ChessDepth Academy

FREE WORKSHEET PACK · LEVEL 1

Foundation Worksheets

The Level 1 lessons from our classes, with 24 puzzles and full answers

- Chess notation
- Castling & special moves
- Attack & defence
- Threats
- Checkmate in one
- Back-rank mate

For beginners and young players · roughly 0–1100 rating

chessdepth.in

How to use this pack

These are the first lessons every ChessDepth student learns: how to write moves down, the special moves, how attack and defence work, and how to give (and avoid) checkmate. Read a chapter, then solve its puzzles.

1 Read the lesson

Each chapter explains one idea with diagrams. Set the positions up on a board if that helps you.

2 Solve from the diagram

Work out the answer in your head before you touch the pieces. Seeing ahead without moving is the skill you are training.

3 Checks, captures, threats

In every puzzle look at all checks first, then all captures, then moves that threaten something.

4 Read every answer

Even when you were right. Knowing *why* a move works is what makes you spot it in your own games.

What's inside

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2 **Castling, en passant, promotion** page 4

3 **Attack, defence and threats** page 6

4 **Checkmate and the back rank** page 7

5 **24 puzzles** page 8

6 **Answers** page 12

Reading the diagrams

In the puzzles, the side to move is at the **bottom**.

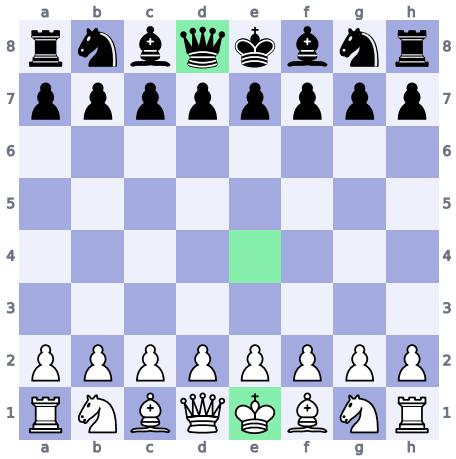
Yellow squares show the **last move**.

○ White to move · ● Black to move

+ check · **#** checkmate · **x** capture · **!** strong move

1 Chess notation

Notation is how we write moves down, so a game can be replayed, studied and shared. Everyone in the world uses the same system: algebraic notation.



Every square has a name: its **file** (a–h) and its **rank** (1–8). The white king starts on **e1**, the black queen on **d8**.

The board

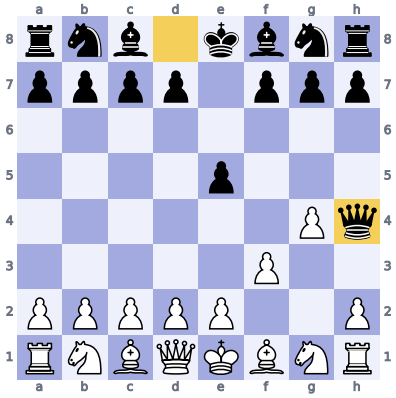
- **Files** are the columns, a to h, from White's left to right.
- **Ranks** are the rows, 1 to 8, from White's side to Black's.
- Every square has one name, such as **e4** (highlighted) or c6.

The pieces

Piece	Letter	Example
King	**K**	Ke2
Queen	**Q**	Qh5
Rook	**R**	Rd1
Bishop	**B**	Bc4
Knight	**N** (K is taken by the king)	Nf3
Pawn	no letter	e4

Writing a move

Move	How to write it	Example
Pawn move	just the square	e4, d5
Piece move	letter + square	Nf3, Bb5
Capture	add **x**	Nxe5, Bxf7
Pawn capture	the pawn's file + x + square	exd5
Castling	kingside / queenside	O-O / O-O-O
Promotion	square + = + new piece	e8=Q
Check / mate	add + or #	Qh5+ / Qh4#



Fool's Mate: 1.f3 e5 2.g4 Qh4#

Results and symbols

- **1-0** White wins · **0-1** Black wins · **½-½** draw
- **!** good move · **!!** brilliant · **?** mistake · **??** blunder · **!?** interesting · **?!** dubious

> Write down every move in your tournament games (it's compulsory in slow games), and replay games from books in algebraic notation. After a few weeks it becomes automatic.

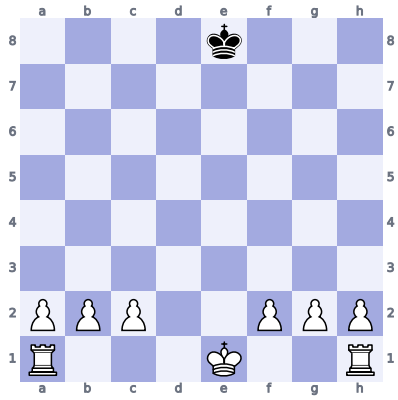
2 Castling, en passant and promotion

Three special moves follow their own rules. Castling is the one you will use in almost every game.

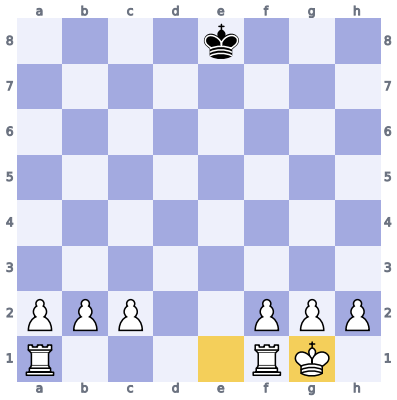
Castling: two pieces, one move

Castling is the only move where you move two pieces at once. It takes the king to safety behind its pawns and brings a rook towards the centre.

