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2 Your First Chess Games

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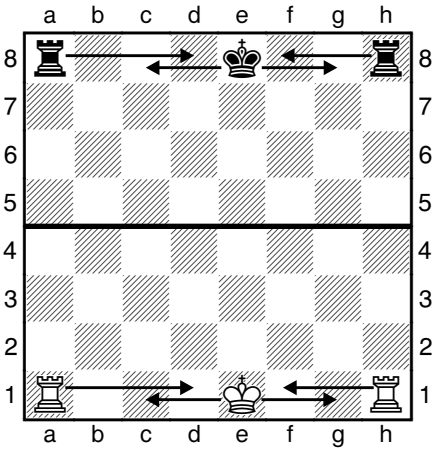
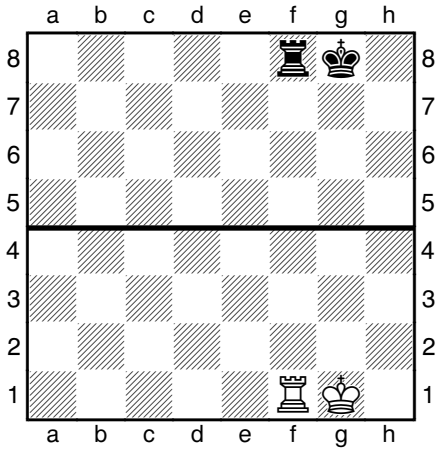
Castling

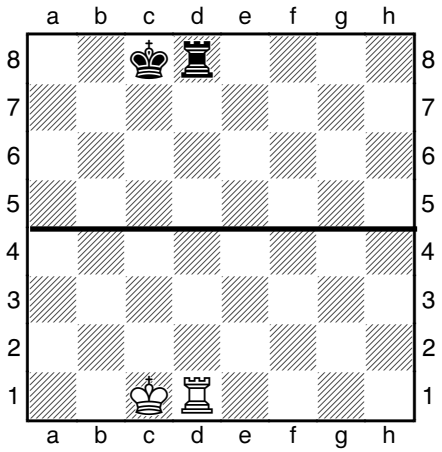
Castling is a special move whose purpose is to increase the safety of the king and bring a rook quickly into play. It consists of moving the king two squares towards either the king's rook (known as **castling kingside**), or towards the queen's rook (**castling queenside**), and immediately afterwards moving that rook to the adjacent square on the other side of the king. This manoeuvre counts as a single move, and it can only be done once in each game. While there is no rule saying that you have to castle, it is very useful, and something you will want to do in most games.

In the next three diagrams these manoeuvres can be clearly seen.



Here we see the initial positions of the kings and rooks. In the next two diagrams, both kings are now castled (kingside and queenside, respectively).





Besides safeguarding the king, since the struggle normally starts on the central files, another purpose of castling is to activate the rook, i.e. bring it to a central file, where it is usually more useful than on one of the edge files.

In chess notation, castling is recorded with two zeros separated by a dash (0-0) in the case

of castling kingside, and with three zeros, separated by dashes (0-0-0), for queenside castling. The number of zeroes is the same as the number of squares moved by the rook.

Rules for Castling

The legal conditions to be able to castle are these:

- The king and the rook must not have moved previously
- There must not be any pieces on the squares through which king and rook must pass
- The king must not be in check or, in other words, castling **cannot be a response** to a check
- The squares through which the king will pass must not be attacked by an enemy piece

Material Values of the Pieces

Just as in life, where our parents give us our basic values, in chess some rules of thumb are necessary. Besides, chess is a complex game, so any standards or values to guide us are welcome!

Thus, knowing the rules of the game and the moves of the pieces is not enough, since the student would then be at his opponent's mercy when playing a game.

