ChessDepth Academy



FREE WORKSHEET PACK · LEVEL 2

Intermediate Worksheets

The Level 2 lessons from our classes, with 18 puzzles and full answers

- The CCT method
- Double attacks
- Pins
- Zwischenzug
- Desperado
- Half-open files

For club players · roughly 900–1500 rating

chessdepth.in

How to use this pack

These lessons turn you from someone who sees tactics sometimes into someone who looks for them every move. Start with the CCT method: it is the habit that every other chapter builds on.

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

1 **The CCT thinking method** page 3

2 **Double attacks** page 4

3 **Pins** page 5

4 **Zwischenzug and desperado** page 6

5 **Half-open files** page 8

6 **18 puzzles and answers** page 9

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 The CCT thinking method

CCT stands for Checks, Captures and Threats: the forcing moves. Look at them first, in that order, for you and for your opponent, and you will miss far fewer tactics.

Why forcing moves first?

A forcing move limits your opponent's replies, so it is easier to calculate and more likely to win something straight away. Most tactics, from a simple fork to a long combination, begin with a forcing move.

Step	Ask yourself	Why it matters
1. Checks	Which checks can I give? How can the king reply to each one?	The opponent *must* answer a check: move the king, block, or capture the checking piece.
2. Captures	What can I take? What happens after the recapture?	Never assume a piece is protected. Count the attackers and defenders and calculate the exchange to the end.
3. Threats	Which moves attack something: a loose piece, the king, a promotion square?	Threats give the opponent a little more choice, but forks, pins, mate threats and promotions are all here.

Then turn the board around

Once you have a candidate move, do a **blunder check**: imagine the position after your move and run CCT for your opponent.

- **Their checks:** does my move allow a check that wins something?
- **Their captures:** did I leave a piece unprotected, or take away a defender?
- **Their threats:** what is their strongest attacking idea now?

> An important extra rule: **before** you look for your own ideas, ask what your opponent's last move threatens. A single question, asked every move, prevents most blunders.

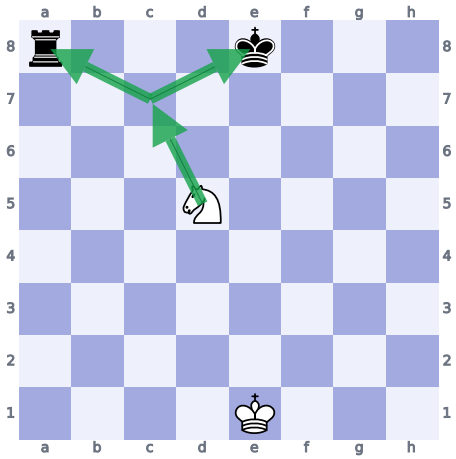
Making it a habit

- Use CCT on every puzzle in this pack, even when the answer seems obvious.
- In slow games, run CCT on every move until you do it without thinking.
- When you review your games, find the moment where CCT would have saved you, or won.
- Later, combine CCT with positional ideas: piece activity, king safety and plans. CCT keeps you tactically safe; the plan tells you where to go.

> Want more practice? Our free **Checks, Captures and Threats workbook** has 20 more graded problems: chessdepth.in/shop

2 Double attacks

A double attack is one move that creates two threats at once. Your opponent can usually meet only one of them, so you win the other.



Nc7+ forks the king and the rook. After the king moves, Nxa8 wins the rook.

The key idea

Two threats are much harder to meet than one. Typical pairs: attacking a piece *and* threatening mate, giving check *and* attacking a loose piece, or attacking two pieces at once.

Typical patterns

- **Loose pieces** (undefended) are the favourite targets. "Loose pieces drop off."
- **Look for forcing moves**: a check that also attacks something is the most common double attack.
- **Knights** are the great forking pieces: their jumps are hard to see coming.

