

Check and Mate

A Beginners Guide With 2000 Examples

Anastasiya Geller

Check and Mate – A Beginners Guide With 2000 Examples
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ISBN 978-5-6047849-7-6

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Introduction

“Check” and “mate” are a familiar combination of words which comes straight from chess. This is no accident – both concepts are firmly woven into the essence of the game. Without knowing what a mate is and what the difference between it and a check is, it is simply impossible to play chess!

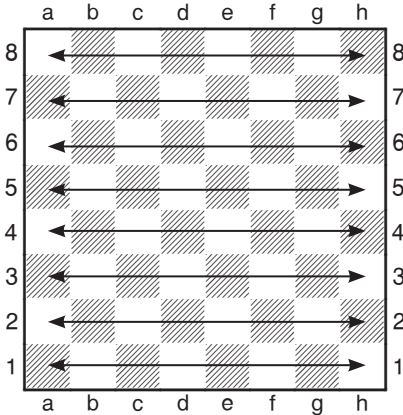
In this textbook, we learn concepts including “check” – an attack on the king, “defense against check” and “checkmate” – an attack on the king from which there is no protection. The book covers checkmate in 1 move, beginning with the simplest mates with one piece and ending with mating using several tactical techniques at once.

Special attention is paid to practical deployment of the acquired knowledge. After studying each technique, the student is provided with a sufficient number of exercises to test and consolidate their acquired skills. In some exercises, one of the sides has only two pieces on the board, one of which the player needs to move. Gradually, the number of pieces in the exercises increases.

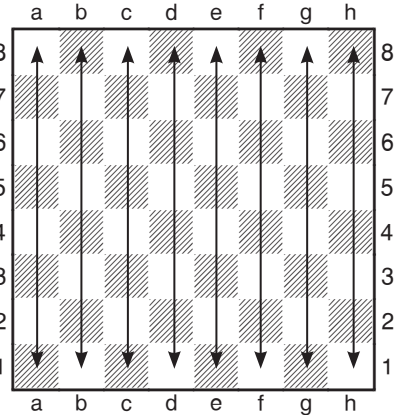
The book concludes with 480 exercises featuring checkmate in 1 move selected from actual games, including a separate chapter consisting exclusively of checkmate in 1 move from games of the world champions!

The chessboard

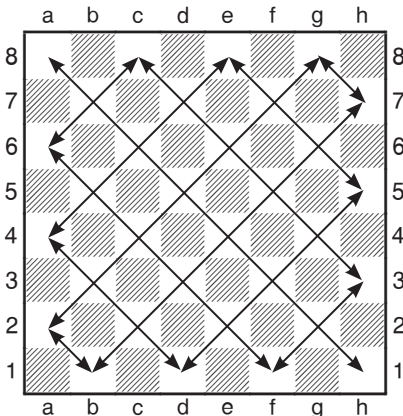
The chessboard consists of 64 squares, of which 32 are light squares and 32 are dark squares. There are three types of straight line on the board: ranks (8), files (8) and diagonals (13 light-squared diagonals and 13 dark-squared diagonals). Along the ranks and files, the light and dark squares strictly follow each other.



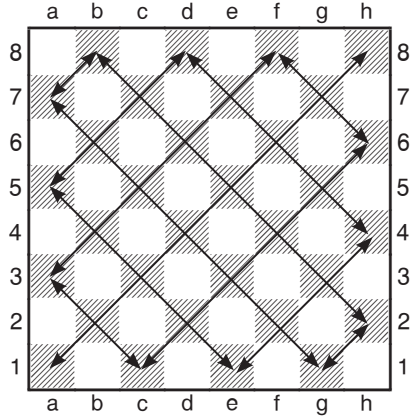
A **rank** is a row of dark and light squares running from left to right. Ranks are numbered from 1 to 8.



A **file** is a row of dark and light squares running from bottom to top. Files are named using letters from “a” to “h”.



A **diagonal** is a straight line of adjacent squares of the same color. The squares of one diagonal touch each other corner to corner. The diagram shows all the light-squared diagonals.



This diagram shows all the dark-squared diagonals.

Chess notation

Each square has its own “name”. To name a square, you need to see its file (letter) and rank (number).

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

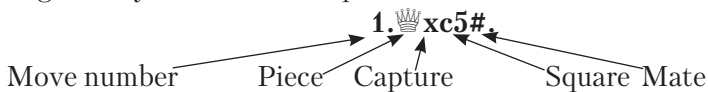
Symbols

♔ – King ♚ – Queen ♖ – Rook ♗ – Bishop ♘ – Knight ♙ – Pawn
 ▲ – White to move ▼ – Black to move

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| x | Capture |
| + | Check |
| # | Checkmate |
| ! | Good Move |
| ? | Bad Move |
| → | Move |
| → | Attack/protect |
| ○ | Possible move |
| ∅ | Attacked square |

Note that in this book we do not cover *every* attacked square with the “∅” symbol, but only those that aid your understanding of the concepts.

Each chapter of this textbook contains exercises. The moves of the pieces given in the answers to these exercises are written using chess notation and figurine symbols. An example of a solution is as follows:



In this book, there will be two options for writing chess moves: with **bold** and regular font. If the answer contains more than one variation, then the correct solution will always be highlighted in **bold**.

Part 1

Check

The king is a piece that is radically different from all the other pieces. It is not only the “tastiest” target for any tactical blow, but also a piece that, according to the rules of chess, must not be left under attack. For this reason, a large number of tactical maneuvers and combinations are used to attack the opponent’s king.

An attack on the king in chess is usually called a short word – “check”. Check is not necessarily a good move, but it forces the opponent to go on the defensive and can lead to large material gains or even an immediate win if the opponent is completely unable to defend against it.

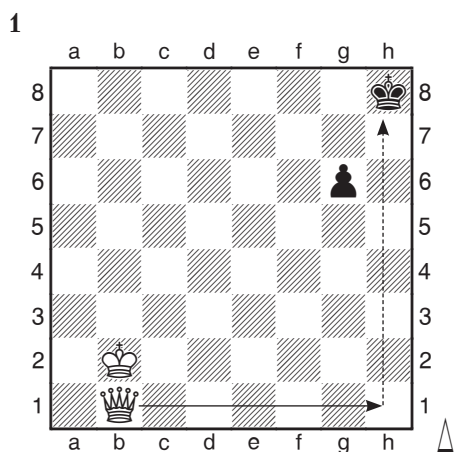
Defending against a check also comes with its own nuances. To protect the king from attack, you can use only four defensive techniques: “capturing”, “exchange”, “interference” or “escape”. Such a variety is extremely small, especially in comparison with the defensive capabilities when other pieces are attacked.

Despite the alluring prospect of giving any possible check, you should keep in mind the concept of a “safe attack”: it is unlikely that a check will be a good move if the opponent can immediately capture the piece giving check! Avoiding your pieces getting captured is often much more important than all other chess skills.