The first material standard for a beginner to consider is the scale of **material values** of the pieces. Although they cannot be taken as absolutes, they are useful as a first point of reference. If we give the pawn the value of 1 point, then the values for each piece are as follows:

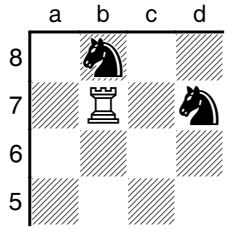
Pawn	1
Knight	3
Bishop	3
Rook	5
Queen	9
King	3½ or infinite

The value of the king deserves special consideration. Since the game depends on the king's survival, its value can be considered to be infinite. The above value of 3½ should be understood to represent the king's comparative worth as a fighting piece, in positions (generally in the endgame) where it can be used as a fighting piece.

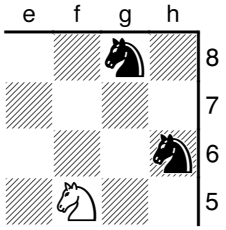
From the above scale we can establish simple relations between different pieces. For instance: three pawns are equivalent to a knight or a bishop. One rook and one pawn are equal to two knights. The queen is somewhat weaker than two rooks, etc.

It is important to appreciate that these values are relative, since everything will always depend on the concrete position in which the different forces operate on the board. However, you should always bear in mind this table of values, especially when considering sequences of moves in which pieces are taken or exchanged.

Let's now look at some examples, so that you can practise calculating the worth of the material captured or exchanged.

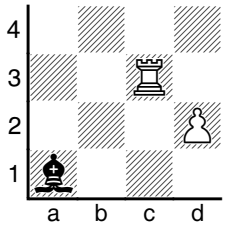


The white rook can capture either of the opponent's knights, but if so, the remaining knight could in turn take the rook. The result of the operation: White has eliminated a piece valued at 3 points, but Black would eliminate a piece valued at 5 points. Balance sheet: -2 points. Consequently, the exchange is unfavourable to White.

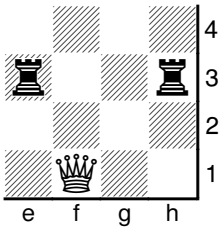


The white knight can take the black knight on h6 and, in turn, would be taken by the one on g8. This exchanging operation is equal, since a

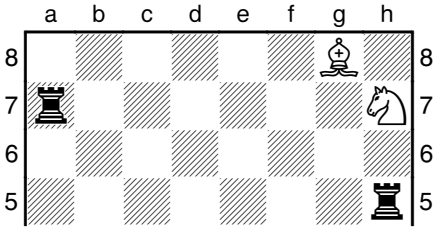
piece is exchanged for another of the same value. Theoretically speaking, it is neither profitable nor harmful.



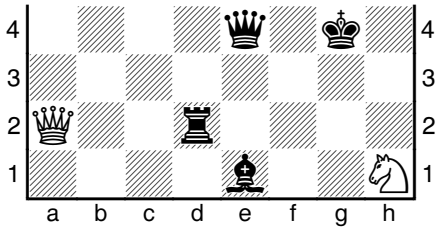
The black bishop can take the rook on c3, but will then be taken by the d2-pawn. However, this transaction is interesting, since Black would have taken material valued at 5 points, whereas he will only have lost material valued at 3 points. Balance sheet: 2 points. A good deal.



The white queen can take the black rook on h3, but since the rook is protected by its colleague on e3, and since the queen (9 points) is much more valuable than a rook (5 points), in that case taking would be a bad deal.



Either rook can take the white knight, then the bishop can take the rook and finally the remaining rook can then take the bishop. For instance: 1...♖axh7 2 ♗xh7 ♖xh7. Balance-sheet of the operation: three pieces have disappeared from the board, and only a black rook has survived. Calculation: 6 (3+3) – 5 = 1. A small profit.



Here the white queen is attacked by the rook on d2, but the best solution for White is to play 1 ♕xd2, since after 1...♗xd2 he can play 2 ♘f2+ ♔f4 3 ♘xe4 ♔xe4, and the balance-sheet is a positive one for White, as he has won a queen and a rook, whereas Black has only won a queen and a knight. Consequently we have a 14 (9+5) – 12 (9+3) = 2 points advantage.

As was previously mentioned, this type of calculation is always necessary when considering any manoeuvre in which captures or exchange of pieces take place.

