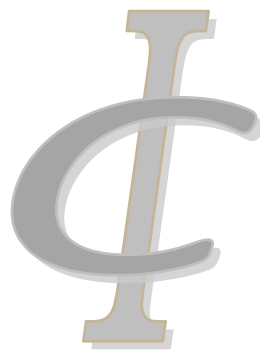# Institute of Chess

Revision Guide to

LEVEL 1

The contents were written and arranged by

GM Chris Ward
FM Desmond Tan.

This revision guide is dedicated to the memory of

IM Bob Wade OBE (1921 ~ 2008),

who devoted his life to chess.

Institute of Chess
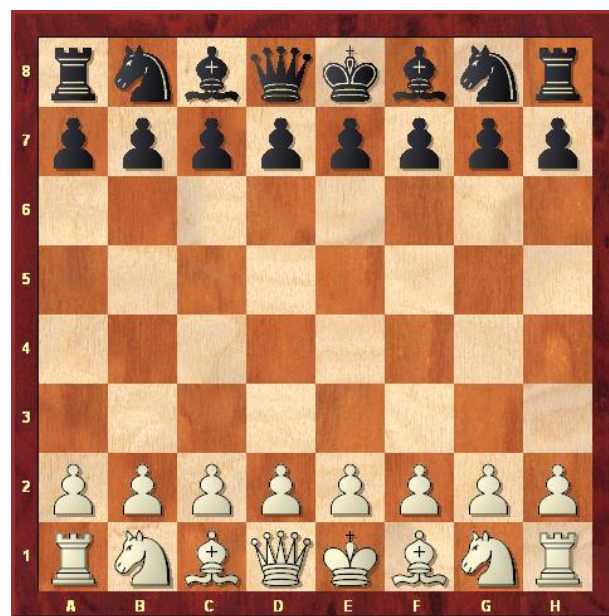# **Level 1 Coaching Course**
by GM Chris Ward and FM Desmond Tan

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The Chess Board

The game of chess is played between two players on a board with 64 squares, 32 of which are white (or light) and 32 of which are black (or dark).

As can be seen with the coordinates above, every square has a name. The four squares in the very centre of the board are d4, e4, d5 and e5.

When you first set up a chess board, always remember 'white on the right' and specifically the square 'a1' (occupied above by a white rook) should be in the bottom left-hand corner of the player with the white pieces.

White starts off the game and then the players make alternate moves until either somebody has won or the game is agreed drawn.

You are about to learn how each of the pieces move but for now note that the king tends to differ in looks from the queen in having a cross on top of it! As a white queen begins the game on a white square (d1) and the black queen starts on a black square (d8), it is worth remembering 'The queen always starts on her own colour'.

The Pieces

The King

Although it is certainly not the most powerful piece, we are going to start with a king because it is of the most importance. Everything will be explained in time but for now please note that whatever position is shown on a chess board, it must always include the two kings.
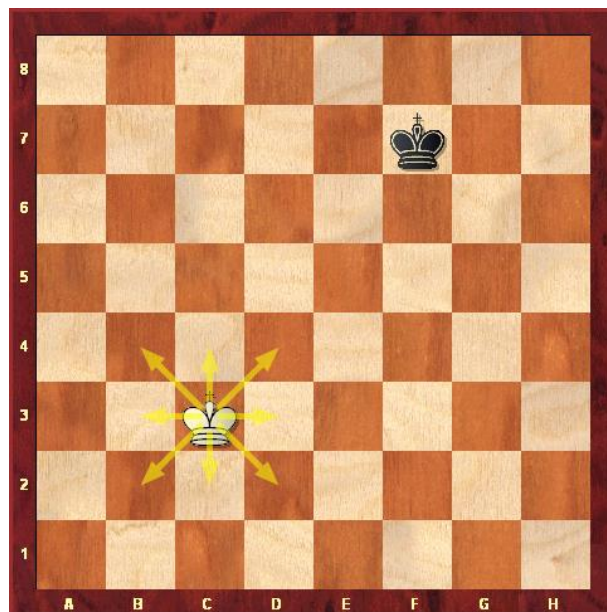
A king can move one square in any direction. Above the white king (or monarch as it is sometimes known) is on c3. The arrows illustrate that it could move to b2. b3, b4, c4, d4, d3, d2 or c2. Similarly, the black king has each of the 8 neighbouring squares available to it.

With the exception of pawns (coming up later!) each piece moves and captures enemy pieces in exactly the same way. Above if there were, for example, a white piece on e6, then, if it was Black's turn, his king would be able to take it.

Two very important things to remember are that **kings cannot be taken** and **two opposing kings cannot move next to each other.**

The Rook

The vertical lines on a chessboard are known as **files** and the horizontal lines are known as **ranks**.