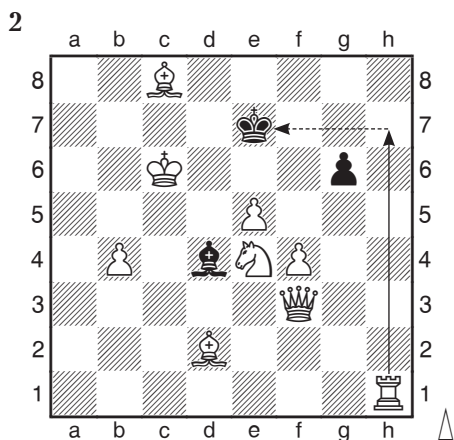
Chapter 1

Check (find the only check)

Check is an attack on the king. Any piece can give a check, except for the king. The king cannot give a check, because according to the rules it must not be under attack on the opponent's move.



You should notice that the black king is open for checks along the 8th rank, the h-file and the a1-h8 diagonal. Therefore, moving the queen to one of the above lines will be considered a check unless it is blocked. Hence you can find the only possible check in this position – **1. ♕h1+**.

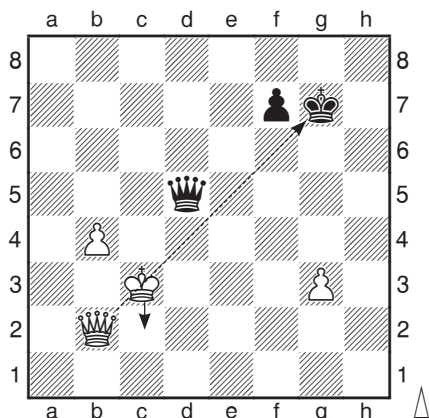


As the number of pieces increases, it becomes increasingly difficult to find an attack route to the opponent's king.

The white pieces have literally surrounded the black king. However, only the rook can put it in check in this position: **1. ♖h7+**. The rest of the pieces cannot attack the black king in any way, and white's queen and dark-squared bishop are even prevented from giving a check by their own pieces and pawns!

Although the king cannot deliver a check on his own, a move made with the king may yet give a check! This can only happen if another piece helps the king. In the case when one piece makes a move, while another one delivers the actual check, such a check is called a discovered check.

3

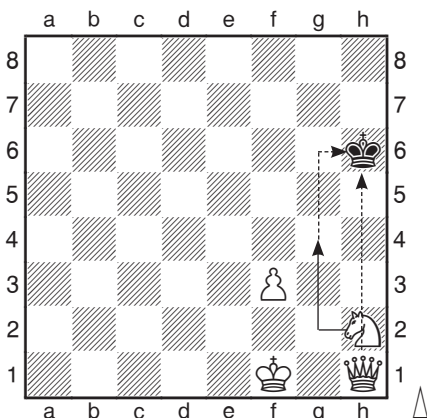


After **1. ♔c2+** the white queen attacks the black king. Note that the white king has no other way to retreat, since the king must not be placed under attack from the opponent's pieces.

Only long-range pieces – a queen, rook, or bishop – can deliver a discovered check if one of them is in a stand-off with the opponent's king on one of the lines prior to the checking move. At the same time, any piece, except for the queen, can make a move that frees up the line of attack for the check.

It is also worth noting the simultaneous attack on the king of two pieces at once, which is commonly called a “double check”. A double check is a special case of a discovered check and can only occur if, when using a discovered check, a piece, retreating from the line of attack, attacks the king, too.

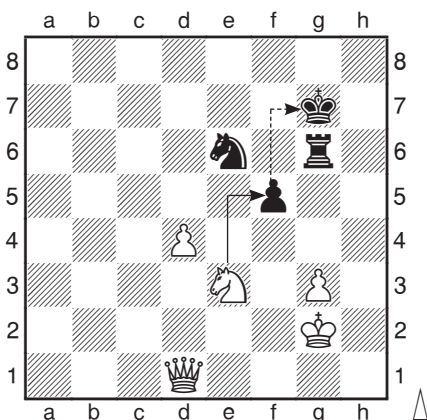
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After **1. ♞g4+** the black king is attacked by both the knight and the queen at once – there is a double check on the board!

An attack on the king can be combined with any tactical or defensive technique. For example, you can put it in check while capturing one of the opponent's pieces.

5

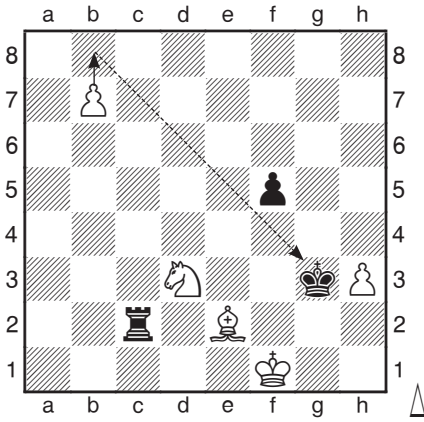


With the move **1. ♞xf5+** white simultaneously captures the pawn and checks the black king.

Another tactical technique used together with a check is promoting a

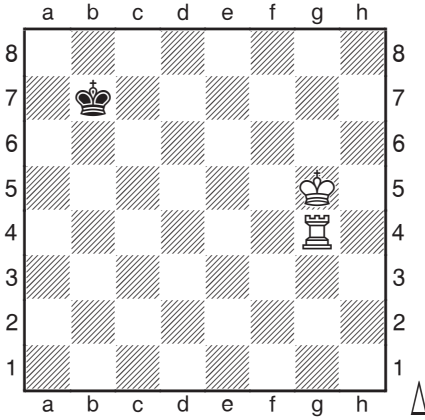
pawn. A pawn that reaches the last rank turns into another piece, which carries out an attack on the king.

6

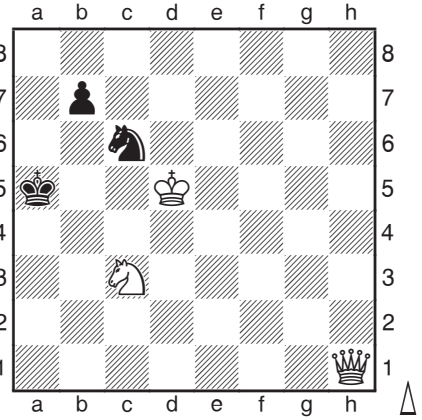


A check can be declared only by means of **1.b8=♔+** or **1.b8=♚+**. Note that it is normally much more advantageous to promote to a queen with a check, rather than to a rook or bishop.

