List of Chess Tactics. Find the Examples below.

List of Chess Tactics

For easy reference the tactical patterns are listed in alphabetical order:

1. Absolute Pin
2. Advanced Pawn
3. Alekhine's Gun
4. Attraction
5. Battery
6. Capture the Defender
7. Clearance
8. Counter Threat
9. Cross-check
10. Cross-pin
11. Decoy
12. Deflection
13. Demolition of Pawn Structure
14. Desperado
15. Discovered Attack
16. Domination
17. Double Attack

18. Double Check
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21. f2 (or f7) weakness
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24. Greek Gift Sacrifice
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34. Pins
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47. Two Rooks Battery
48. Two Rooks on 7th Rank
49. Under-promotion
50. Weak Back-Rank
51. Windmill
52. X-Ray
53. X-Ray Attack
54. X-Ray Defense
55. Zugzwang
56. Zwischenzug

The above list of chess tactics is quite long. When you study the examples, you will note that some of the patterns share similar features. For example: attraction, deflection, decoy and removing the defender can in some situations appear to be the same thing. For the sake of completeness I'll add examples of all the common terms, even if they are sometimes essentially the same thing as another term.

How many chess tactics are there?

Many tactical patterns share similar ideas with other named patterns and because of this overlap it's difficult to say exactly how many unique tactics exist. But on this page you will find a fairly comprehensive list of chess tactics, 56 in total, with simplified examples of how they work.

Absolute pin

An absolute pin occurs when:

- A defending piece is *between* its own king and an attacking piece.
- If the pinned piece moves, it would expose the king to attack — which is illegal.

Because of that, the pinned piece is absolutely immobilized (it cannot move, though it can sometimes capture the attacker.

Advanced pawn

An advanced pawn is any pawn that:

- Has crossed the halfway point of the board, and
- Poses a potential threat to the opponent's position (by controlling key squares or threatening promotion).

Alekhine's Gun

The idea consists of placing the two rooks stacked one behind another and the queen at the rear. This can lead to substantial *material* loss for the opponent,

Attraction

Attraction tactics occur when you lure (or force) an enemy piece onto a square where it will become vulnerable to another tactical ideas:

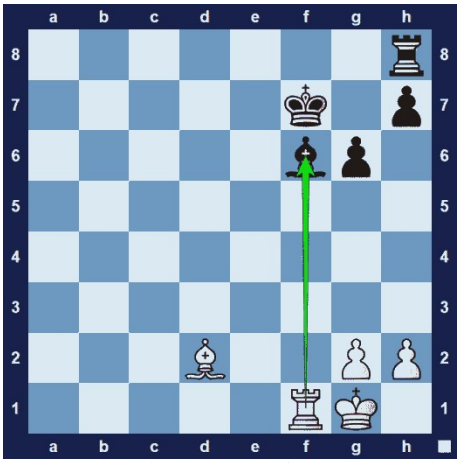


Diagram above: 1.Rxf6 attracts the black king to the f6-square. The point is that after 1... Kxf6, white will play 2.Bc3+, a skewer that wins the black rook on h8.

Battery

In chess, a battery refers to lining up two or more pieces on the same diagonal, rank or file. Only queens, rooks and bishops can form a battery. The rooks can form a battery on a rank or file whilst the bishops can be part of a battery on a diagonal. The queen, of course, can be part of a battery on a rank, file or diagonal.

Battery / Two Rooks

Two rooks can dominate an open rank or file if they manage to form an unopposed battery on it.

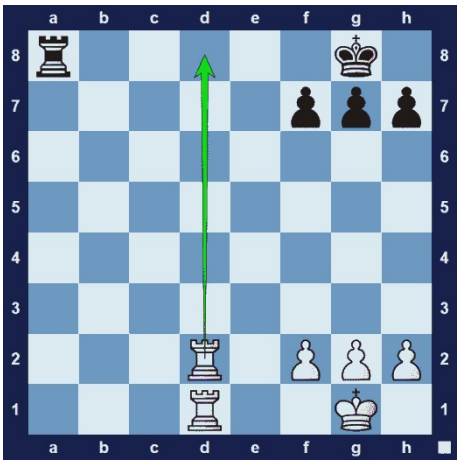


Diagram above: 1.Rd8+ Rxd8 2.Rxd8# The back-up provided by the second rook delivers the checkmate.

Battery / Queen and Bishop

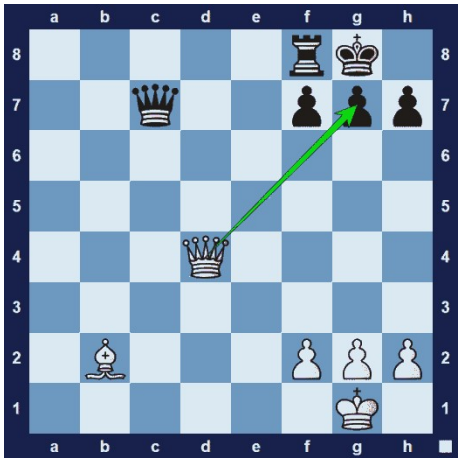


Diagram above: 1.Qxg7# The queen is supported by the bishop on b2.