Below the white rook is on the **d-file**, specifically the square d5. Rooks are rather easy to operate, as they move (or capture enemy pieces) any number of squares left, right, up or down.
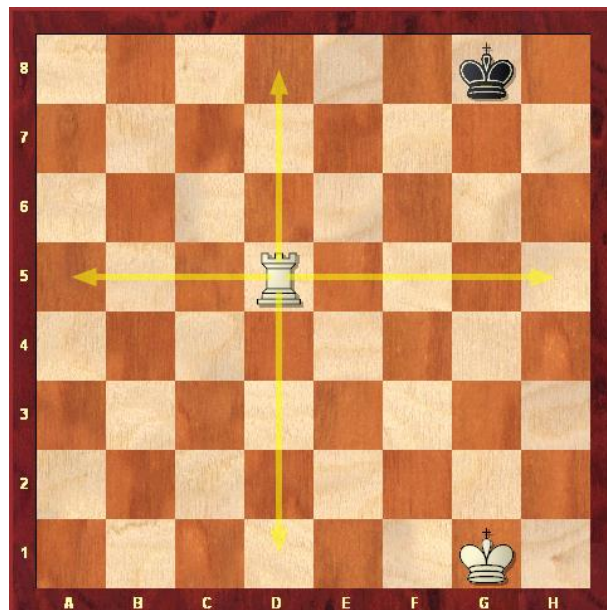
As they have the ability to travel from one end of the board to the other in one turn, rooks are **long-range pieces** and, in describing their movement, we say that rooks move along ranks and files.

The Bishop

The diagram below illustrates how a bishop moves **diagonally**. Please take care when moving a bishop otherwise its direction might end up looking more like a banana! Making any move that is not allowed (such as a bishop banana!) is known as an **illegal move** and upon being spotted, must be retracted.
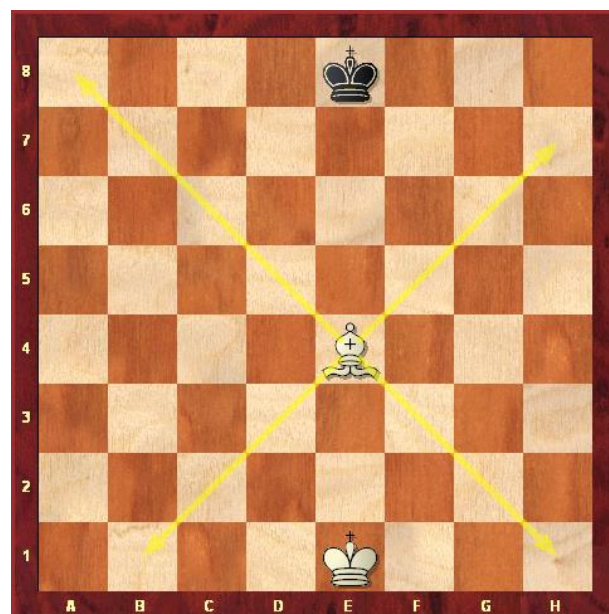
Note that however many times you move a bishop, it can never change the colour of square that it operates on. However, as we saw in the very first diagram, each player begins the game with two bishops; one that travels on the dark squares and another that travels on the light squares. Above demonstrates the options available to White's light-squared bishop.

The Queen

Put simply, the queen is like a rook and a bishop rolled into one. It moves along the ranks, files and diagonals as far as it likes.
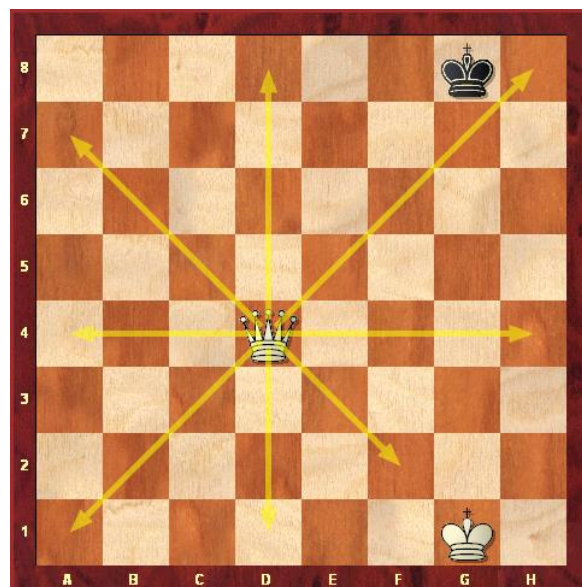
Illustrated by the yellow arrows, above you can see the numerous options available to the white queen from the square d4. It should come as no surprise that her majesty is considered to be the most powerful piece.