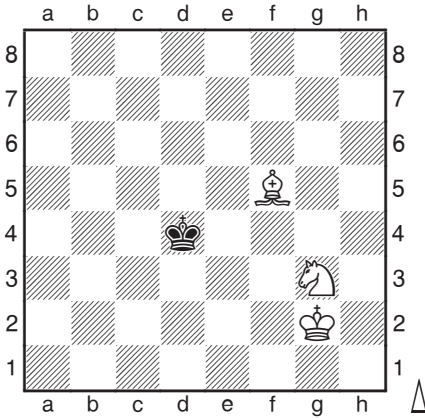
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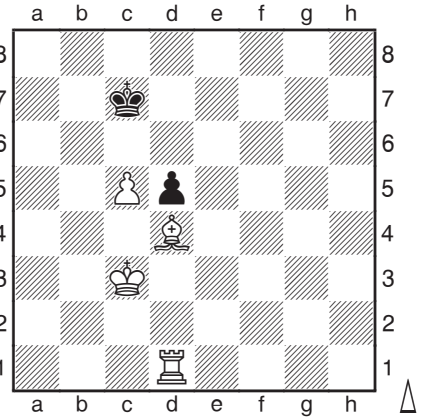
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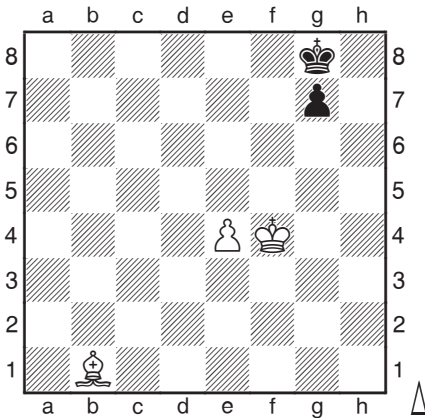
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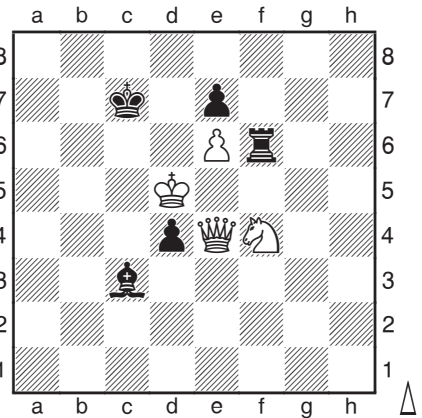
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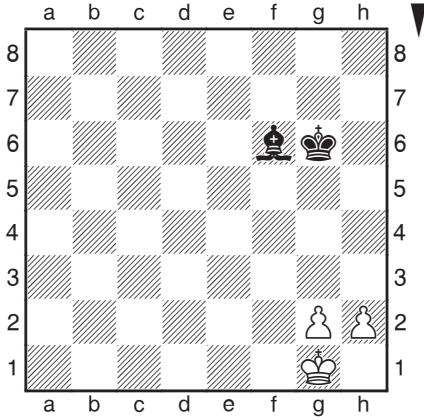
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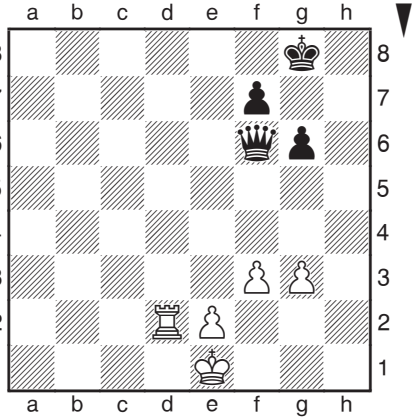
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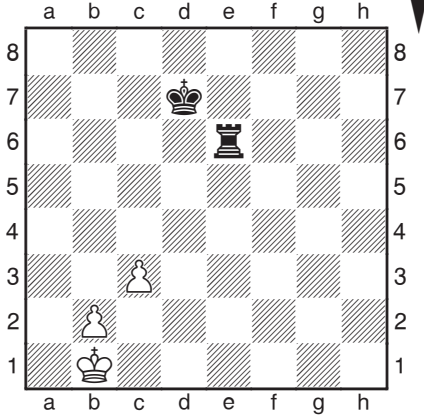
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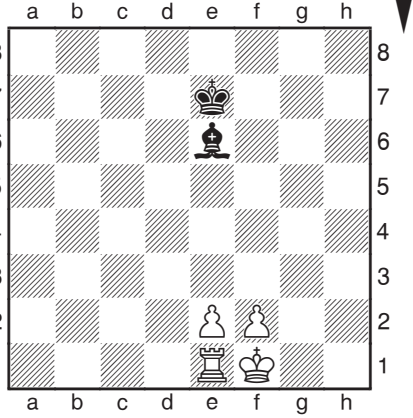
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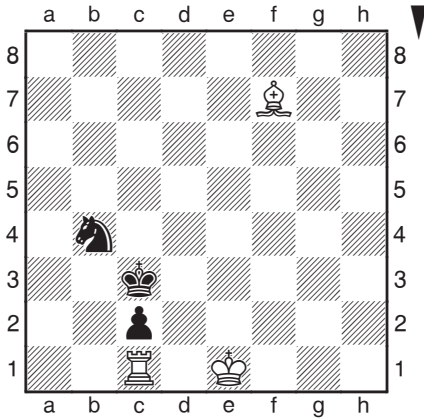
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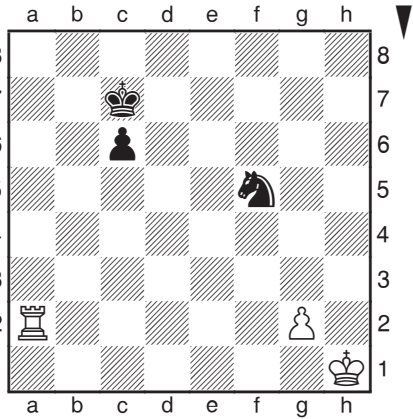
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15



18



Part 2

Checkmate in 1 Move

Any check which cannot be met by capturing, exchange, or interference, and from which there is no route for your king to escape, is in fact checkmate. In other words, a checkmate is a check from which the opponent has no protection.

The easiest way to prevent capture or exchange of your pieces when attacking is to avoid putting your pieces under attack from your opponent's pieces. The "safe attack" technique referred to earlier is the best approach here. There are also other more complicated options (pinning, protection, a discovered check or a double check), which are discussed in detail in the third part of this book.

To prevent interference that blocks your attacking piece, you have to review carefully the possible moves of each of the opponent's pieces that could reach the line of attack – between the king and the piece attacking it. Note that the interference method can only be applied to long-range pieces, i.e. the queen, rook or bishop.

It is only possible to prevent the enemy king from escaping from a check by depriving it of all possible moves. For this purpose, you need to control all squares next to your opponent's king that are not occupied by his own pieces. According to the rules, the king cannot take its own pieces or occupy a square already occupied by them. Therefore, squares that are occupied by the opponent's pieces do not necessarily need to be kept under attack – they are unsuitable for escape.

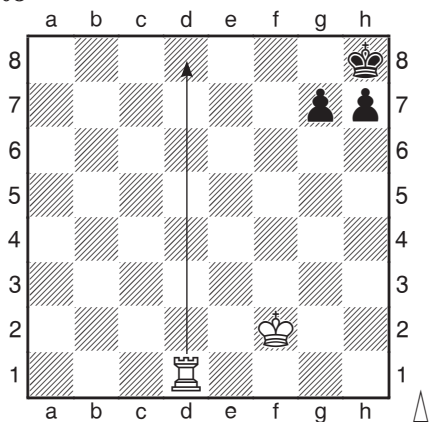
In this part of the book, the main focus is placed on controlling all possible squares for the retreat of the king: in each exercise, checkmate is delivered only with the help of a safe attack technique. Before moving to the most difficult examples, you must first learn how to identify an attacking continuation that deprives the enemy king of all possible moves.