Battery / Alekhine's Gun

Alekhine's gun is a special case of a battery where two rooks are stacked one behind another and the queen at the rear. The diagram below is from the actual game where this formation got its name from (Alekhine vs. Nimzowitsch, San Remo 1930).

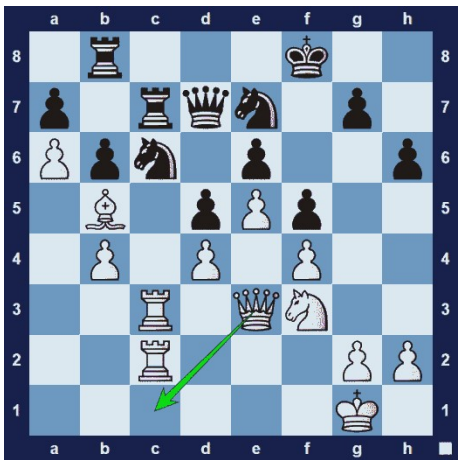


Diagram above: White played Qc1. This battery setup can place a lot of pressure along the file they're on (in this case Alekhine's opponent resigned 4 moves later).

Clearance

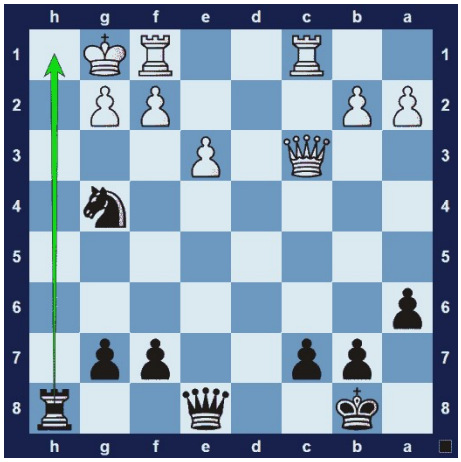


Diagram above: 1... Rh1+ clears the h8-square for the queen. The point is 2.Kxh1 Qh8+ 3.Kg1 Qh2#

Counter Threat

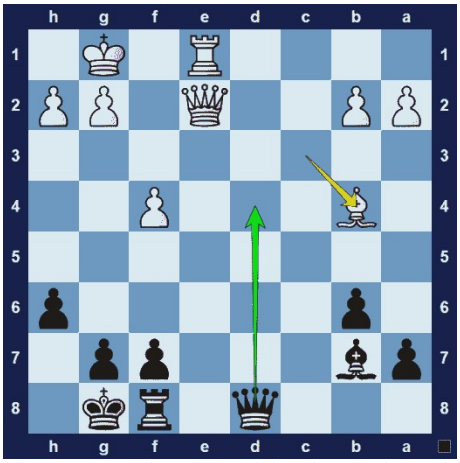


Diagram above: White just played 1.Bb4, threatening to capture the rook on f1. Instead of moving the rook, black finds a counter-threat, 1... Qd4+, followed by Qxb4.

Cross-check

A cross-check occurs when a player blocks a check against their king and in the process checks the opponent's king.

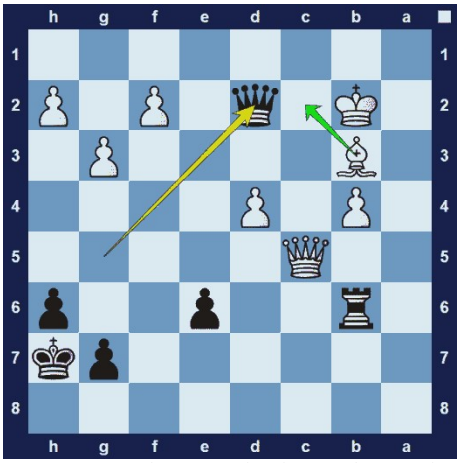


Diagram above: Black made a mistake by playing 1... Qd2+ because white blocks the check and at the same time checks the black king, which means that, after the king gets out of check, black will lose the hanging rook on b6.

Decoy

A decoy is a tactical idea where you lure your opponent piece away from where it is needed. Since that piece can't be in two places at the same time, a decoy can help you achieve your goal.

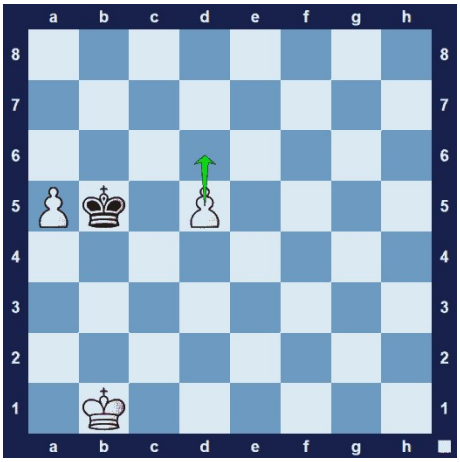


Diagram above: White plays 1.d6 and now the black king is helpless. If black plays 1... Kc6, then white will play 2.a6, again luring the king away from the other pawn.