Types of double attack

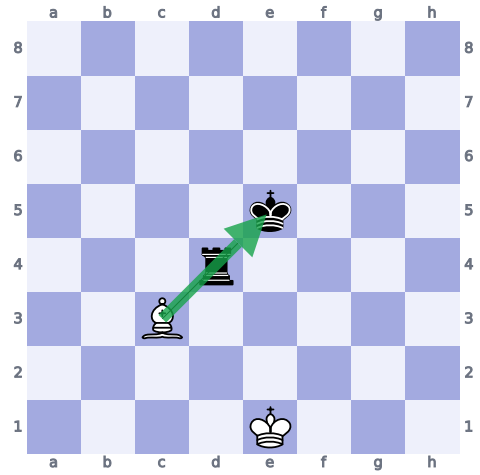
Type	What happens	Typical example
Queen double attack	The long-range queen hits two targets, often with check.	Qd5+ hitting the king on g8 and a rook on a8
Knight fork	The knight attacks two or more pieces, often king and queen.	Nc7+ forking king and rook
Pawn fork	A pawn attacks two bigger pieces diagonally.	e5 attacking knights on d6 and f6
Discovered attack	One piece moves and uncovers an attack by the piece behind it, and the moving piece makes a threat too.	A bishop moves off the e-file with a threat, uncovering the rook on e1
Double check	The moving piece and the uncovered piece both give check. Only a king move can answer it.	Nf7++ with a bishop behind

> When you find a double attack, check that your opponent has no **check or capture** that meets both threats at once. That is the only defence against a double attack.

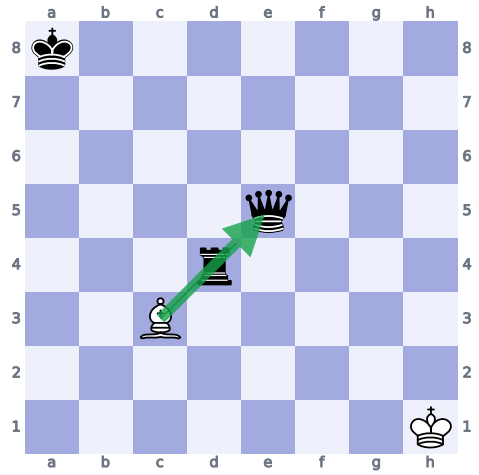
3 Pins

A pin freezes an enemy piece: it can't move without exposing a more valuable piece behind it.

Every pin has three parts, all on one rank, file or diagonal: the **pinning piece** (always a bishop, rook or queen), the **pinned piece** in front, and the more valuable piece **behind** it.



Absolute pin. The rook on d4 is pinned to its king by the bishop on c3. It is *illegal* for it to move off the diagonal.



Relative pin. Now the queen is behind the rook. The rook *may* move, but then Bxe5 wins the queen.

Why pins are so strong

- **Immobilise:** a pinned piece can't move, so it can't defend other pieces or squares either.
- **Win material:** pile up on the pinned piece. It can't run away, so more attackers win it (often a pawn attacking it does the job).
- **Tie the opponent down:** pinned pieces need extra defenders, which leaves the opponent passive.

How to escape a pin

- **Block** the line with another piece.
- **Move the piece behind** (the king or queen) so the pin disappears.
- **Attack the pinning piece** and force it to move or be exchanged, for example with a pawn (…h6 against Bg5).
- **Counter-attack** with something more forcing.

> A pinned piece is a **bad defender**. When a pinned piece seems to guard a square, check whether it really can: a knight pinned to the king doesn't protect anything at all.

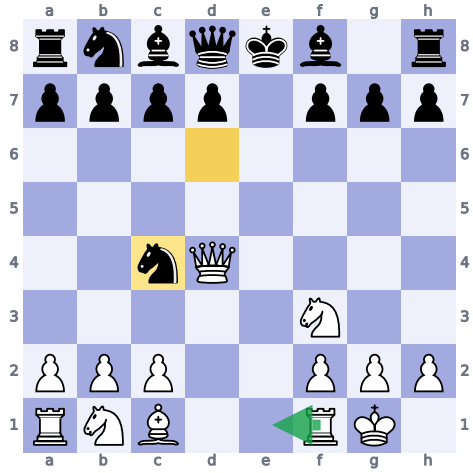
4 Zwischenzug and desperado

Two ideas about timing: sometimes the move everyone expects is not the best one, and sometimes a doomed piece can still take something with it.