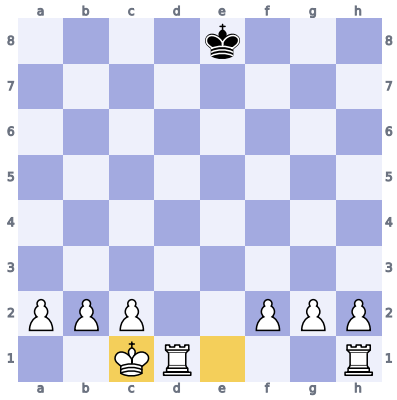
- The **king moves two squares** towards a rook.
- The **rook jumps over** the king and lands on the square right next to it.



Before castling. Nothing stands between the king and either rook.



Kingside (O-O): king e1→g1, rook h1→f1. Black: Ke8→g8, Rh8→f8.



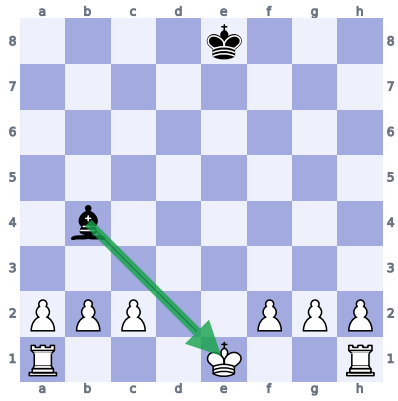
Queenside (O-O-O): king e1→c1, rook a1→d1. Black: Ke8→c8, Ra8→d8.

You may castle only if…

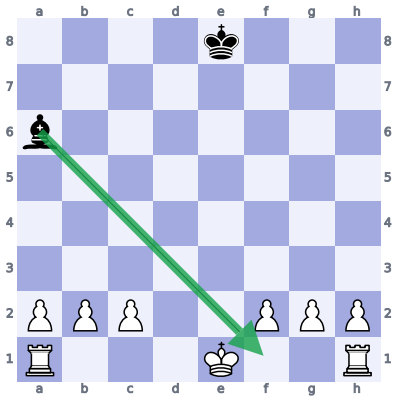
1. neither the king nor that rook has moved yet in the game;
2. there are no pieces between them;
3. the king is **not in check**;
4. the king does not **pass through** or **land on** a square attacked by the opponent.

> Easy to remember: you can't castle **out of** check, **through** check or **into** check. The rook, though, may pass over or stand on an attacked square.

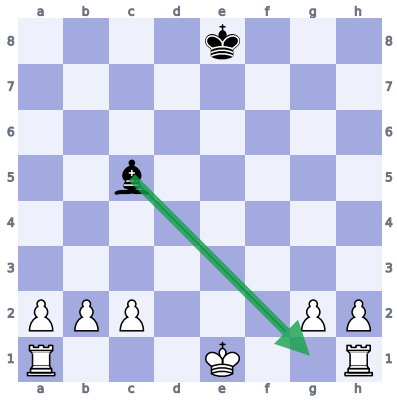
Three positions where White can't castle kingside



Out of check. The bishop on b4 gives check, so White can't castle at all this move.



Through check. The bishop on a6 attacks f1, the square the king passes over.



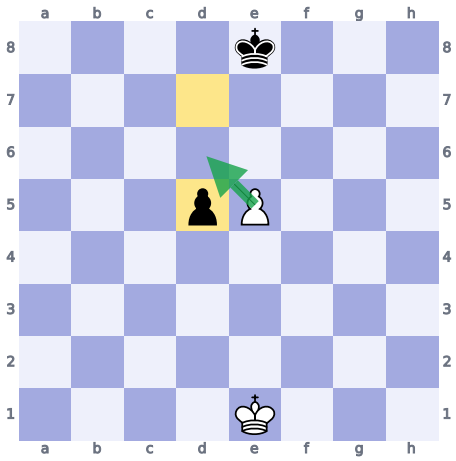
Into check. The bishop on c5 attacks g1, where the king would land.

In the second and third positions White can still castle **queenside**, because the bishops don't attack c1 or d1.

Why castle early?

Castling gets the king out of the centre, where the files open quickly, and hides it behind three pawns. It also connects the rooks so they can work together. Most quick checkmates in beginners' games happen to a king that stayed on e1 or e8.

En passant

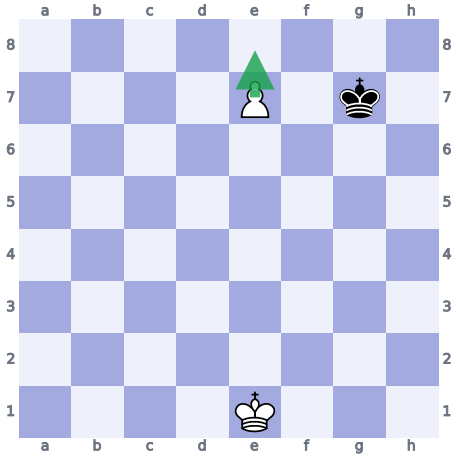


Black has just played ...d7-d5. White can take **exd6 e.p.**

When a pawn moves **two squares** from its starting rank and lands right beside an enemy pawn, that enemy pawn may capture it **as if it had moved only one square**.