Deflection

Deflection is a from of removing a defender. You deflect a defending piece by capturing another piece it is supposed to defend. After the trade you will be able to take advantage of the newly weakened square:

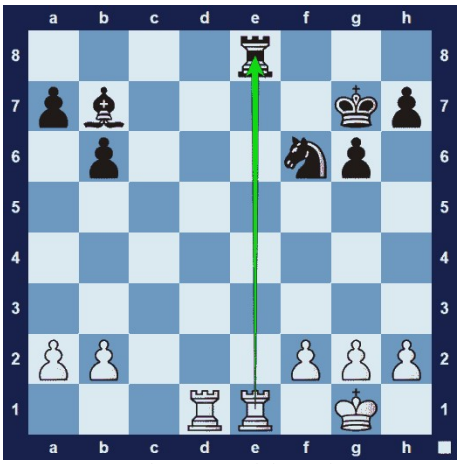


Diagram above: White plays 1.Rxe8 with the idea to deflect the black knight on f6 so that it does not defend the d7-square anymore. 1.Rxe8 Nxe8 2.Rd7+ followed by 3.Rxb7.

Desperado

Desperado is when you sacrifice an attacked piece before making another capture. It is in essence a combination of a sacrifice and a zwischenzug. The example will illustrate a desperado tactic:

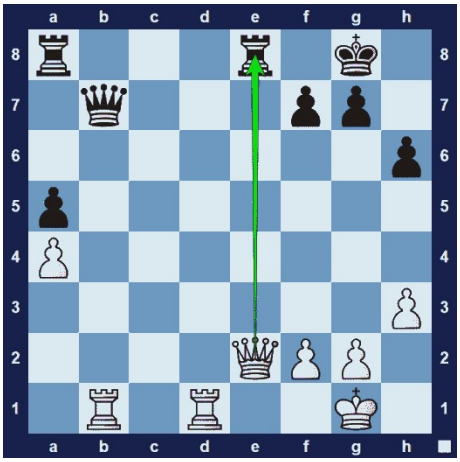


Diagram above: White wants to play Rxb7 but black will then play Rxe7, resulting in an equal exchange of the queens. Instead, white uses a desperado to “get something for his queen” before playing Rxb7.

Discovered Attack

A discovered attack occurs when moving a piece reveals a strong threat from a piece hiding behind it. The power of a discovered attack often lies in the fact that you can use it to set up a double attack.

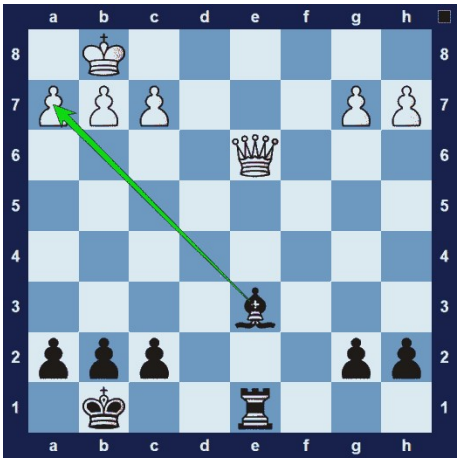


Diagram above: Black can “discover an attack” on white’s queen by moving the bishop. By playing 1... Bxh2! black checks the white king. White must get their king out of check and then black will capture the white queen, Rxd3.

Discovered Attack / Windmill

A windmill tactic can also be described as a series of forced discovered attacks. This tactic is also known as a see-saw, based on how the front piece keeps returning to its previous position. Follow the variation below to see the destructive power of a windmill tactic. Note that on every move black is forced to move their king:

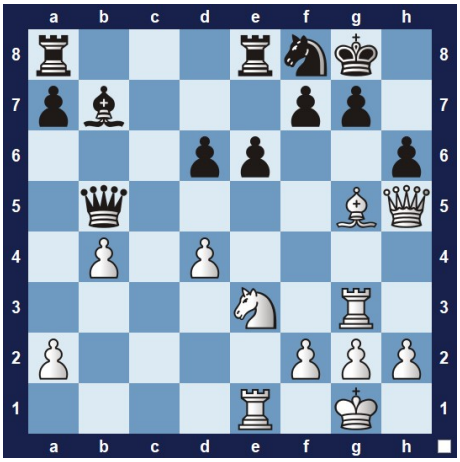


Diagram above: 1.Bf6! Qxh5 2.Rxg7+ Kh8 3.Rxf7+ Kg8. White repeats the pattern–4.Rg7+ Kh8 5. Rxb7+ Kg8 6.Rg7+ Kh8 7.Rg5+ Kh7 8.Rxh5.

[FEN "r3rnk1/pb3pp1/3pp2p/1q4BQ/1P1P4/4N1R1/P4PPP/4R1K1 w - - 0 1"]
1. Bf6 Qxh5 2. Rxg7+ Kh8 3. Rxf7+ Kg8 4. Rg7+ Kh8 5. Rxb7+ *

Domination

Domination is a unique situation (usually in the endgame) where a piece is trapped even though it seemingly had many squares to move to.

Domination Example #1

The first example is from the game Beliavsky–Korchnoi, György Marx Memorial, 2004.