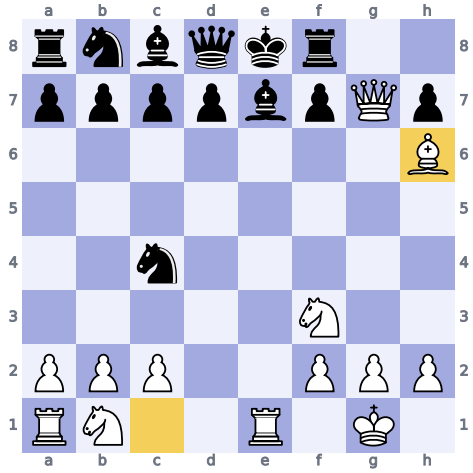
The zwischenzug (in-between move)

Zwischenzug is German for "in-between move"; it is also called an **intermezzo**. Instead of the automatic move, usually a recapture, you first play a **forcing move** (a check, a capture or a big threat). The opponent has to answer it, and only then do you make the move you were expected to make, in a better version.

- **Forcing:** the best in-between moves are checks (in German, *Zwischenschach*), because the opponent has no choice.
- **Purpose:** win more material, gain time, or create a new threat before finishing the exchange.



After 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nf6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.Qxd4 Nd6 6.O-O Nxc4. Black expects 7.Qxc4. White first plays **7.Re1+!**



7...Be7 8.Qxg7 Rf8 9.Bh6. Instead of recapturing, White opened up the black king, and Qxf8# is threatened.

A Bishop's Opening game from 2000. Black was hoping simply to swap off White's dangerous bishop, but the in-between check changed everything.

Questions to ask

1. Is there an exchange, or a sequence of captures, happening right now?
2. Before the natural move, is there a check, a capture of something valuable or a threat that can't be ignored?
3. After the opponent answers it, can I still make the original move, with a better result?

The desperado

A **desperado** is a piece that is lost anyway: it is attacked and can't escape, or it is about to be captured in an exchange. Instead of letting it die for nothing, you use it to **take as much as possible first**, ideally a piece of equal or higher value, or a pawn with check.

- The desperado often dives into the enemy position, capturing material or wrecking the pawn structure.
- Desperado sequences can go back and forth: your attacked knight takes a rook, now their attacked piece takes something too. Both sides keep capturing with pieces that are already lost.
- Count to the **end** of the sequence. Only the final material balance matters.

> **Typical case:** your knight is attacked by a pawn and has no safe square. Before you give up on it, look at everything it can take: a pawn with check, a defended piece of the same value, or a pawn that wrecks the enemy king's shelter. Something is better than nothing.

Questions to ask

1. Is one of my pieces trapped or attacked, with no good square to go to?
2. Can this piece capture something of equal or higher value right now, or take with check?
3. What is the final material balance after the whole sequence, and what does the position look like? Calculate it to the end.

Zwischenzug and desperado together

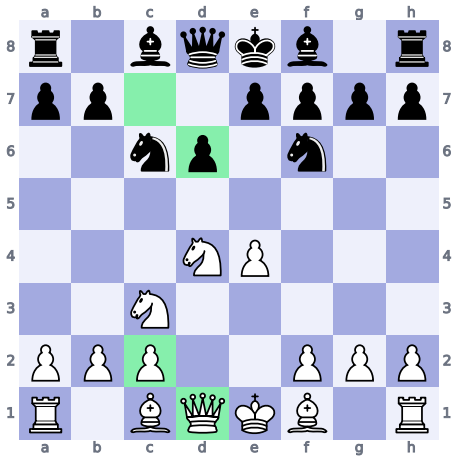
Both ideas break the "I take, you take back" rhythm. In a capture sequence, always ask before recapturing: **is there something better first?** And when a piece of yours is doomed, ask: **what can it take with it?**

> The most common mistake: recapturing automatically. Make it a habit to pause for one second before every recapture and run CCT.

5 Half-open files

A file is a column of the board. What matters for your rooks is whose pawns are still on it.

File type	Pawns on it	Who it helps
Open	No pawns at all	Both sides: rooks fight for it
Half-open (semi-open)	Only an enemy pawn, none of yours	You: your rook presses against that pawn
Closed	Pawns of both colours	Nobody, until a pawn exchange opens it



An Open Sicilian after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6. The c-file is half-open for Black, the d-file for White.

Using a half-open file

- **Put a rook (or queen) on it** to attack the enemy pawn at the end of the file, often the base of a pawn chain.
- **Double up:** two rooks, or rook and queen, add pressure.
- **Target weak pawns:** an isolated or backward pawn on a half-open file is a classic target.
- **Create an outpost:** the file can help you plant a knight on a strong square near the enemy position.

