Beginner's manual

CHESS

for **adults**



Step by step: from the rules to the basic mates

JOSE SANDE

Beginner's Chess Manual

for adults

From the first rules to the basic mates
18 units · 216 solved exercises

JOSE SANDE

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Free to download and use.

Introduction

This book is written for adults who want to learn to play chess from scratch, or who know how the pieces move but have never managed to play games with confidence. You need no previous knowledge, no special gift for numbers and no prodigious memory. You need a board, a little patience and the wish to understand what happens on it.

The aim is concrete: by the end of the book you will be able to play a complete game following all the rules, you will recognise the most common threats, you will know when it pays to exchange pieces and you will be able to mate with the queen, with a rook and with two rooks when your opponent is left with only the king. We don't promise you a rating or a particular level: progress in chess depends on what you play and review afterwards. We do promise that, if you do the exercises, you will have a solid foundation with no gaps.

The road has three stages. In Units 1 to 8 you will learn the board, each piece and all the rules, including the special ones. In Units 9 to 14 you will play your first games and learn not to lose material, to start sensibly and to see your first tactical moves. In Units 15 to 18 you will master the basic mates and learn how to keep improving on your own.

How to use this book

Keep a board in front of you. Reading chess without moving pieces is like reading a recipe without cooking. Set up each diagram on your board and play through the moves. It will be hard at first; within a few weeks you will do it without thinking.

One unit at a time. Each unit starts with its aim, explains the ideas with examples and ends with twelve exercises, a practice task with a board and a summary. At the end, the "Check your progress" section tells you whether you can move on to the next. There is no hurry: it is better to review a unit than to move on with doubts.

The diagrams. They are seen from White's side. The small square next to the bottom right corner shows who is to move: white if White is to move, black if Black is to move. Diagrams without the small square are practice boards, which may have no kings and are not game positions.

The exercises. Each exercise has a fixed reference, such as U07 E04 (Unit 7, exercise 4). The solutions are at the end of the book, in order of that reference. Try to solve each exercise on the board before looking at the solution, and if you get it wrong, read the explanation: it usually tells you why the tempting answer does not work.

Notation. The text uses the standard English letters for the pieces: K (king), Q (queen), R (rook), B (bishop) and N (knight, because K is already taken by the king). Pawns have no letter. Notation is explained little by little and completed in Unit 9. The signs ! and ? mark a good move or a mistake.

The teaching games. There are five, written to teach: they include common mistakes by both sides and pauses where we ask you what you would do. Play them through on the board and stop at each pause before reading on.

Play. From Unit 9 onwards you should play games, in person or online, against opponents of your level or against a program on an easy setting. Afterwards, review three moments of each game with the guide in Unit 18.

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UNIT 1

Your first look at the board

In this unit *Set up the board correctly, recognise ranks, files and diagonals, find any square by its name and know what the aim of the game is.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

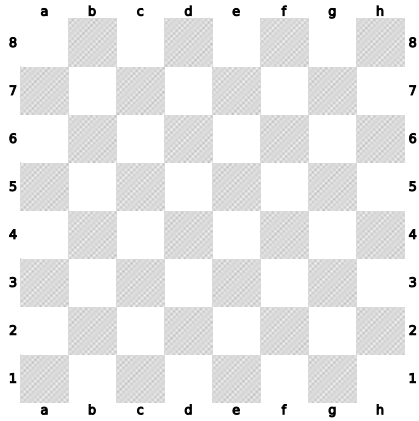
Imagine sitting down in front of a chessboard for the first time. Before you move a single piece, some very practical questions come up: which way round does the board go? Which side starts? What is each square called? This unit answers those questions. You do not need to know anything about chess to follow it; a board, or the diagrams in this book, and a few minutes of attention are enough.

1.1 Two players taking turns

Chess is played by two people. One has the **white** pieces and the other the **black** pieces. White always starts, and then each player moves once, in turn: White, Black, White, Black... Nobody may skip a turn or move twice in a row. This simple rule has an important consequence that we will see again and again: after each of your moves, your opponent has the right to reply.

1.2 The board: 64 squares of two colours

The board is a square divided into 64 squares, eight across and eight high. The squares are alternately **white** and **black**. On real boards they may be light and dark wood, or white and green, but we always call them white squares and black squares. In this book the black squares are shown hatched. When we simply say "White" or "Black", we mean the pieces or the players.

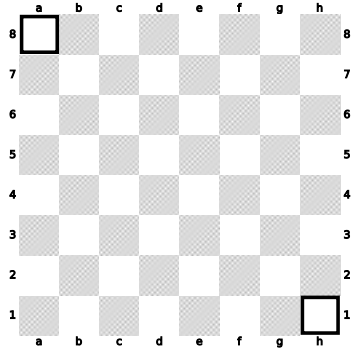


The empty board. The letters and numbers around the edge are used to name the squares.

1.3 White square on the right

The board cannot be placed just any way. The rule is: **each player must have a white square in the corner on their right**. If you sit down and see that the square in your right-hand corner is black, the board is set up wrongly: turn it a quarter turn. A half turn is not enough, because the right-hand corner would still be black.

The check works for both players at once: if the board is right for White, it is also right for Black, who sits opposite. In the diagram below, White's right-hand corner is h1 and Black's is a8. Both are white.



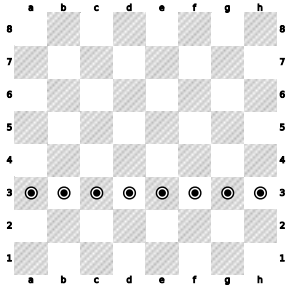
Each player's right-hand corner: h1 for White, a8 for Black.

> **A trick to remember it.** Many teachers sum it up in a short phrase: "white on the right". The white square in the corner is next to each player's right hand.

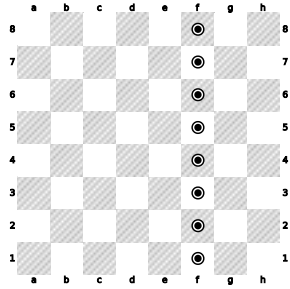
1.4 Ranks, files and diagonals

The squares form three kinds of lines that we will use all the time:

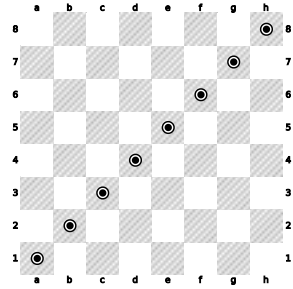
- **Rank**: a horizontal row, from left to right. There are eight ranks, numbered 1 to 8. The 1st rank is the closest to White and the 8th rank the closest to Black.
- **File**: a vertical column, from one player to the other. There are eight files, named with the letters "a" to "h". From White's side, the a-file is on the left.
- **Diagonal**: a slanting line of squares that touch at the corners. All the squares of a diagonal have the same colour. There are long diagonals, of eight squares, and very short ones, of two.



A rank: the 3rd rank.



A file: the f-file.



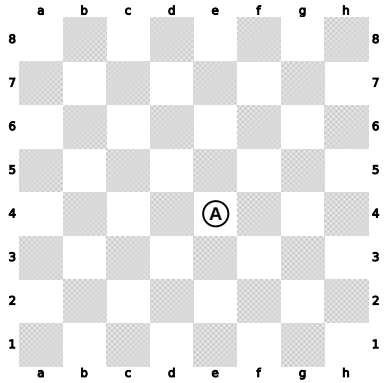
A diagonal: from a1 to h8.

Notice that the diagonal on the third board has only black squares. Another diagonal starting from the same square on the a-file, for example from a1 upwards and to the left, does not exist: a1 is a corner. From a square in the centre, on the other hand, four arms of diagonals go out in the shape of an X.

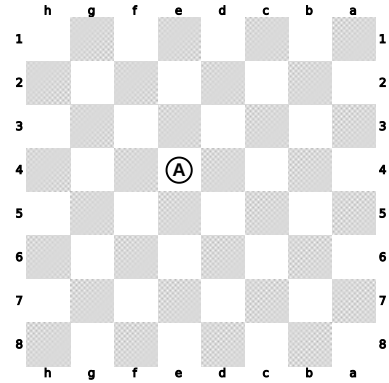
1.5 The name of each square

Each square is named by the letter of its file and the number of its rank, in that order: first the letter, then the number. So **e4** is the square where the e-file and the 4th rank cross. This is called the system of **coordinates**, and it is the same all over the world.

Most important of all: **the name of a square never changes**, even if you look at the board from Black's side. The square e4 is always the same. From White's side it is on the fourth rank counting from you; from Black's side, on the fifth. To avoid mistakes, do not think of "my right" or "my left", but of the letters and numbers on the edge of the board.



e4 seen from White's side.



The same square seen from Black's side.

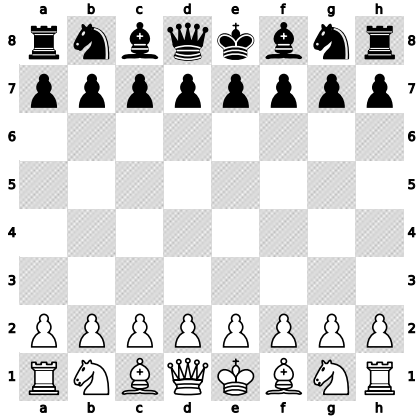
In the second diagram the board is turned round: Black is at the bottom. Notice that the letters on the edge now run from "h" to "a" and the numbers from 8 to 1. Almost all the diagrams in this book are seen from White's side; when they are not, we will tell you.

> **Common mistake.** Players with the black pieces tend to count the ranks from their own side and call "e4" the square that is really e5. To avoid this, always read the coordinates on the edge of the board.

1.6 The pieces and the aim of the game

Each player starts with 16 pieces: a king, a queen, two rooks, two bishops, two knights and eight pawns. In English notation each piece is represented by a capital letter; pawns have no letter. The diagrams use the usual piece symbols.

Piece	Letter	Number per side
King	K	1
Queen	Q	1
Rook	R	2
Bishop	B	2
Knight	N	2
Pawn	(no letter)	8



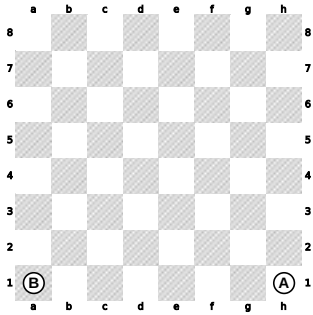
The starting position. For now it is enough to recognise the pieces; you will learn to set them up in Unit 9.

The knight is written N, because K is already taken by the king. In this book we will call all the figures **pieces**, including the pawns, except when we need to tell them apart.

And how do you win? Many people think that whoever captures more pieces wins. That is not so. **The aim of the game is to checkmate the opponent's king**: to attack it in such a way that it can neither escape nor be defended. The king is never captured; the game ends before that. Capturing pieces helps, because the side with more force can attack better, but a game can be won with fewer pieces than the opponent. You will look calmly at what check and checkmate are in Units 5 and 7.

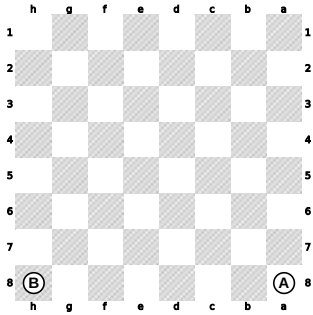
Exercises for Unit 1

The diagrams in this unit are practice boards: they do not show games, only squares to be found. Unless otherwise stated, they are seen from White's side.

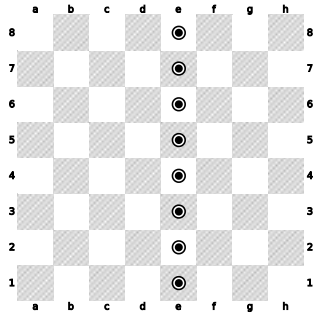


U01 E01 White sits at the bottom. Which of the two marked corners should be next to White's right hand? What colour is it?

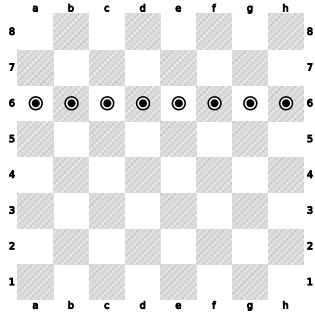
U01 E02 You come to a table and see that the square in your right-hand corner is black. What do you do: give the board a half turn, a quarter turn, or leave it as it is?



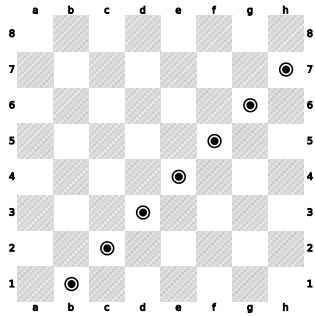
U01 E03 This diagram is seen from Black's side. Which marked square is in the right-hand corner of the player with Black? Write its name.



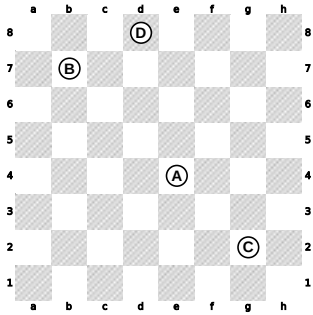
U01 E04 Do the marked squares form a rank, a file or a diagonal? Name the line.



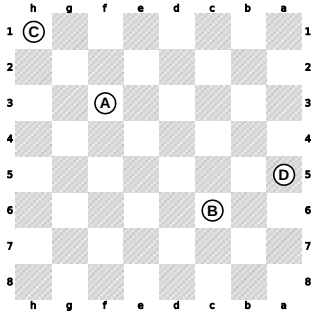
U01 E05 Do the marked squares form a rank, a file or a diagonal? Name the line.



U01 E06 How many squares does the marked diagonal have? What colour are they all?



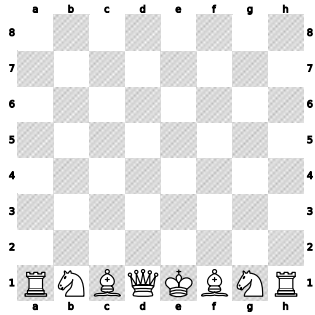
U01 E07 Write the names of the squares marked A, B, C and D.



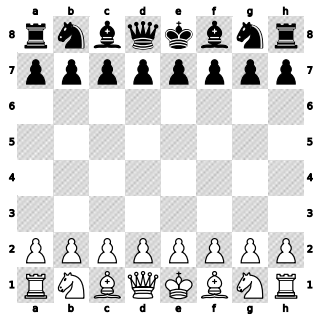
U01 E08 Now the board is seen from Black's side. Write the names of squares A, B, C and D.

U01 E09 The four central squares of the board are d4, e4, d5 and e5. Find them on the empty board in section 1.2. Which are white and which are black?

U01 E10 You are playing Black. Your partner, sitting on the White side, asks you to put a coin on the square e4. From your side, on which rank counting from you is that square?



U01 E11 Name, from left to right, the white pieces on the 1st rank.



U01 E12 In the starting position, how many pieces does each side have? How many of them are pawns? Does the player who captures more pieces win the game?

> **Practice with a board.** With a real board, ask someone to call out five squares to you (for example c7, f2, a4, h5 and d1) and put a coin on each one. Then change sides of the table and repeat the exercise from Black's side. This practice does not count towards your score, but it is the best way to learn the coordinates.

Remember

- Each player has a white square in the corner on their right.
- Squares are named by a letter (file) and a number (rank), and their name does not change even if you turn the board.
- The aim of the game is to checkmate the opponent's king, not to capture all the pieces.

Check your progress. If you solved at least 10 of the 12 exercises correctly and you can set up the board from both sides, go on to Unit 2. If you got the exercises with the board turned round (E03 and E08) wrong, repeat only section 1.5 before going on.

UNIT 2

The rook

In this unit *Move and capture with the rook, recognise when a piece blocks its way, and tell the squares it can go to from the squares it only controls.*

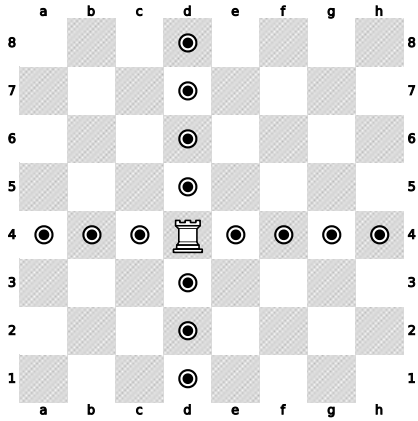
Lesson and exercises on Lichess

We begin with the rook because its move is the easiest to see: it travels in straight lines, like the streets of a well-planned city. What you learn here about open paths, obstacles and captures will help you with the bishop, the queen and the other pieces.

In this unit and the next two we will use **practice boards**: positions with few pieces and, often, without kings. They are not real games but movement exercises. That is why their diagrams do not have the little square that shows whose turn it is.

2.1 Moving along ranks and files

The rook moves along the **rank** or the **file** it stands on, forwards, backwards or sideways, as many squares as it likes. On an empty board, a rook on d4 can go to any of the marked squares: seven on the d-file and seven on the 4th rank. Fourteen destinations in all.



The rook on d4 on an empty board: 14 destinations.

Notice a curious detail: from any square of the empty board, the rook always has 14 destinations. From a corner or from the centre, it makes no difference. It is the only piece for which this is true.

2.2 One direction per move

In one move, the rook chooses **one** direction and moves along it in a straight line. It cannot turn a corner: if it is on a1 and wants to reach h8, it will need two moves, one along the file and another along the rank. Nor can it move diagonally. Going from d4 to e5, for example, is forbidden for the rook even though the squares are next to each other.

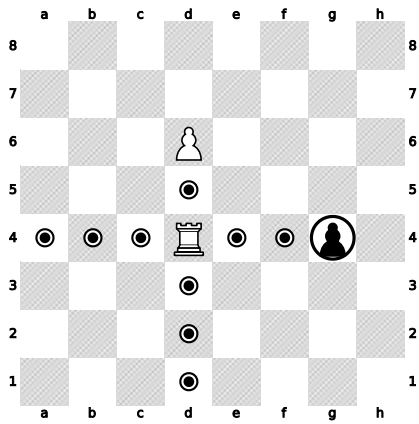
2.3 Your own pieces block the way

The rook cannot jump over any piece. If there is a piece of its own colour in its path, the rook stops before it: it cannot occupy that square or the ones behind it.

2.4 Capturing an enemy piece

If it meets an **enemy** piece in its path, the rook can capture it: it removes that piece from the board and takes its square. The capture ends the move; the rook does not keep going. Nor can it pass over the enemy piece to go further.

In the next diagram, the white rook on d4 has a white pawn on d6 and a black pawn on g4. Upwards it only reaches d5, because its own pawn blocks the way. To the right it can go to e4 and f4, or capture the pawn on g4; it can never reach h4. To the left and downwards the path is open.



Blocking and capturing. The rook has 10 destinations; one of them, g4, is a capture.

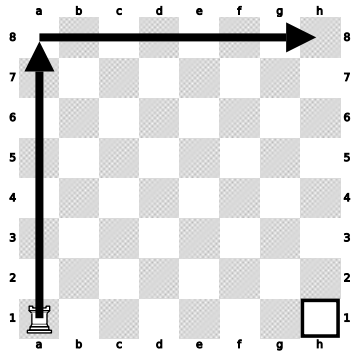
How we say it. A piece **attacks** another when it could capture it on its next move. A piece **defends** (or protects) another of its own colour when, if the opponent captured it, it could recapture. In the diagram, the rook attacks the pawn on g4 and defends the pawn on d6.

2.5 Squares it goes to and squares it controls

Sometimes we will be less interested in where a piece can go than in which squares it **controls**, that is, on which squares it could capture if an enemy piece appeared there. They are almost always the same. The difference lies in your own pieces: the rook on d4 cannot go to d6, because its own pawn is there, but it does control d6: if a black piece captured that pawn, the rook could recapture. This idea will be very important when we study the king, which can never go to a square controlled by the opponent.

2.6 Two-move routes

To reach a square that is not on its rank or file, the rook needs two moves. Usually there are two routes, through the two corners of the rectangle formed by the starting square and the target square. From a1 to h8, for example, the rook can go via a8 or via h1. If one of these paths is blocked, only the other remains. This is a geometry exercise: in a game, the opponent also moves between your two moves.

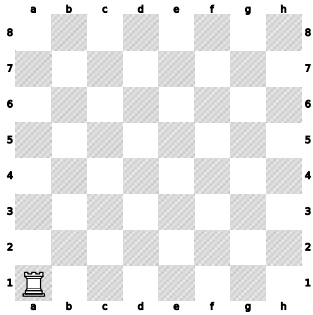


Two routes from a1 to h8: via a8 or via h1.

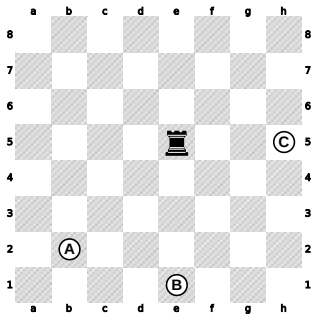
Common mistakes. Moving the rook diagonally; turning a corner in the same move; jumping over a piece; carrying on after capturing. When we say the rook moves "any distance", always add in your head: "as long as the path is clear".

Exercises for Unit 2

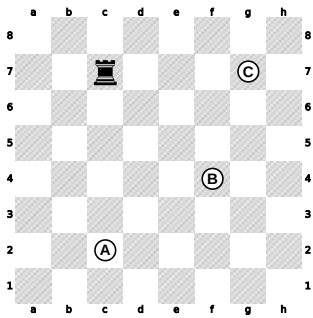
All the diagrams are practice boards. In each exercise, look only at the rook the question is about.



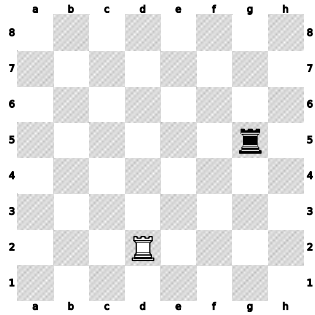
U02 E01 White rook on a1, on an empty board. How many squares can it go to? Can it reach b2?



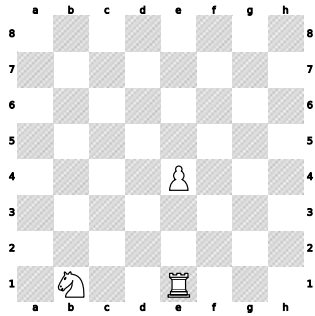
U02 E02 Black rook on e5. Can it go to b2? And to e1? And to h5?



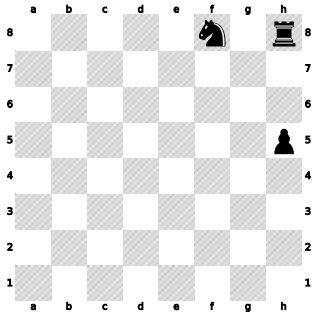
U02 E03 Black rook on c7. Which of the squares A, B and C can it go to in one move?



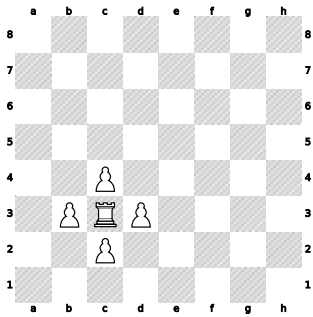
U02 E04 The white rook on d2 and the black rook on g5 want to go to the same square. Which squares can both reach in one move?



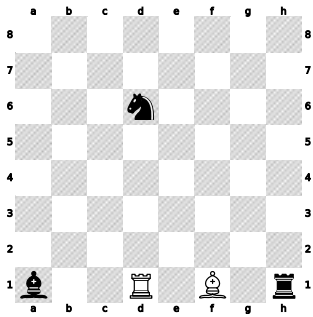
U02 E05 White rook on e1, with a white pawn on e4 and a white knight on b1. Point out all its destinations.



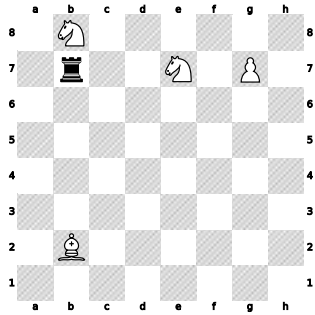
U02 E06 Black rook on h8, with a black pawn on h5 and a black knight on f8. Where can it go?



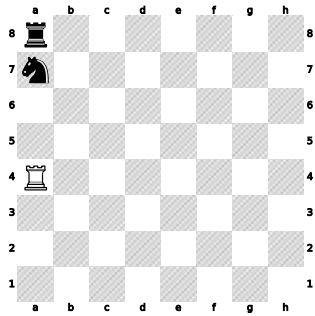
U02 E07 White rook on c3 surrounded by white pawns on c4, b3, d3 and c2. Can it move? Can it jump over the pawn on c4?



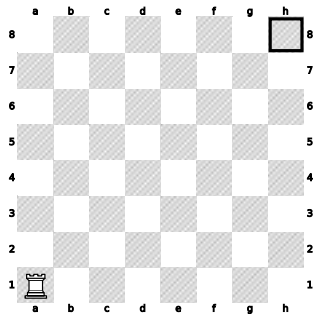
U02 E08 White rook on d1 and white bishop on f1. Which of the black pieces can it capture?



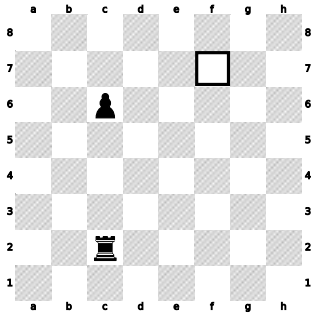
U02 E09 Black rook on b7. Which white pieces can it capture?



U02 E10 The white rook on a4 captures the black knight on a7. On which square does the rook end up? Could it, in the same move, carry on to a8 and capture the rook too?



U02 E11 White rook on a1. Write the two two-move routes that take it to h8.



U02 E12 Black rook on c2 with a black pawn on c6. How can it reach f7 in two moves?

> **Practice with a board.** Place a rook and three or four pawns at random on a real board. Touch, one by one, all the squares the rook can go to and ask someone to check. Repeat with a black rook and white pawns, which can now be captured.

Remember

- The rook moves along ranks and files, in only one direction per move.
- It does not jump: one of its own pieces blocks its way; an enemy piece can be captured, and that is where the move ends.
- To attack is to threaten to capture; to defend is to be able to recapture.

Check your progress. If you solved at least 10 of the 12 exercises correctly and did not "jump" over any piece in the last three, move on. First, explain out loud one complete capture: which square the rook leaves from, which square it arrives on and which piece is removed.

UNIT 3

The bishop and the queen

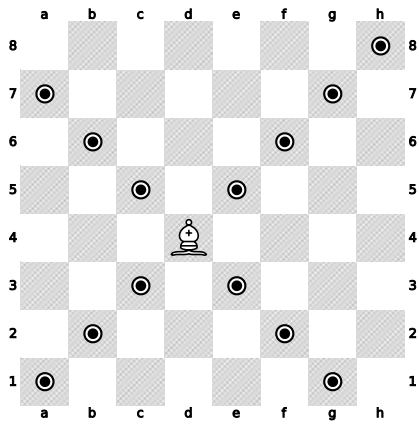
In this unit *Recognise the bishop's diagonal move and understand the queen as a rook and a bishop combined.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

You already know that the rook travels along ranks and files. The bishop does the same along diagonals, and the queen combines both. The rules about obstacles and captures you learned in Unit 2 still apply without any change, so this unit is, to a large extent, a review with a new geometry.

3.1 The bishop's diagonals

The bishop moves **diagonally**, forwards or backwards, as many squares as it likes as long as the path is clear. From the centre of the board it has four directions, like the arms of an X. On an empty board, the bishop on d4 reaches thirteen squares.



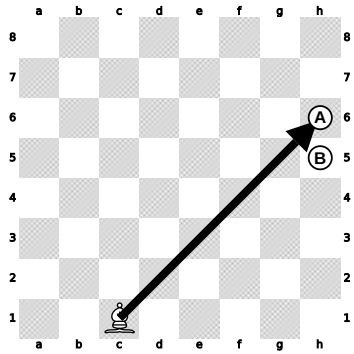
The bishop on d4: 13 destinations in four directions.

Unlike the rook, the bishop loses mobility near the edge. From a corner it has only one diagonal, of seven squares; from the centre, thirteen. That is why, in games, bishops are usually better on long, open diagonals.

3.2 Always on the same colour

Since all the squares of a diagonal have the same colour (you saw this in Unit 1), the bishop **never changes colour**. A bishop that starts on a black square will stay on black squares for the whole game. That is why we talk about the "white-squared bishop" and the "black-squared bishop". Each player has one of each.

A practical consequence: before working out whether a bishop can reach a square, look at its colour. In the diagram, the bishop on c1 is on a black square. The square h6 is also black and lies on its diagonal: c1-d2-e3-f4-g5-h6. The square h5 is white: the bishop will never get there.



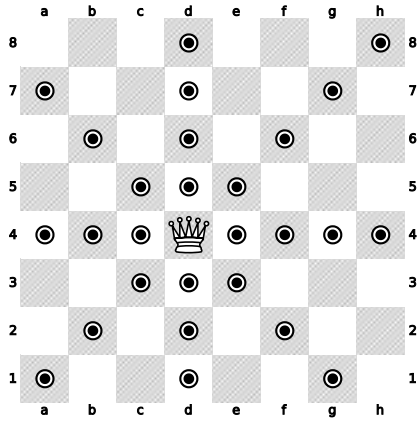
The bishop on c1 reaches h6 (A), but never h5 (B).

3.3 Captures and blocks

The bishop captures just like the rook: it takes the square of the enemy piece and its move ends there. And it does not jump either: any piece, its own or the opponent's, interrupts the diagonal. If it is an enemy piece, the bishop can capture it; if it is its own, it stops before it.

3.4 The queen: rook plus bishop

The **queen** is the strongest piece in chess. Its move is very easy to remember if you already know the previous ones: **the queen moves like a rook and like a bishop**. In each move it chooses one direction, along a rank, a file or a diagonal, and moves in a straight line as many squares as it likes. On an empty board, from d4, it reaches 27 squares: the rook's 14 plus the bishop's 13.

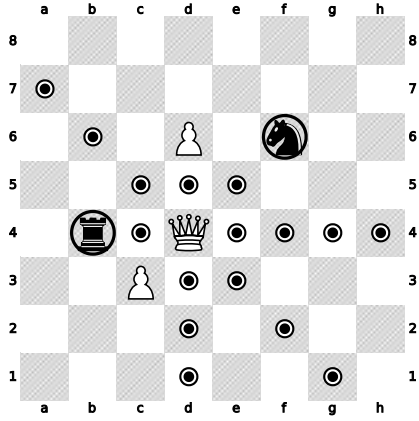


The queen on d4: 27 destinations.

In notation the queen is written Q. Do not confuse it with the king, which is written K.

3.5 Range and real freedom

The fact that a piece can reach 27 squares on an empty board does not mean it always will. In a game, the other pieces shorten its lines. Compare the previous diagram with the next one: the same queen on d4, with two of its own pawns and two black pieces around it, has far fewer destinations. Some directions are closed by its own pawns; in others, the line ends with a capture.



The same queen with obstacles: 18 destinations, two of them captures (b4 and f6).

> **Careful.** The queen is powerful, but it does not perform miracles: it does not jump like the knight or pass through pieces. When you look at it, follow each line square by square up to the first obstacle.

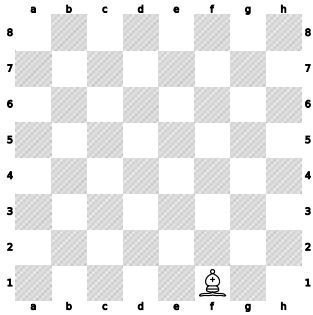
3.6 Pieces working together

Pieces become stronger when they work together. A simple example: if a rook and a bishop attack the same square, an enemy piece that goes there can be captured by either of them. And if one piece captures on that square, the other can recapture. This "teamwork" will be the basis of the mates in the last units. For now, it is enough to get used to looking not at just one piece, but at the squares all of them control at the same time.

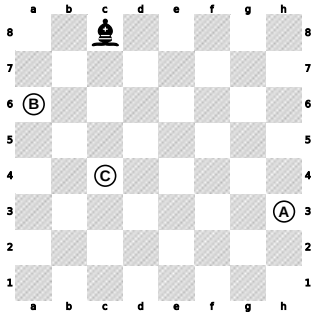
> **Common mistakes.** Letting the bishop change colour; giving the queen the knight's jump; thinking that a strong piece can pass through another. All three are corrected the same way: follow the line square by square.

Exercises for Unit 3

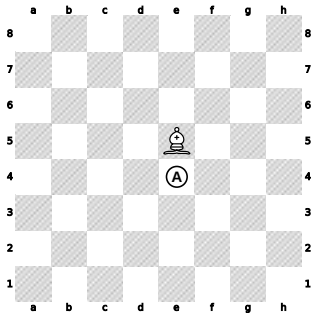
Practice boards. Remember: the bishop never changes colour and none of the pieces in this unit jumps.



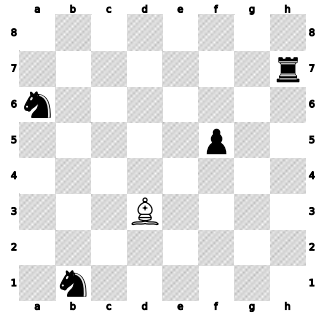
U03 E01 White bishop on f1, on an empty board. How many destinations does it have? Name them.