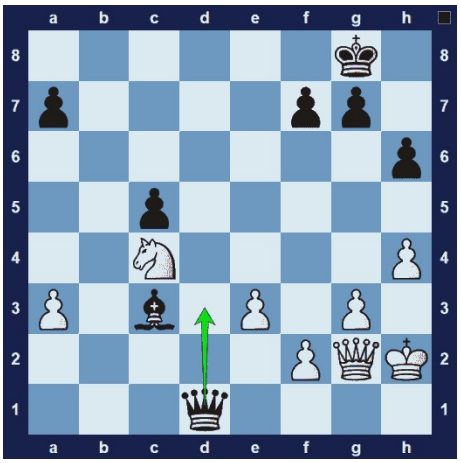


Diagram above: Black played 38... Qd3. Despite having 6 squares to choose from, the knight on c4 can't escape.

Domination Example #2

The next example of domination is an endgame study (a combined effort by Troitsky and Reti) that demonstrates how a knight can, under perfect circumstances, dominate a bishop on a long diagonal:

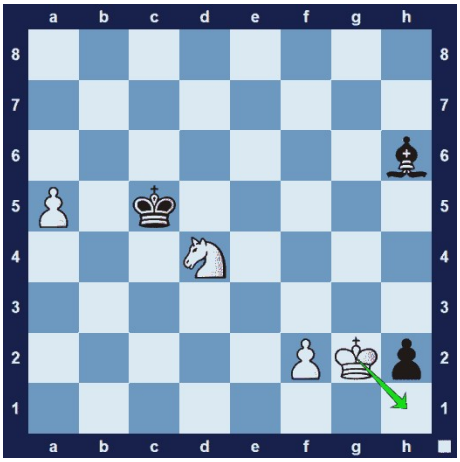


Diagram above: White plays 1.Kh1! and proves that black is doomed. Anything black does is met by a decisive blow. If the black bishop moves to any safe square, then the knight can fork the black bishop and king. On the other hand, if the black king moves then white can either fork the king and bishop, or advance the a-pawn and promote. Black is essentially in zugzwang.

Double Attack

A double attack is a situation where *one or more* of your pieces make multiple threats. A double attack performed by a *single piece* is known as a fork.

Double Attack / Example #1

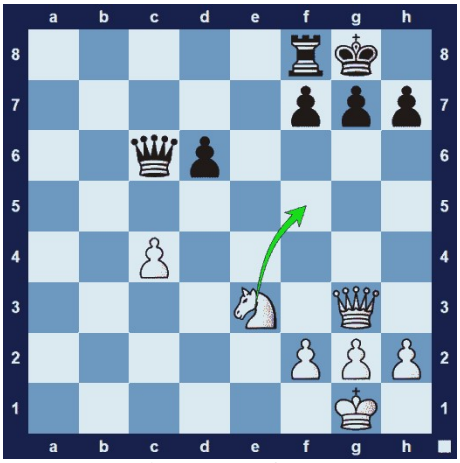


Diagram above: 1.Nf5! creates two threats at the same time. White is threatening 2.Qxg7# or 2.Ne7+, forking the black king and queen. Note that white's threats involve 2 attacking pieces, 1) the queen and 2) the knight. Therefore its a double attack rather than a fork.

Double Attack / Example #2

The second example shows that a discovered attack results in a double attack (two attacks from two different pieces are created by one move).

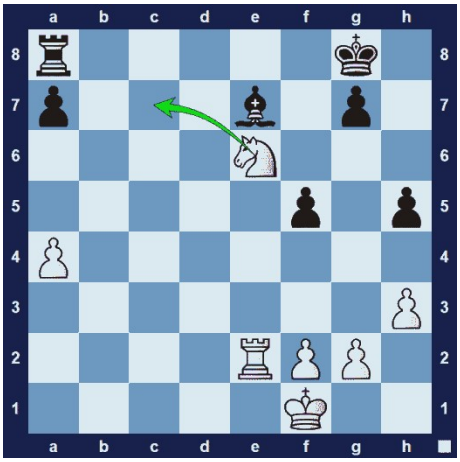


Diagram above: 1.Nc7 attacks the rook on a8 but also creates a discovered attack on the bishop, with the rook on e2.

Double Check

The interesting thing about a double check is that the only way to get out of check is to move the king. It's not possible to capture or block two checking pieces with one move:

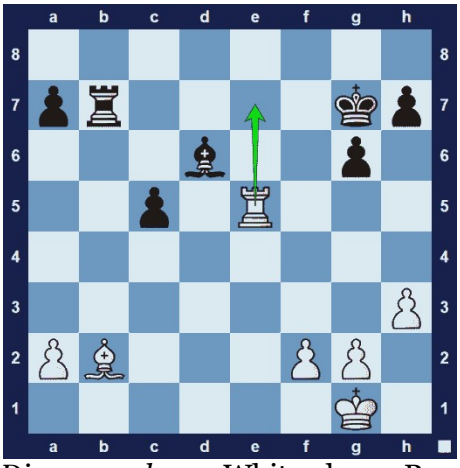


Diagram above: White plays 1.Rc7+. Two white pieces checks the black king. Black's king must move out of check and then white will capture the black rook on the next move.

Draw Tactics

Tactics isn't only about winning. Sometimes tactics can help you force a draw in a position where you were otherwise losing.