- It is only allowed on the very next move. Wait, and the chance is gone.
- The capturing pawn ends up on the square the other pawn passed over (d6 here).
- It is written like a normal capture: **exd6** (sometimes with "e.p.").

Promotion



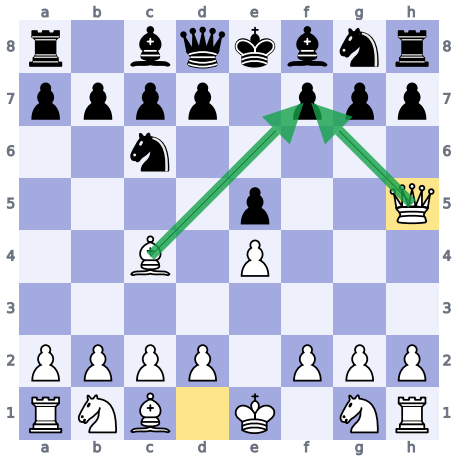
The pawn on e7 moves to e8 and becomes a queen: **e8=Q**.

A pawn that reaches the last rank **must** become a queen, rook, bishop or knight of the same colour, straight away. Almost always you choose a queen. You can have two or more queens at once.

> Choosing a knight or rook instead of a queen is called **under-promotion**. Players do it to give a check with the knight, or to avoid stalemate.

3 Attack, defence and threats

An attack means making threats. Defence means stopping them. Good players know when to switch from one to the other.



White threatens **Qxf7#**: the queen and the bishop both aim at f7. Black must defend with ...g6 or ...Qe7. After ...Nf6?? White mates.

What is a threat?

A threat is a move that says: *"If you don't do something right now, I will gain something next move."*

- **Capture a piece:** Bb5 attacks the knight on c6.
- **Checkmate:** queen and bishop aiming at f7.
- **Fork:** a knight jumps to c7, attacking king and rook.
- **Promote:** a pawn on the 7th rank, ready to queen.

Four ways to meet a threat

1. **Defend** the attacked piece with another piece.
2. **Escape:** move it to a safe square.
3. **Block** the line of attack.
4. **Counter-attack** something of equal or greater value. Only ignore a threat if your own is stronger.

Simple rules of attack

Use more pieces. Three attackers against one defender usually wins.

Aim at weak spots: f7/f2 at the start, the back rank, a king without pawns.

Open lines (files and diagonals) help the attacker.

Don't rush. Bring your pieces first, then strike.

Don't attack if your own king is unsafe.

Simple rules of defence

Stay calm and look at every threat.

Protect directly: defend an attacked piece with another.

Trade attackers: swap off the opponent's most dangerous piece.

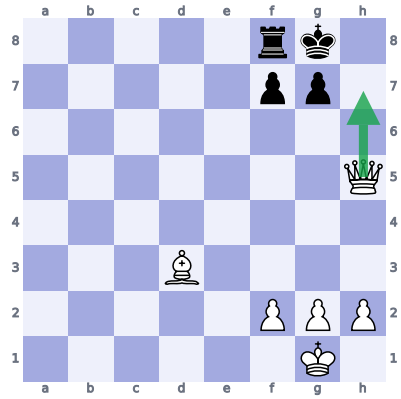
Give your king air: h3 or h6 creates an escape square.

Counter-attack on the other side when you can.

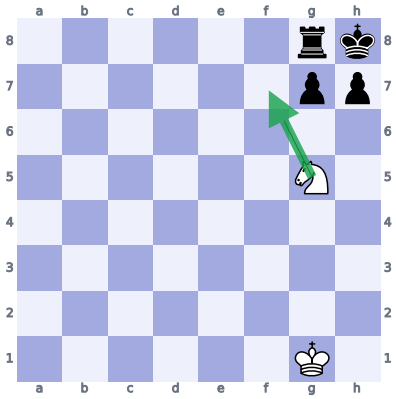
Before every move, ask two questions: **What is my opponent threatening?** and **What will my opponent be able to do after my move?** These two questions prevent most blunders.

4 Checkmate and the back rank

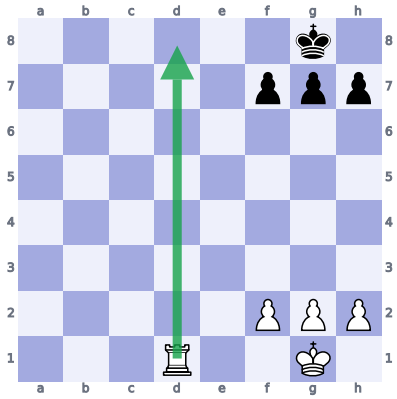
Checkmate: the king is in check and there is no way out. It can't move, the check can't be blocked, and the checking piece can't be captured.



Qh7#. The queen gives check and the bishop on d3 protects it. The king's own rook and pawns block its escape.



Nf7#, a smothered mate. The king is boxed in by its own pieces and a knight check can't be blocked.



Rd8#, the back-rank mate. The pawns on f7, g7 and h7 stop the king from escaping.