The rook (find the checkmate in 1 move with a rook)

The rook is a long-range piece that moves in a straight line. An attack on a king with a rook is checkmate only if capturing, exchanging, or interference with the attack are all impossible and the king has no possible squares for retreat.

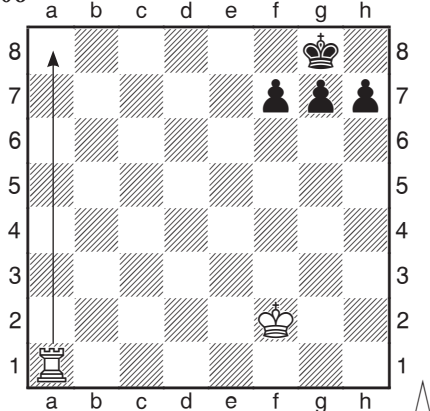
A rook check automatically deprives the king of all possible retreat squares along the line of attack – vertically or horizontally.

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The check **1.♖d8#** is checkmate, because it is impossible to capture or exchange the white rook, there are no pieces that could occupy the line of attack between the rook and the king (the e8, f8 or g8 squares), and the black king has no squares to retreat to – the g8 square is attacked by the rook, while the g7 and h7 squares are occupied by black pawns.

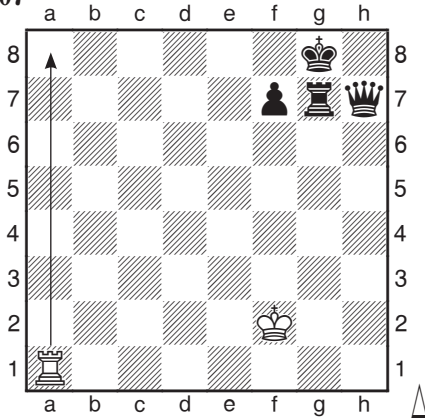
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The check **1.♖a8#** is also checkmate. As in the previous example, black cannot capture, exchange, or interfere with the white rook. The king has no squares for retreat – the f7, g7 and h7 squares are taken by the black pawns, and the f8 and h8 squares are under the rook's control. Meanwhile, the remote position of the rook does not matter at all – the rook checkmates on the last rank even from the “most distant” a8 square.

It is worth noting the arrangement of the black pawns in the examples considered above. The pawns deprive the black king of the opportunity to move to the 7th rank, in other words – they have blocked it. The king can only be blocked by its own pieces. When you checkmate with a rook along the back rank, the pawns occupying their initial position often block the king's escape.

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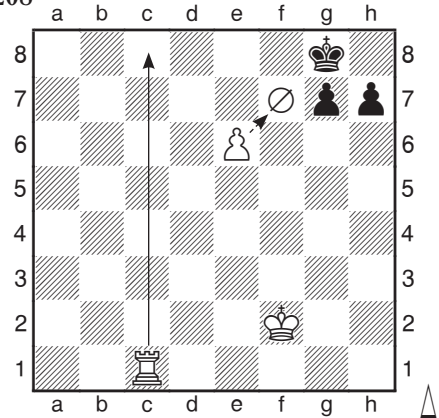


This example is similar to the previous one, with the only difference being that there are other pieces here instead of two black pawns. The material balance has changed; however, after $1.\text{R}\text{a}8\#$ the black king gets checkmated anyway.

Note that the value of pieces is often irrelevant when searching for defense against checkmate. If there were, for example, a black knight on h7 instead of the queen, then black would defend against the checkmate by interference via $1...\text{N}\text{f}8$. And if there was no queen at all, then escape via $1...\text{K}\text{h}7$ would lead to salvation. Thus, in the position on the diagram the queen helps white, rather than black.

Not only his pieces, but also your pieces can prevent the enemy king from escaping. This can happen when your pieces attack the squares to which the king would like to retreat.

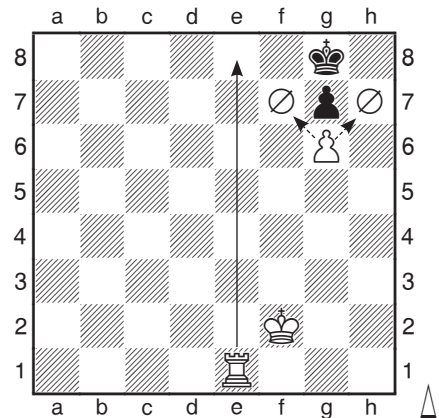
208



After $1.\text{R}\text{c}8\#$, the black king is checkmated again. The g7 and h7 squares are blocked by the black pawns, while the black king cannot retreat to f7, since there it will find itself under attack from the white pawn. In such cases, players sometimes say that the white pawn controls the f7 square.

In the next example, the white pawn manages to control two squares at once.

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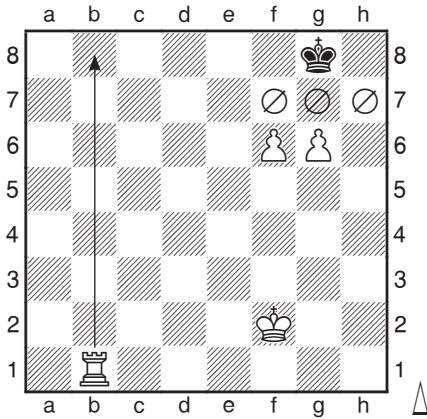


The move $1.\text{R}\text{e}8\#$ delivers checkmate! As in the previous

examples, the white rook attacks the king and in addition cannot be taken, exchanged, or blocked. The king cannot retreat to the f8 or h8 squares, since they are located on the line of attack and are controlled by the rook. Escaping to the 7th rank turns out to be impossible, too – the g7 square is blocked by the black pawn, while the f7 and h7 squares are controlled by the white pawn.

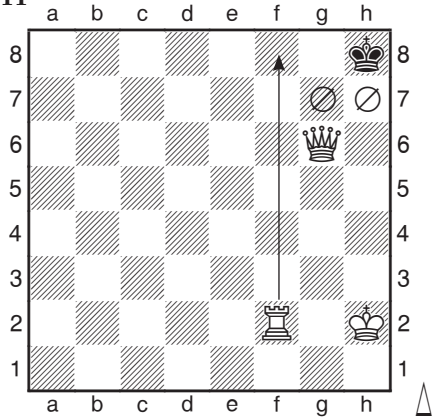
You can easily imagine a situation in which the rook checkmates the king aided by only its own pieces.

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The solution is **1. ♖b8#**. The f6 pawn prevents the king from escape to the g7 square, while the g6 pawn controls the f7 and h7 squares. In such cases, players sometimes say that the king is in a “mating net”. The word “net” here means several white pieces or pawns that cut off all escape paths for the black king.

