and collect. White has an excellent resource in **1.g6!! fxc6 2.h6 gxh6 3.f6** Then the Pawn will become a Queen.
3. In this position White has made as much progress as he can. Any move he makes will end the game with best play from Black. If he moves away from the Pawn, Black will capture, leading to draw by insufficient material. If White plays **1.Kf6**, the Black King is stalemated.
4. Go back and reread the rules of check if you got this one wrong. *You can never take kings!*

## Calculate



It's Black's turn to move. White just played **Kg6**. Black's Pawn Queens first, but does it matter? Students are to answer the solutions in chess notation.

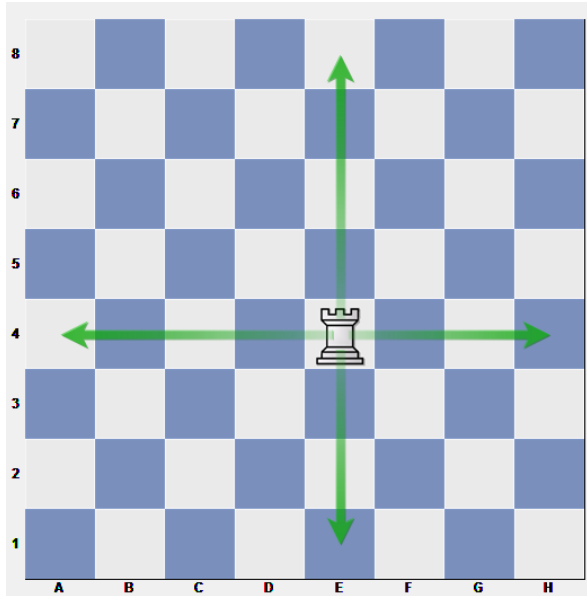
**Pro Tip:** *Attempt the position without moving the pieces and figure out who is better.*

## Solution

**1...a5 2.c4 a4 3.c5 a3 4.c6 a2 5.c7 a1Q 6.c8Q#**

# Chapter 4: The King and the Rook

## The Rook



Rooks fall into the category of major pieces as opposed to minor pieces because the Rook may checkmate the opposing King solely with the assistance of his own King.

### *Teacher Tip:*

*The Queen and the Rook are **major pieces**.*

*The Bishop and the Knight are **minor pieces**.*

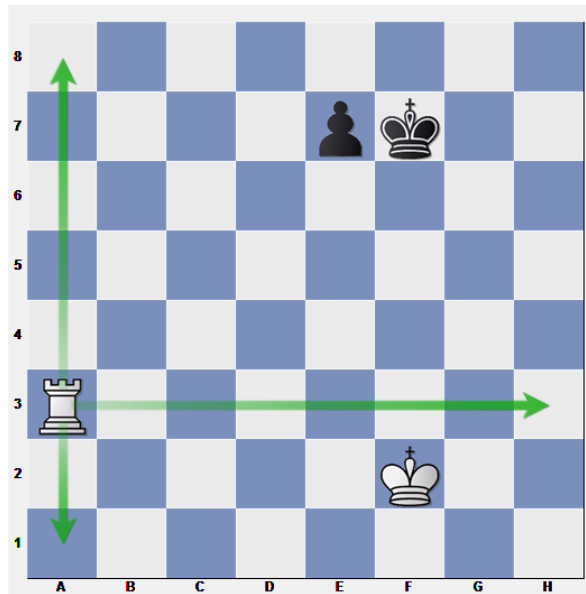
*Pawns are not considered either!*

### **Rook Movement**

The Rook is the master of verticals and horizontals. Rooks travel in a plus shape: forward, backward, left, or right. Rooks are usually valued at 5 points.

Rook movement rules and limitations include the following:

1. Rooks may never jump over pieces (their own\* or opposing pieces).  
*\*We will cover one exception, called castling, later in this chapter.*
2. Rooks must choose a direction and travel only that way for that turn.
3. Rooks may not move around corners.

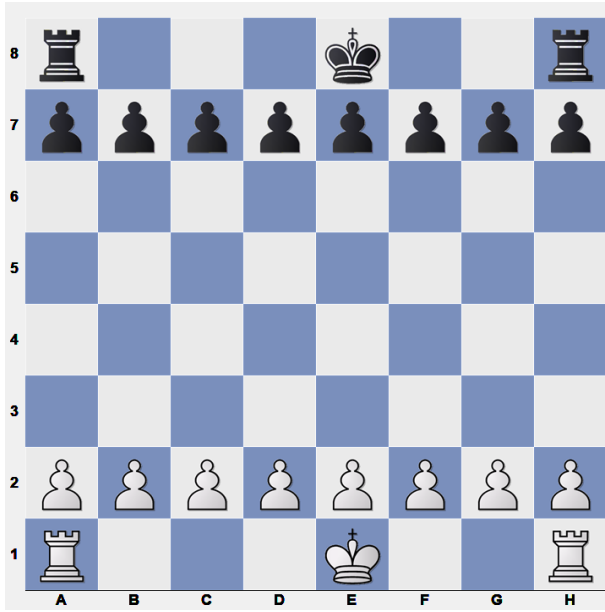


In this position the Rook can move to any square on the a-file or the 3rd rank.

***Pro Tip:*** ***Files*** are columns that go up and down the chessboard, and each board has eight of them.  
***Ranks*** are rows that go from side to side across the chess board and are referred to by numbers.

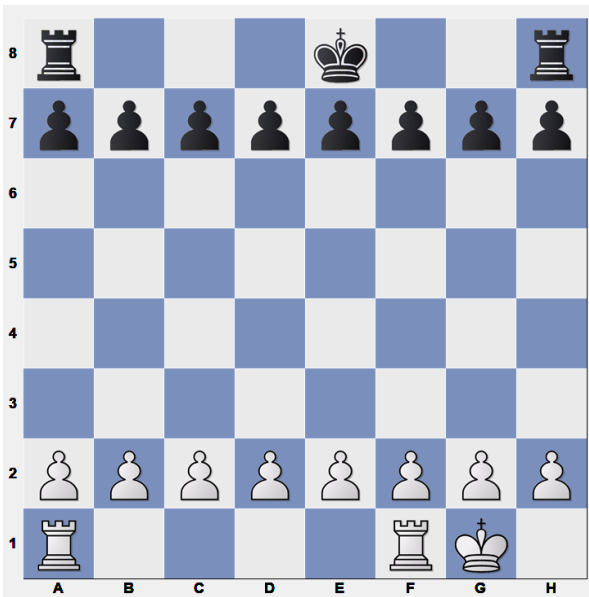
### Safety Measures: Castling

Castling, as we will see in future chapters, is one of the most essential rules in chess. Castling can get your King out of the center quickly and keep him behind a wall of Pawns for protection.

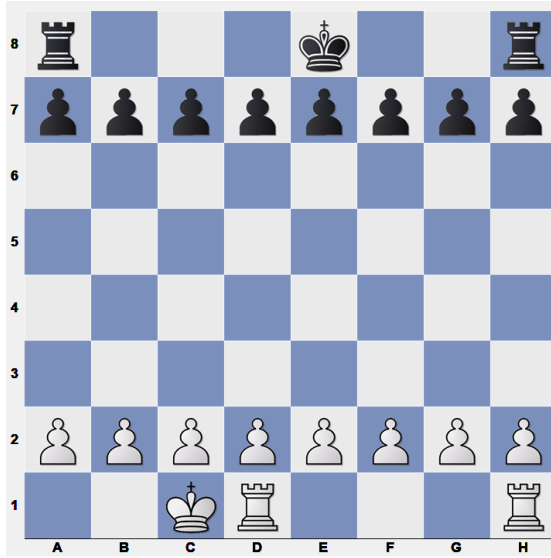


Castling is the only time in the game when more than one piece is moved in a single turn.

The King will move two squares toward the Rook, and the Rook is placed on the opposite side of the King.



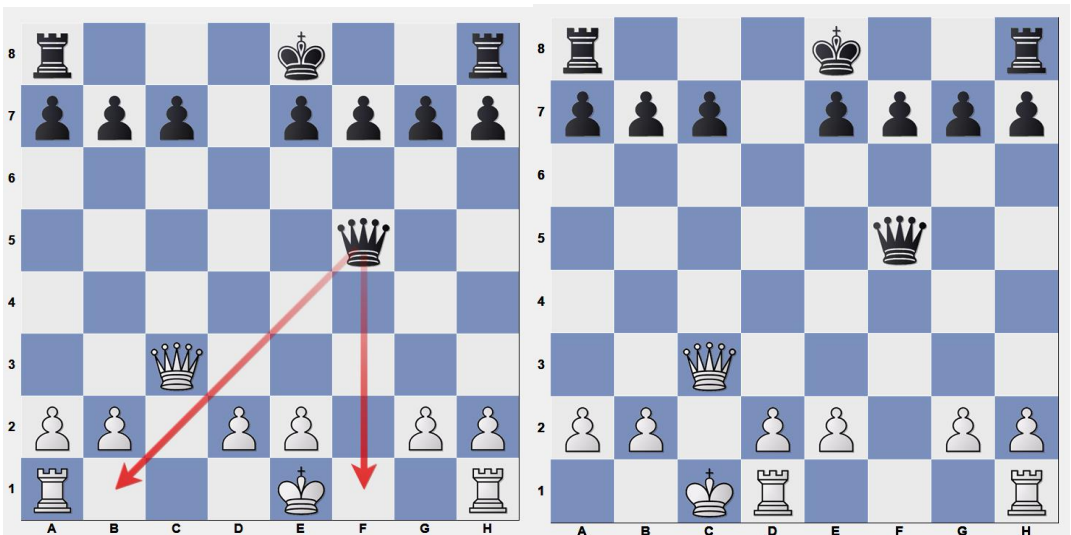
Kingside castling



Queenside castling

Castling has restrictions:

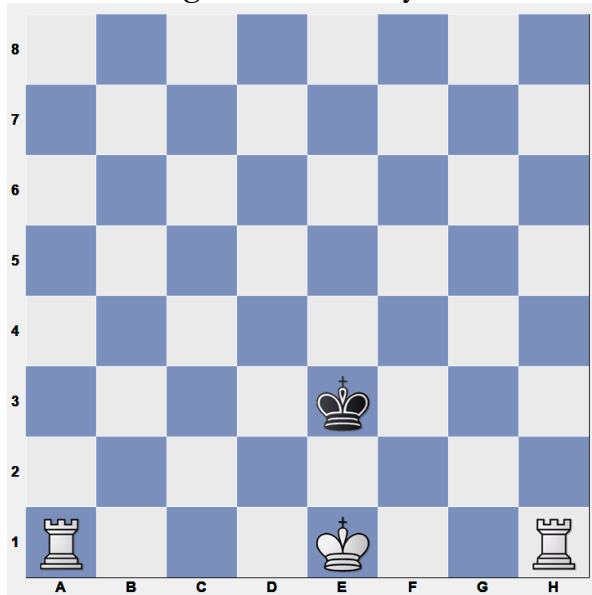
- It can occur only if there are no pieces standing between the King and the Rook.
- You may not castle if the King or Rook you wish to castle with has ever moved from its original position, even if it returns to its original spot.
- You cannot castle into, out of, or through check.



In this position, the Black Queen is attacking the f1 & b1 squares.

You may choose to castle Queenside but not Kingside, as you would move through check.

## Checkmate: King and 2 Rooks by Steve Abrahams



Checkmating with two major pieces is relatively common and quite easy using the ladder method.

### ***Teacher Tip:***

*The ladder method can be used for the following:*

*Queen and Rook versus King*

*Two Queens versus King*

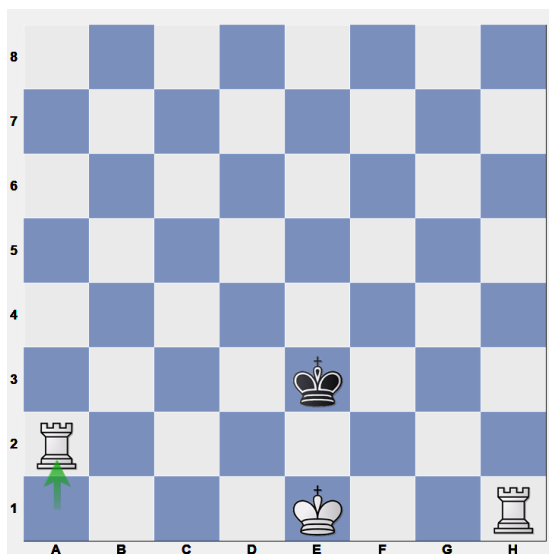
*Two Rooks versus King*

Picture yourself climbing a ladder.

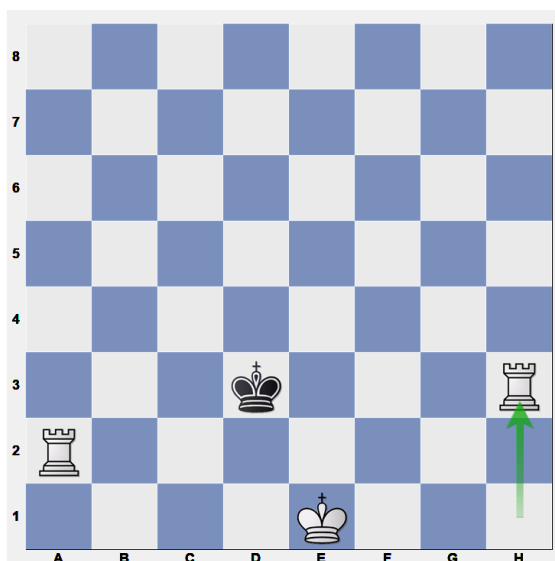




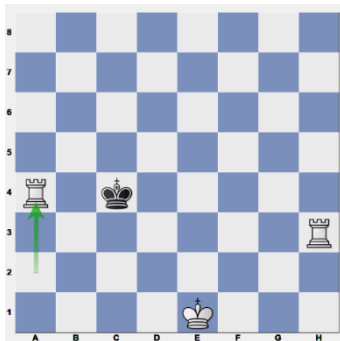
One hand reaches above the other.  
You realize that a spider is climbing up the ladder, too.  
If the spider gets too close to your hand, it will bite you.  
The easiest thing to do is simply move your hand to the other side of the ladder  
whenever the spider gets too close.



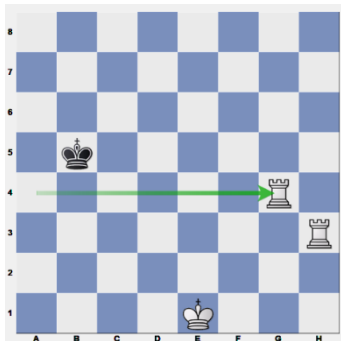
First we reach onto the ladder. Just as when you climb a ladder, you can start with either hand. In this case we used our left hand.



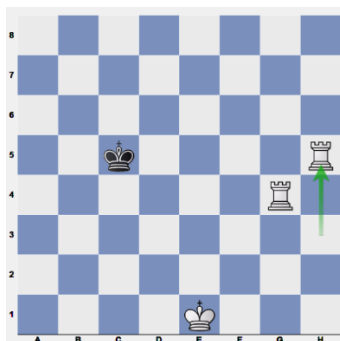
Next we use our right hand and take one step above our left. Notice that the spider (the Black King) is far from either of our hands (White Rooks), so we don't have to worry.



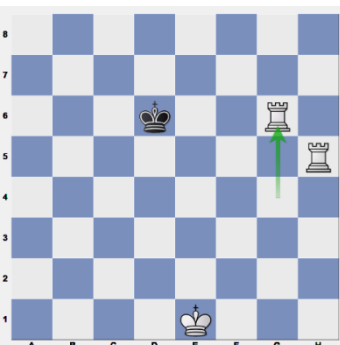
Climb with the left.



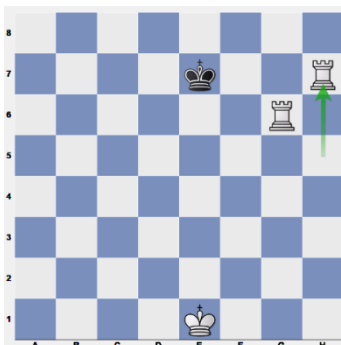
The spider is too close, so we run.



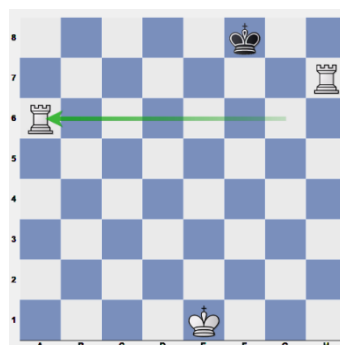
Climb with the right.



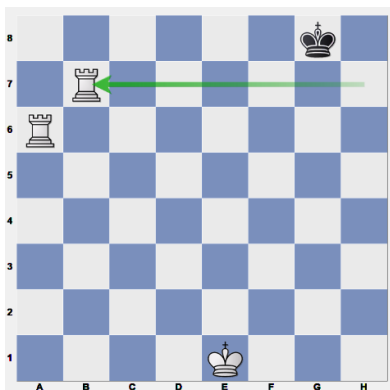
Climb with the left.



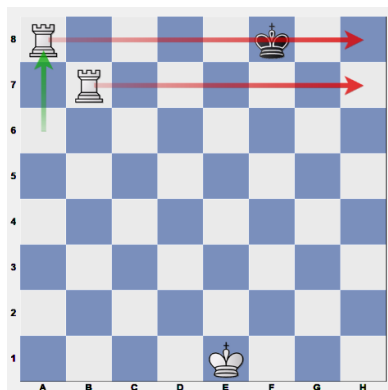
Climb with the right.



The spider is too close, so we run.



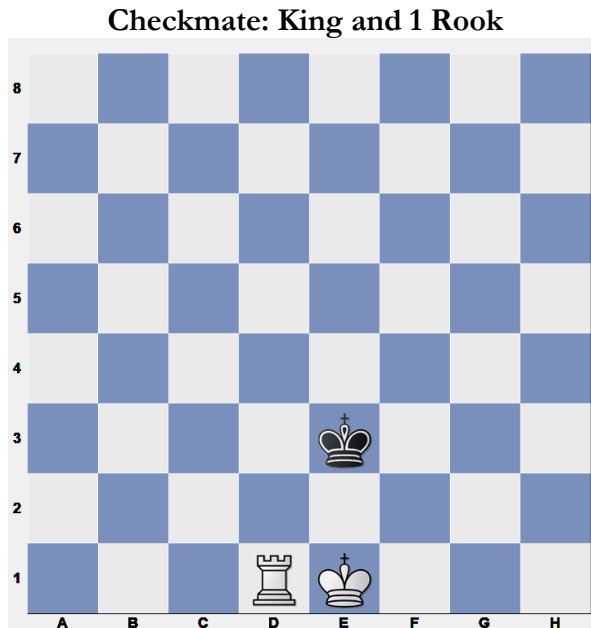
The spider is too close, so we run.



Climb with the left (checkmate).

**Pro Tip:** Remember: Always use your lower Rook when climbing up the board to force the King backward.

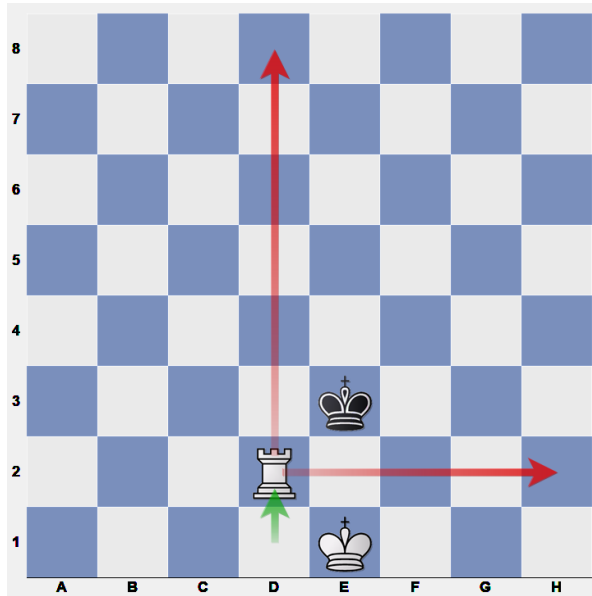
Make sure your Rooks are always safe.



There are many methods to checkmating with the King and the Rook; however, the method we have chosen will help you when learning later checkmates. It is a very clear and easy method for accomplishing this checkmate, which is one of the most important.

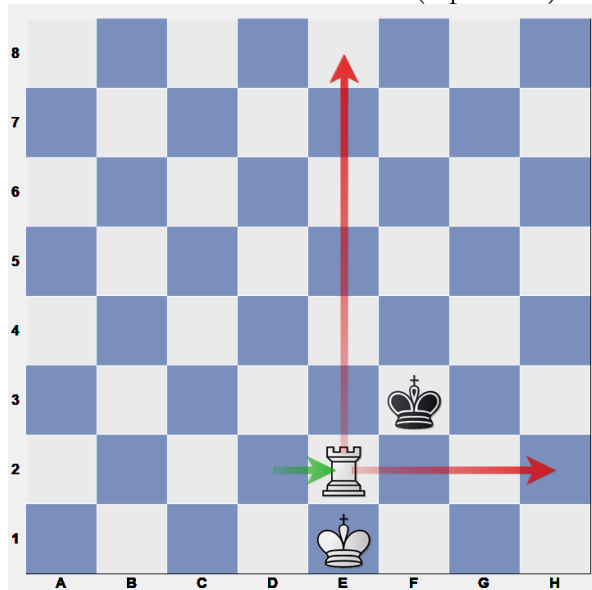
Before you can move to your steps, you must first “build a box.” Use the Rook to contain the King in one quadrant of the board.

**Pro Tip:** With every checkmate strategy the concept of controlling key squares in order to cut off the defending King is essential to comprehend. Cut off squares and make the box smaller!



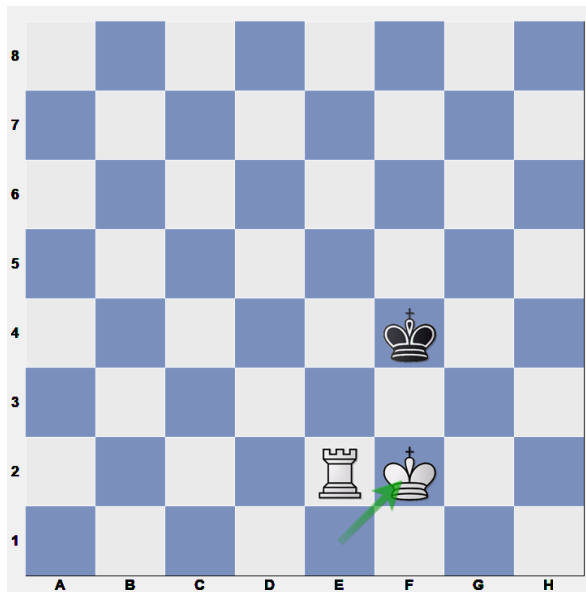
By moving the Rook to and from d2, the Black King has only 24 squares it can ever move to. Every move you make will now limit the King to the same number of, or fewer, squares.

**Step 1:** Always make the box smaller with the Rook (if possible).



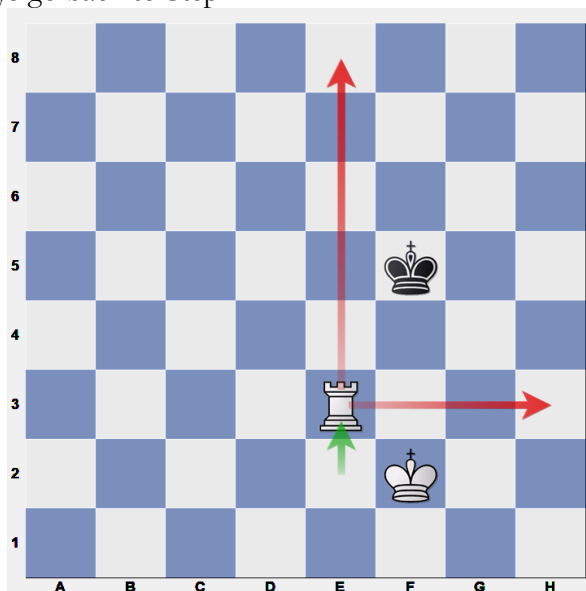
When the Black King moved to f3, we moved our Rook to e2, and the Black King is now limited to only 18 squares.

**Step 2:** If you can't make the box smaller with the Rook, make the box smaller with the King.



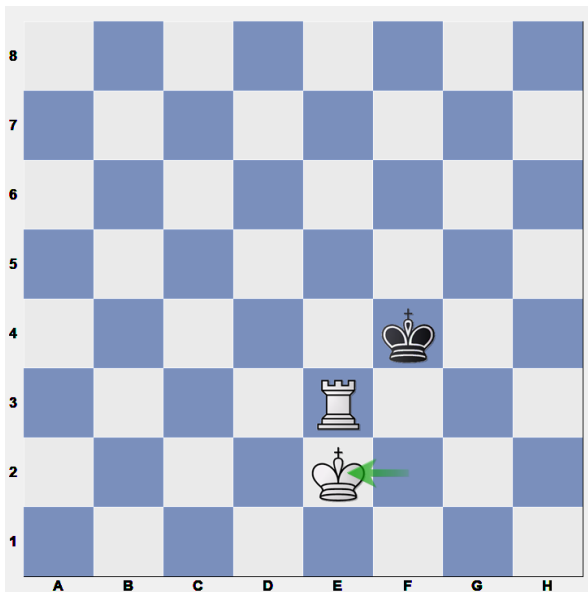
When the Black King moved to f4, we moved our King to f2 to get closer to the Black King.

Remember to always go back to Step 1.



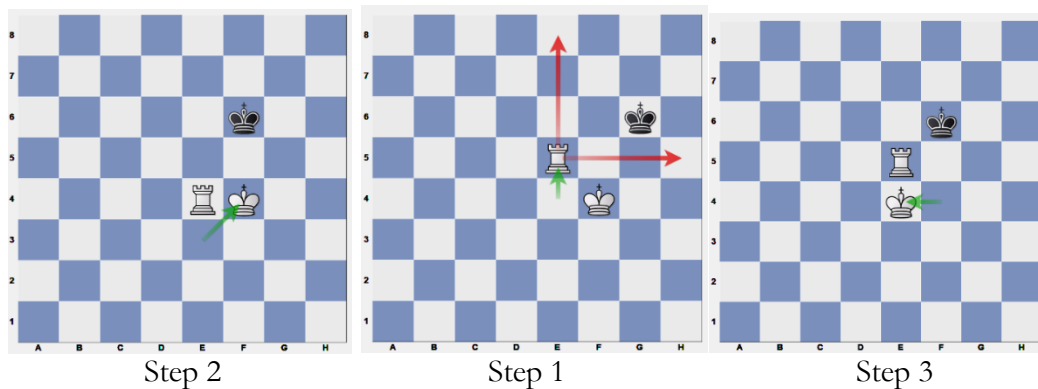
When the Black King moved to f5, we moved our Rook to e3 to make the box smaller. Now Black has only 15 possible squares.

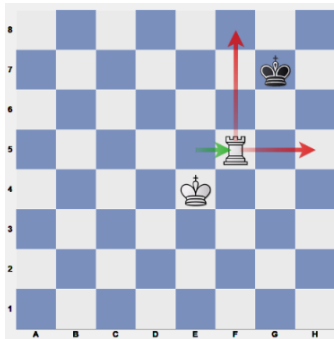
**Step 3:** If you can't make the box smaller with the Rook or the Ring, just simply move your King, making sure to keep your Rook protected and the box the same size.



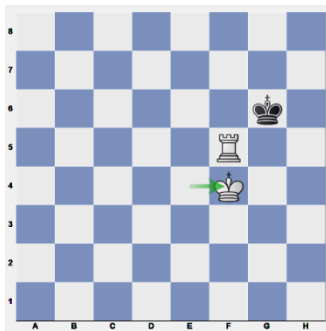
When the Black King moved to f4, we moved our King to e2, keeping our Rook safe and the box the same size.

Repeat Steps 1–3 until the Black King is trapped in the corner and you can deliver checkmate!

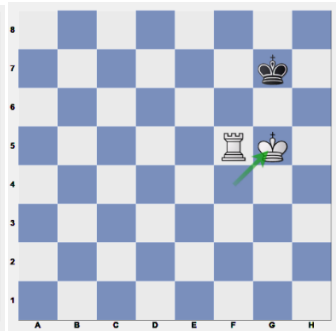




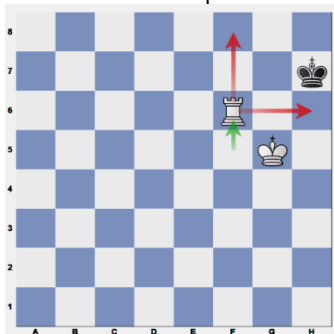
Step 1



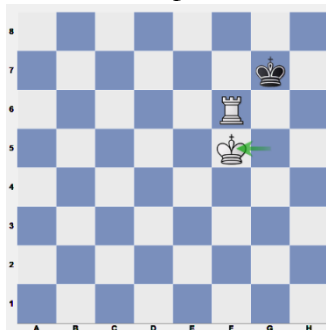
Step 3



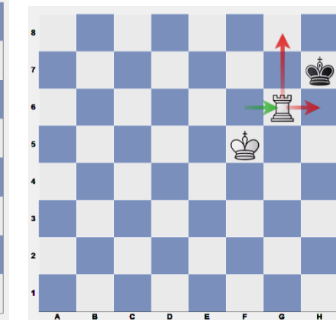
Step 2



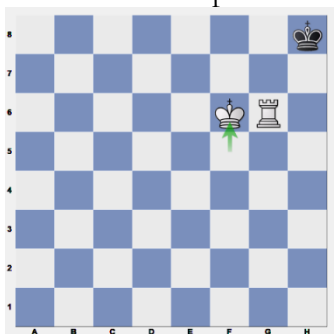
Step 1



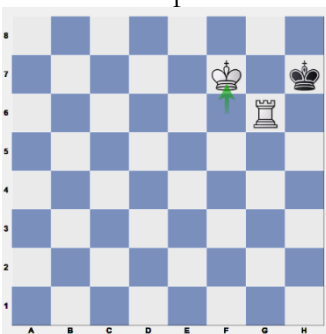
Step 3



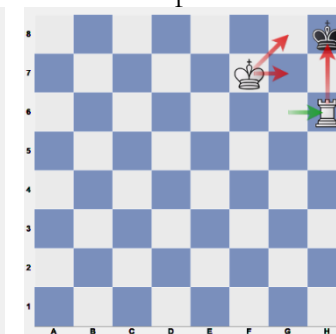
Step 1



Step 3



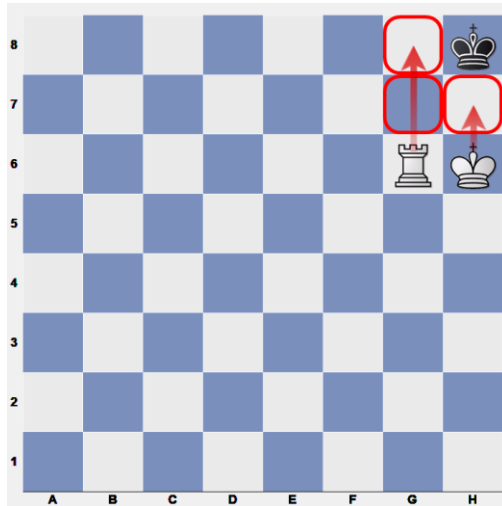
Step 3



Step 1 (checkmate)

**Author's Note:** Checkmate in Chess Notation is shown as ++ or #

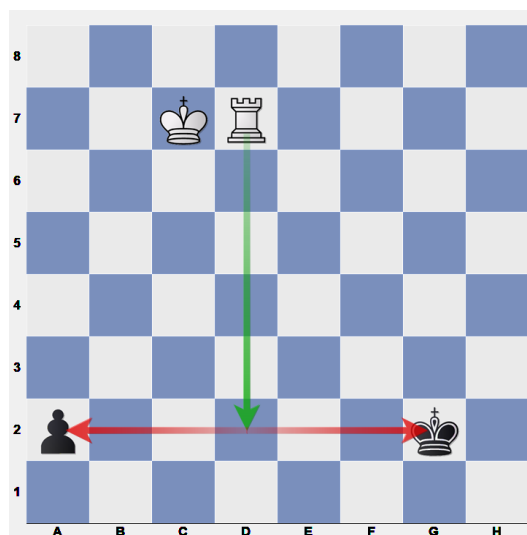
Do not bring your King inside the box when the Black King is in the corner, as this would be stalemate.



The worst moment of chess, when you Stalemate

### Double Attack

A double attack occurs when a major piece is attacking two or more pieces at the same time. This is not to be confused with a fork, which has two pieces of lesser value (typically a Knight or a Pawn) attacking two pieces of greater value at the same time.



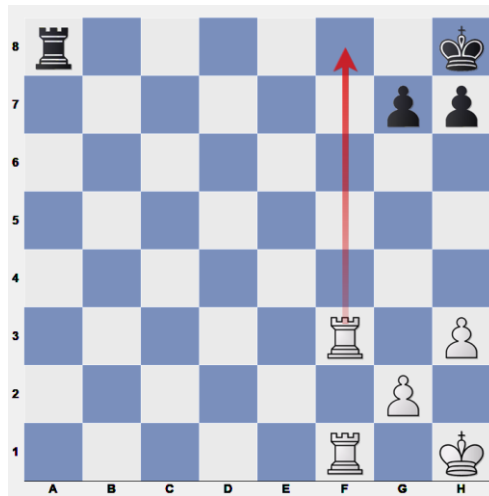
In this position, White must stop the Black a-Pawn from becoming a Queen.

**1.Rd2+** puts the Black King in check as well as attacks the Pawn.



The Black King must move out of check, and we collect the Pawn with an easy win to follow.