Perpetual Check

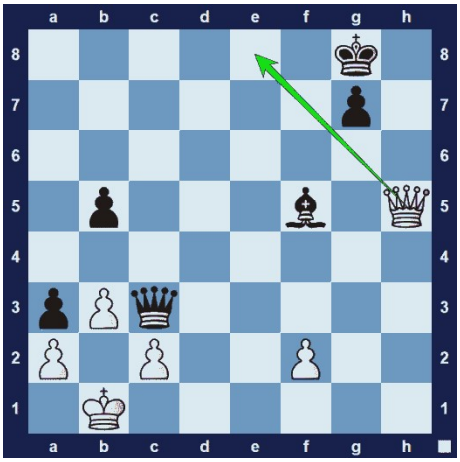


Diagram above: 1.Qe8+ Kh7 2.Qh5+ Kg8 3.Qe8+ is a common perpetual check that can help you force a draw in an otherwise bad position. This also proves again (from black's point of view) why it's important to keep your king safe.

Perpetual Attack

A perpetual attack is a tactical idea where you force your opponent to repeat the position by attacking a valuable target repeatedly.

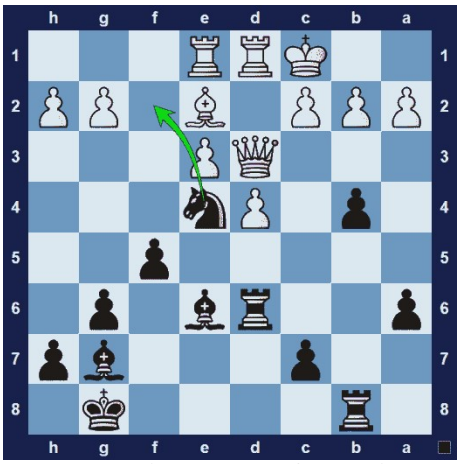


Diagram above: 1... Nf2 2.Qd2 Ne4 3.Qd3 Nf2.... black will repeat the moves and force white to settle for a draw. The point is that black will not capture the rook on d1 with their knight (it won't be enough to compensate for their bad situation), but instead perpetually attack the white queen with the knight. 1... Nf2 2.Qd2 Ne4 3.Qd3 Nf2. Since white wouldn't want to give up the queen, they will have to settle for a draw by repetition of the moves.

Stalemate Tactics

When all seems lost in an endgame situation, you can look for opportunities to force a draw by means of a stalemate.

Stalemate Tactics / Example #1

In the first example white is clearly in a desperate situation. However, if they can force black to capture their queen, it would be stalemate:

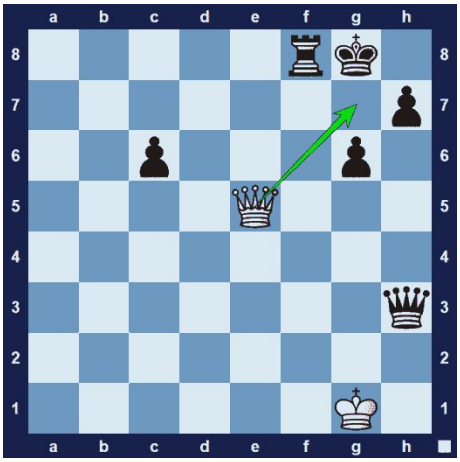


Diagram above: White plays 1.Qg7+, forcing black to play 1... Kxg7, which results in a stalemate because white can't move but he isn't in check either. Draw.

Stalemate Tactics / Example #2

A c-pawn or f-pawn on the 7th rank vs an opposing queen can often end in a draw by means of a clever stalemate tactic:

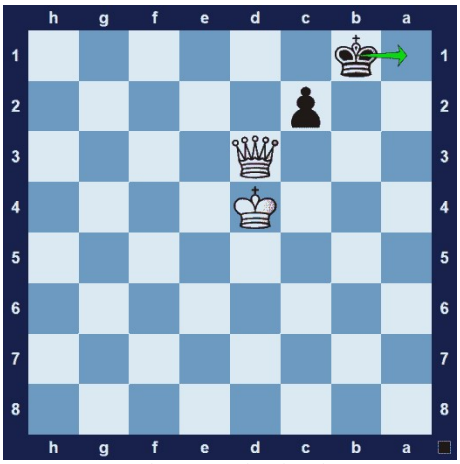


Diagram above: Black plays 1... Ka1! Black is now threatening to promote the pawn but if white captures the pawn, Qxc2, it would be stalemate. This is a useful idea to know.

Endgame Tactics

The endgame stage lends itself to tactical ideas that are common in the endgame. Here's a few examples.

Endgame Tactics / Example #1

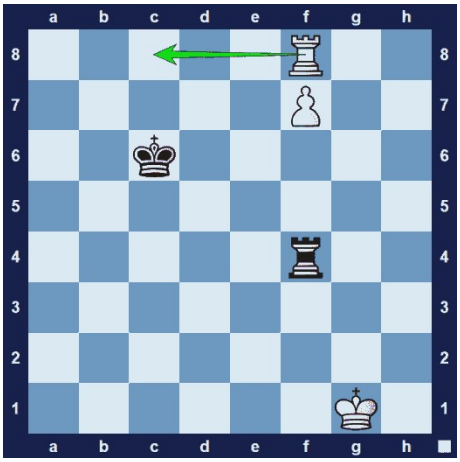


Diagram above: White's pawn on f7 is blocked by their own rook. This is a common situation since the rook on f8 supported the advance of the pawn up to the 7th rank. Now 1.Rc8+ is a tempo move that allows white to promote on the next move. 1.Rc8+ Kd7 2.f8(Q) Rxf8 3.Rxf8 1-0.