The back-rank mate

Castling puts the king behind a wall of pawns, which is usually great. But if those pawns never move, the king has no escape square, and a rook or queen that reaches the back rank (the 1st rank for White, the 8th for Black) gives mate. Watch out for it whenever the back rank is guarded by just one piece: if that defender can be removed or lured away, the mate is on.

> **How to prevent it:** when you have a moment, play **h3** (or ...h6) to give your king an escape square (often called *luft*, German for air), and keep a rook or queen guarding your back rank.

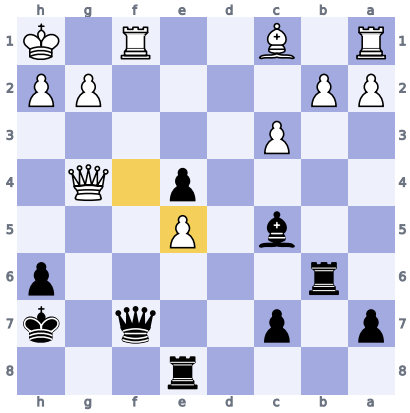
How to avoid getting checkmated

1. **Know the patterns**: back-rank mate, smothered mate, queen-and-bishop mates. If you know them, you see them coming.
2. **King safety**: castle early and don't push the pawns in front of your king without a reason.
3. **Check your opponent's checks** before every move.
4. **Keep pieces near your king** when the opponent is attacking it.
5. **Don't only defend.** Look for counter-threats so the opponent can't attack freely.
6. **Play safe openings** that develop pieces and castle quickly.
7. **Take your time** when your king might be in danger.
8. **Spot tactics:** forks, pins and skewers often come just before a mate.
9. **In the endgame, use your king.** With the queens gone, it becomes a strong piece.

5 Mate in one

Find the move that checkmates straight away. Look at every check, then ask: can the king escape, block or capture?

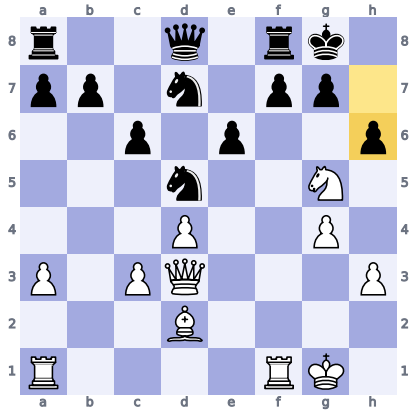
1 ● Black to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

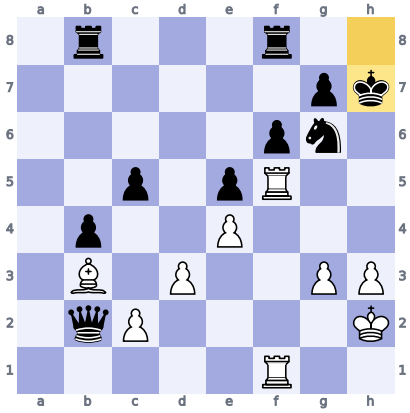
2 ○ White to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

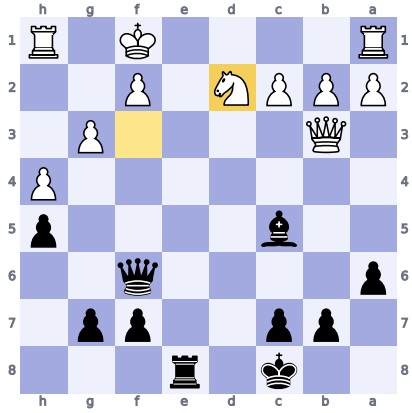
3 ○ White to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

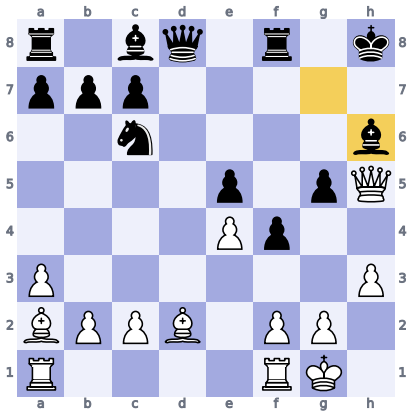
4 ● Black to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

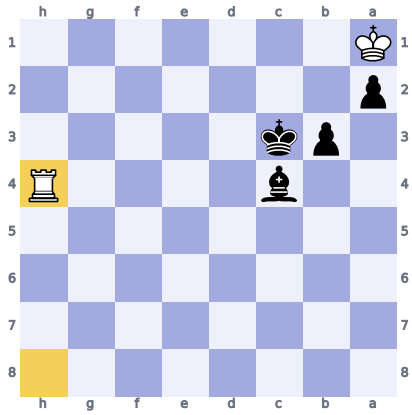
5 ○ White to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

6 ● Black to move

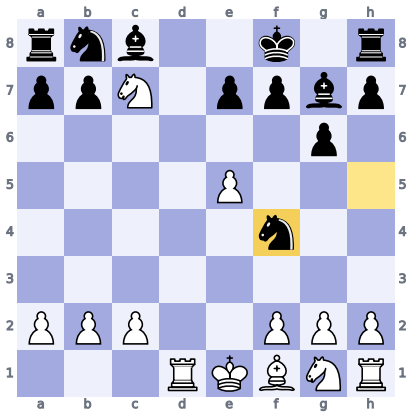


Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

5 Mate in one (continued)

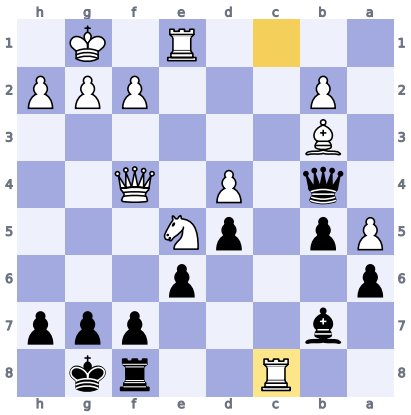
7 ○ White to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