### Back Rank

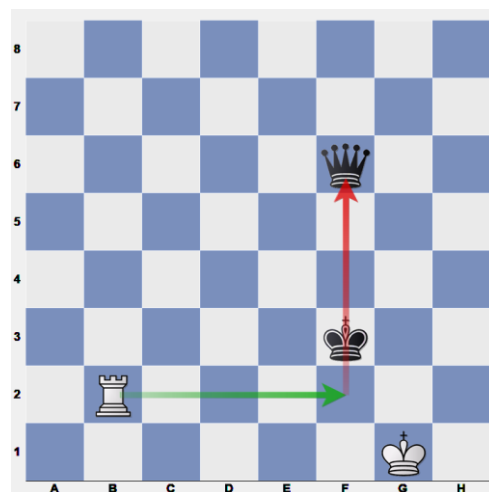


Always watch your back rank; bad things happen when you're trapped. Checkmate occurs after

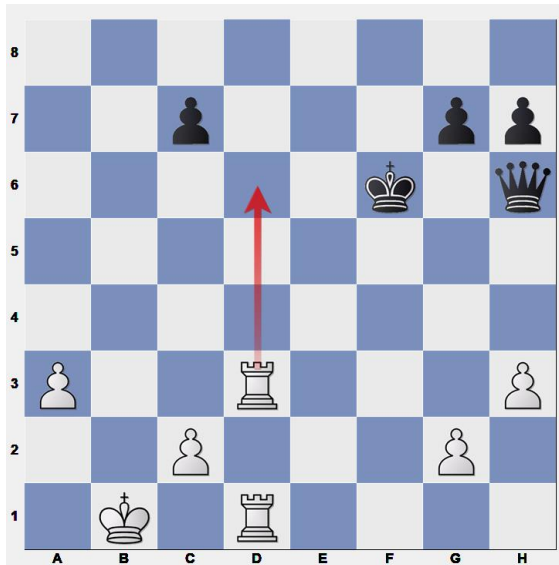
**1.Rf8 Rxf8 2. Rxf8#**

### Skewer

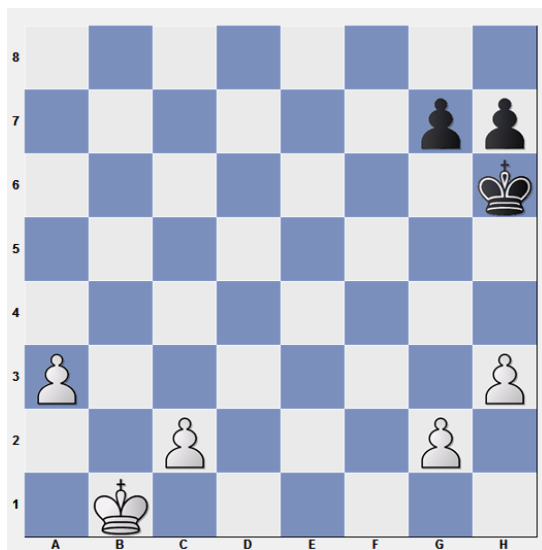
The skewer is a devastating chess tactic where the King is placed in check and, through the King, there is another piece being attacked.



In this position, White's Rook is attacked. Moving it to safety with **1.Rf2+** wins the Black Queen.

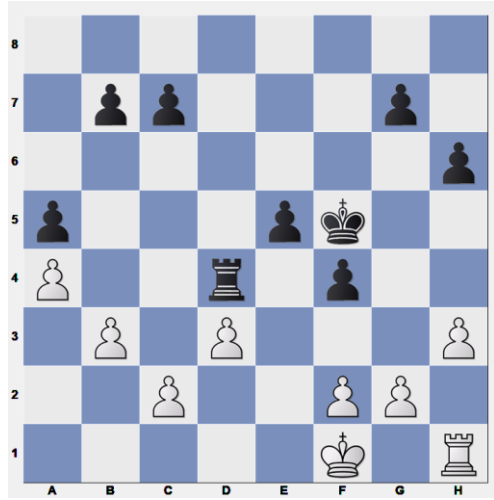
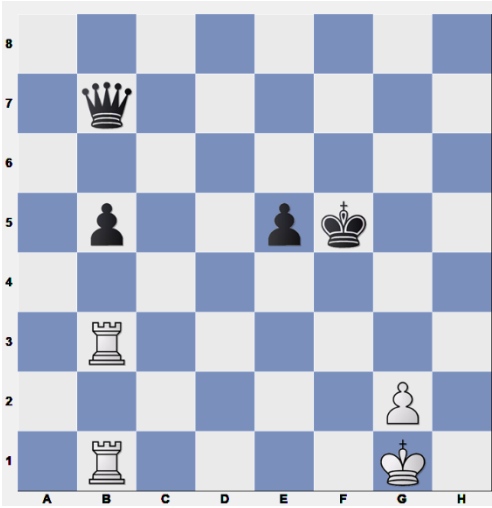


In this position, the sacrifice of the first White Rook wins the Black Queen after **1.Rd6+ cxd6 2.Rxd6+ Kg5 3. Rxh6 Kxh6**, where White has a winning position:

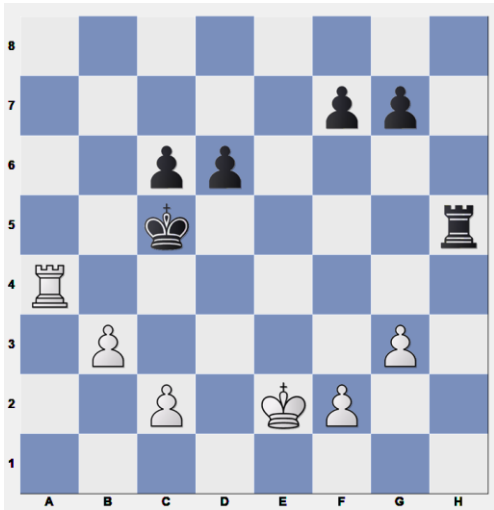
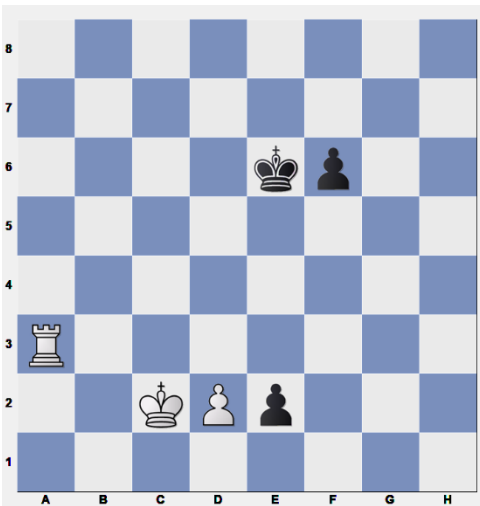


Like many Endgames passed pawns win games, in this case calculate how the a-pawn becomes a Queen as the black Kings cannot stop Promotion.

# Test



1. Can the b3 Rook capture more than one piece? 2. Can the King on f1 castle?

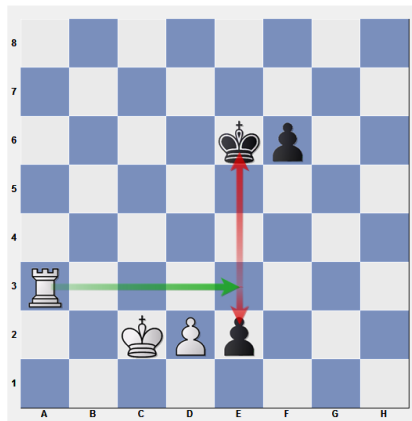


3. Find the double attack.

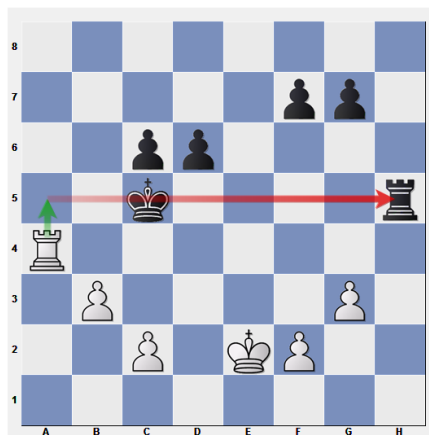
4. Find the skewer.

## Knowledge Check

1. The Rook can capture the b5 Pawn, but he cannot capture both the Pawn and the Queen. There is no case in chess where you can capture two pieces at the same time!
2. Once the King has moved, you cannot castle.
3. **1.Re3+** double attacks the Black King with check and the dangerous Pawn on e2

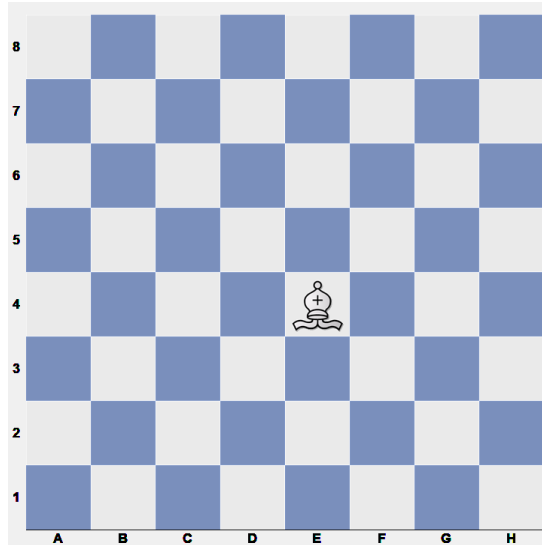


4. **1.Ra5+** checks the Black King and will win the Black Rook on the next move after the Black King moves.

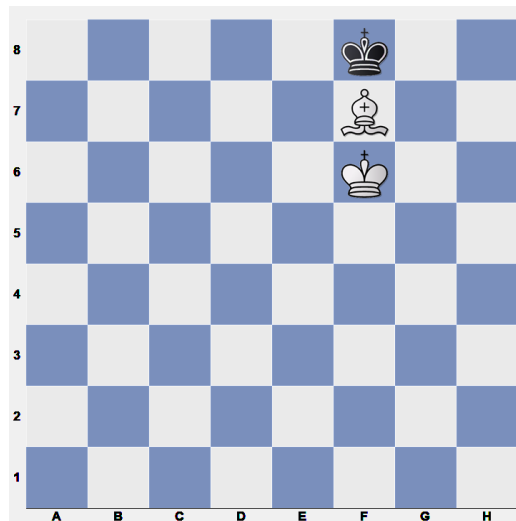


# Chapter 5: The King and the Bishop

## The Bishop



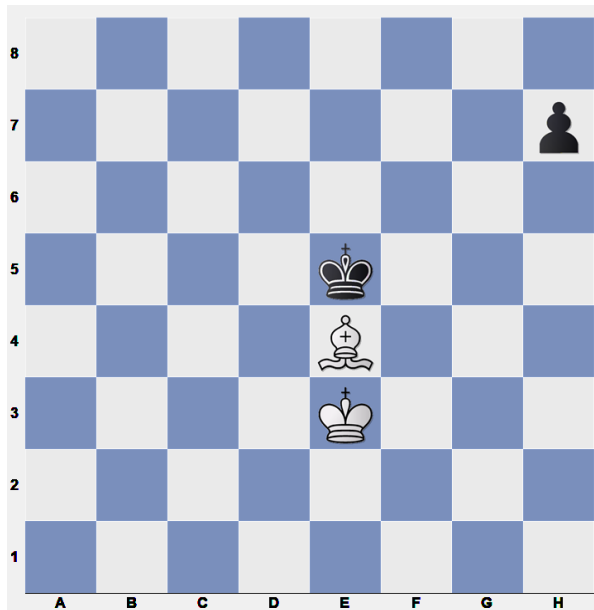
The Bishop is the first of the minor pieces to the monarchy.



Unlike the Queen, a lone Bishop with the King cannot checkmate; he will need assistance.

Bishop movement rules and limitations include the following:

1. The Bishop can move diagonally one or as many squares until it reaches the end of the board.
2. Bishops capture anywhere in their diagonal.
3. A Bishop can never jump over pieces and will never go on the opposite color square. If a Bishop starts on a light square, he will be on a light square for the entire game.

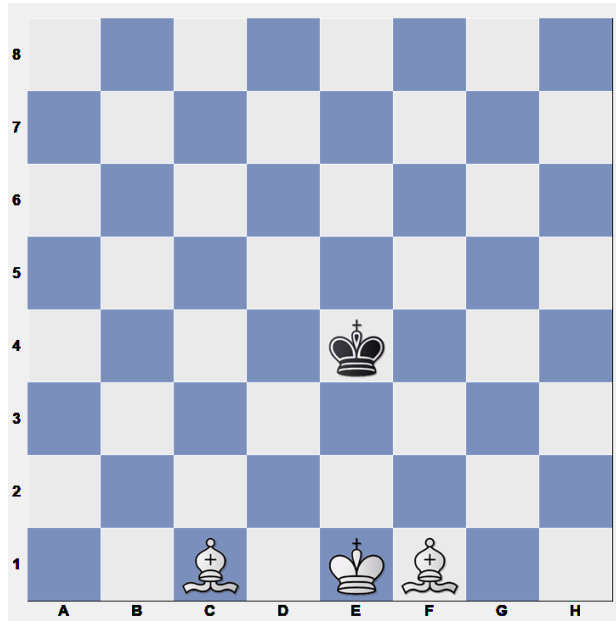


In this position the Bishop can move to any square on the h1–a8 diagonal and the b1–h7 diagonal. In this case, capturing the Pawn with **1.Bxh7** is the best move and results in a drawn game from insufficient material.

### **Bishop Mastery: Checkmating with Bishops**

When working with students, we are ambitious in our training methodology. As we are learning the Bishop, we immediately want to explore the full extent of their powers. The following activity is handled in the same means as its predecessors in the Queen and Rook chapters. This is the first checkmate of difficulty. When you master this checkmate, you have enough technique to have mastery of the Bishop.

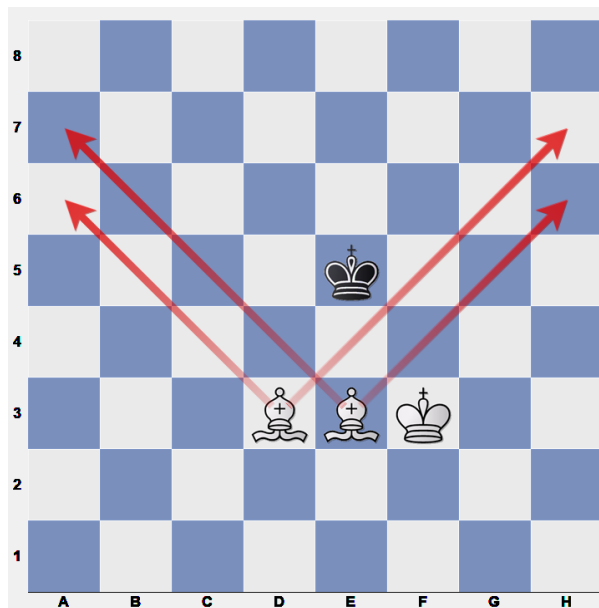
**Pro Tip:** *To prepare for any competition, the training should be more difficult than the competition.*



Be sure to follow the notation from this diagram!

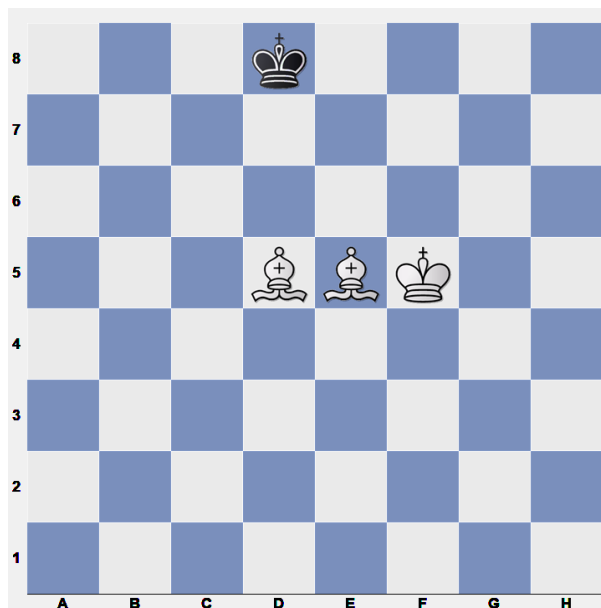
Compared to the previous checkmates, this one is of moderate difficulty. Be sure to take your time and understand the ideas behind how to checkmate before starting the time trials.

There are multiple steps to the process; keep in mind not to allow the Black King out of the box!



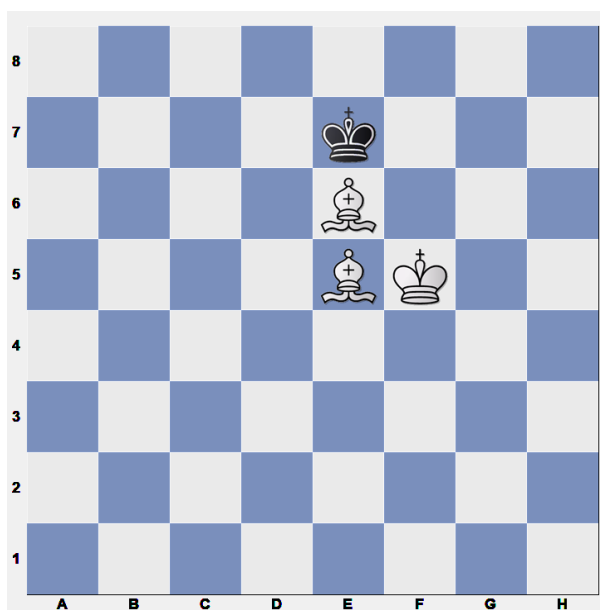
1. Use the King to protect the Bishops as they advance up the board.

**1.Be2 Kd4 2.Bd2 Ke4 3.Kf2 Kd4 4.Kf3 Ke5**



2. The pattern repeats until the Black King is on the back rank.

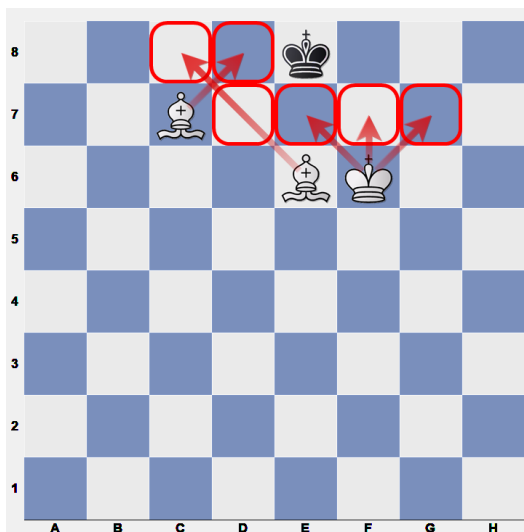
**5.Be3 Kd5 6.Bd3 Ke5 7.Be4 Ke6 8.Bd4 Kd6 9.Kf4 Ke6 10.Be5 Kd7 11.Bd5 Ke7 12.Kf5 Kd8**





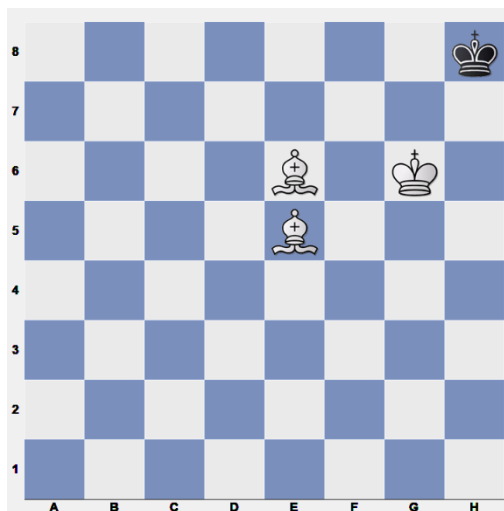
3. This is the most difficult part of the pattern. You must keep the Black King from escaping the box, and will checkmate him in the corner.

**13.Be6 Ke7**



4. It is important to visualize how we are forcing the Black King into the h8 corner.

**14.Bc7 Ke8 15.Kf6**



**15...Kf8 16.Bd7 Kg8 17.Kg6 Kf8 18.Bd6+ Kg8 19.Be6+ Kh8 20.Be5#**

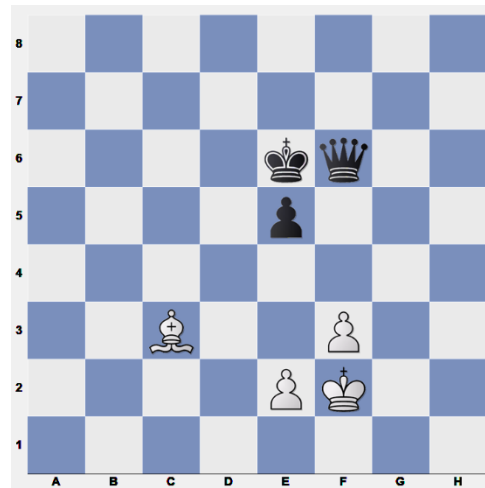
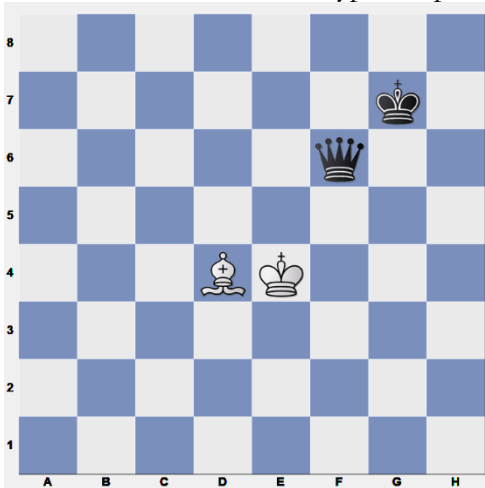
Ending in checkmate!

**Teacher Tip:** Performing this checkmate will teach the value of restricting opponents' play. This checkmate must be mastered in order to perform the Knight and Bishop checkmate in the following chapter.

## Bishop Pins

**Pro Tip:** In order to have full mastery of the Bishop, a student must understand the Bishop's potential as an attacker.

There are two types of pins in chess: absolute and relative.



In Example 1 on the left:

1. We have an **absolute** pin.
2. The Black Queen cannot move off the diagonal of the White Bishop to save herself because the Black King would be placed into check.
3. You can **NEVER** put your King into check.

In Example 2 on the right:

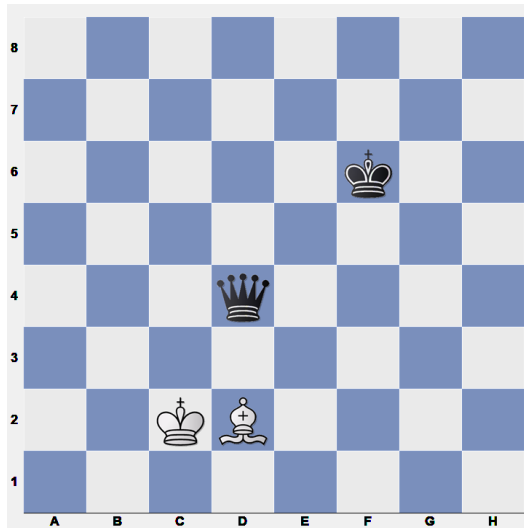
1. We have a **relative** pin.
2. The White Bishop is attacking the Black Pawn and behind it is the Black Queen.
3. The Black Pawn is only relatively pinned as it can move, but clearly it would be a mistake to allow the White Bishop to take the powerful Black Queen.

**Pro Tip:** Bishops are the masters of pins and develop in the opening, frequently attacking Knights as they are the fastest diagonal route to the King or Queen.

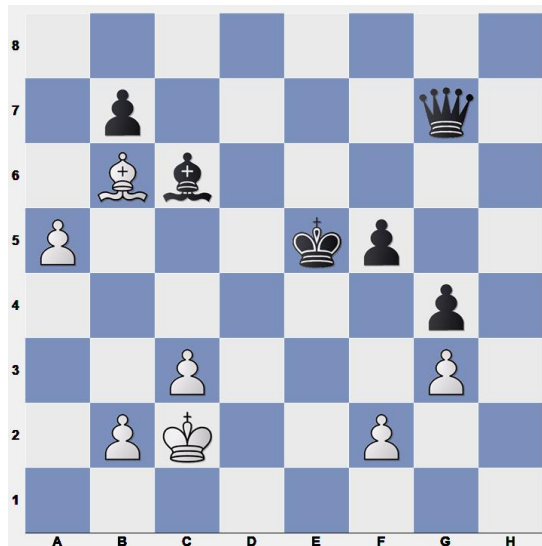
## Test

1. Would you ever want to promote a Pawn to Bishop instead of Queen?
2. Can one Bishop achieve checkmate?

For Problems 3 and 4: Find the best possible moves (we promise there is only 1 best move).



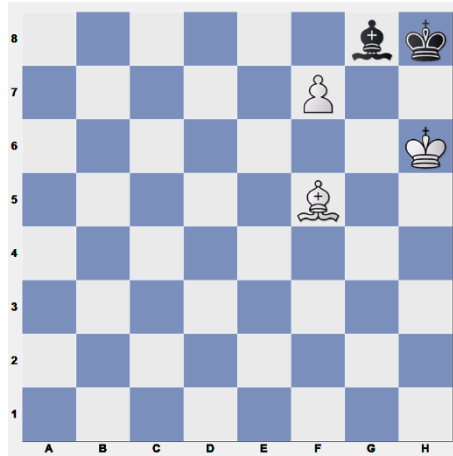
3. White to move



4. White to move

## Knowledge Check

1. A Pawn promoting could get a second Bishop on the same color. In extremely rare cases, it can occur:

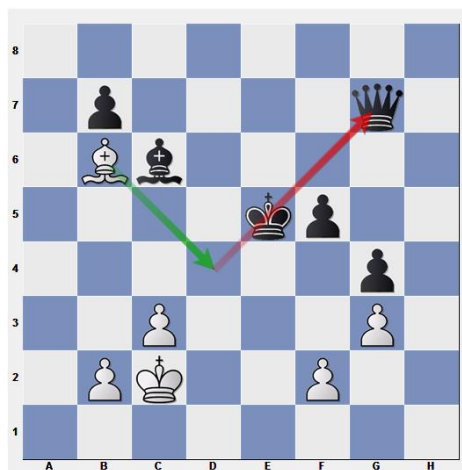


In this position, if White promotes to a Queen or a Rook, Black will be stalemated.

White plays **1.f8/B Bd5 2.Bh7 Bf3 3.Bg7#**

***Pro Tip:** Underpromotion is uncommon, but we always need to consider the possibility of getting something other than the Queen.*

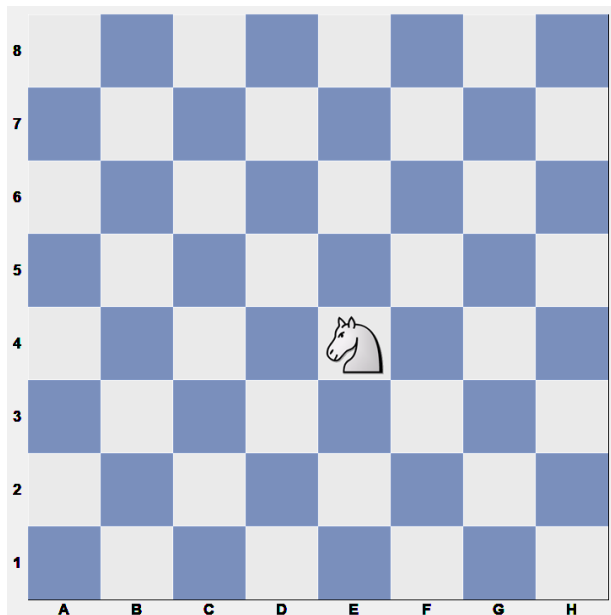
2. A Bishop cannot checkmate with the assistance of the King.
3. **1.Bc3!** saves the game as it pins the Black Queen to the Black King.
4. **1.Bd4+** forces the King to move, winning Black's Queen.



# Chapter 6: The King and the Knight

## The Knight

“In blitz, the Knight is stronger than the Bishop.”  
—Grandmaster Vlastimil Hort

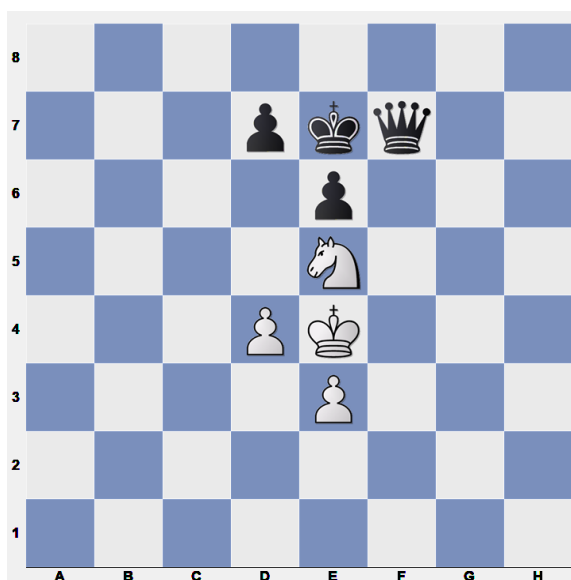


Knight movement rules and limitations include the following:

1. The Knight has the ability to move in a 2-1 square pattern or L in any direction. The Knight is the most difficult piece to learn.
2. A Knight can capture or move only at the end of the L-shape pattern.
3. The Knight is the only piece that can jump over other pieces.

**Teacher Tip:** *The Knight moves in an L-shape pattern; the top of the L is 2 squares and the bottom of the L is 1. A solid method of explanation is describing step step slide, or 2-1 in any direction.*

**Authors' Note:** *The activities in this chapter are done in sequence to prepare the student to use the Knight in actual games. In our experience students (especially under 6) have much difficulty with the Knight, and many activities need to be done in order to have full respect and mastery of Knight movement.*



In this diagram:

1. Which pieces can the Knight capture?
2. Is the Black King in check?
3. Can the Knight capture more than one piece at the same time?

Answers:

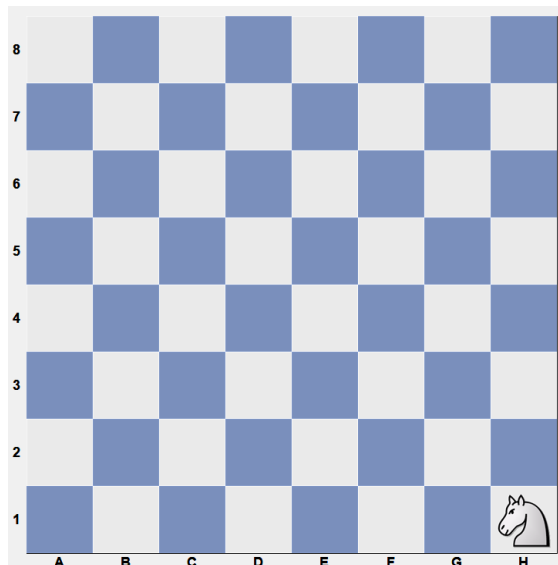
1. f7,d7
2. No
3. You can never take more than one piece.



In this case, the Black Knight can move to any indicated square. Sadly, we would lose our Queen from the pin if he chose to move.

### Activity 1: A Knight's Tour


The Knight is the best piece for honing your visualization and calculation techniques. There is an age-old question asked to great chess players: "How many moves can you see ahead?" With this next activity, you can have a good idea of how to answer that question.



Your goal in this position is to touch every square on the board in as few moves as possible.



This was a display activity by the great blindfold exhibitionist George Koltanowski, pictured here. He would, without sight, verbally give notation as a demonstrator would move the pieces for him. The lone Knight navigates the empty board, visiting each square once and finishing with the re-entrant tour, where the Knight on its 64th move lands on its original starting square.

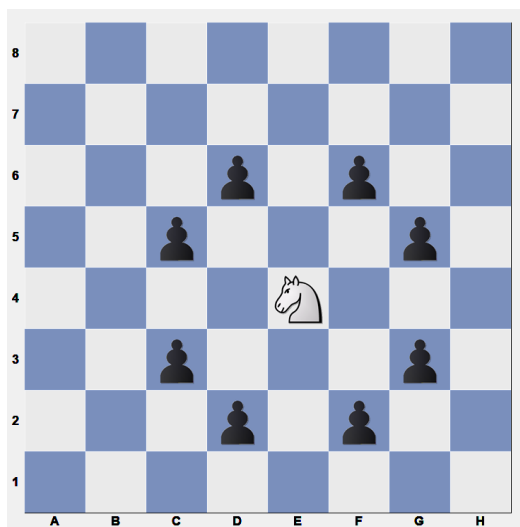
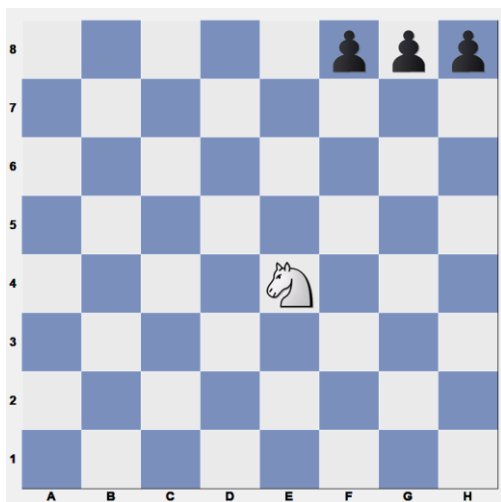
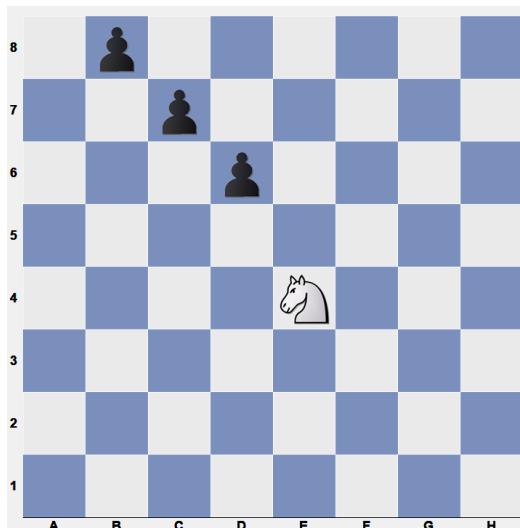
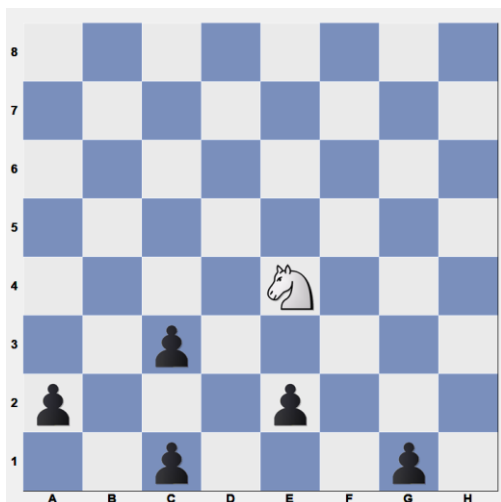
8		44	17	32	3	50	19	34
7	16	31	2	63	18	33	4	51
6	43	64	45	14	49	62	35	20
5	30	15	42	61	46	21	52	5
4	11	58	29	48	13	60	23	36
3	28	41	12	59	22	47	6	53
2	57	10	39	26	55	8	37	24
1	40	27	56	9	38	25	54	7
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h

Full Knight's Tour



## Activity 2: Calculation

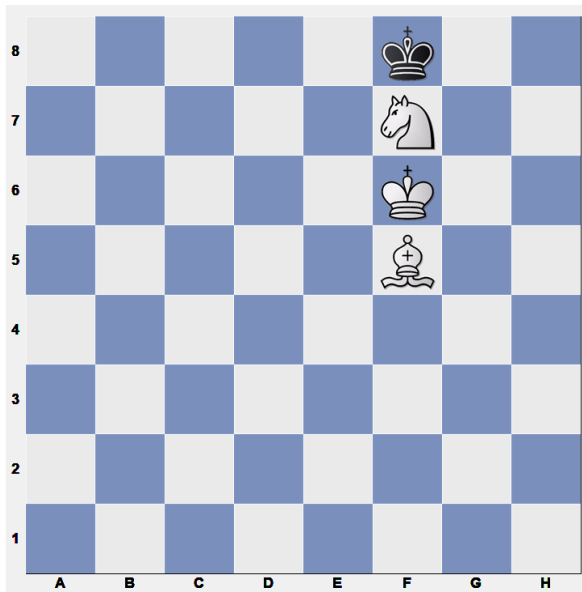
Your goal with this Knight activity is to, in the fewest moves possible, capture all of the Pawns on the board.