Endgame Tactics / Example #2

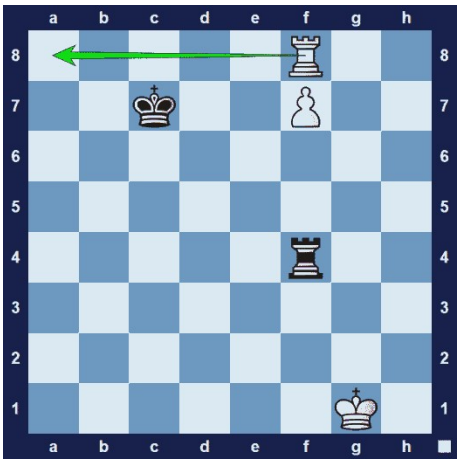


Diagram above: 1.Ra8 is a useful endgame tactic to know. White is threatening to promote on the next move and if black plays 1... Rxf7, then 2.Ra7+ is a skewer on the black king and rook.

f2 (or f7) weakness

The f7-square (or f2-square from black's point of view) is a weakness right from the start of the game–because of its close proximity to the king and because the king is the only piece that defends it. (The king is not an ideal defender). There are many well-known tactical ideas that exploit the weakness of the f7-square. In the Fried Liver Opening, it is quite common to reach the following position:

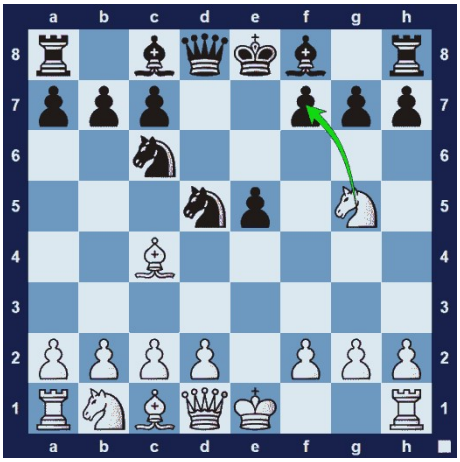


Diagram above: White can exploit the inherent weakness of the f7-square by playing 1.Nxf7!? The point is that after 1.Nxf7 Kxf7 2.Qf3+, black is forced to play Ke6, placing the king in a very awkward situation. Black can survive if they find the correct defense on every move, but one slip will mean instant disaster.

Fork

A fork is a type of double attack whereby a *single piece* makes multiple threats:

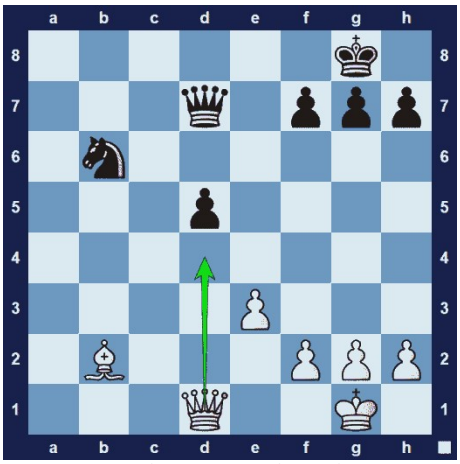


Diagram above: 1.Qd4! The queen makes two threats at the same time: 1.Qxg7# would be checkmate or 2.Qxb6 wins the knight. Black can't defend against both threats at once. Black must give up the knight if they want to avoid checkmate.

Knight Fork

Among amateur chess players, tactics that involve knights forks are notorious for being unexpected. This is because knight forks are harder to spot due to the non-linear movements of the knight:

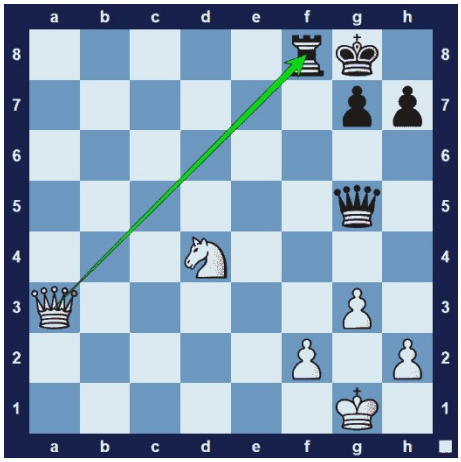


Diagram above: 1.Qxf8+ Kxf8 2.Ne6+ will fork the black king and queen.

The Difference Between a Double Attack and a Fork

A double attack is a situation where *one or more* of your pieces make multiple threats.
A fork, on the other hand, is when a *single piece* makes multiple threats.

Hit-and-Run

The following tactical pattern is quite common in chess, yet I have not seen it named as a unique pattern.