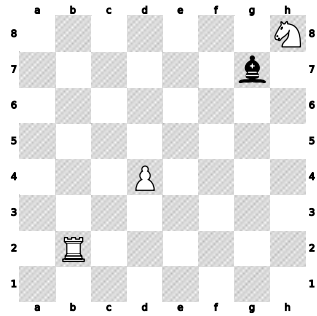
U03 E02 Black bishop on c8. Which of the squares A, B and C can it go to in one move?



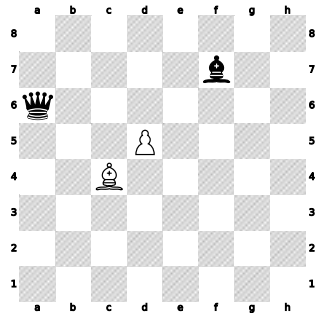
U03 E03 White bishop on e5. Will it ever be able to reach e4, even after many moves? Why?



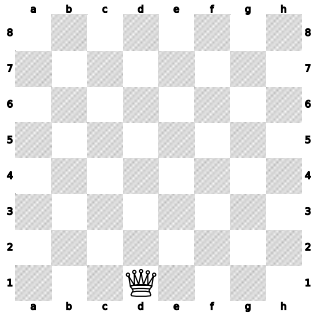
U03 E04 White bishop on d3. Which black pieces can it capture?



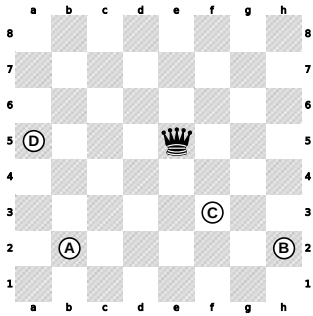
U03 E05 Black bishop on g7. Which white pieces can it capture?



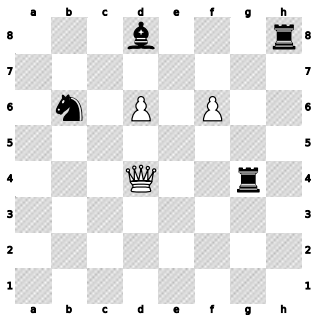
U03 E06 White bishop on c4 with a white pawn on d5. Which black pieces can it capture?



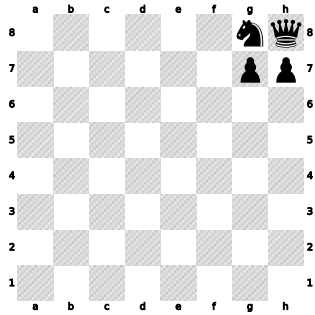
U03 E07 White queen on d1, on an empty board. How many destinations does it have?



U03 E08 Black queen on e5. Which of the squares A, B, C and D can it go to?

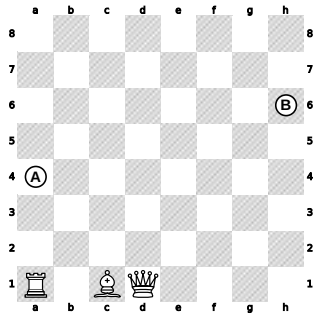


U03 E09 White queen on d4, with white pawns on d6 and f6. Which black pieces can it capture?



U03 E10 Black queen on h8, with black pawns on g7 and h7 and a black knight on g8. How many moves does the queen have?

U03 E11 On an empty board we place, in turn, a rook, a bishop and a queen on d4. How many destinations does each have? Which of them can go from d4 to g7?



U03 E12 Rook on a1, bishop on c1 and queen on d1, all white. Which pieces can go to a4? And to h6?

> **Practice with a board.** Place a queen on any square and, around it, five pawns of both colours. Run your finger along each of its eight directions up to the first obstacle and count the destinations. Then replace the queen by a bishop and by a rook on the same square: how many destinations does each piece have?

Remember

- The bishop moves diagonally and never changes colour.
- The queen combines the moves of the rook and the bishop.
- Neither of them jumps: follow each line up to the first obstacle.

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct you can go on. First, explain in your own words why a bishop never reaches a square of the other colour and why a queen cannot pass through one of its own pieces.

UNIT 4

The knight

In this unit *Find all the destinations of a knight, understand that it jumps over pieces, and use its change of colour to reason about its routes.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

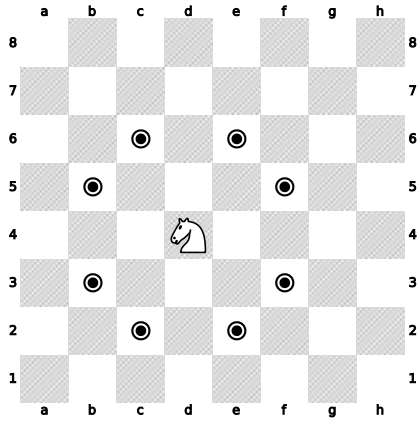
The knight is the hardest piece at first, because it does not move in a straight line. The usual explanation, "it moves in an L shape", helps you remember it, but it is not enough to play. In this unit you will learn to see at a glance the squares it reaches, which is what really matters.

4.1 Two squares in one direction and one to the side

The knight moves two squares in a straight line (along a rank or a file) and then one more at a right angle. What matters is not the path but **the square where it lands**. A practical way to see it: from the knight, the landing squares are the nearest ones that are **not** on its rank, its file or its diagonals.

4.2 Eight destinations at most

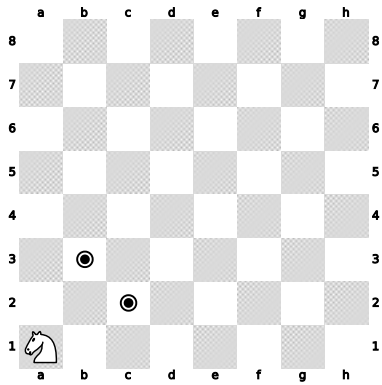
From the centre of the board, the knight has eight destinations forming a circle around it. From d4: b3, b5, c2, c6, e2, e6, f3 and f5. It is a small number compared with the queen, but the knight has an advantage that no other piece has, as you will soon see.



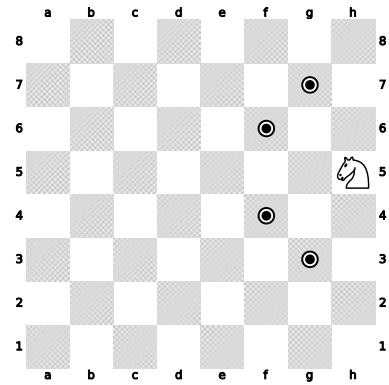
The knight on d4 and its eight destinations.

4.3 Less range near the edge

Near the edge, some of those eight destinations "fall off" the board. From an edge it has four at most; from a corner, only two. That is why players say that **a knight on the rim is dim**: it reaches few squares and takes a long time to get back to the centre.



From a1: only 2 destinations.



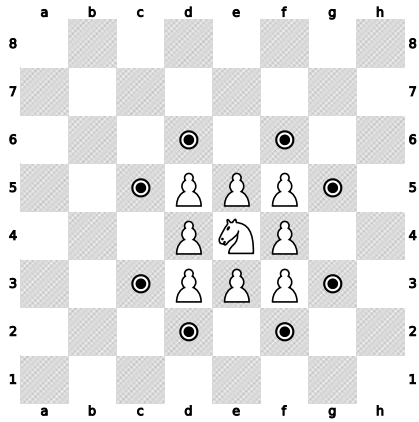
From h5: 4 destinations.

4.4 It changes colour with every jump

Look again at the diagram of d4: the knight is on a black square and all its destinations are white. This rule has no exceptions: **with every jump, the knight changes colour**. This lets you reason about its routes without trying them all. After two jumps it is back on its starting colour; after three, it is on the opposite colour. A square of the same colour as its own is never one or three jumps away.

4.5 The knight jumps

The knight is the only piece that **jumps over the others**, its own or the opponent's. The squares in between do not affect it: it can be completely surrounded and keep all its destinations. When it jumps it does not capture anything it leaves behind. The only thing that matters is the landing square: if it is empty, the knight can go there; if it holds an enemy piece, it can capture it; if it holds one of its own pieces, it cannot go there.



Surrounded by its pawns, the knight keeps its eight destinations.

4.6 The knight's captures

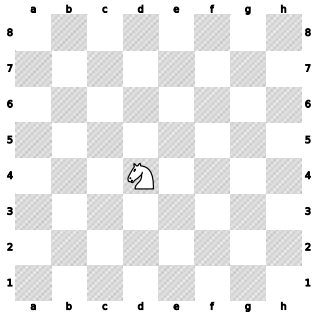
The knight captures on the same squares it can go to. Since its attack does not follow any line, **it cannot be blocked**: if a knight attacks a piece, putting another piece in between is useless. Later you will see that this makes the knight a very awkward attacker, able to threaten two pieces at once.

> **A tip.** L-shaped arrows can make you think that the knight "passes through" the squares in between or captures on them. It does not: it takes off from one square and lands on another. That is why in this book we mark only the landing squares.

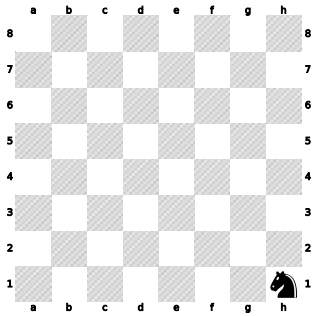
> **Common mistakes.** Counting the starting square as the first step (and ending up one square short); ending on a square of the same colour; believing that, because it jumps, it can land on one of its own pieces.

Exercises for Unit 4

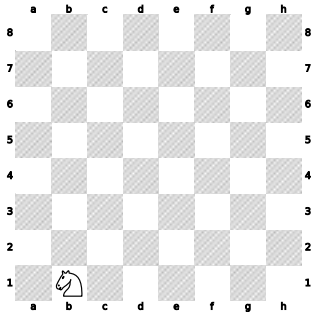
Practice boards. If you find it hard to see the destinations, put coins on the landing squares of a real board and remove them afterwards.



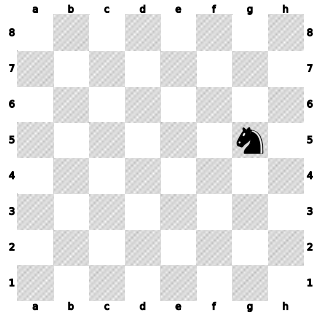
U04 E01 White knight on d4. Write its eight destinations.



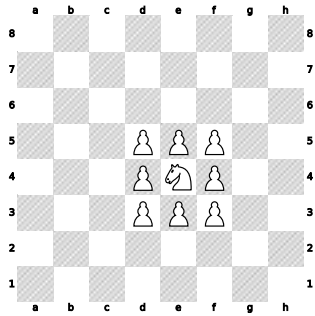
U04 E02 Black knight on h1. How many destinations does it have? Which ones?



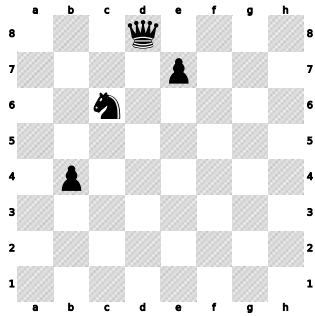
U04 E03 White knight on b1. How many destinations does it have?



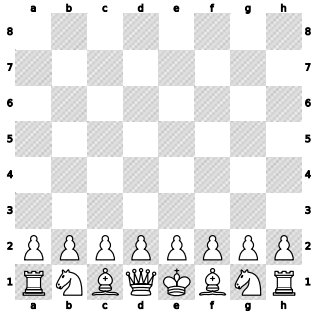
U04 E04 Black knight on g5. What colour are all its landing squares? Name them.



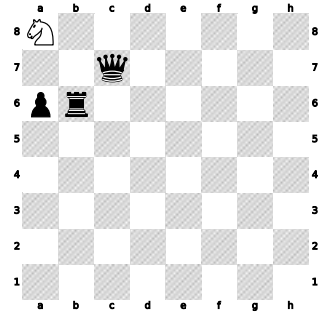
U04 E05 White knight on e4, surrounded by eight white pawns. How many destinations does it have?



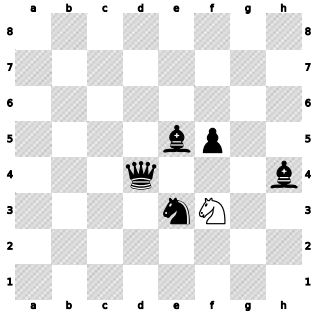
U04 E06 Black knight on c6, with black pieces on b4, e7 and d8. Where can it go?



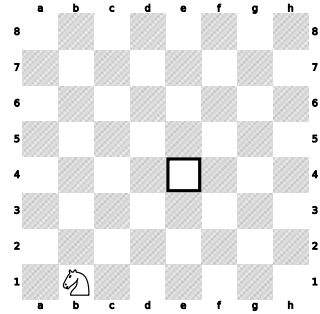
U04 E07 This is White's side of the starting position. Where can the knight on g1 go?



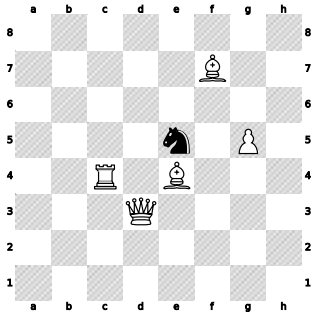
U04 E10 White knight on a8. Which black pieces can it capture?



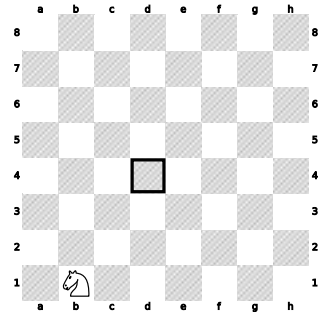
U04 E08 White knight on f3. Which black pieces can it capture?



U04 E11 Knight on b1. How does it reach e4 in two jumps? Find both routes.



U04 E09 Black knight on e5. Which white pieces can it capture?



U04 E12 Knight on b1. Can it reach d4 in two jumps? Explain your answer without trying all the routes.

> **Practice with a board.** Put a knight on a1 and a coin on h8. Take the knight to the coin, counting the jumps. Do not try to cover the whole board: it is enough to find one path and repeat it from another corner.

Remember

- The knight lands on the nearest squares that are not on its rank, file or diagonals: eight at most.
- It jumps over any piece and its attack cannot be blocked.
- It changes colour with every jump, and on the edge it loses strength.

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct and the complete list of a knight's destinations from a new square, you have finished the first block of moves. If you still have doubts, practise with coins on the board before doing it in your head.

UNIT 5

The king and check

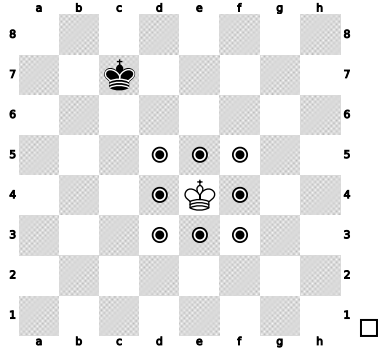
In this unit *Move the king safely, know when it is in check and find the legal replies: moving away, capturing the attacker or blocking with a piece.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

The king is the most important piece in chess: if it is checkmated, the game is lost. Paradoxically, it is also one of the pieces that moves least. From this unit on, all game positions will have both kings on the board, and next to each diagram there will be a little square showing whose turn it is: **white** if White is to move, **black** if Black is to move.

5.1 The king's move

The king moves like the queen, but **only one square**: to any of the eight neighbouring squares. It captures the same way it moves, by taking the square of the enemy piece. It also has a special move, castling, which we will study in Unit 8.



The king on e4 has eight neighbouring squares.

5.2 Attacked squares

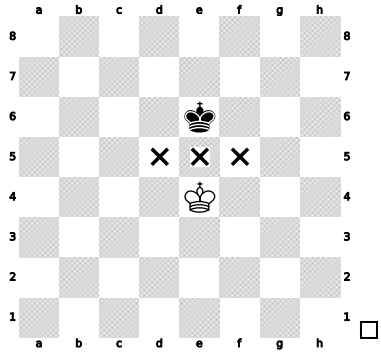
There is a rule that sets the king apart from the other pieces: **the king can never go to a square attacked by an enemy piece**. The other pieces may risk being cap-

tured; the king may not. That is why, before moving the king, you have to look at the whole board and ask yourself which squares the opponent controls.

Remember what you saw in Unit 2: a piece also controls the squares occupied by pieces of its own side. If a black rook defends a black knight, the white king cannot capture that knight, because it would then be on a square attacked by the rook.

5.3 The kings are never side by side

A direct consequence: the two kings **cannot be on neighbouring squares**. Each king attacks the squares around it, so the other cannot come closer than one square away. There must always be at least one empty rank or file between the two kings.



White cannot go to d5, e5 or f5: the black king controls them.

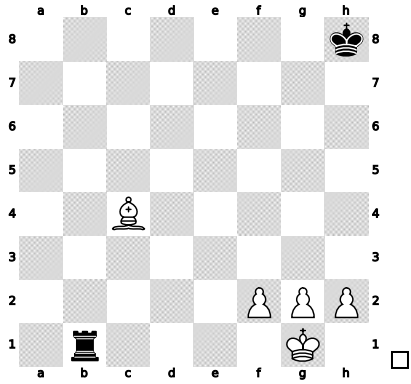
5.4 What check is

A king is said to be in **check** when an enemy piece attacks it. It is not a polite warning or a word you have to say out loud: it is a situation on the board. And it is compulsory. **A player in check must get out of check on their move**, and cannot do anything else. In the same way, nobody may make a move that leaves their own king in check.

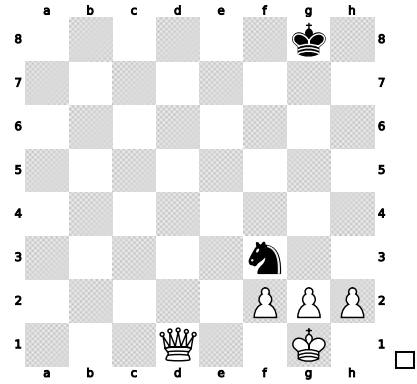
5.5 Three ways to get out of check

- **Move the king** to a square that is not attacked.
- **Capture the piece** giving check, with the king or with another piece.
- **Block**: put a piece between the king and the attacker, when the check comes from a distance along a line.

All three do not always exist. Nothing can block a knight's check, because the knight jumps. Nor can you block a check from a piece right next to the king, because there is no square in between. And the king can only capture the attacker if it is not defended.



Rook check: the only defence is to block with the bishop on f1.

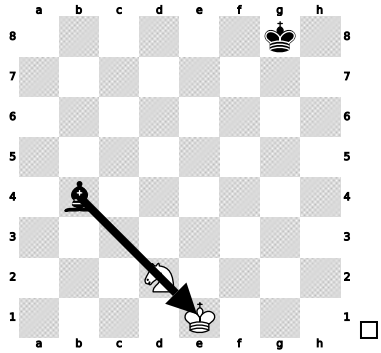


Knight check: it cannot be blocked.

In the first diagram, the rook on b1 gives check along the 1st rank. The king cannot move away: f2, g2 and h2 are occupied by its pawns, and f1 and h1 are still on the rook's rank. Nothing can capture the rook. The only thing left is to block: the bishop goes to f1 and cuts the line. In the second diagram, the knight on f3 gives check. White can capture it with the g2-pawn or with the queen, or move the king to f1 or h1. Blocking is impossible.

5.6 Moves that expose your own king

Sometimes a piece stands between its king and an enemy piece that attacks in a straight line. If that piece moves, it opens the line and leaves its king in check. **That move is illegal**, even though the piece's move is correct in itself. It is as if the piece were "pinned" in place. In the diagram, the white knight on d2 blocks the diagonal from the bishop on b4 to the king on e1: the knight cannot move.



The knight on d2 cannot move: it would leave its king in check.

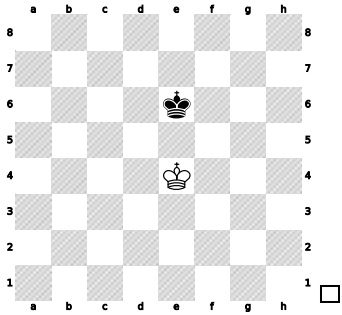
5.7 Moving and moving legally

Until now it was enough to know the geometry of each piece. From this unit on, a move is only valid if it also **does not leave your own king in check**. So before moving, ask yourself two questions: "Can this piece go there?" and "Is my king still safe afterwards?"

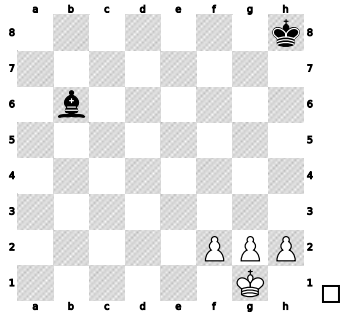
> **Common mistakes.** Capturing the king (it never happens: the game ends before that, with mate); answering a check with a move that does not deal with it; trying to block a knight's check; moving a piece that was shielding the king from a long-range attack.

Exercises for Unit 5

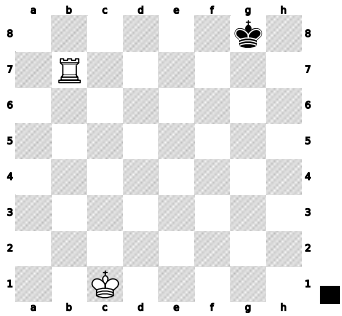
From now on, the positions are game positions: there are two kings and the little square shows whose turn it is. When you are asked for all the legal moves, do not forget any piece.



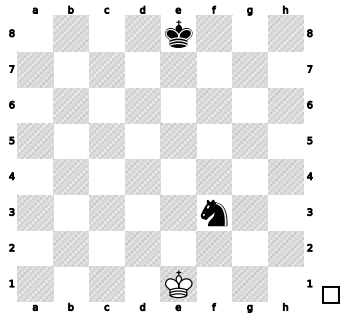
U05 E01 White to move. Which squares can the white king go to?



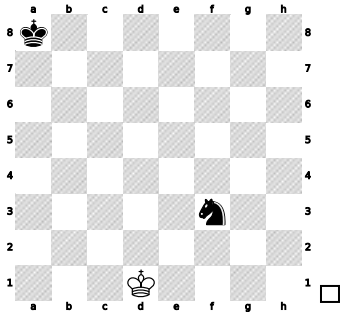
U05 E04 White to move. Is the white king in check?



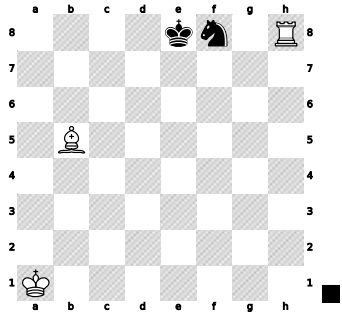
U05 E02 Black to move. Which squares can the black king go to?



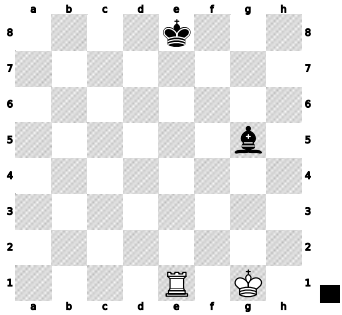
U05 E05 White to move. Is the white king in check? Which piece attacks it?



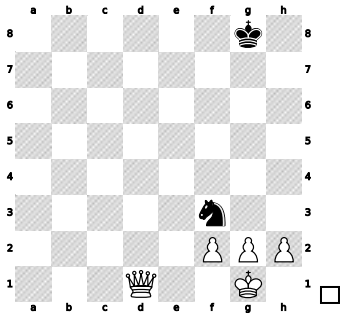
U05 E03 White to move. Which squares can the white king go to?



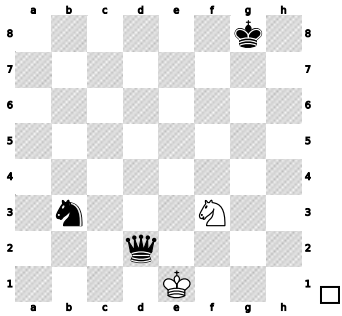
U05 E06 Black to move. Is the black king in check? Look at both white pieces.



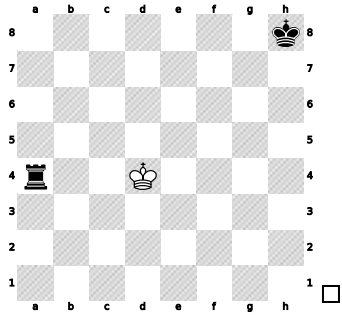
U05 E07 Black to move, and in check. Write all the legal replies.



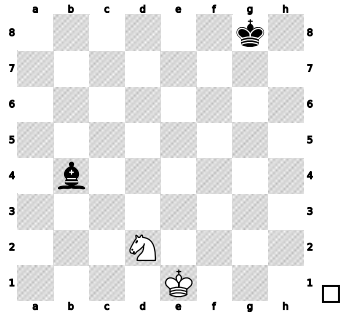
U05 E08 White to move, in check from a knight. Write all the legal replies.



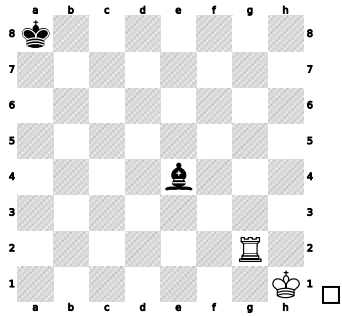
U05 E09 White to move, in check. Can the king capture the queen? Write the legal replies.



U05 E10 White to move, in check from the rook. Can the king go to e4? Write all the squares it can go to.



U05 E11 White to move. Is the knight move from d2 to f3 legal?



U05 E12 White to move. What legal moves does the rook on g2 have?

> **Practice with a board.** Set up the two kings and a black rook. Move the white king and ask someone to say, before each move, which squares are forbidden and why. Then swap roles.

Remember

- The king moves one square and can never go to an attacked square; the kings cannot stand side by side.
- Being in check forces you to get out of it: by moving the king, capturing the attacker or blocking with a piece.
- A move that leaves your own king in check is illegal.

Check your progress. You need 10 correct answers out of 12 and, above all, you must not get wrong any of those that require you not to leave the king attacked (E07 to E12). This requirement cannot be made up for with correct answers elsewhere: if you got one of them wrong, repeat section 5.6.

UNIT 6

Pawns

In this unit *Understand how the pawn advances, captures and controls squares, learn its first move, and know what happens when it reaches the end of the board.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

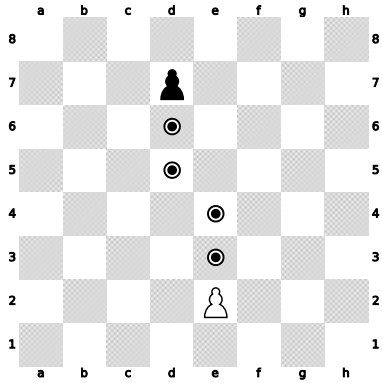
Pawns are the most modest pieces and the most numerous: eight per side. They are also the only pieces that **cannot move backwards** and the only ones that **capture differently from the way they move**. Those two oddities explain almost every beginner's mistake with them. In return, a pawn that reaches the far end turns into a new piece, usually a queen.

6.1 Always forwards

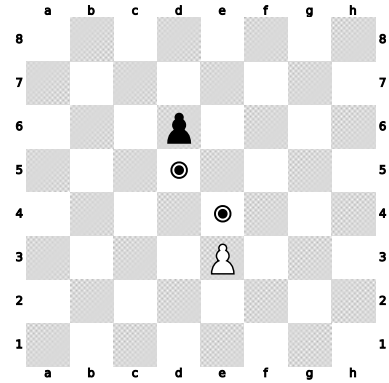
White pawns advance towards the 8th rank and Black pawns towards the 1st rank. Each pawn moves along its file, **one square forwards**, and never backwards or sideways. For White, "forwards" means up the diagram; for Black, down.

6.2 The first move: one or two squares

When a pawn is still on its starting square (the 2nd rank for White, the 7th rank for Black), it may choose to advance one square or **two squares**. Once it has moved, even just once, it only advances one square at a time.



From their starting square, pawns may advance one or two squares.



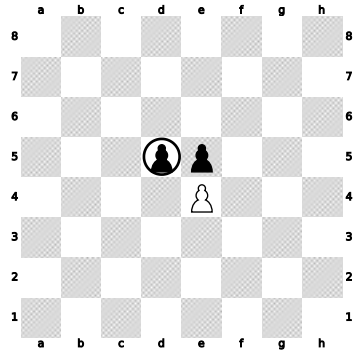
Away from their starting square, only one.

6.3 The way must be clear

A pawn advances only if the square in front of it is empty. If there is **any** piece there, its own or the opponent's, it is blocked. It cannot jump over it or capture it head-on. And if it is on its starting square with the square in front occupied, it cannot make the double step either: there is no jumping.

6.4 Capturing diagonally

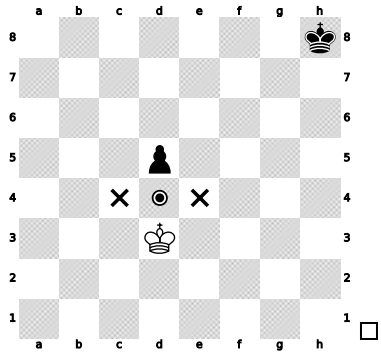
Here is the big difference: the pawn **captures diagonally**, one square forwards to the left or to the right. It does not capture straight ahead or backwards. In the diagram, the white pawn on e4 can capture the pawn on d5 (or the one on f5), but it cannot advance, because e5 is occupied. Notice that the pawn on e5 blocks it without being able to capture it: pawns facing each other on the same file paralyse each other.



The pawn on e4 can capture on d5, but cannot advance.

6.5 The squares a pawn controls

Because it captures diagonally, a pawn **controls the two diagonal squares in front of it**, even when they are empty. This has a consequence worth remembering: the enemy king cannot step onto those squares. On the other hand, the pawn does not control the square directly in front of it: a king can stand in front of a pawn safely.

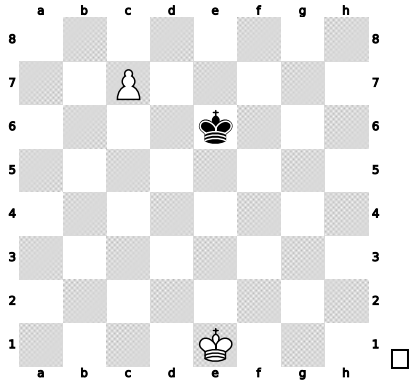


The pawn on d5 controls c4 and e4. The white king can go to d4, but not to c4 or e4.

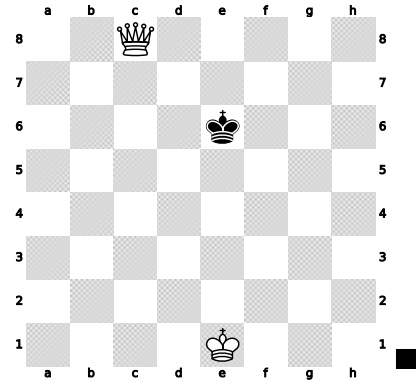
6.6 Promotion

When a pawn reaches the last rank (the 8th for White, the 1st for Black), on that very move it **turns into** the piece its player chooses: queen, rook, bishop or knight. It cannot become a king or remain a pawn. The pawn is removed and the new piece is placed on its square. This rule is called **promotion** or **queening**.

Two important points. First: the choice **does not depend on which pieces have been captured**; a player can have two or more queens at the same time. If you don't have a second queen to hand on a real board, use an upside-down rook and tell your opponent, or ask the arbiter for help. Second: the new piece acts from that moment on, from the square where it appears. A queen is almost always chosen, because it is the strongest piece.



The pawn on c7 advances to c8...



... and becomes a queen: c8=Q+.

In the example, the new queen on c8 gives check to the black king along the c8-d7-e6 diagonal. A black pawn promotes in the same way, but on the 1st rank. Don't associate promotion only with the 8th rank.

6.7 The pawn race

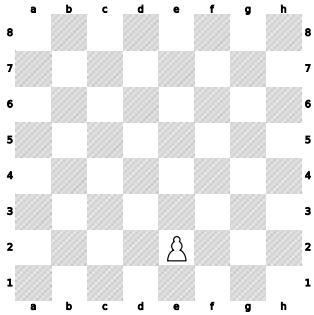
A good exercise for mastering pawns is the **pawn race** game. Each player places their eight pawns on their starting squares, with no other pieces. Players take turns using the normal pawn rules, and the first to promote a pawn wins. If a player has to move and has no legal move, they lose. It is a simplified game, not a game of chess: there are no kings and no checks. But it makes you think about advances, captures and blockades, and it is usually great fun.

> **Common mistakes.** Capturing straight ahead; moving a pawn backwards; making a double step away from the starting square; jumping over a blocking pawn; believing you can only promote to a piece that has already been captured.

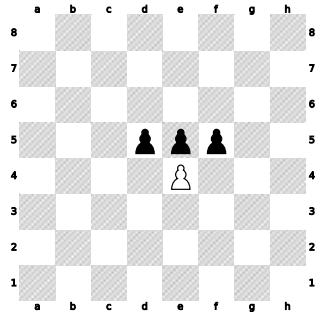
There is a special way for pawns to capture, called **en passant**. We will study it in Unit 8, together with castling.

Exercises for Unit 6

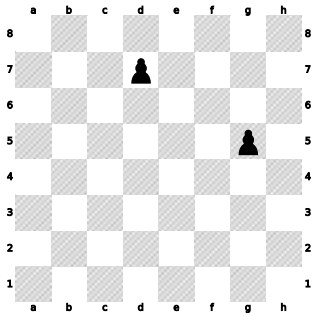
The first six exercises are practice boards. Careful with the black pawns: they move downwards.