**Teacher Tip:** This activity can be used as a warm-up for students; there is an endless number of patterns ranging in difficulty that can be created from this activity.

Solutions: 1. (5) 2. (5) 3. (7) 4. (15)

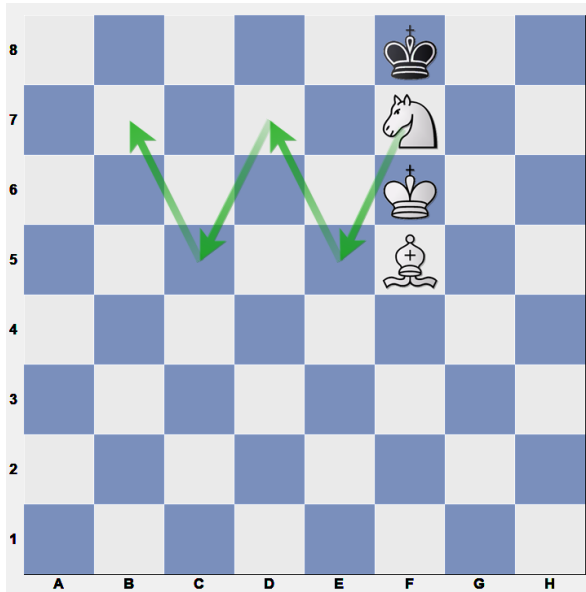
### Activity 3: Knight and Bishop Checkmate?



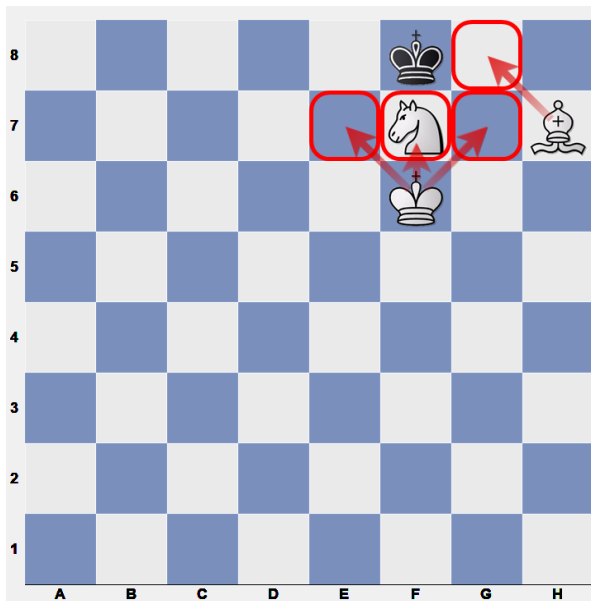
Much like the two Bishops checkmate in the previous chapter, once the King is stuck on the back rank, we begin to force him into a corner for checkmate. Keep in mind these points:

- Level of difficulty: hard. Take your time and carefully move.
- You must checkmate the defending King in a corner square that is the color of your Bishop.
- Focus on the W pattern with the Knight.
- Practice getting to the ideal position (the position in the illustration).
- *Do not let the defending King out!* If you fail to find the correct pattern, Black can easily claim a draw based off the 50-move rule. There is not much room for error in this checkmate.

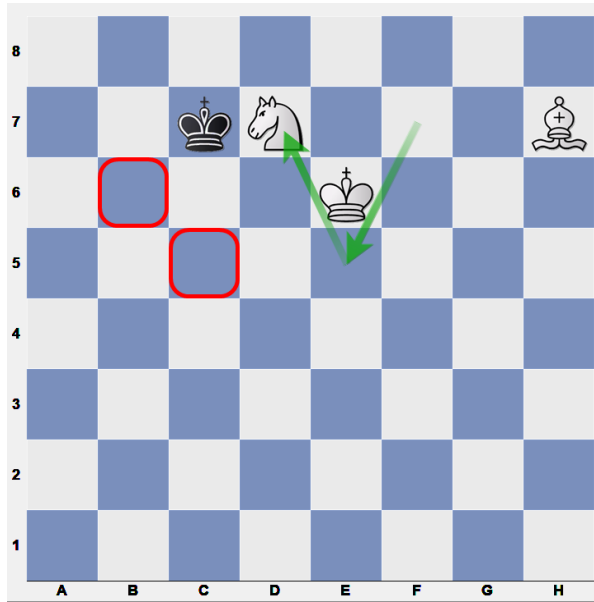
**Teacher Tip:** *There are many checkmates within the text, this is the most rewarding and challenging to accomplish. Once your students master this, they have complete mastery of the knight & Bishop.*



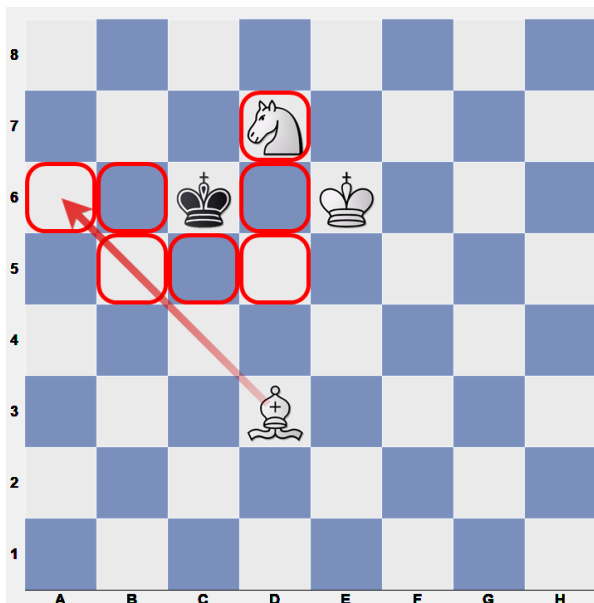
In this diagram we see the classic W. This is the path the Knight will take.



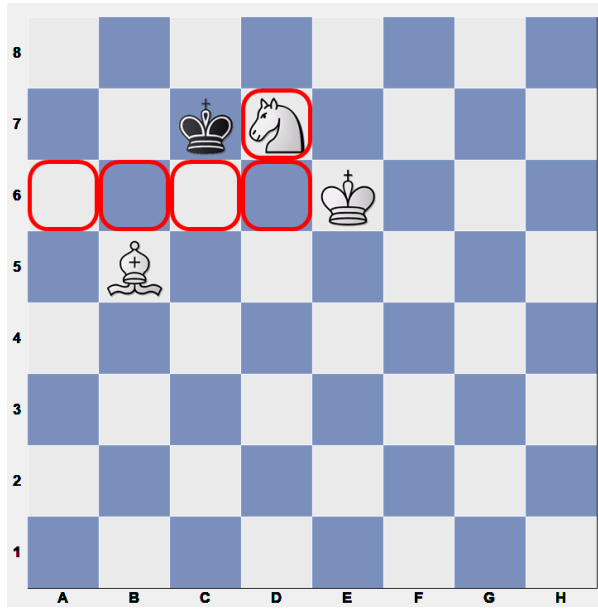
**1.Bh7** It is important to see how to force the Black King out of the corner using all of our pieces in harmony, we must get the black king to either the a8 or h1 squares for checkmate as we have a light squared Bishop.



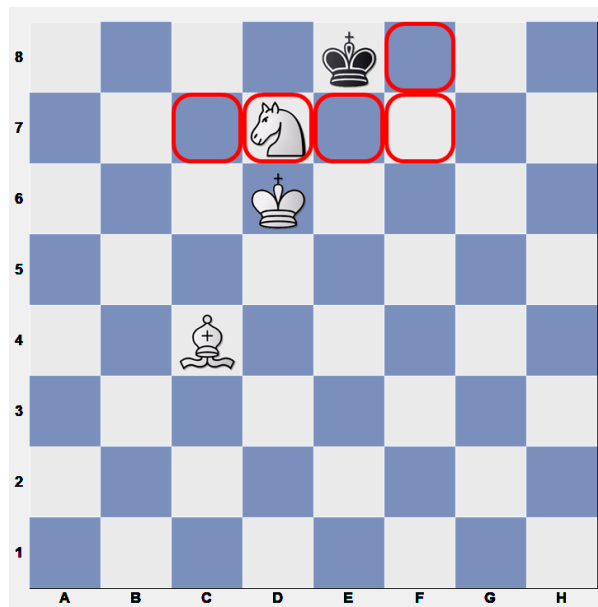
1...Ke8 2.Ne5 Kd8 3.Ke6 Kc7 4.Nd7 We see the Knight has completed half of the W pattern at this point. Note that it looks like the Black King has escaped, but he has not! The Knight covers dark squares and the Bishop covers the light squares, making a coffin for the Black King.



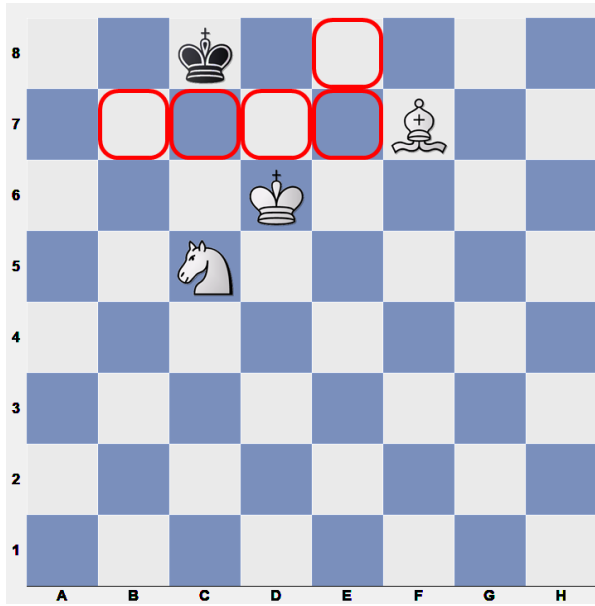
4...Kc6 5.Bd3 It is beautiful when a plan comes together!



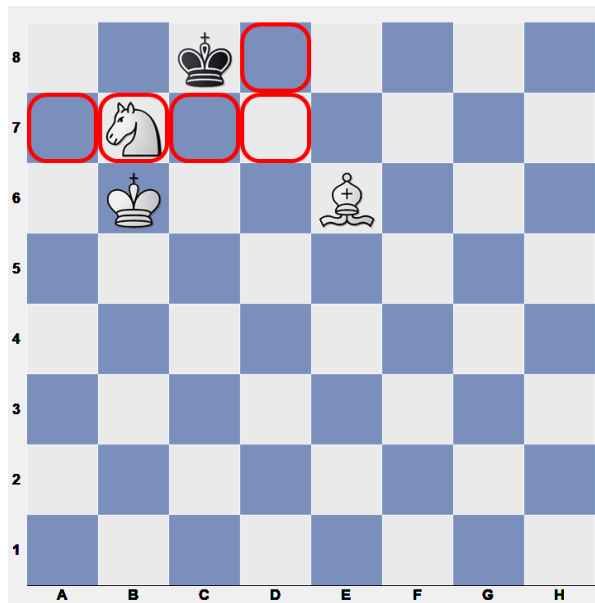
5...Kc7 6.Bb5 Just like the Queen and Rook checkmates, make the box smaller!



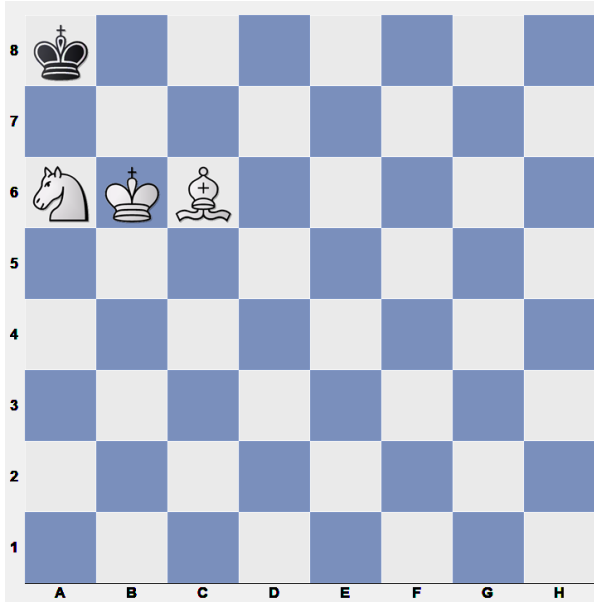
6...Kd8 7.Kd6 Ke8 8.Bc4



8...Kd8 9.Bf7 Kc8 10.Nc5 Almost finished with our W.

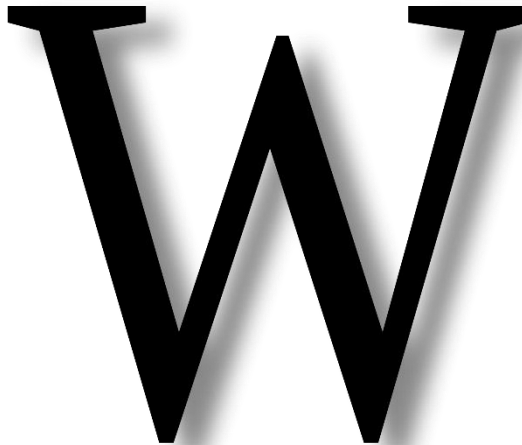


10...Kd8 11.Nb7+ (W complete) Kc8 12.Kc6 Kb8 13.Kb6 Kc8 14.Be6+



**14...Kb8 15.Nc5 Ka8 16.Bd7 Kb8 17.Na6+ Ka8 18.Bc6#**

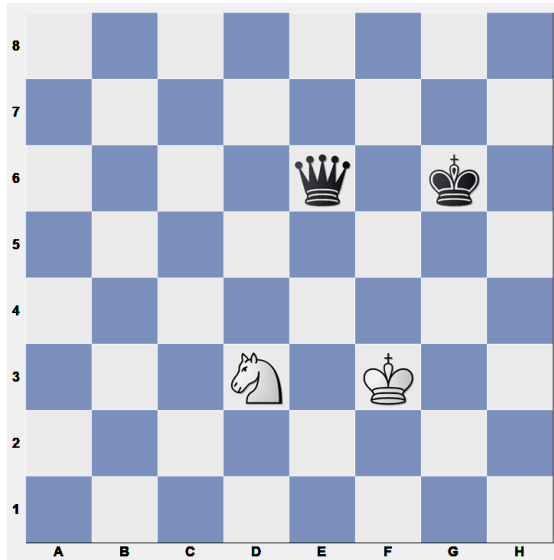
Before working on this checkmate, remember: Practice makes perfect. Some of the best chess players in the world have failed to complete this checkmate when they were in time trouble. It is important to practice this checkmate under a strict time limit once you have the basics down.



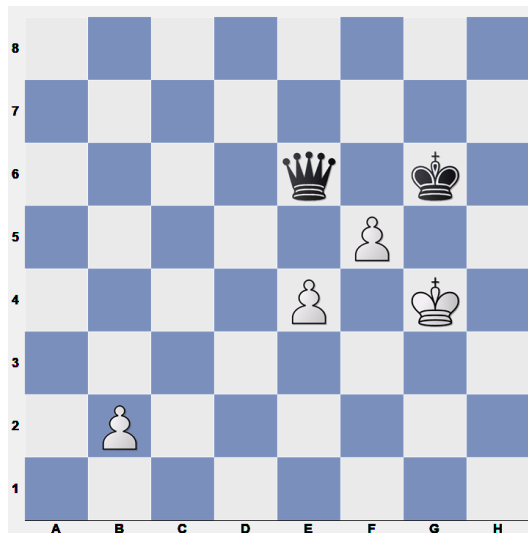
Do not forget the letter of the day!

## Knigh Mastery: Forks

Our definition of a fork in chess is a piece of lesser value attacking two pieces of greater value. Typically forks occur with a Knight or Pawn.



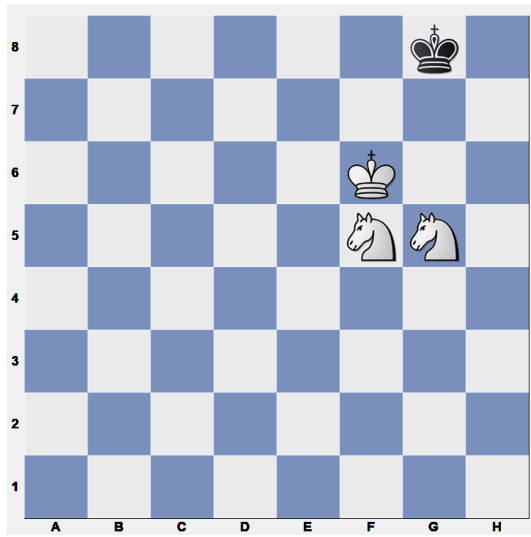
In this case above, the Knight can move to (c5,e5,f4,f2,e1,c1,b2,b4). If the White Knight moves to the f4, it will check the Black King and also attack the Black Queen; this tactic is called a fork.



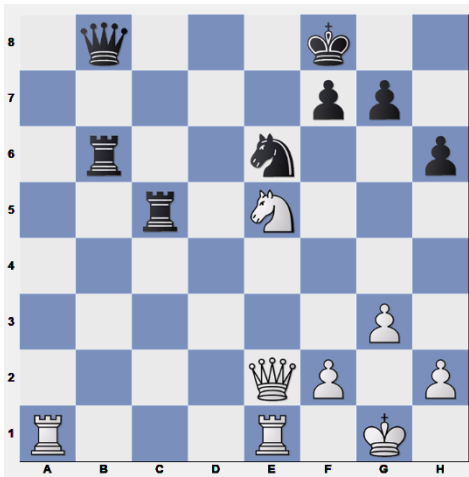
In this case we see Pawns enjoying a jump into the action with a fork of their own.



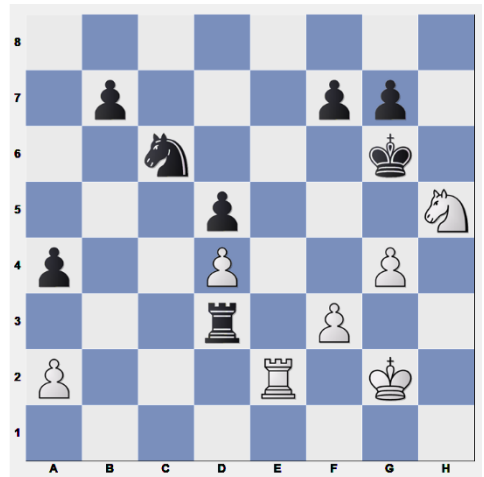
## Test



1. Can a Knight (or even two Knights) checkmate?



2. White to move

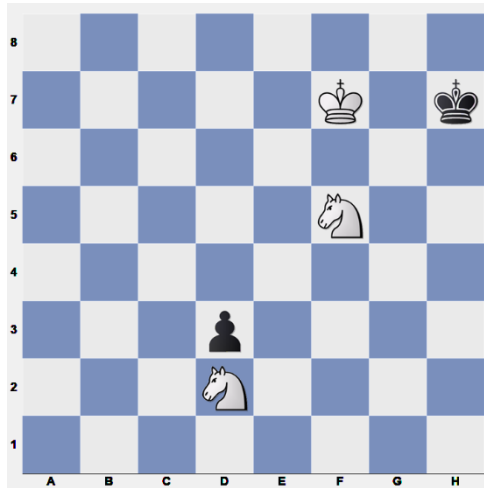


3. White to move

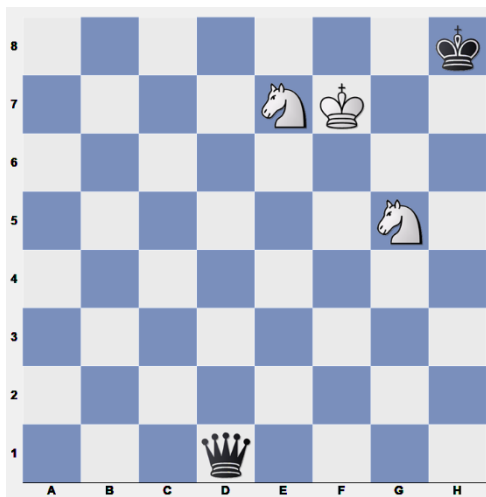
**Pro Tip:** In a tournament game situation you have no hints, treat position two and three as a real game.

## Knowledge Check

1. The Knights can checkmate only under special circumstances. It is an easy rule for the defender: Don't helpmate yourself by going into the corner. If the Black King stays out of the corners, he cannot lose.



In this diagram we have a special case: The Black Pawn allows us to stalemate Black's King in the corner in order to deliver the checkmate: **1.Nf3 d2 2.Ng5+ Kh8 3.Ne7**



The meanest checkmates leave the defender with hope for a moment before ruining his aspirations.

**3...d1Q 4.Ng6#**

2. **1.Nd7+** is a royal fork where the monarchy will be split.
3. **1.Nf4+** attacks the King and the Rook, winning the Rook.

# Chapter 7: The Elements of Time, Material, and Quality



Garry Kasparov, 13th World Chess Champion

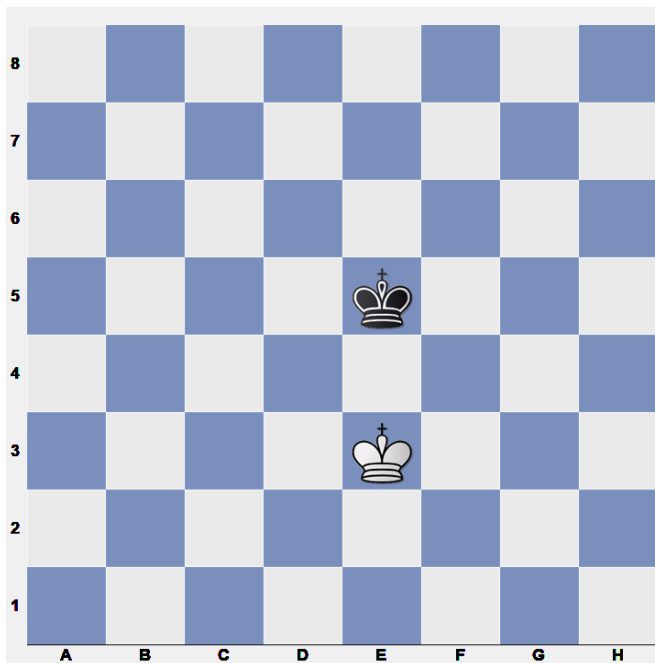
Here's what we know so far about the strength of pieces:

- The **King** is invaluable; if you get checkmated, you lose.
- The **Queen** is the strongest piece, combining the powers of both the Rook and Bishop, and can checkmate by herself with the help of the King.
- The **Rook** has the ability to move in long verticals and horizontals, and can checkmate by himself with the help of the King.
- The **Bishop** has the ability to move in long and short diagonals; he cannot checkmate by himself, but two Bishops can achieve checkmate.
- The **Knight** is the only piece that can hop over others in his L-shaped pattern. The only way a Knight captures is on the final square of the L pattern. He can checkmate with the assistance of a Bishop, but two Knights cannot force checkmate.
- The **Pawn** always travels straight forward unless he is capturing when he travels one square diagonally. Pawns have potential of promotion.

**Pro Tip:** Thus far in the book, we have provided activities to coincide with each chapter. This is the first point where careful study of the elements in this and the following chapter are needed in order to play a sufficiently high-level game of chess. We strongly suggest playing chess in person or online against increasingly stronger competition to continue growing your strength.

## Advantages

If in a chess game we were to equally trade our entire armies, we would eventually reach a position similar to the following.



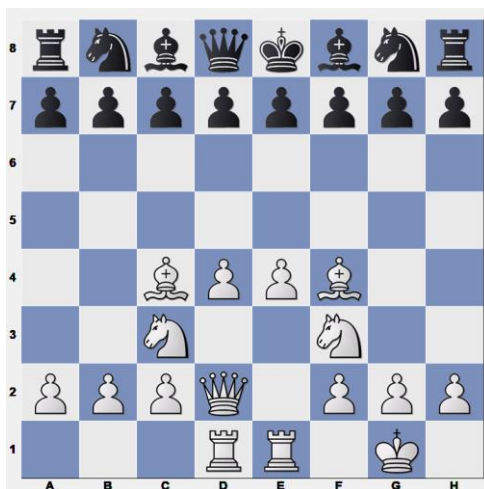
This “dead” drawn position occurred as neither player created favorable imbalances that could have led to material gain. When playing chess, we must take advantage of certain inequalities or trade advantages with our opponent to gain a decisive edge.

These advantages needed for victory can be broken down into the Three Advantages of Chess:

1. Time
2. Material
3. Quality

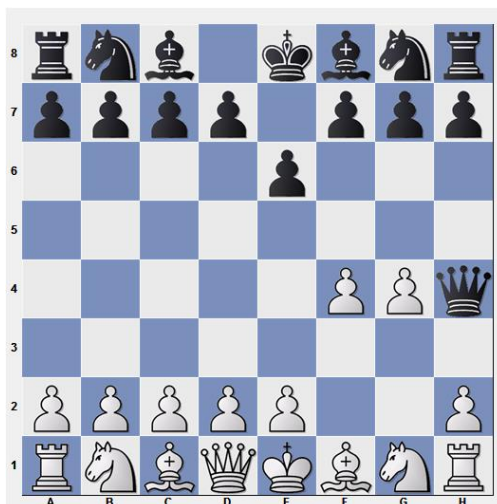
## Time

Time in chess is not defined as the tangible seconds on the clock. Time relates directly to the moves you make on a chess board. Mistakes with time frequently occur either with ineffective development leading to moving the same piece over and over, or ineffective captures.

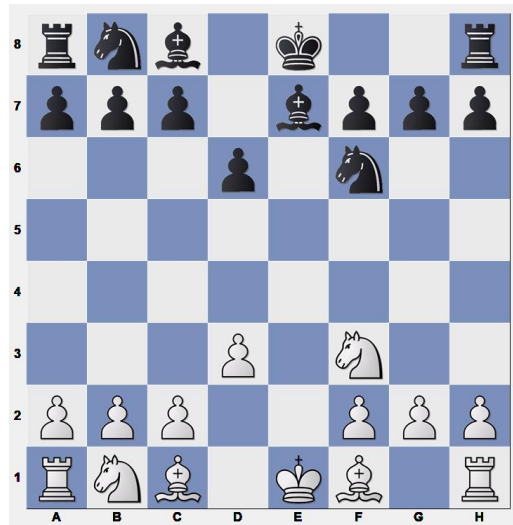
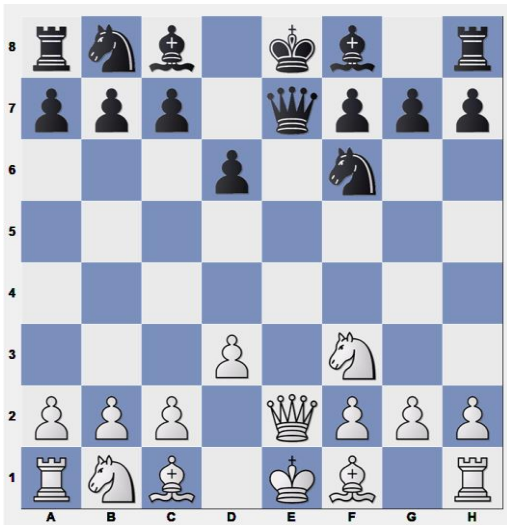


It looks like White is cheating

Observe the above position. Black has decided to move his g8 Knight out to f6 then back to g8, then out to f6, then back to g8 repeating the process. This maneuver has no bearing on the position, and is simply wasting time. White, on the other hand, is following the principles of development. White has a huge advantage because he used his *time* correctly.









Ignoring the elements has consequences



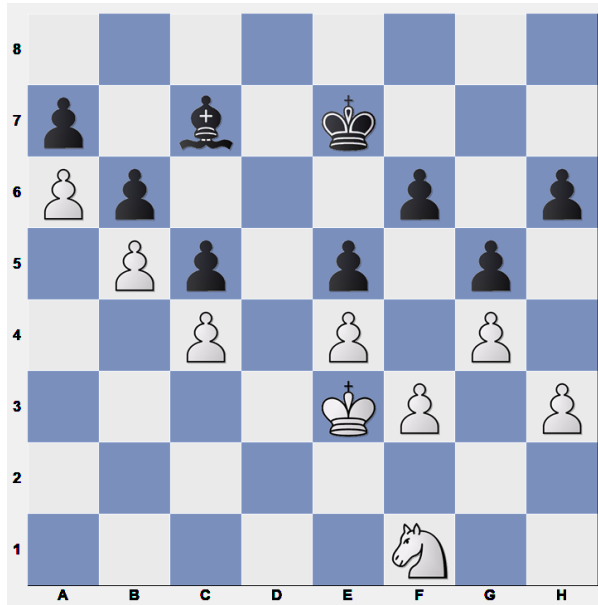
- In the first position white would make a huge time wasting mistake with 1.Qxe7?
- Notice in the second position black has the Bishop developed but it is white to move in a symmetrical position...it is like magic that white is now a move behind and playing black!

### Material

The advantage of material is the first one that new chess players learn and is easiest to understand. When you are up a large amount of material (a full Queen or Rook), it becomes very easy to convert your advantage. This has been seen in previous chapters with theoretical checkmates. A common practice for young players is to get as many Pawns to the other side of the board as they can to retrieve extra Queens. Outlined here is an introduction to piece value. It should be noted that many people take the piece value scale as religion, but this scale is to be taken lightly as it is *relative*.

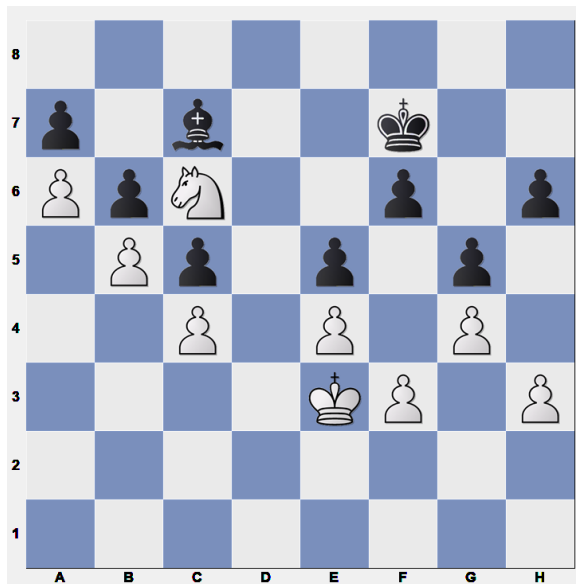
-  King: Priceless
-  Queen: 9
-  Rook: 5
-  Bishop: 3
-  Knight: 3
-  Pawn: 1

How is the scale relative? When does value change?



Draw?

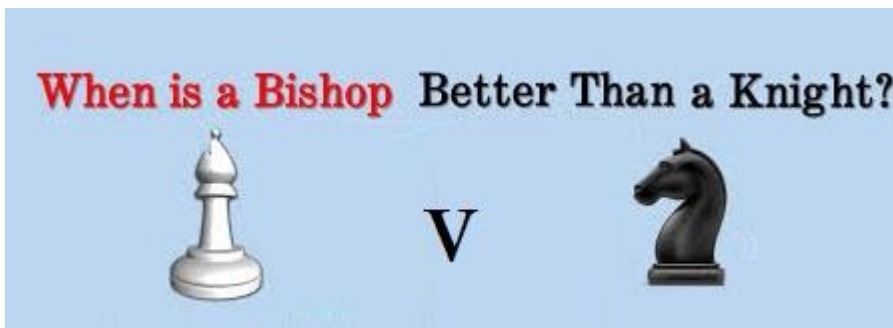
In this position, Knight versus Bishop, the scale indicates we have equal Pawns and pieces. Therefore a materialist would indicate that the game is drawn.



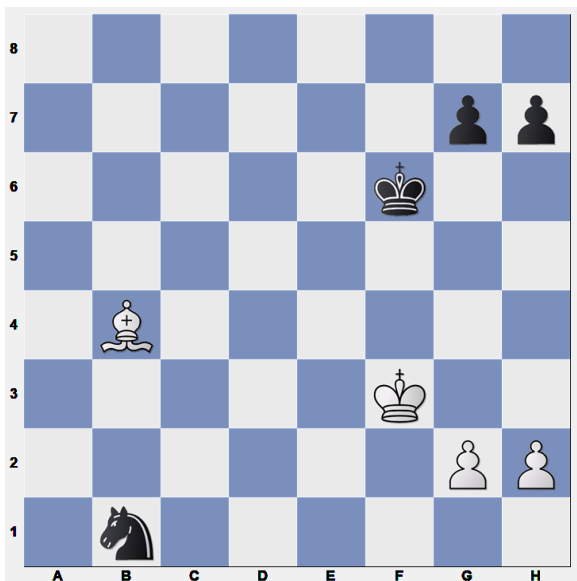
1.Ng3 Kf7 2.Nf5 Kg6 3.Ne7+ Kf7 4.Nc6

This is far from the case. The White Knight will pick off the a7 pawn; it can then retreat and make a new Queen using the a6 pawn, with an easy win to follow.

This example shows clearly in a **closed position** how a Knight can completely dominate a Bishop if the position is closed and the Bishop is on the same color squares as the majority of his Pawns. The Pawns simply get in the way, and this causes the Bishop to have no targets and nothing to do. We like to refer to this Bishop as a Pawn with a funny hat. In order to assure your Bishop is affective, you must have the Bishop agree with his Pawns. To agree with the Pawns the Bishop sits on the opposite color squares to work with the Pawns, not against them.



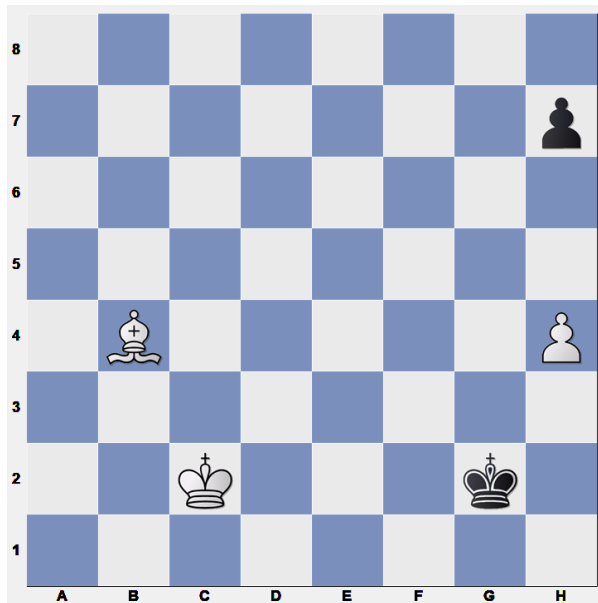
- Bishops typically beat Knights in Open Positions, Bishops want to be on the opposite color squares of their pawns.
- Knights typically beat Bishops in Closed Positions, Knights love to work in positions against Bishops where all of the Pawns are on the same color as the Bishop.