Once you see the idea in the example below you will understand why it's difficult to find a suitable name for it. For lack of a more suitable description, I refer to it as a "hit-and-run" tactic. This tactic boils down to a moment where you capture an enemy piece and at the same time move your piece out of danger:

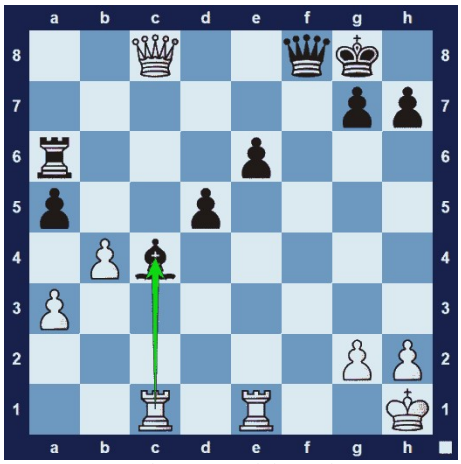


Diagram above: White plays 1.Rxc4. This removes the defender of the black rook on a6 and at the same time defends the queen on c8. If black plays 1... Qxc8, then white can play 2.Rxc8, capturing the black queen and at the same time move the rook out of danger.

Greek Gift Sacrifice

The Greek Gift Sacrifice (also known as the classical bishop sacrifice) is a specific case of demolition of the pawn structure in front of the enemy king. A key feature of the Greek Gift Sacrifice is the placement of the white bishop on d3, the white knight on f3 and the white queen on d1, all ready to join in the attack against black's king.

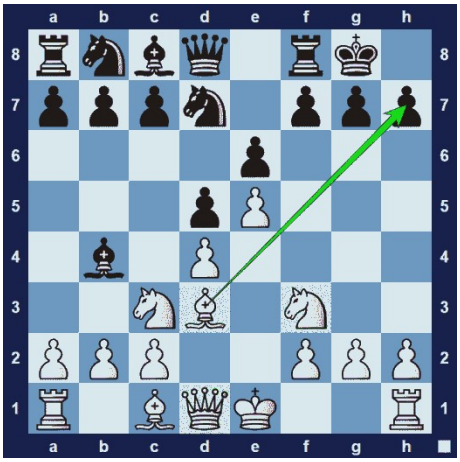


Diagram above: 1.Bxh7 Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg8 3.Qh5 leads to a winning attack for white. It will be a good exercise to pack the position on a chessboard and go through the instructive variations below:

- 1.Bxh7+ Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kh8 3.Qh5+ Kg8 4.Qh7# or
- 1.Bxh7+ Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg8 3.Qh5 Qxg5 Bxg5 or
- 1.Bxh7+ Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg8 3.Qh5 Re8 4.Qxf7+ Kh8 5.Qh5+ Kg8 6.Qh7+ Kf8 7.Qh8+ Ke7 8.Qxg7#
- 1.Bxh7+ Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kh6 3.Nxf7+
- 1.Bxh7+ Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg6 3.h4, threatening 4.h5+ Kh6 5.Nxf7+
- 1.Bxh7+ Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg6 3.h4 Kf5 4.Qf3#
-

Indirect Defense

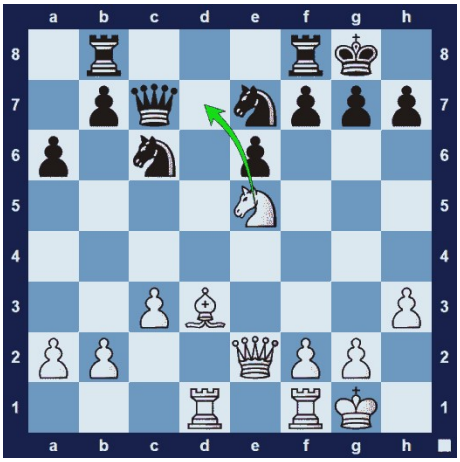


Diagram above: White can play 1.Nd7 and fork the two black rooks. The knight is indirectly defended because 1... Qxd7? allows 2.Bxh7+ with a discovered attack on the black queen (by the white rook on d1).

Interference

Interference is when you obstruct the connection between two enemy piece and in effect cut of a defender.

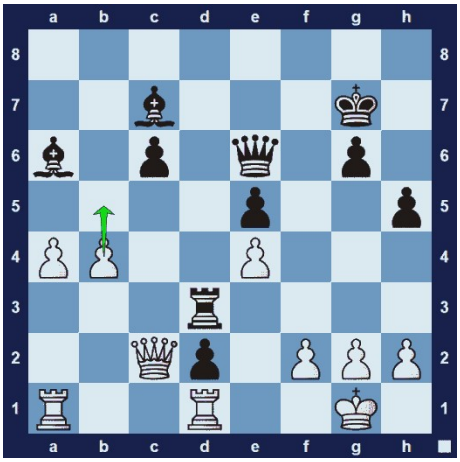


Diagram above: 1.b4 cxb5 2.Qxd3 illustrates how black pawn on b5 now interferes with the black rook's support from the bishop on a5.

Opposition

A king has the ability to dominate the movements of the enemy king by a technique known as opposition. It consist of placing your king in the same rank, file or diagonal as the opposing king, with an uneven number of squares in-between the two kings.