The Knight

It is usually the knight (not horse!) that young juniors have trouble getting to grips with. The knight moves in an 'L' shape going two squares straight in one direction and then one square straight in another. Below the white knight has the maximum 8 squares available to it but the black knight on a1 only has the option of moving to b3 or c2.
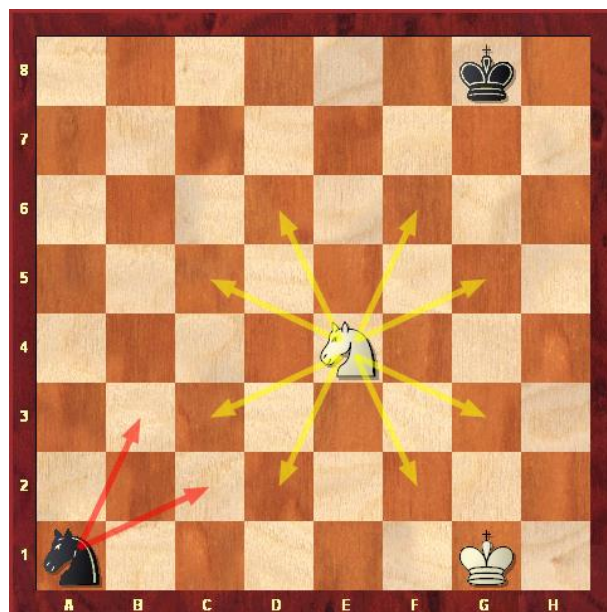
Knights are clearly more active when positioned centrally and if you are having trouble moving the knight, remember that it always travels from a light square to a dark square or from a dark square to a light square but never to the same colour.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about knights is their ability to 'jump' over other pieces. Note though that that is indeed how they move, leaving one square and landing on the next and not capturing every piece in its path!

The Pawn

Pawns differ from every other piece in that they capture in a different way from which they move.

First up then they move straight forward. Each side begins the game with eight pawns and on their first turn they each have the choice of whether to advance one or two squares forward. After any given pawn has moved once though it can then only move one square at a time.

In contrast they capture enemy pieces one square diagonally ahead of them.
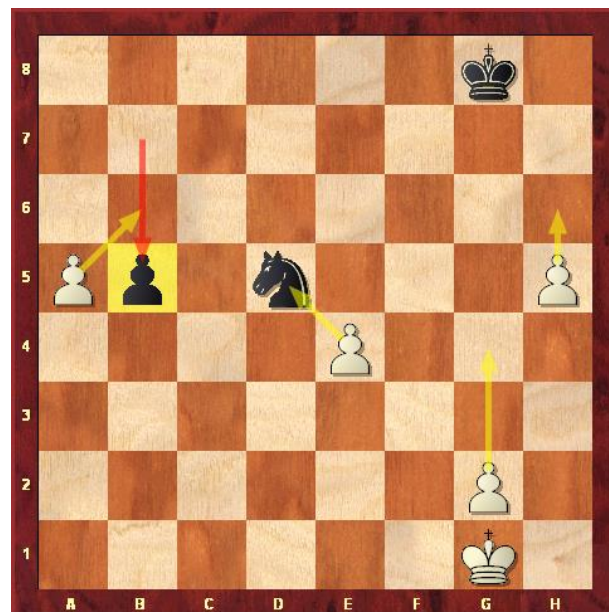
In the above position I would like to discuss each white pawn in turn going from right to left:

The h-pawn has just one option; it can only advance to h6.

The g-pawn however is currently on its starting square and can therefore choose between advancing one or two squares.

White's e-pawn could advance to e5 or, as the arrow points out, it could also capture the black knight leaving the white pawn on d5 and the black knight off the board!

At first it may look as though the only option available to the a-pawn is to advance to a6 but in fact if Black's last move had been to advance his own pawn two squares from b7 to b5 (and remember that as we are looking the white pawns go up the board and the black ones down) then there is also the option of taking that pawn as though it had only moved one square. This is because of a special rule called '**en passant**'. Essentially then en passant is when a pawn is on its 5th row (rank 5 if it is a white pawn but 4 if it is a black one) and an enemy pawn advances two squares to emerge next to it. The attacking pawn can then capture it as though it had only moved one square. In our example then the white pawn would end up on b6 and the black b5-pawn would be removed from the board. En passant is not compulsory but can only be done on the move immediately after an enemy pawn advance two squares.

Perhaps the most appealing thing about pawns though is that if they make it to the end of the board then they achieve what is known as a **promotion** and can turn into any other piece that they like except a king. Indeed, they cannot then remain as a pawn, with a queen being the most likely transformation candidate. Theoretically then I suppose White could actually get 9 queens on the board; the one he started with and eight that were promoted by pawns. Although that may sound like an attractive prospect, you will however learn that you should not begin a game of chess with the strategy of trying to promote as many pawns as you can as quickly as possible!