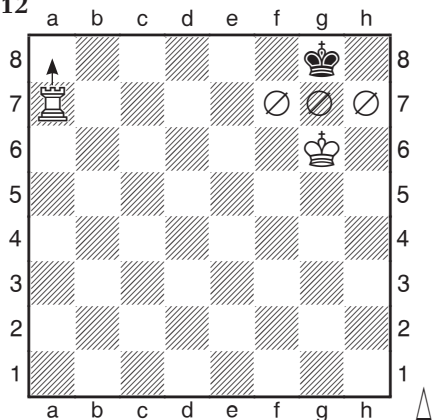
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Each piece can deprive the king of a particular number of squares: a pawn, knight, or bishop deprives it of no more than 2 squares; the enemy king deprives it of no more than 3 squares; a rook deprives it of up to 4, and a queen deprives it of up to 5. The more squares a piece can deprive the king of, the more logical it is to use it during an attack. Therefore, it is much easier to create a mating net if you use a queen, rook, or king.

In the above diagram, the queen has deprived the black king of all possible moves by herself. Therefore, the move **1. ♖f8#** is checkmate.

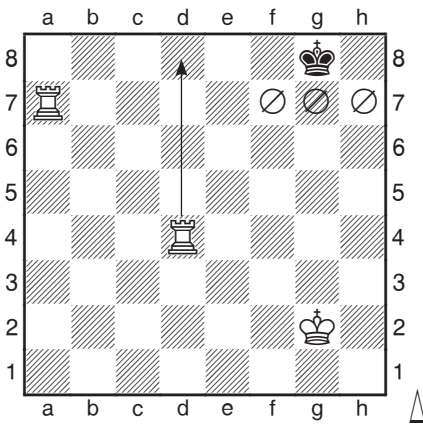
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Here is another position that has significant theoretical relevance. The move **1.♖a8#** is checkmate, since the white king attacks the f7, g7 and h7 squares, while the rook attacks the black king and deprives him of all the remaining retreat squares. You can see that there is a choice between two possible variations of a rook check. In the case of **1.♖g7+**, white does not checkmate, since black can retreat to f8 or h8 with the king.

In practice, you often encounter rank or file checkmates: checkmates with either two rooks or a queen and rook.

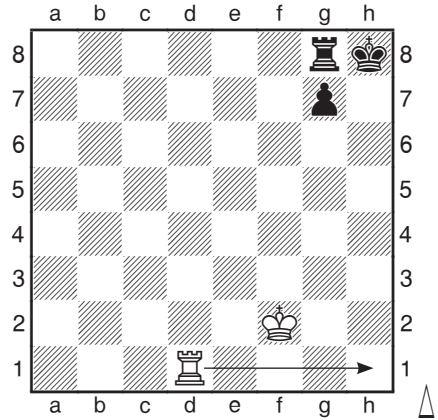
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It is important for white not to mix up roles for his/her two rooks here. The rook on the a7 square attacks the squares of the 7th rank, while the other one takes control over the squares of the 8th rank after **1.♖d8#**. You can easily see that none of the other checks leads to checkmate: **1.♖a8+** ♔g7, **1.♖g4+** ♔f8 or **1.♖g7+** ♔xg7. If you put a

white queen on the same a7 square instead of the rook then it would also serve to prevent the black king from moving to the 7th rank.

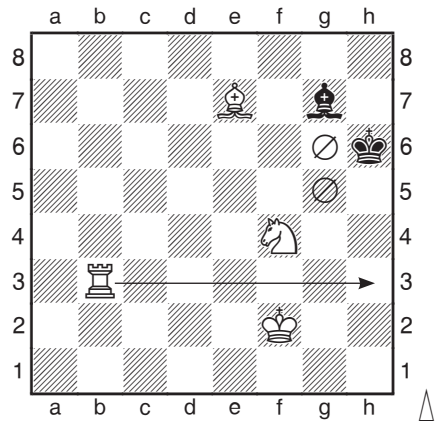
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Giving checkmate along a file does not differ from mating along a rank.

The move **1.♖h1#** is checkmate, because the black king finds itself blocked by its own rook and pawn.

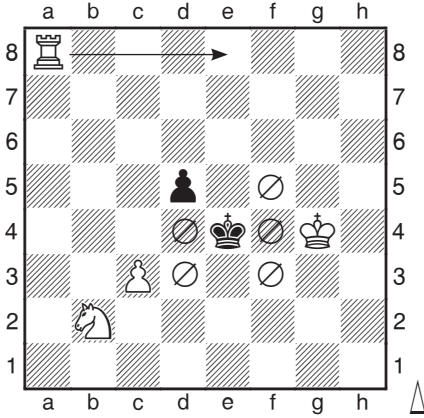
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Choosing one of two rook checks, you notice that after **1.♖b6+** black can respond with **1...♔h7** or **1...♙f6**,

whereas in the case of **1.♖h3#** the black king is completely defenseless.

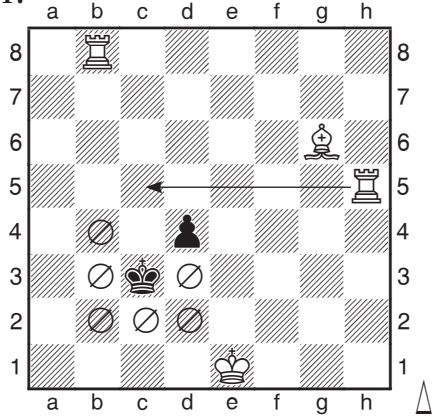
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Finally, checkmating a king that is not located on the edge of the board may be much more difficult. This is due to the large number of squares to which it may retreat, and which the attacking side needs to control. Nevertheless, nothing is impossible in chess!

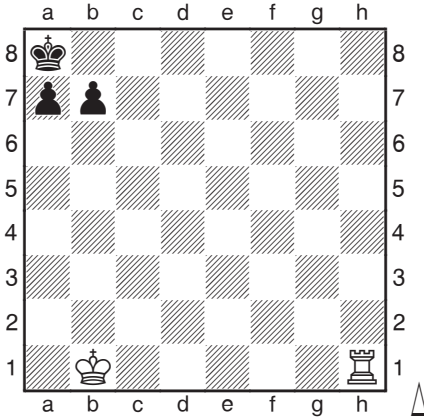
With **1.♖e8#** the rook attacks the king and at the same time takes control of the e3 and e5 squares. The white king controls the f3, f4 and f5 squares, the knight watches over the d3 square, and the white pawn prevents the black king from moving to the d4 square. Finally, the only remaining square – d5 – is occupied by the black pawn. Checkmate is on the board! The move **1.♖a4+**, offering black to choose between three defensive moves, was weaker.