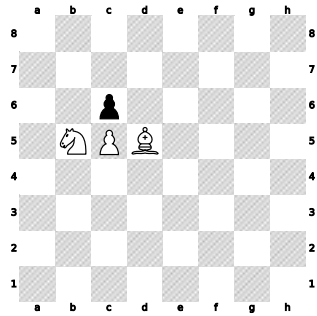
U06 E01 Which squares can the white pawn on e2 advance to?



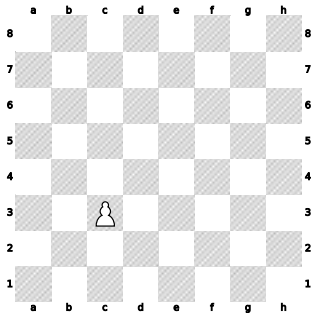
U06 E04 What can the white pawn on e4 do?



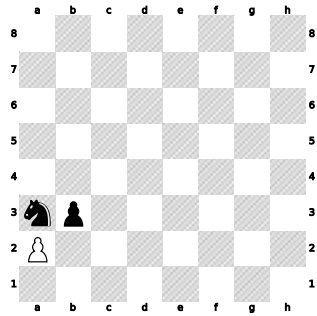
U06 E02 Which squares can each black pawn advance to?



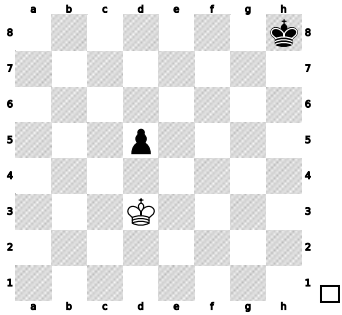
U06 E05 What can the black pawn on c6 do?



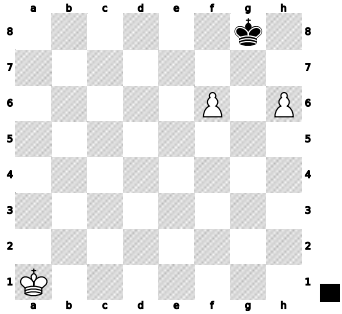
U06 E03 The white pawn on c3 wants to reach c5 in one move. Is that possible?



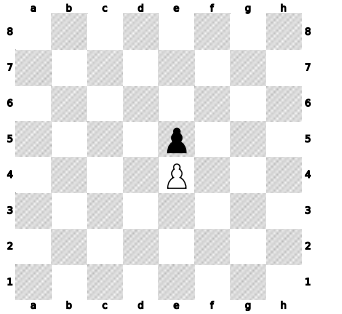
U06 E06 What can the white pawn on a2 do?



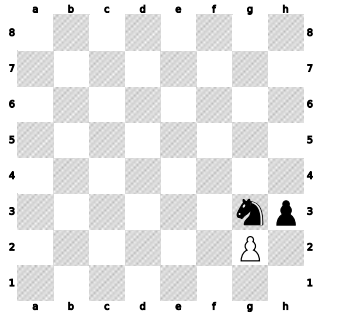
U06 E07 White to move. Which of the squares c4, d4 and e4 can the king go to?



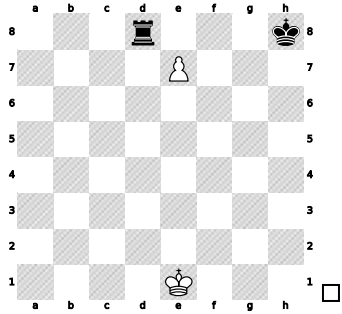
U06 E08 Black to move. Can the black king go to g7? Which squares can it go to?



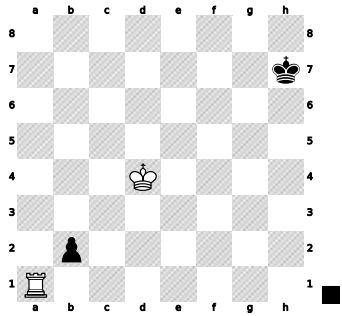
U06 E09 What moves do the two pawns in the diagram have?



U06 E10 What can the white pawn on g2 do?



U06 E11 White to move. What moves can the pawn on e7 make? Which would you choose?



U06 E12 Black to move. Where can the pawn on b2 promote? Which move do you choose?

Practice with a board. Play three pawn races (section 6.7) with another person, switching colours each time. When you finish, explain in your own words the difference between advancing and attacking with a pawn.

Remember

- The pawn advances one square forwards (two from its starting square) and never moves backwards.
- It captures diagonally forwards and controls those two squares even when they are empty.
- When it reaches the last rank it becomes a queen, rook, bishop or knight, regardless of which pieces have been captured.

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct, including the two with black pawns (E02 and E05) and the two promotions (E11 and E12), you can move on.

UNIT 7

Checkmate and stalemate

In this unit *Tell whether a position is check, checkmate, stalemate or a position where the game goes on, and find your first mates in one move.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

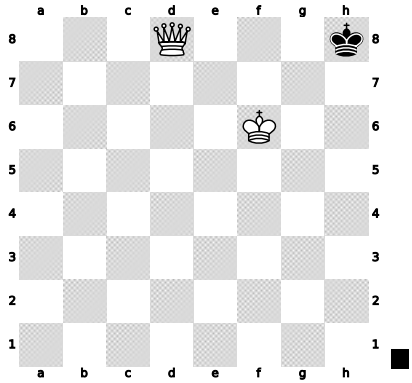
You already know the aim of chess: to give checkmate. Now we are going to define it precisely, because there is a very similar situation, **stalemate**, which has the opposite result: instead of winning, the game ends in a draw. Mixing them up costs many won games. Remember, too, that a player usually has other pieces besides the king, and they all count.

7.1 Checkmate

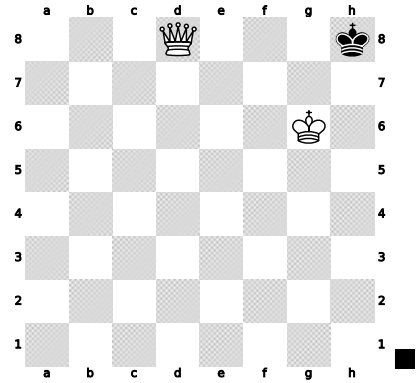
It is **checkmate**, or simply **mate**, when the king is in check and its side **has no legal move** to get out of it. The game ends at that moment and the player who gave mate wins. The king is never actually captured.

7.2 Before saying mate: capture, block or escape

To find out whether a check is mate, go through the three defences you studied in Unit 5. Can the king **escape** to a square that is not attacked? Can any piece **capture** the attacker? Can any piece **block**? If the answer to all three is no, it is mate. A single yes is enough for the game to continue.



Check, but not mate: the king escapes to h7.

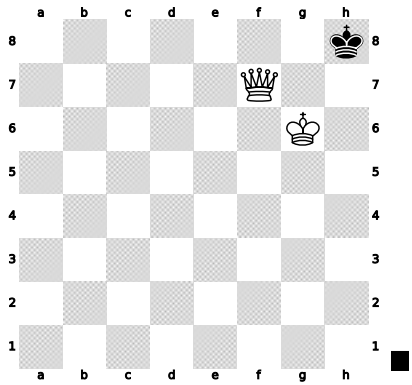


Mate: the white king controls g7 and h7.

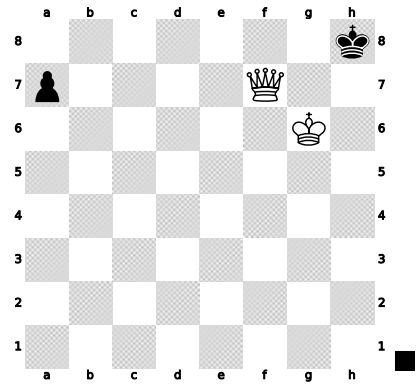
The two diagrams differ only in the square of the white king. In the first, the black king is in check but can flee to h7. In the second, the king on g6 controls g7 and h7, and the queen controls g8: there is no escape, no capture and no piece to block. It is mate.

7.3 Stalemate

It is **stalemate** when the side to move **is not in check** but **has no legal move**, neither with the king nor with any other piece. The game ends immediately in a **draw**, even if one side has far more material than the other.



Stalemate: the king is not in check and cannot move.



Not stalemate: the pawn on a7 can move.

In the first diagram, Black has no move at all: g8 and g7 are controlled by the queen and h7 by the white king. But the black king is not in check. It is stalemate: a draw. In the second, the black king cannot move either, but Black can play the pawn to a6

or a5. It is not stalemate; the game goes on and White will give mate straight away. **A king that cannot move is not enough for stalemate**: you have to look at all the pieces.

7.4 Two questions and the turn

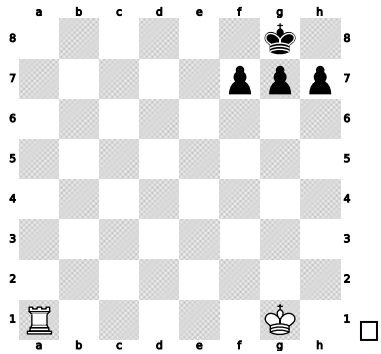
All these situations are recognised with two questions, always about **the side to move**:

Is it in check?	Does it have any legal move?	Result
Yes	Yes	Check: it must get out of it
Yes	No	Checkmate: it loses
No	No	Stalemate: draw
No	Yes	The game goes on

The turn is decisive. The same arrangement of pieces can be stalemate if it is Black to move and a normal position if it is White to move. That is why game diagrams always carry the small square showing whose turn it is.

7.5 First mates in one

Finding a **mate in one** means finding a move that leaves the opponent in a mating position. The method is to ask the questions the other way round: look for a check and make sure that, afterwards, the king cannot escape, the attacker cannot be captured and nothing can block the line.



White to move and mate in one.

Black has three pawns in front of the king, which protect it but also shut it in. The rook goes to a8 and gives check along the 8th rank. The king cannot go to f8 or h8,

which are still on the rook's rank, nor to f7, g7 or h7, occupied by its own pawns. Nothing captures the rook or blocks. It is mate. This pattern is called the **back-rank mate** and you will see it again in Unit 14.

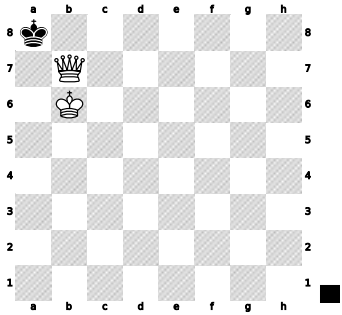
7.6 Extra material and the result

Being ahead in material does not guarantee victory. If you leave your opponent with no moves and without giving check, the game is drawn, even if you have a queen and a rook against a lone king. The bigger your advantage, the more careful you must be at the end: before every move that is not a check, make sure your opponent still has at least one legal move.

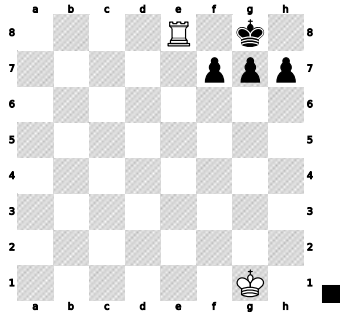
> **Common mistakes.** Calling any check mate; believing that a king that cannot move is always stalemated; forgetting that another piece may capture the attacker; thinking that the side with more material wins even if there is stalemate.

Exercises for Unit 7

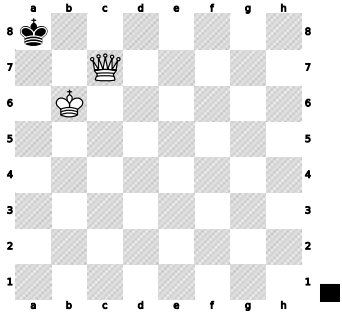
In each exercise, look first at the small square: it shows whose turn it is. In the classification exercises, answer with one word (check, mate, stalemate or "the game goes on") and a sentence explaining it.



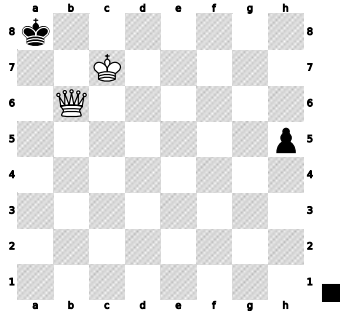
U07 E01 Black to move. What is the situation?



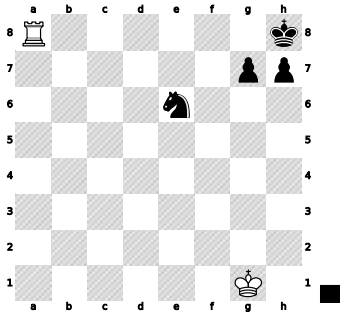
U07 E04 Black to move. What is the situation?



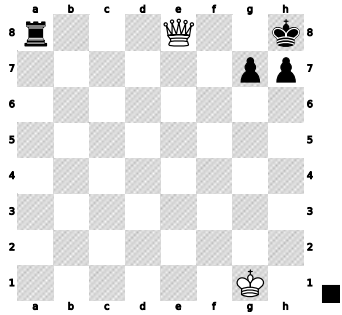
U07 E02 Black to move. What is the situation?



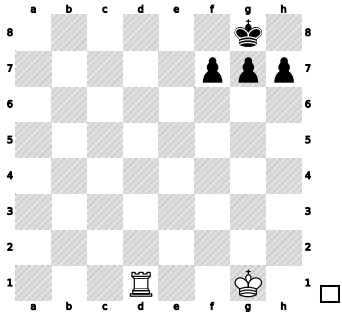
U07 E05 Black to move. The black king cannot move. Is it stalemate?



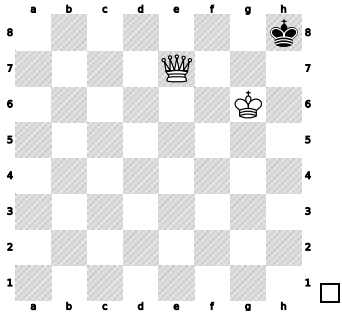
U07 E03 Black to move. Is it mate?



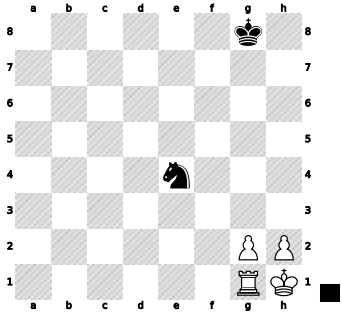
U07 E06 Black to move. Is it mate?



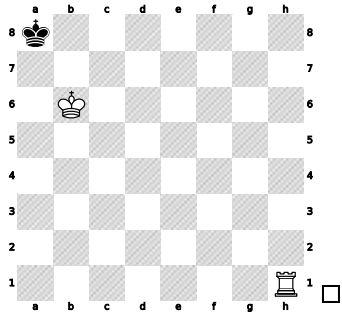
U07 E07 White to move. Mate in one.



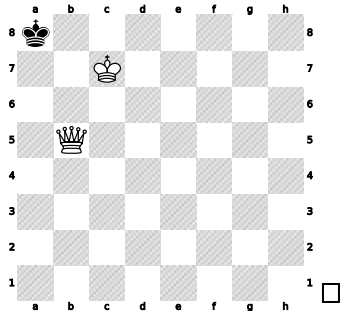
U07 E08 White to move. Mate in one. There are several solutions: find at least one.



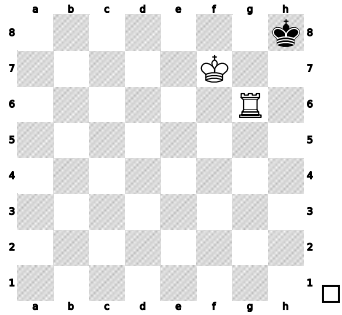
U07 E09 Black to move. Mate in one.



U07 E10 White to move. Mate in one.



U07 E11 White to move. The move Qb6 seems to shut in the black king. What happens if you play it? Find a better move.



U07 E12 White to move. What happens after Rg7? Which move gives mate?

Practice with a board. Set up king and queen against king on the board, with the black king in a corner. Move the queen and, before letting go of it, say out loud: "check", "mate", "stalemate" or "goes on". Ask another person to check it with the table in section 7.4.

Remember

- Mate is check with no legal move; stalemate is not being in check and having no legal move.
- Mate wins the game; stalemate is a draw, whatever the material.
- The two questions are always asked about the side to move, and with all its pieces.

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct, including the two cases where other pieces can move (E03 and E05), move on. If you confuse mate and stalemate, go back to the table in section 7.4 before continuing.

UNIT 8

The special rules

In this unit *Carry out both kinds of castling and the en passant capture, and know in each position whether they are allowed.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

You already know how each piece moves. Two special moves remain that every player must master before their first game: **castling**, which moves the king and a rook at the same time, and **en passant**, a particular way of capturing a pawn. Neither is difficult, but both have conditions that are worth checking one by one.

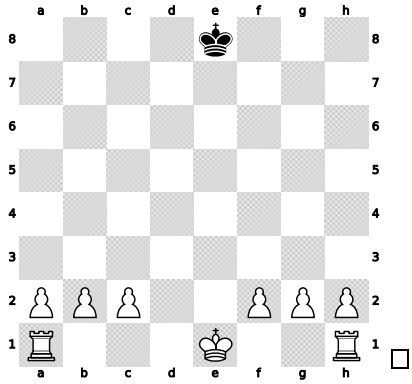
8.1 What castling is for

At the start of the game the king is in the middle of its first rank, which is where lines of attack usually open. Castling lets you, in a single move, **take the king to one side of the board**, protected by its pawns, and **bring the rook towards the centre**, where it will be useful. That is why almost every game has castling in the first ten or fifteen moves.

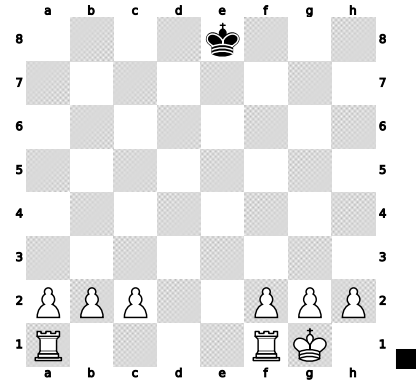
8.2 How to castle

The king moves **two squares** towards one of its rooks, and that rook jumps over the king and lands on the square next to it. Although two pieces move, **it is a single move**. There are two kinds of castling:

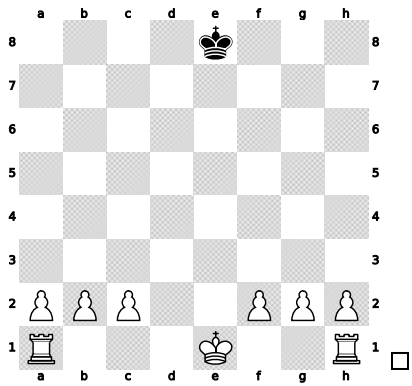
- **Kingside castling**, towards the nearer rook (the one on h1 or h8). The king goes to g1 (g8) and the rook to f1 (f8). It is written 0-0.
- **Queenside castling**, towards the further rook (the one on a1 or a8). The king goes to c1 (c8) and the rook to d1 (d8). It is written 0-0-0.



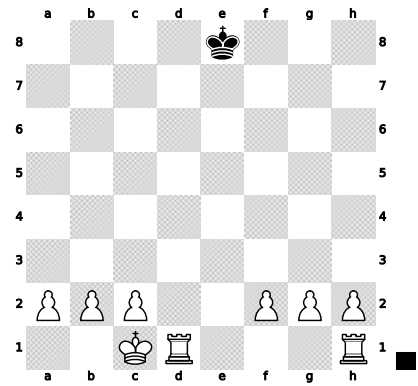
Before kingside castling.



After: king on g1, rook on f1.



Before queenside castling.



After: king on c1, rook on d1.

On a real board, touch the king first, move it two squares and then move the rook with the same hand. If you touch the rook first, the rules may force you to make a move with the rook alone.

8.3 The conditions for castling

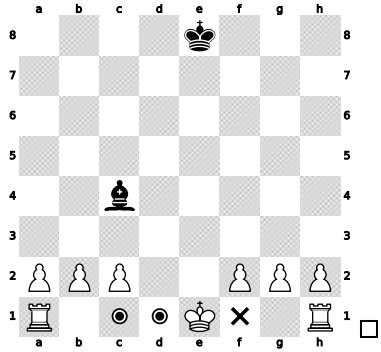
You may castle only if **all** of these conditions are met. The first two depend on the history of the game; the rest, on the current position.

- The king **has never moved** in the game, not even to return to its square.
- The rook you castle with **has never moved**. If only the other rook has moved, castling on this side is still allowed.
- All the squares **between the king and the rook are empty**.
- The king **is not in check** at that moment.

- The king **does not pass over an attacked square** and **does not land on an attacked square**.

8.4 What matters is the king

The last condition refers only to the squares the king steps on: e1, f1 and g1 on the kingside; e1, d1 and c1 on the queenside. **The rook may be attacked**, and in queenside castling the square b1 (which only the rook crosses) may also be attacked. What it cannot cross is a piece: b1 must be empty.

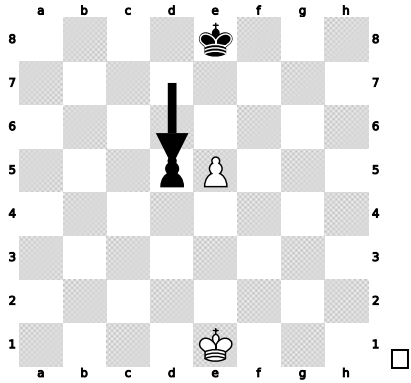


White cannot castle kingside: the bishop attacks f1. Queenside castling is allowed.

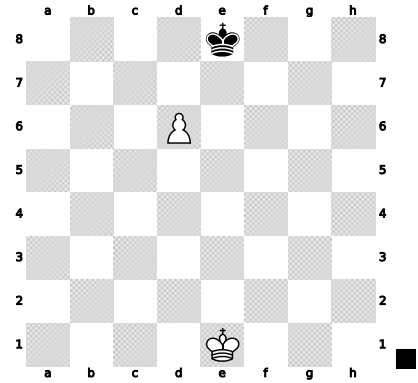
8.5 En passant

Remember that a pawn on its starting square can advance two squares. That advantage has a limit: if, by advancing two squares, it **passes next to an enemy pawn** that could have captured it had it advanced only one, that enemy pawn may capture it **as if it had advanced only one square**. This is the **en passant** capture.

- Only a pawn can do it, and only against another pawn.
- The capturing pawn is on its fifth rank (the 5th for White, the 4th for Black), on a neighbouring file.
- The enemy pawn has just advanced two squares and has landed right beside it.
- It must be done **immediately**, on the very next move. Otherwise the right is lost.



Black has just played d7-d5.



White captures en passant: the pawn goes to d6 and the pawn on d5 is removed.

Note the most important detail: a single diagram does not tell you whether en passant is possible, because it does not show the last move. That is why, in this book, the previous move will be given whenever it is needed. In notation, "e.p." is sometimes added after the move: exd6 e.p.

8.6 Promotion revisited

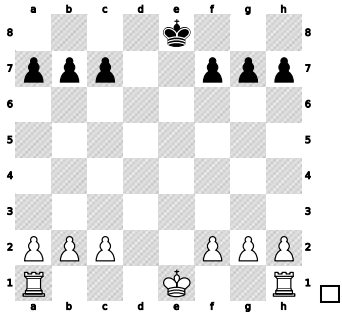
Promotion, which you studied in Unit 6, completes the special rules. Remember that the pawn turns into the chosen piece on the same move it reaches the last rank, and that this piece acts from that moment on. Before promoting, check whether the promotion square is attacked: a new queen that is captured on the next move is not much use.

> **Common mistakes.** Castling while in check or across an attacked square; applying the king's conditions to the rook; moving the king three squares in queenside castling; capturing en passant one or two moves after the double step.

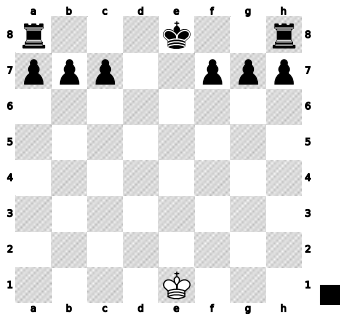
> **For the teacher.** An advanced case: en passant is also illegal if it leaves your own king in check, for example by removing from a rank the two pawns that were blocking the line of an enemy rook. There is no need to explain this on a first reading.

Exercises for Unit 8

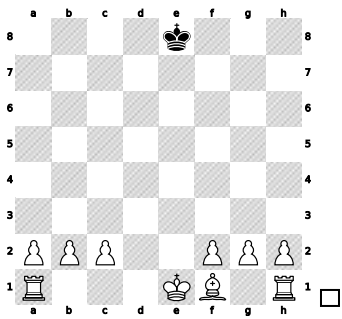
If an exercise depends on earlier moves, the question says so. If nothing is said, assume that the king and the rooks have not moved.



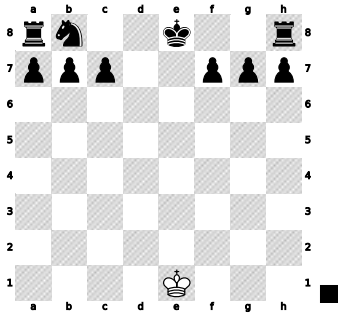
U08 E01 White to move. Castle kingside. Which squares do the king and the rook end up on?



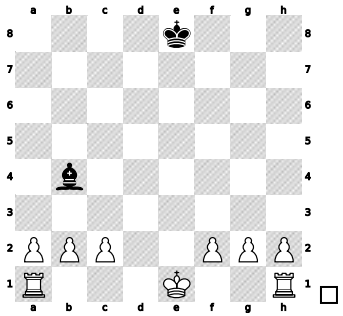
U08 E02 Black to move. Castle queenside. Which squares do the king and the rook end up on?



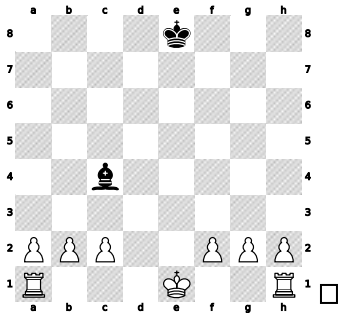
U08 E03 White to move. Which way can White castle?



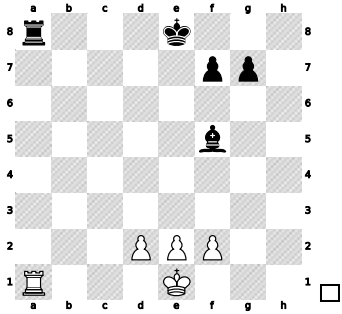
U08 E04 Black to move. Which way can Black castle?



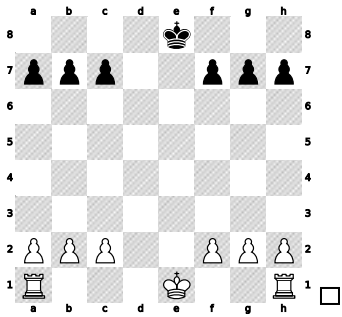
U08 E05 White to move, and in check. Can White castle kingside to put the king in safety?



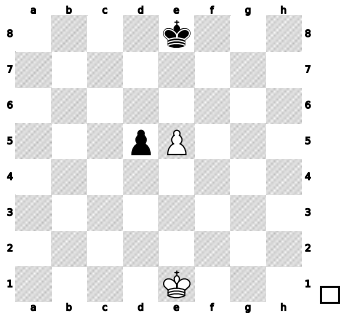
U08 E06 White to move. Can White castle kingside? And queenside?



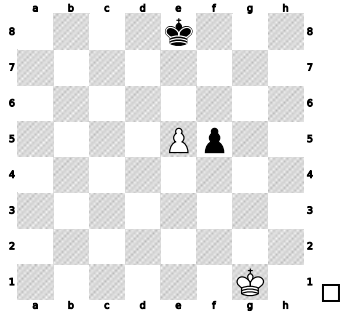
U08 E07 White to move. The rook on a1 is attacked, and so is the square b1. Can White castle queenside?



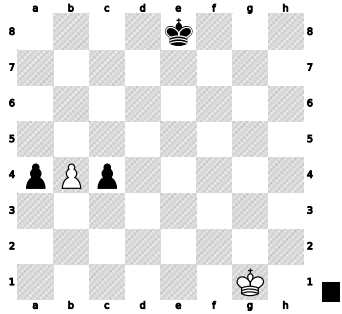
U08 E08 White to move. In this game, White moved the king from e1 to f1 and, two moves later, brought it back to e1. The rooks have not moved. Can White castle?



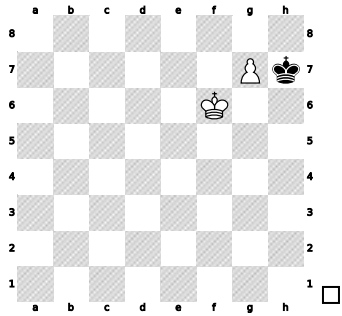
U08 E09 Black has just played d7-d5. White to move. Can the pawn on e5 capture en passant? Where does it end up?



U08 E10 Black played f7-f5 two moves ago. Since then, White has played Kf1-g1 and Black Kd8-e8. Can the pawn on e5 now capture on f6?



U08 E11 White has just played b2-b4. Black to move. What en passant captures does Black have?



U08 E12 White to move. Should White promote straight away with g8=Q+? Which move is better?

> **Practice with a board.** With another person, set up three castling positions: one where it is allowed, one where it is forbidden by an attacked square and one where it is forbidden by a piece in the way. Each of you must guess which is which. Then repeat the en passant sequence with white pawns and with black pawns.

Remember

- Castling is a single move: the king goes two squares towards the rook and the rook jumps to its other side.
- You cannot castle if the king or that rook has moved, if there are pieces in between, if the king is in check, or if it crosses or lands on an attacked square.
- En passant can only be played on the move right after the enemy pawn's double step.

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct and no king-safety mistakes in castling (E05 and E06), you are ready to play your first game. Before that, repeat en passant with both colours.

UNIT 9

Your first complete game

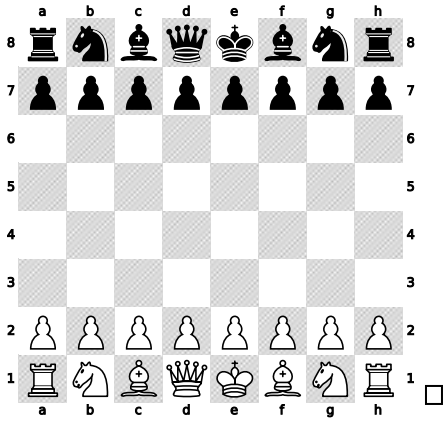
In this unit *Set up the pieces without help, read and write moves in algebraic notation, play through a game and know how it can end.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

You have learned all the rules of movement. It is time to play a complete game. First you need three tools: setting up the pieces correctly, understanding how moves are written and knowing every way a game can end. With them you will be able to follow the games in this book, record your own and review them afterwards.

9.1 The starting position

Each side's first rank is set up like this, from the a-file to the h-file: rook, knight, bishop, queen, king, bishop, knight, rook. The pawns fill the whole next rank. There is an easy rule so as not to confuse the queen and the king: **the queen goes on her own colour**. The white queen on d1, which is a white square; the black queen on d8, which is a black square. The kings end up facing each other on the e-file.



The starting position. White queen on d1 (a white square) and black queen on d8 (a black square).

Also check the orientation from Unit 1: a white square at each player's right. If the board is the right way round and the queens are on their own colour, everything else falls into place.

9.2 Moves and turns

In chess the word **move** is used in two ways. A single side's action is a move, but moves are also **numbered** in pairs: move 1 consists of White's first move and Black's reply. So "12." marks White's twelfth move, and Black's reply belongs to the same move 12.

9.3 Algebraic notation

To write a move you give the **piece** with its letter and the **destination square**. There is no need to write where it comes from, because almost always only one piece can get there.

What happens	How it is written	Example
A piece goes to a square	Letter + square	Nf3 (knight to f3)
A pawn advances	Just the square	e4
A piece captures	Letter + x + square	Bxc6
A pawn captures	Starting file + x + square	exd5
Check	Add +	Qh5+
Checkmate	Add #	Rxh5#
Castling kingside / queenside	0-0 / 0-0-0	0-0
Promotion	Square + = + piece	e8=Q

White's moves come after the move number and a full stop: **1.e4**. Black's moves are written next (**1.e4 e5**); if a Black move appears on its own, three dots follow the number: **1...e5**. In books you will also see evaluation signs: ! for a good move, ? for a mistake.

When two identical pieces can go to the same square, the starting file (or rank) is added: **Nbd2** means that the knight on the b-file goes to d2. Don't worry about these cases now; you will rarely meet them.

Careful with the letters. In English, K is the **king** and N the **knight** (K was already taken). Books in other languages use other letters: in Spanish, for example, R is the king (*rey*), D the queen (*dama*), T the rook (*torre*), A the bishop (*alfil*) and C the knight (*caballo*). Chess programs and game files (PGN format) always use the English letters K Q R B N.

9.4 How to read a diagram

A diagram shows a position at one moment. It is seen from White's side unless stated otherwise, and the small square on the right shows who is to move. To copy a diagram onto your board, place the kings first, then the pieces and finally the pawns, rank by rank, and check the coordinates at the end.

9.5 How a game ends

- **Checkmate**: the player who gives it wins.
- **Resignation**: a player may resign at any moment and the opponent wins. You do it by saying so or by stopping the clock, and it is a courteous gesture when the game is clearly lost.
- **Draw by agreement**: the two players may agree to a draw.
- **Stalemate**: a draw, as you saw in Unit 7.
- **Other draws**: when neither side can give mate with what is left (for example, king against king); when the same position occurs three times and it is claimed; and when fifty moves by each side go by without a capture or a pawn move. The details of these cases are in the glossary.