The Game

Throughout this and other guides you will notice how the diagrams depicting the board positions may be different. This merely reflects how you will no doubt come across the game in the future. Boards may be made out of plastic or wood and some will have the algebraic coordinates on and others might not. It is important that you understand that in the latter case it doesn't change the fact that 'a1' is in the bottom left-hand corner of the player with the white pieces or put in another way is the starting square of White's queen's rook. Whether or not I am wearing a name tag, my name is still 'Chris'!

As plenty of concentration is required, chess should be played in a quiet environment and although everyone likes winning, respect must always be paid to one's opponent. No celebrating then in his or her presence and no kicking under the table! In chess competitions referees or arbiters are present and to limit the length of games, chess clocks may be used.

Although you may agree not to enforce it in friendly games, one rule destined to cause arguments amongst the dishonest or visually impaired is 'touch and move'. Once you touch a piece then provided it is legal to do so, you must move it. Similarly, once you have moved a piece and let go of it, then you have completed your move. Whilst you still have it in your grasp you can still change where you intend to move a piece but it is of course still touch and move.
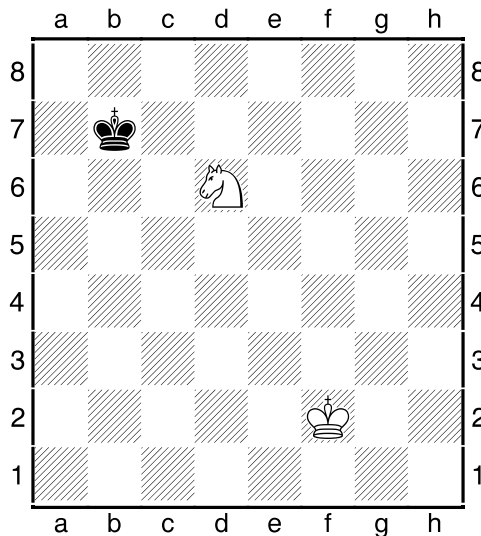
Check

If you are to progress in chess, then it is absolutely vital to get to grips with the concept of check. Having spent a lot of time teaching young beginners I know that it is one of the hardest features of the game for them to come to terms with.

NOTE: Put simply, 'check' is when a king is attacked by an enemy piece.
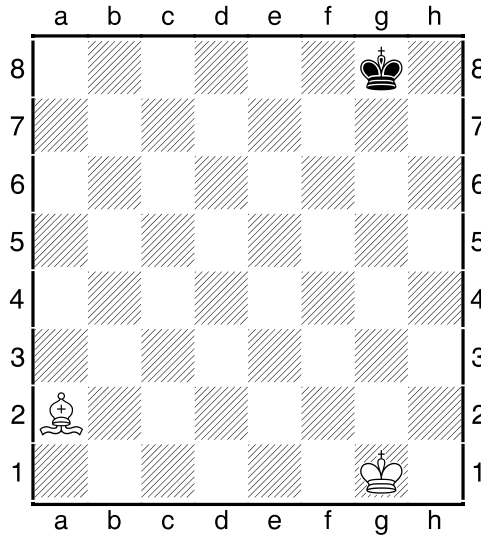
Above sees the bishop checking from a long distance

The white knight checks the black king

In the diagrams (no longer with coordinates) the black king finds itself attacked by enemy pieces, first by the bishop along the a2-g8 diagonal and secondly in an 'L'-shaped distance by the knight.

Whereas a player has an option of whether to ignore or do something about any other attacked piece, the king is a law unto itself.

**WARNING:** When a king is in check, it must somehow escape it.

The three general ways in which to get out of check are:

1) Take the enemy piece that is doing the checking.
2) Move the king out of the way.
3) Block the check with any friendly piece.

In any given position one of these methods may be more applicable than another or may even be forced by a process of elimination.

Common sense would dictate that if it is possible to take the enemy piece doing the checking for nothing then that would be preferable but it isn't always that straightforward.

NOTE: It is not possible to block a check from an enemy knight.
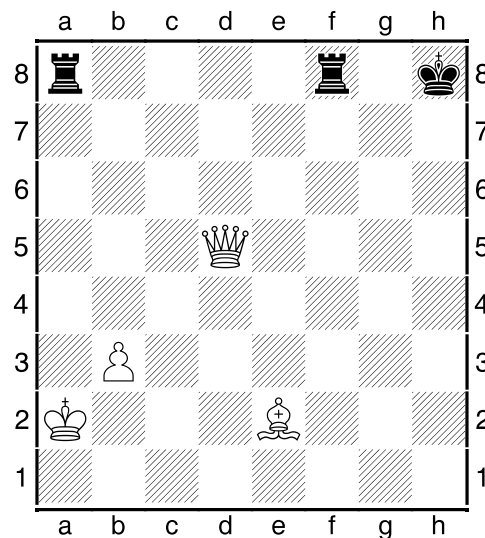
Take, block or move?