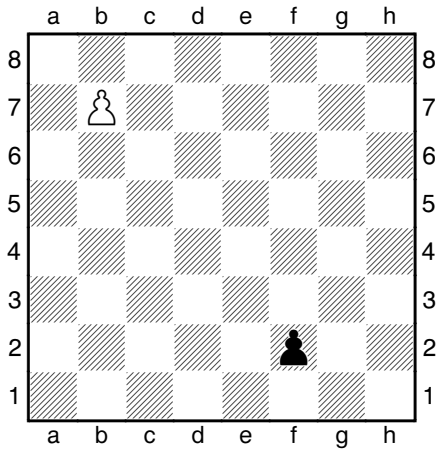
Pawn Promotion

The pawn is a foot-soldier and its main purpose should be to survive in any conflict, including chess. But in our harmless war the pawn may have ambitions. He can even be transformed into a powerful queen, a right that any pawn has if it reaches its eighth rank. In fact, the pawn can be converted into any piece of its own colour (queen, rook, bishop or knight), except the king (a sacred and irreplaceable piece). As a small price for its exploit, it will lose its nature as a pawn, something that, by the way, would not be of any use, since on the last file a pawn does not attack anything and would be a kind of zombie or living-dead piece. Note that you can't delay the choice of piece; the move is not completed until you have replaced the pawn with queen, rook, bishop or knight.

We should add that the conversion of a pawn that reaches the last rank does not depend on whether the chosen piece is present on the board. If a pawn reaches the last rank and his side still has a queen, the player can still convert his pawn into a new queen. Many tournament chess

sets come with a spare queen of each colour for this purpose, though this is just for convenience. In theory each side could have nine queens on the board at the same time! (the initial one, plus another eight resulting from the eight pawn promotions).

Thus the pawn, despite initially being the most modest chess piece, is in fact one of the most dynamic elements in chess, precisely for its ability to convert itself into a powerful piece, which can often prove to be a decisive factor.



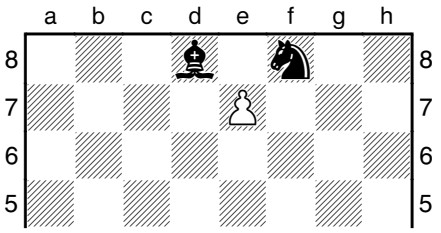
Here we have two cases of pawn promotion. The white b7-pawn can advance to b8 and be transformed into any piece the player chooses. The black f2-pawn can reach the first rank, and thus the promotion square, f1, also converting itself into any other piece.

Assuming that the players would each convert the promoted pawn into a queen, these moves would be written in algebraic notation as follows: b8♕ and ...f1♕, respectively.

If the pawn is promoted into another piece, the symbol of that piece should be written, i.e. b8♖, b8♗, or b8♘.

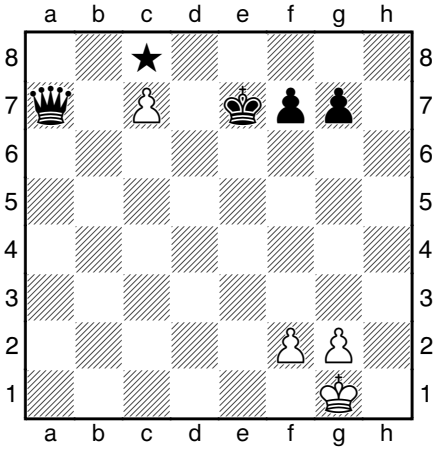
A more curious case of promotion (and also more attractive for the player who achieves it) is when a pawn reaches the promotion square moving off his normal track, in other words by taking an enemy piece.

In the following diagram, the white pawn can promote on three different squares: e8, d8 and f8. If promoted on d8 it will, at the same time, take the bishop. If on f8, it will take the



knight. Assuming that White decides to promote to a queen, these two moves should be written exd8♕ and exf8♕.

So far we haven't yet seen the best deal that we can make with the pawn promotion. See the next diagram.