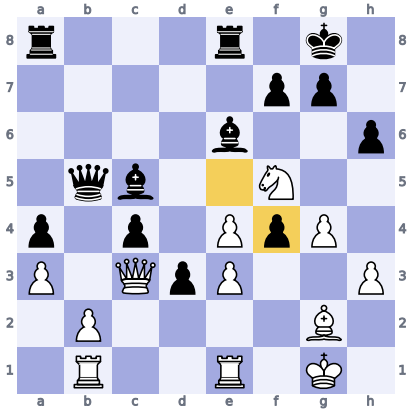
8 ● Black to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

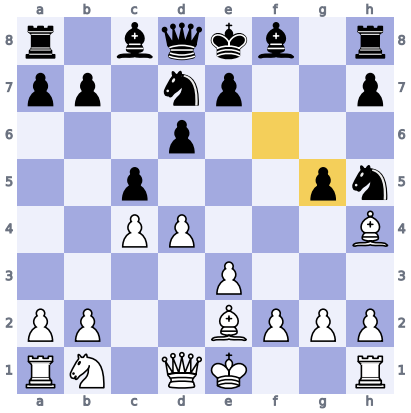
9 ○ White to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

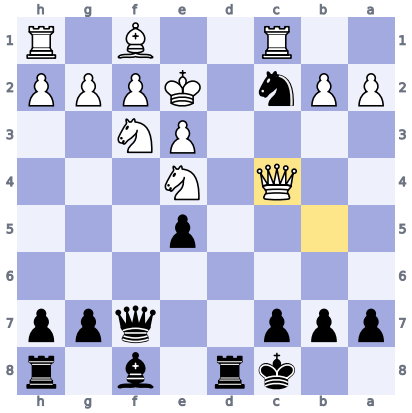
10 ○ White to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

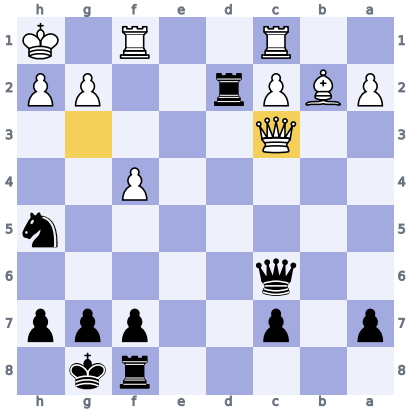
11 ● Black to move



Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

12 ● Black to move



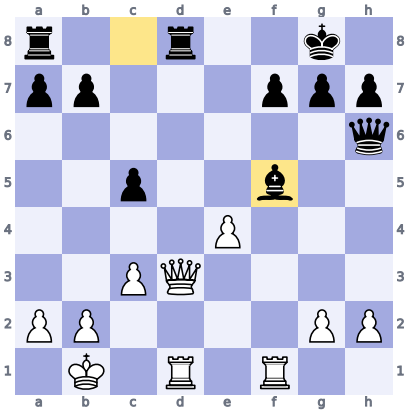
Hint: Try every check.

Your answer:

6 Back-rank mates

The king is stuck behind its own pawns. Most of these take two moves: remove or distract the defender first, then mate.

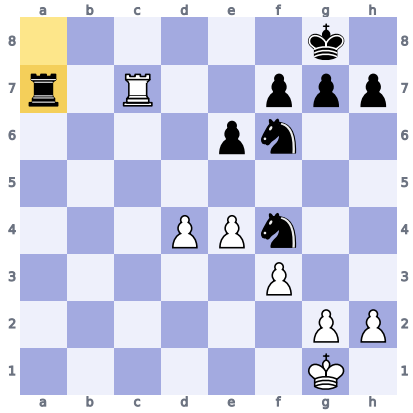
13 ○ White to move



Hint: Who guards the back rank?

Your answer:

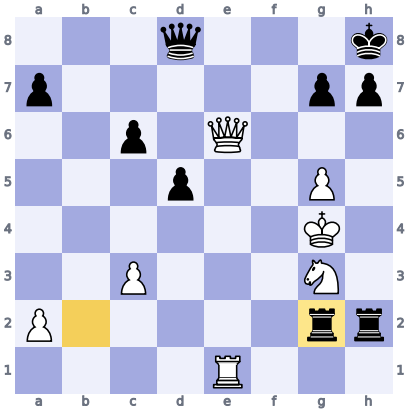
14 ○ White to move



Hint: Who guards the back rank?

Your answer:

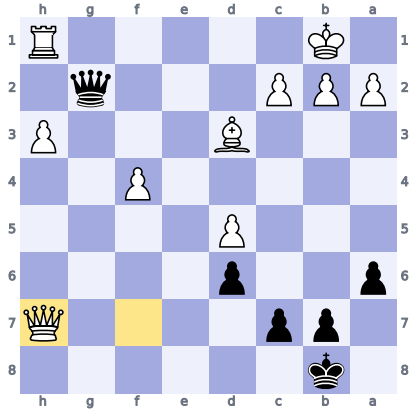
15 ○ White to move



Hint: Who guards the back rank?