Above the black rook on a8 is checking the white king and White has options for us to investigate:

a) He could take the offending piece with his queen. This would be a good idea were the rook unprotected and hence '**en prise**' as it is commonly known. However, as it is well guarded by its compatriot on f8, it would simply be replaced with White effectively having lost a queen for a rook and once again facing the problem of how to get out of check.

b) White could block the check either by sliding his queen over to a5 or by plonking his bishop on a6. Although either of those moves would temporarily solve the getting out of check problem, they would both be suicidal, as the black rook could take them for nothing.

c) The white king could escape the a-file check by nudging one square to either b1 or b2. Both seem satisfactory but, as this is an endgame situation, I would favour not returning to the back rank.

The conclusion then is that White should play 1 Kb2 leading to the position below.
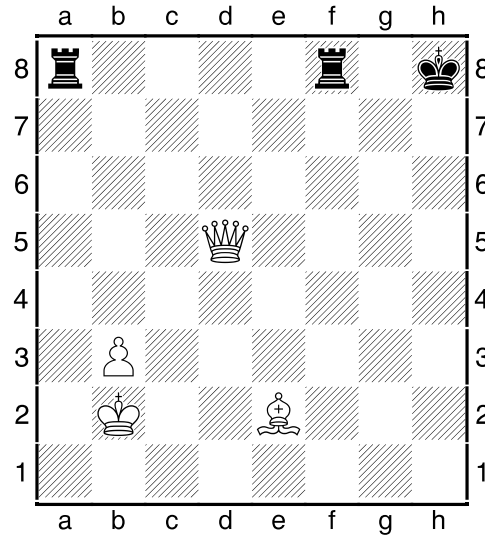
The difficulty then (and to be honest it's not that difficult!) is understanding that a king is different from the rest of the army and not just because it moves differently. Kings cannot be taken and it is compulsory to move out of check.

NOTE: There is therefore (as juniors so commonly seem to say) no taking, killing, or destroying kings. There must always be two kings on a chessboard and one is NOT allowed to move a king into check.
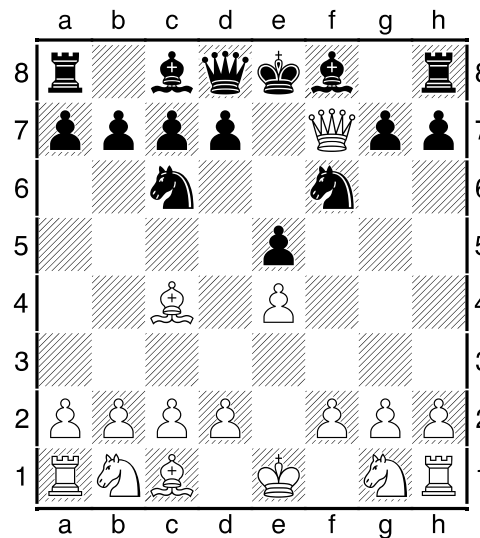
Checkmate

If it is not possible to take, block or move away to escape a check then 'checkmate' has occurred. Although youngsters very much enjoy taking their opponent's pieces and then commonly hoarding them like a squirrel with nuts, the actual aim of a game of chess is to achieve checkmate. Different players will set about achieving this aim in different ways. Beginners may set about trying to attack their opponent's king as quickly as possible, hoping to give mate in as few moves as possible, whereas Grandmasters may frequently appear to ignore the enemy monarch during the opening stage of the game, instead preferring to develop their army to sensible squares and tuck their own king into safety.

Let us take a look at the famous 4-move checkmate:

1 e4 e5 2 Qh5 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Qxf7 mate
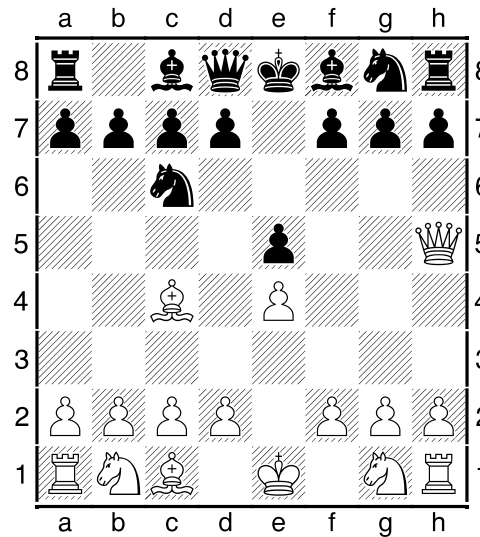

The white queen and bishop combine.