A win is worth one point, a draw half a point and a loss zero. On a scoresheet the result is written 1-0 (White wins), 0-1 (Black wins) or ½-½ (draw).

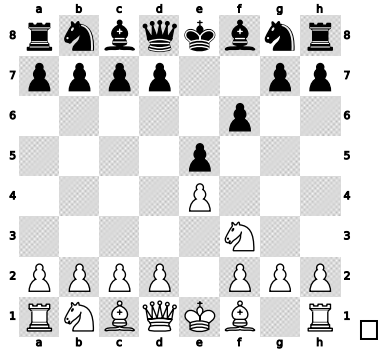
9.6 Teaching game 1

The following game is a teaching example, not a game between real players. Play it through on your board move by move. At each diagram, stop and check that your position is identical. The pauses ask you to think before going on.

Teaching game 1: a king with no shelter

Two amateurs are playing. Black makes a mistake on the second move and, from then on, the king has to flee across the whole board.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 f6



White to move.

White develops the knight, which attacks the pawn on e5. Black defends it with the f6 pawn. It looks logical, but that pawn opens the diagonal from h5 to the king (h5-g6-f7-e8). Which white pieces could exploit it?

3.Nxe5

White gives up the knight: Nxe5. If Black captures it, the white queen will come in on h5 with check. The prudent course for Black would be not to take and to play Qe7.

3...fxe5 4.Qh5+



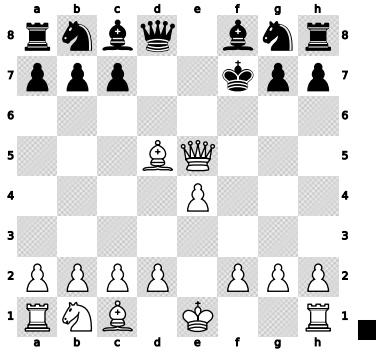
Black to move. Black is in check.

Pause: what replies does Black have? The king can go to e7, or Black can block with g6. If Black blocks with g6, the queen captures on e5 with check and then wins the rook on h8. Black chooses to move the king.

4...Ke7 5.Qxe5+ Kf7 6.Bc4+

The bishop gives check along the c4-d5-e6-f7 diagonal. Black blocks with the pawn.

6...d5 7.Bxd5+



Black to move.

White captures the pawn with a new check. Look at the balance: White gave up a knight and has won back three pawns, and the black king is in the middle of the board, unprotected.

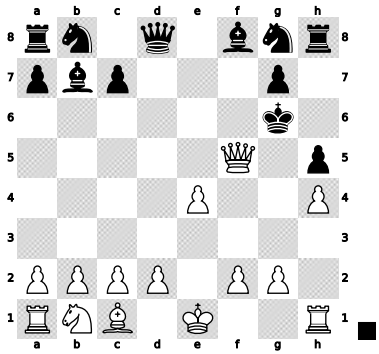
7...Kg6 8.h4

A quiet but threatening move: the pawn wants to go on to h5 to check the king. Black stops it.

8...h5 9.Bxb7

White wins another pawn and attacks the rook on a8. Black captures the bishop.

9...Bxb7 10.Qf5+



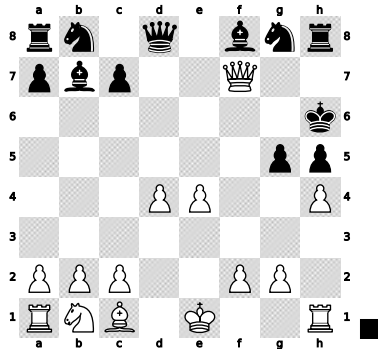
Black to move.

Pause: where can the black king go? Only to h6: f7 and f6 are controlled by the queen.

10...Kh6 11.d4+

Discovered check: the pawn steps aside and opens the diagonal of the c1 bishop towards h6. Black can only block with g5.

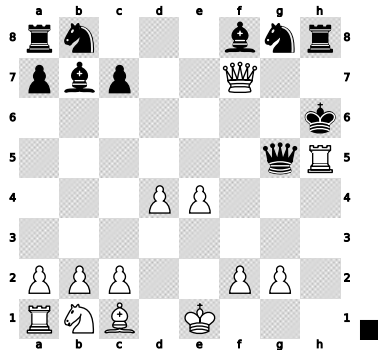
11...g5 12.Qf7



Black to move.

A move without check, but decisive. The queen watches g6 and h5, and the pawn on h4 threatens to capture on g5 with check. Black tries to defend.

12...Qe7 13.hxg5+ Qxg5 14.Rxh5#



Checkmate.

The rook, which had not moved all game, gives mate along the h-file. Check the three defences. Escape: g6, g7 and h7 are controlled by the white queen. Capture: the black queen on g5 could take the rook, but it cannot move because the c1 bishop aims at the king through it. Block: the rook is right next to the king.

Result: 1-0. Now review the game with three questions. What was Black's first mistake? (2...f6, which weakened the king's diagonal, and above all 3...fxe5.) What did White's moves have in common? (Almost all were checks or direct threats: Black

never had time to organise a defence.) Which white piece did not move until the end? (The rook on h1, which gave mate without leaving its file until the last move.)

9.7 Your first game

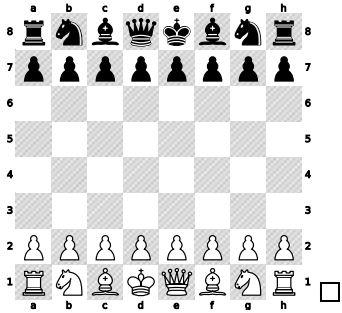
Now play a game against another person, without a clock or with plenty of time. Winning does not matter. Pay attention to three things: that every move is legal, that you respond to checks and that you recognise the end of the game. If you can, write the moves down on a sheet: that way you can replay the game and discover where it changed course.

> **Common mistakes.** Mixing up K (king) and N (knight); writing down only your own moves; losing track of the turn when playing through a game (check the diagrams); placing the queen off her own colour.

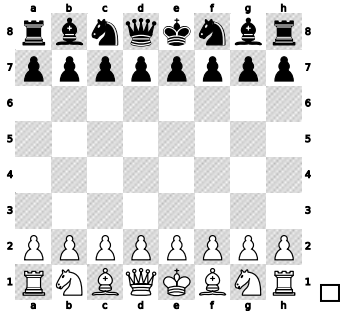
Exercises for Unit 9

For the replay exercises, use a real board.

U09 E01 On which square does the white queen go? And the black queen? Which rule helps you remember?



U09 E02 This board is set up wrongly. What is the mistake?



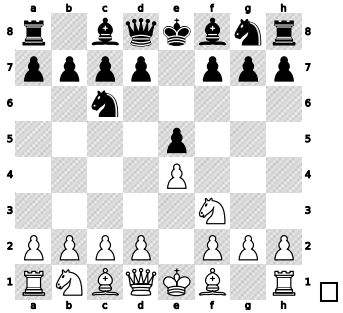
U09 E03 This board also has a mistake. Which one?

U09 E04 Write in notation: a) the white pawn goes from e2 to e4; b) the bishop on c1 captures on g5; c) a rook goes to d8 and gives check; d) Black castles queenside.

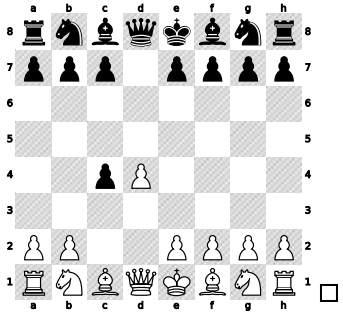
U09 E05 Explain in words: a) Nxe5; b) Qh5+; c) 0-0; d) exd6 e.p.; e) b8=Q.

U09 E06 A scoresheet reads "12.Bb5+ c6". Who makes each move? What does the + sign mean?

U09 E07 A Spanish book gives the moves "1.e4 e5 2.Cf3 Cc6 3.Ab5 De7". Write them in English notation.



U09 E08 Which moves, one per side in turn, lead from the starting position to this diagram?



U09 E09 This diagram arises after two moves by each side. Write them down.

U09 E10 Play through on your board: 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nc6 3.Qh5 Nf6 4.Qxf7. How has the game ended?

U09 E11 Play through: 1.f3 e5 2.g4 Qh4. White to move. What has happened?

U09 E12 What is the result in each case? a) Black is checkmated. b) It is White to move, White is not in check and has no legal move. c) White stops the clock and says "I resign". d) The two players agree to finish.

> **Practice with a board.** Play a complete game with another person and write down the moves. When you finish, fill in a short record: result, how it ended, an illegal move you tried (if any) and a moment when you missed a threat.

Remember

- The queen goes on her own colour; the board, with a white square on the right.
- A move is written with the piece letter and the destination square; x is a capture, + check and # mate.
- A game ends by mate, resignation or a draw (agreement, stalemate and other cases).

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct and the teaching game played through for at least eight moves without altering the position, you can move on. In your own game, what matters is spotting and correcting illegal moves, not winning.

UNIT 10

Look before you move

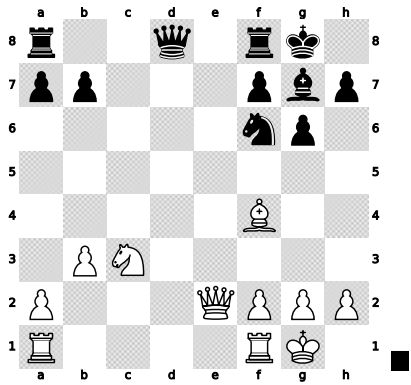
In this unit *Build a short observation routine that stops you losing pieces and overlooking mating threats.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

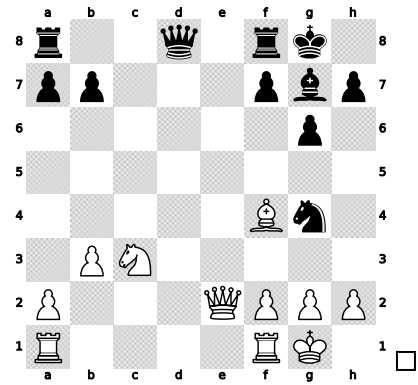
If you look back at your first game, it was most probably decided by something very simple: a piece left undefended, a check you didn't see coming, a capture that was not as good as it looked. That is how almost all games between beginners are decided, and many between experienced players too. The good news is that it can be fixed with a habit: look before you move.

10.1 What has changed?

Every move your opponent makes changes something. A piece arrives on a new square, and from there it attacks squares it did not attack before. But it also vacates the square it came from, and that may open a line for another piece. The first question, even before thinking about your own plan, is: **what has changed with their last move?**



Before: Black to move.



After ...Ng4: White to move.

Black has moved the knight from f6 to g4. The obvious point is that the knight now attacks f2 and h2, but those pawns are defended by the king. The important thing is

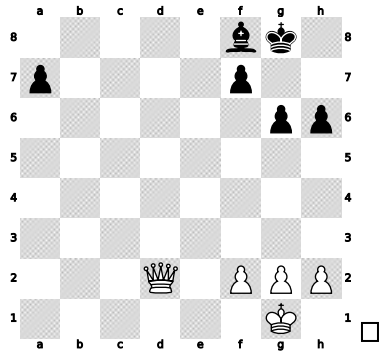
elsewhere: by leaving f6, the knight has **opened the diagonal** of the g7 bishop, which now attacks the white knight on c3. That knight is undefended. If White only looks at the piece that moved, it will be lost.

10.2 Checks and threats

A **threat** is what your opponent could do on their next move if you don't prevent it: capture a piece, give a dangerous check or give mate. To find it, imagine you could pass and ask yourself: "What would they play now?" Always start with the most serious: checks and mating threats.

10.3 Attacked and undefended pieces

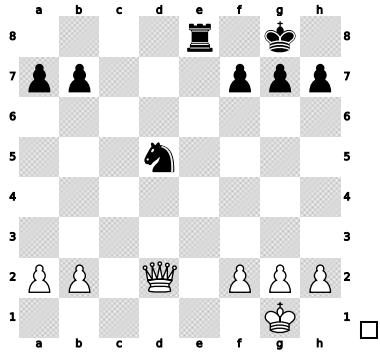
Then go through your pieces one by one: is any of them attacked? Is it defended? A piece that is attacked and undefended is called, in players' language, a **hanging** piece. Hanging pieces are the most common cause of defeat among beginners. Watch out for long-range defences too: a bishop or a rook can defend from the other side of the board.



White to move. The pawn on h6 looks free, but the bishop on f8 defends it.

10.4 The lines you open yourself

What happens with your opponent's moves also happens with yours. When you move a piece, it stops defending the squares it was defending and may open a line towards something valuable. In the next diagram, White can capture the knight on d5 with the queen. It looks like a gift. But the queen on d2 is the only piece defending the square e1. If it goes to d5, the black rook comes in with mate: ...Re1#.



White to move. Qxd5? Re1#.

So, before winning material, make sure there is no mating threat. In this position a prudent move such as h3 opens an escape square for the king and removes the danger; there will be time for the knight later.

10.5 Is the destination square safe?

Once you have chosen a move, look at the square where the piece will stand: is it attacked by an enemy piece? Is it defended? Could your opponent capture it with a less valuable piece? Many mistakes are avoided at this last moment.

10.6 The complete routine

Let's put it all together into a four-question routine. Do it on every move, slowly at first; with practice it becomes automatic:

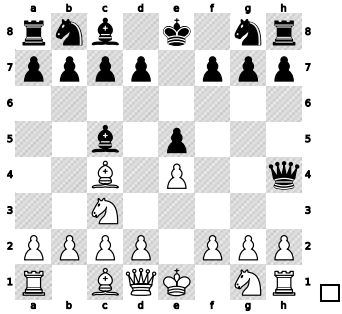
- **My king**: am I in check? Can I be mated or given a dangerous check?
- **Their threat**: what has changed with their last move? What would they do if I passed?
- **My pieces**: is any of them attacked and not defended enough?
- **My move**: is the destination square safe? What does the piece I'm moving stop defending?

A word of warning: not every position hides a danger. If the routine finds nothing, play calmly and get on with your plan. Inventing threats that don't exist also wastes time.

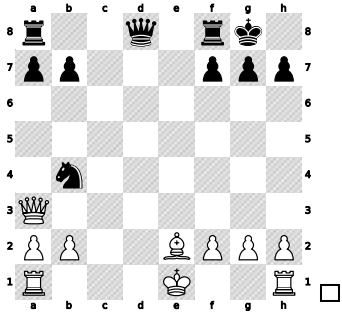
> **Common mistakes.** Looking only at the piece that has just moved; forgetting long-range attacks; believing that a defended piece can never be lost; looking for your own attack while your king is threatened.

Exercises for Unit 10

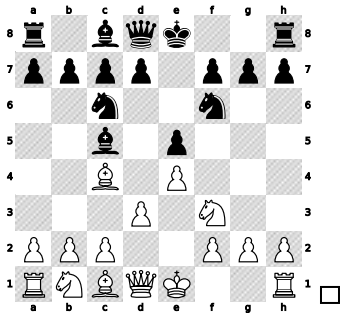
In the threat exercises, imagine you have to pass: what would your opponent play?



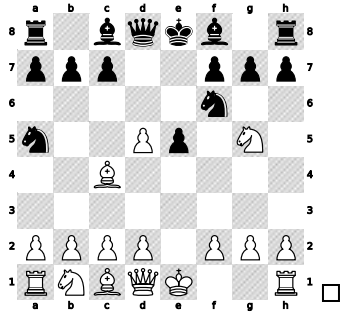
U10 E01 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Bc5 3.Nc3 Qh4. White to move. What is Black threatening?



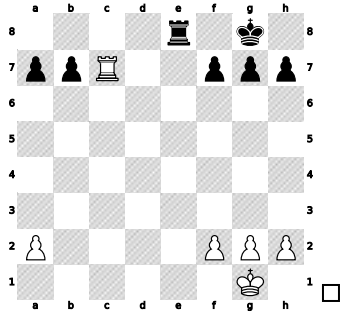
U10 E02 White to move. What is the black knight threatening?



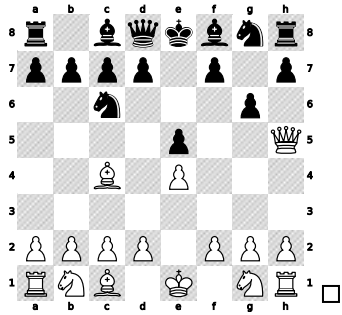
U10 E03 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.d3 Nf6. White to move. Does Black have any immediate threat?



U10 E04 White to move. Which white piece is attacked? Is it defended?



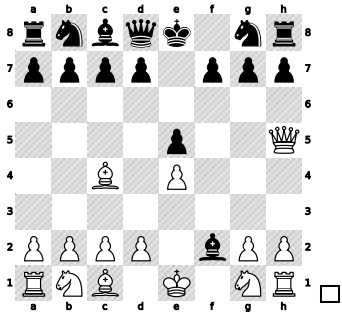
U10 E05 White to move. White has a rook on the seventh rank and could capture the pawn on b7. Is it a good idea? Choose a safe move.



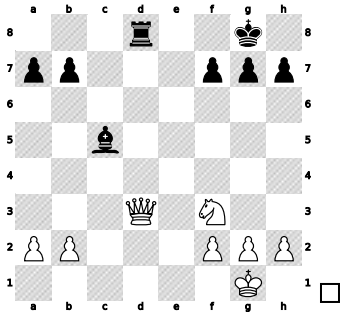
U10 E06 1.e4 e5 2.Qh5 Nc6 3.Bc4 g6. White to move. The queen is attacked. Where do you put it?



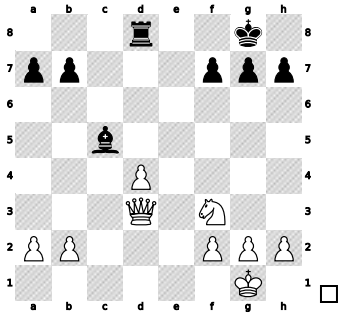
U10 E07 1.e4 Nf6 2.e5. Black to move. The knight is attacked by the pawn. Which square do you choose? Is there a bad one?



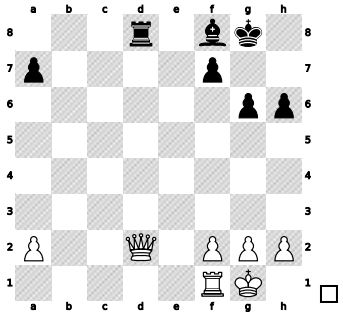
U10 E08 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Bc5 3.Qh5 Bxf2+. White was planning to mate with Qxf7. Can White do it now? What must White play?



U10 E09 Black has just played Bd6-c5. White to move. Which white piece is attacked now that was not attacked before?



U10 E10 The same position as in the previous exercise, but with a white pawn on d4. Is the queen still attacked?



U10 E11 White to move. Your partner suggests Qxh6 to win a pawn. What do you tell them?



U10 E12 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3. Black to move. Is Nxe4 to win a pawn a good idea?

Practice with a board. Play a slow game and, during the first ten moves, say the four questions of the routine out loud before every move. Your partner can act as an observer and note how many times you skip one.

Remember

- Before moving, ask yourself what has changed with your opponent's last move, including the square it left empty.
- Look first for checks and mating threats; then for attacked and undefended pieces.
- Check that your destination square is safe and what the piece you move stops defending.

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct and the threat explained in three new positions from your own games, move on. Note which kind of mistake you make most (unseen threat, hanging piece, line opened): it will tell you what to review, and it is not a label on your ability.

UNIT 11

Capturing, defending and exchanging

In this unit *Assess simple exchanges and tell the difference between winning material, trading it for something equivalent, or losing it after the recapture.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

With the routine from the previous unit you can already see which pieces are attacked. Now you have to decide what to do with that information. Should you capture? What happens if your opponent recaptures? Is it enough to defend an attacked piece, or must you move it away? To answer, we need a simple way of comparing what you give and what you get.

11.1 The value of the pieces

Players use a rough scale, measured in pawns:

Piece	Approximate value
Pawn	1
Knight	3
Bishop	3
Rook	5
Queen	9

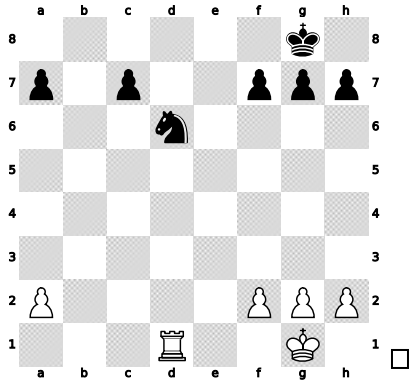
The knight and bishop are called **minor pieces**; the rook and queen, **major pieces**. Trading a rook for a minor piece is called losing (or winning) **the exchange**. These numbers are not laws: a well-placed piece is worth more than a trapped one, and in the endgame a pawn about to promote is worth almost a queen. But as a guide for starting out they are very useful.

11.2 The king is priceless

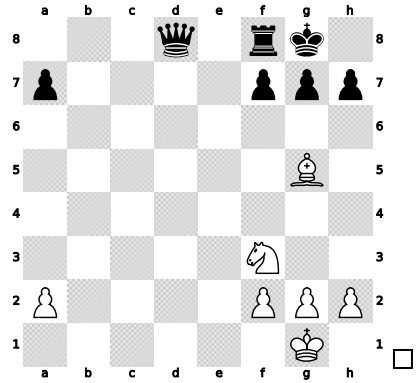
The king does not appear in the table because it cannot be traded: losing it means losing the game. That is why any material consideration comes after its safety.

11.3 Capture and recapture

To assess a capture, it is not enough to look at what you win on the first move. You must follow the sequence to the end, including your opponent's **recapture**, and draw up the balance: what you captured minus what you lost.



Rxd6? cxd6: rook (5) for knight (3). Balance: −2.



Bxd8 Rxd8: queen (9) for bishop (3). Balance: +6.

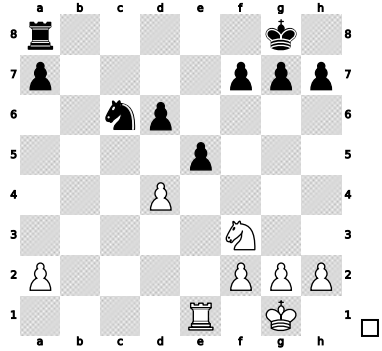
In the first diagram, the rook can capture the knight, but the pawn on c7 defends it. After Rxd6 cxd6, White has given 5 in return for 3. In the second, the black queen is attacked by the bishop. Even though it is defended by the rook, White should capture: Bxd8 Rxd8 leaves a balance of 9 to 3 in White's favour. **A piece being defended does not mean it cannot be captured with profit**: it depends on which piece captures.

11.4 Defend or retreat

When one of your pieces is attacked you have two basic resources: **defend it** with another piece or **retreat it** to a safe square. Defending works if the attacker is worth the same as or more than the attacked piece. But if the attacker is a less valuable piece, defending is not enough: if a bishop attacks your rook, even if you defend it you will lose 5 in return for 3. In that case you must move it away.

11.5 When several pieces attack and defend

If a square is attacked by several pieces and defended by several, the sequence of captures may get longer. Two tips for counting it: compare the **number** of attackers and defenders, but above all their **value and their order**. Normally you capture first with the least valuable piece. If at any point the recapture does not pay, the side that would lose stops capturing. Always calculate to the end and draw up the balance of the whole sequence.



White to move. dxe5 or Nxe5?

The pawn on e5 is attacked three times (the d4 pawn, the knight and the rook) and defended twice (the d6 pawn and the c6 knight). If White starts with the knight, Nxe5? dxe5, White has given 3 for 1. The right way is to start with the cheapest piece: dxe5, and after ...dxe5 or ...Nxe5 the count stays level.

11.6 Mate comes first

Everything above applies when the kings are safe. If your opponent threatens mate, the material balance no longer matters: first you must stop the threat. And the other way round, if you can give mate, don't waste time capturing pieces. Mate is worth more than any amount of material.

> **Common mistakes.** Counting only what you capture; forgetting the recapture; counting attackers and defenders without looking at their value; treating 1, 3, 3, 5 and 9 as absolute laws; winning material while your opponent prepares a mate.

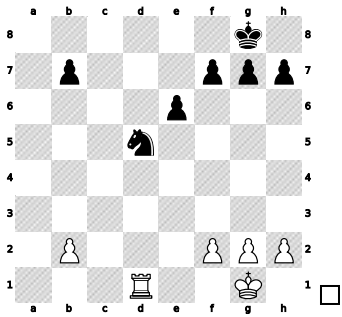
Exercises for Unit 11

In the balance exercises, write down the material you win and the material you lose, and the final result.

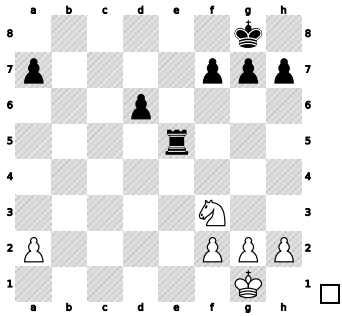
U11 E01 You capture a rook with your bishop and your opponent recaptures the bishop. What is the balance?

U11 E02 You capture a pawn with your queen and an enemy knight captures your queen. Balance?

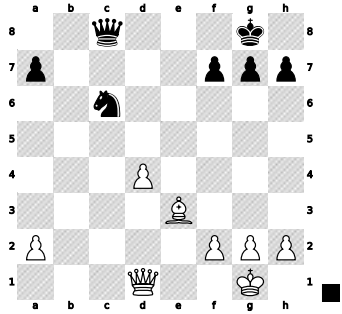
U11 E03 You trade your knight for their bishop and then your rook for their rook. Balance?



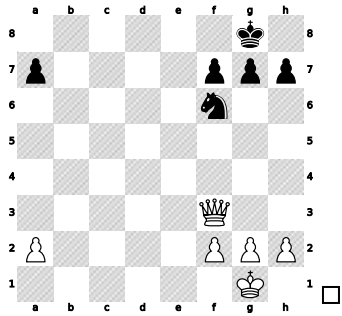
U11 E04 White to move. Is it a good idea to capture the knight with the rook?



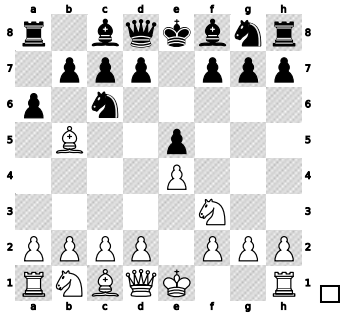
U11 E05 White to move. Can the knight capture the rook on e5?



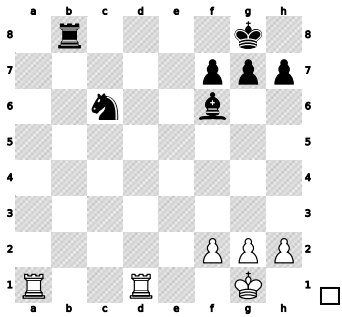
U11 E06 Black to move. The white pawn on d4 is attacked by the knight and defended by the queen and the bishop. Is Nxd4 a good idea?



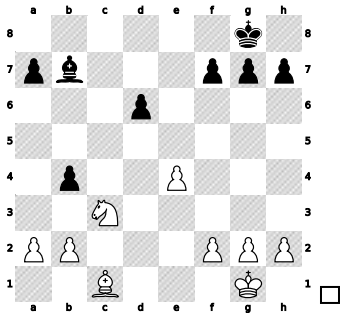
U11 E07 White to move. The white queen can capture the knight on f6. Should it?



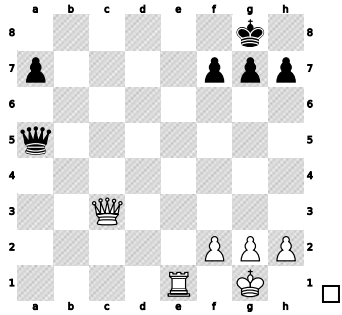
U11 E08 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6. White to move. The bishop is attacked by a pawn. What are your options?



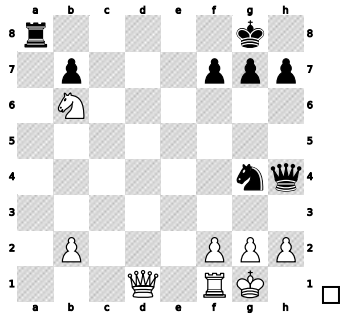
U11 E09 White to move. The rook on a1 is defended by the other rook. Is that enough?



U11 E10 White to move. The knight on c3 is attacked by the pawn on b4. Where do you put it?



U11 E11 White to move. White can capture the black queen. Is there anything better?



U11 E12 White to move. White can capture the rook on a8 with the knight. What is Black threatening? Which move do you choose?

> **Practice with a board.** Set up an attacked piece and another piece defending it on the board. Ask another person to add an attacker or a defender and work out together the sequence of captures to the end, writing down each side's material before and after.

Remember

- Rough values: pawn 1, knight 3, bishop 3, rook 5, queen 9; the king cannot be traded.
- Calculate the sequence to the end, including the recapture, and draw up the balance.
- If a cheap piece attacks an expensive one, defending is not enough: it must move away. And mate comes before material.

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct and no recapture mistakes in exercises E04 to E07, you can move on. You should be able to explain why capturing a valuable piece can be bad if it leaves your own king undefended.

UNIT 12

How to start a game

In this unit *Develop your pieces, occupy the centre and put your king in safety in the first moves, without depending on memorised openings.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

The first moves of a game are called the **opening**. There are whole books devoted to each opening, with thousands of variations. You don't need them now. What you do need are a few **principles** that explain what good players aim for at the start, and that will let you play any opening sensibly, including ones you have never seen.

12.1 What you aim for in the opening

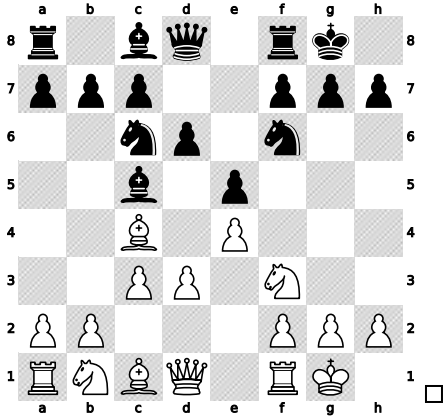
At the start, almost all the pieces are shut in behind the pawns. The aim of the opening is to **bring them out to active squares** as soon as possible, to **fight for the centre** of the board and to **put the king in safety**. Whoever achieves this first usually reaches the middlegame with an advantage. These three aims are the compass for everything that follows.

12.2 The central pawns and the centre

The squares d4, e4, d5 and e5 are the **centre**. A piece in the centre controls more squares than on the edge, as you saw with the knight. That is why the most common first moves are 1.e4 and 1.d4: they occupy the centre and at the same time open lines for the queen and the bishops. One or two central pawn moves are usually enough; after that, it's time to bring out the pieces.

12.3 Developing knights and bishops

To **develop** is to move a piece from its starting square to a useful square. The minor pieces are developed first: knights (for example, to f3 and c3) and bishops (to c4, b5, e2, d3, f4, g5...). A good habit is to move **each piece once** in the opening, unless there is a concrete reason to move it again, such as a threat.



A healthy opening for both sides: centre, minor pieces out and kings castled.

12.4 Putting the king in safety

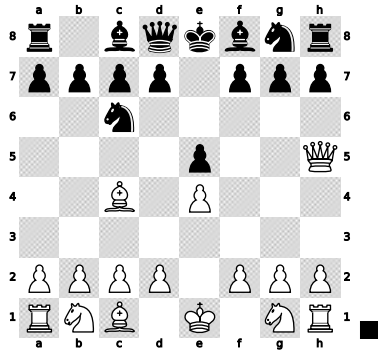
In the centre, the king is exposed to the lines that open when pawns are exchanged. The normal thing is to **castle early**, within the first ten moves. To castle kingside you only need to bring out the knight and bishop on that side. After castling, it is best not to push the pawns protecting the king without a good reason.

12.5 Connecting the rooks

When the minor pieces are out and the king has castled, the queen still needs to move one square (for example, to e2 or d2) so that the two rooks are "connected", that is, they see and defend each other along the first rank. From then on, the rooks look for open files.

12.6 Typical mistakes: the wandering queen and lost time

Bringing the queen out very early looks aggressive, but it is usually a mistake: your opponent attacks it with pieces that develop as they do so, and every time the queen runs away a **tempo** (a move) is lost. The same happens when you move the same piece several times or play lots of pawn moves on the wings. The best-known case is **Scholar's Mate**: the white queen goes to h5 and, together with the bishop on c4, attacks f7.



Black to move. White threatens Qxf7#.

If Black does not see the threat and plays, for example, 3...Nf6??, Black loses to 4.Qxf7#. Defending is easy: 3...g6 attacks the queen and closes the diagonal, and 3...Qe7 defends f7. Afterwards, the white queen will have wasted moves and will have to retreat. It is worth knowing this threat in order to defend against it, not to go looking for it.

12.7 Concrete threats first

Principles are general advice. When there is a concrete threat (a check, an attacked piece, a mate), the threat takes priority. There is no point developing a knight if doing so loses your queen. Always apply the routine from Unit 10 before any principle.

12.8 Teaching game 2

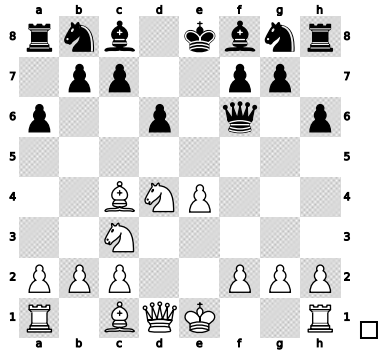
In the following game, White applies the principles and Black forgets them one after another: Black plays wing pawns, brings the queen out too early and leaves the king in the centre. It is a teaching example; play it through on your board.