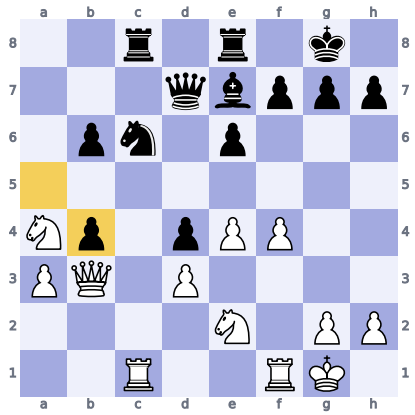
The side that still has a pawn on the file has to defend it, often by blocking the file with a piece.

> In the Sicilian, Black's rook usually goes to **c8** to use the half-open c-file against c2 and the knight on c3, while White's pieces use the half-open d-file against the d6 pawn. Knowing which files are half-open tells you where your rooks belong.

6 Double attacks

Find a move that attacks two things at once. Checks that also attack a piece are the most common.

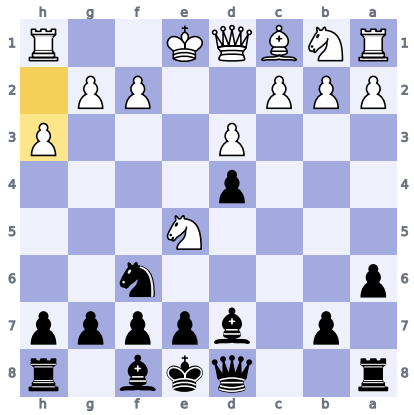
1 ○ White to move



Hint: Which piece can attack two things at once?

Your answer:

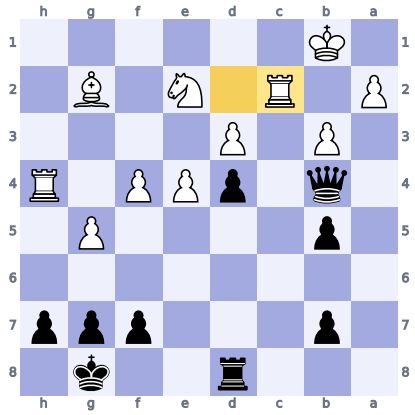
2 ● Black to move



Hint: Which piece can attack two things at once?

Your answer:

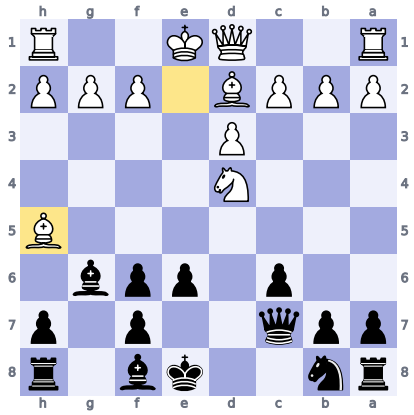
3 ● Black to move



Hint: Which piece can attack two things at once?

Your answer:

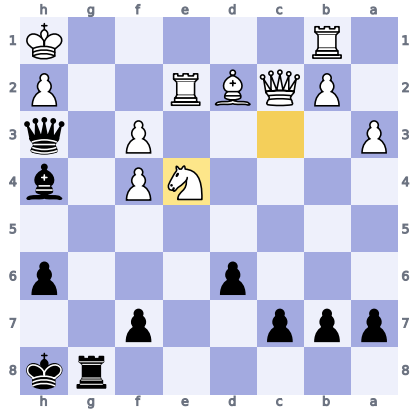
4 ● Black to move



Hint: Which piece can attack two things at once?

Your answer:

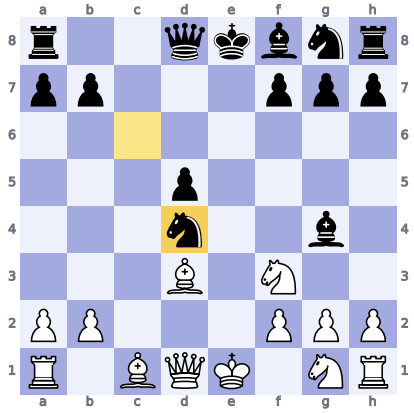
5 ● Black to move



Hint: Which piece can attack two things at once?