Your answer:

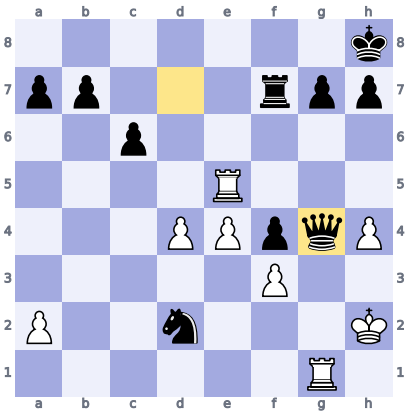
16 ● Black to move



Hint: Who guards the back rank?

Your answer:

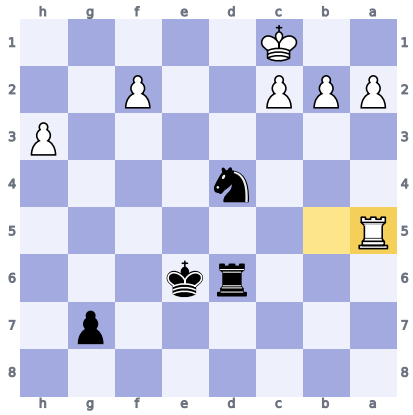
17 ○ White to move



Hint: Who guards the back rank?

Your answer:

18 ● Black to move



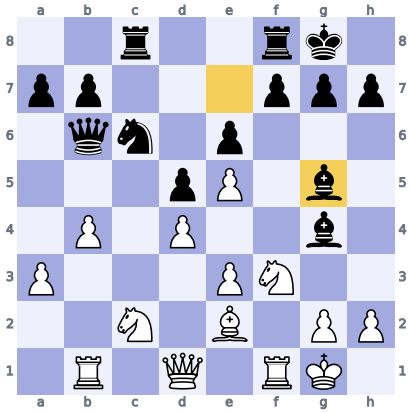
Hint: Who guards the back rank?

Your answer:

7 Free pieces

Something is undefended or not defended enough. Find it and take it, but check your opponent's reply first.

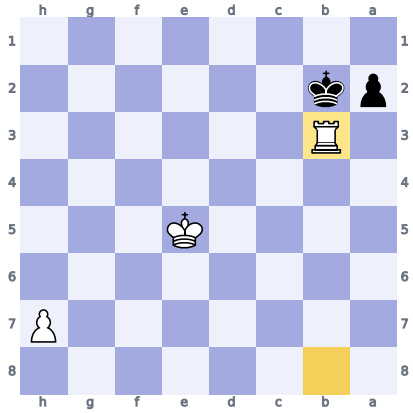
19 ○ White to move



Hint: Is anything left undefended?

Your answer:

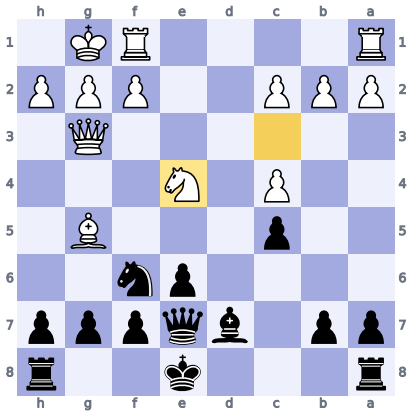
20 ● Black to move



Hint: Is anything left undefended?

Your answer:

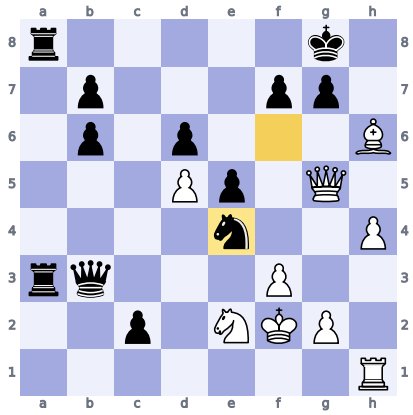
21 ● Black to move



Hint: Is anything left undefended?

Your answer:

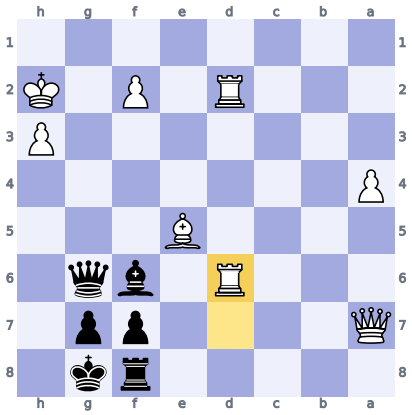
22 ○ White to move



Hint: Is anything left undefended?

Your answer:

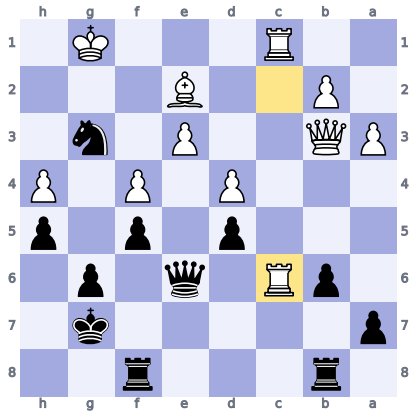
23 ● Black to move



Hint: Is anything left undefended?