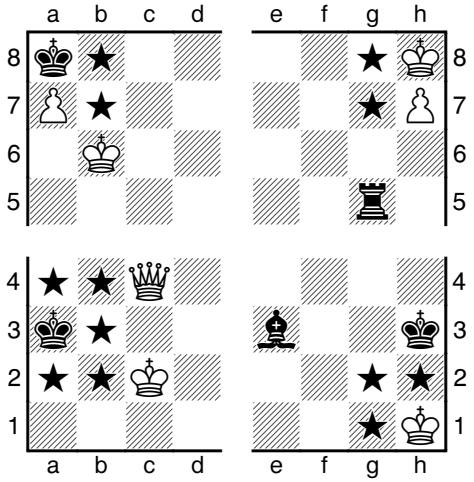
If White promotes his c7-pawn to a queen, then the position will be balanced, since both sides will have a queen and two pawns. But if White sees the possibility of promoting to a knight, then he will discover buried treasure: 1 c8♘+, since in so doing the knight is attacking both the king and queen (which is known as a fork), and after the black king moves, it will take the queen, 2 ♘xa7, with a winning endgame for White, thanks to a material advantage of 3 points (the value of the knight).

Stalemate

When the king of the side to move, although not in check, cannot legally move to any square,

and nor can any piece on his side make a move, we have a **stalemate**. In that case, the game is immediately drawn.

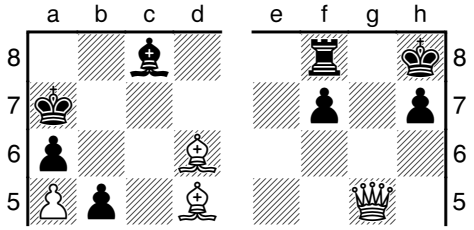
In the four positions that follow you can see examples of stalemate.



As you can see, the kings on a8, h8, a3 and h1, it being their turn to move and **without being in check**, cannot make any legal move, since all the squares to which they could move (marked with stars) are attacked by enemy pieces. Consequently, the four positions are drawn.

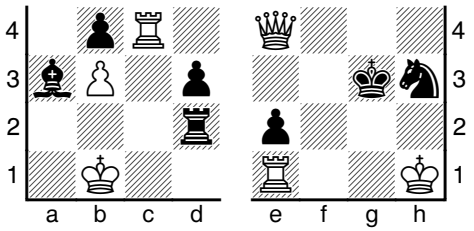
Perpetual Check

In chess we give the name **perpetual check** to a series of checks that cannot be avoided and that force a draw. In the following diagrams, perpetual check is clearly illustrated.



On the left, White delivers perpetual check by using his dark-squared bishop: 1 ♗c5+ ♔b8 2 ♗d6+ ♔a7 3 ♗c5+, etc. In this position it is important that the b7- and a8-squares are controlled by the other bishop on the long diagonal.

On the right, White can force perpetual check by 1 ♕f6+ ♔g8 2 ♕g5+ ♔h8 3 ♕f6+, etc.



On the left, the white king cannot escape from the perpetual attack by the black rook: 1...♖d1+ 2 ♔a2 ♖d2+ 3 ♔b1 (or 3 ♔a1) 3...♖d1+, etc.

On the right, the white king cannot avoid perpetual check by the black knight: 1...♘f2+ 2 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 3 ♔h1, etc. Here the black e2-pawn that controls the escape-square on f1 is important.

In all these cases the game should logically end in a draw, since the continuous repetition of checks creates a sort of cul-de-sac, and the players must conclude a peace agreement.

How Games are Drawn

The aim of a chess game is to win, conquering the opponent's king. However, not all games are won or lost. On many occasions both opponents have played with the same accuracy or have committed equally bad mistakes, so that the fight leads to positions which are very difficult to decide in favour of either side. In those cases, the games usually end in a draw.

The game is a draw in the following cases:

- When both kings are left alone on the board
- In the endgame ♔+♗ vs ♔, without any other material
- In the endgame ♔+♘ vs ♔, without any other material
- In an endgame in which each side has a bishop of the same colour (i.e. moving along squares of the same colour), without any other material
- When the position is stalemate