Teaching game 2: the king that stayed in the centre

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4

The first two moves by each side occupy and contest the centre. White wins back the pawn with the knight, which is well placed on d4.

4...a6 5.Nc3 h6 6.Bc4 Qf6



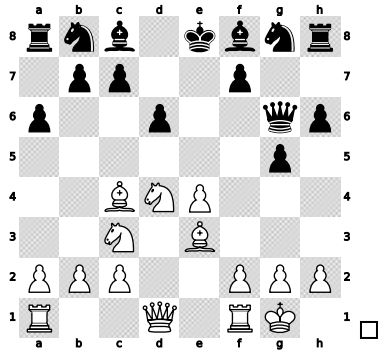
White to move.

Pause: count the developed pieces. White has two knights and a bishop out. Black has played two wing pawns (a6 and h6) that develop nothing, and has brought out the queen, which also takes the best square of the g8 knight.

7.Be3 g5

Another pawn move that weakens the black king's position. White carries on with the plan.

8.O-O Qg6



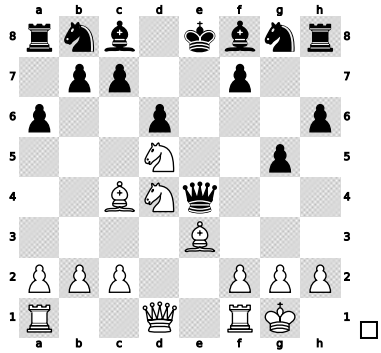
White to move.

White has castled: the king is safe and the f1 rook can now come into play. In eight moves Black has developed only the queen, which has moved twice. Black's king is still in the centre.

9.Nd5

The knight jumps to a central square and threatens Nxc7+, which would attack the king and the rook on a8 at the same time.

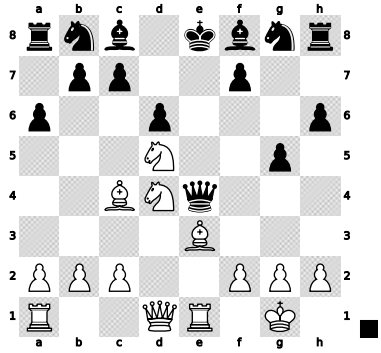
9...Qxe4



White to move.

Black sees a free pawn and takes it. Pause: apply the routine from Unit 10. What has changed? The black queen is now on the e-file, in front of its own king. Which white piece can exploit this?

10.Re1



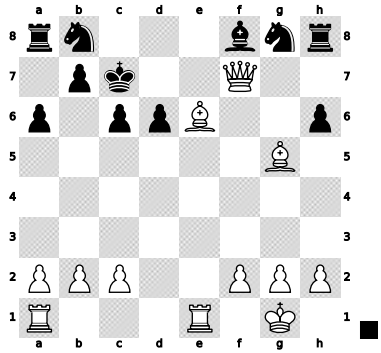
Black to move.

The rook attacks the queen, and the queen cannot leave the e-file: if it did, the black king would be in check. The queen is lost. This is the price of leaving the king in the centre with the lines open.

10...Qxd5 11.Bxd5 c6 12.Bxg5+

Discovered check: the bishop leaves e3 and the rook on e1 gives check. Along the way, the bishop captures a pawn.

12...Be6 13.Nxe6 fxe6 14.Qh5+ Kd7 15.Bxe6+ Kc7 16.Qf7+



Black to move.

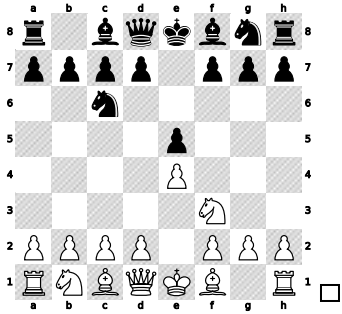
Black resigns. Black has a bishop and a knight fewer than in the starting position and has lost the queen, while every white piece is taking part in the attack. Result: 1-0.

> **Review.** Count how many moves each side spent developing pieces in the first ten. White: Nf3, Nc3, Bc4, Be3, 0-0 and Re1. Black: only the queen, which moved three times. The game was decided on the e-file, the direct route to an uncastled king.

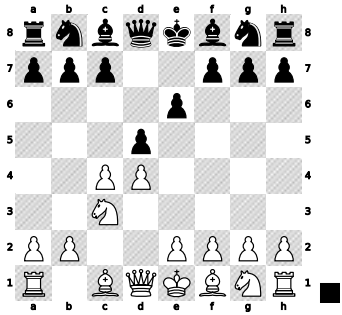
> **Common mistakes.** Repeating a memorised sequence without looking at what your opponent plays; moving the same piece for no reason; bringing out the queen to try to win straight away; applying a general principle when there is a concrete threat.

Exercises for Unit 12

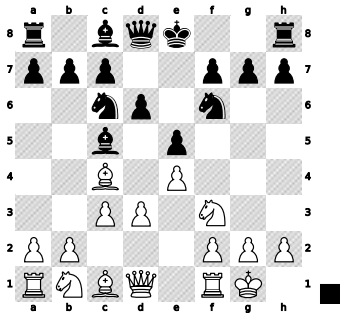
Some exercises have several good answers: what matters is that yours follows the principles and leaves nothing hanging.



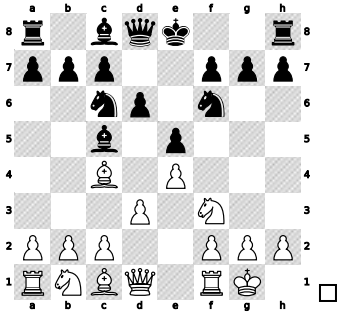
U12 E01 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6. White to move. Which of these moves best follows the principles: a) h3; b) Bc4; c) Qh5?



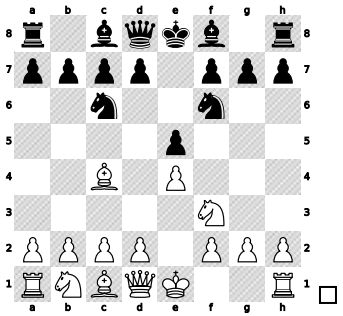
U12 E02 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3. Black to move. Choose between a) Nf6; b) h6; c) Qg5.



U12 E03 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.d3 Nf6 5.0-0 d6 6.c3. Black to move. Which move completes development safely?



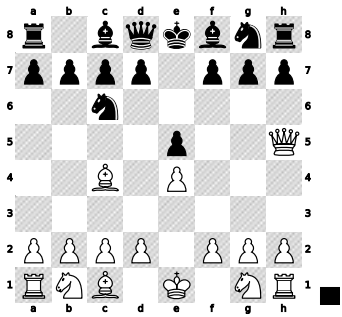
U12 E04 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.d3 Nf6 5.0-0 d6. White to move. Which white pieces have still to be developed? Suggest a move.



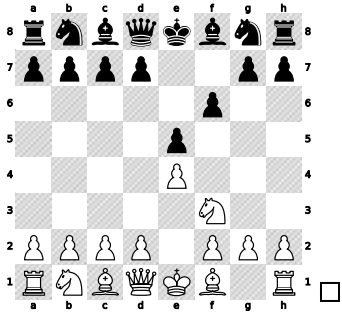
U12 E05 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6. White to move. Can White castle already? Is it a good idea?



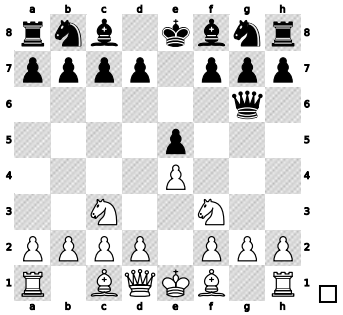
U12 E06 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5. Black to move. What is White attacking? How would you reply?



U12 E07 1.e4 e5 2.Qh5 Nc6 3.Bc4. Black to move. What is White threatening? Which move stops it?



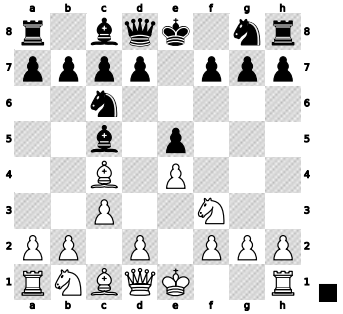
U12 E08 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 f6. What mistake has Black made?



U12 E09 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Qf6 3.Nc3 Qg6. Point out two problems in Black's play.



U12 E10 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 h6 4.Nc3 a6 5.d4. What do Black's 3rd and 4th moves have in common?



U12 E11 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3. What is White aiming for with c3?

U12 E12 You have played ten moves: your queen is on d1, your two bishops have not come out and your king is still on e1. Which three tasks do you set yourself for the next moves, and in what order?

> **Practice with a board.** Play ten moves with each colour against another person and stop. Count each side's undeveloped pieces and check whether the kings have castled. Repeat it three times, switching colours.

Remember

- In the opening: centre, development of the minor pieces and king in safety.
- Move each piece once unless there is a reason, and don't bring the queen out too early.
- Concrete threats take priority over general principles.

Check your progress. With 10 out of 12 exercises correct and an explanation of three opening decisions from your own games, move on. Don't judge yourself by matching a book line or by beating more experienced opponents.

UNIT 13

Your first tactical moves

In this unit *Recognise and defend against three basic tactical weapons: the double attack, the pin and the discovered attack.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

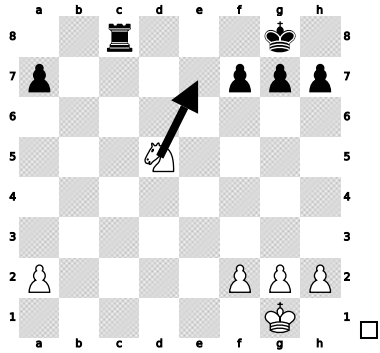
So far you have learned not to lose material. In this unit you will learn to win it when your opponent is careless. **Tactics** are concrete blows that force your opponent to lose something. You don't need to calculate much: almost all of them are based on a few recurring ideas. We will study them two at a time, from the attacker's side and from the defender's.

13.1 The double attack

One piece attacks **two targets at once**. Your opponent can save only one of them with a single move, and loses the other. Any piece can make a double attack: a pawn advancing between two pieces, a queen attacking a rook and threatening mate, a bishop aiming at two pieces along one diagonal. The double attack is especially effective when one of the targets is the king, because the check must be answered.

13.2 The knight fork

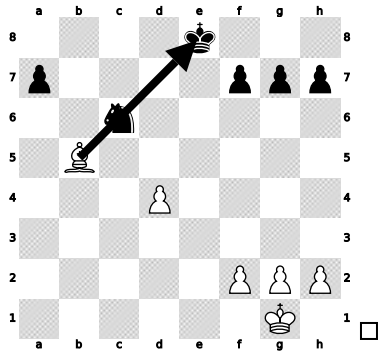
The knight's double attack is called a **fork**. It is the most dangerous because the knight attacks in every direction, jumps and cannot be blocked. In the diagram, Ne7+ checks the king and at the same time attacks the rook on c8. Black must move the king and loses the rook.



White to move: Ne7+ and Nxc8.

13.3 The pin against the king

A piece is **pinned** when it cannot move without exposing a more valuable piece standing behind it on the same line. If what stands behind is the king, the pin is **absolute**: moving the piece would be illegal, as you saw in Unit 5. In the diagram, the bishop on b5 pins the knight on c6 to its king. White plays d5 and the knight, which cannot move, is lost.



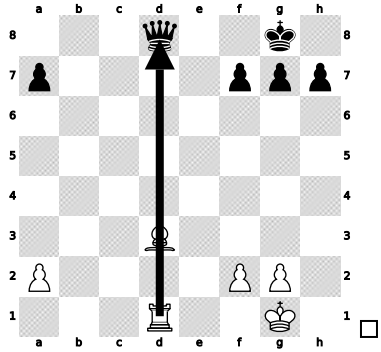
White to move: d5 wins the pinned knight.

13.4 The pin against a valuable piece

If behind the pinned piece there is not a king but another valuable piece, such as the queen, the pin is **relative**: moving the piece is legal, but it would cost the piece behind. A knight pinned by a bishop in front of its queen can move, but then the bishop captures the queen. So **a pin does not always prevent a move**: sometimes it just makes it very expensive. Tell them apart with this question: what is behind, the king or another piece?

13.5 The discovered attack

A piece steps aside and **opens the line** of another friendly piece that was behind it. Suddenly there are two attacks: that of the piece that moves and that of the piece that is uncovered. In the diagram, the bishop captures on h7 with check and, at the same time, the rook on d1 is left attacking the queen on d8. Black must deal with the check and loses the queen.



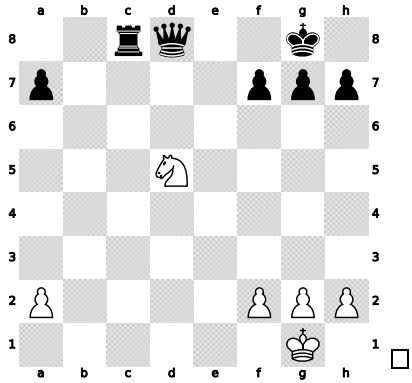
White to move: Bxh7+ and the rook wins the queen.

13.6 The discovered check

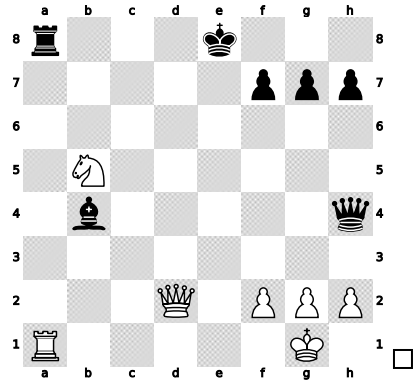
If the uncovered piece gives check, we speak of a **discovered check**. It is one of the strongest weapons: your opponent has to deal with the check, and the piece that moved can do whatever it likes, even capture the queen, without anyone stopping it. You saw it in teaching game 2, when the bishop left e3 and the rook on e1 gave check.

13.7 Looking through the defender's eyes

Before launching a combination, check what your opponent can do. Is your piece's square defended? Does your opponent have a check or a capture that changes everything? Is your own queen attacked? A tactic that works in one position can fail in an almost identical one because of a single piece. And the other way round: when you defend, look for the double attack, pin or discovery your opponent is preparing.



Here Ne7+? fails: the queen captures.

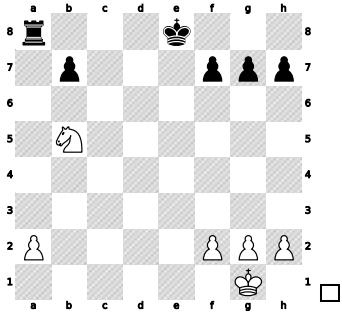


And here Nc7+? loses the queen: ...Bxd2.

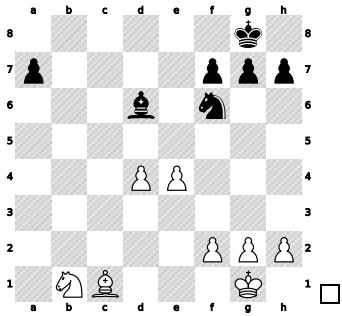
Common mistakes. Believing that every pin prevents a move; launching a combination without looking at your opponent's checks and captures; looking for sacrifices in every position. Tactics appear when there are undefended or badly placed pieces: start by looking for those.

Exercises for Unit 13

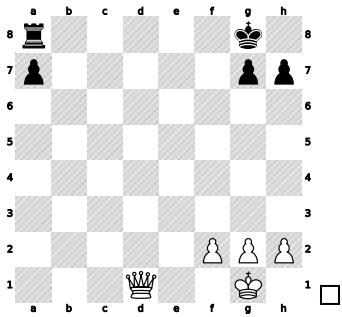
The theme of each exercise is not given: work it out yourself. The solutions are one or two moves long.



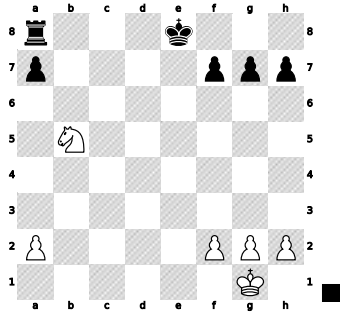
U13 E01 White to move. Win material.



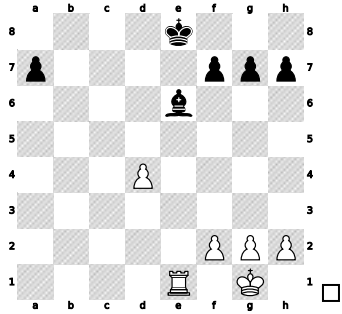
U13 E02 White to move. Win material with a pawn.



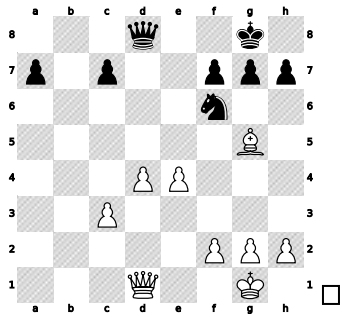
U13 E03 White to move. Win material with the queen.



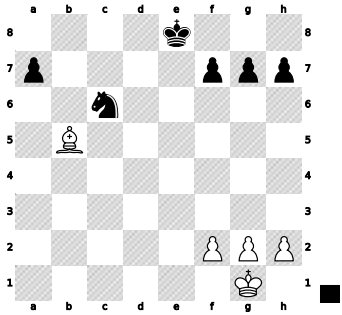
U13 E04 Black to move. What is the white knight threatening? How do you defend?



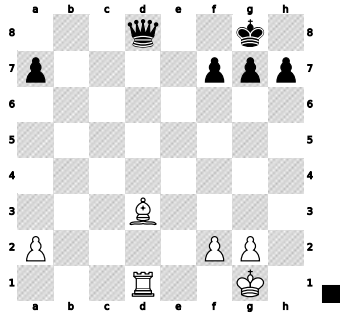
U13 E05 White to move. Exploit the pin.



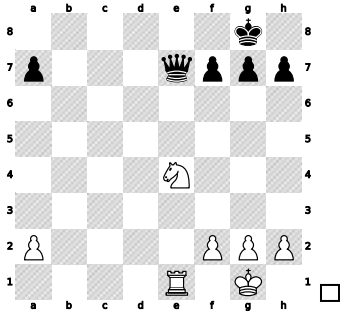
U13 E06 White to move. The black knight is pinned in front of its queen. How do you exploit it?



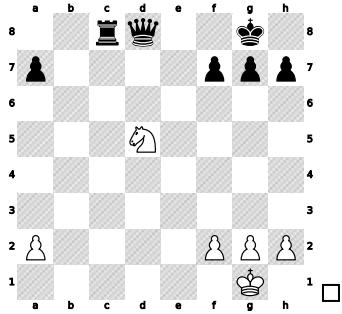
U13 E07 Black to move. What legal moves does the knight on c6 have?



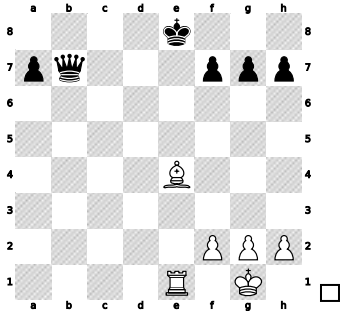
U13 E10 Black to move. What is White threatening? Defend yourself.



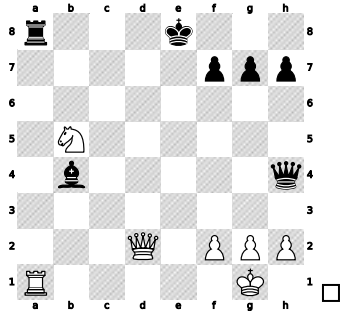
U13 E08 White to move. Win the queen.



U13 E11 White to move. Does Ne7+ work?



U13 E09 White to move. Win the queen with a discovered check.



U13 E12 White to move. Nc7+ wins the rook. Is it a good idea?

Practice with a board. Set up a black king and rook and a white knight on the board. Find all the squares from which the knight would make a fork. Then repeat with a queen instead of the knight.

Remember

- Double attack: one piece attacks two targets; the knight fork is the most typical case.
- Pin: a piece cannot move (if the king is behind it) or moving costs dearly (if another valuable piece is behind it).
- Discovered attack: when one piece moves aside, another attacks. And before attacking, look at what the defender can do.

Check your progress. With 9 out of 12 exercises correct and the defence explained in E11 and E12, you can move on. If you recognise the theme but miss the move, repeat the examples with fewer pieces before looking for new exercises.

UNIT 14

Recognising mate

In this unit *Identify simple mating nets, find mates in one and solve your first mates in two.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

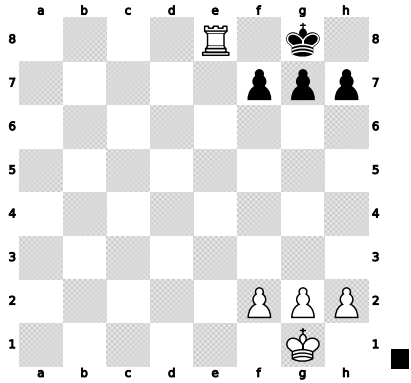
In Unit 7 you learned to recognise whether a position is mate. Now we take the next step: seeing the mate **before** it happens. Almost all the mates in real games are built from a few recurring patterns. If you know them, you will recognise them in your games, both to deliver them and to avoid them.

14.1 Who gives check and who closes the exits

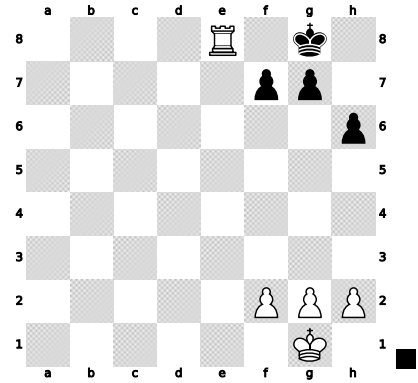
In every mate there are pieces with two different jobs. One **gives the check**. The others **close the king's escape squares** or **protect** the checking piece so that the king cannot capture it. Often the defeated king's own pieces, especially its pawns, take squares away from it. A good way to study a mate is to take the final position and ask, square by square, who controls each exit.

14.2 The back-rank mate

You know it already: the king is shut in behind its pawns and a rook or queen checks it along the last rank. To avoid it, players open an escape square for the king in time (an h- or g-pawn pushed one square) or keep a piece watching the first rank. Compare the two diagrams: only one pawn changes.



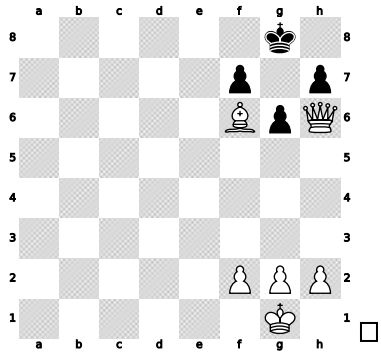
Back-rank mate.



With the pawn on h6 it is not mate: the king escapes to h7.

14.3 The supported queen

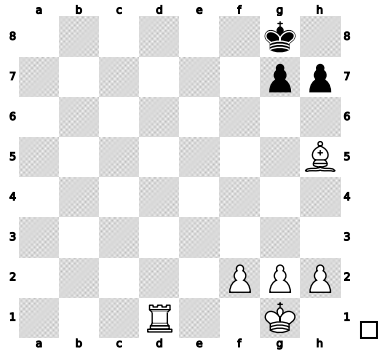
The queen very often gives mate **right next to the king**, protected by another piece so that the king cannot capture it. It is the most frequent mate of all. In the diagram, the queen reaches g7 protected by the bishop on f6: Qg7#. The king cannot capture it and every square around it is controlled.



White to move: Qg7#.

14.4 Rook and bishop

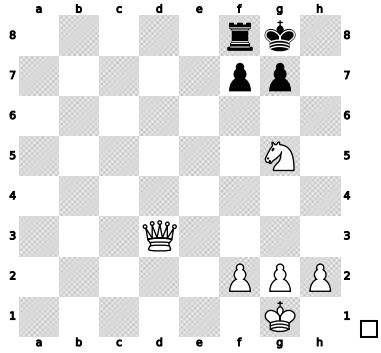
The bishop can take care of closing the exits while the rook gives check. In the diagram, Rd8# is mate because the bishop on h5 controls f7, the only free square the rook does not cover. The king cannot go to h8 either: it would still be on the rook's line.



White to move: Rd8#.

14.5 Queen and knight

The knight is a great support for the queen because it protects squares very close to the king without getting in the way. The typical case is the mate on h7 (or h2): the knight on g5 protects h7 and the queen gives mate there. Note the role of the black rook on f8: it takes the escape square away from its own king.



White to move: Qh7#.

14.6 Defending against a mating threat

The same patterns help you defend. If your opponent threatens mate, you can: **capture** the piece preparing it, **cover** the mating square with another piece, **block** the line along which the check would come, or **open an escape square** for the king. Beware of defences that look natural but create a new square for the enemy queen: you will see one in exercise E10.

14.7 Your first mates in two

A **mate in two** is a move that, whatever your opponent replies, lets you give mate on the next move. To solve it, finding a good first move is not enough: you must check **all the defender's reasonable replies**, not just the one that suits the attacker. A good method: look for the final mate you want to give, ask what prevents it now and which move removes that obstacle.

14.8 Teaching game 3

Teaching game 3: pieces that cooperate

In this game White attacks the castled king with four cooperating pieces: the bishop opens the way, the knight and queen come closer and a pawn finally closes the net. Notice the role each piece plays in the final mate.

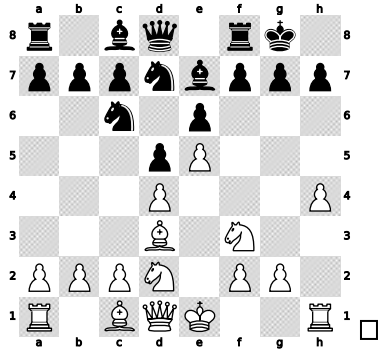
1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 Bd6 5.Nbd2 O-O

Both sides develop calmly and castle. The white bishop on d3 is already aiming at h7.

6.e4 Nfd7

Black retreats the f6 knight, the piece that was defending h7. The idea is reasonable (avoiding an attack on it by the white pawn with e5), but it leaves the king with fewer defenders.

7.e5 Be7 8.h4 Nc6



White to move.

Pause: which white pieces can quickly reach the kingside? The bishop on d3 aims at h7, the knight on f3 can jump to g5, the queen can go to h5 and the pawn on h4 supports the knight on g5.

9.Bxh7+

The bishop sacrifices itself to open the way. This is the idea of the "sacrifice on h7", which only works when the other pieces can arrive in time.

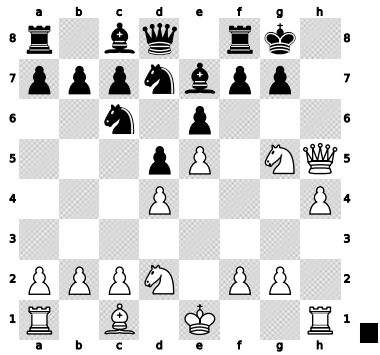
9...Kxh7 10.Ng5+

The knight gives check, protected by the pawn on h4 and by the bishop on c1, and clears the way for the queen to h5.

10...Kg8

If 10...Bxg5, 11.hxg5+ and the rook on h1 comes into play along the open file.

11.Qh5



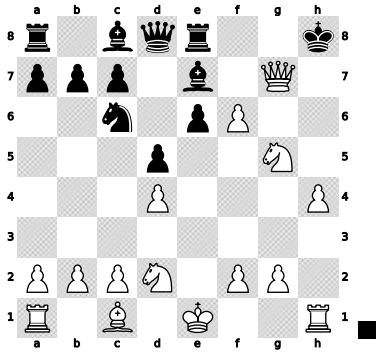
Black to move.

White threatens Qh7#: the queen would mate on h7 protected by the knight on g5. It is the queen-and-knight mate from section 14.5.

11...Nf6

Black tries to cover h7 with the knight, but the e5 pawn captures it. 11...Re8 was no use either, because of 12.Qh7+ Kf8 13.Qh8#.

12.exf6 Re8 13.Qxf7+ Kh8 14.Qxg7#



Mate.

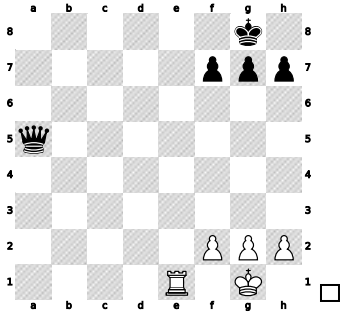
The queen gives mate right next to the king, protected by the pawn on f6. The knight on g5 controls h7 and the black rook on e8 takes the f8 square away from its own king. It is the supported-queen mate from section 14.3.

Review: in the final mate, the queen gives check, the pawn on f6 protects it, the knight on g5 closes h7 and Black's own rook closes f8. No single white piece would have been enough. The bishop sacrifice was only correct because the knight, the queen and the h4 pawn could arrive at once.

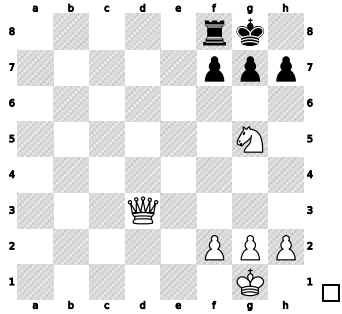
> **Common mistakes.** Confusing giving check with closing the net; forgetting that the checking piece can be captured; accepting a solution that only works if your opponent goes wrong; always looking to the queen as the piece that gives mate.

Exercises for Unit 14

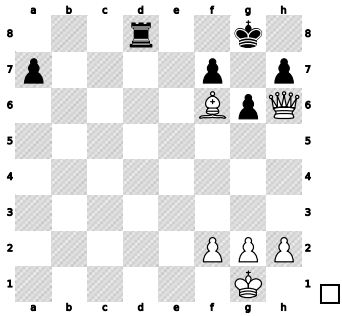
Exercises E01 to E06 are mates in one. E07 and E08 ask whether a position is mate. E09 and E10 are defences. E11 and E12, mates in two.



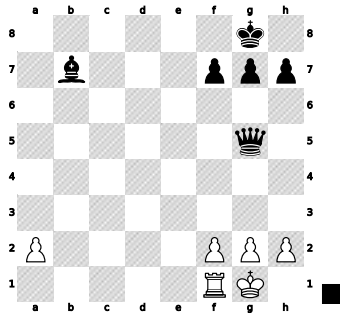
U14 E01 White to move. Mate in one.



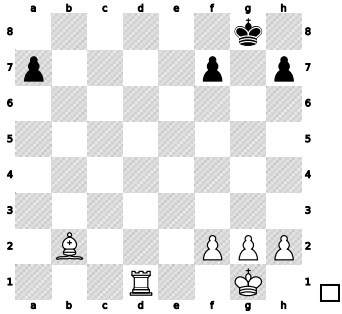
U14 E04 White to move. Mate in one.



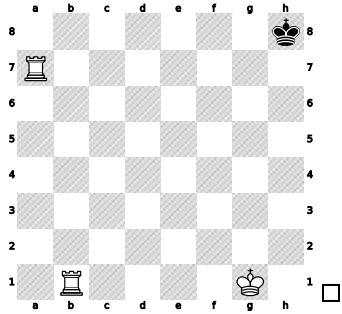
U14 E02 White to move. Mate in one.



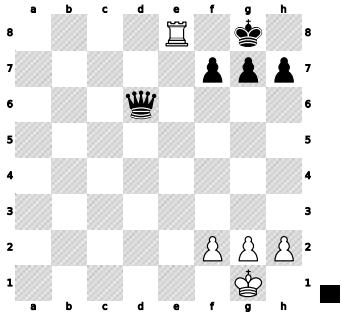
U14 E05 Black to move. Mate in one.



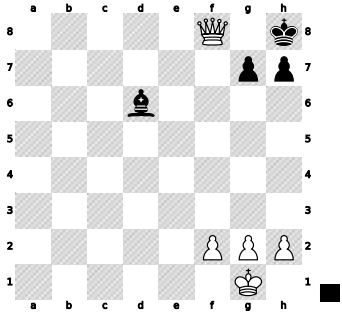
U14 E03 White to move. Mate in one.



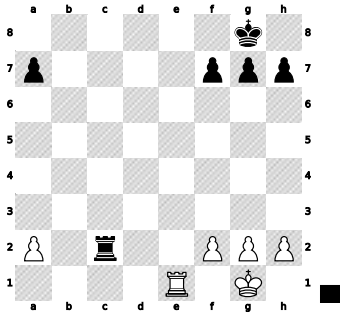
U14 E06 White to move. Mate in one.



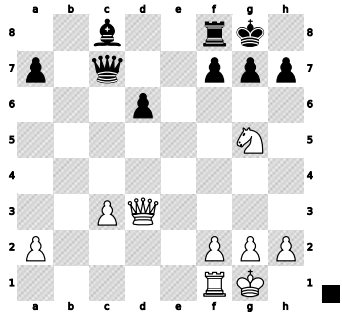
U14 E07 Black to move. The white rook has just arrived on e8 with check. Is it mate?



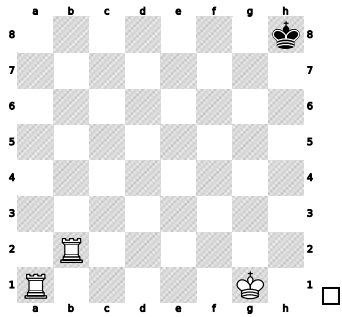
U14 E08 Black to move. The white queen has just given check on f8. Is it mate?