Here is what we can conclude:

1) It certainly is checkmate! The white queen attacks the black king which has nowhere to go. We can see that there is insufficient room to block the check and the queen can't be taken by the black king because it would be putting itself into check by the bishop.

2) Black was very careless, as he failed to deal with White's threat and that cost him the game and an early bath.

3) Whilst Black may be embarrassed by this miniature and should endeavour to ensure that there is no repetition, in contrast White was probably most pleased that his 'plan' had worked out. It has probably worked for him before and it probably will do so again!

4) Perhaps White is enjoying this way of playing and after all everyone likes winning! However, if he is to progress to any decent level of play then he will ultimately have to change his strategy.

TIP: The squares f7 and f2 are typically weak points in the early stage of a game and one should be careful to ensure that a disaster doesn't occur there.

If Black had guarded his f7-pawn or prevented the white queen from landing on f7 (e.g. through **3...g6**) then White would have lost time through having to move his queen. As the queen is such a valuable piece, then when it is attacked by enemy piece other than the queen, it has to keep moving. Regarding White's 'going for a quick checkmate' strategy, my view is that if his opponent was going to fall for such a trick then the chances are that he was going to win through more conventional ways anyway. However, if Black wasn't going to be fooled in such a manner then he was destined to suffer for his early queen moves and would clearly have been better off employing more sensible moves early on.

The fact is that there are no special prizes for winning a game as quickly as possible.
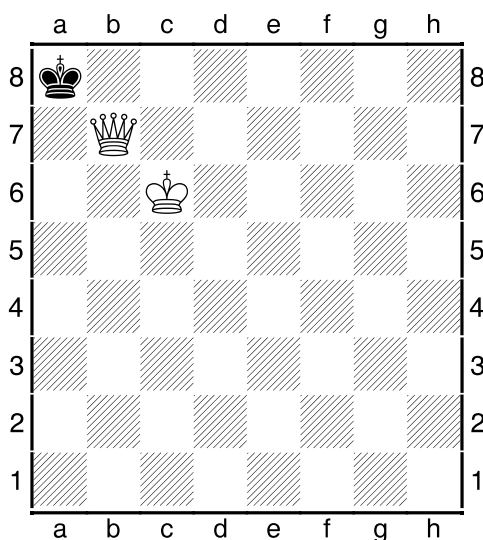
One king protects; one king is mated!
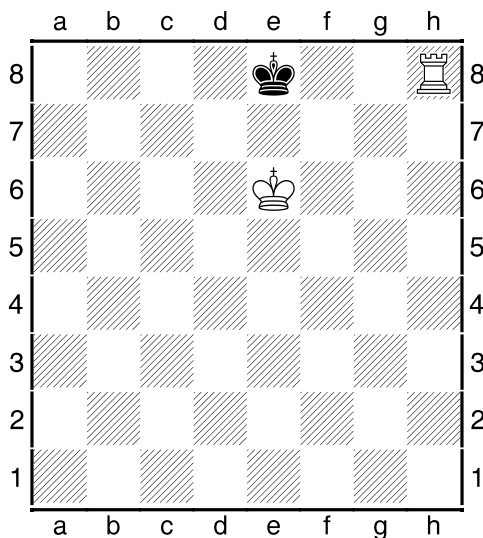
A back rank mate

Above are two more examples of checkmate. In my experience the most common type of checkmate sees a supported queen checking a king on the edge. In the top position the white queen is protected by its compatriot king. As a king cannot move next to another king, the black monarch is deprived of any options.

In the second position the black king is checked by the white rook along the back rank. As it would still be check if the black king tried to move left or right, his majesty needs to escape his back rank. Unfortunately, its opposite number prevents it from doing just that.
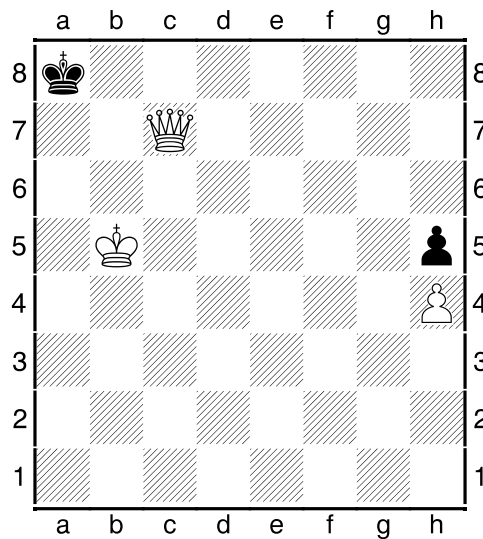
Stalemate