217

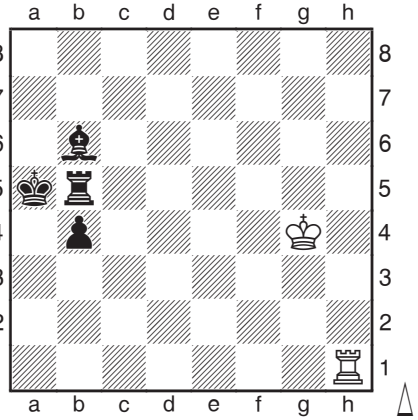


White chooses between four possible checks. After **1.♖b3+**, black will continue by capturing **1...♙xb3**; in the case of **1.♖c8+** checkmate is prevented by **1...♙b4**, while if **1.♖h3+**, then interference via **1...d3**. The only continuation that is checkmate is **1.♖c5#**. As in the previous example, all white pieces participate in the creation of a mating net, while the black pawn prevents the retreat of its king to the only square at his disposal that is not controlled by the white pieces.

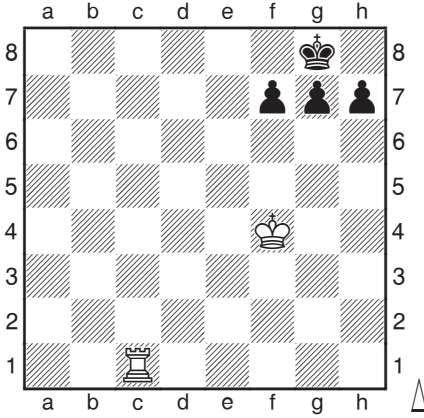
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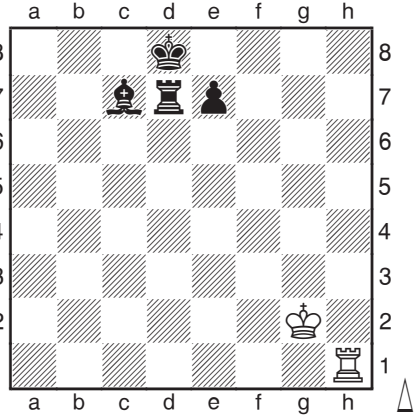
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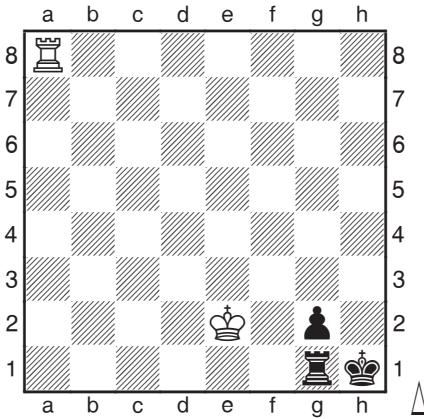
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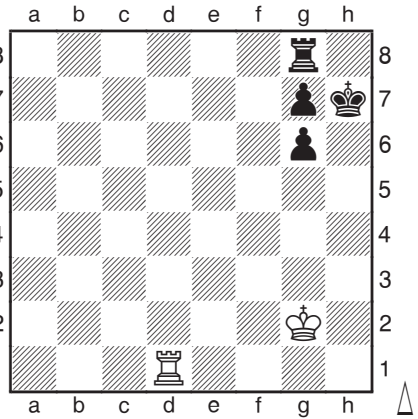
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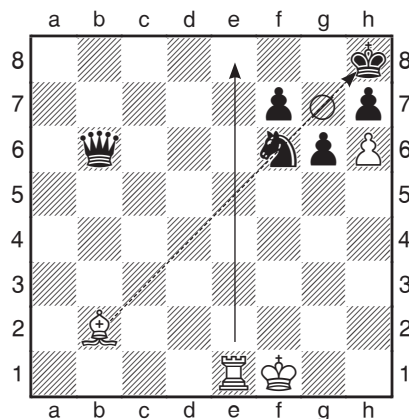


Chapter 13

Checkmate with pinning (find the checkmate in 1 move)

The attacking piece may be left not only under attack by the opponent's king, but also under attack from his/her other pieces. This can only happen when those pieces are pinned to the king and cannot take the attacking piece or obstruct the line of its attack on the king.

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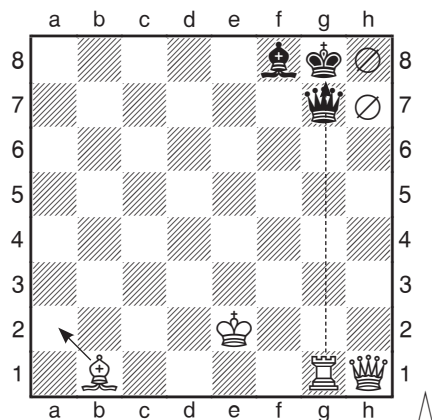


After **1. ♖e8#** there is checkmate on the board. The only piece that could have helped the black king is the knight, however, due to the pin along the long diagonal it can neither capture the white rook, nor retreat to the g8 square. The g7 square is attacked by the white pawn.

A precondition for finding a checkmate with pinning is the stand-off (the placement of pieces on the same rank, file or diagonal) between one of your long-range pieces (a

queen, rook or bishop) and your opponent's king.

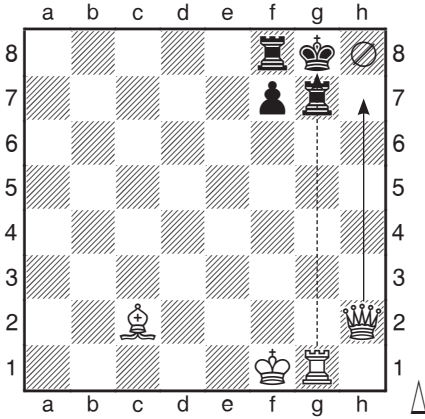
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In the stand-off between the white rook and the black king along the g-file, the black queen is pinned and hence caught in the crossfire. After **1. ♕a2#** she cannot obstruct the line of attack on the king from the f7 square. Retreating with the king to the h-file is impossible, since the white queen attacks both the squares the king would like to move to.

Checkmate with pinning can be combined with all other techniques, for example, protection.

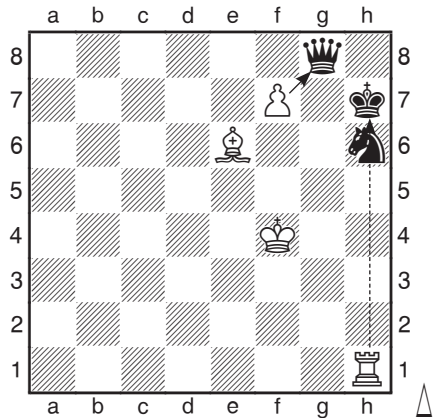
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The queen checkmates even though she falls under two attack from two pieces at once – **1. ♕h7#**. The black g7 rook cannot capture the queen, since the white rook pins it to the king. Meanwhile, the king cannot take the attacking piece either, since it is protected by the white bishop.