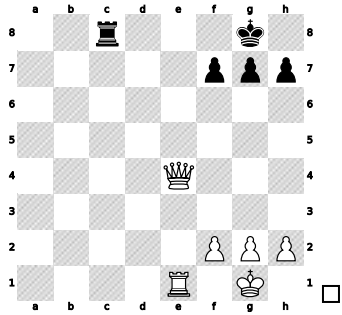
U14 E09 Black to move. What is White threatening? Is it a good idea to capture the pawn on a2?



U14 E10 Black to move. White threatens Qxh7#. Does ...h6, attacking the knight, help?



U14 E11 White to move. Mate in two.



U14 E12 White to move. Mate in two.

> **Practice with a board.** Set up on the board the four mates from sections 14.2 to 14.5. Remove, one by one, each white piece that does not give check and see which escape square appears. Then rebuild the position one move before the mate.

Remember

- In a mate, one piece gives check and others close the exits or protect the attacker; often the king's own pieces take squares away from it.
- Basic patterns: back rank, supported queen, rook and bishop, queen and knight.
- In a mate in two you must check all the defender's replies.

Check your progress. Solve the six mates in one and at least three of the other six exercises. The mates in two are for going further: they don't stop you moving on to the units on basic mates.

UNIT 15

Mate with two rooks

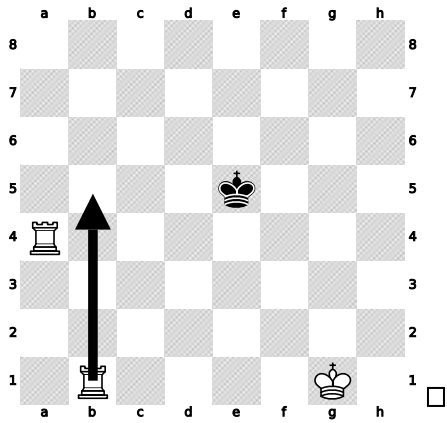
In this unit *Mate the lone king with two rooks, using the staircase method, without help from your own king and without falling into stalemate.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

We now begin the units on basic mates. These are endings in which one side has only the king and the other still has enough pieces to give mate. They look easy, but many half-points are lost in real games through not knowing how to finish them. The first, with two rooks, is the simplest: the rooks work on their own and the king can stay where it is.

15.1 The idea: the staircase

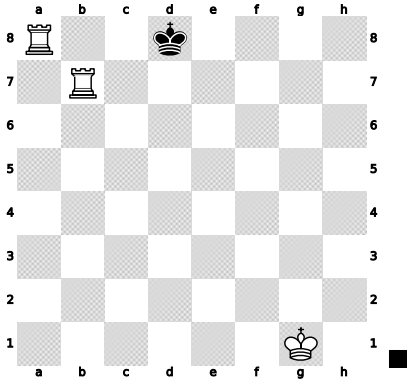
One rook **cuts off** a rank: the enemy king cannot cross it. The other rook **gives check** on the next rank and forces the king back. Then the rooks swap roles: the one giving check now cuts off, and the one cutting off moves forward and gives the next check. Rank by rank, like going down a staircase, the king reaches the edge. There the last check is mate.



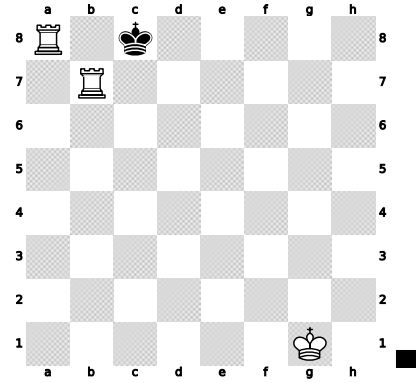
The rook on a4 cuts off the fourth rank. White to move: Rb5+.

15.2 The final position

Mate comes when the king is on the edge, one rook checks it along that last rank and the other controls the next rank. Both rooks must be **far from the king**, so that it cannot capture them.



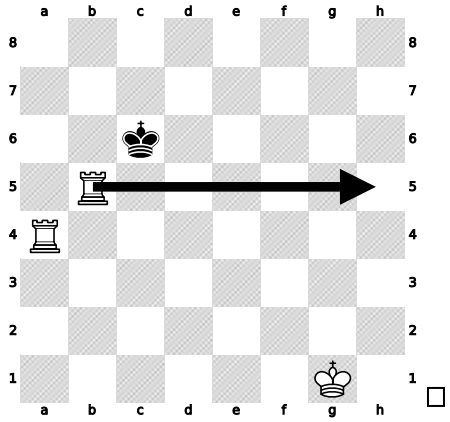
Mate: the rook on b7 closes the seventh rank.



Not mate: the king captures the rook on b7.

15.3 When the king attacks a rook

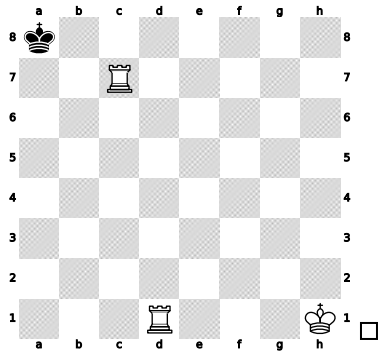
As soon as the rooks come closer, the enemy king tries to attack them. The solution is simple: move the attacked rook **to the other end of the same rank**, as far from the king as possible. That way it keeps doing its job and is out of reach. There is no need to defend it with the other rook: that only complicates things.



The king attacks the rook on b5. White to move: Rh5.

15.4 Watch out for stalemate

Once the king is on the edge, every move that is not a check must leave it at least one square. If you close all the exits without giving check, it is **stalemate** and the game ends in a draw. Before moving, ask yourself: does my move give check? If not, does the king have any legal move?



White to move. Rd8# is mate; Rb1?? would be stalemate.

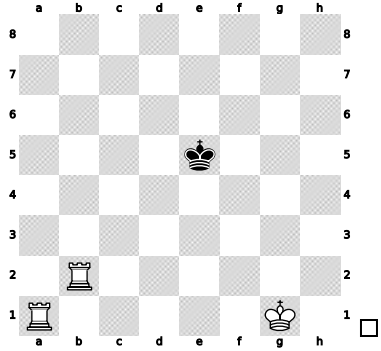
15.5 No hurry, but no dawdling

With the staircase method, mate comes in fewer than fifteen moves from any position. Remember the fifty-move rule (Unit 9): you have time to spare, but don't waste it on aimless checks. Your king does not need to move; just make sure it doesn't get between the rooks.

15.6 Three complete executions

Play through each execution on your board. Then go back to the starting position and repeat it without looking at the book, varying the black king's replies.

Execution 1: towards the eighth rank

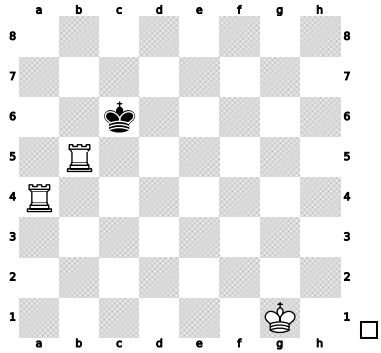


Starting position.

1.Ra4

First, cut off: the rook on a4 stops the king coming down past the fifth rank.

1...Kd5 2.Rb5+ Kc6



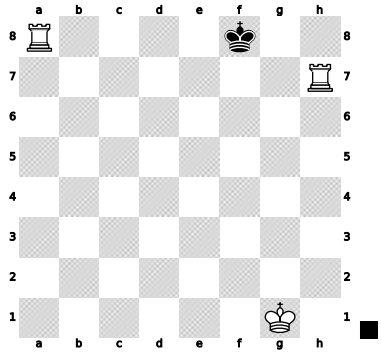
White to move.

The king attacks the rook on b5.

3.Rh5

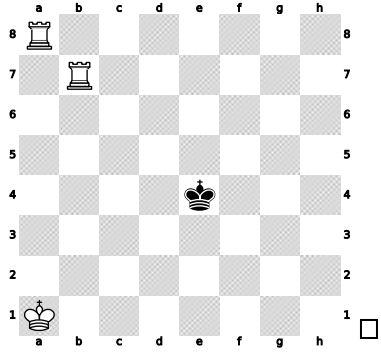
The rook goes to the other end of the rank: it keeps cutting off and is far away.

3...Kd6 4.Ra6+ Ke7 5.Rh7+ Kf8 6.Ra8#



Mate.

Execution 2: towards the h-file

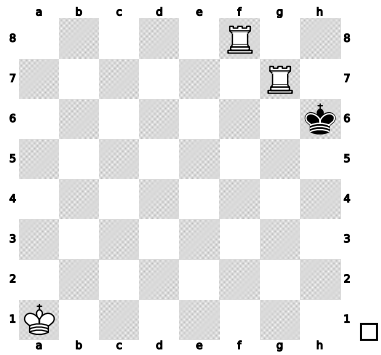


Starting position.

1.Rd8

The staircase also works with files. The rook on d8 cuts off the d-file.

1...Ke5 2.Re7+ Kf5 3.Rf8+ Kg5 4.Rg7+ Kh6



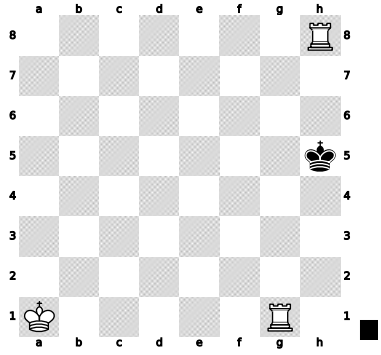
White to move.

The king attacks the rook on g7.

5.Rg1

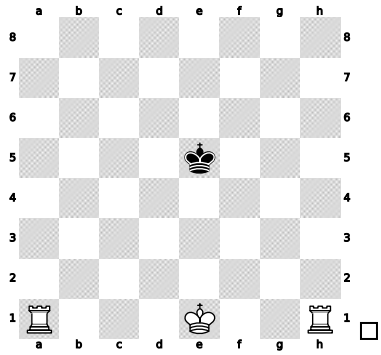
The rook moves away along the g-file and keeps cutting it off. The king has only h5 and h7 left.

5...Kh5 6.Rh8#



Mate.

Execution 3: from the rooks' starting squares

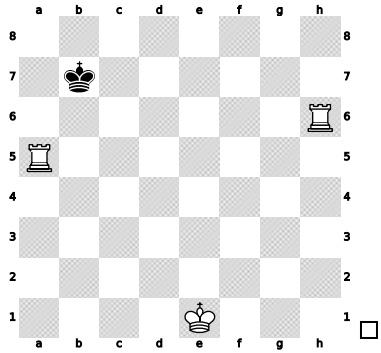


Starting position.

1.Rh4

It cuts off the fourth rank.

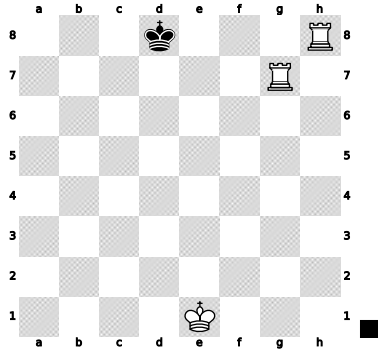
1...Kd5 2.Ra5+ Kc6 3.Rh6+ Kb7



White to move.

Now 4.Ra7+? would be a mistake: the king captures the rook. Before giving check, the rook must move away.

4.Rg5 Kc7 5.Rg7+ Kd8 6.Rh8#

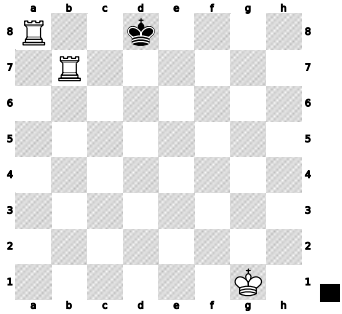


Mate.

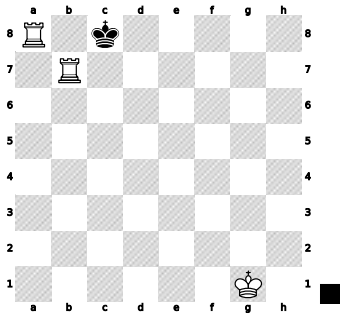
> **Common mistakes.** Giving random checks without first cutting off a rank; bringing the rooks close to the enemy king; defending an attacked rook instead of moving it away; closing all the exits without giving check (stalemate); putting your own king on a rook's line.

Exercises for Unit 15

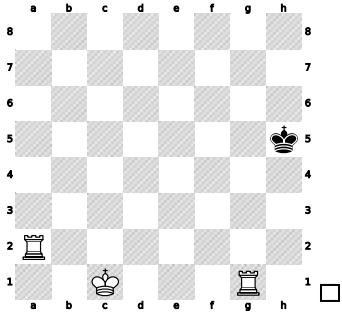
In exercises E04 to E09, look for the next step of the method, even if other moves also win.



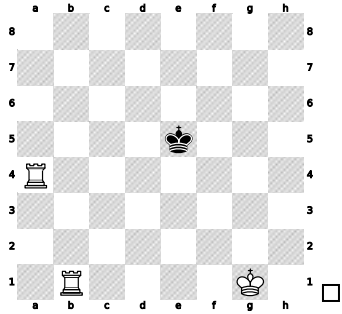
U15 E01 Black to move. Is it mate?



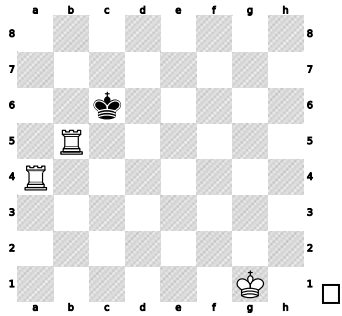
U15 E02 Black to move. Is it mate?



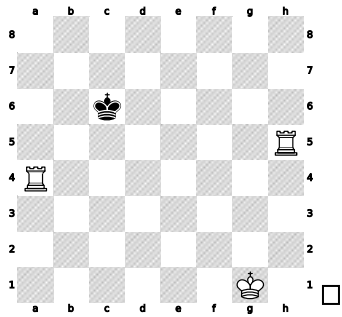
U15 E03 White to move. Mate in one.



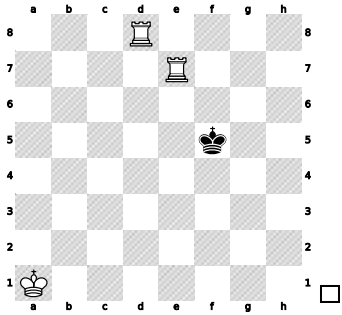
U15 E04 White to move. Next step?



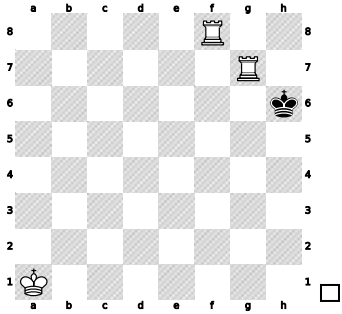
U15 E05 White to move. The king attacks the rook on b5. What do you do?



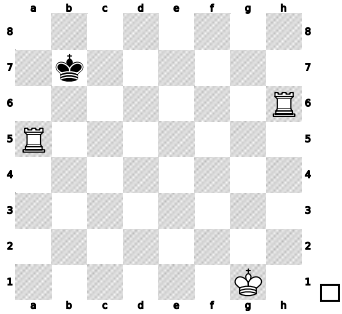
U15 E06 White to move. Next step?



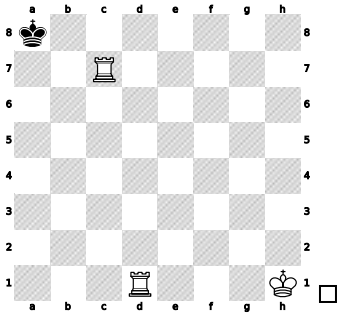
U15 E07 White to move. Next step? This time the staircase goes by files.



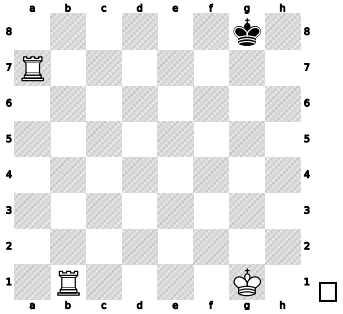
U15 E08 White to move. The king attacks the rook on g7. What do you do?



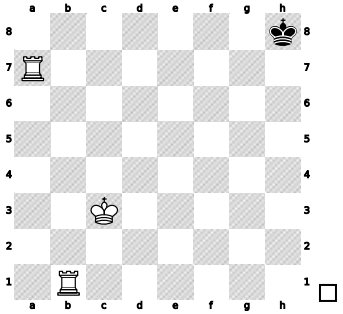
U15 E09 White to move. Is Ra7+ a good idea?



U15 E10 White to move. Is Rb1 good?



U15 E11 White to move. Mate in one.



U15 E12 White to move. Mate in one. Which similar move would be a disaster?

> **Practice with a board.** Place the two rooks on a1 and h1, your king on e1 and the black king on a central square. Give mate without moving the white king. Repeat the exercise driving the black king towards each of the four edges. Goal: mate in fewer than fifteen moves, without losing a rook and without stalemate.

Remember

- One rook cuts off, the other gives check; then they swap roles.
- If the king attacks a rook, move it to the other end of its rank or file.
- Before every move that is not a check, make sure the king has a square.

Check your progress. You should be able to mate with two rooks from any position in fewer than fifteen moves, three times in a row, and solve E10 and E12 correctly.

UNIT 16

Mate with queen and king

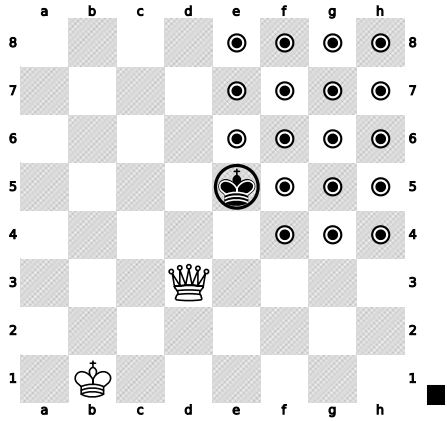
In this unit *Mate the lone king with queen and king: box the king in with the queen, bring your own king closer and avoid stalemate.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

The queen is the most powerful piece, but on her own she cannot give mate: she needs the help of her king. The method has two phases. First, the queen **boxes in** the enemy king and pushes it towards the edge. Then your king **comes closer** to protect the queen on the mating square. Between one phase and the other there is a trap: stalemate.

16.1 The queen a knight's move away

A simple way of boxing in the king is to place the queen **a knight's move away** from it: at the distance from which a knight would attack it. From there the queen gives no check, cannot be captured and keeps the king inside a rectangle of ranks and files that it cannot cross.



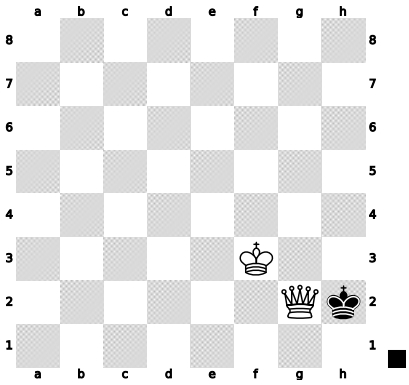
The queen, a knight's move away from the king, boxes it in between the fourth rank, the e-file and the edges.

16.2 Shrinking the rectangle

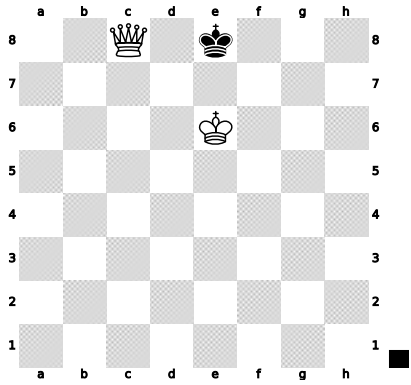
Every time the king moves, the queen again places herself a knight's move away, and the rectangle gets smaller. There is no need to give checks: checks often let the king escape. In a few moves the king is on the edge or in a corner, with only two squares to move between.

16.3 Bringing up the king

When the enemy king is boxed in on the edge, the queen can do no more on her own. Now the queen **stays still** and your king walks towards it. While your king comes closer, the enemy king shuffles between its two squares. When your king arrives, the queen gives check on a square it protects.



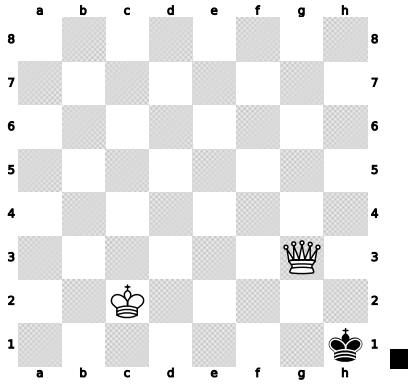
Mate in the corner: the king on f3 protects the queen.



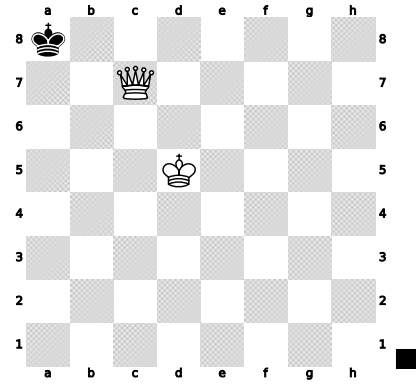
Mate on the edge: the king on e6 controls d7, e7 and f7.

16.4 The danger of stalemate

The less space the king has, the easier it is to leave it **with no move and no check**. It is the most common mistake in this ending: a won game that ends in a draw. Practical rule: when the enemy king has only two or three squares, before every queen move check that it still has at least one.



Stalemate: the queen took the king's last square.

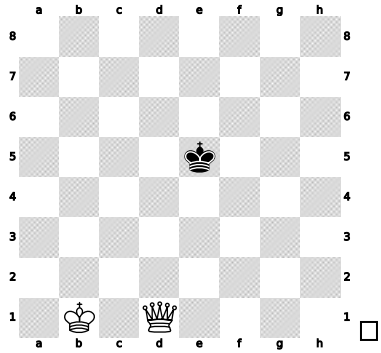


Stalemate too: the king has no moves and is not in check.

16.5 Three complete executions

Play through each execution on your board. Notice the moment when the queen stops moving and the king starts walking.

Execution 1: the strong king nearby

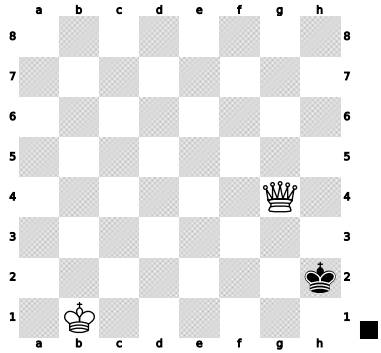


Starting position.

1.Qd3

The queen places herself a knight's move away from the king.

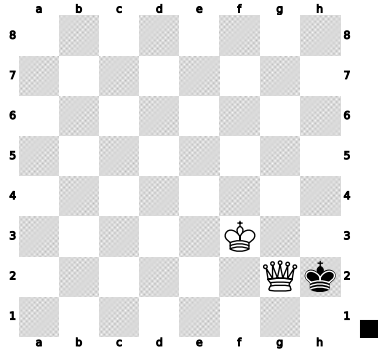
1...Kf4 2.Qd5 Kg3 3.Qf5 Kh2 4.Qg4



Black to move.

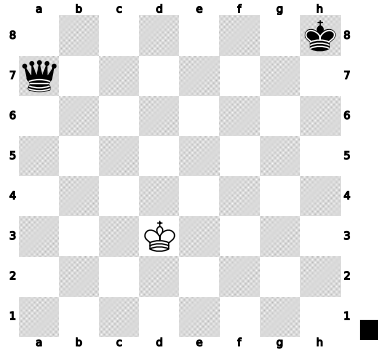
The king now has only h1 and h2. Careful: if the king now goes to h1, 5.Qg3?? would be stalemate.

4...Kh1 5.Kc2 Kh2 6.Kd3 Kh1 7.Ke4 Kh2 8.Kf4 Kh1 9.Kf3 Kh2 10.Qg2#



Mate.

Execution 2: with the black pieces



Starting position.

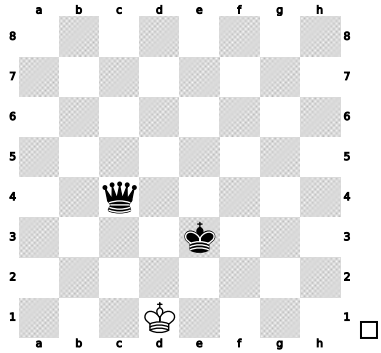
1...Qc5

Now the queen is yours and you play Black. The queen cuts off the fifth rank and the c-file.

2.Ke4 Kh7

The black king starts walking early, because the queen is already keeping the white king boxed in.

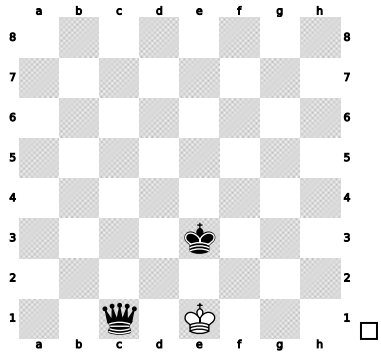
3.Kf4 Qd5 4.Ke3 Kh6 5.Ke2 Kg5 6.Ke3 Kg4 7.Ke2 Kg3 8.Ke3 Qc4 9.Kd2 Kf2 10.Kd1 Ke3



White to move.

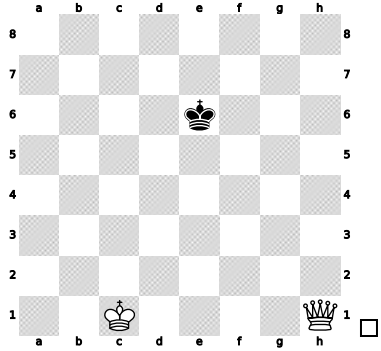
The white king now has only e1.

11.Ke1 Qc1#



Mate.

Execution 3: the strong king from far away



Starting position.

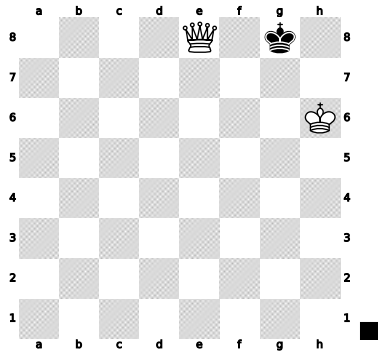
1.Qh5 Kf6 2.Qd5 Kg7 3.Qe6 Kh7 4.Qf6

The black king is boxed in on g8 and h7. The queen no longer moves.

4...Kg8 5.Kd2 Kh7 6.Ke3 Kg8 7.Kf4 Kh7 8.Kg5 Kg8 9.Qe7

A waiting move that does not stalemate: the black king keeps h8.

9...Kh8 10.Kh6 Kg8 11.Qe8#

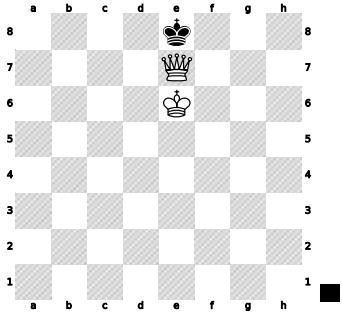


Mate.

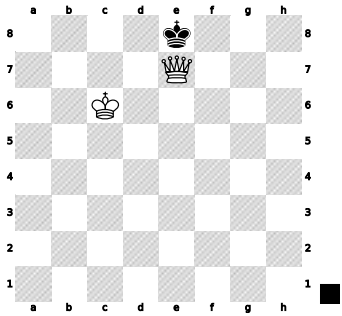
> **Common mistakes.** Giving aimless checks that let the king out of the rectangle; forgetting to bring up your own king; leaving the queen unprotected next to the enemy king; stalemating the king when it has only one or two squares left.

Exercises for Unit 16

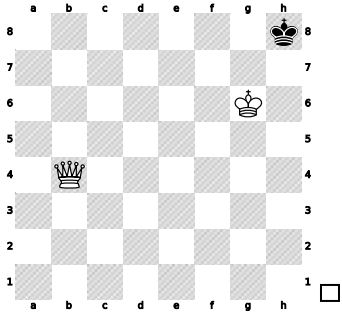
In the method exercises (E05 to E09) there may be more than one good move: what matters is following the plan without stalemating.



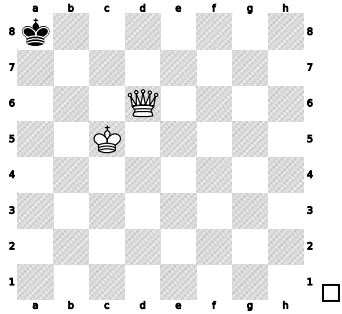
U16 E01 Black to move. Is it mate?



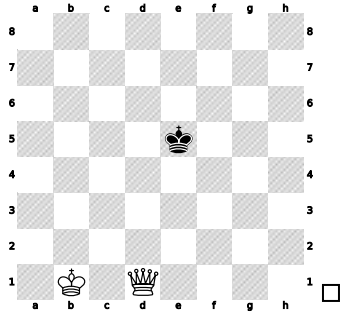
U16 E02 Black to move. Is it mate?



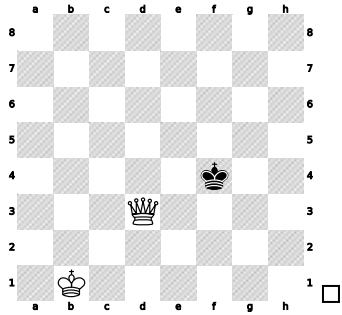
U16 E03 White to move. Mate in one. There are two solutions.



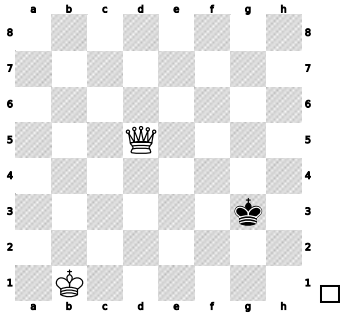
U16 E04 White to move. Why is Qc7 a mistake?



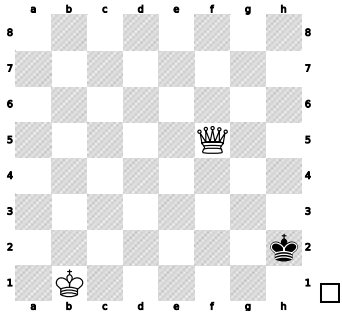
U16 E05 White to move. Place the queen a knight's move away from the king.



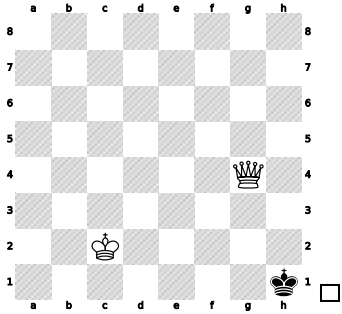
U16 E06 White to move. The king has gone to f4. Next step?



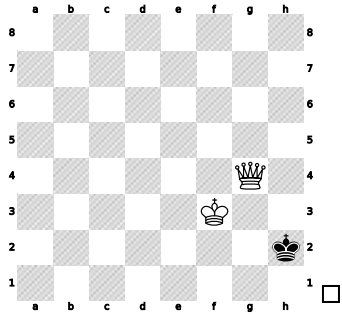
U16 E07 White to move. Next step?



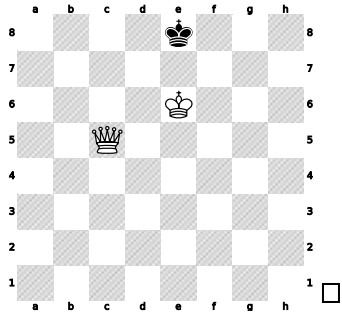
U16 E08 White to move. Box the king into the corner.



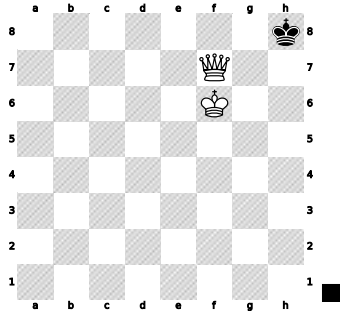
U16 E09 White to move. The black king has only h1 and h2. What do you do? Which move would be a disaster?



U16 E10 White to move. Mate in one.



U16 E11 White to move. Mate in one. There are two solutions.



U16 E12 White has just played Qf7. Black to move. What has happened?

Practice with a board. Place the white queen and king in a corner and the black king in the centre. Give mate without giving a single check until the final one. Repeat driving the black king to each edge. Goal: mate in fewer than twenty moves, without stalemate.

Remember

- Phase 1: the queen, a knight's move away, boxes the king in and pushes it to the edge.
- Phase 2: the queen waits and your king comes closer to protect her on the mating square.
- When the enemy king has few squares, always check that it still has one.

Check your progress. You should be able to mate with queen and king from any position in fewer than twenty moves, three times in a row and without stalemate.