Your answer:

6 ○ White to move



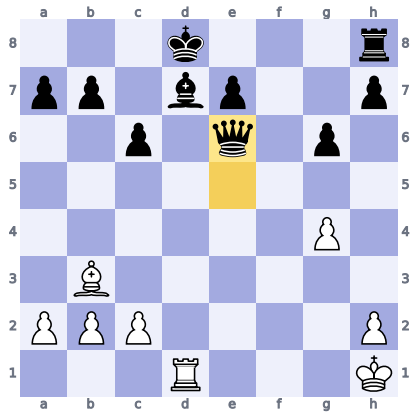
Hint: Which piece can attack two things at once?

Your answer:

7 Pins

Use a pin to win material: attack the pinned piece, or exploit the fact that it can't move or defend.

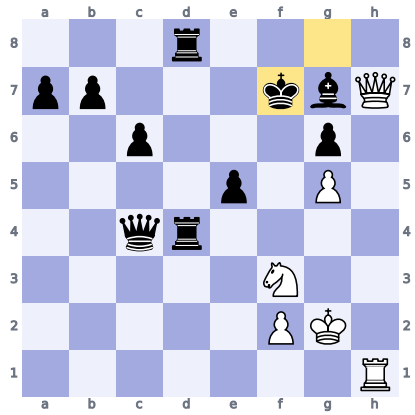
7 ○ White to move



Hint: What is pinned, and to what?

Your answer:

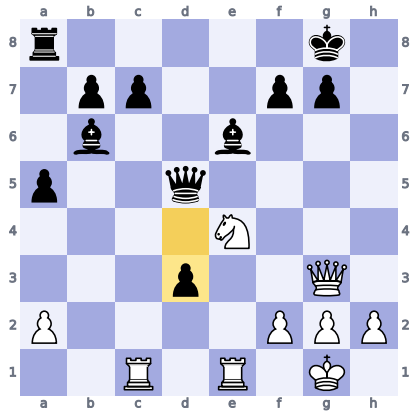
8 ○ White to move



Hint: What is pinned, and to what?

Your answer:

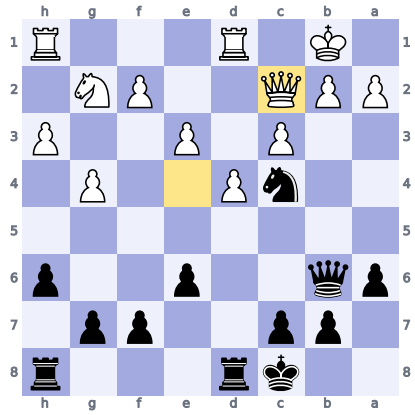
9 ○ White to move



Hint: What is pinned, and to what?

Your answer:

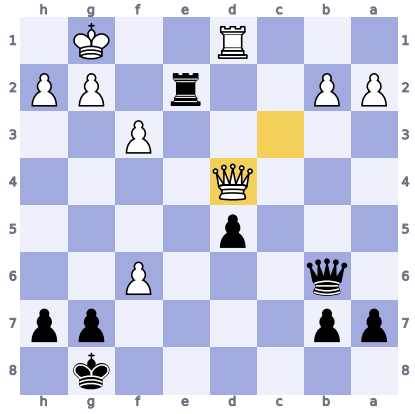
10 ● Black to move



Hint: What is pinned, and to what?

Your answer:

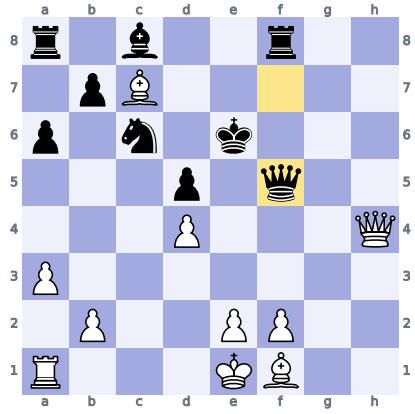
11 ● Black to move



Hint: What is pinned, and to what?

Your answer:

12 ○ White to move



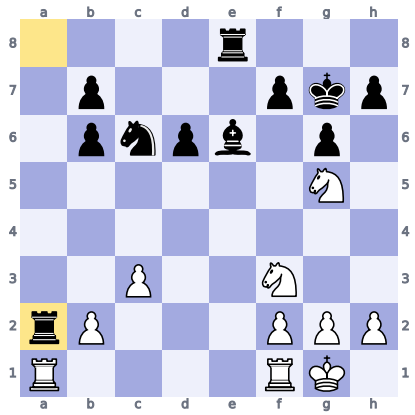
Hint: What is pinned, and to what?