Your answer:

24 ● Black to move

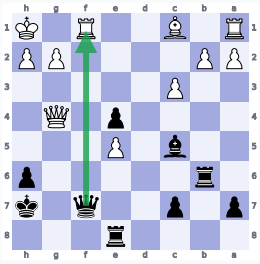


Hint: Is anything left undefended?

Your answer:

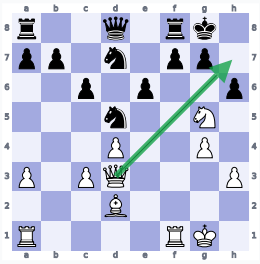
ANSWERS

Puzzles 1–6



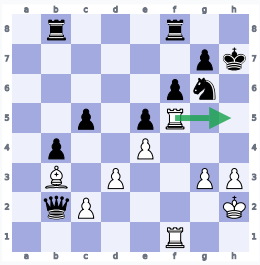
1 **Mate in one · Black to move** Puzzle rating 512

1...Qxf1#. The queen gives check, and the white king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on g2, h2 take away its escape squares.



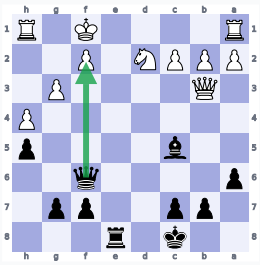
2 **Mate in one · White to move** Puzzle rating 545

1.Qh7#. The queen gives check, and the black king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on f7, g7, f8 take away its escape squares.



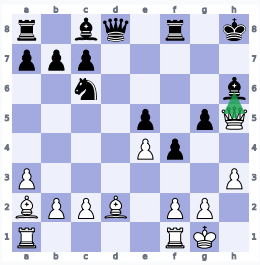
3 **Mate in one · White to move** Puzzle rating 556

1.Rh5#. The rook gives check, and the black king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on g6, g7 take away its escape squares.



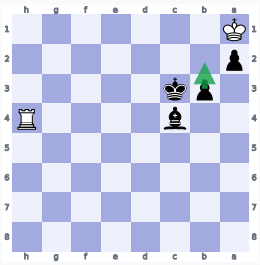
4 **Mate in one · Black to move** Puzzle rating 594

1...Qxf2#. The queen gives check, and the white king can't escape, block or capture.



5 **Mate in one · White to move** Puzzle rating 615

1.Qxh6#. The queen gives check, and the black king can't escape, block or capture.

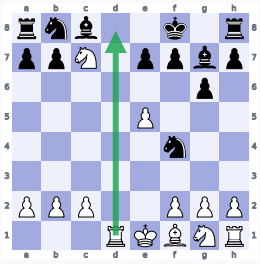


6 **Mate in one · Black to move** Puzzle rating 627

1...b2#. The pawn gives check, and the white king can't escape, block or capture.

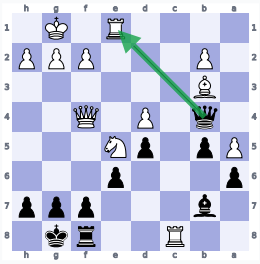
ANSWERS

Puzzles 7–12



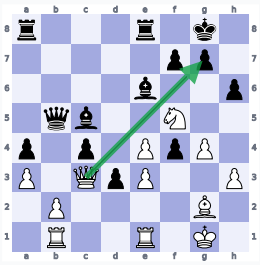
7 **Mate in one · White to move** Puzzle rating 638

1.Rd8#. The rook gives check, and the black king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on e7, f7, g7 take away its escape squares.



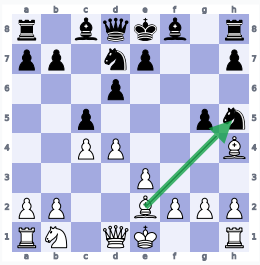
8 **Mate in one · Black to move** Puzzle rating 686

1...Qxe1#. The queen gives check, and the white king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on f2, g2, h2 take away its escape squares.



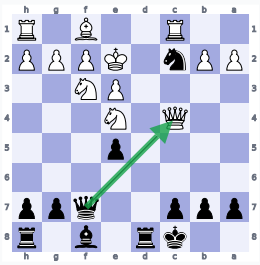
9 **Mate in one · White to move** Puzzle rating 689

1.Qxg7#. The queen gives check, and the black king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on f7 take away its escape squares.



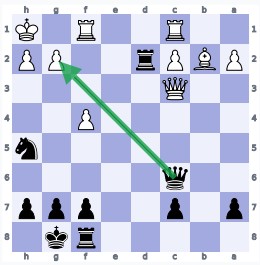
10 **Mate in one · White to move** Puzzle rating 749

1.Bxh5#. The bishop gives check, and the black king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on d7, e7, d8 take away its escape squares.



11 **Mate in one · Black to move** Puzzle rating 760

1...Qxc4#. The queen gives check, and the white king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on f1, f2, e3 take away its escape squares.