UNIT 17

Mate with rook and king

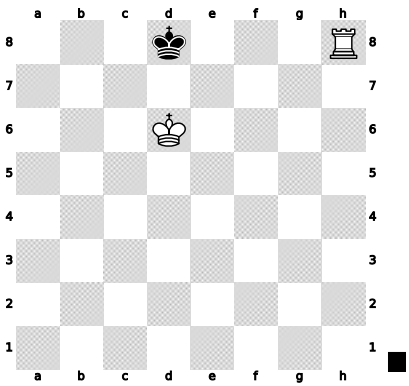
In this unit *Mate the lone king with rook and king: cut off with the rook, bring up the king, use the opposition and waiting moves.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

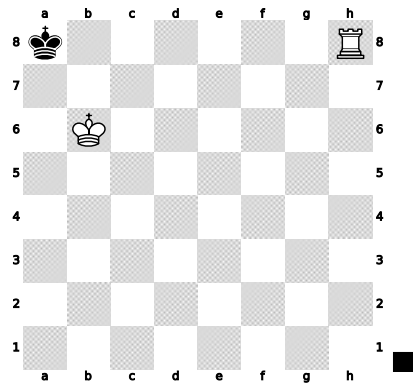
This is the most important basic mate, because rook endings are the most frequent in real games. It is also the longest: the rook alone cannot box in the king as quickly as the queen, and your king has to work from the start. With a method, mate always comes in fewer than thirty moves, well within the fifty-move limit.

17.1 The mating positions

The enemy king has to be on the edge. Your king stands **opposite** it, one rank away (in **opposition**), and takes away the three squares in front of it. The rook gives check along the edge. In the corner, it is enough for your king to control the two exit squares.



Mate on the edge, with the kings in opposition.



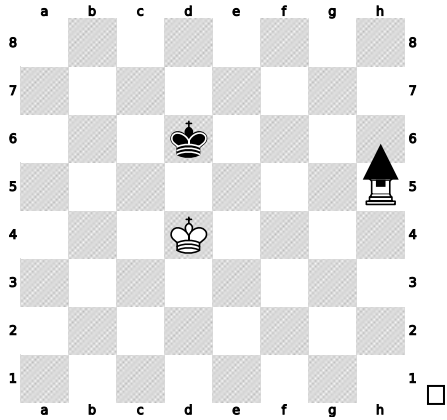
Mate in the corner.

17.2 Cutting off with the rook

The first step is to place the rook so that it **cuts off** a rank or a file: the enemy king is shut into one part of the board. Then your king comes closer. Meanwhile, the rook must stay **far from the enemy king** or be protected by your king.

17.3 The opposition and the check

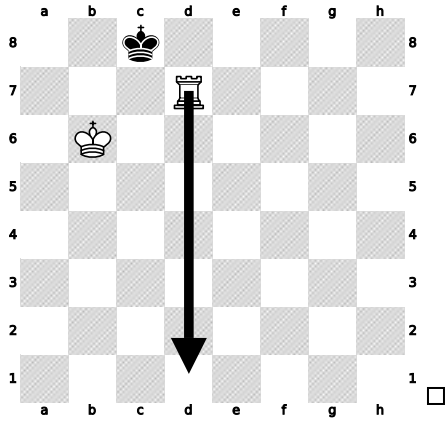
With the rook cutting off, your king advances until it stands opposite the enemy king, with the rook's rank between them. If the enemy king steps into opposition, the rook gives check and forces it back one rank. If it moves away to one side, your king follows it, or the rook moves one rank closer to reduce its space.



The kings are in opposition. White to move: Rh6+.

17.4 The waiting move

Sometimes the enemy king avoids the opposition and you want it to be the one that moves. Then the rook makes a **waiting move**: it moves along its own line without stopping cutting off. The enemy king has to move and either steps into the opposition or goes into the corner.



White to move: Rd1, which waits and moves the rook away. After ...Kb8, Rd8#.

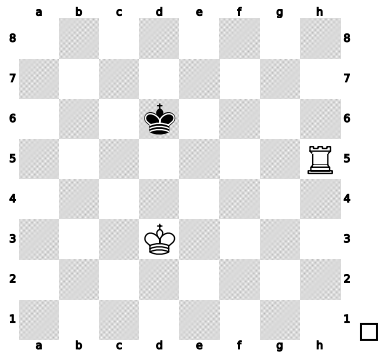
17.5 The two mistakes that cost half a point

The first is leaving the rook within reach of the enemy king without protection: with king against king, the game is a draw. The second is **stalemate**: when the enemy king is in the corner or on the edge, every move of your king or rook that is not a check must leave it a square.

17.6 Four complete executions

Play through the executions on your board. On every white move, ask yourself what it is doing: cutting off, bringing up the king, checking in opposition or waiting.

Execution 1: the rook already cuts off



Starting position.

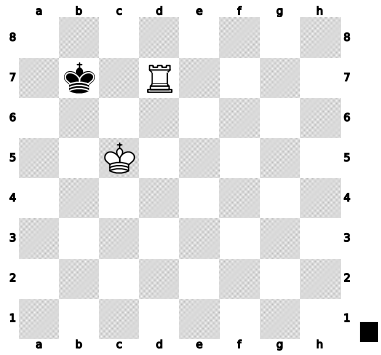
1.Kc4

The rook on h5 cuts off the fifth rank. The white king comes closer.

1...Ke6 2.Kc5 Kd7 3.Re5

The rook moves to the e-file and cuts the king off from the other side. Now the black king is shut into the a- to d-files, from the sixth rank upwards.

3...Kc7 4.Rd5 Kb7 5.Rd7+



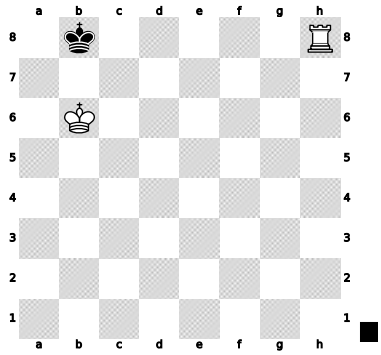
Black to move.

The rook, far from the black king, pushes it to the last rank.

5...Kc8 6.Kc6 Kb8 7.Rh7

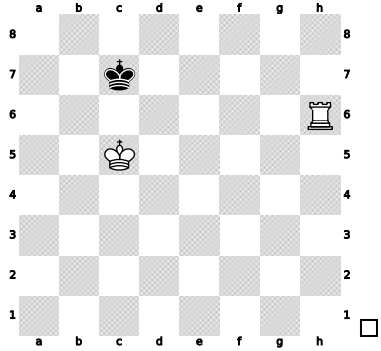
A waiting move: the rook keeps cutting off the seventh rank.

7...Ka8 8.Kb6 Kb8 9.Rh8#



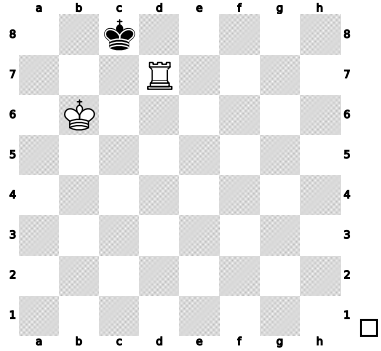
Mate.

Execution 2: the waiting move



Starting position.

1.Rd6 Kb7 2.Rd7+ Kc8 3.Kc6 Kb8 4.Kb6 Kc8



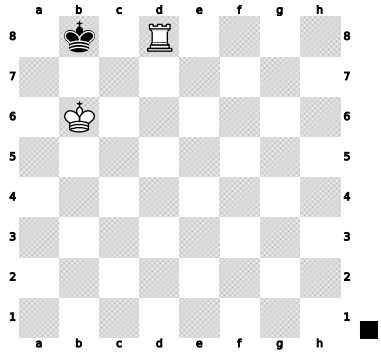
White to move.

The kings are not in opposition and the rook is attacked.

5.Rd1

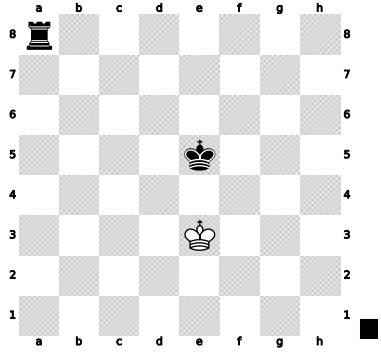
The rook moves away and waits. The black king has only b8.

5...Kb8 6.Rd8#



Mate.

Execution 3: with the black pieces



Starting position.

1...Ra3+

Now you play Black. The kings are in opposition: check.

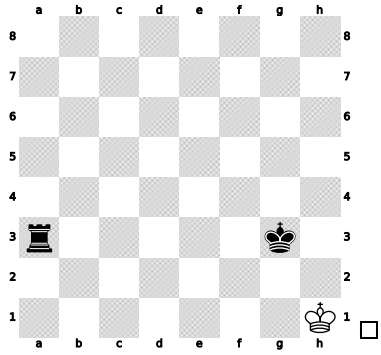
2.Ke2 Kd4 3.Kf2 Kd3 4.Kf3 Ra4

The rook now cuts off the fourth rank: the white king can no longer go up.

5.Kf2 Rd4

The rook cuts off the d-file and clears the way for the black king.

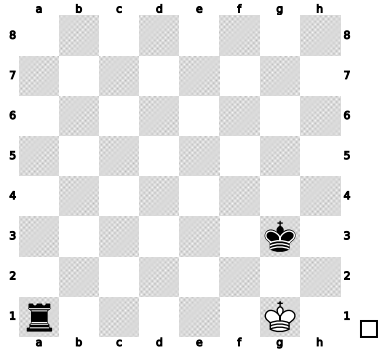
6.Kf1 Kd2 7.Kg2 Ke2 8.Kg3 Ra4 9.Kg2 Ra3 10.Kg1 Kf3 11.Kh1 Kg3



White to move.

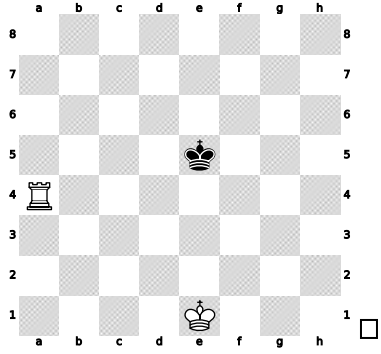
The black king controls f2, g2 and h2. The white king has only g1.

12.Kg1 Ra1#



Mate.

Execution 4: from far away



Starting position.

1.Ke2

The rook on a4 already cuts off the fourth rank. The white king goes up.

1...Kd5 2.Kd3 Kd6 3.Rd4+

The rook gives check, protected by the king.

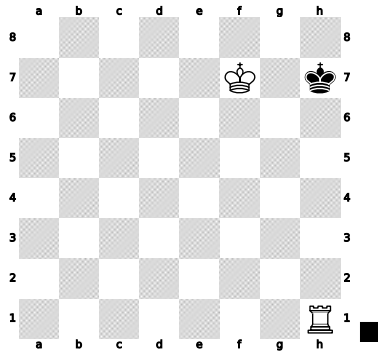
3...Ke5 4.Kc4 Ke6 5.Re4+ Kf6 6.Kc5 Kg7 7.Kd6 Kf6 8.Rd4

A waiting move that keeps the black king boxed in.

8...Kf5 9.Rb4 Kg6 10.Ke6 Kg7 11.Rg4+ Kh6 12.Kf6 Kh7 13.Rg1

Another waiting move: the rook keeps cutting off the g-file.

13...Kh8 14.Kf7 Kh7 15.Rh1#

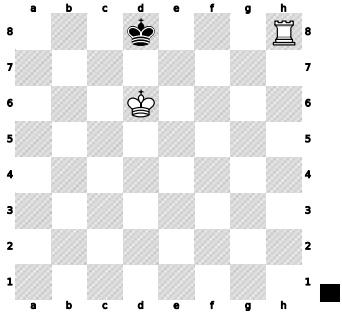


Mate.

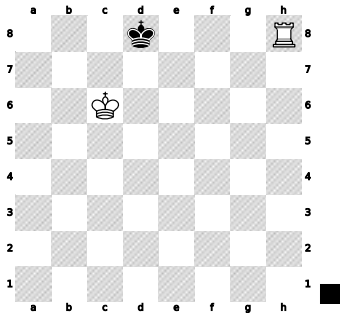
> **Common mistakes.** Giving checks when the kings are not in opposition; leaving the rook within reach of the enemy king; forgetting waiting moves; stalemating the king in the corner; changing plan halfway through the mate.

Exercises for Unit 17

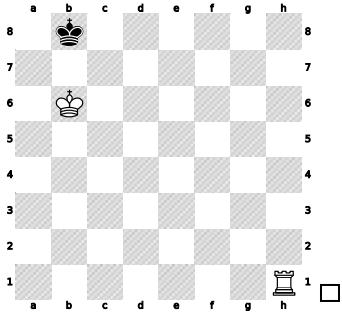
In the method exercises there may be more than one good move. What matters is that yours follows the plan and neither leaves the rook hanging nor stalemates.



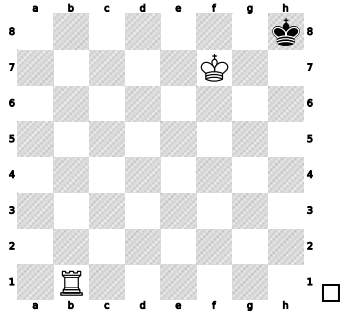
U17 E01 Black to move. Is it mate?



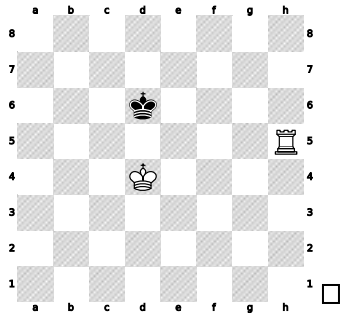
U17 E02 Black to move. Is it mate?



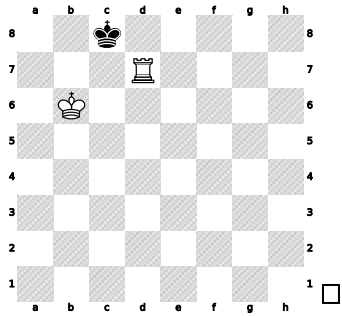
U17 E03 White to move. Mate in one.



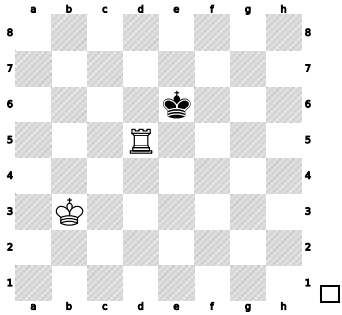
U17 E04 White to move. Mate in one.



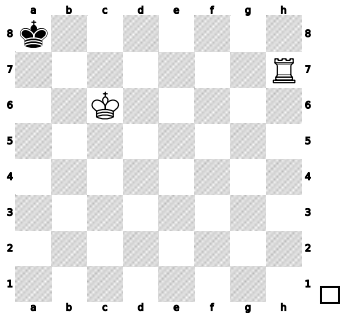
U17 E05 White to move. The black king has stepped into opposition. What do you do?



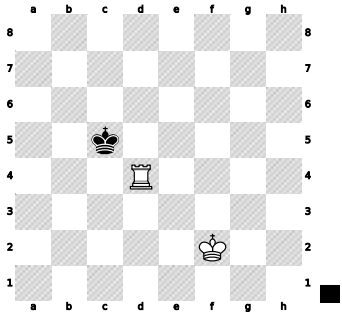
U17 E06 White to move. The rook is attacked. What do you do?



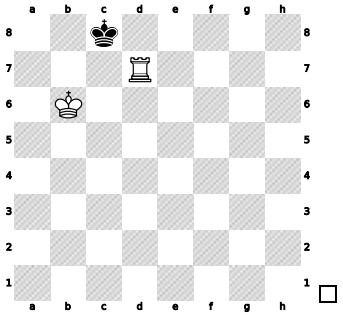
U17 E07 White to move. The rook is attacked. What do you do?



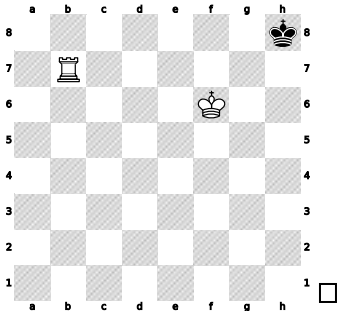
U17 E08 White to move. Is Rb7 good? What would you play?



U17 E09 White has just played Rd4. Black to move. What does Black do?



U17 E10 White to move. Mate in two.



U17 E11 White to move. Mate in two. Which rook move would be stalemate?

U17 E12 Why, with rook and king, is it not enough just to give checks with the rook?

> **Practice with a board.** Place the white rook and king on their starting squares and the black king in the centre. Give mate. Repeat with the black king in each quarter of the board. Goal: mate in fewer than thirty moves, four times in a row, without losing the rook or stalemating.

Remember

- Cut off with the rook, bring up your king and give check when the kings are in opposition.
- If the enemy king avoids the opposition, make a waiting move with the rook.
- Keep the rook far from the enemy king or protected; and watch out for stalemate in the corner.

Check your progress. You should be able to mate with rook and king from any position in fewer than thirty moves, four times in a row. It is the most important skill in the block on mates.

UNIT 18

Now you can play on your own

In this unit *Bring together rules, observation, development, exchanges and mates in complete games, and learn to review your own mistakes in a useful way.*

Lesson and exercises on Lichess

You have come all the way: the rules, your first games, the safety of your pieces, the opening, tactics and the basic mates. In this last unit we put all those tools together, learn to review our own games and make a plan to keep improving without depending on a teacher.

18.1 The complete routine

On every move of a real game, repeat these steps. At first they will seem slow; with practice they take seconds.

- **What has changed?** Look at your opponent's last move: what it attacks, what it threatens, what it has left undefended.
- **Am I safe?** Check your opponent's checks, captures and mates against your king and your pieces.
- **What can I do?** Look for your own checks, captures and threats. If there is nothing concrete, follow a principle: develop, improve your worst piece, put your king in safety.
- **Final check.** Before letting go of the piece, see whether the destination square is attacked and what the piece you move stops defending.

18.2 When to exchange pieces

Exchanges are neither good nor bad in themselves: it depends on the score. **If you are ahead in material, exchange pieces**: with fewer pieces on the board, your advantage weighs more and your opponent has fewer resources to complicate the game. The ideal is to reach an ending you know how to win, like those in Units 15 to 17. **If you have less material, avoid exchanges** and look for complications. And when

material is equal, exchange when the piece you get is better than the one you give, or when the exchange removes a piece attacking your king.

Once you are ahead, don't hurry. Check on every move that you are not leaving anything hanging and that your opponent has no dangerous check. Many won games are lost by trying to finish too quickly.

18.3 Teaching game 4

Teaching game 4: mistakes on both sides

A game between two amateurs who are just starting, with mistakes on both sides. Stop at each pause and answer before going on.

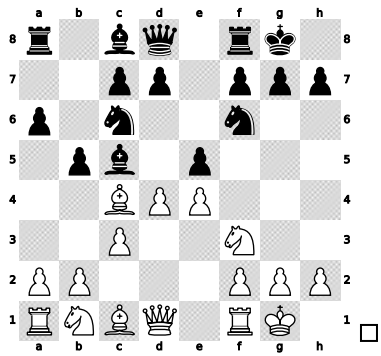
1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 a6

A wing pawn move that develops nothing. It is not serious, but every tempo counts.

5.O-O Bc5 6.c3 O-O 7.d4

White attacks the bishop and the e5 pawn at the same time.

7...b5



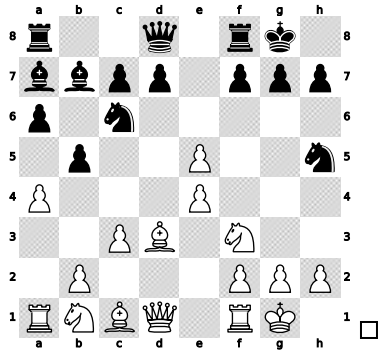
White to move.

Pause. Which black pieces are attacked? The bishop on c4 is attacked by the b5 pawn, but the bishop on c5 is attacked too, by the d4 pawn. Black has preferred attacking to defending, and keeps moving wing pawns.

8.Bd3 Ba7 9.a4

White attacks the b5 pawn, but misses something better: 9.Nxe5, winning a pawn, because if ...Nxe5, dxe5 and the pawn attacks the knight on f6.

9...Bb7 10.dxe5 Nh5



White to move.

Pause. The attacked knight goes to the edge. There it controls few squares, it may get trapped and it no longer defends h7 or the king. 10...Ng4 was better.

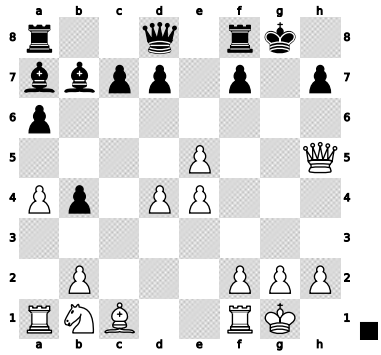
11.Be2 b4

Black does not see that the knight on h5 is attacked by the bishop on e2.

12.Nd4 Nxd4 13.cxd4 g6

To save the knight, Black weakens the pawns in front of the king.

14.Bxh5 gxh5 15.Qxh5



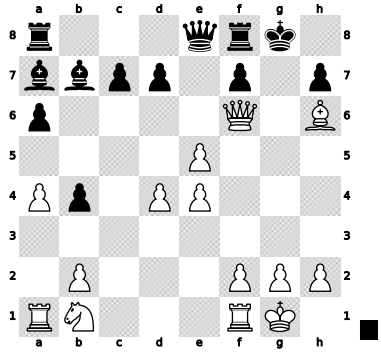
Black to move.

Pause. The white queen is very close to the black king, and the pawns that protected it have gone. What is White threatening? Defence must come before anything else: 15...f6 gave the king the f7 square and allowed Black to defend with queen and rook: White would still be better, but without an immediate mate.

15...Qe8

A serious mistake: the queen defends nothing. Now there is mate in a few moves.

16.Qg5+ Kh8 17.Qf6+ Kg8 18.Bh6



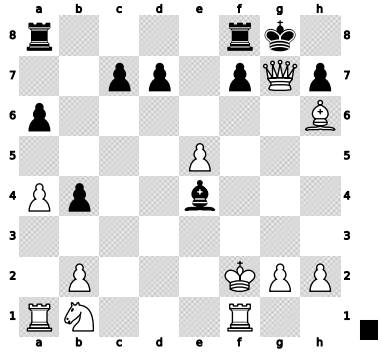
Black to move.

White threatens Qg7#, the queen supported by the bishop. There is no defence any more.

18...Qxe5

The black queen attacks the white one, but the pawn captures it.

19.dxe5 Bxf2+ 20.Kxf2 Bxe4 21.Qg7#



Mate.

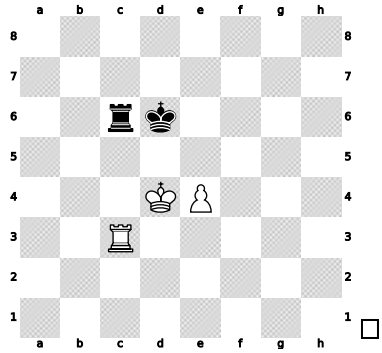
The queen gives mate on g7, protected by the bishop on h6: it is the supported-queen pattern from Unit 14.

> **Review.** Review with the three questions of this chapter. **Opening decision**: Black wasted tempi with a6, b5 and Ba7 and took the knight to the edge (10...Nh5). **Unseen threat**: 11...b4 left the knight attacked, and 15...Qe8 ignored the danger to the king. **Chance to finish or to win**: White missed 9.Nxe5, which won a pawn; afterwards White made good use of the attack.

18.4 Teaching game 5

Teaching game 5: from the ending to mate

This game starts at move 40. We don't give the earlier moves: after many exchanges, White has reached this ending a pawn up. It is a game written to teach the last phase: how to turn a small advantage into a basic mate.

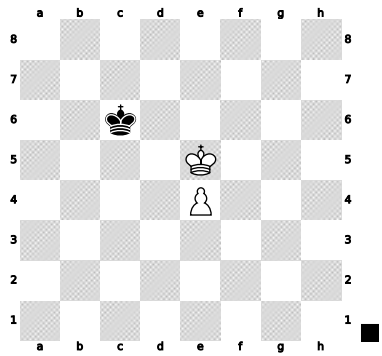


Starting position.

40.Rxc6+

When you are ahead, it pays to exchange pieces. But before exchanging the last piece you must check that the pawn ending is won. Here it is, on one condition, which you will see on the next move.

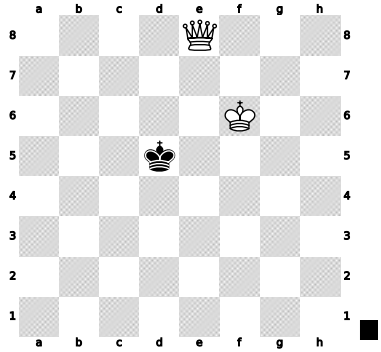
40...Kxc6 41.Ke5



Black to move.

The only winning move: the king stands **in front of** its pawn and clears the way for it. After 41.e5?, the black king would get in front of the pawn (...Kd7 and ...Ke7) and the game would be drawn.

41...Kd7 42.Kf6 Kd6 43.e5+ Kc5 44.e6 Kc6 45.e7 Kd5 46.e8=Q



Black to move.

The pawn promotes. Now it is a queen-and-king against king ending: the method from Unit 16.

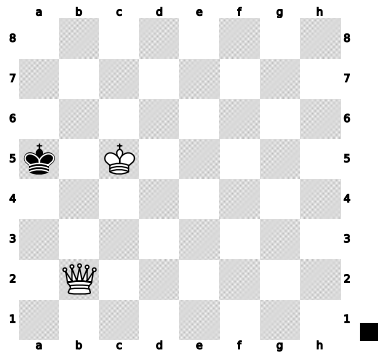
46...Kd4 47.Qa4+ Kc3 48.Qe4

The queen boxes the black king into the rectangle of ranks 1 to 3 and files a to d.

48...Kb2 49.Ke5

Now the white king walks.

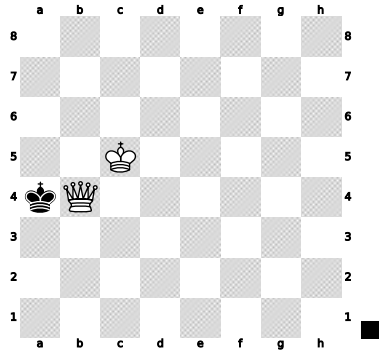
49...Kc3 50.Qe2 Kb4 51.Kd4 Kb3 52.Qg2 Kb4 53.Qb2+ Ka5 54.Kc5



Black to move.

The black king has only a4. Beware of stalemate: with the king on a4, moves such as Qc3?? or Kb6?? would leave it with no squares and no check. There are two mates: Qb4# and Qa2#.

54...Ka4 55.Qb4#



Mate.

> **Review.** Three decisions won the game: exchanging rooks when the pawn ending was won, placing the king in front of the pawn (41.Ke5!) and applying the queen-and-king method without stalemating.

18.5 How to review a defeat

After every game, especially if you lost it, spend ten minutes reviewing it. You don't need to analyse every move or consult a program from the start. Look for just **three moments**:

- **The opening decision.** Did you bring out your pieces and castle in time? Did you move the same piece several times or bring out the queen too early?
- **The unseen threat.** On which move did you lose material or get mated? What would have warned you if you had applied the routine?
- **The missed chance.** Was there a moment when you could have won material or given mate and didn't see it?

Turn one of those moments into an exercise: write down the position and solve it again in a few days. That way your own games become your best exercise book. Once you have done it yourself, you can check the game with an analysis program, but don't stop at the number: look for the concrete move and understand why it is better.

18.6 Your plan for the future

Progress in chess is not measured only by the result of each game, but by the mistakes you stop making. A reasonable week for an adult beginner might be this:

- Two or three games with enough time to think (at least fifteen minutes per player), reviewed with the guide above.
- Ten or fifteen minutes of simple tactical exercises several days a week.
- A monthly review of the three basic mates, from different positions.
- Going back to Units 5 to 8 if questions about the rules come up in your games.

Don't study new openings to make up for the pieces you lose in one move: that problem is solved with the routine, not with more theory.

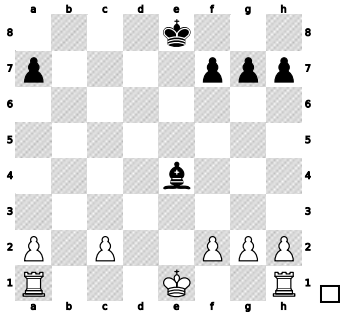
18.7 Playing in person and online

At a club or a tournament there are some rules of courtesy: you greet your opponent before and after the game, you play in silence and, if you want to straighten a piece on its square, you say "I adjust" first. In games with a clock, you press it with the same hand you move with. If you deliberately touch one of your own pieces, you must move it if it has a legal move. Online, choose slow games at first: very fast games leave no time for the routine and reinforce bad habits.

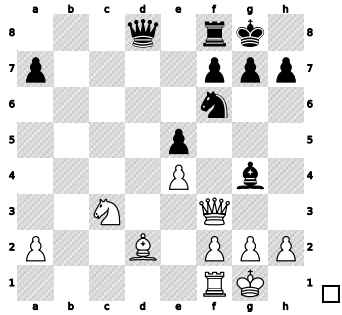
> **Common mistakes.** Measuring progress only by results; analysing every move by a program's number; giving up reviewing the rules; studying new openings to make up for pieces lost in one move; playing only very fast games.

Exercises for Unit 18

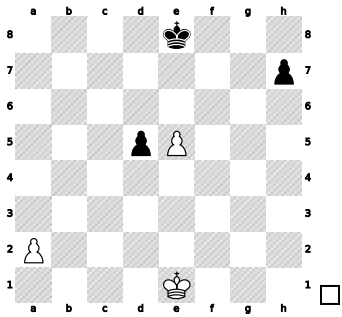
This is the book's final test. It mixes rules (E01-E02), threats (E03-E05), exchanges (E06-E07), opening (E08-E09) and mates (E10-E12).



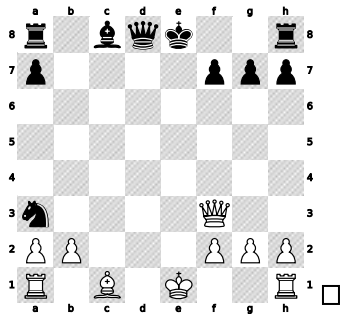
U18 E01 The black bishop on e4 attacks the square b1. White to move. Can White castle queenside?



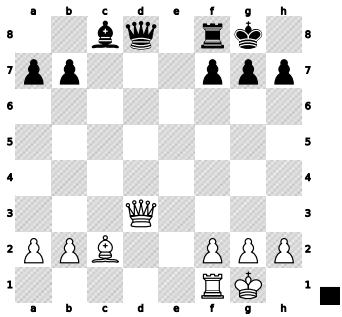
U18 E04 White to move. The black bishop has just arrived on g4. What has changed? What do you do?



U18 E02 Black has just played ...d7-d5. White to move. Can the pawn on e5 capture the pawn on d5? And on the following move?



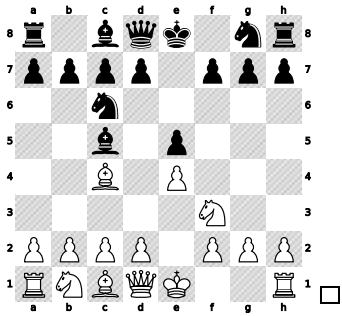
U18 E05 White to move. What is the black knight on a3 threatening? What is the best reply?



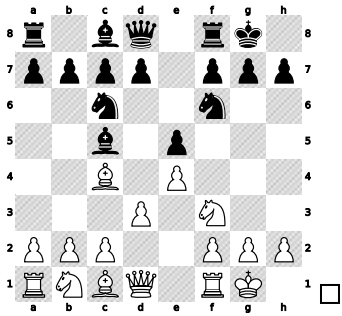
U18 E03 Black to move. What is White threatening? Does ...h6 help?

U18 E06 You trade your knight for their bishop and then your bishop for their rook. Balance?

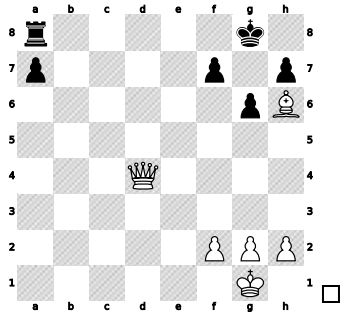
U18 E07 You are a rook up and your opponent offers to exchange queens. Do you accept?



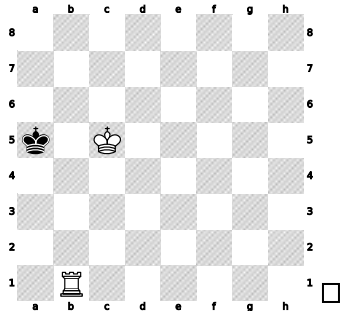
U18 E08 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5. White to move. Which move best follows the principles: a) h3; b) 0-0; c) Qh5?



U18 E09 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.0-0 Nf6 5.d3 0-0. White to move. Which pieces have still to be developed? Suggest a move.



U18 E10 White to move. Mate in one.



U18 E11 White to move. Mate in one.

U18 E12 Practical test. Give mate, without help and without stalemate, in the following three positions: two rooks (a1 and h1, king on e1) against the king on e5; queen and king (d1 and e1) against the king on e5; rook and king (a1 and e1) against the king on e5.

> **Practice with a board.** Play a complete game with enough time, in person or online. Write it down. Then review it with the three moments from section 18.5 and turn one of them into an exercise for a week from now.

Remember

- On every move: what has changed, am I safe, what can I do, final check.
- When ahead, exchange pieces and aim for an ending you know how to win; when behind, avoid exchanges.
- Review your games looking for three moments: the opening, the unseen threat and the missed chance.