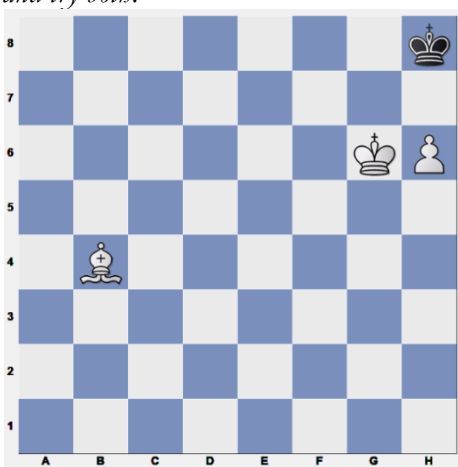
A Knight is a piece that can go where he pleases and can attack many squares (up to 8). This lowly thing on b1 could be referred to as a “donkey.”

That position may continue: 1... Kf5 2.Ke3 Ke5 3.Kd3 g5 4.Kc2 Kd4 5.Kxb1 Ke3 6.Kc2 Kf2 7.g3 Kg2 8.h4 gxh4 9.gxh4

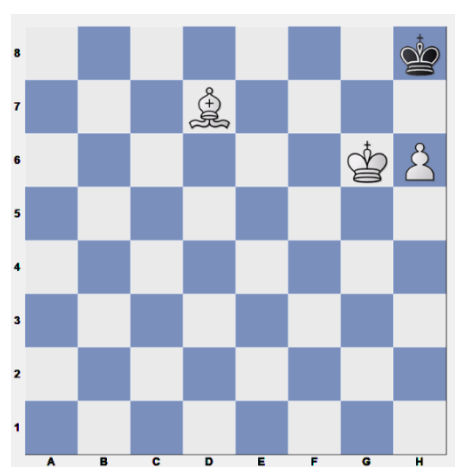


Black resigned as White will make a Queen by force.

**Pro Tip:** In this position, it is important to note that if this were a light queening square, the game would be a draw as the Black King can make it to the Queening square and stay there. Use your board and try both!

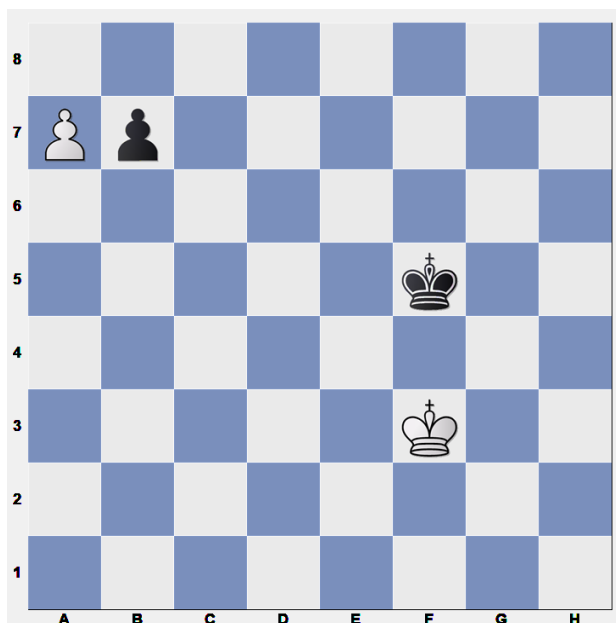


Win

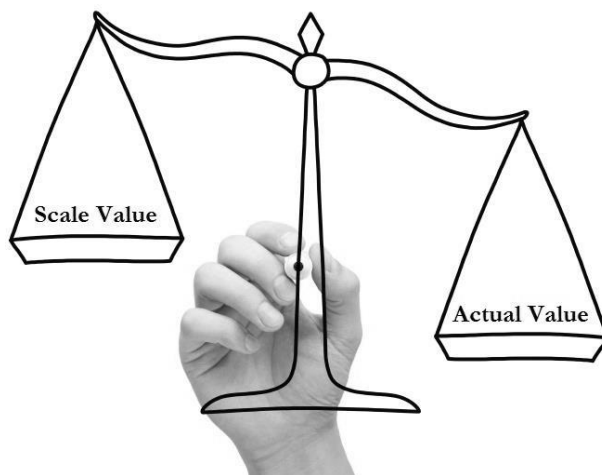


Draw

How do Pawns factor into scale change?



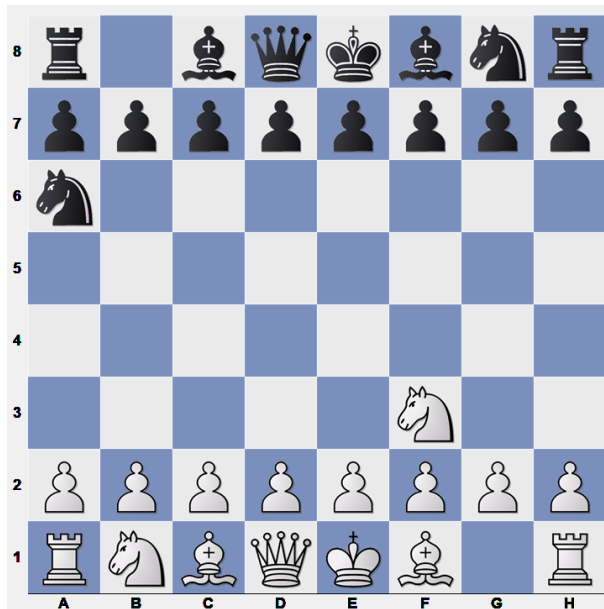
As a Pawn gets closer to becoming a Queen, it get significantly stronger and more valuable. It is amazing the difference in value between a pawn on the 7th rank and a Pawn that reaches the 8th!



We hope these examples solidify in your mind that the piece value system is *relative*, and the *actual value* of pieces far outweigh the *scale*.

## Quality

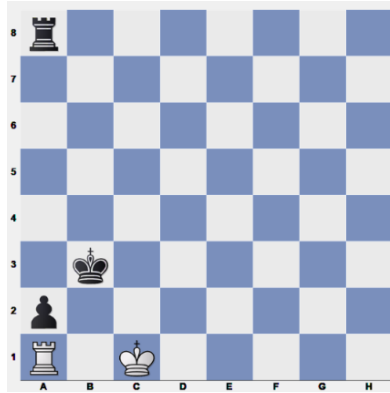
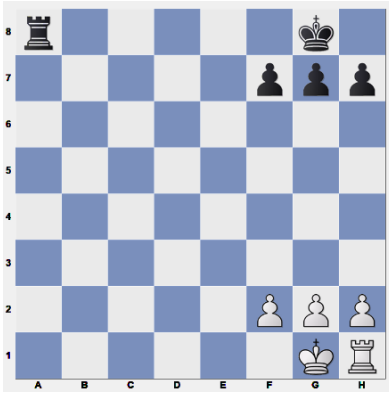
The effectiveness of a piece toward the goal affects the value of the piece. Some pieces can be so weak and invaluable that they cause weaknesses in the position.



Compare the 2 developed Knights here:

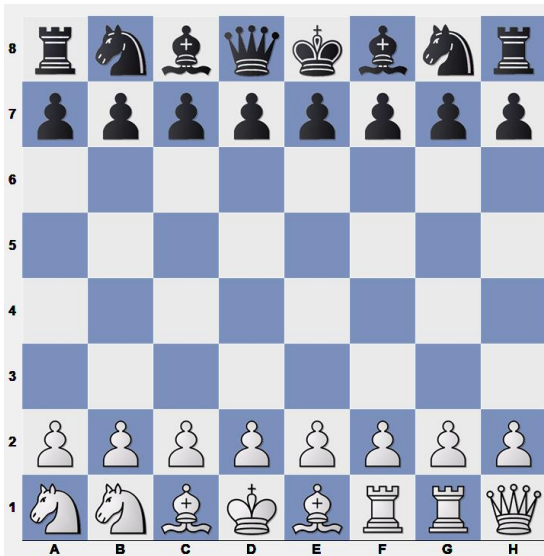
- White's Knight is attacking the center and is well placed as it will defend White's King when he castles Kingside. The best defender of the King is a Knight on f3 or f6.
- Black's Knight, on the other hand, is a "donkey" as it is on the corner of the board, limiting its abilities, and will be required to waste time (move again) in order to become a useful piece.

A goal in the opening is to make our pieces quality pieces as quickly and easily as possible, and not to waste valuable time.



In both of these positions, the Black Rook dominates its “equal” counterpart.

**Teacher Tip:** *mix up the back row pieces versus a standard position. Have the student play the game to see the tremendous impact of the poor quality of the pieces have on their game.*



*This activity teaches the student the value of placing pieces on active and affective squares.*

## Review

Before moving on, make sure you have mastery of all of the following items. If you struggle with remembering anything in the list we encourage you to go back and review the numbers you have difficulty with.

1. Demonstrate how the Pawn moves.
2. Demonstrate how the Knight moves.
3. Demonstrate how the Bishop moves.
4. Demonstrate how the Queen moves.
5. Demonstrate how the King moves.
6. Demonstrate castling, both Kingside and Queenside.
7. Explain these terms: rank, file, and diagonal.
8. Understand and be able to explain check.
9. Understand and be able to explain checkmate.
10. Understand and be able to explain various ways to make a draw.
11. Understand the difference between checkmate and stalemate.
12. Be able to explain and demonstrate a pin.
13. Be able to explain and demonstrate a fork.
14. Be able to explain and demonstrate a double attack.
15. Be able to explain and demonstrate a skewer.
16. Explain C.P.R. and how does it relate to check.
17. Explain relative piece value and be able to give examples of how value changes.
18. Perform checkmate with King and Two Rooks versus King.
19. Perform checkmate with King and Queen versus King.
20. Perform checkmate with King and Rook versus King.

# Chapter 8: Opening Principles: King Safety, Center Control, and Effective Pieces

To first understand how to be successful in the opening, let's look at the dictionary and chess reference definition first and see if that can help us understand how to be successful in the chess opening.

We can first look at Webster's Dictionary for a simple definition of *opening*: "A usually planned series of moves made at the beginning of a game of chess." But this doesn't tell us anything about how to start a game of chess.

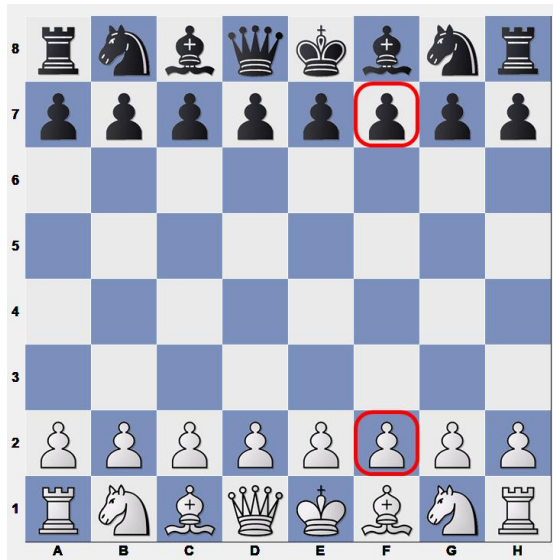
We can try to look at the United States Chess Federation's definition in its online glossary: "The first phase of the game in which the pieces are developed. Strong amateur players have the basic ideas and moves of their openings memorized. Professional players memorize larger numbers of openings and variations, and often develop new, never before played ideas, novelties." Again, this might give us some hints to what we need to do, but simple memorization doesn't work without true understanding.

We break down the opening into three coinciding goals that are all taking place at the same time:

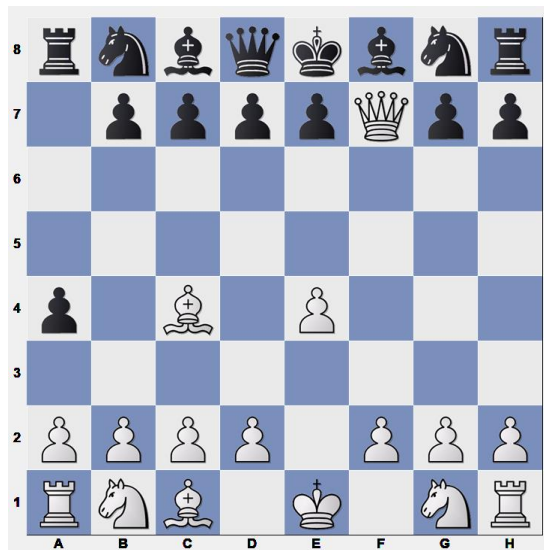
- **King safety:** Getting your King away from the action (typically by castling).
- **Center control:** Control as much of the board as possible; the center is the best route to doing this.
- **Effective piece development:** Maximize your options for attack and defense. Invite everyone to the party!

## Scholars Mate: Keep The King Safe At All Times

The squares f2 and f7 are significant as they are the only weak points in the initial chess position. The two initial pawns on the f-file are sole defenders of the King. Compared with all other Pawns, which are defended by expendable pieces, these two pawns demand protection in the initial phase of the game.



f2 + f7

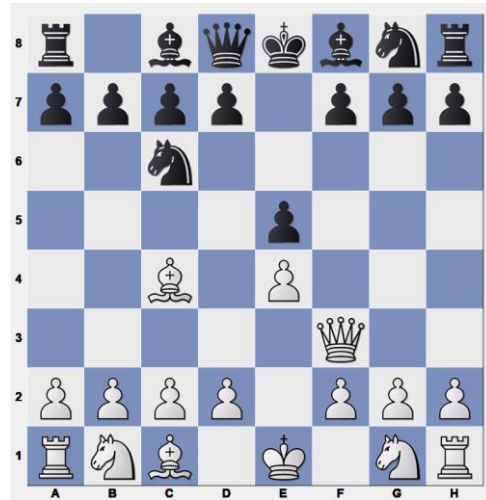


1.e4 a6 2.Bc4 a5 3.Qf3 a4 4.Qxf7#

Known for its swift attack, winning the game against an inexperienced player in 4 moves, the Scholar's Mate is an idea that should be well known to all chess players.

## Prophylaxis against Scholars Mate

**Authors' Note:** *Prophylaxis – action taken to prevent something negative from happening.*



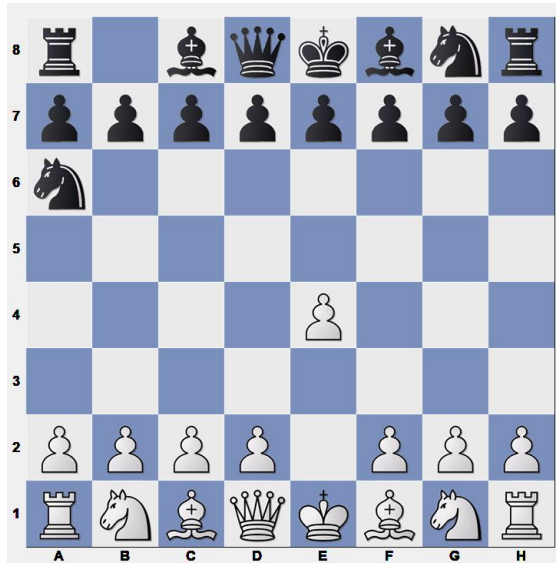
- In the first diagram, Black can stop White's Queen from attacking f7 with **1...g6!** This attacks the Queen and forces a retreat.
- In the second diagram, the developing move **1...Nf6** is played, leading to the Queen being misplaced for White. It will need to move again in the near future.

**Authors' Note:** *If the game ends in 4 moves, was the game really worth playing in the first place? It is a cheap trick; if the opponent doesn't fall into it, you have a fundamentally worse position from bringing the Queen out early.*

### Common Mistakes

In order to further understand openings, as well as center control and effective piece development, let's explore common mistakes that pop up in scholastic tournaments.



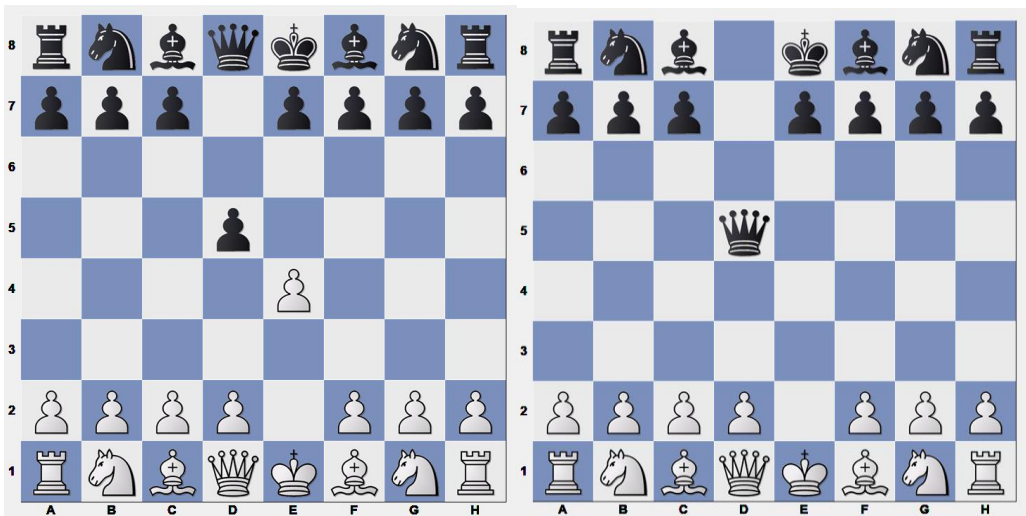


In the above diagram white would play 1.Bxa6 as it would cripple black's pawn structure creating **Doubled Pawns** leading to an endgame weakness, Knights aren't meant for the sides.

### Opening Inexperience

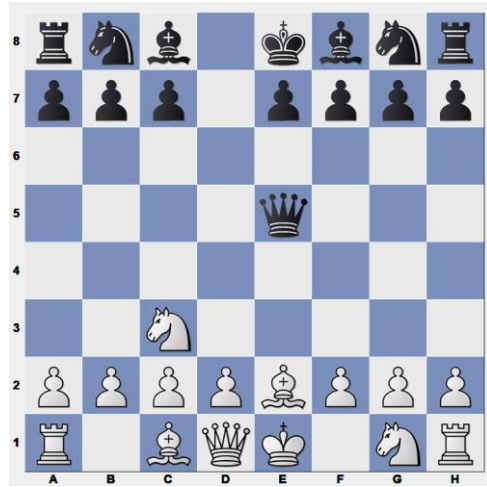
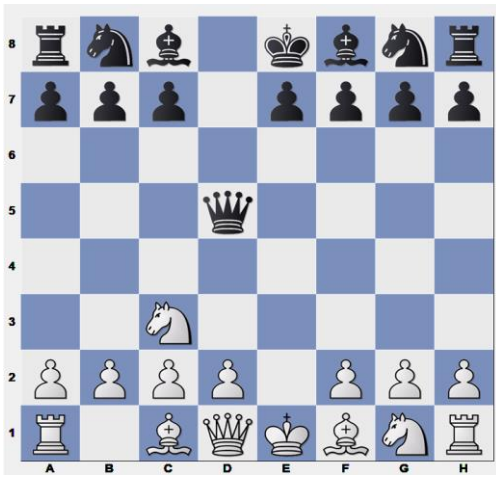
The following mistakes are typical of beginning chess players.

1. Don't move the same piece twice unless you must.



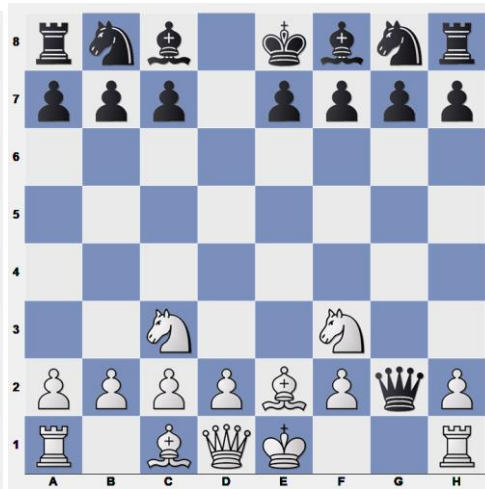
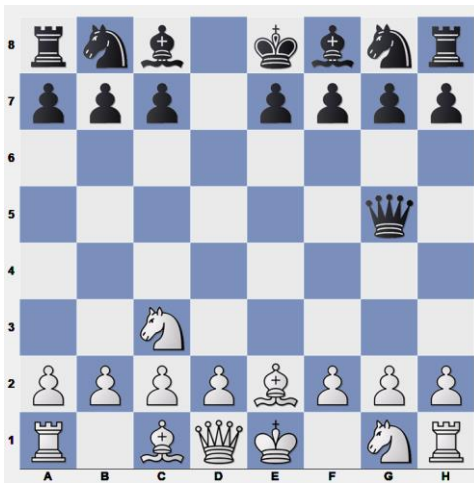
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5

The center counter is a common opening that defies one of our opening principles: Never bring your Queen out early.



**3.Nc3 Qe5+ 4.Be2**

At this point the Queen has moved three times, and White has picked up a full move developing his Bishop.

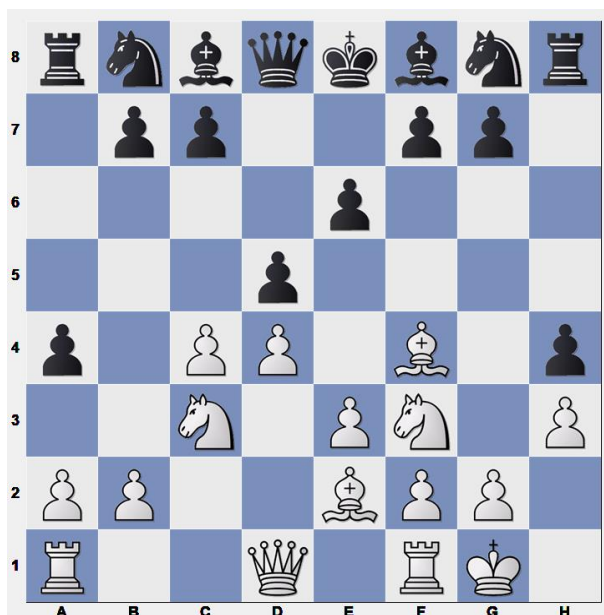


Black persists, moving the Queen to attack the g-Pawn. White has two options: Defend the g-Pawn with **5.Bf3** or gambit (give material for time).

**4...Qg5 5.Nf3 Qxg2**

In the final position, White gets more time as the Queen will run after **6.Rg1!** Black has won a single Pawn for 4 developed pieces. The time should overwhelm Black's position long before the single Pawn could be a factor in an endgame.

## 2. Don't move just Pawns.



Let's compare Black's position to White's in this diagram.

Black:

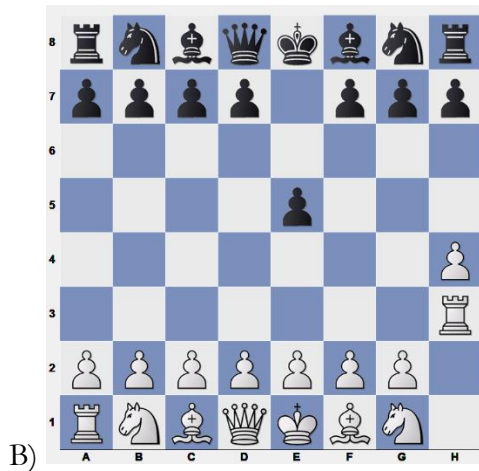
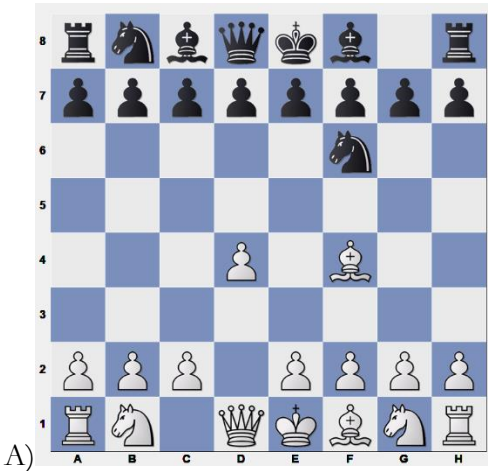
- He has maintained his d5 Pawn in the center and has center control.
- He has advanced his a- and h-Pawns with no effect.
- His King is still in the center and cannot vacate easily.

***Pro Tip:*** We castle because in the opening, all of the action is happening in the center. Needless to say, the King feels uneasy about all of the action taking place a few squares north of his location, so he flees to the side of the board where a wall of Pawns can protect him. Keep in mind, with this note, not to move the Pawns in front of your King, weakening his position.

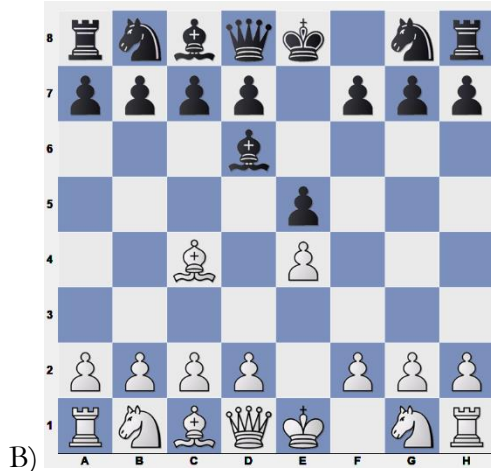
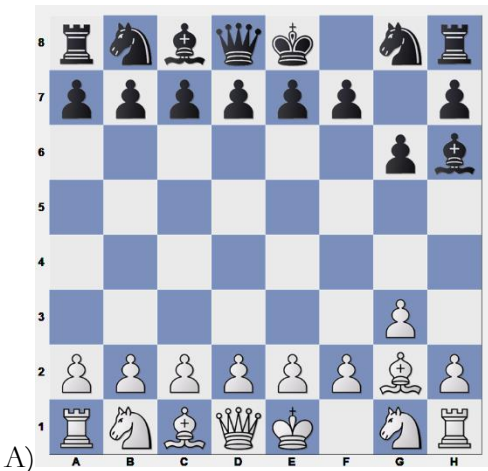
White:

- He has maintained his d4 Pawn in the center and has center control.
- He has developed all minor pieces in the position.
- He has castled his King and has safety.
- He is poised to attack with Pawns from c4 or e3-e4, opening up the position to attack.

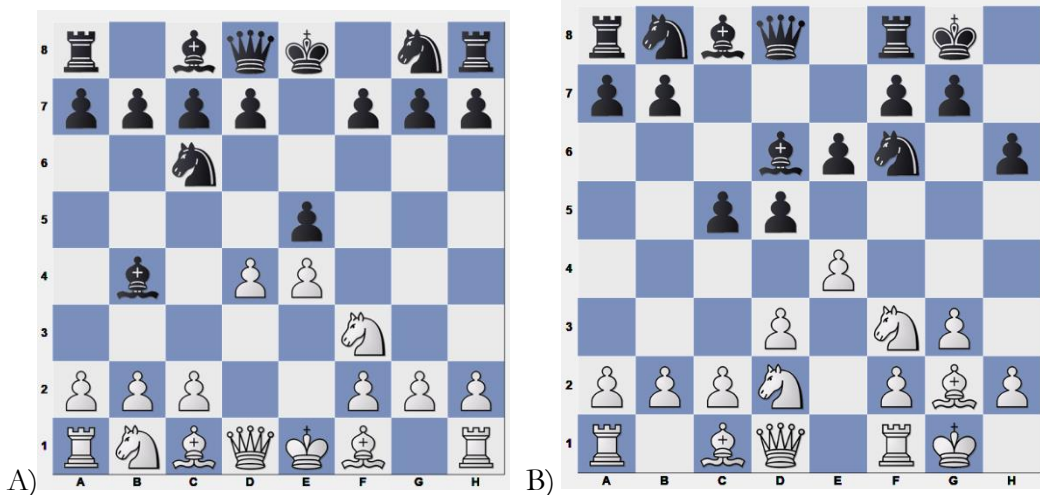
3. Don't move pieces toward the edge of the board and pay attention to your opponents ideas.



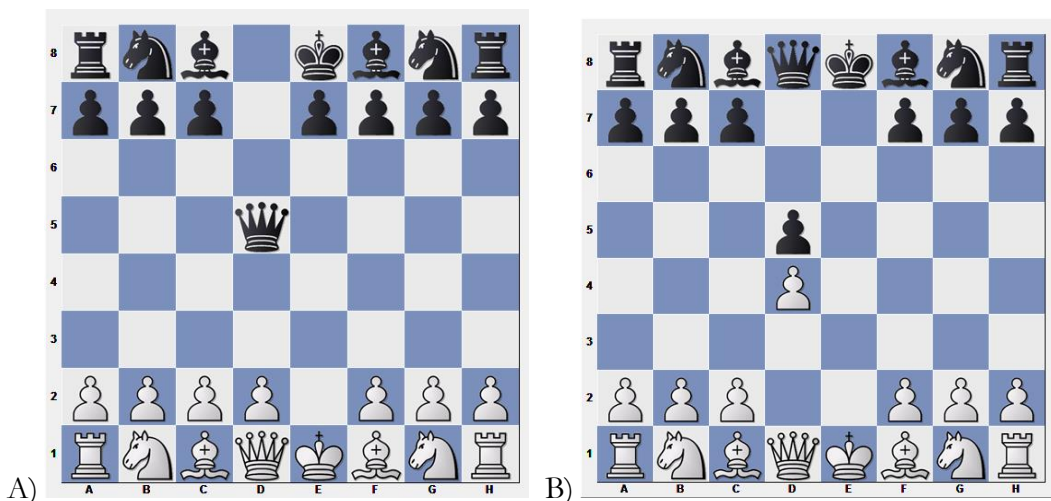
- In position A, both White and Black have successfully developed pieces that are both attacking the center and serving a purpose in the position.
- In position B, White's first move with the h-Pawn does not help the cause in the center, and bringing out the Rook early is incorrect.



- In position A, let's compare the two Bishops. The g2 Bishop is attacking through the center and is within "the house" built for him. The Bishop on h6 has gone camping outside of his built home. Why go camping in your front yard?
- In position B, the Bishop on c4 attacks the center. The d6 Bishop does attack the center, but it only defends a Pawn instead of attacking (wasting time).



- In position A, Just because you see a check doesn't mean you go for it. White simply plays c3 and you need to move the Bishop again.
- In Position B, focus too much outside of the center and you will end up in a nasty Fork. In this case white can play e5 leaving black with the choice of saving his Bishop or Knight.



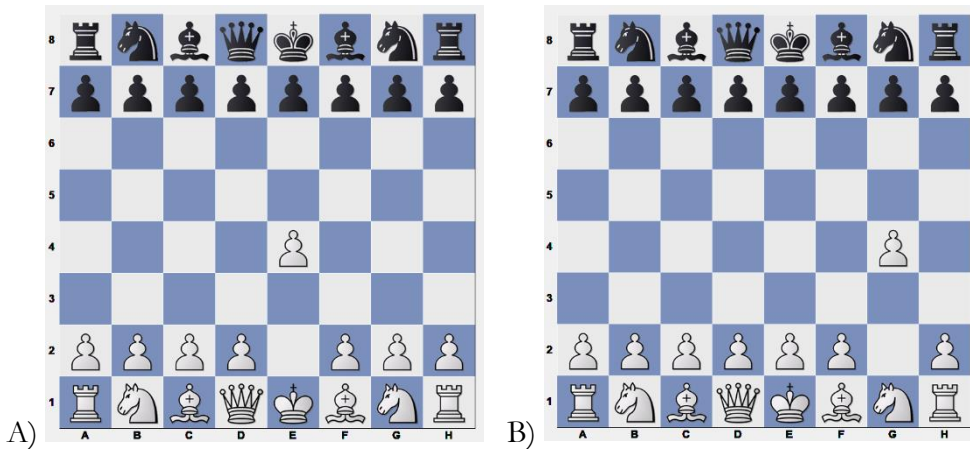
- In position A, Black will lose time as he captured with a Major Piece (Queen or Rook) early in the game (Do not bring your Queen out early if she can be attacked).
- In Position B, when the d-pawn was captured by white, black recaptured with a pawn. Maintaining a pawn in the center stops pieces from being kicked around.

## Activity 1: Evaluation

In the following sets of diagrams, you are to select which you perceive to be better: A or B.

**Pro Tip:** Before looking at the answers, we suggest writing down why you are choosing the answer; try to articulate as much as you can for the following examples.

### Set 1



A is the best choice as it controls one of the key central squares and prepares to develop the light-squared bishop and the Queen easily.

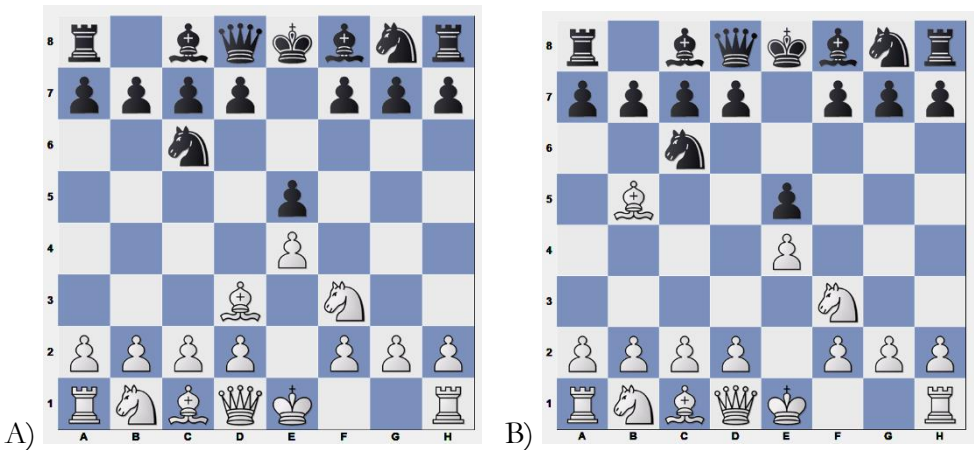
B is an actual opening called the Grob but is much less suited for being a classical opening. It does allow for the development of the light-squared Bishop, but if Black simply plays d5, he is immediately making a threat on the g4 Pawn and White will be required to waste time to some degree to protect the Pawn. Reflecting on a previous chapter dealing with advantages, White will be giving up time unnecessarily.