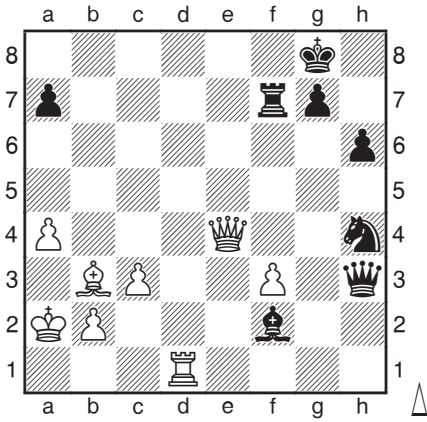
When carrying out a mating attack, it is possible to simultaneously combine almost any number of techniques. For example, it is not difficult to imagine a situation in which checkmate is delivered using four techniques at once: capturing, promoting a pawn, protection and pinning!

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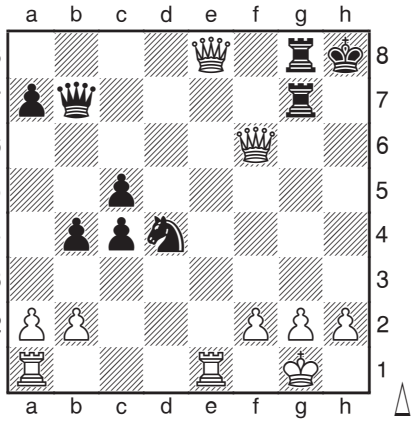


Taking the black queen by means of **1. fxg8=♕#** achieves the goal. It turns out that black can neither capture the queen that has appeared on the board (the queen is protected by the bishop, while the black knight is pinned to the rook on h1), nor retreat with the king.

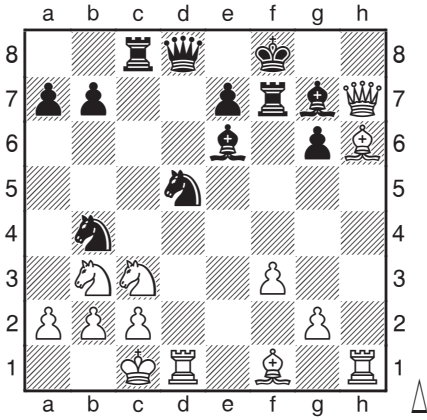
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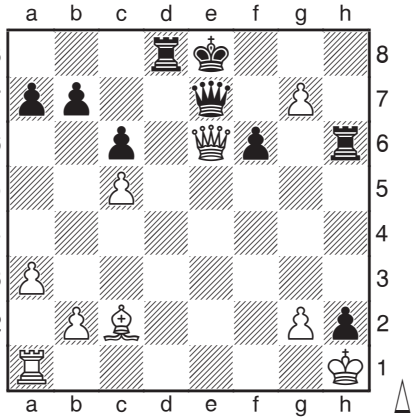
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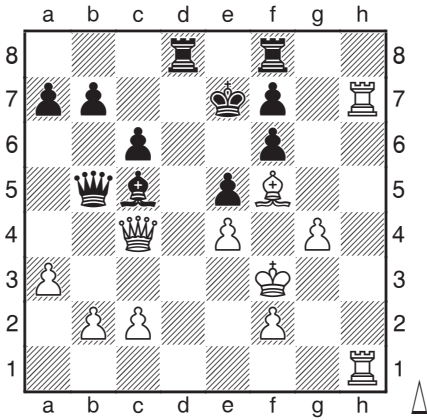
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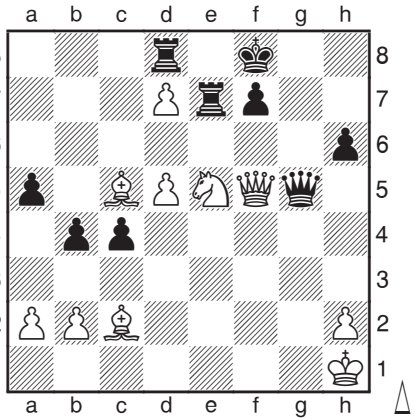
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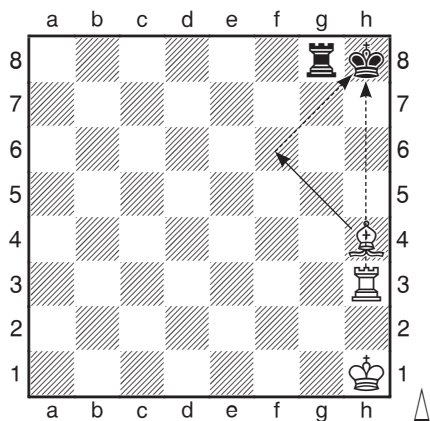
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Checkmate with a double check (find the checkmate in 1 move)

Simultaneous attack on the king of two pieces at once is called “double check”. A double check is a special case of a discovered check and can only occur if, when using a discovered check, a piece, retreating from the line of attack, attacks the king, too.

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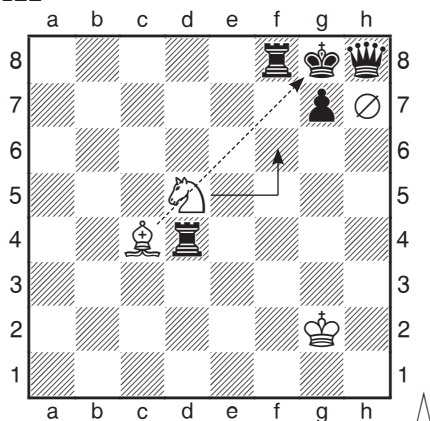


The stand-off along the h-file is a precondition for the search for a discovered check. The move **1. ♖f6#** delivers a double check to the black king and is in fact checkmate. In response to any other move with the bishop, black can play **1... ♔g7**.

Double check is an extremely effective way to give checkmate! The king, caught under a double check, is completely deprived of all defensive capabilities, except retreating. Thus, if after a double check the king

cannot move to any square, then this means that there is checkmate on the board.

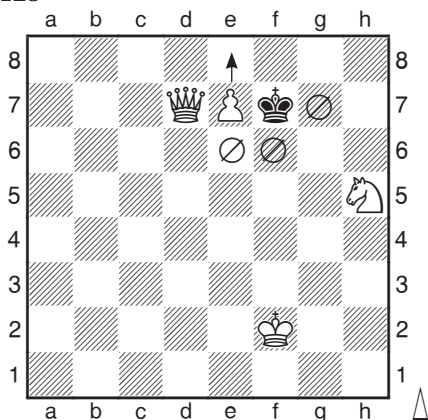
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White has two double checks at once. However, in the case of **1. ♞e7+** the black king can escape by means of **1... ♔h7**. Yet after **1. ♜f6#** he no longer has the opportunity to escape – checkmate is on the board. Note that both of white’s attacking pieces are under attack, but black cannot take either of them, because in this case his/her king will remain under attack from the other piece.

Double check is a special case of a discovered check, which, in turn, can be combined with all previously studied techniques, for example, with pawn promotion or protection.