Check your progress. At least 9 out of 12 correct answers, no illegal moves in your games and the three basic mates demonstrated. Note separately what you have mastered and what you need to review, and go back to those units. Congratulations: now you can play on your own!

Solutions

Unit 1. Your first look at the board

U01 E01 A (h1), which is a white square. B (a1) is White's left-hand corner and it is black. If you got it wrong, remember the phrase "white on the right".

U01 E02 Give it a quarter turn. With a half turn the right-hand corner would still be black. Then check that your opponent's corner is white too.

U01 E03 A, which is the square a8 and is white. Although it appears at the bottom right of the diagram, its name is still a8: read the coordinates on the edge.

U01 E04 A file: the e-file. All the squares have the same letter and numbers from 1 to 8.

U01 E05 A rank: the 6th rank. All the squares have the same number and letters from "a" to "h".

U01 E06 Seven squares (b1, c2, d3, e4, f5, g6, h7), all white. On a diagonal the colour never changes.

U01 E07 A = e4, B = b7, C = g2, D = d8. Remember: first the letter of the file, then the number of the rank.

U01 E08 A = f3, B = c6, C = h1, D = a5. If you wrote c6 for A or f3 for B, you counted from your own side instead of reading the edge.

U01 E09 e4 and d5 are white; d4 and e5 are black. The two white squares lie on a diagonal with each other, and so do the two black ones.

U01 E10 On the fifth rank counting from Black. The name does not change: it is still e4, on the e-file and on rank 4 of the edge.

U01 E11 Rook, knight, bishop, queen, king, bishop, knight, rook (in letters: R, N, B, Q, K, B, N, R).

U01 E12 Each side has 16 pieces, 8 of which are pawns. The winner is not the one who captures more pieces, but the one who checkmates the opponent's king.

Unit 2. The rook

U02 E01 14 squares: seven on the a-file (a2 to a8) and seven on the 1st rank (b1 to h1). It cannot go to b2, which is diagonal.

U02 E02 Not to b2, because it is not on its rank or file. To e1, yes (the e-file), and to h5 as well (the 5th rank). The colour of the rook changes nothing: Black moves the same way.

U02 E03 To A (c2), along the file, and to C (g7), along the rank. Not to B (f4), because it would need to turn a corner.

U02 E04 d5 and g2. They are the corners of the rectangle formed by the two rooks: d5 is on the white rook's file and the black rook's rank; g2, the other way round. The paths are clear in both cases.

U02 E05 Seven: e2 and e3 upwards; c1 and d1 to the left; f1, g1 and h1 to the right. Its own pieces block its way at e4 and b1.

U02 E06 Only to h7, h6 and g8. The knight on f8 stops it from reaching e8, and the pawn on h5 stops it from going further down than h6.

U02 E07 It cannot move: all four directions are closed by its own pieces. And the rook never jumps.

U02 E08 The knight on d6 (the file is clear from d2 to d5) and the bishop on a1 (b1 and c1 are empty). Not the black rook on h1, because the white bishop on f1 is in the way.

U02 E09 The bishop on b2, the knight on b8 and the knight on e7. Not the pawn on g7, because the knight on e7 is in the way.

U02 E10 It ends up on a7, the square of the captured knight. The move ends with the capture: only one piece is captured per move. What is more, the black rook on a8 now attacks the white rook.

U02 E11 a1-a8 and then a8-h8; or a1-h1 and then h1-h8. They are the two corners of the rectangle.

U02 E12 Only via f2: c2-f2 and then f2-f7. The other route, via c7, is closed by its own pawn on c6.

Unit 3. The bishop and the queen

U03 E01 Seven: e2, d3, c4, b5 and a6 on one diagonal; g2 and h3 on the other.

U03 E02 To A (h3) and to B (a6). C (c4) is the same colour, but it is not on either of its diagonals: it would need two moves.

U03 E03 Never. The bishop on e5 is on a black square and e4 is white. A bishop does not change colour during the whole game.

U03 E04 The pawn on f5, the knight on a6 and the knight on b1. Not the rook on h7: the pawn on f5 is in the way.

U03 E05 The pawn on d4 and the knight on h8. The rook on b2 is shielded by the pawn on d4.

U03 E06 Only the queen on a6. The bishop on f7 is on its diagonal, but its own pawn on d5 blocks the way.

U03 E07 21: seven on the 1st rank, seven on the d-file, three on the diagonal towards a4 (c2, b3, a4) and four on the diagonal towards h5 (e2, f3, g4, h5).

U03 E08 To A (b2) and B (h2), along diagonals, and to D (a5), along the rank. Not to C (f3): it is "a knight's jump" away.

U03 E09 The knight on b6 and the rook on g4. The bishop on d8 is shielded by the pawn on d6, and the rook on h8 by the pawn on f6.

U03 E10 None. Its three lines (file, rank and diagonal) are closed by its own pieces. All its power is no use if it has no path.

U03 E11 Rook 14, bishop 13 and queen 27. The bishop and the queen can go to g7, along the diagonal d4-e5-f6-g7.

U03 E12 The rook (a-file) and the queen (diagonal d1-c2-b3-a4) can go to a4. Only the bishop can go to h6 (c1-d2-e3-f4-g5-h6). There is more than one correct answer to the first question: that is normal.

Unit 4. The knight

U04 E01 b3, b5, c2, c6, e2, e6, f3 and f5.

U04 E02 Two: f2 and g3. In the corner the knight is very weak.

U04 E03 Three: a3, c3 and d2.

U04 E04 All white, because g5 is black. There are six: e4, e6, f3, f7, h3 and h7.

U04 E05 All eight: c3, c5, d2, d6, f2, f6, g3 and g5. The pawns around it do not affect it because it jumps.

U04 E06 To five squares: a5, a7, b8, d4 and e5. It cannot go to b4, e7 or d8, which are occupied by its own pieces.

U04 E07 To f3 and h3. The square e2 is occupied by one of its own pawns. Jumping over the row of pawns is normal: that is why knights can come out from the very first move.

U04 E08 The queen on d4, the bishop on h4 and the bishop on e5. The knight on e3 and the pawn on f5 are close, but not on its landing squares.

U04 E09 The rook on c4, the queen on d3 and the bishop on f7. The bishop on e4 and the pawn on g5 are right next to it, but the knight does not capture in a straight line.

U04 E10 The rook on b6 and the queen on c7, its only two destinations. The pawn on a6 is two squares away in a straight line: out of its reach.

U04 E11 Via c3 (b1-c3-e4) or via d2 (b1-d2-e4). Either is correct.

U04 E12 No. b1 is white and d4 is black; after two jumps the knight is always back on its starting colour. It needs three, for example b1-c3-e2-d4 or b1-a3-c2-d4.

Unit 5. The king and check

U05 E01 Five: d3, e3, f3, d4 and f4. The squares d5, e5 and f5 are next to the black king.

U05 E02 Only f8 and h8. The rook on b7 controls the whole 7th rank, so f7, g7 and h7 are forbidden.

U05 E03 c1, c2 and e2. The knight on f3 controls d2 and e1.

U05 E04 No. The bishop on b6 points towards g1, but the pawn on f2 blocks the diagonal.

U05 E05 Yes: the knight on f3 attacks e1. White can only move the king, to d1, e2, f1 or f2 (d2 is also controlled by the knight); nothing can capture the knight.

U05 E06 Yes, but not from the rook, which is blocked by the knight on f8. The check comes from the bishop on b5, along the diagonal b5-c6-d7-e8.

U05 E07 Six: the king can go to d7, d8, f7 or f8, and the bishop can block on e7 or on e3. Both squares are between the rook and the king, so both block the check. Capturing is not possible.

U05 E08 Four: capture the knight with the pawn (gxf3) or with the queen (Qxf3), or move the king to f1 or h1. No piece can block a knight's check.

U05 E09 The king cannot capture the queen, because the knight on b3 defends it. There are two replies: capture it with the knight (Nxd2) or move the king to f1.

U05 E10 It cannot go to e4 or c4, because it would still be on the rook's rank. It can go to c3, d3, e3, c5, d5 and e5.

U05 E11 No. The knight blocks the diagonal from the bishop on b4 to the king; if it moves, the king is left in check. Only the king can move.

U05 E12 None. The bishop on e4 points at h1 along the diagonal e4-f3-g2-h1; if the rook moves, the king is left in check. Besides, the rook cannot capture the bishop, because it moves in straight lines, not diagonally.

Unit 6. Pawns

U06 E01 To e3 or e4. It is on its starting square, so it can advance one or two squares.

U06 E02 The one on d7, to d6 or d5 (it is on its starting square). The one on g5, only to g4: it has already moved.

U06 E03 No. Only pawns on their starting square can advance two. The pawn on c3 reaches c4.

U06 E04 Capture on d5 or on f5. It cannot advance: e5 is occupied, and a pawn does not capture straight ahead.

U06 E05 Capture the knight on b5 or the bishop on d5. It cannot advance, because c5 is occupied.

U06 E06 Only capture the pawn on b3. It cannot advance because the knight on a3 blocks it, so it cannot go to a4 either.

U06 E07 Only d4. The pawn on d5 controls c4 and e4, even though they are empty; it does not control the square in front of it.

U06 E08 It cannot go to g7, which is controlled by both pawns. It can go to f8, h8, f7 and h7.

U06 E09 None. They are face to face: each blocks the other and neither can capture straight ahead.

U06 E10 It cannot advance: the knight on g3 blocks it, so it cannot go to g4 either. It can capture the pawn on h3.

U06 E11 Advance to e8 or capture the rook on d8, promoting in both cases. The best is to capture and promote to a queen: exd8=Q+. You win the rook and the new queen gives check along the 8th rank.

U06 E12 On b1 or by capturing on a1. If it promotes on b1, the rook on a1 captures the new piece. The right move is bxa1=Q+: it wins the rook, and the new queen, safe on a1, checks the white king along the diagonal.

Unit 7. Checkmate and stalemate

U07 E01 Checkmate. The queen on b7 gives check; the king cannot capture it because the white king defends it, and every escape square is controlled.

U07 E02 Stalemate: a draw. The black king is not in check, but a7 and b7 are controlled by the white king, and b8 and b7 by the queen. It has no move at all.

U07 E03 No. It is check, but the knight can block on d8 or on f8.

U07 E04 Checkmate: a back-rank mate. The king's own pawns stop it escaping and nothing can capture the rook or block it.

U07 E05 No: the game goes on. The king cannot move, but the pawn can advance to h4. You have to look at all the pieces, not just the king.

U07 E06 No. It is check, but the rook on a8 captures the queen: Rxe8.

U07 E07 Rd8#. A back-rank mate: the black king is shut in by its own pawns.

U07 E08 Qd8#, Qe8#, Qf8#, Qg7# and Qh7# all work. In the last two, the queen stands next to the black king, but it cannot be captured because the white king defends it.

U07 E09 Nf2#. The knight gives check and the white king is surrounded by its own pieces. A knight check cannot be blocked, and nothing captures the knight. This mate is called the "smothered mate".

U07 E10 Rh8#. The rook gives check along the 8th rank; a7 and b7 are controlled by the white king.

U07 E11 Qb6 is stalemate: the black king is not in check and has no moves. A draw. The same happens with Qc5. On the other hand, there are five mates: Qa4#, Qa5#, Qa6#, Qb7#

and Qb8#.

U07 E12 Rg7 is stalemate: the black king cannot capture the rook (the king defends it) and has no other square. The correct move is Rh6#.

Unit 8. The special rules

U08 E01 The king on g1 and the rook on f1. It is a single move: 0-0.

U08 E02 The king on c8 and the rook on d8: 0-0-0. The king moves two squares, not three.

U08 E03 Only queenside. The bishop on f1 is between the king and the rook on h1.

U08 E04 Only kingside. The knight on b8 blocks the way of the rook on a8. All the squares between the king and the rook must be empty, b8 included.

U08 E05 No. You cannot castle while in check. White must deal with the check in another way, for example with c3 or by moving the king to f1. If the king moves, White loses the right to castle for good.

U08 E06 Not kingside: the bishop on c4 attacks f1, which the king would cross. Queenside, yes: d1 and c1 are not attacked.

U08 E07 Yes. The conditions about attacked squares refer only to the king (e1, d1 and c1). The rook being attacked, or b1 being attacked, does not prevent castling.

U08 E08 No, neither kingside nor queenside. The king has moved, and even though it has returned to its square it has lost the right to castle for the whole game.

U08 E09 Yes: exd6 e.p. The white pawn goes to d6 (the square the black pawn passed over) and the pawn on d5 is removed.

U08 E10 No. En passant can only be played on the move immediately after the double step. The moment has passed.

U08 E11 Two: axb3 e.p. and cxb3 e.p. Either black pawn can capture, and in both cases the pawn lands on b3 and the pawn on b4 is removed.

U08 E12 No: after g8=Q+ the black king captures the new queen (Kxg8) and the game is drawn. The right move is Kf7, defending g8; on the next move the pawn promotes and the queen is protected.

Unit 9. Your first complete game

U09 E01 White on d1 and Black on d8. Rule: the queen goes on her own colour (d1 is white, d8 is black).

U09 E02 The white king and queen have been swapped. The white queen must be on d1, her own colour, facing the black queen.

U09 E03 On Black's side, the knights and bishops have been swapped. The correct order is rook, knight, bishop, queen, king, bishop, knight, rook.

U09 E04 a) e4; b) Bxg5; c) Rd8+; d) 0-0-0.

U09 E05 a) A knight captures on e5. b) The queen goes to h5 and gives check. c) Kingside castling. d) The pawn on the e-file captures en passant and lands on d6. e) A pawn reaches b8 and becomes a queen.

U09 E06 Bb5+ is White's 12th move: a bishop goes to b5. The + sign means it gives check. c6 is Black's reply, a pawn that blocks the check.

U09 E07 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Qe7. In Spanish, C is the knight (*caballo*), A the bishop (*alfil*) and D the queen (*dama*).

U09 E08 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6. It is White to move: two complete moves have been played.

U09 E09 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4. 1.c4 d5 2.d4 dxc4 is also correct: the order of White's moves gives the same result.

U09 E10 With checkmate: 4.Qxf7#. The queen, defended by the bishop on c4, gives check, and the black king can neither capture it nor escape. This is the so-called Scholar's Mate; in Unit 12 you will learn how to avoid it.

U09 E11 White is checkmated: the queen on h4 gives check along the e1-h4 diagonal and nothing can block it or capture it. It is the fastest possible mate. White's two pawn moves opened the way to the king.

U09 E12 a) 1-0. b) Stalemate: ½-½. c) 0-1. d) Draw by agreement: ½-½.

Unit 10. Look before you move

U10 E01 Qxf2#. The queen, supported by the bishop on c5, would give mate on f2. White must defend, for example with Qe2 or Qf3. (Qh4 also threatens the pawn on e4.)

U10 E02 ...Nc2+, a check that also attacks the king, the queen on a3 and the rook on a1. After the king steps aside, Black captures the queen. White must prevent it, for example with Kd1 or Kd2, which control c2, or by moving the queen off a3.

U10 E03 No. The knight on f6 attacks e4, but the pawn on d3 defends it; every white piece is protected. It is a quiet position: White can carry on developing, for example with 0-0 or Nc3.

U10 E04 The bishop on c4, attacked by the knight on a5. No piece defends it: it is hanging. It must retreat, for example with Bb5+.

U10 E05 No: after Rxb7??, Black mates with Re1#. First the back-rank threat must be removed: h3 (or g3, h4, Kf1, Rc1). Then you can think about the pawn.

U10 E06 Qf3 is best: it puts the queen in safety and keeps the mating threat on f7 (with the bishop on c4). Qe2 is also fine. What you cannot do is Qxe5+??, because the knight on c6 captures it.

U10 E07 Nd5 is the natural square, in the centre; Ne4 and Ng8 are also possible. The bad one is Nh5??: the white queen captures it (Qxh5) along the d1-h5 diagonal, which the advance of the e2 pawn left open.

U10 E08 No: White is in check and must get out of it first. The best reply is Kxf2, capturing the bishop. (Kf1, Ke2 and Kd1 are also legal, but they don't win the piece back.)

U10 E09 The queen on d3. When the bishop leaves d6, the rook on d8 sees the whole file down to d3. White must move the queen (for example, Qe2) or block the file.

U10 E10 No. The pawn on d4 cuts the file. The bishop on c5 attacks that pawn, but it is defended by the knight and by the queen. A single piece completely changes the assessment: that is why you must check each line square by square.

U10 E11 That it is a mistake: the bishop on f8 defends h6, and after Qxh6?? Bxh6 White loses the queen for a pawn. It is a long-range defence.

U10 E12 No. The pawn on e4 is defended by the one on d3: after Nxe4? dxe4 Black has given a knight for a pawn.

Unit 11. Capturing, defending and exchanging

U11 E01 +2: you win 5 (the rook) and lose 3 (the bishop). You have won the exchange.

U11 E02 −8: you win 1 and lose 9. This is the most expensive beginner's mistake: always check whether the destination square is attacked.

U11 E03 0: both trades are equivalent (3 for 3 and 5 for 5). Material is still level.

U11 E04 No. The knight is defended by the pawn on e6: Rxd5? exd5 leaves a balance of −2 (you give 5 and get 3).

U11 E05 Yes, and it should: Nxe5 dxe5. The rook was defended by the pawn, but the balance is +2 (you win 5, lose 3).

U11 E06 No. After Nxd4? Qxd4, Black has given a knight for a pawn: −2.

U11 E07 No: the pawn on g7 defends f6. Qxf6? gxf6 trades the queen for a knight (−6). A piece defended by a pawn can only be captured with profit if the capturing piece is worth less.

U11 E08 Retreat it (Ba4 is the most usual) or trade it for the knight (Bxc6). Defending it is no use: the pawn is worth less than the bishop. Both options are good.

U11 E09 No. After ...Bxa1 Rxa1 White loses 5 for 3. The rook must move, for example to b1 or c1 (Rab1, Rac1).

U11 E10 On e2 or d5, where it is safe. Careful with Na4: the knight ends up on the edge, far from everything, although it is not lost straight away. And it cannot stay where it is: the pawn captures it (balance −2).

U11 E11 Yes: mate with Re8#, a back-rank mate. Capturing the queen also wins, but mate ends the game at once. (Qc8+ is not mate: the black queen blocks on d8.)

U11 E12 Black threatens Qxh2#. After Nxa8??, the mate arrives. Qxg4? doesn't work either, because the queen on h4 recaptures. The right move is h3, driving the knight away: the mate disappears and the rook on a8 can wait.

Unit 12. How to start a game

U12 E01 b) Bc4: it develops a minor piece and aims at the centre and at f7. h3 develops nothing, and Qh5 brings the queen out too early (besides, the knight attacks it if it goes to f6).

U12 E02 a) Nf6: it develops and watches the centre. h6 wastes a tempo, and Qg5?? loses the queen: the bishop on c1 captures it.

U12 E03 0-0. The king goes to safety and the rook on h8 comes into play. a6 or Bg4 are also reasonable, but castling is the most natural.

U12 E04 The knight on b1 and the bishop on c1. Nc3, Bg5, Be3 or c3 followed by Nbd2 are all fine. Any of them follows the principles.

U12 E05 Yes. The squares f1 and g1 are empty, the king has not moved and it is not in check. Castling is an excellent move: the pawn on e4 is left attacked, but after ...Nxe4 White wins the material back with Re1 or Bd5. The important point for you: castling is available from the third move.

U12 E06 White attacks f7 twice (knight and bishop), and f7 is defended only by the king: White threatens Nxf7, which would attack the queen and the rook at the same time. The usual reply is 4...d5, cutting the bishop's diagonal.

U12 E07 White threatens Qxf7#. 3...g6, 3...Qe7 or 3...Qf6 stop it. The trap is 3...Nf6??, which develops and attacks the queen but allows 4.Qxf7#.

U12 E08 f6 defends the pawn, but it weakens the h5-e8 diagonal towards the king and takes away the best square of the g8 knight. You saw it in teaching game 1: after 3.Nxe5! fxe5? 4.Qh5+ the black king is exposed.

U12 E09 The queen has come out too early and has already moved twice, with no minor piece developed; it also occupies f6, the knight's natural square. White develops while gaining time, for example with d4 or Nd5.

U12 E10 They are wing pawn moves that develop no piece. White already has two knights and a bishop out and has pushed a pawn into the centre; Black has only a knight out.

U12 E11 White is preparing d4: if Black captures on d4, the c3 pawn recaptures and White will have two pawns in the centre. It is a pawn move with a clear plan, not a waiting move.

U12 E12 Bring out the bishops, castle and connect the rooks with a queen move. The exact order depends on the position, but always check first for concrete threats.

Unit 13. Your first tactical moves

U13 E01 Nc7+: a fork of the king and the rook on a8. After the king moves, Nxa8.

U13 E02 e5: the pawn attacks both the knight on f6 and the bishop on d6. If ...Bxe5, dxe5 and the knight is still attacked. Black loses a piece.

U13 E03 Qd5+: check along the d5-g8 diagonal and an attack on the rook on a8 along the d5-a8 diagonal. After the king moves, Qxa8+.

U13 E04 It threatens Nc7+, a fork of the king and the rook. Black defends with ...Kd7 or ... Kd8, which watch c7 (...Rc8, moving the rook away, also works). The bad thing would be to ignore it.

U13 E05 d5: the bishop on e6 is pinned to the king by the rook on e1 and cannot escape. The pawn captures it on the next move.

U13 E06 e5: the pawn attacks the knight. If the knight moves away, the bishop captures the queen; if it doesn't, the pawn captures the knight. It is a relative pin: the knight can move, but it costs the queen.

U13 E07 None. The bishop on b5 pins it to its king: it is an absolute pin. Black can break it, for example with ...a6 (attacking the bishop) or by moving the king.

U13 E08 Nf6+: the knight gives check and, by moving away, lets the rook on e1 attack the queen on e7. Black has to deal with the check (...gxf6 or ...Kh8) and the rook captures the queen.

U13 E09 Bxb7+: the bishop captures the queen and, by moving away, lets the rook on e1 give check. Black must deal with the check and cannot win anything back.

U13 E10 White threatens Bxh7+, a discovered check that leaves the rook attacking the queen. The simplest defence is to take the queen off the d-file, for example ...Qe7 or ...Qc7. Defending h7 with ...h6 is not enough if the queen stays on the file: any bishop move attacks it.

U13 E11 No. The square e7 is defended by the black queen: Ne7+? Qxe7 and White loses the knight. Before a fork, check whether the knight's square is defended.

U13 E12 No: the white queen is attacked by the bishop on b4. After Nc7+ Black moves the king and, after Nxa8, plays ...Bxd2: Black has traded a rook (5) for the queen (9). First the queen must be saved, for example with Qe2 or Qc2.

Unit 14. Recognising mate

U14 E01 Re8#. A back-rank mate. The black queen on a5 cannot block on f8.

U14 E02 Qg7#. The queen, protected by the bishop on f6, gives mate right next to the king.

U14 E03 Rd8#. The rook gives check along the eighth rank, the bishop on b2 controls g7 and Black's own pawns on f7 and h7 close the other exits.

U14 E04 Qxh7#. The queen captures on h7, protected by the knight on g5. The rook on f8 prevents the king's escape.

U14 E05 Qxg2#. The queen captures on g2 protected by the bishop on b7, which watches the whole long diagonal.

U14 E06 Rb8#. The rook on a7 cuts off the seventh rank and the other gives check on the eighth. It is the final position of the two-rook mate you will study in Unit 15. Careful: Ra8+ is not mate, because then the seventh rank is free.

U14 E07 No. The black queen blocks on f8 (...Qf8). Before giving a back-rank mate, check whether any piece can block.

U14 E08 No: the bishop on d6 captures the queen (...Bxf8). The checking piece was not protected.

U14 E09 White threatens Re8#, a back-rank mate. If ...Rxa2??, Re8#. Black must give the king an escape square (...h6, ...g6, ...Kf8) or bring the rook to the eighth rank (...Rc8).

U14 E10 No: after ...h6??, Qh7# is still mate, because h7 is now empty and the knight protects it. The correct defences are ...g6 or ...f5, which cut the queen's diagonal. (...Bf5 also blocks, but the queen captures it for free.)

U14 E11 1.Ra7! The black king can only go to g8 (the rook controls the whole seventh rank). 2.Rb8#. 1.Rb7 also works, with the same idea (2.Ra8#). 1.Ra8+? does not work, because the king escapes to g7.

U14 E12 1.Qe8+! Rxe8 (the only reply: the king has no squares) 2.Rxe8#. The queen sacrifices itself to deflect the rook on c8, the only piece defending the eighth rank.

Unit 15. Mate with two rooks

U15 E01 Yes. The rook on a8 gives check along the eighth rank and the one on b7 controls the seventh. The king has no square at all.

U15 E02 No: the king captures the rook on b7 (...Kxb7), which was too close and unprotected.

U15 E03 Rh2#. The rook on g1 controls the g-file and the one on a2 gives check along the h-file.

U15 E04 Rb5+. The rook on a4 already cuts off the fourth rank; the other gives check on the fifth and the king has to go up to the sixth.

U15 E05 Rh5 (or Rg5): the rook goes to the other end of the fifth rank, keeps cutting off and is far from the king.

U15 E06 Ra6+. The rook on h5 cuts off the fifth rank; the one on a4 gives check on the sixth.

U15 E07 Rf8+. The rook on e7 cuts off the e-file and the one on d8 gives check on the f-file.

U15 E08 Rg1 (or Rg2, Rg3): the rook moves away along the g-file and keeps cutting it off. After ...Kh5, Rh8#.

U15 E09 No: the king captures the rook (...Kxa7) and mate is no longer possible. First the rook must move away (Rg5), and then give check on the seventh.

U15 E10 No: Rb1?? is stalemate, because the king is not in check and has no square at all. The right move is Rd8#.

U15 E11 Rb8#. Ra8+? does not work, because the seventh rank is free and the king gets out via g7, f7 or h7.

U15 E12 Rb8#. The disaster would be Rg1??, which leaves the king with no squares but no check: stalemate.

Unit 16. Mate with queen and king

U16 E01 Yes. The queen gives check from e7, protected by the king on e6, and controls every square around.

U16 E02 No: the black king captures the queen (...Kxe7). The queen needs her king's protection.

U16 E03 Qb8# and Qf8#. In both cases the queen gives check along the eighth rank and the king on g6 controls g7 and h7.

U16 E04 Because it is stalemate: the black king is not in check and has no square at all. Careful: Qb6 and Kb6 also stalemate. The right way is, for example, Kc6: after ...Ka7, Qc7+ and mate next move (Qb7# or Qb6#).

U16 E05 Qd3 (or Qf3). The king is boxed in a rectangle without being checked.

U16 E06 Qd5: the queen is a knight's move away again and the rectangle shrinks.

U16 E07 Qf5: a knight's move away once more. The king can only go towards the corner.

U16 E08 Qg4: the king now has only h1 and h2. Now the second phase begins.

U16 E09 Bring up the king: Kd3, then Ke4, Kf4 (or Kf3) until you give mate. The disaster would be Qg3??, stalemate.

U16 E10 Qg2#. The queen gives check protected by the king on f3.

U16 E11 Qc8# and Qe7#. In both cases the white king controls d7, e7 and f7.

U16 E12 Stalemate: the black king is not in check and has no squares (g8, g7 and h7 are controlled). A draw. The right move was, for example, Kg6, and mate next move.

Unit 17. Mate with rook and king

U17 E01 Yes. The kings are in opposition: the white king controls c7, d7 and e7, and the rook gives check along the eighth rank.

U17 E02 No: the king gets out via e7, which nobody controls. For mate, the white king needed to be on d6.

U17 E03 Rh8#. The kings are in opposition.

U17 E04 Rh1#. The white king controls g7 and g8.

U17 E05 Rh6+: check in opposition. The black king has to go back to the seventh rank.

U17 E06 Move the rook away along the d-file, for example Rd1. It is also a waiting move: after ...Kb8, Rd8#.

U17 E07 Move it away while still cutting off: Rd1 (or Rd2). That way it keeps cutting off the d-file and the black king cannot reach it.

U17 E08 Rb7?? is stalemate: the rook, protected by the king, takes away the black king's last squares without giving check. The right move is Kb6: after ...Kb8, Rh8#.

U17 E09 ...Kxd4: the rook was unprotected and within the king's reach. With king against king, the game is a draw.

U17 E10 1.Rd1 (or any other distant square on the d-file) Kb8 2.Rd8#.

U17 E11 1.Kg6 Kg8 2.Rb8#. On the other hand, 1.Rg7?? would be stalemate: the rook, protected by the king, takes away g8 and h7 without giving check.

U17 E12 Because the rook alone does not control the squares in front of the enemy king: after each check, the king steps aside or approaches the rook. You need the king to take away the squares on the next rank, and only when the kings are in opposition does the check force it back.

Unit 18. Now you can play on your own

U18 E01 Yes. To castle queenside, the king crosses d1 and lands on c1; neither of those squares is attacked. The rook crossing an attacked square (b1) does not prevent it.

U18 E02 Yes: en passant, exd6. Only on this move: if White plays something else, the en passant capture will no longer be allowed afterwards.

U18 E03 White threatens Qxh7#: the queen, supported by the bishop on c2, gives mate on h7. ...h6?? is no use, because Qh7# is still mate. The diagonal must be cut: ...g6 or ...f5.

U18 E04 The bishop attacks the queen. It must retreat to a safe square, for example Qe3. Careful with h3?: ...Bxf3 and the queen is lost.

U18 E05 It threatens ...Nc2+, a fork of the king and the rook on a1. The best reply is to capture it: bxa3. If that were not possible, you would have to move the king or the rook.

U18 E06 +2: the first trade is equal (3 for 3) and in the second you win the exchange (5 for 3).

U18 E07 Yes. When you are ahead in material it pays to exchange pieces: without queens, your opponent has fewer chances of attacking your king and your extra rook weighs even

more.

U18 E08 b) 0-0: it puts the king in safety and brings the h1 rook into play. h3 develops nothing and Qh5 brings the queen out too early.

U18 E09 The knight on b1 and the bishop on c1. For example, Nc3 or Bg5. Moving the c4 bishop again or a wing pawn does not help.

U18 E10 Qg7#. The queen gives mate supported by the bishop on h6, as in teaching game 4.

U18 E11 Ra1#. The white king controls b4, b5 and b6, and the rook gives check along the a-file.

U18 E12 Apply the methods from Units 15, 16 and 17. You pass if you mate in all three without losing the piece and without stalemating, in fewer than fifteen, twenty and thirty moves respectively.

Glossary

Back-rank mate
Mate given by a rook or queen along the last rank, with the king shut in by its own pawns.

Castling
Special move of the king and a rook. Kingside (0-0) or queenside (0-0-0).

Centre
The squares d4, e4, d5 and e5.

Check
An attack on the king. It must be answered: capture the checking piece, block the line or move the king.

Checkmate
A check that cannot be answered. It ends the game.

Cutting off
In the basic mates, placing a piece so that the enemy king cannot cross a rank or a file.

Develop
To bring a piece from its starting square to an active square.

Discovered attack
A piece moves aside and opens the line of another friendly piece behind it. If the uncovered piece gives check, it is a discovered check.

Double attack
One piece attacks two targets at once. The knight's double attack is called a fork.

Draw
A tied game. Each player gets half a point.

En passant
Special pawn capture: if a pawn advances two squares and lands beside an enemy pawn, that pawn may capture it as if it had advanced one, only on the very next move.

Exchange (the)
The difference between a rook and a minor piece. Whoever trades a rook for a bishop or knight "loses the exchange".

File, rank, diagonal
Lines on the board: vertical (a-h), horizontal (1-8) and slanting.

Material

Each side's pieces and pawns, measured with the values 1, 3, 3, 5 and 9.

Minor and major pieces

Minor: bishop and knight. Major: rook and queen.

Opening

The first phase of the game, in which pieces are developed, the centre is contested and the king is put in safety.

Opposition

Two kings on the same rank or file, with one square between them.

Pin

A piece cannot move (absolute pin, if the king is behind it) or moving costs dearly (relative pin, if another valuable piece is behind it).

Promotion

A pawn reaching the last rank becomes a queen, rook, bishop or knight of the same colour.

Recapture

A capture that answers an opponent's capture on the same square.

Stalemate

The side to move has no legal move and its king is not in check. The game ends in a draw.

Tempo

A move. "Losing a tempo" means spending a move without improving the position.

Waiting move

A move that does not change the essentials of the position and forces the opponent to move, often making things worse for them.

Quick reference

How a game ends

Result	When
Win	Checkmate; the opponent resigns; the opponent runs out of time and mate is still possible.
Draw	Stalemate; agreement between the players; insufficient material to mate (for example, king against king); the same position occurs three times (claimed); fifty moves by each side without a capture or pawn move (claimed).

Rough value of the pieces

Pawn 1	Knight 3	Bishop 3	Rook 5	Queen 9	King: cannot be traded

Conditions for castling

- Neither the king nor that rook has moved before in the game.
- There are no pieces between the king and the rook.
- The king is not in check, does not cross an attacked square and does not end up in check.

Routine before every move

- What has changed with my opponent's last move? What does it threaten?
- Do I have a check, capture or threat that works?
- With the move I want to make, do I leave a piece undefended or allow a mate?

The three basic mates

- **Two rooks:** one cuts off, the other gives check; if the king attacks a rook, move it to the other end.
- **Queen and king:** the queen, a knight's move away, boxes the king in on the edge; then your king comes closer; watch out for stalemate.
- **Rook and king:** cut off with the rook, bring up the king, check in opposition, waiting moves.

Notation

English	K king	Q queen	R rook	B bishop	N knight
Spanish	R rey	D dama	T torre	A alfil	C caballo

x capture · + check · # checkmate · 0-0 kingside castling · 0-0-0 queenside castling · =Q promotion to a queen · ! good move · ? mistake

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