This is where we truly begin working on problem solving technique, it is important to reflect:

Every master was once a beginner  
Every pro started as an amateur  
Every icon began as an unknown

**Robin Sharma**

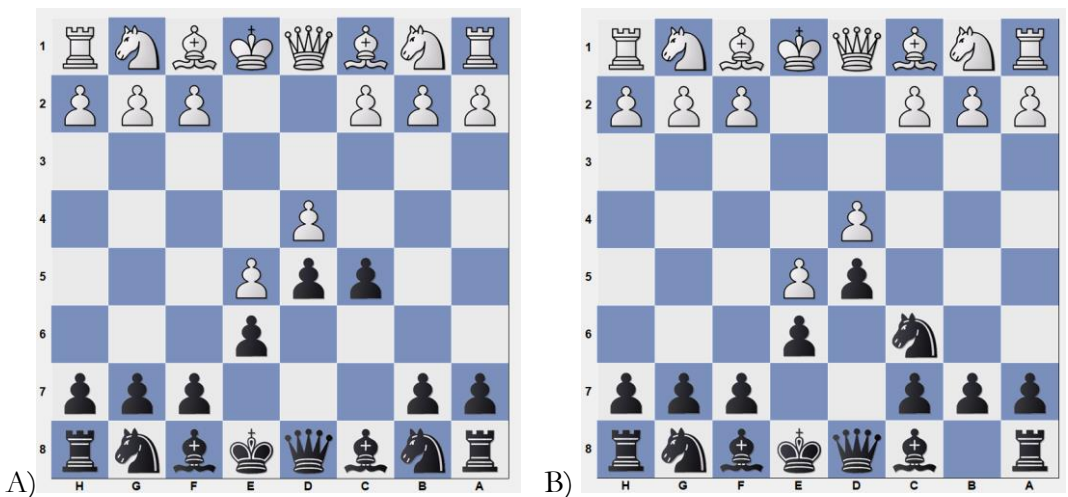
## Set 2



A places a Bishop trying to control the center, but it has poor quality. It would be much better to place the Bishop on c4 or b5; on c4 it would be directly attacking the center and the weakest point in the starting position in chess (f7).

B is a strong example of indirectly attacking the center. White's Knight is attacking the e5 pawn, so Black's Knight defended it. White developed his Bishop to capture Black's Knight, thereby removing the guard of the Pawn.

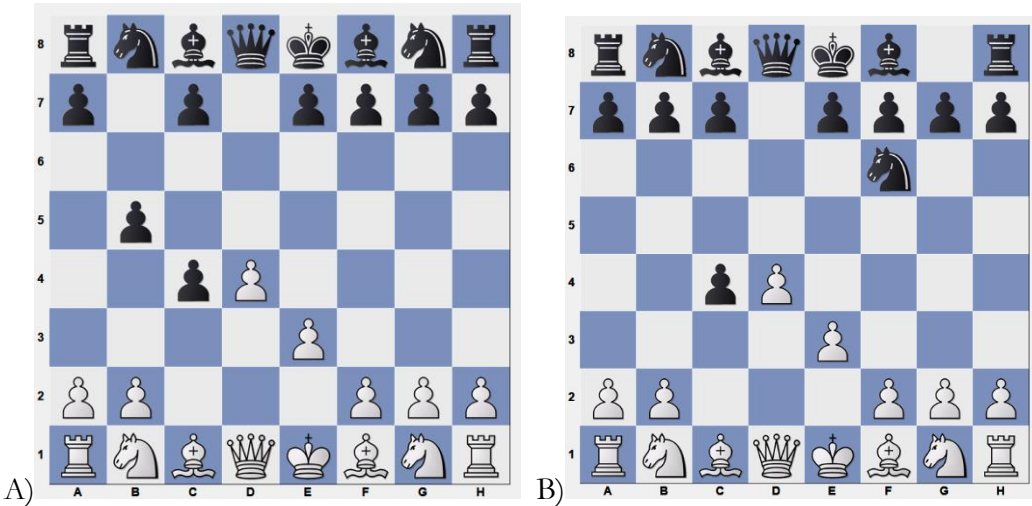
## Set 3



A is the better choice as the center is locked; it must be torn down with Pawns. Only Pawns can break pawns; pieces support the **Pawn Lever**.

B Develops the Knight in front of the pawn, Black will find himself in a bad position.

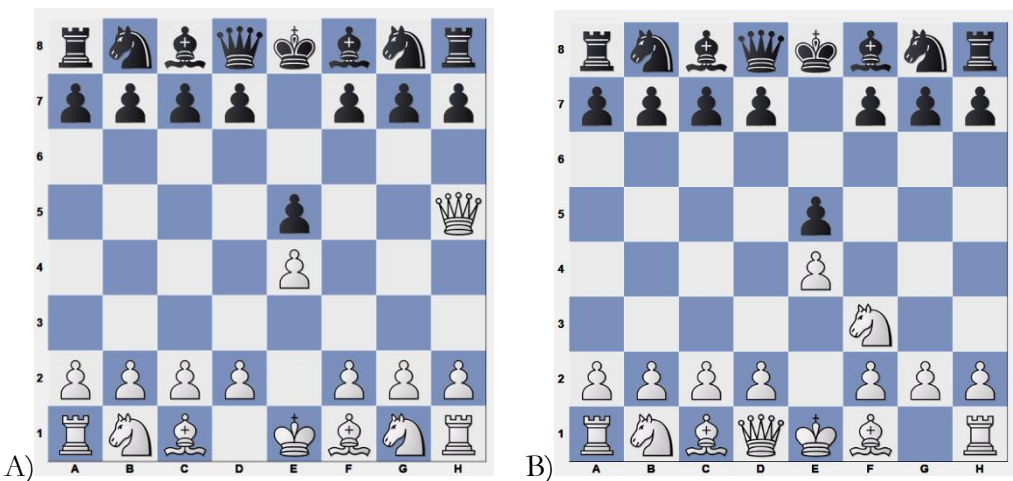
### Set 4



A disregards development to try and be greedy and hold onto a Pawn. This will lead to issues with development and overextend weaknesses.

B develops a Knight and is improving the position. The next step for Black is to fight for the center (c5) because without a Pawn there, White will claim the center with Pawns and Black's minor pieces will be kicked around.

### Set 5



A brings the Queen out too early; Black will be able to defend his Pawn with **2.Nc6** and on the following move attack the Queen with a developmental move like **g6** or **Nf6**, gaining time while the Queen runs away.

B is a solid developmental move as the Knight is needed out of the way for castling, and it is immediately making a threat on the e-Pawn.



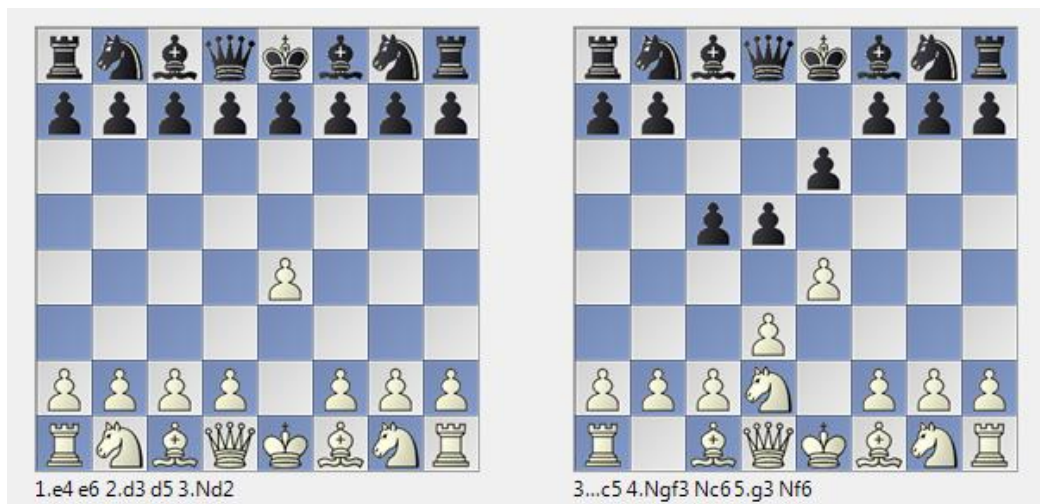
## Looking at a Complete Opening

**Pro Tip:** *When going over a game, use two chess boards! Use one board for the main game and the second board for the sidelines so you don't get confused.*

Dvoretzky, M versus Damsky, Y  
Moscow, 1970

The following game would not be available for us to study had the players not taken the time to write it down. Study your own games deeply to advance your skills.

**Teacher Tip:** *We strongly suggest you play through the game on your own board and try to guess the following moves before they come. Take a sheet of paper and cover the White moves for the game. Once you have thought of a move, then check to see if the player in the game played what you did. This is an excellent training activity to slowly go through a game while attempting to play like a Grandmaster.*



This game is a model of how to play the King's Indian Attack for White by the late Mark Dvoretzky. He is famed as one of the greatest trainers of a generation and his endgame text is one of the best chess books written for master-level players.

Notice with the first moves of the game that both players are interacting in the innermost 4 squares (e4, e5, d4, d5); these squares make up the center and all openings are governed under the principle of central control.

Keep in mind that we want to control the center due to piece mobility in conjunction with our aforementioned rules. If a Knight is placed on the edge of the board (h3 or a3), we have lopped off half of his possibilities. The typical desired squares for Knights

are f3 and c3, with secondary squares of d2 and e2. In this case, White elected to place his Knight on d2 so it wouldn't be attacked by the Pawn push to d4, forcing him to move the Knight again and waste time.



6.Bg2 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Re1 b6



9.e5 Nd7 10.Nf1 Bb7 11.h4

As the opening moves along, we see our principles developing. Control the center and maintain it; this prevents your pieces from being kicked around. Next we have King safety; both sides prepare and then castle. Once all minor pieces are developed and the Kings are safe, it's time to fight.

In the second preceding diagram, we see White kicking the Knight on f6 by pushing the Pawn to e5. The Knights on the f file are typically the best defenders of the King. When you're attacking, it's great to make your opponent waste time and weaken the area around his King.



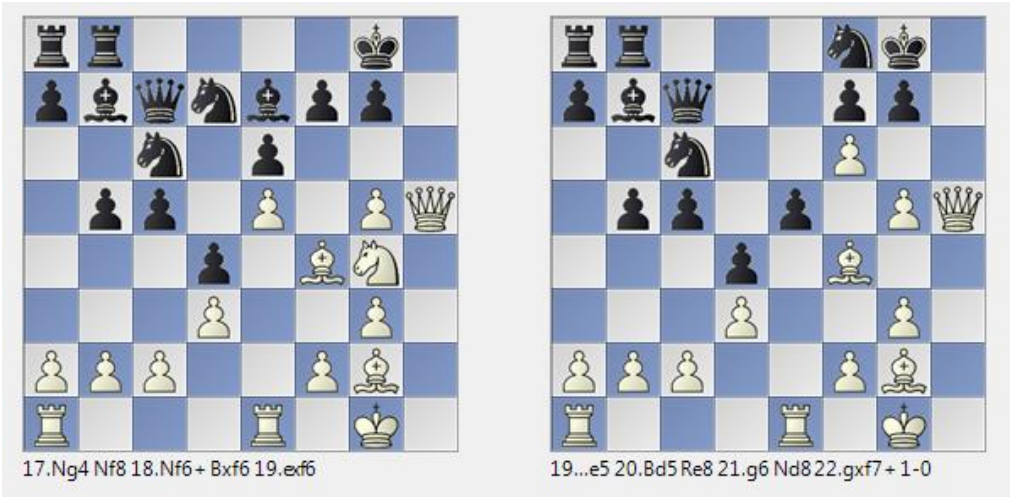
11...Qc7 12.Bf4 b5 13.N1h2 d4



14.Ng5 h6 15.Qh5 hxg5 16.hxg5 Rfb8

At this phase of the game, White is collecting his pieces toward the weakened King for an all-out attack. This plan is available because we were able to get rid of the Knight.

**Pro Tip:** *Too often do chess players go after the King when he is well defended. Do not directly attack the King in the opening unless you are at the same time benefiting yourself with development and flexibility.*



White would not be denied; the breakthrough on the Kingside leads to a brutal attack ending with resignation.

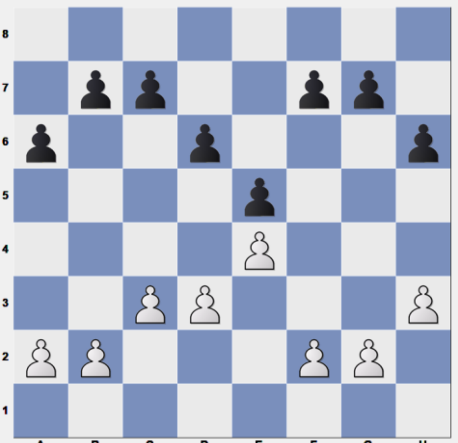


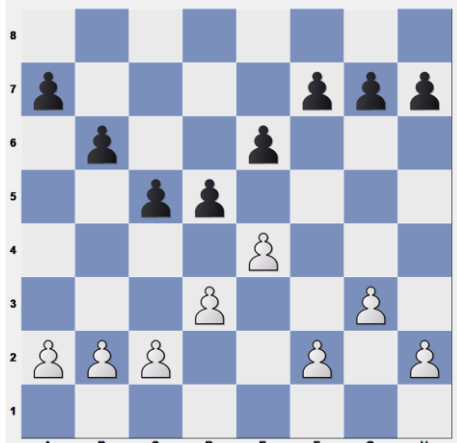
Mark Dvoretsky one of the greatest endgame trainers of all time.

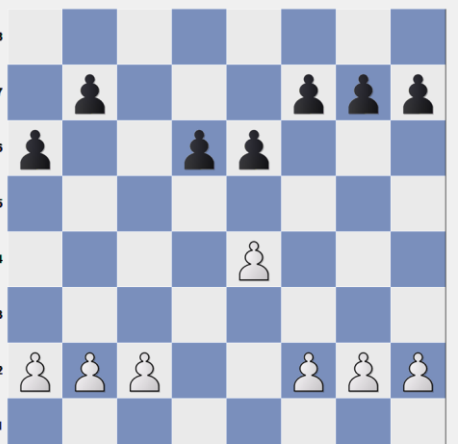
## Activity 2: Where Do They Go?

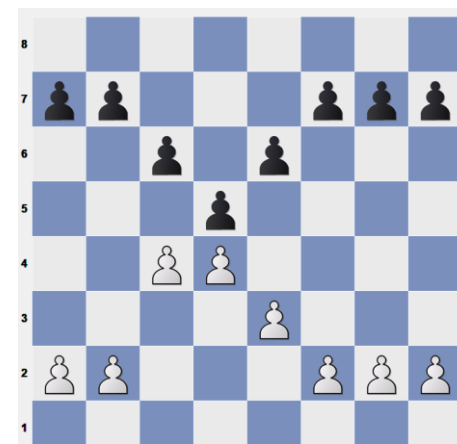
Use the Pawn structures in these commonly occurring openings by placing the pieces on your perceived ideal squares and explain the rationale behind the placement. It is easy to hear something and forget it; it is difficult to forget it if you have placed thorough effort! Be sure to use your own paper and write down where and why.

This activity can help find style and comfortable planning.

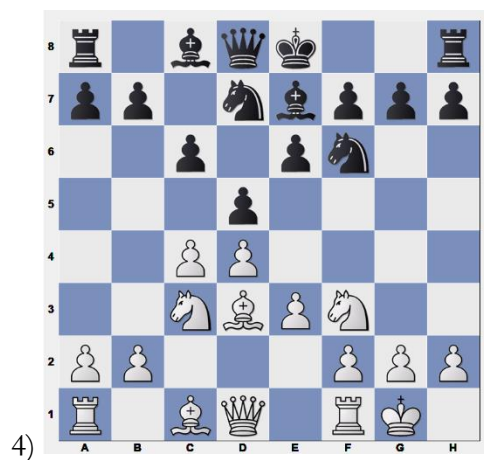
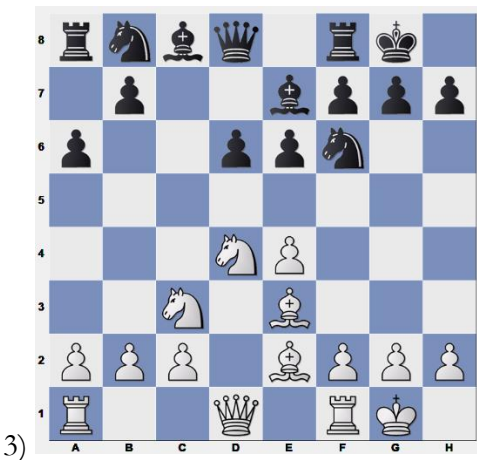
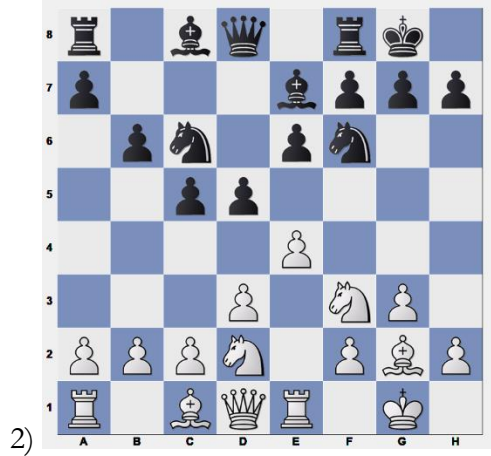
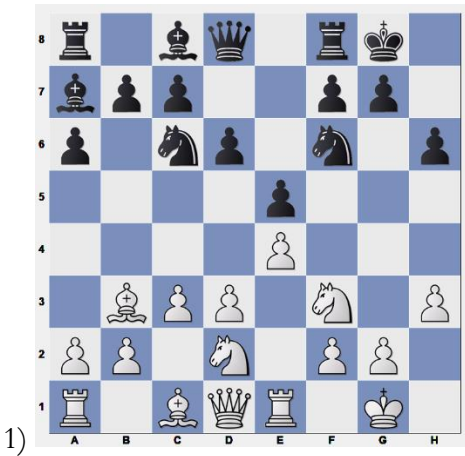
1) 

2) 

3) 

4) 

## Answers



In all of these positions, either White, Black, or both sides have pieces that are not developed. We are not out of the opening phase of the game until we have our King safe and have all minor pieces developed effectively.

Plans in the opening are based off the structure and the necessity of developing your worst piece.

Notice the difference between your answers and the ones here; what is different? Why is this position better or worse than what you have? How would you complete development?

**Pro Tip:** Many chess databases exist online for free. One of the best ways to learn an opening is to study the best players who play it; look the position up!

# Chapter 9: Tactical Radar



“Tactics flow from a superior position.” —Bobby Fischer

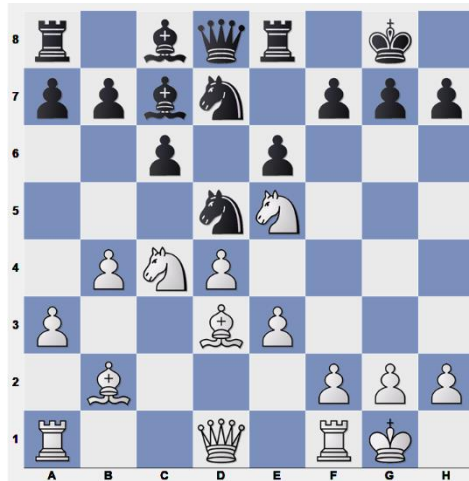
A *tactic* is usually one or moves that are played to gain a material advantage.

Without knowing it, you have already learned several tactical ideas in the chapters about Bishops, Knights, Rooks, and Queens. Forks, pins, skewers, and double attacks are all types of tactics that you have already seen.

**Pro Tip:** *Checks, Captures, Threats...this is the order of operations when solving tactical problems. This goes from most Forcing to least forcing tactical order of operations. Pay careful attention to this concept on the following page as it is the basis of all tactical inquiry.*

## Building a Radar

The first thing we do after the opening is take certain considerations into account, evaluate the position in general terms. In any given position, we must always be alert for the possibility of a tactic gaining a substantial advantage. It is extremely important to hone tactical awareness through subconscious means as much of the time tactics are solved from previous experience. Let’s take a look at this example, which happened in an Internet Chess Club (ICC) game:



Tillis versus NN, 2016

Things to note about the position (Black's last move was **Nd5**):

- All of White's minor pieces are developed (better use of time).
- White's King is safe.
- Black's pieces are not well developed.
- Black's pieces are not defending the King adequately.

Typically after the opening phase of development, you are ready to attack.

Black has failed to develop all of his pieces, and White has few things to worry about. **Nd5** takes away Black's best defender of the Kingside. Based off the breakdown of elements, we know we have extra time to attack and Black's Kingside is weak. White played the move **Bxh7** and went on to win easily by using his Queen and Knights to deliver the final blow to the weak King.

The preceding example hopefully gave a sense that a number of elements (as discussed in previous chapters) jumped out like "spider sense" in order to find the solution. This is what we like to call the *tactical radar*, which at all times is scanning for *forcing variations* or *forcing moves*.

Forcing moves in order of importance are the following:

- Checks
- Captures
- Threats

If there are no forcing moves available in the position, take these elements into account: **Use prophylaxis:** Do something to stop your opponent from doing what he wishes to do.

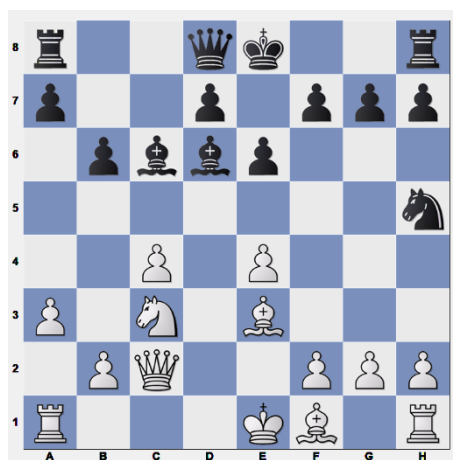
Before we move on to examples, let's make note of tactics linked with forcing moves. Think about a very simple tactics book that contains just checkmate puzzles. If the question asks for checkmate in one, we know that we need to look at all of the checks to find the solution. This helps train our brain to first look at King safety in the position. With the study of other tactical themes in conjunction with the thinking process, we learn not only how to win material but also how to avoid our opponent's tactical threats using prophylaxis. Tactics teaches you what to do in the middlegame if you use them properly.

Two final points with planning:

1. Focus on the forcing moves of each piece even if the move looks terrible; you do this especially when your opponent is going to win on the next move. Develop that sense of urgency (think of Queen sacrifices leading to mate). In order to play like a master, you must consider the moves that are outside the box, finding creative solutions to problems.
2. After each move your opponent makes, figure out what he did and how it directly affected the position in that moment or how it is about to affect the position. In other words, ask yourself: "What did my opponent's move just do?"

Even one of the greatest defensive minds in the history chess (World Champion Anatoly Karpov) can slip and fall due to turning the tactical radar off:

GM Larry Christiansen versus GM Anatoly Karpov (1993)



**12. Qd1!** Double attacking the Knight and Bishop



## Tactical Themes

There are many tactical themes in chess, and we selected what we deem the most important themes for an individual completely new to chess. Our tactics rules:

- When studying tactics, you should think about a problem no more than 10 minutes; give yourself a timer and do not cheat! It is the effort that activates multiple parts of the brain!
- Much like people do with bodybuilding, focus on the quality, not quantity, of tactics solved.
- If an idea isn't clear, read the notes in the solution and mark the problem for further study.
- Create a database of tactics positions that you couldn't solve when studying tactics or when playing games.

*The most important rule:* Do not simply go through the tactic and get it correct once and feel like you know it and will remember it forever. When you are studying, there is no pressure, no real constraint like in a tournament game, and no real risk of failure. You want to study the same tactics over and over and over so that when you get into the pressure situation, it is muscle memory. The idea is to do the problem until you get it right, and study it until you can never get it wrong.

**Pro Tip:** *First, go through the tactics once, noting what you got wrong, then return only to solve those tactics. Next time you pick up this book, your goal is being able to go through every tactic in under an hour without getting a problem wrong; then you have completed the task. This study of tactical themes is serious and painstaking, but from our experience, students who have the stomach to keep studying tactics with such vigilance become tactical monsters that everyone is afraid to face.*

Studying tactics helps with pattern recognition. In the process of finding “the plan” in a position, we want to be able to spot tactics as quickly as possible in order to save time and energy with our games. The majority of those reading this book are at a level of Unrated to 1400 USCF rated (which we will explain more in the tournament chapter); you are at the level where tactics account for the majority of results in your games. Fundamentally, your skill at recognizing tactical themes is the single most important element of your growth at this time. We get tactics from two methods: studying tactical themes and losing games to opponents with greater tactical aptitude.

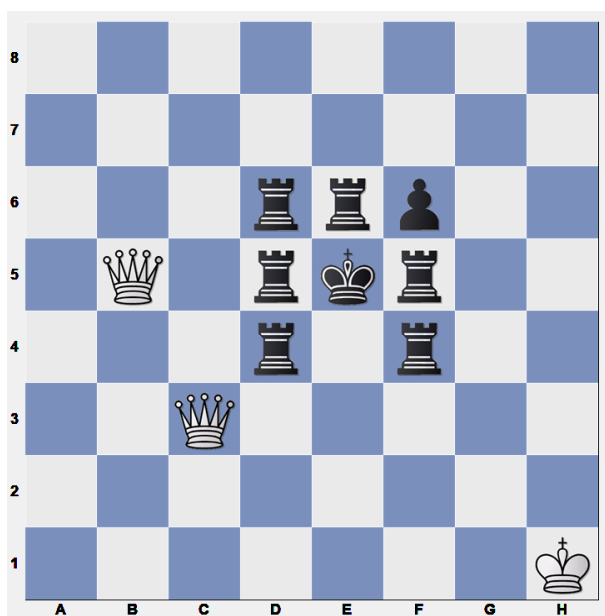
## Solving Problems versus Practical Play

When solving tactics, our job is easier than in a real game. We have a given question and a solution, whereas in chess it isn't always so clear. Studying tactics on similar themes is meant to chunk information together, making it easier to find similar tactical themes in your games. In the first diagram in this chapter, previous training and experience attacking a weak King lead to the idea of sacrificing the Bishop on h7; calculation backed the idea up.

Keep in mind: *Calculation without a plan is wasted effort.*

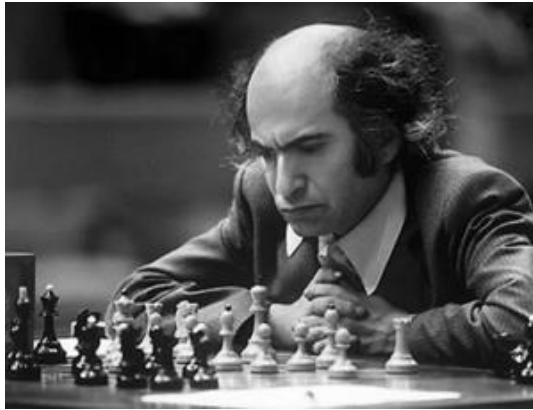
It has been said too many times, but “chess is 99 percent tactics.” Think about the symmetry in the beginning of the game. If you do not create favorable imbalances through understanding and tactics, you will not be able to achieve victory.

We want you to be excited about your tactical training; not all problems are arduous and pattern-worthy. Some are for pure pleasure . . . like clockwork!



White to move

Some problems can be solved out of a necessity or need to make forcing moves. This problem is visibly beautiful when you recognize the pattern needed to win. The World Champion Mikhail Tal (picture next page) once said, “You must take your opponent into a deep dark forest where  $2 + 2 = 5$ , and the path leading out is only wide enough for one.”

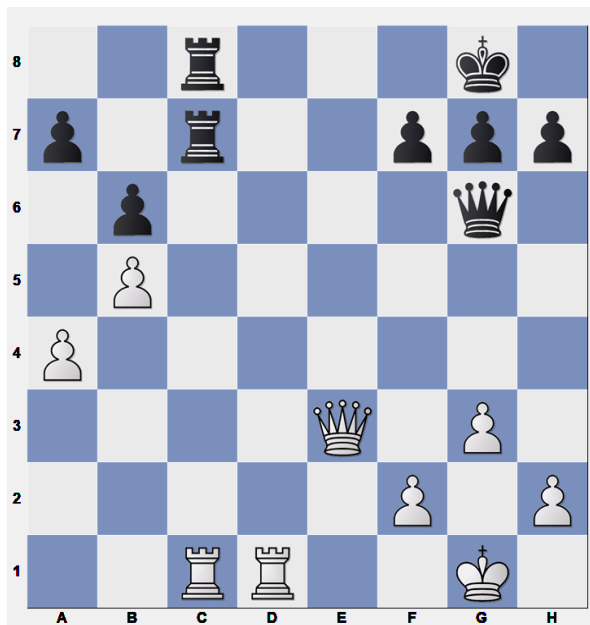


Some tactics are intuitive and too deep to calculate but the feel in the position—what to do by being guided by principles—will help you more than brute force calculation.

### Clockwork Solution

1. Qe2+ Rfe4 2. Qg3+ Rff4 3. Qh5+ f5 4. Qg7+ Rf6 5. Qe8+ Rde6 6. Qc7+ Rdd6  
 7. Qb5+ R4d5 8. Qc3+ Red4 9. Qe2+ Rfe4 10. Qg3+ f4 11. Qh5+ Rf5 12. Qg7+ Ref6  
 13. Qe8+ Rde6 14. Qc7+ Rdd6 15. Qb5+ R4d5 16. Qc3+ Red4 17. Qe2#

### Tactics Introduction



Why do we solve checkmating tactics? First and foremost, solving checkmating tactics trains the mind to constantly be looking at where the King is located and if he is

vulnerable. The most powerful concept to use for an attacker is check! When the opponent is in check, she must react to it, whereas you can continue attacking.

As a reminder, keep in mind we want to consider:

- Checks
- Captures
- Threats (setting up checks and captures typically)

If we apply this method in the preceding example:

1. We find that both checks (**1.Qe8** or **1.Rd8**) are met with losing a piece.
2. Then we try captures. **1.Rxc7** is most logical, now if **1...Rxc7**

We can see that that moving our Rook or Queen to the back rank puts Black in checkmate. When we play **Rxc7**: If Black recaptures we removed the only guard of the back rank and can play **Qe8** or **Rd8** and it is checkmate.

Carefully understand the thinking process of this problem as it is first used when solving problems until your brain is trained to find certain themes by deep tactical study. First, identify the problem, then solve it!

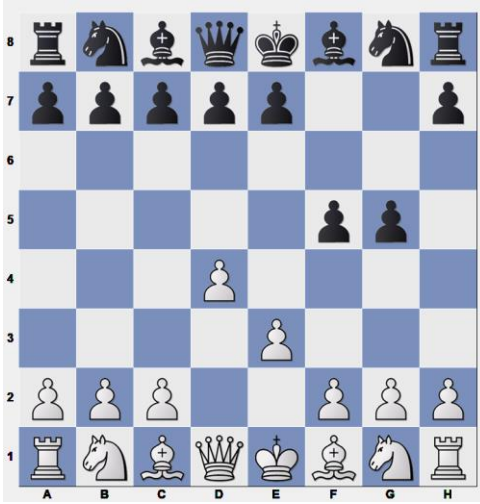
### Solving Tactics

- All of the following problems are White to move
- Be sure to attempt to solve the tactic yourself prior to looking at the answers
- Make sure to take note of the problems you miss and review
- Have fun, tactics are difficult but are the soul of chess

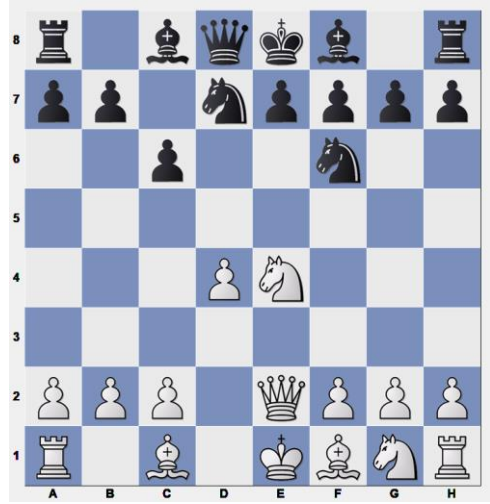
This chapter obviously has a lot more examples than any other. As we discussed before, the best way to learn tactics is through repetition and practice. There are many resources and books that will help you improve your tactical radar, but for now try solving the following examples again and again. Time yourself until you can solve all 32 problems in less than 4 minutes. Only when you can achieve this, and understand why you are making the moves you are, have you truly engrained them into your brain and mastered the concepts outlined.

