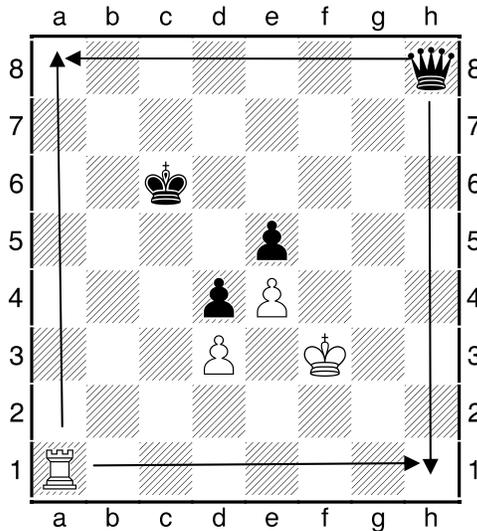


Think Chess 4 Kids



Elementary Mates 002: The Back Rank Mate

Welcome again to the Elementary Mates lessons. Today we are going to look at the back rank mate. Here the enemy King will be trapped against the side of the board and a check will be delivered along that side by a Rook or a Queen. Only these two pieces are capable of this feat. This is because these are the two pieces that can attack or see along the ranks and files.

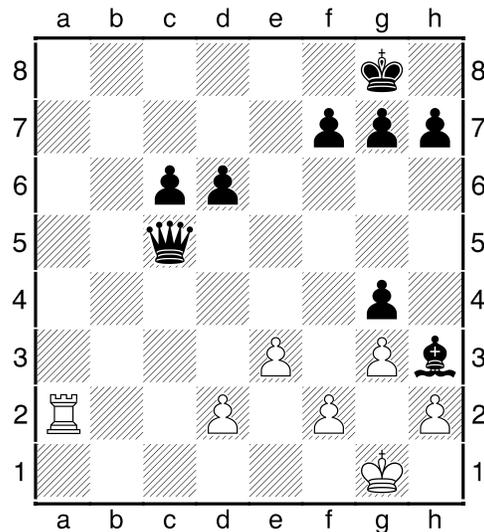


Notice how the White Rook looks along the first rank and up the "a" file. And the Black Queen looks along the eighth rank and down the "h" file. Since only these two pieces can do this they are the ones that are to be used to deliver a back rank mate.

Remember: Back rank mates require two things.

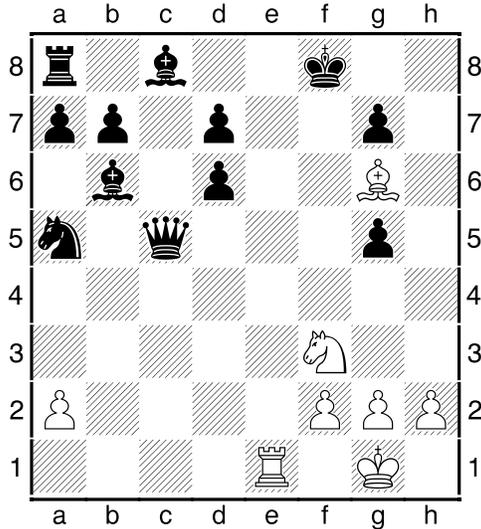
First: The mated King must be pinned to the edge of the board unable to move towards the center.

Second: An enemy Queen or Rook must be on that same edge looking at that King delivering a check that can't be blocked or captured.

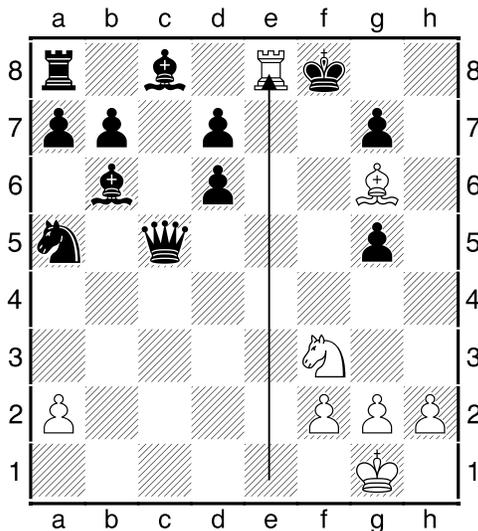


Here is an example of two basic back rank mates. Both White or Black could easily checkmate it only depends who's move it is. If it is White's turn then his Rook on a2 will move to a8 delivering a check. The Black King is hopelessly trapped behind his own pawns and is checkmated. None of the Black pieces can come to his rescue. If it is Black to move then he sends the Queen on c5 to c1 delivering her check. The poor White King thought he could escape to g2 but the Black Bishop

on h3 is eyeballing that square.
White is checkmated.