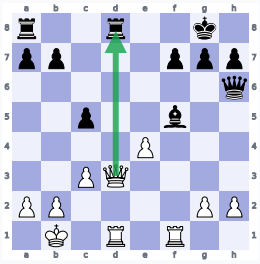


12 **Mate in one · Black to move** Puzzle rating 768

1...Qxg2#. The queen gives check, and the white king can't escape, block or capture. Its own pieces on h2 take away its escape squares.

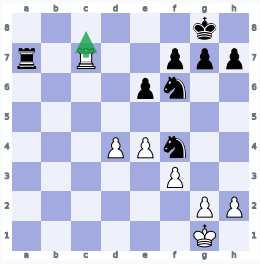
ANSWERS

Puzzles 13–18



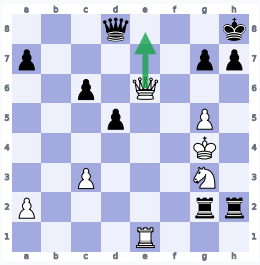
13 **Back-rank mate · White to move** Puzzle rating 641

1.Qxd8+ Rxd8 2.Rxd8#. The king has no escape square because its own pawns block it in. The first move removes or deflects the only defender of the back rank, then the mate follows.



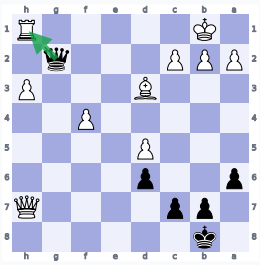
14 **Back-rank mate · White to move** Puzzle rating 649

1.Rc8+ Ne8 2.Rxe8#. The king has no escape square because its own pawns block it in. The first move removes or deflects the only defender of the back rank, then the mate follows.



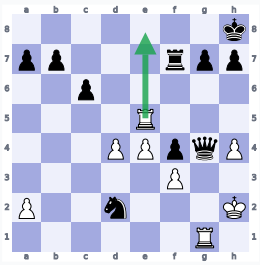
15 **Back-rank mate · White to move** Puzzle rating 655

1.Qe8+ Qxe8 2.Rxe8#. The king has no escape square because its own pawns block it in. The first move removes or deflects the only defender of the back rank, then the mate follows.



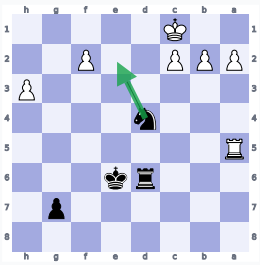
16 **Back-rank mate · Black to move** Puzzle rating 773

1...Qxh1+ 2.Bf1 Qxf1#. The king has no escape square because its own pawns block it in. The first move removes or deflects the only defender of the back rank, then the mate follows.



17 **Back-rank mate · White to move** Puzzle rating 842

1.Re8+ Rf8 2.Rxf8#. The king has no escape square because its own pawns block it in. The first move removes or deflects the only defender of the back rank, then the mate follows.



18 **Back-rank mate · Black to move** Puzzle rating 843

1...Ne2+ 2.Kb1 Rd1#. The king has no escape square because its own pawns block it in. The first move removes or deflects the only defender of the back rank, then the mate follows.

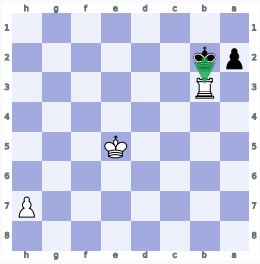
ANSWERS

Puzzles 19–24



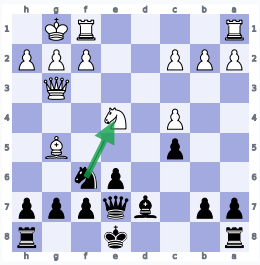
19 **Free piece · White to move** Puzzle rating 753

1.Nxg5 Bxe2 2.Qxe2. Black's bishop on g5 was left undefended, so you take it and win a piece.



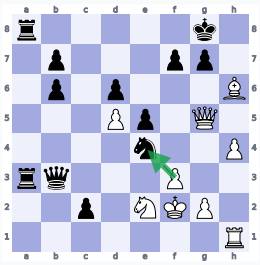
20 **Free piece · Black to move** Puzzle rating 775

1...Kxb3 2.Kf6 a1=Q+. White's rook on b3 was left undefended, so you take it, and then your pawn queens.



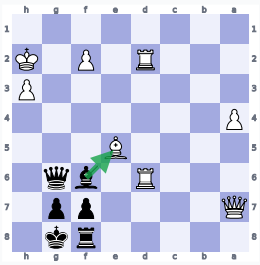
21 **Free piece · Black to move** Puzzle rating 890

1...Nxe4 2.Bxe7 Nxg3. White's knight on e4 was left undefended, so you take it and win a piece.



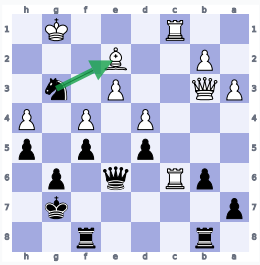
22 **Free piece · White to move** Puzzle rating 1004

1.fxe4 Qe3+ 2.Qxe3. Black's knight on e4 was left undefended, so you take it and win the queen.



23 **Free piece · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1080

1...Bxe5+ 2.Kh1 Bxd6. White's bishop on e5 was left undefended, so you take it and win a rook.



24 **Free piece · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1098

1...Nxe2+ 2.Kf2 Nxc1. White's bishop on e2 was left undefended, so you take it and win a rook.

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