# Checkmate Tactics

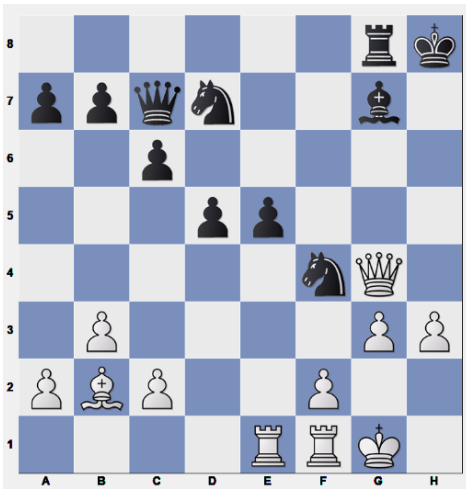
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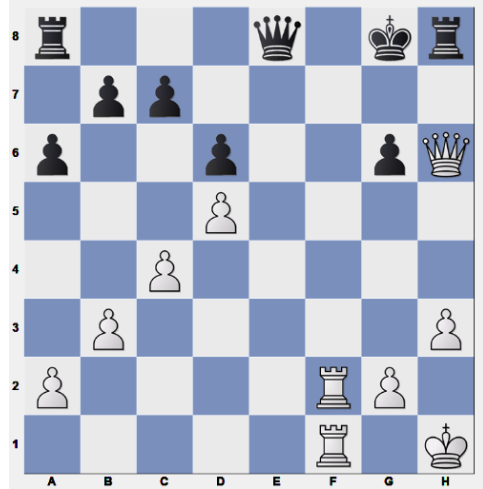
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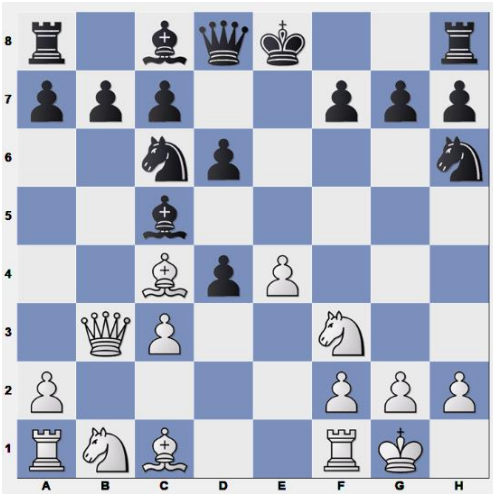


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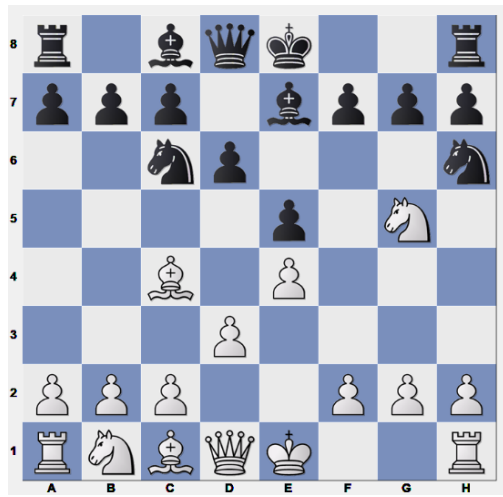


## f2 and f7 Tactics

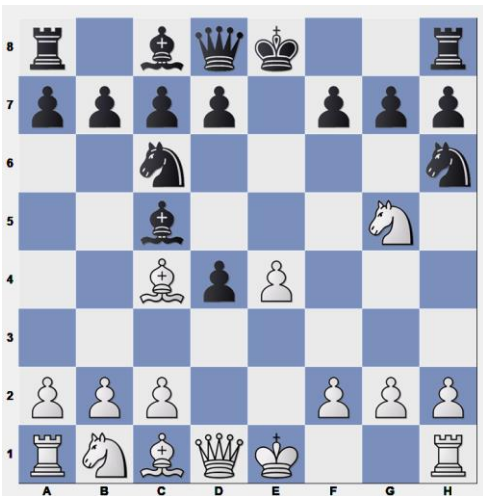
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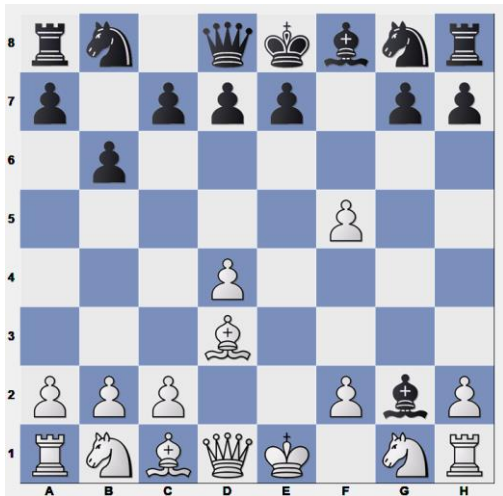
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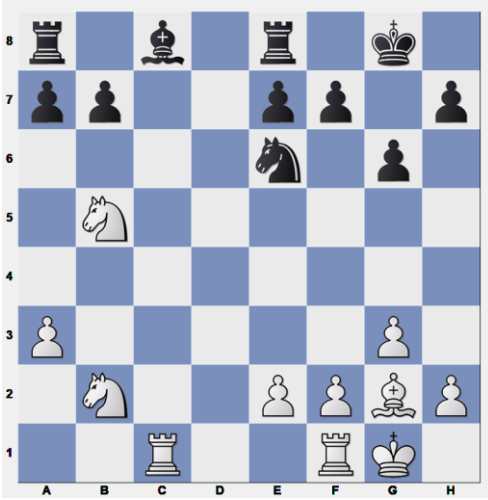


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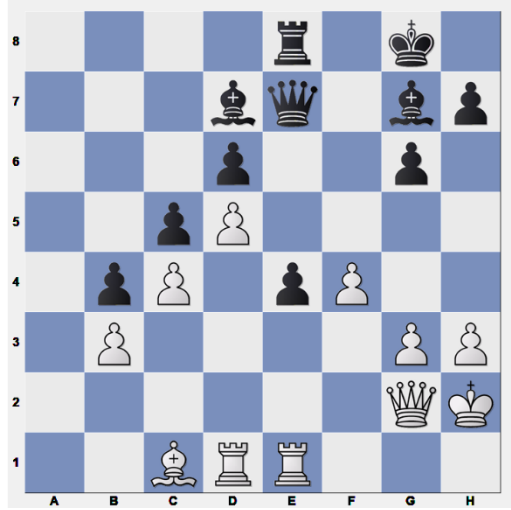


# Simplification Tactics

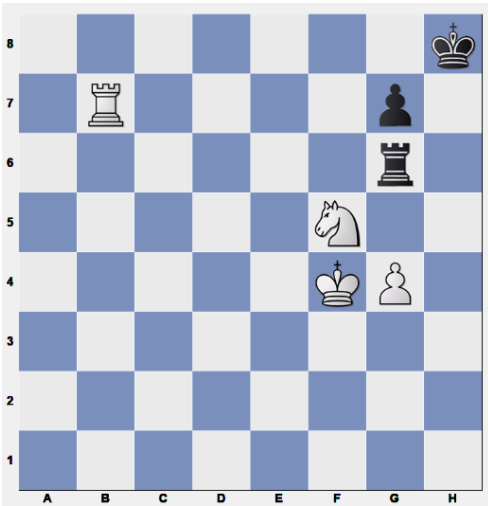
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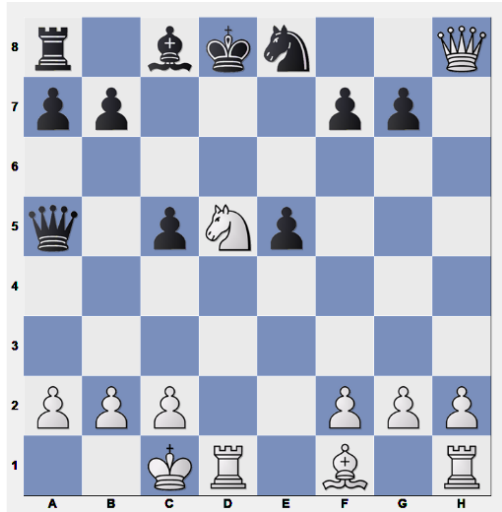
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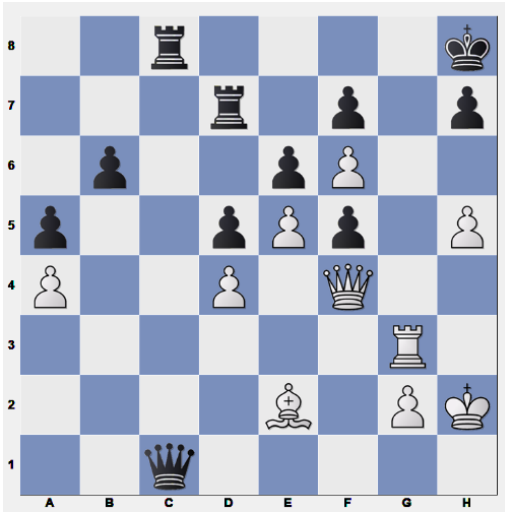


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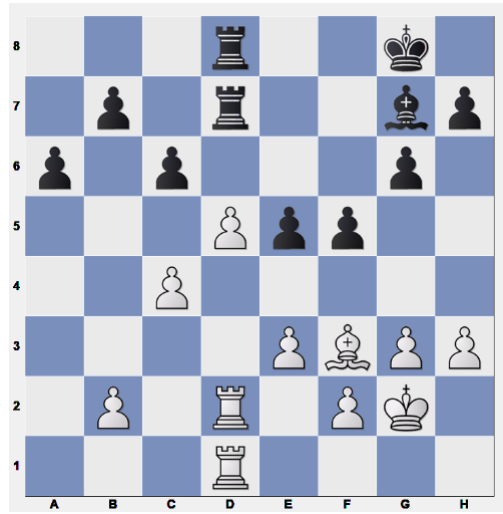


## Removing the Guard

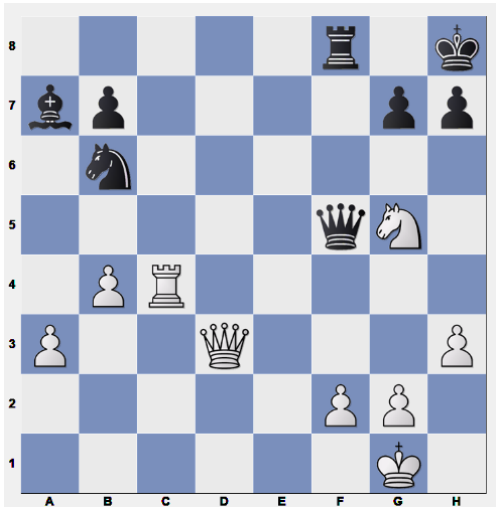
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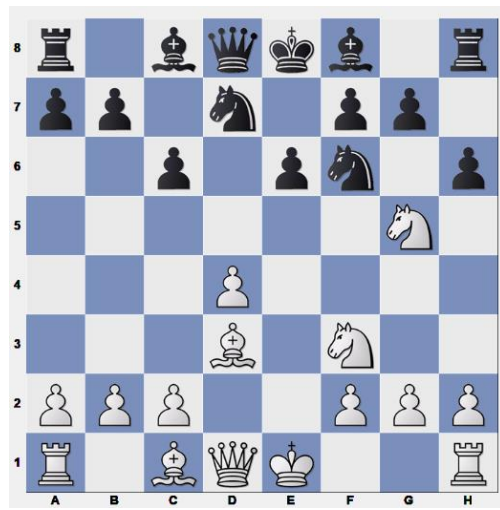
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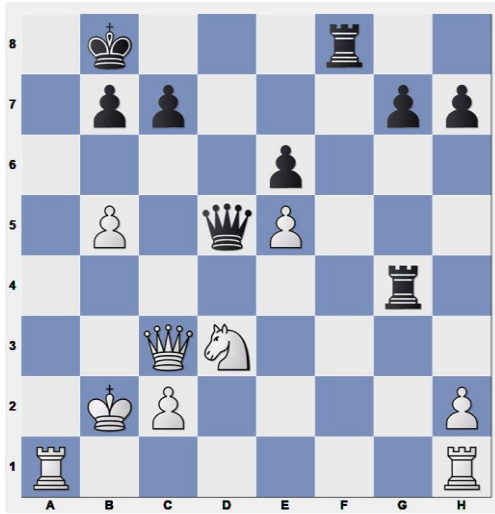
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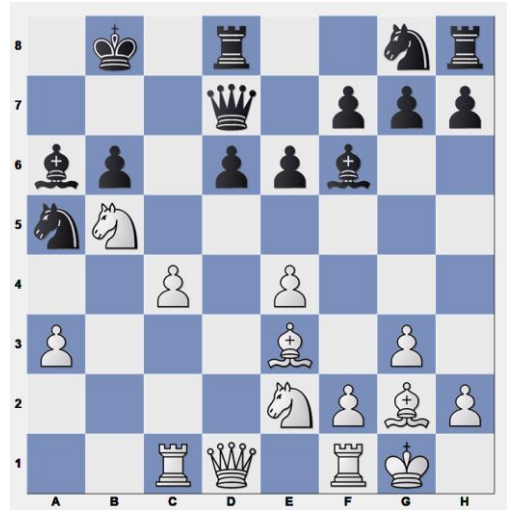


## Forks and Double Attacks

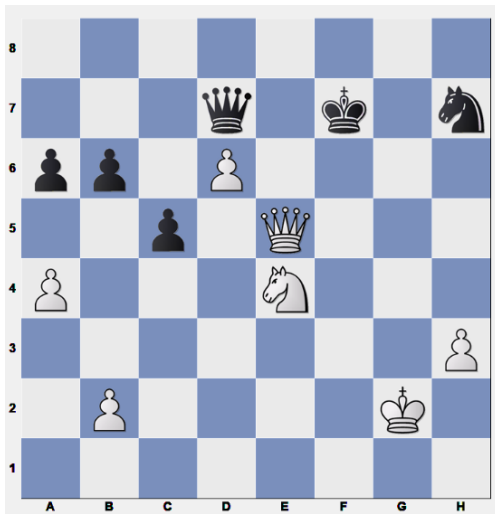
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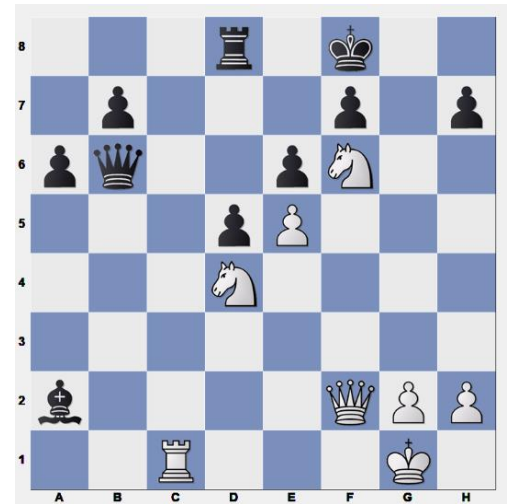
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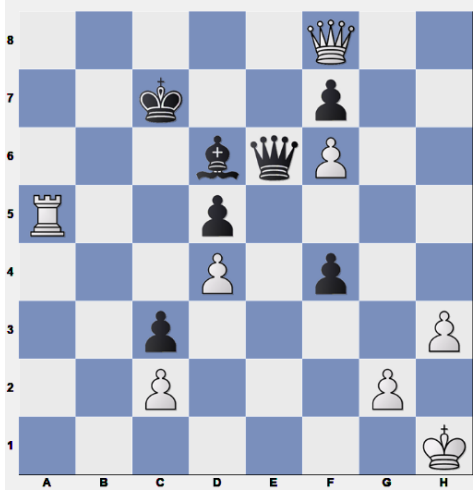


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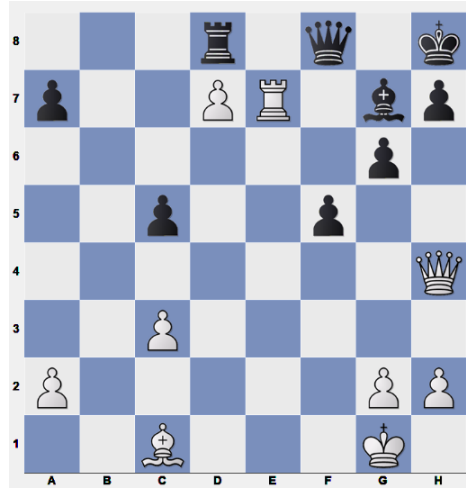


# Skewers

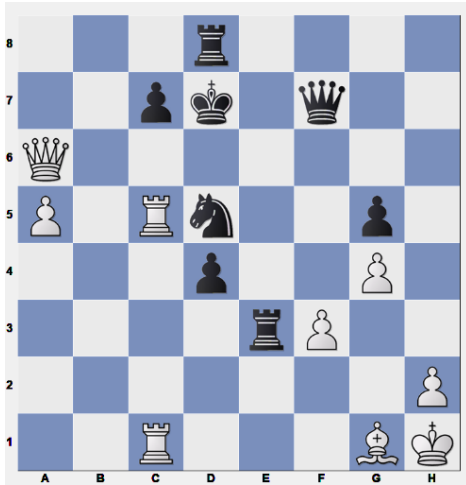
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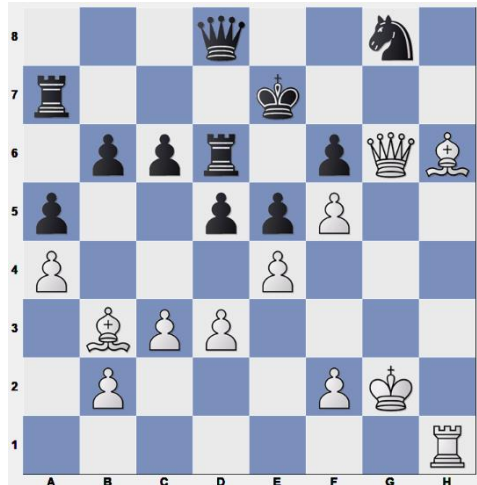
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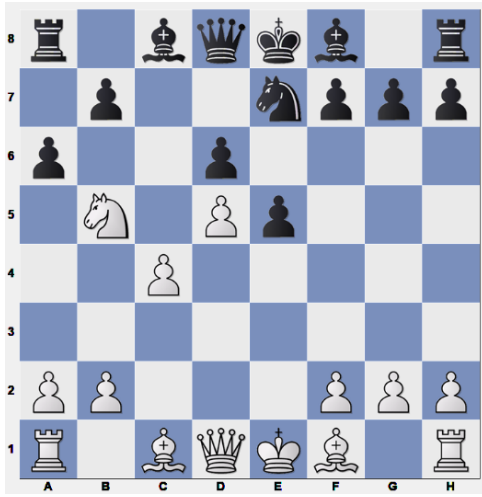


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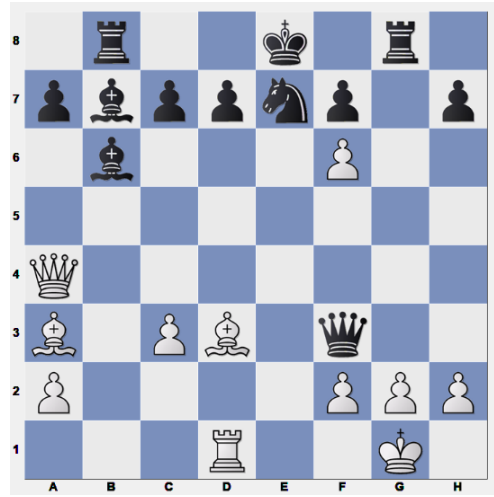


## Discovered Check

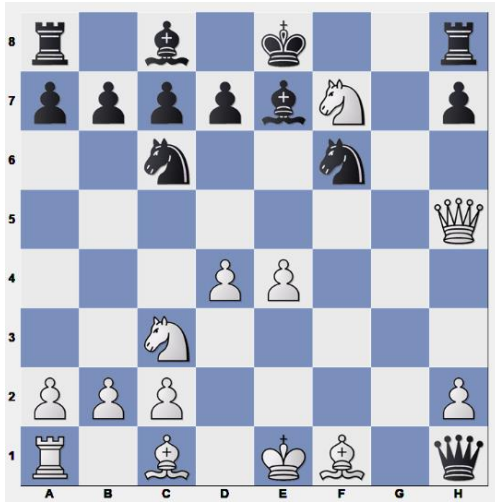
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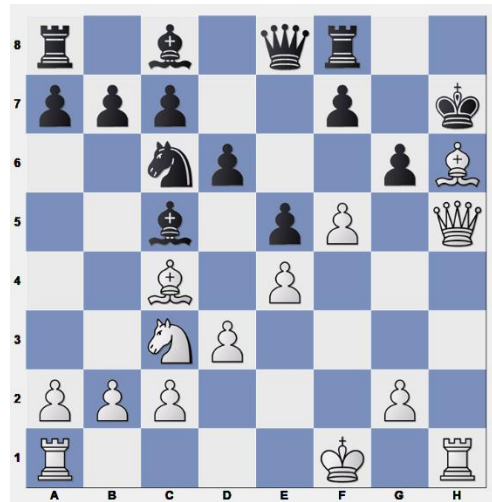
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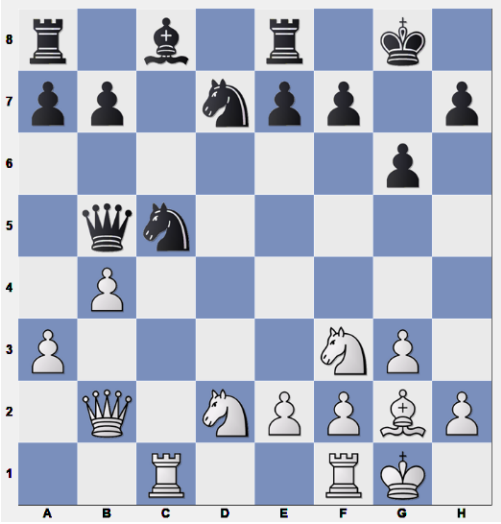


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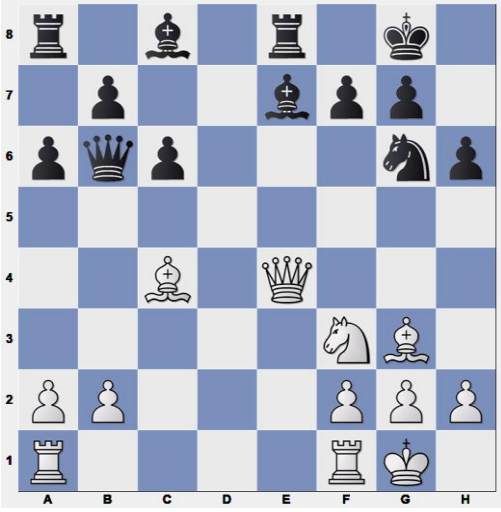


# Overloading Pins

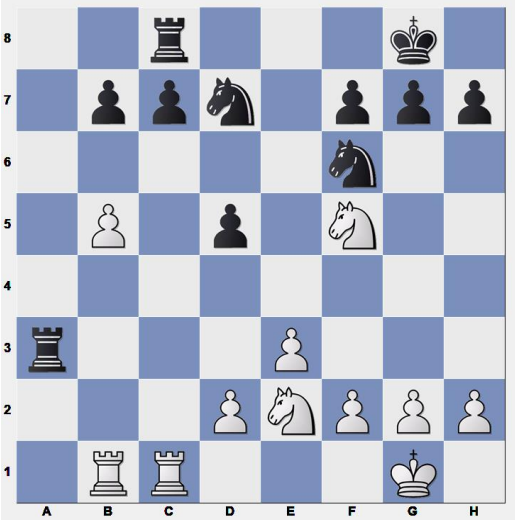
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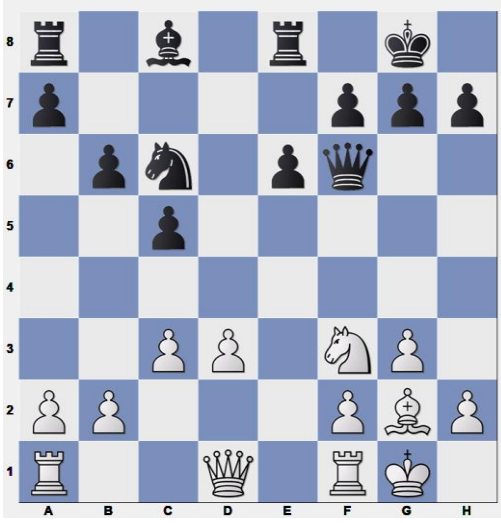
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## Tactics Solutions

### Checkmate Answers:

1. **1.Qh5#** (Fool's Mate)
2. **1.Nd6#**
3. **1.Qh4 Nh5 2.Qxh5 Bh6 3.Qxh6#**
4. **1.Rf8+ Qxf8 2.Rxf8+ Rxf8 3.Qxg6#** (Epaulet Mate)

### f2+f7 Answers:

1. Remove the defender with **1.Bxh6 gxh6 2.Bxf7!** This wins material and keeps Black's King unsafe forever.
2. There is no win on f7 as Black has adequately defended the square; White has wasted time with **Ng5** and will be returning back home soon.
3. **1.Bxf7+ Nxf7 2.Nxf7 Kxf7 3.Qh5+ g6 4.Qxc5** White has gotten back his sacrificed piece and Black's King is unsafe.
4. White must react quickly and forcefully as he will lose a piece otherwise; hopefully you noticed the weak Black King! **1.Qh5+ g6 2.fxg6 Nf6 3.gxh7! Nxh5 4.Bg6#**

### Simplification Answers:

1. **1.Nc7** forces the trade of the Knight and getting a Rook to the 7th rank, where the Rook will dominate.
2. **1.Bb2** The piece was doing nothing; opposing Black's strong Bishop and magnifying the advantage by trading are correct. After trading Bishops, White will target the e4 Pawn and make progress.
3. This could be a difficult ending to win, but if White has studied his King and Pawn endgames, he will find that **1.Rxg7** wins as the White King will have opposition and be able to Queen the Pawn with accurate play. The first position in the endgame chapter deals with this position.
4. You probably looked at this position and said everything wins. You are probably right, but we like these moves: **1.Nf6+ Ke7 2.Qxe8+ Kxf6 3.Qd8+** The computer hates this move as it takes longer to win the game than playing for checkmate, but from a human perspective, there is zero chances for Black to win with the Queens off the board, and Black resigned on this move.

### Removing the Guard Answers:

1. **1.Rg8+** as Black is left with two horrible choices: 1) Take with the Rook and lose his Queen or 2) Take with the King and get mated after **Qg3+**.
2. Black has seriously underestimated the power of Pawns. **1.dxc6!! Rxd2 2.Rxd2 Rxd2 3. c7!** The guard has been removed and the Pawn will now become a Lady.
3. **1.Rf4!** If the Queen takes the Rook: **Qxh7#** or **Qg6** leads to **Rxf8#**.

- An idea made famous in the final game of the Deep Blue–Kasparov match. White played **1.Nxe6 fxe6 2.Bg6+** where the discoordination of Black’s pieces led to a nearly untenable position.

Forks and Double Attacks Answers:

- 1.Qa3** attacks the Rook on f8 as well as threatens mate on a8. Black can attempt checking the King, but he will simply go to c1 and avoid trouble.
- 1.Bxb6** takes a free Pawn and attacks both the Knight on a5 and the Rook on d8.
- 1.Qh5+ Kg8 2.Qxh7+** King or Queen takes leads to the Knight fork.
- 1.Nd7+! Rxd7** (otherwise the Black Queen is lost) **2.Rc8+ Rd8 3.Nxe6!+ Qxe6 4.Rxd8**

Skewers Answers:

- In the first case, former World Champion Viswanathan Anand missed **1.Qxf7+ Qxf7 2.Ra7+** winning
- 1.Rxg7!** sets up a winning skewer if **Qxg7 2.Qxd8+** or if **1...Kxg7 2.Bh6+**, winning the Queen.
- 1.Rxc7 Nxc7 2.Rxc7 Kxc7 3.Qa7+** wins the Black Queen.
- 1.Qg7+ Ke8 2.Qxg8+! Kd7 3.Qh7+!! Qe7 4.Bf8 Qxh7 5.Rxh7**, winning the Rook on a7.

Discovered Check Answers:

- With the move **1.Qa4**, a devastating check is threatened. If Black plays **1...Bd7**, the game ends immediately after **2.Nxd6#**.
- 1.Qxd7+!! Kxd7 2.Bf5+**(the strong discovered check) **Ke8 3.Bd7+ Kf8 4.Bxe7#**
- Back to our smothering mate ways . . . hopefully you didn’t forget the pattern from earlier. **1.Nd6+ Kd8 2.Qe8+ Rxe8 3.Nf7#**
- 1.Qxg6!** clears the Queen out of the way for the discovery: **fxg6 2.Bxf8#**

Overloading Tactics Answers:

- 1.Nd4 Qb6 2.Nc4 Qf6 3.bxc5**
- 1.Qxg6** leaves Black with a funny look on his face.
- The Pawn on c7 has difficulties after **1.Nd6** as the Knight is immune to capture under threat of losing the exchange.
- White begins by creating a pin with **1.Ne5!** if **Qxe5 2.Bxc6** This forks the Rooks and if **2...Nxe5 3.Bxa8** wins the exchange.

# Chapter 10: Notation and Analysis

**Authors' Note:** *This chapter is included as beginners always struggle when initially taking notation. They focus more on the perfectionism of keeping a proper scoresheet that they lose all sight of the game that they came to play in the first place. This chapter provides a framework for not only how and why we take notation but how to effectively learn from your notation.*

Notation is the term for several systems that have developed to record either the moves made in a game of chess or the position of pieces on a chess board. The majority of chess players use *algebraic notation*, seen throughout this book.

**Teacher Tip:** *Much like with history, if we fail to record the moves in a chess game, the ideas will be lost.*

 <b>US CHESS</b>			<b>888.512.4377 (CHESS)</b> <b>www.USCFSales.com</b>		<b>OFFICIAL SCORE SHEET</b>
EVENT				DATE	
ROUND		BOARD	SECTION		OPENING
WHITE		BLACK	PAIRING NO.		
WHITE	BLACK	WHITE	BLACK		
1		31			
2		32			
3		33			
4		34			
5		35			
6		36			
7		37			
8		38			
9		39			
10		40			
11		41			
12		42			
13		43			
14		44			
15		45			
16		46			
17		47			
18		48			
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21		51			
22		52			
23		53			
24		54			
25		55			
26		56			
27		57			
28		58			
29		59			
30		60			
CIRCLE CORRECT RESULT:		WHITE WON	DRAW	BLACK WON	
SIGNATURE			SIGNATURE		

This scoresheet is typical for tournaments around the United States.

## Notation Methodology

It is essential to have a process when taking notation that trains you to write your move in as little effort as pressing the clock or moving the pieces themselves:

1. Make your move on the board.
2. Press the clock to start your opponent's time.
3. Write down your move.

This process that we advocate goes against classical grain: Coaches often cite Alexander Kotov, who, in his classic book, *Think Like a Grandmaster*, advocates writing the move first before making your move.

Due to changes in the rule system, this is now considered illegal and can gain a warning. According the *USCF Rule Book*: “The player must first make the move, and then record it on the score sheet.”

Here is the added rationale for why you should use our order:

- Over the course of a 40-move game, you will save yourself 3–5 seconds a move, yielding more thinking time especially in a game of 30 minutes, common in scholastic tournaments.
- If you write your move down first, it allows your opponent to see it and be able to be thinking on your time for a response, wasting your time and giving hints to your opponent.

### ***Pro Tip: Tournament Psychology***

*Do not be distracted by outside forces beyond your control. Keep in mind that rule changes are frequent and tournament directors, in our experience, take it upon themselves to pick and choose rule enforcement and consequences. It does beg the question: Why have a rule book if it is not universally followed?*

*Because being principled is honorable, chess is a noble game, and we should always stick to our principles.*

## Skills Needed for Notation

- The ability to write and not be distracted from your overall game
- Mastery of the alphabet up to the letter h
- Counting up to the number 8



**Teacher Tip:** Many young chess players have not developed the sensory motor skills needed to hold a pen and efficiently write the notation without it ruining their game. Typically in a large tournament, it is not required for students under 10 to write their moves.

Students with special needs who struggle with reading or writing are suggested to investigate one of the USCF-approved scorekeeping devices that will record notation but does not require the laboriousness of writing all of the moves.

### Activity 1: Notation Practice

When someone is teaching students notation, one method used in a classroom setting helps with overall chess knowledge as well as notation practice.

The teacher shows a game between two players and explains the rationale behind each move. While the teacher is going through the game, the students are to write down the notation on a scoresheet while following along.

**Teacher Tip:** If you don't have the resources, in this case a coach or teacher to read out the notation, there are countless amazing games analyzed in video format that you can use for the activity.

### Game Analysis

Now that we have a record of our games, this begs the question: Why did I go to all this effort writing the moves down?

The purpose of writing the moves in your own games yields the highest benefit when learning from your chess games: analysis!

1. What techniques do you use to analyze your games?
2. How much time do you spend on analyzing the game?
3. Are there any tools (electronic or manual, such as a piece of paper) you use during analysis?

**Pro Tip:** Game analysis is the fastest way to improve the quality of your play.

## How to Analyze

When you start analyzing, use a chess board, but *don't use an engine at first*. Look for moves where you made a mistake or missed something important.

Typical mistakes include the following:

- **Blundering:** Losing material without adequate compensation
- **A faulty plan:** In every position, there is a plan or reason why the plan cannot be executed; find the mistake that started the inadequacy.

Put every idea that is found in your notes (handwritten or in a chess program/database). Be sure to analyze your games shortly after the tournament ends to document your thought process and the variations you calculated in the game. This in the future will be very beneficial to pinpoint logical fallacies and mistakes in thought process that need to be corrected.

After you've gone over the game yourself, using 15 minutes to an hour, it is time to bring in the big guns:

First, use a chess database to compare your opening to that of Grandmasters who played the same line.

Second, use a chess engine to analyze the rest of the game. Typically chess engines struggle to give the best evaluation in the beginning of the game as more possibilities clouds their judgment toward finding the best setup.

### ***Pro Tip:***

*Chess Databases can be found for free with a Google search. A few we recommend are these:*

- *Chessgames.com allows you to explore your opening or similar games.*
- *Lichess.com has an analysis tool of exploring a free database of 2 million GM games.*
- *Chesspublishing.com allows you to explore your opening.*
- *365chess.com offers a great database tool.*

*Chess engines can also be found free online and play at a level stronger than the world champion.*

- *Stockfish is one of the strongest engines in the world, and you can download it to a computer or smartphone for free!*

It is extremely useful to go through all of the moves of the game and take note of any spot where the engine says that evaluation changed by more than a point.

**Pro Tip:** Chess engines evaluate the position based on a point system designed from piece value. A point is considered 1 Pawn, 3 points for minor pieces, 5 for a rook, and 9 for a queen. Typically, anything +2 or more is a decisive advantage. When reading the evaluation, 0.00 means equal and the game will likely be drawn, anything above 0 means White has the edge, and anything below zero means Black has the edge.

Add variations (different options) to your notes. If it's not clear why something that the engine suggests is good, investigate it further. Try out some lines and see where it takes you.

After you have completed the self-analysis, go back through and reflect on the mistakes that you made and how you can improve on the process. If you feel that you have not gotten everything from the game that you could, seek out a strong player or coach to help analyze with you! A stronger player can give you suggestions for how to think in certain positions. Basically, a chess engine can show tactical themes instantly and accurately, but at times the computer will make a move that is puzzling. A strong player will be able to tell you plans and long-term ideas needed to fix certain mistakes made that the engine can't convey.



Mikhail Botvinnik 6<sup>th</sup> World Chess Champion

## Actual Game Analysis

**Tillis, Bryan (2010) versus Mclellan, Josh (1930)**

Huntsville Chess Club Tournament

December 26, 2008

[It is important to note that I analyze my games as quickly as I can after the tournament in order to create the best picture of not only the game, but my frame of mind, and thought process. The more information you annotate, the better you will be able to analyze with a coach.]

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e5**

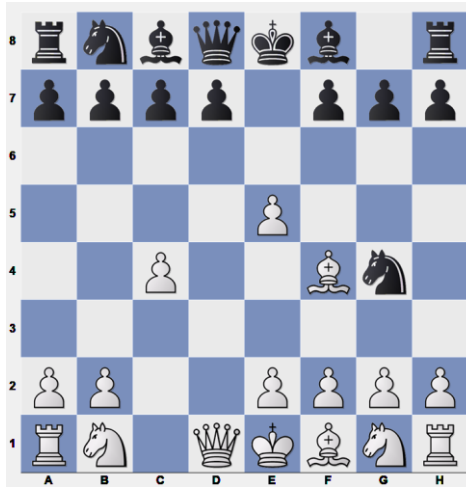


Budapest Gambit

[I went into a deep think here, but not because I was confused or surprised—I simply wanted to remember which variation I wanted to play. I played the Budapest Gambit in blitz on many occasions and attempted a line I had lost against quickly in practice online. My opponent was beaming (big smile) and walking away from the board thinking he had caught me in preparation.]

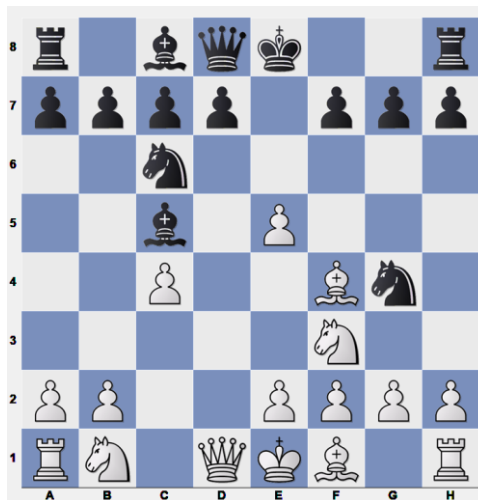
**3.dxe5** [The best way to refute a gambit is to accept it!]