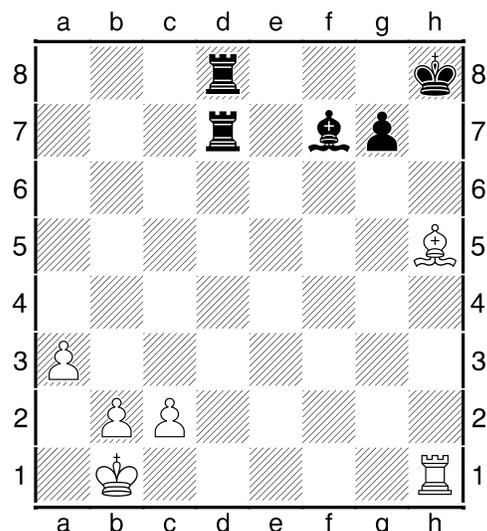


Here is an example of a more difficult back rank mate. It's White to move. Notice that the Black King is trapped against the side of the board by a combination of White's Bishop, Rook and Black's own pawn. The Bishop sees the mate square on e8 and now White just needs to send the Rook to that square to deliver the mate!



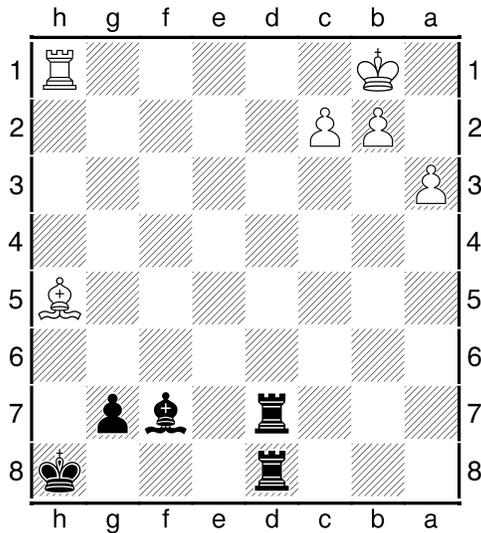
Thump! Re8 sends the Black King his check and he is mated.

Before we go I want to point out that the back rank mate is one of the most used all tactics by beginning players. All too often the novice player fails to leave his King a way off the back rank and is surprised by a Rook or Queen who flies in from clear across the other side of the board and BLAM their King is checkmated. It can be very embarrassing. Guard your back rank or give your King a route to escape the threat. In many cases you just need to guard the open files and diagonals that end on your back rank. The practice worksheet will extensively cover dozens of back rank mates that occur from all possible directions. Some come from real games and some are composed. All lead to mate on the back rank in one to four moves.

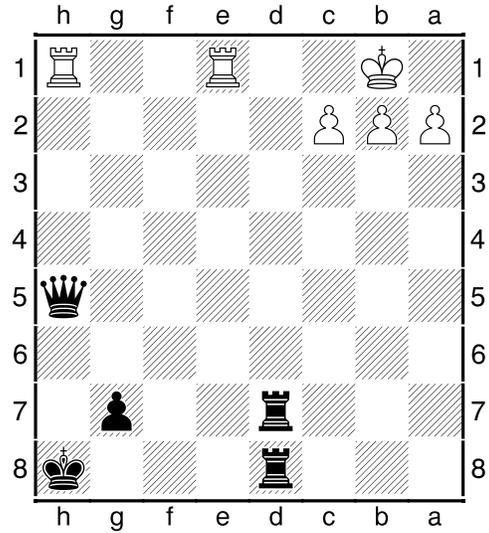


This example is a mate in one for White.

White uses a discovered check with his Bishop on h5 capturing the Black Bishop on f7. The check is delivered along the h-file by the Rook on h1. Black's King cannot leave the file via g8 because of the White Bishop now on f7.



Here is the same problem with Black to move. It is mate in two moves. Black uses the battering ram tactic by sending his first Rook on d7 to d1 to deliver the required check along the 1st rank. White's King cannot escape to a2 because of the Black Bishop on f7. White must take the Black Rook on d1 with his Rook on h1. Black then unloads the remaining Rook on d8 and captures the White Rook on d1 delivering the unstoppable check to the White King and checkmating him.



This interesting example is Black to mate in three moves. Black sends the Rook on d7 again to d1 delivering a check. This time White has two Rooks on the back rank for protection. No doubt this is enough against the two Black Rooks. White takes the Black Rook on d1 with the Rook on e1. Black follows suit by taking the White Rook now on d1 with his Rook on d8. White immediately captures the offending Black Rook on d1 with his remaining Rook on h1. White breathes a sigh of relief. But the relief is short lived because Black has one more piece that can deliver a back rank mate on d1. Now Black sends in his Queen on h5 to capture White's Rook on d1 and this delivers the checkmate. You have to watch out for back rank mates from the diagonals too. Have fun solving the practice problems.