Young juniors also have trouble coming to terms with this concept. 'Stalemate' is when one side is unable to make any legal moves but is not actually in check.
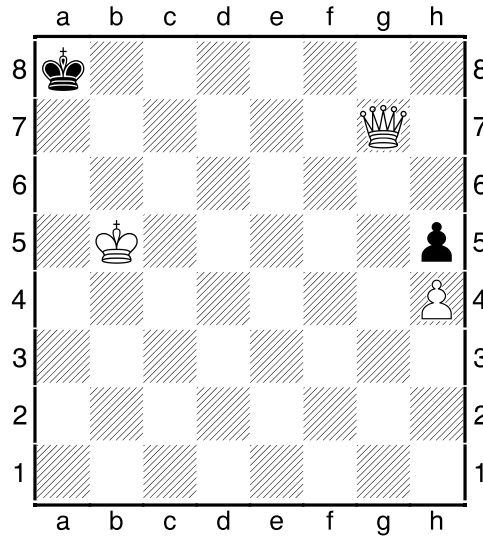
Don't get complacent!

The above example is a mini-disaster. White has successfully trapped the enemy king on the back rank. Depriving the enemy king of squares is part and parcel of forcing it to the edge when attempting to deliver checkmate with a king and a queen against a king. Unfortunately, the move **1 Qc7??** leading to the diagram below has gone one step too far.

Now Black cannot legally move his king whilst his pawn is blocked too. If he were in check it would be checkmate, but, as he is not, it is stalemate. Instead of 1 Qc7?? White could have set about eliminating Black's remaining pawn and then promoting his own, but 1 Kb6 would have settled the matter rather quicker. Black's only move would have been 1...Kb8 when 2 Qb7 would have been mate.

Strong players tend to give each other a lot of respect and will frequently resign for reasons that a complete novice will not comprehend. At beginner level though the existence of the stalemate rule means that even in the most desperate of situations there is hope and in such an eventuality, the game is declared a draw.

WARNING: When moving in for the kill, always make sure, if you are not checkmating your opponent on that turn, that they have at least somewhere to move. Basically then, BEWARE stalemate.
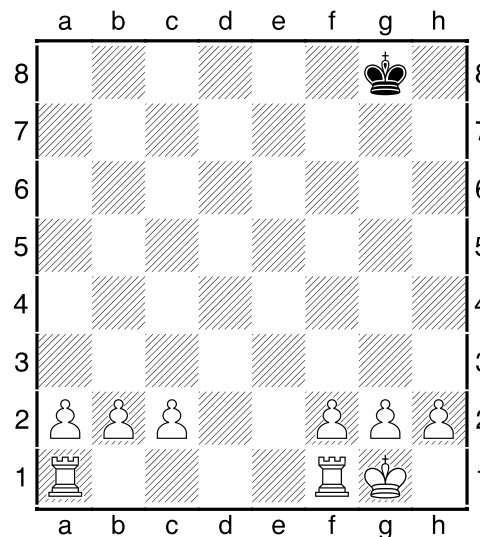
Castling

Castling is the only move that involves using two of your pieces at the same time. Essentially it is performed with a king and a rook, **neither of which have previously moved**.
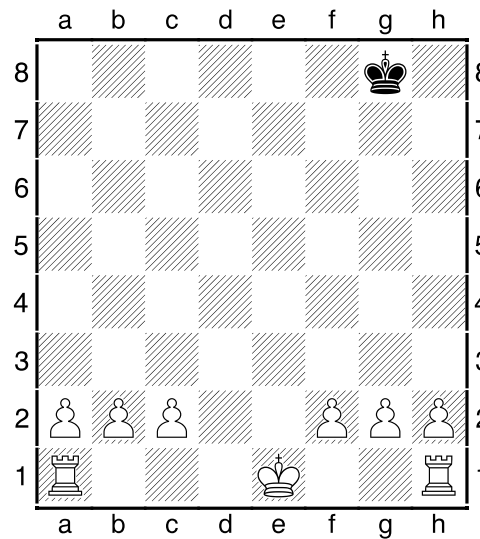

Above you will notice that the coordinates have reappeared, as I observe that in this particular position White has the option to castle on either the **kingside** or the **queenside**.

The physical motion of castling involves picking up the king and moving it two squares towards the rook and then picking up the rook and moving it directly to the other side of the king.