Your answer:

8 In-between moves

Don't play the automatic move. Find the forcing move that comes first.

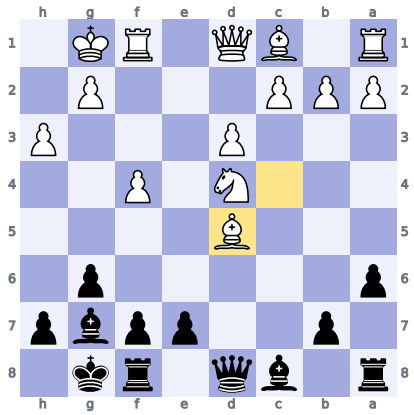
13 ○ White to move



Hint: Is there something stronger first?

Your answer:

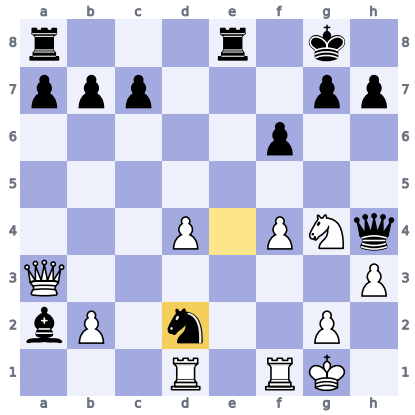
14 ● Black to move



Hint: Is there something stronger first?

Your answer:

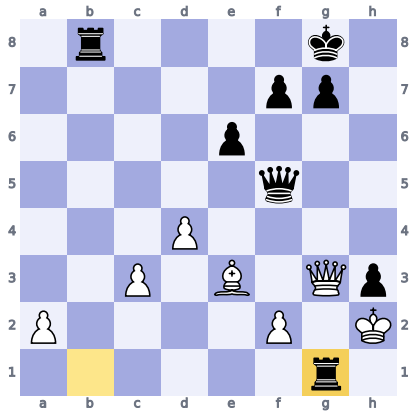
15 ○ White to move



Hint: Is there something stronger first?

Your answer:

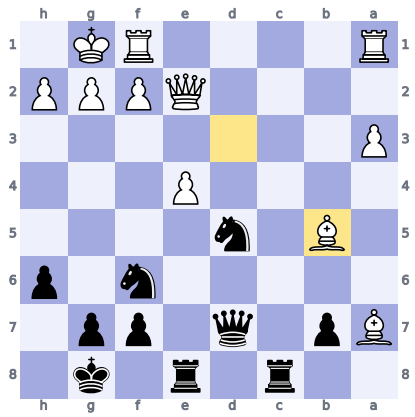
16 ○ White to move



Hint: Is there something stronger first?

Your answer:

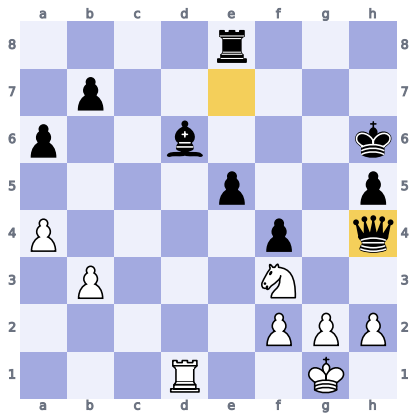
17 ● Black to move



Hint: Is there something stronger first?

Your answer:

18 ○ White to move

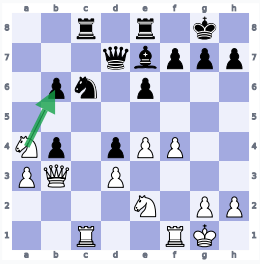


Hint: Is there something stronger first?

Your answer:

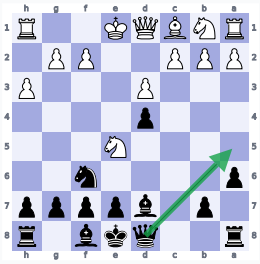
ANSWERS

Puzzles 1–6



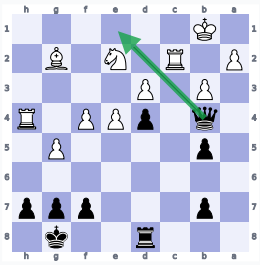
1 **Double attack · White to move** Puzzle rating 952

1.Nxb6 Qb7 2.Nxc8. After Nxb6 the knight on b6 attacks the queen and the rook at the same time. Black can only save one, and White wins a rook.