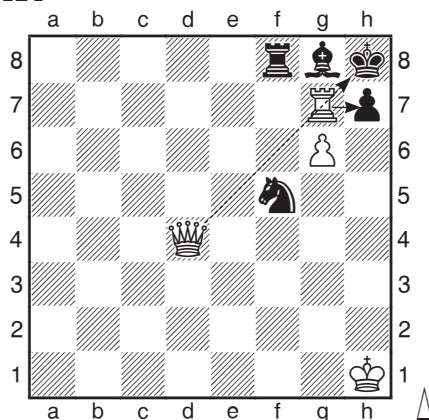
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The move **1.e8=♔#** is checkmate, because it is a double check and the king cannot escape. The king cannot take the new queen on e8, since it is protected by the original queen.

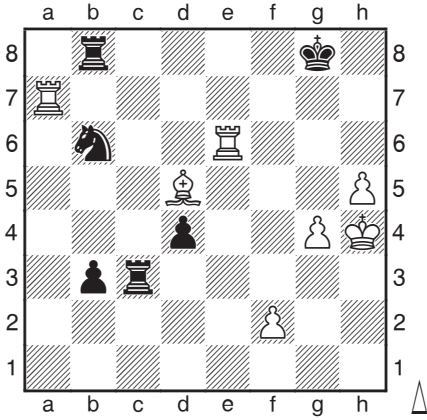
Capturing with protection is another combination of techniques that is often found in mating attacks with double check.

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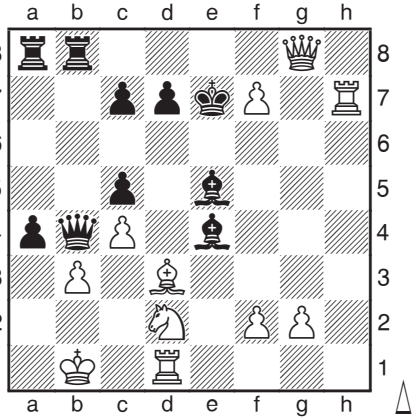


Despite all his/her pieces being en prise, white can checkmate the black king. After the double check **1.♖xg8+** the black king can escape from the double attack with **1...♗xg8**. Instead, the accurate **1.♞xh7#** is checkmate, because the rook is protected on the h7 square by the white pawn.

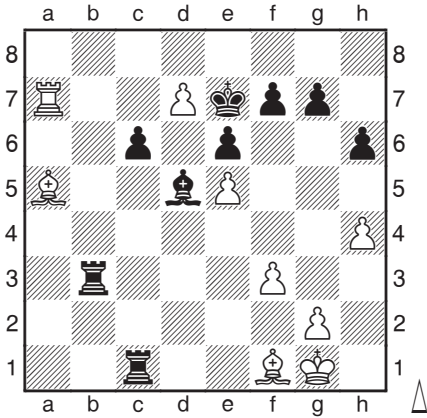
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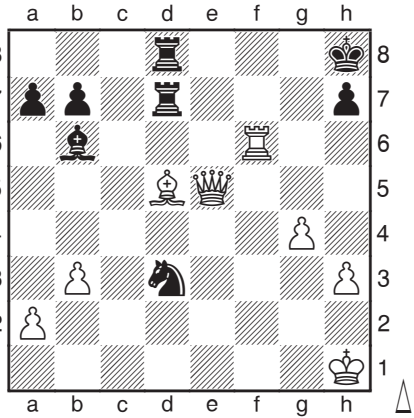
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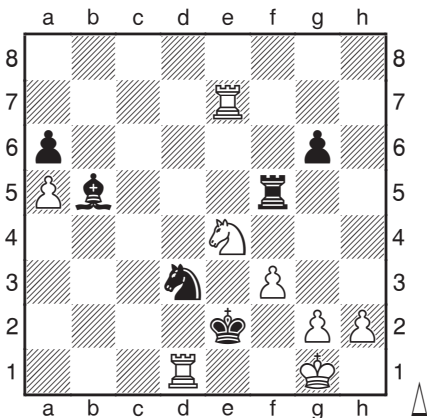
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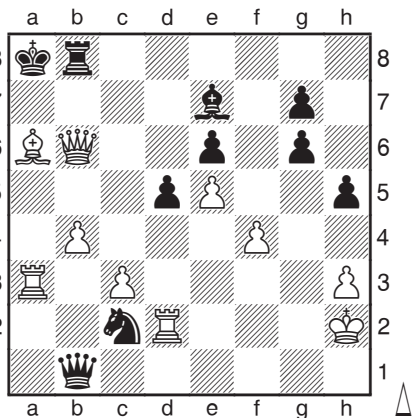
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1130



Answers

Chapter 1

- 1 1. ♖h1+
- 2 1. ♖h7+
- 3 1. ♔c2+
- 4 1. ♜g4+
- 5 1. ♜xf5+
- 6 1.b8=♖+ or 1.b8=♙+
- 7 1. ♖b4+
- 8 1. ♜e2+
- 9 1. ♙a2+
- 10 1. ♖a1+
- 11 1. ♙e5+
- 12 1. ♖e5+
- 13 1...♙d4+
- 14 1...♖e1+
- 15 1...♜d3+
- 16 1...♖a1+
- 17 1...♙h3+
- 18 1...♜g3+
- 19 1. ♖xf8+
- 20 1. ♔xc6+
- 21 1. ♙xe4+
- 22 1. ♖e5+
- 23 1.f8=♜+
- 24 1.c6+
- 25 1...♖a8+
- 26 1...♙a5+
- 27 1...♖xc3+
- 28 1...♖a1+
- 29 1...♙xf4+
- 30 1...♙d6+
- 31 1.a8=♖+ or 1.a8=♙+
- 32 1. ♙b3+
- 33 1. ♖e8+
- 34 1. ♙b5+
- 35 1. ♖c6+
- 36 1.g8=♖+ or 1.g8=♗+
- 37 1...♜xc2+
- 38 1...♖e8+
- 39 1...♙e6+

- 40 1...d1=♖+ or 1...d1=♗+

- 41 1...♙a3+
- 42 1...♜g3+

Chapter 2

- 43 1. ♖h1+
- 44 1. ♖h5+
- 45 1. ♖f4+
- 46 1. ♖c7+
- 47 1. ♖h2+
- 48 1. ♖h8+
- 49 1. ♖d6+
- 50 1. ♖a8+
- 51 1. ♖d3+
- 52 1. ♖e7+
- 53 1. ♜c6+
- 54 1. ♙c3+
- 55 1...♙a3+
- 56 1...♜f5+
- 57 1...♔f3+
- 58 1...♜f3+
- 59 1...♖b1+
- 60 1...♖g1+
- 61 1. ♖g4+
- 62 1.h5+
- 63 1. ♖h7+
- 64 1. ♖c5+
- 65 1. ♖a8+
- 66 1. ♖xf5+
- 67 1...♙a2+
- 68 1...♖h1+
- 69 1...♖xf2+
- 70 1...♜xc2+
- 71 1...♙xh4+
- 72 1...♜g3+
- 73 1. ♖xf8+
- 74 1. ♙xb7+
- 75 1. ♜d6+
- 76 1. ♖h7+
- 77 1. ♖d8+