In the above diagram White has taken the option to castle on the kingside whereas below shows what the position would be if he selected castling queenside instead.
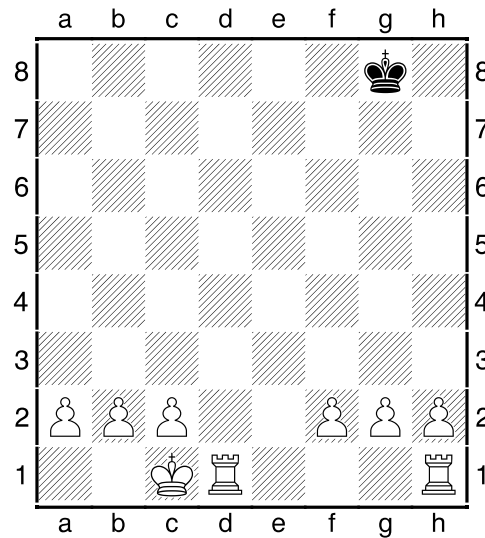
The other important thing to know about castling is that **a king cannot castle into, out of or through check**.

In the position below it is obviously Black's turn, as the king is in check from the white light-squared bishop.
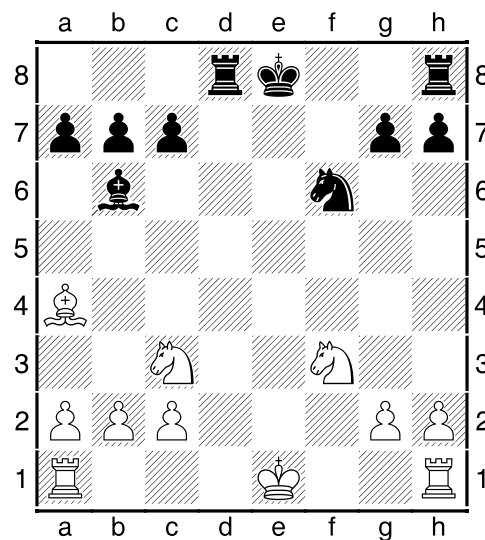
Although there is a clear path between the black king and the black king's rook Black is not allowed to castle to escape check. Provided that he gets out of check without moving his king (for example by blocking the check by advancing his c-pawn to c6), then he would be allowed to castle next turn.

As things stand White cannot castle on either side. To try to do so on the kingside would leave the king on g1 in check from the black bishop. Furthermore, he won't be allowed to castle on the queenside either whilst a black piece (in this case the d8-rook) controls the d1-square. Although the king would end up on c1 after castling queenside, it effectively has to travel through the d1-square and so that would count as castling 'through' check.

You will learn over time why it is generally a good idea to try to castle early on in a game, as it tucks the king into safety and helps bring a rook into play. Nevertheless, the first thing that you must get to grips with is when castling is or isn't allowed. Do make sure that you understand the rule of castling and note the seemingly common mistaken belief that you cannot castle if you have been in check. That would only be the case if the king had moved to escape the check. If the check had been blocked or the checking piece taken then provided the other stipulations are met, future castling is definitely allowed.

Illegal Moves and the Value of the Pieces

When one first learns the game one is taught the following score chart:

Pawn = 1 point
Knight = 3 points
Bishop = 3 points
Rook = 5 points
Queen = 9 points

As we have already established that a king cannot be taken, it doesn't have a price although that is certainly not to say that it is not valuable. When I was a junior I once played a computer in a competition (they wouldn't be allowed to enter these days!) and reached an unlikely endgame position of a king (obviously!) and 7 pawns each. Whilst I understood that my king would be very useful coming out into action to try to capture enemy pawns, the metal box that was my opponent kept his own king tucked away in the corner. I promptly guzzled 3 of its pawns before its monarch suddenly appeared to spring into action. Clearly too late, after I enjoyed advancing several of my pawns closer to promotion, its embarrassed human operator soon resigned on its behalf. Later he explained that the computer was programmed to 'keep its king safe' until it had fewer than 5 pawns remaining!

Alas computers and computer programmes tend not to play like that anymore and have much more complex criteria to work with. When playing a game, a human has to use his judgement to decide whether a king should be:

a) Guarded and safe.
b) Tucked away but with little or no resources around to defend.
c) Brought into action. Endgames are prime suspects for such action but it could be earlier.

NOTE: An **illegal move** is quite simply a move that contradicts the rules of the game. It's not exactly an imprisonment offence but it is not allowed and nothing good can come out of an attempt to employ one. Indeed, in competition play, typically the offender is penalised in some way.

Returning to the above statement about kings not being able to be taken, remember that they could not be put into a square which is attacked in the first place anyway. To do so would be an illegal move and if your opponent makes one then you simply have to retract it. In tournament chess there could be a penalty and at the very least the 'touch and move' rule will be enforced if possible.

The queens and rooks are referred to as the **major** pieces and the knights and bishops as **minor** pieces. As you gain more experience in the game you will learn about the relative strengths and weaknesses of each piece. Depending upon the position, a piece may appear to exceed its supposed value (e.g. a bishop destined to win an enemy queen) or be worth less (e.g. a knight trapped in the corner). The chart then is a bit of a generalisation but with all other things being equal, a pretty fair reflection.