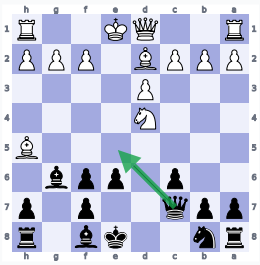
2 **Double attack · Black to move** Puzzle rating 964

1...Qa5+ 2.Nd2 Qxe5+. After Qa5+ the queen on a5 attacks the king and the knight at the same time. White can only save one, and Black wins a piece.



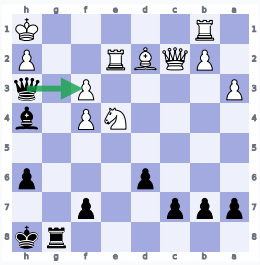
3 **Double attack · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1071

1...Qe1+ 2.Kb2 Qxh4. After Qe1+ the queen on e1 attacks the king and the rook at the same time. White can only save one, and Black wins a rook.



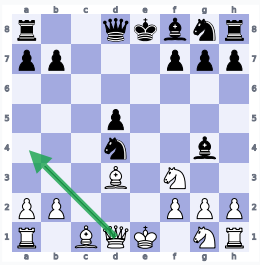
4 **Double attack · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1262

1...Qe5+ 2.Be2 Qxd4. After Qe5+ the queen on e5 attacks the king and the knight at the same time. White can only save one, and Black wins a piece.



5 **Double attack · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1305

1...Qxf3+ 2.Rg2 Qxg2#. After Qxf3+ the queen on f3 attacks the king and the rook at the same time. White can only save one. It ends in checkmate.

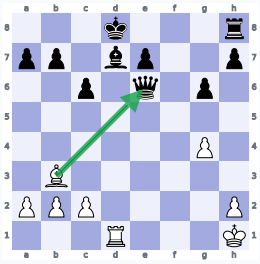


6 **Double attack · White to move** Puzzle rating 1395

1.Qa4+ Nc6 2.Qxg4. After Qa4+ the queen on a4 attacks the king and the knight at the same time. Black can only save one, and White wins a piece.

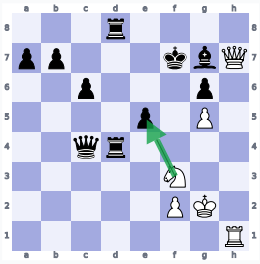
ANSWERS

Puzzles 7–12



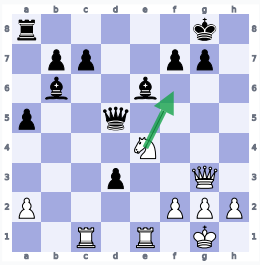
7 **Pin · White to move** Puzzle rating 978

1.Bxe6 Kc7 2.Rxd7+. The key is the pin: Black's bishop on d7 is pinned to its king, so it can't move away or help. White wins the queen.



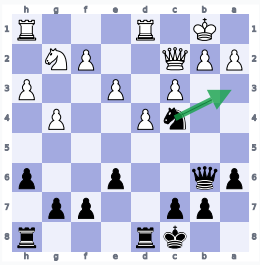
8 **Pin · White to move** Puzzle rating 1042

1.Nxe5+ Kf8 2.Nxc4. The key is the pin: Black's bishop on g7 is pinned to its king, so it can't move away or help. White wins the queen.



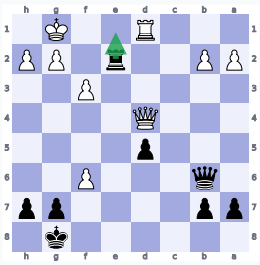
9 **Pin · White to move** Puzzle rating 1069

1.Nf6+ Kf8 2.Nxd5. The key is the pin: Black's pawn on g7 is pinned to its king, so it can't move away or help. White wins the queen.



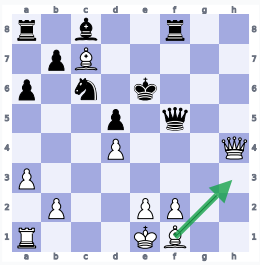
10 **Pin · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1081

1...Na3+ 2.Kc1 Nxc2. The key is the pin: White's pawn on b2 is pinned to its king, so it can't move away or help. Black wins the queen.