**3...Ng4 4.Bf4** [4.Nf3 is the secondary move, but it has the problem of allowing Black to keep the Bishop on c1 out of the game 4...Bc5 5.e3]



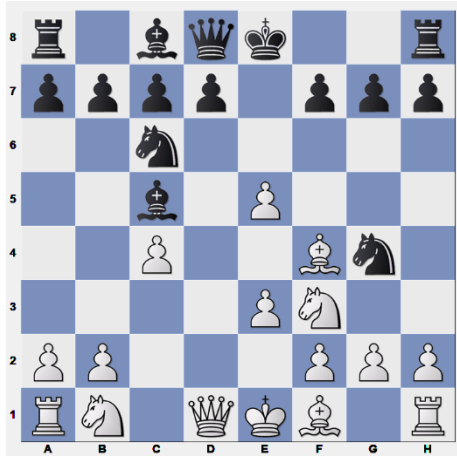
4...Nc6 5.Nf3 [White is simply developing while protecting the Pawn.]

5...Bc5? [This move leads to big problems for Black. Typically the line goes like this:]



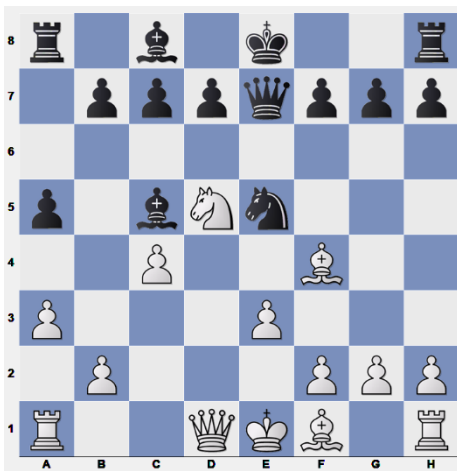
[5...Bb4+ 6.Nc3 It is important to make sure this Knight cannot move! 6...Qe7 7.Qd5 Bxc3+ 8.bxc3 f6 9.exf6 Nxf6 10.Qd3, where White has a slight edge due to his extra Pawn, but Black has an easy target due to the doubled c-Pawns.]

6.e3 [Stopping the attack on f2]

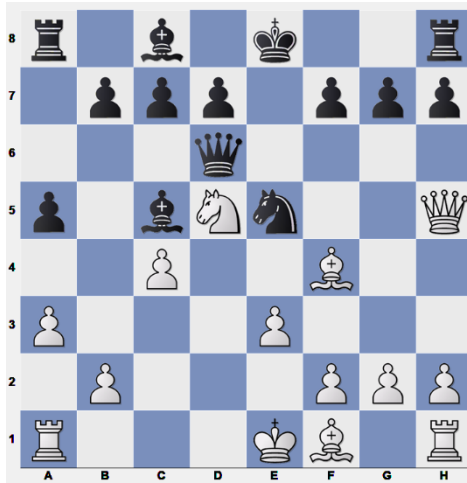


6...Qe7 7.a3 [Stopping the Bishop from going to b4, its natural and best square]

7...a5 8.Nc3 Ngxe5 9.Nxe5 Nxe5 10.Nd5 [This move is devastating to Black's game. The overall takeaway is that Black did not know the details of the opening, and it cost him.]

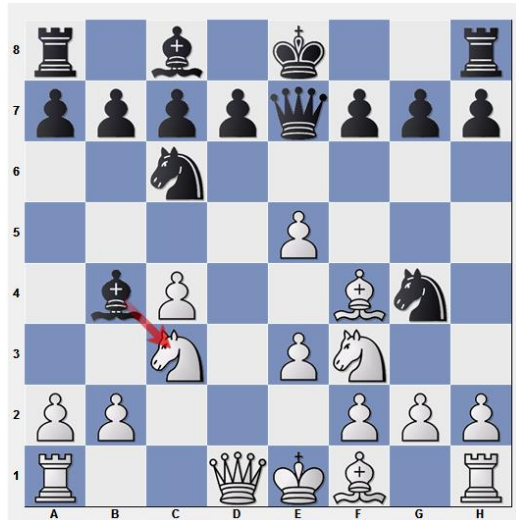


10...Qd6 11.Qh5 [Black loses a piece by force and quickly resigned.]



1-0

This short game has one major flaw for the Black side: On move 5, Black developed his Bishop to the wrong square, not understanding the gravity of the position. This mistake falls under the faulty plan category. If Black had analyzed a few more games before playing this position, the tragedy would not have occurred.



This is a typical position in the Budapest Gambit, it is essential for black to eliminate the c3 Knight to prevent the powerful Nd5 ideas seen in the game.

## Coach's Game Analysis by Steve Abrahams

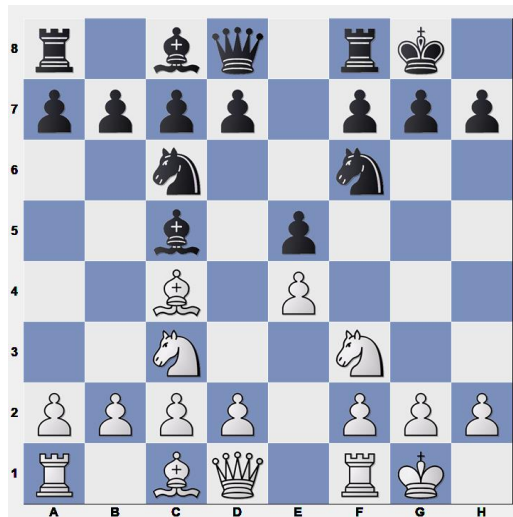
As a coach or parent, it is incredibly important to help your students analyze their games. The following is an example of a game analysis sent to the mother of one of my students via e-mail following a quite good game, considering his rating at the time. Notice that I don't just analyze Keita's moves but both sides equally. As a chess player, you need to realize and admit that your opponent may have had better options even if you had a beautiful game.

Keita (514) versus Sabina (757)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6** [It's probably worth Keita considering Ng5 in this position, as it can create many complications for Black.]

**4.Nc3** [Nc3 can have some trouble after **4...Nxe4 5. Nxe4 d5**. It will be equal material and Black is happy with his development.]

**4...Bc5 5.O-O O-O** [Overall this position is good for both sides. Keita developed toward the center and his King's safe.]

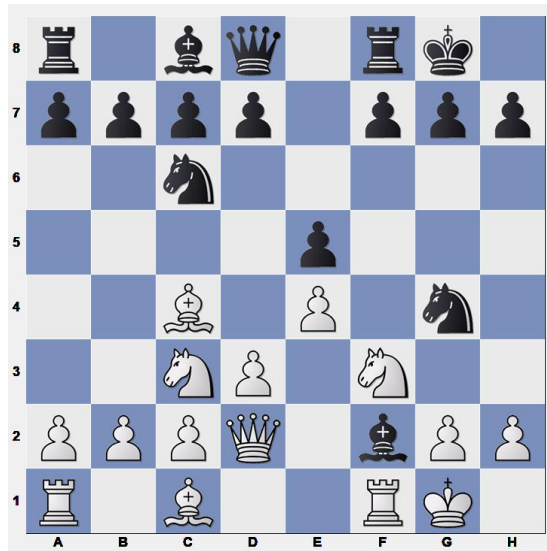


**6.d3 Ng4** [Ng4 doesn't really threaten anything. Probably White should just develop the Bishop now to g5.]

**7.Qd2** [Qd2 is probably a little off. It blocks the Bishop and the idea of going to g5 to trade is probably a little passive.]

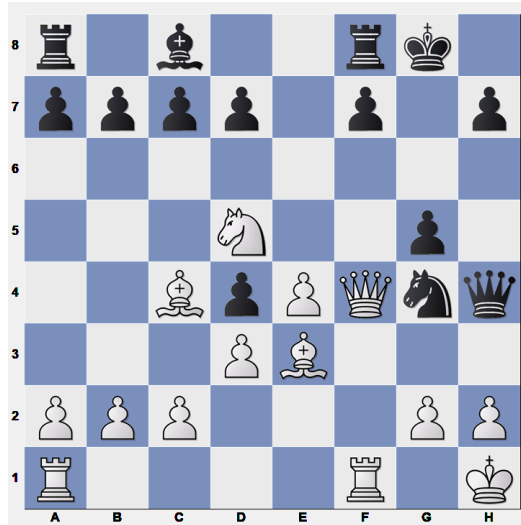


**7...Bxf2** [When I was about 13 years old and 1200, I asked an older member of my local chess club, Leo Cabana, who was about 1500, whether it is a good idea to trade a Bishop and a Knight for Rook and Pawn in the early middlegame like this. He said, “The Knight and the Bishop are good attacking pieces, and even though the trade is considered 6 points for 6, it’s an active Bishop and Knight or a Rook and Pawn that aren’t doing anything.” Keita should just take the Bishop and Knight and be happy.]

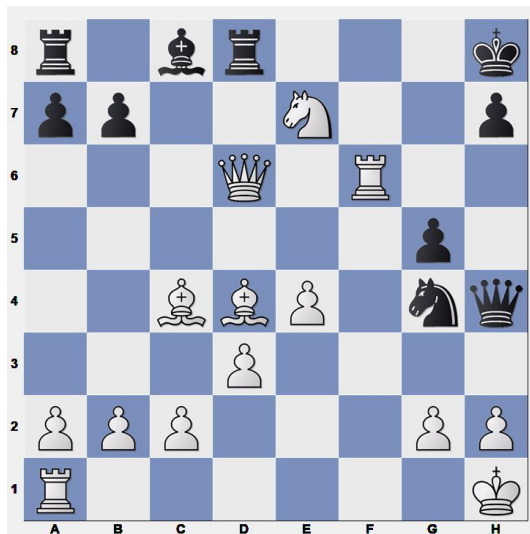


**8.Kh1 Nd4 9.Nxd4 exd4 10.Nd5 Qh4** [White has a Queen, 2 Pawns, and Rook versus Queen, Knight, and Bishop. Even though Black is attacking, White is pretty safe.]

**11.Qf4 Be3 12.Bxe3 g5** [Black had to take the Bishop back. g5 is too weakening.]



13.Ne7+ Kh8 14.Qxc7 d6 15.Qxd6 Rd8 16.Bxd4 f6 17.Rxf6! [If Keita saw the whole checkmate through, then Rxf6 is a terrific move; however, the easier move is probably just Qxd8, which should checkmate in 2. This is, however, a very cool Queen sacrifice.]



...17.h6 18.Rf7+ [Rh6# is a little quicker, but Rf7 is fine.] 18...Nf6 19.Bxf6# Overall this was a very nice game by Keita. He played well and thought through his moves. I am proud of how he didn't get distracted by the opponent's attack and kept playing hard and solving his way to a win. Great job!

# Chapter 11: Coach and Parent Involvement

Success in the great game of chess almost always comes with sacrifices. Not only does the individual wishing to become great need to be engaged and passionate, but it also helps immensely to have a strong support system. The vast majority of the players with the greatest improvement have parents that, weekend after weekend, take their children to tournaments. Not only are these local tournaments, but very often these parents are traveling the country and internationally to help their children pursue chess titles. Countless examples in chess culture can be seen, but let's take a look at the recent tremendous success of Grandmaster Ruifeng Li.

At the time of the first text in 2016, Ruifeng was

- Number 2 among 15-year-olds in the United States
- Number 11 under the age of 18 in the world
- 18th overall (regardless of age) in the United States

His activity graph shows the many opportunities he has had to play:

Name [RUIFENG LI](#)

## Record By Year (since 1991)

Year	Games	Wins	Draws	Losses	% score	Peak Rating
2007	40	22	1	17	56.2	1040
2008	140	77	8	55	57.9	1503
2009	186	106	31	49	65.3	1898
2010	203	113	42	48	66.0	1988
2011	248	148	41	59	67.9	2147
2012	172	109	42	21	75.6	2315
2013	186	101	49	36	67.5	2403
2014	256	140	66	50	67.6	2497
2015	290	156	83	51	68.1	2577
2016	263	154	84	25	74.5	2669
<b>1984</b>	<b>1126</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>2669</b>	

Games played since 1991 with an established regular rating of 2200 or higher: 1066

His rating improvement is equally impressive to his tournament dedication:



He has played more games in a year (with 200-plus) than many players in a decade of competition. It is the authors' hypothesis, when looking at the top rising youth stars of today, that all of them have this type of typical activity graph.

***Update:** As of the July 2018 statistics, Ruifeng is #1 in his age group and #14 overall in the United States. Activity brings success!*

Here is our activity graph from youth (keep in mind Bryan started playing at 15 in 2003 and Steve at age 14 in 2002, and we will look at the point in time until they went to college):

Name **BRYAN TILLIS**

### Record By Year (since 1991)

Year	Games	Wins	Draws	Losses	% score	Peak Rating
2003	33	12	5	16	43.9	1460
2004	68	33	16	19	60.3	1634
2005	44	24	10	10	65.9	1771
2006	44	26	10	8	70.5	1921
2007	43	21	13	9	64.0	2019

It is clear Bryan had a steady number of games each year (though not nearly close to Ruifeng) and played in every tournament within driving distance. Bryan grew up in rural Alabama, where the nearest frequent tournaments were a 90-minute drive, but his mother was always dedicated and passionate about making sure he had opportunities. Without her, he would not be a success today in the chess world, and he definitely would not be a USCF Life Master.

Name STEVEN ABRAHAMS

## Record By Year (since 1991)

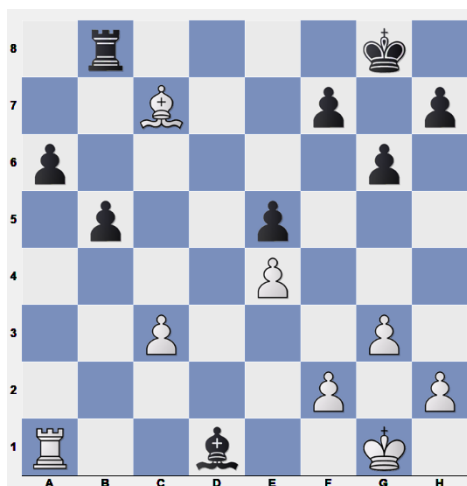
Year	Games	Wins	Draws	Losses	% score	Peak Rating
2002	6	3	1	2	58.3	1148
2003	17	9	1	7	55.9	1177
2004	31	18	2	11	61.3	1424
2005	34	15	9	10	57.4	1513
2006	34	14	6	14	50.0	1602
2007	34	14	5	15	48.5	1779

Steve had a similar situation to Bryan. After moving to rural New Hampshire in 2003, it was usually quite a drive to get to events. Steve was extremely lucky to not only have the support of his parents but also to have a coach and mentor. Without their guidance and push, Steve most certainly wouldn't have accomplished what he did on his own.

## Tournament Story

For me personally, parent support comes as an added positive motivation. The statements made by family at key moments forever shaped me for the harsh environment of tournament competition.

In 2007, I competed in the Alabama State Championship and had lost in this position:



I played Ra8 and hung a Bishop in a trivially drawn endgame and was devastated.

I wanted to quit the tournament and go home. I struggled with getting back into the mind-set of wanting to compete. My mother wanted me to sleep on it before making my decision, as this was the last game of the day, and I could wake up and withdraw before being required to play in the morning.

I remember distinctly seeing my pairing with a player that had a similar rating to mine. I walked out to the car in the Auburn University Montgomery campus parking lot with waning confidence, and I asked my mother if I should play. In retrospect, I feel like I put my mother in a difficult situation. If I lost the game, it would have been devastating for both of us. She didn't hesitate and said I should play . . . this was because she had faith in me.

The following game would not have been played without my mother's encouragement.

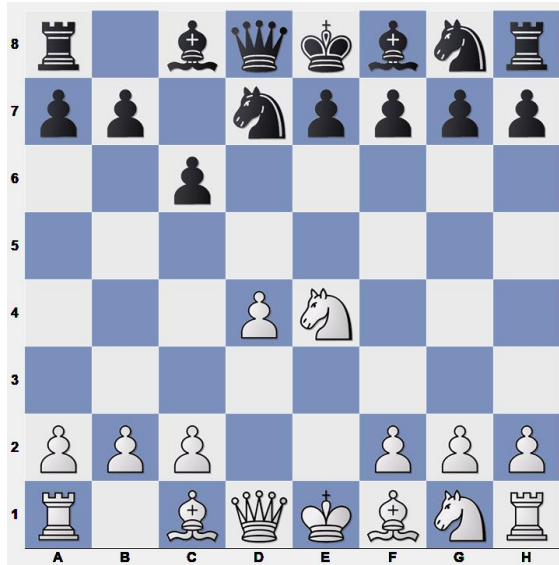


A very young Bryan Tillis with TD Caesar Lawrence (2003)

**Tillis, Bryan (1724) versus Smith, Ross (1714)**

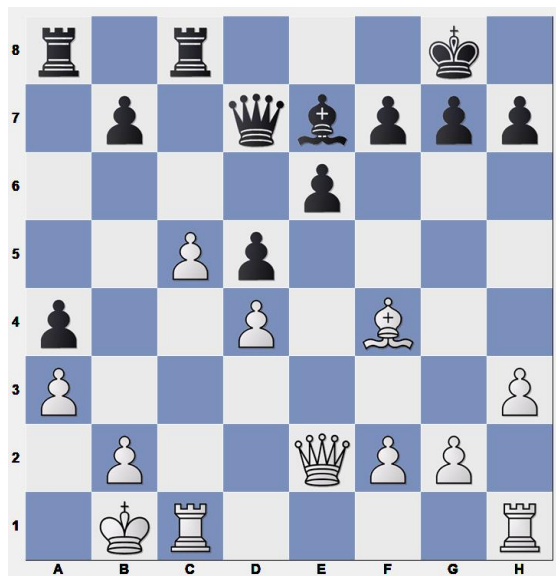
Alabama State Championship, September 4, 2005

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7**



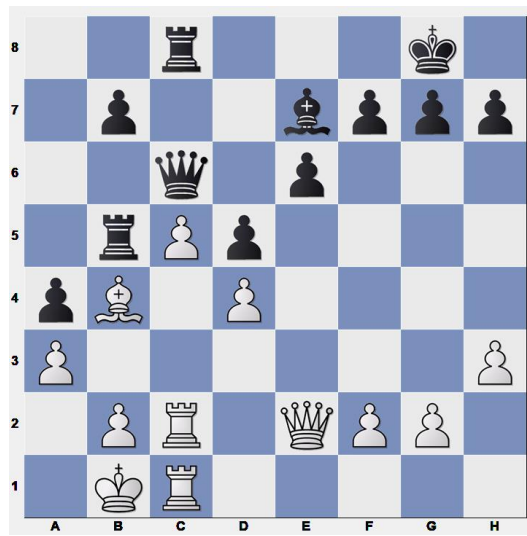
This is the Steinitz variation of the Caro Kann; at this time in my chess development, I had no knowledge of chess theory. I simply played according to the principle of getting a solid position. The most aggressive line here begins with 5.Ng5.

**5.Nf3 Ngf6 6.Nxf6+ Nxf6 7.Bc4 Nd5 8.Bb3 Bg4 9.h3 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 e6 11.Be3 Bd6 12.0-0-0 a5 13.c4 Nb4 14.c5 a4 15.Bc4 Be7 16.a3 Nd5 17.Bxd5 cxd5 18.Qe2 0-0 19.Kb1 Qd7 20.Rc1 Rfb8 21.Bf4 Rc8**



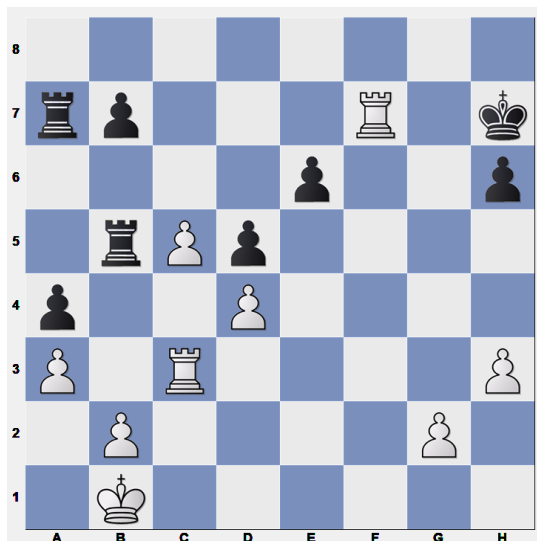
Not the highest-quality game from either side up to this point. I now began to settle in, comforted that my King was safe and I could play with some initiative.

22.Rc2 Ra5 23.Rhc1 Qc6 24.Bd2 Rb5 25.Bb4



No tactics, no problems.

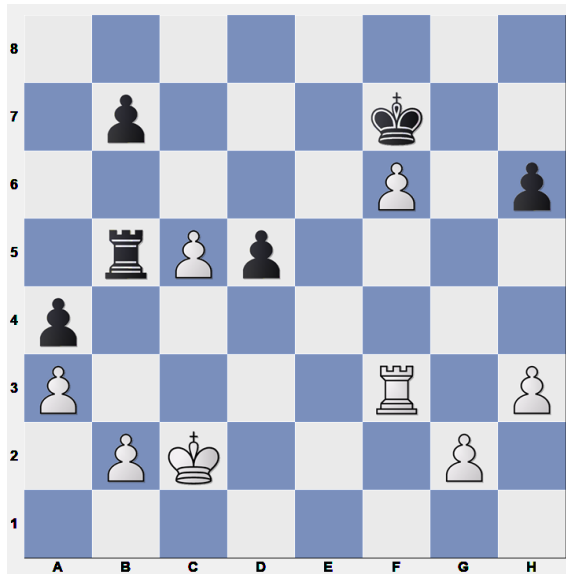
25...Bd8 26.Qd2 Ra8 27.f4 h6 28.Qf2 Ba5 29.Bxa5 Raxa5 30.Rc3 Kf8 31.f5 Ra6  
32.f6 Qc7 33.fxg7+ Kxg7 34.Rf1 Ra7 35.Qf6+ Kh7 36.Qxf7+ Qxf7 37.Rxf7+



With a Pawn in hand, now I wanted to have no weaknesses and create an unopposed Pawn to win the game.

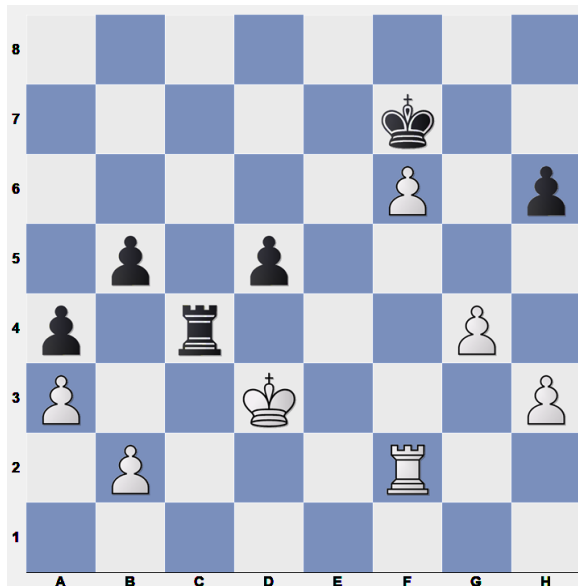


37...Kg6 38.Rcf3 e5 39.dxe5 Ra6 40.R7f6+ Rxf6 41.exf6 Kf7 42.Kc2



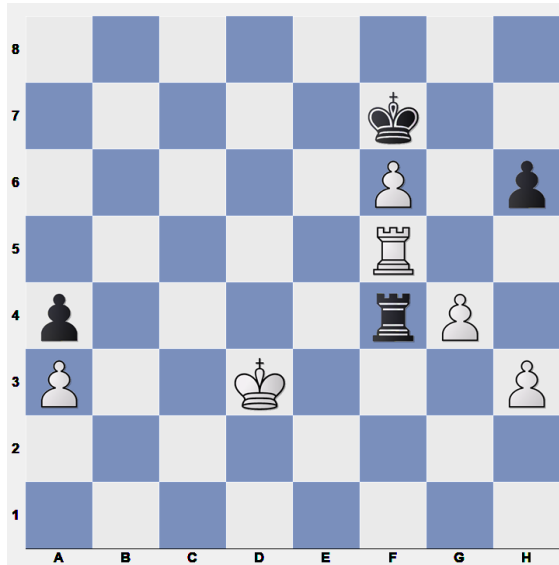
Invite *everyone* to the party; in endgames Kings are a valuable resource in the attack. In the opening and middlegame, we keep the King well hidden from danger, bring him in!

42...Rxc5+ 43.Kd3 Rc4 44.Rf2 b5 45.g4



White uses the majority 3 versus 1, while Black's counterplay is stifled due to the great placement of the White King.

45...Re4 46.Rf5 b4 47.Rxd5 bxa3 48.bxa3 Rf4 49.Rf5



A simple calculation left me sure that this was a trivial King and Pawn ending. When you are not 100 percent sure, never trade off your last Rook. My opponent resigned in a few moves later.

### Reflection

As you can see, support systems play a major role in the success of tournament competitors. Both the author and contributor Steve Abrahams both were greatly impacted by having strong support systems.

***As a parent:*** Please encourage your children, and help them succeed.

***As a student:*** Do not lose faith. If you are losing, change the script...find the motivation to change perspective and play your best chess.

“Be strong, be fearless, be beautiful. And believe that anything is possible when you have the right people there to support you. “

Misty Copeland

# Chapter 12: Tournament Preparation

This chapter begins by investigating common questions that parents and teachers have about tournaments. Once a student or group has reached this point in the text the question then arises: “Are we ready for tournaments?”

## Student Question

How do I go from playing with friends in my after school club to competing in tournaments?

## Parent & Teacher Questions

1. Where do we begin on our road to tournament competition?
2. Where do I go for information on tournaments?
3. What do I need to bring to tournaments?

**Authors’ Note:** *We take pride in expanding our text, if you have any questions you would like answered that did not make the cut above e-mail us at [palmbeachchess@gmail.com](mailto:palmbeachchess@gmail.com)*

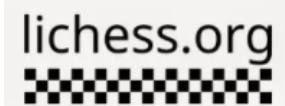
## Tournament Information

### Where do we begin on our road to tournament competition?

**Authors’ Note:** *The authors got their start playing on Yahoo! Games in the early 2000’s. Thankfully, chess has come a long way in regards to options for online chess to sharpen our skills.*

If a student wants to get a gauge of their relative playing strength before playing in their first competition we strongly suggest playing online games and training. Once you have mastered the preceding ideas in the text you are ready for active online completion.

### Where are the best places to play?



All three of these sites have excellent materials and resources to use for chess development. It is easy to create an account (all you need is a valid email) and it is free to be able to play games!

Benefits to Online Chess:

- Its Free
- It can be played on anything with an internet connection
- Choose your own pace with the time: 1 min, 5 min, 15 min, or even 1 move a day
- Test out ideas while risking nothing
- Get your first Rating

Let's use Chess.com as an example:



There are two main ways the 'Live Chess Arena' can be used for training purposes.

First, any student keen on playing a game can jump in immediately by clicking the play button.

**Authors' Note:** *We strongly suggest starting with a slower time control of 15 minutes per game so you have time to think and reflect on the games.*

Second, you can observe other player's games to gain insight and ideas on openings. Simply click the binoculars and click the top game to view masters playing against each other:

### Activity Revisited: Solitaire Chess Online

1. Find a master on chess.com who is playing many games one after another.
2. Try to find a master that plays similar Openings to what you currently play
3. Right click the player's name and left click follow to observe games that are in progress
4. Focus only on the side of the master chosen for the activity, see the game from their perspective and attempt to predict the moves they will make before they make them

### A typical GM vs GM battle



Chess.com has an easy feature to play Solitaire Chess to see how accurate you are in comparison to the master playing.

In the above diagram while two players are playing you are able to attempt to “Become the Top Guesser”. When it is the turn of your master, make a movement on the board or type in the move you think they will make.

**Authors' Note:** Try to guess each move, and remember the best methods of learning consist of actively participating in the learning process!

## Pro Chess League Solitaire Chess

With the innovations in modern gaming, TWITCH has come to the forefront in chess players' ability to stream live while they play or analyze games. The reader can find countless examples via YouTube of excellent streamers who can be followed for fun or for learning.

An example of this is found from the 2018 Season of the Pro Chess League



The Miami Champions team were covered by Darcy Linde & Bryan Tillis:



The entire season of the Pro Chess League was a large game of Solitaire Chess for the critics. The entire season of the Miami Champions can be found on the Palm Beach Chess YouTube channel.

**Authors' Note:** *We are constantly working on new projects for our channel. If you subscribe to our channel feel free to send us a message with what content you would like to see covered and we will do our best to create a video.*

## Palm Beach Chess



### Where do I go for information on tournaments?

The first step to find out more information on chess in the United States is with our governing body: The United States Chess Federation:  
<https://new.uschess.org/home/>



In order to compete in tournaments you will need to become an active member. On the USCF homepage hover on join and click on become a member.



The navigation bar is very straight forward where you can find information on current events.



To find tournaments in your area hover over play where you will find the two options:

1. National Events
2. Upcoming Tournaments

With a membership in hand, the student is now ready to compete in any of the tournaments found registered with the USCF by Tournament Directors.

One flaw in this system is that tournament directors can run events without advertising via the main website. We strongly suggest finding the main organization in your area who typically work with local tournament directors on advertising their small events.

***Authors' Note:*** *The authors strongly suggest starting in small local tournaments. The stress alone of a tournament takes a toll, a National Event can be overwhelming even to seasoned competitors.*



## How to find local tournaments

Nearly every state has an active organization at the forefront of events in the immediate area. This list gives access to the state organization which will provide access to the smaller chess clubs in your area. Remember, the best form of chess is Over the Board.

Please click on the state (digital version) you are interested in to view that state's chess federation:

Alabama	Louisiana	Ohio
Alaska	Maine	Oklahoma
Arizona	Maryland	Oregon
Arkansas	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania
California	Michigan	Rhode Island
Colorado	Minnesota	South Carolina
Connecticut	Mississippi	South Dakota
Delaware	Missouri	Tennessee
Florida	Montana	Texas
Georgia	Nebraska	Utah
Hawaii	Nevada	Vermont
Idaho	New Hampshire	Virginia
Illinois	New Jersey	Washington
Indiana	New Mexico	Washington DC
Iowa	New York	West Virginia
Kansas	North Carolina	Wisconsin
Kentucky	North Dakota	Wyoming

## Tournament Materials

What do I need to bring to tournaments?



- Chess Set (Board & Pieces): keep in mind that official tournament sets are used in tournaments this usually means: 3.25in to 4in King, White/Cream and Black.
- Chess Clock: we strongly suggest the DGT North American Chess Timer, we have owned many clocks, this clock can take many drops and is easy to set to typical time controls.
- Notation Pad: Necessary for all tournament games in order to keep record of your games. Most organizers have scoresheets available but a book makes it easy to keep up with all of the tournament games for your coach to analyze.
- Good Working Pen & Backup
- MonRoi or Plycounters are excellent options for students under the age of 8 that struggle with taking chess notation. The devices allow for students to drag and drop pieces, no writing necessary.



## Tournament Travel Necessities

What items do I need to pack when I travel to a Chess Tournament?

### Packing Items

- Cash
- Wallet/Passport
- Food/Water
- Lightweight clothing that can be layered (Jacket - you never know how the AC will be in a tournament hall)
- T-shirts and tank tops (be respectful of the culture you are visiting)
- Pants and/or shorts
- Socks
- Comfortable Shoes
- Pajamas/sleepwear
- Underwear
- Sunglasses and glasses case
- Dresses and/or skirts
- Jewelry – Watch, Etc.
- Hat or sun visor
- Swimsuit or swim trunks
- Cell phone and charger
- Travel pillow, eye mask and ear plugs
- Electric converters and adapters
- Travel apps that will help with language, directions, and money conversion

### Toiletries

- Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, mouthwash
- Hair brush or comb, hair ties, barrettes/bobby pins
- Deodorant
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Sunscreen and face lotion with SPF
- Make up packed in a wipeable wristlet
- Face wash and/or makeup remover wipes and q-tips
- Night time Moisturizer/Lotion
- Hair Gel
- Lip balm and lipstick or lip gloss
- Personal hygiene items
- Feminine hygiene products
- Extra contacts, solution, and contact case
- Glasses and prescription sunglasses
- Prescription medication with the label/script for TSA.

# Chapter 13: Tournament Tips

The purpose of this chapter is to prepare students for everything that they will face during a tournament.

## USCF Tournament Rules

**Authors' Note:** *Before delving into our interpretation of needed tournament rules, if you read nothing else in this book, read the most important rule of all:*

***If you ever have a problem during a game, pause the clock and get the attention of the tournament director (TD). Never argue with the opponent.***

### 1. Touch Move/Touch Take Rule

If you touch a piece and you are legally allowed to move it, you must move it! If you touch a piece either with your hand or with a piece and you can legally capture that piece, you must capture!

### 2. USCF Time Rule

If you or your opponent falls below 5 minutes in sudden death (no time-added control), you may stop taking notation. Note that if something happens where the notation is needed as proof, you will not have it. We suggest taking notation at least one move more than your opponent.

### 3. Castling

The rule constantly changes on this, but let's keep it simple: When you intend to castle, touch the King first!

### 4. One Hand

When you're playing a game, it is easier and more ethical to use one hand (typically the dominant hand) for the entire game. It is a rule violation if someone uses two hands to play during their game. *Imagine a player keeping one hand on the clock at all times and the other to move. This is inappropriate and illegal.*

### 5. Who Chooses Equipment?

White gets the first move of the game, so the rules committee gave Black the choice of which set and clock will be used for the game; he also has the choice of which side of the board the clock will be placed on. If someone has a strange-looking or color set she wishes to use (maybe pink and purple pieces), you may ask the director to use a more traditional set.

## 6. Communication

You may talk to your opponent only on your own time; at any other time, it is considered a distraction and a time penalty could be imposed.

For instance, if you mess up on your notation on your time, you may ask to borrow the scoresheet, offer a draw, or say adjust (to fix off-centered pieces without having the touch move rule called on you).

## 7. Illegal Moves

In the event of an illegal move, 2 minutes are added to the clock of the opponent of the rule violator.

## 8. General Rules Violations

If any rules violation occurs, you must stop the clock and tell the tournament director at that moment! Once the moment passes, it is considered settled. An opponent can be blatantly cheating during the game, but if the director is not alerted of the violation during the game, little to nothing can be done after the fact in most cases.

## 9. Leaving Early

If you need to leave a tournament early, be sure to tell the director so it doesn't affect pairings. It is an awful experience to drive hours to play an event only to have your opponent not show up to the game. In FIDE events, if you are late to the start of the round, you have forfeited.

## 10. Byes

In the event that there are an uneven number of players in a crosstable (11 people for instance), the odd man out will get a bye. If you are the odd man out, you get 1 full point. This will not affect your rating, but it will affect your tournament score. If you know you need to miss a round, you can request a bye for a specific round in most tournaments and receive a half point (again not affecting your rating).