11 **Pin · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1196

1...Re1+ 2.Rxe1 Qxd4+. The key is the pin: White's queen on d4 is pinned to its king, so it can't move away or help. Black wins the queen for a rook.

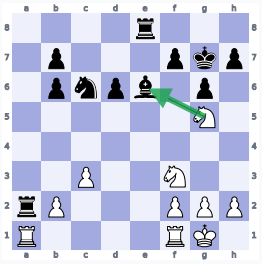


12 **Pin · White to move** Puzzle rating 1331

1.Bh3 Kf7 2.Bxf5. The key is the pin: Black's queen on f5 is pinned to its king, so it can't move away or help. White wins the queen.

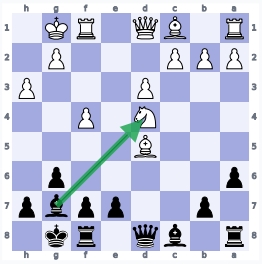
ANSWERS

Puzzles 13–18



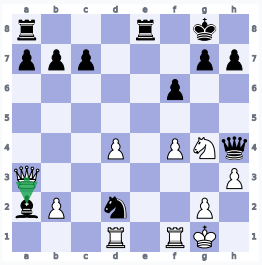
13 **In-between move · White to move** Puzzle rating 1187

1.Nxe6+ fxe6 2.Rxa2. Instead of the automatic move, White first plays Nxe6+, which Black must answer. Only then does White collect the material, ending up a rook ahead.



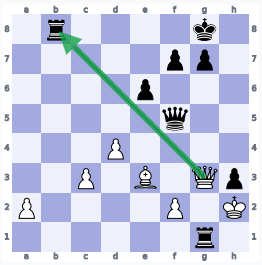
14 **In-between move · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1310

1...Bxd4+ 2.Kh1 Qxd5. Instead of the automatic move, Black first plays Bxd4+, which White must answer. Only then does Black collect the material, ending up a piece ahead.



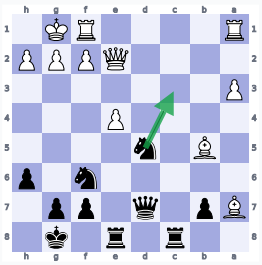
15 **In-between move · White to move** Puzzle rating 1345

1.Qxa2+ Kh8 2.Rxd2. Instead of the automatic move, White first plays Qxa2+, which Black must answer. Only then does White collect the material, ending up a piece ahead.



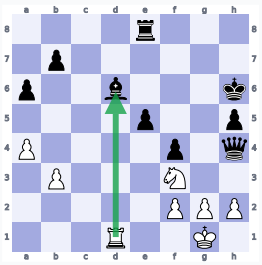
16 **In-between move · White to move** Puzzle rating 1468

1.Qxb8+ Kh7 2.Kxg1. Instead of the automatic move, White first plays Qxb8+, which Black must answer. Only then does White collect the material, ending up a rook ahead.



17 **In-between move · Black to move** Puzzle rating 1479

1...Nc3 2.Bxd7 Nxe2+ 3.Kh1 Nxd7. Instead of the automatic move, Black first plays Nc3, which White must answer. Only then does Black collect the material, ending up a piece ahead.



18 **In-between move · White to move** Puzzle rating 1498

1.Rxd6+ Kh7 2.Nxh4. Instead of the automatic move, White first plays Rxd6+, which Black must answer. Only then does White collect the material, ending up the queen ahead.

What next?

A little practice every day beats a long session once a week. Here is how ChessDepth can help you keep going.

Chess Lab

Thousands of rated puzzles that adapt to your level, Puzzle Streak, opening courses and a progress dashboard, all in your browser.

chessdepth.in/lab

Blindfold Training

Ten free drills that train you to see the board in your head, from square colours to full games against Stockfish.

chessdepth.in/blindfold

Classes with a coach

Structured online classes from beginner to tournament level, with worksheets, regular tests and game reviews. Your first demo class is free.

chessdepth.in/courses

Puzzle tracker

Tick each puzzle you solved without help. Come back to the empty ones in a week.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		

ChessDepth Academy

WhatsApp / phone +91 98230 29262 · info@chessdepth.in · Instagram @chessdepthacademy1

Puzzle positions from the free Lichess puzzle database (lichess.org, CC0), every solution checked with Stockfish. Lessons written by the coaches of ChessDepth Academy. © 2026 ChessDepth Academy. Free to download, print and share for personal and classroom use.