## 11. What If My Opponent Doesn't Show?

If your opponent does not show at the beginning of a USCF game, you should start his clock. He has the right to show up during that allotted time up to 1 hour. If the time control is less than 1 hour, then he has only his allotted time. i.e.: G/90 games (90 minutes for each player) would receive forfeits in 60 minutes. G/30 games (30 minutes for each player) would receive forfeits in 30 minutes. If you win by forfeit, this does not affect your or your opponent's rating, but it does add a full point to your tournament score, and likely the no-show player will be withdrawn.

## Etiquette

### 1. Shaking Hands

Any time your opponent extends her hand—either before or after the game—shake it. Some players have atrocious manners when it comes to winning; be a bigger person and earn the respect of others by shaking hands always. Much like at the end of a little league game, players and coaches all pay respects because the game would not take place without the other team. By shaking hands, you pay respects to the game.

### 2. Kibitzing (Commenting on Games)

At no point in time, *ever*, should you talk about someone else's game while it is in progress, or talk about your own game while you are still playing. This is the most frequent form of cheating seen at scholastic events. Even if you are going over to look at how your teammate is doing, if you exchange facial expressions, you are considered cheating because you passed information that could assist in that player's decision-making. If this occurs, you will be penalized by most tournament directors.

### 3. Travel

It is a common misconception of new tournament players that you are required to stay at your board for the entire game; this is not the case. You are allowed to stand up and walk around the tournament hall, or go to the bathroom. You do not, however, pause the clock if you need to use the bathroom.

Be aware: If a player is leaving the board every move and you feel he is traveling somewhere to receive assistance, alert the TD.

### 4. Space Bubble

When observing a game, the players playing the game should not be able to reach out and touch you from where they are sitting. Keep in mind that this is not a tournament rule but common decency to two individuals trying to think. If you are watching your friend's or relative's game, it is also considered correct to stand behind that person to avoid making eye contact.

### 5. Tournament Director Questions

Most tournament rounds start later than advertised (especially the first); this can arise from a number of factors on the TD's end, but let's consider how you can help.

- Organized TDs have the ability to let players to register in advance through e-mail or online; do so! This will free up the TD to work on pairings to get the round started.
- Questions before the round need to be limited to emergencies; the TD is in a scramble to get all the information in from all the players. The stock question “When will the next round start?” simply distracts the TD from getting the needed work done.

### Suggestions/Strategies

1. **Distracting Opponents:** This list has been put together from years of experience in tournament play against players from all over the country; all of these stem from actual events.

Visibly distracting behaviors you will likely witness include the following:

- Fidgety opponents: They are young and impulsive, or they simply cannot sit still due to the overconsumption of caffeine and sugar.
- Opponents with obsessive-compulsive disorder: They have to touch a piece three times before actually moving it, or they have to constantly adjust pieces to the perfect center of squares.
- Magicians: They enjoy flicking their wrist when making piece movements or adding a flourish, like twisting the piece into a square to add emphasis to a move or shooting their hand into the air in a bow.
- Physically distracting opponents: A beautiful opponent or a hideous opponent.

#### *Solution:*

Try making a visor out of your hands so you cannot see your opponent. Look only at the game. This also prevents opponents from seeing where your eyes are looking (giving away what you are thinking) and has the added benefit of stopping everything in the preceding list from bothering you.



2. **Noise Distractions:** These include the following:

- Drink slurping: Intentionally enjoying that last sip a bit too much.
- Hacking cough: Why are you even at the tournament if you are sick?
- Mumlbers: Some players love to have a dialogue with themselves just under their breath.
- Talkers: This one is Bryan’s personal favorite a “narcissistic chess player tendency.” The chess players 5 boards down just finished their game, and they begin to analyze in the room with each other. At no point in time ever is this reasonable decorum. In every tournament we’ve attended, there is a skittles (analysis area) where you can go to discuss your game. The tournament hall is a silent area for thinking.

*Solution:*

Earplugs! In the past, listening to music was another method, but the legality of having a listening device in your ear has become vague. Wearing the earplugs has an added bonus: You cannot hear draw offers from your opponent. This leads to having more fighting spirit!

3. **Look at MSA Stats:** The United States Chess Federation has an excellent online tool in the Member Services Area. You are able to look up players and



see a record of every tournament and game they have ever played, player statistics, and other factual information that can help a studious chess player gain advantages. Check out [www.uschess.org/msa](http://www.uschess.org/msa).

For example: When you're playing against a lower-rated player, it can be helpful to look up that player's statistics in order to see how they perform against a player in the same rating category. Chances are that if they have never beaten someone of your rating, it won't be today! This type of information right before the game can give a needed confidence boost.

4. **Game Preparation:** Building camaraderie with other chess players stems from preparation. If you know that a certain chess player has played your opponent 25 times, why not ask him what he typically does and his assessment of your opponent? If you have no ally you can trust, try looking up information online to see if you can find games played by your opponent in a chessbase online or chess.com.
5. **Tournament Director Tip:** Whenever you are speaking with a TD, please remain calm and take turns speaking with your opponent. In 9 out of 10 cases from a TD's perspective, the player who is interrupting and making a scene is typically the player trying to hide something or is in the wrong. Being calm, clear, and undistracted will have the ear of anyone over screaming, crying, or accusatory behavior.
6. **Local Chess:** Both authors grew up playing chess in parks and coffeehouses against adult players. It is important to find a chess club and play in person. It is great that you can get a game anytime online, but it is extremely important to gain the social aspects of chess. Get out to your local chess club and make friends; if there isn't a club, start one!
7. **Chess Set:** This is a strong suggestion, but if you want to become a serious tournament player, put away the Mario and Harry Potter sets and play only on a regulation tournament board. It is difficult enough as a new chess player to remember all of the intricacies needed to play a reasonable chess game. Don't add to the complications by being confused if Luigi is a Bishop or a Knight.
8. **Body Language:** This is something that is difficult to train, but when you have it, and it can make a huge difference on your overall game.



Good posture and a determined look from Zane Griffith

9. **Reading Pairings:** One of the most frequent things we see at the first tournament of the year is players not knowing how to get to their board and which color they are playing.

Bd	#	Res	White	#	Res	Black
1	1		Viswanathan Anand (2757)	9		John Kennedy (1595)

Here is the breakdown of this example:

- The first column on the far left is Bd (board number); this is the location of the board that will correspond to a number on the table where you should sit for that game.
- The next column, #, shows what seed you are in the tournament. The first player, former World Chess Champion Viswanathan Anand, is seed #1 (the highest-rated player in the event), and his opponent, John Kennedy, is #9.
- The next open column, Res, is designed to write the result of the game. In this box you will write 1 for a win,  $\frac{1}{2}$  for a draw, or 0 for a loss, depending on the result of the game. It should be noted that both your result and your opponent's result need to be written in Res boxes.
- The last column shows the color the player will have in the game. If the name appears first (reading left to right), that player will have White, if second, Black.

## A Student's First Tournament Experience



By middle school student Andrew Sissom

Chess is a game of the mind in which, in some cases, luck prevails. My first rated tournament is a strong example of this. Going into the tournament, I was anxious and worried that I would fail. I played 4 games that, one after another, all ended in victory. The feeling from this result was far more pleasing than I had first expected.

I vividly remember 1 of the games from the event. This game was against my nemesis. He, at the time, had the title of Best in the School. I sat down, poised for a great battle. As we went further into the game, my heart was beating faster and faster, the drums of war pounding louder, as I sank deeper into quicksand then . . . I saw the branch, the drums grew silent, the bell was rung, my opponent *touched his queen while in check* and was forced to move her into danger! My golden coin! I was completely lost in the position, but I managed to win because of both luck and my knowledge of the touch move rule. I left the tournament with choirs singing in my head as I earned the title of the Highest Rated in the School!

### Reflection

Andrew had an excellent tournament performance coming out of his first tournament with a 1392 rating based on 4 games. This was nearly 400 points higher than his nearest rival. The rating system is motivating for chess players as it shows our relative strength. In their infinite wisdom, the policy makers created categories for chess players based off their ratings. The following information explains chess titles and classifications to hopefully give you, the reader, goals for the future.


## USCF Rating Categories & FIDE Titles

<b>USCF Rating Classification</b>	<b>Rating Range</b>
Senior Master	2400 and up
Master	2200 to 2399
Expert	2000 to 2199
Class A	1800 to 1999
Class B	1600 to 1799
Class C	1400 to 1599
Class D	1200 to 1399
Class E	1000 to 1199
Class F	800 to 999
Class G	600 to 799
Class H	400 to 599
Class I	200 to 399
Class J	100 to 199

<b>FIDE International Titles</b>	<b>Rating Requirement</b>
Grandmaster (GM)	2500 and norms
International Master (IM)	2400 and norms
FIDE Master (FM)	2300
Candidate Master (CM)	2200
<b>FIDE Women's Titles</b>	
Woman Grandmaster (WGM)	2300 and norms
Woman International Master (WIM)	2200 and norms
Woman FIDE Master (WFM)	2100
Woman Candidate Master (WCM)	2000

## List of Classical World Champions

This book would not be complete without a list of the best players. True chess professionals have studied the games of every man on this list.

Name	Years	Country of Origin
1. Wilhelm Steinitz	1886–1894	 <u>Austria-Hungary</u>
2. Emanuel Lasker	1894–1921	 <u>Germany</u>
3. José Raúl Capablanca	1921–1927	 <u>Cuba</u>
4. Alexander Alekhine	1927–1935 and 1937–1946	 <u>Russia</u>
5. Max Euwe	1935–1937	 <u>Netherlands</u>
6. Mikhail Botvinnik	1948–1957, 1958– 1960, and 1961–1963	 <u>Soviet Union (Russia)</u>
7. Vasily Smyslov	1957–1958	 <u>Soviet Union (Russia)</u>
8. Mikhail Tal	1960–1961	 <u>Soviet Union (Latvia)</u>
9. Tigran Petrosian	1963–1969	 <u>Soviet Union (Armenia)</u>
10. Boris Spassky	1969–1972	 <u>Soviet Union (Russia)</u>
11. Robert J. Fischer	1972–1975	 <u>United States</u>
12. Anatoly Karpov	1975–1985	 <u>Soviet Union (Russia)</u>
13. Garry Kasparov	1985–2000*	 <u>Soviet Union</u> ( <u>Azerbaijan</u> )
14. Vladimir Kramnik	2000–2006	 <u>Russia</u>
15. Vishwanathan Anand	2007–2013	 <u>India</u>
16. Magnus Carlsen	2013–Present	 <u>Norway</u>

**Authors' Note:** *It should be noted that from 1993 to 2006, Garry Kasparov split from FIDE and his classical title was taken from him and put into a knockout system, where many players won the knockout to become FIDE World Champion. They are not included in this list as they were not Classical World Champions who won their title by match play (playing 12 or more games to decide the better player with alternating colors).*

# Chapter 14: Psychology of Competition

This chapter focuses primarily on the off-the-board elements of tournament competition. The chess competitor is 100% responsible for his actions and results, the psychology of competition is extremely important...if it isn't taken seriously there can be dire consequences.



“I don't believe in Psychology...I believe in good moves.”

Robert James Fischer – 11<sup>th</sup> World Chess Champion

Points of Interest:

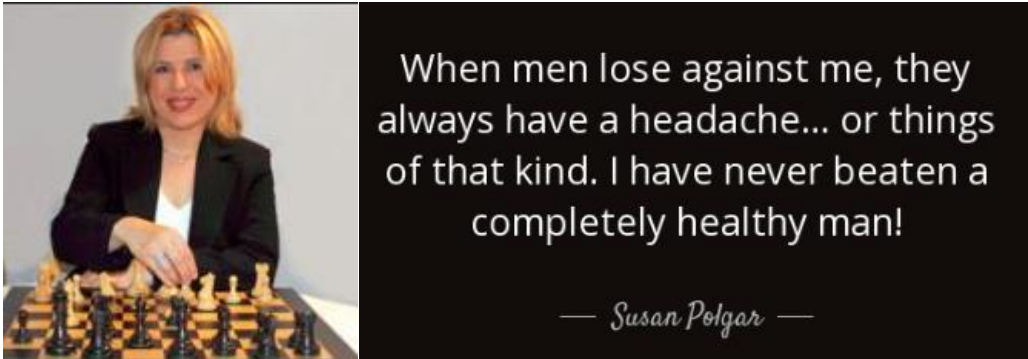
1. Why compete if you are not going to give 100%?
2. How do you deal with a tough loss in a tournament?

## Competitive Engagement

Why compete if you are not giving 100%?

One of the greatest mysteries as a chess player comes in the moment when a competitor states: “Well you won because I wasn’t trying”.

Many chess players have mused over this concept, take it from one of the most accomplished female chess players:



Though this comment is said with sarcasm, it still states a large problem in competition and sportsmanship. When we compete, there is only one person responsible for our actions and decision making...ourselves.

Whatever your excuse is, save it...when a weaker player is facing a stronger player, the lesser player is always giving 100% as they have something to prove. If you want to stay on top of your group of friends, club ladder, local chess club, state or national ranking list, make no excuses...give 100% in every game.

### **GIVE 100% EFFORT IN EVERY GAME**

#### **What preparation for a tournament looks like from a NM’s perspective:**

All champions have one thing in common, great preparation both physically and mentally for competition.

#### **Physiological & Psychological Preparation**

Psychological preparation is often a neglected part of tournament preparation. It is essential in the weeks before a tournament to train hard but also have downtime and relax. It is impossible to play at 100% if you are stressed out and tense.

##### **1. Set goals**

Set clear goals before a tournament. Understand, a goal is not “I want to win all of my games” or “I want to win the tournament” goals are not connected to results or

performance but need to be specific, tangible, and keep the competitor focused on the overall tournament. Here is a list of goals NM Tillis has had at a tournament

- Do not offer draws
- Do not get up from the board unless it is an emergency
- If my mind begins to wander to anything outside of the game, bring back focus immediately
- Calculate as much as needed, do not waste time calculating the same line multiple times

## **2. Get enough rest**

Rest is essential for efficient mind and body. We all know we need enough sleep every night, but just as important is a sleeping routine. Before the tournament it makes sense to adjust your waking and sleeping hours to the tournament schedule. Enough sleep is maybe the most important part of preparing for the game outside of chess preparations.

## **3. Eat the right things**

We definitely are not medical professionals but we do understand the principle of garbage in garbage out. We have all been to the point after a large meal (Thanksgiving, Christmas) where we need a nap soon after eating. Why eat a large quantity of food or highly processed food before hours of competition? Put your body's energy where it needs to be in the days and weeks before the tournament.

## **4. Take care of your body**

Chess players are more and more aware of the importance of taking care of their body as one of the main factors to play chess on the highest level possible for several hours. Exercise increases blood flow and improves the flow of oxygen in your brain which helps you with big mental and physical stresses during a chess game.

World Champions like Kasparov and Carlsen both are recorded to spend a large amount of time in the gym for tournament preparation. Questioning the methods of arguably two of the greatest players of all time makes little sense...just do it!

## **5. Train Properly**

If the training is not more difficult than the tournament, you have already failed yourself when it counts.



## **Chess Preparation**

### **1. Create a Habit**

It takes deliberate effort to create habits for eating correctly, working out, and chess preparation. Create schedules with one hour a day and work your way up to training multiple hours a day. No one in the history of chess started training eight hours a day and could consistently do it on a daily basis.

### **2. Work on all parts of the game.**

Most players spend their time cramming Opening Variations right before a tournament. Studying tactics, working on endgames, and playing training games under tournament conditions are all essential in tournament preparation.

### **3. Work on Openings**

Define the openings you will play at the tournament beforehand. During the tournament is not the best time to change and learn completely new openings.

### **4. Solve Tactics & Problems**

Solving tactics is essential to keep your mind active and calculating properly. **DO NOT GUESS OR MOVE ON UNTIL YOU UNDERSTAND THE TACTIC!** Treat every tactic as a game position and give 100%.

### **5. Study Endgames**

Easily the most frustrating but necessary part of the game to study. In the next chapter we will make suggestions on different endgame text and resources that will assist with this element of the game.

### **6. Play training games & analyze**

During the tournament preparation try to incorporate some training games with a longer time control (at least 1 hour per player) with an opponent of similar strength. The best approximation of a tournament chess game is of course to play over the board training games

## How do you deal with a tough loss in a tournament?

“In time, you will know what it's like to lose. To feel so desperately that you're right. Yet to fail all the same. Dread it. Run from it. Destiny still arrives.”



Thanos – Marvel Comics: Avengers Infinity War (2018)

Every competitor regardless of their medium of competition all have one thing in common, we will face adversity and failure. It is how we adapt to the pain which dictates our ability to be successful.

### What are some suggestions for parents'/coaches' post-game after a loss?

LISTEN before giving feedback.

Begin with a supportive remark, and use open-ended questions:

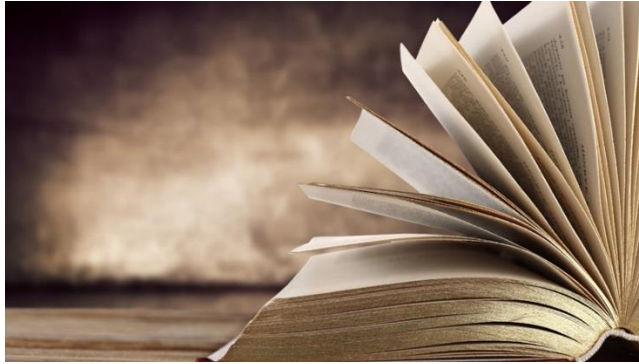
- “What was the most important thing you learned?”
- “What can you take away from your mistakes?”
- “How did you feel about your mindset and overall performance; how can that improve?”

What are some tips for helping young chess players deal with losing?

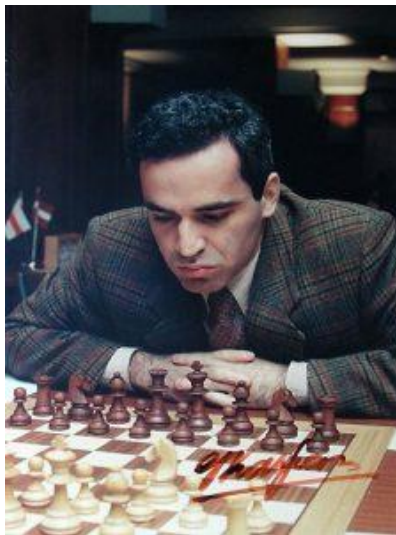
- Don't ever place blame or get angry. The students already are frustrated, don't exacerbate the situation.
- Focus on the positive: “You showed tenacity...keep working hard, and you won't need to worry about winning, that takes care of itself.”

## Learning from Losses

The most important aspect of chess training is fine tuning yourself for the next competition. In Nascar, hours of work are piled into a vehicle between every race to make sure it is tweaked to be in top competitive form. It is essential as a chess player to find in your losses (and wins!) what you could have improved and create a study plan to fill in the gaps in your play.



“By strictly observing Botvinnik’s rule regarding the thorough analysis of one’s own games, with the years I have come to realize that this provides the foundation for the continuous development of chess mastery.”



– Garry Kasparov

Every tournament game you play, you must analyze to the full extent you can gain from the analysis. Chess Coaches can help break down the elements which are most needed for improvement.

# Chapter 15: Selecting a Coach



Game Analysis – 2018 Florida State Championship

Many talented players will fail to reach their potential due to their own self-imposed limits. Most chess players need someone to help push them to new plateaus. In order to get in pinnacle form it is essential to constantly be evaluated by a professional to fine tune the competitor for competition.

A good coach will build a player up in every area in chess and mental toughness. Coaches are responsible for training in chess through lessons and analysis of student performances, and by providing encouragement. Coaches are also responsible for the teaching of life skills through their chosen medium. As social creatures we seek encouragement, an excellent coach is highly recommended by all collaborators of this book to assist the student in their development.

**Authors' Note:** *The hardest thing in this text will not be chess related...it will be finding the perfect coach. Good Coaches teach content, Great Coaches teach life skills through mastery.*

## Question to investigate the merits of a Coach:

1. Does the coach have clear credentials and resume?
2. Does the coach have a clean background check and favorable history?
3. Does the coach click with your child?
4. Does the coach have reasonable prices compared to competitors?
5. Does the coach have a proven track record of success with students?

## Coaching Credentials



Tangible credentials like an NM certificate **is not the most important detail!**

***Authors' Note:*** Too often parents when seeking a coach only focus on rating. Every chess master can play the game at a high level, not every chess master can teach at a high level. Find a great teacher that is a strong chess player.

- 1) Find a coach that has a background check. Any professional working around children can easily get certified and become a vendor in their area through their school district. The education system has stringent personal checks and it is an effortless process.
- 2) Ask about the playing history and look up the experience level of your prospective chess coach using FIDE and the United States Chess Federation player lookup. A high rating based on one year and two tournaments versus 15 years and 300 is an easy comparison.
- 3) Get an example lesson/assessment in the first lesson from the coach to A) Gauge the communication and connection between student and teacher and B) To not get wrapped into a buy 10 lessons get 2 free scenario. Just because a

coach has worked well with a large number of students doesn't necessarily mean they will develop that bond with your child.

- 4) There are many types of chess coaches: the good, the bad, and the money hungry. If the coach for instance is charging \$20.00/1hr to a group of six to let them play blitz week after week, find a real coach. There are no one size fits all approaches to chess advancement. Every student needs personalized and individualized instruction to get the greatest improvement. Make sure the coach is developing lessons specifically for your child.

### **Cost of Lessons & Student - Coach Connection**

Many parents should first consider the importance of cost versus benefit scenario with lessons.



GM Boris Avrukh – Legendary Chess Author & Trainer

This comes from renowned author and trainer GM Boris Avrukh: “Besides my work with Elite GM's, I had mostly been working with very advanced students (ranging from a FIDE rating of 2000 all the way to GM level)...I decided to set the minimum bar at a USCF rating of 1600. Obviously, there were some exceptions, but overall I was trying to keep the bar there. I had been receiving a lot of requests from much lower rated students (mainly parents), but I was very honest with them by recommending they start with expert-level coaches rather than GM fees. It was hard for me to imagine working with players of this level.” – Facebook Post: May, 2018 -

It is unnecessary to go straight to the top with Grand Master lessons and on many occasions it can be harmful to student development. It has been decades since many Grand Masters were beginners making their initial movements and much like Grand Master Narodistky in the foreword, they cannot recall how they improved to the level that they did. One element in early chess development is widely ignored by authors and coaches alike:

Every great chess player has in common:

### **THE LOVE OF THE OF CHESS**

It doesn't take an elite Grand Master to inspire a child, it can be **any great teacher** who loves chess.

### **Coaching Inspiration**



Legendary Coach Bruce Pandolfini with the Author

Growing up seeing the movie *Searching for Bobby Fischer* a feeling of trust and connection is seen early on in the film as the coach (Bruce) was playing various games (Rat Trap, Monopoly, Etc.) with young student Josh. Chess didn't even come up; after the introductory lesson as the coach is leaving he says he is looking forward to "pac-man and pizza" next time. Much can be taken away from this brief moment as the initial connection a teacher develops with a student is essential for success.

***Authors' Note:*** *If you don't have a bond you won't be able to take bad news from them.*



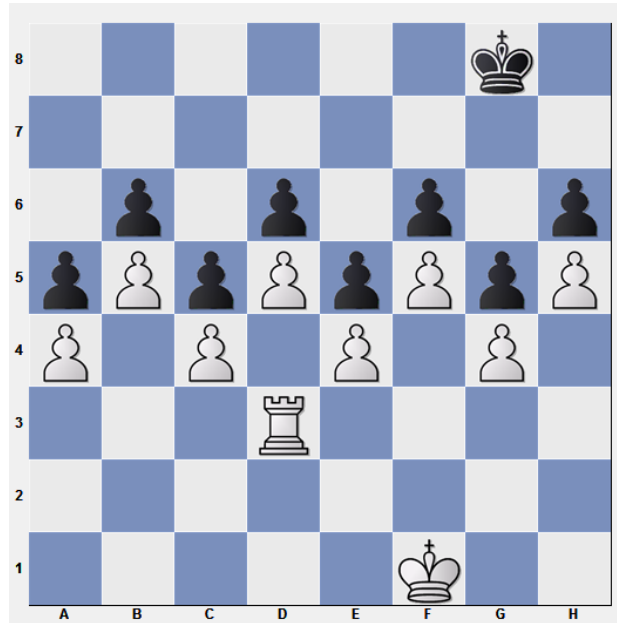
Being a coach is not just about chess: building bonds and killing Terminators





# Chapter 16: Advanced Lessons

Once reaching the end of the text where can continued development come from?



A winning position?

**Authors' Note:** *Sometimes even a Rook isn't enough, set up this position and try to win!*

## Ongoing Development: Old School vs New School

Generationally speaking, the 'Old School' chess players came from the Fischer Boom of the 1970's where the size of the National Organization (USCF) multiplied many times over in size. The main training method of this generation was the use of books and text to study.

Fast forwarding to most players born after 2000, the use of computers has become tantamount with chess training. We use what we are comfortable with, the younger generation are children of the computer, phone, tablet, video series, training bot, and engine.

## NM Tillis Suggested Books

After finishing this book, the first text every chess player should read is:

BOBBY FISCHER TEACHES CHESS by Bobby Fischer & Stuart Margulies

### 1200 USCF and UP

SILMAN'S COMPLETE ENDGAME COURSE by Jeremy Silman

CHESS TACTICS FOR CHAMPIONS by Susan Polgar

### 1600 USCF and UP

HOW TO REASSESS YOUR CHESS by Jeremy Silman

JUDIT POLGAR TEACHES CHESS, VOLUMES 1-3 by Judit Polgar

LESSONS WITH A GRANDMASTER, VOLUMES 1,2 by Boris Gulko and Joel Sneed

TAL-BOTVINNIK, 1960 by Mikhail Tal

MY 60 MEMORABLE GAMES by Robert Fischer

THE LIFE & GAMES OF MIKHAIL TAL by Tal

BENT LARSEN'S BEST GAMES by Bent Larsen

### 1800 USCF and UP

PUMP UP YOUR RATING by Axel Smith

AMATEUR TO IM by Jonathan Hawkins

CAPABLANCA'S BEST CHESS ENDINGS by Irving Chernev

FUNDAMENTAL CHESS ENDINGS by Karsten Muller and Frank Lamprecht

MY SYSTEM by Aron Nimzowitsch

THINK LIKE A GRANDMASTER by Alexander Kotov

### 2000 USCF and UP

DVORETSKY'S ENDGAME MANUAL by Mark Dvoretsky

Hopefully the most important lesson taken away from Become a Chess Champion is that to get the most out of your learning experience you must be **actively learning**.

Do not simply go through the games passively, you must **actively learn** when working with these texts to become stronger at chess.

## Getting the most out of your Computer

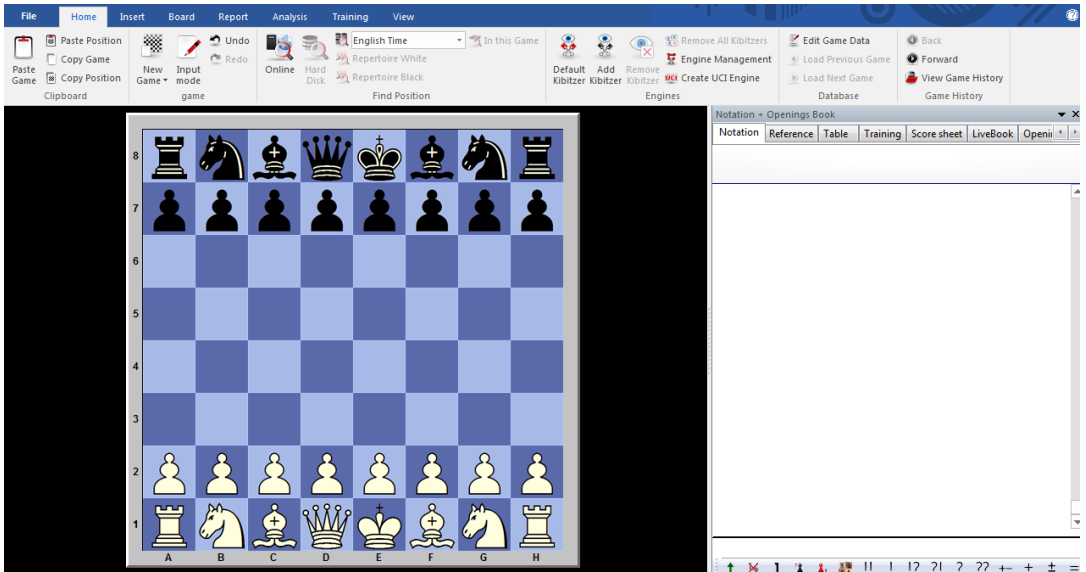


*From the Documentary: Computer Chess (2013)*

The modern chess player encompasses the older generation's learning method as well as these components:

1. Chessbase
2. Tactics Trainers
3. Video Lessons

The most essential tool for game analysis comes from the Chessbase program.



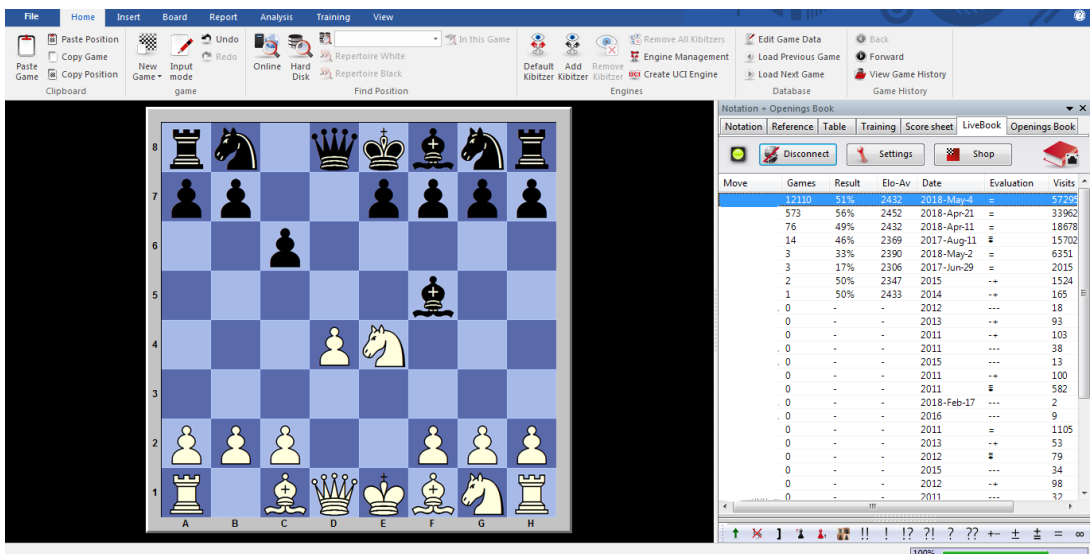
**Enter variations and annotate games**

To enter analyses and annotations is easy. Just go to the desired position with the mouse and play a different move than the one given in the text. ChessBase opens a variation. A double-click on a move opens a text editor to enter comments.



## Opening Analysis

Using chessbase to build an Opening's Repertoire is the most efficient method:



## Tactics Trainer

There are plenty of efficient Tactics Trainers on the market, we suggest starting with a free one:

**chesstempo.com** is a great resource to begin exploration of chess tactics:



Studying Tactics via a tactics trainer forces the user to solve problems and gives immediate feedback.

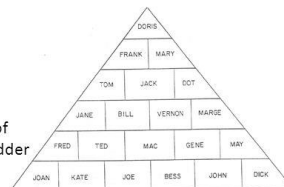
**Teacher Tip:** Have ladder competitions for games and tactics solving in your chess class/club where you and all of the students are ranked. Motivate not only your students but yourself to train daily.

### Ladder Tournaments

PLACES	PLAYERS	PLACES
1	DORIS	1
2	FRANK	2
3	MARY	3
4	TOM	4
5	JACK	5
6	DOT	6
7	JANE	7
8	BILL	8
9	VERNON	9
10	MARGE	10
11	FRED	11
12	TED	12

- Players should be seeded.
- Participants move up if they win and down if they lose.
- Players may challenge any of the three opponents above.
- A deadline date/time should be set by which a winner is declared.
- This type of tournament is best suited for individual sports because participants are ranked by ability when the tournament is completed.

Pyramid Tournament  
An adaptation of the standard ladder tournament



## YouTube Lessons

This is the most dangerous form of study as it is very easy to become a passive learner watching videos. When using the Opening Videos my students get out a physical board and stop the video after each line moving the pieces and attempting to remember the variation. Repetition is the first step to mastery with unfamiliar concepts building up to internal Socratic dialogue for understanding. The student continues to go through the Opening Variations until they become muscle memory.

Palm Beach Chess Opening Videos:



This video focused specifically on the Classical King's Indian Petrosian Variation.



## Chess Study

All throughout the text the authors hope one point has been made clear, Active Learning with Deliberate Practice is the essential ingredient for success in chess and all endeavors in life. In closing *Become A Chess Champion*, we leave you with quotes by World Champions as food for thought.

### **If you can't beat them, you must respect them:**

“The ability to work hard for days on end without losing focus is a talent. The ability to keep absorbing new information after many hours of study is a talent.” – Garry Kasparov

“You can only get good at chess if you love the game.” – Robert James Fischer

“To be champion requires more than simply being a strong player; one has to be a strong human being as well.” - Anatoly Karpov

“Some consider that when I play I am excessively cautious, but it seems to me that the question may be a different one. I try to avoid chance. Those who rely on chance should play cards or roulette. Chess is something quite different.” – Tigran Petrosian

“When my opponent's clock is going I discuss general considerations in an internal dialogue with myself. When my own clock is going I analyze concrete variations.” – Mikhail Botvinnik

“You must take your opponent into a deep dark forest where  $2+2=5$ , and the path leading out is only wide enough for one” – Mikhail Tal

“I attend to my fitness. I go the gym every day and try to maintain my physical fitness; without that, it is tough to take challenges on the chess board.” – Viswanathan Anand

“People who want to improve should take their defeats as lessons, and endeavor to learn what to avoid in the future.” – Jose Raul Capablanca

“Chess first of all teaches you to be objective.” - Alexander Alekhine

“Some people think that if their opponent plays a beautiful game, it's OK to lose. I don't. You have to be merciless.” – Magnus Carlsen

## Dedication

A big thank you goes to **Daniel Naroditsky** for work on the foreword.

A huge thank you goes to **Steve Abrahams** who assisted with the production, publishing, and editing of the first edition. Steve's contributions as a writer are noted in the book.

Last but definitely not least thank you to **Darcy Linde** for editing the definitive edition.

Thank you Advanced Chess Class of 2018 at Franklin Academy



I am inspired everyday by having the opportunity of working with this group. We have been through years of competition and I have seen you all grow from eager to learn piece movement to Champions.

It has been my greatest privilege to call myself your teacher. Had it not been for these students I would not have completed this book and would not currently be striving still to be a competitive chess player.

**Bryan Tillis**