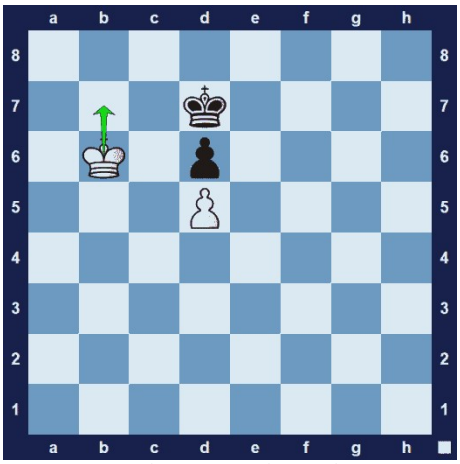


Diagram above: 1.Kb7 Kd8 2.Kc6 Ke7 3.Kc7 Ke8 4.Kxd6 uses the opposition technique to win the black pawn by force. With the correct technique, white will then be able to promote the pawn.

Pawn Tactics

Tactics that depend primarily on a pawn for its execution.

Advanced Passed Pawns

The presence of advanced pawn make various tactical ideas possible. All these ideas are based on the fact that the opponent cannot afford to let the advanced pawn promote.

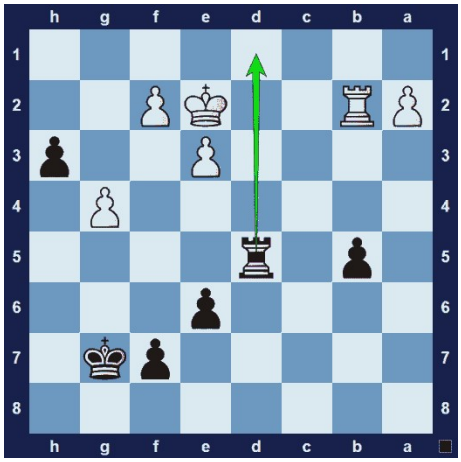


Diagram above: 1... Rd1! 2.Kxd1 h2! is a interference tactic that prevents the white rook from stopping black's advanced pawn on the h-file.

Pawn Breakthrough

A primary objective in the endgame is to promote a pawn. If you can find a way to promote a pawn, you will usually win the game, even if it means sacrificing a few pawns or minor pieces along the way.

In this classic example of a pawn breakthrough, there is only one way for white to win:

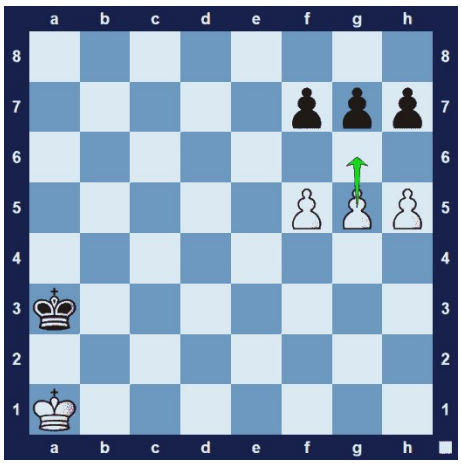


Diagram above: 1.g6 hxg6 2.f6 gxf6 h6 and the h-pawn will promote or 1.g6 fxg6 2.h6 gxh6 f6 and the f-pawn will promote.

Pawn Fork

The majority of tactical patterns involve the larger pieces and therefore it's easy to overlook the tactical potential of the humble pawn:

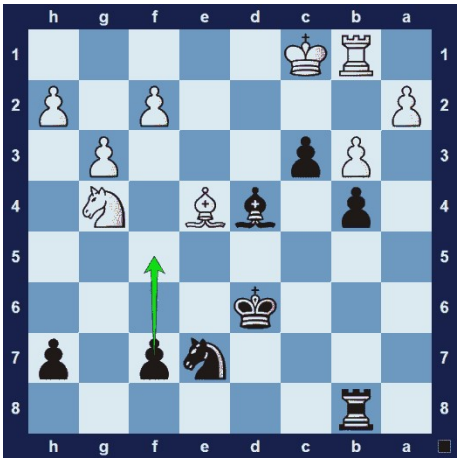


Diagram above: 1... f5 forks the white knight and bishop. If you aren't aware of the solution beforehand, it's easy to miss such simple pawn moves–because of the human tendency to focus primarily on the larger pieces.

Under-promotion

Sometimes it makes sense to promote your pawn to something else than the commonly chosen queen. In the diagram below black is threatening to capture the pawn on g7. If white promotes and chooses a queen, it would be stalemate. Draw.

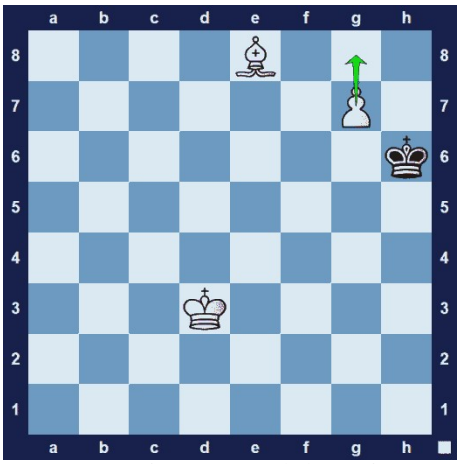


Diagram above: 1.g8(R) under-promoting to a rook is the only way to avoid a draw in this game. Even if white knew how to checkmate with a knight + bishop vs king, this would not be the time to try it because 1.g8(N)+ Kg7 2.Ne7 Kf8 forks the white knight and bishop. Draw.

Pins

Pin tactics occur when an attacked piece cannot move without exposing an even more valuable piece (or target) behind it. Pins can take on various forms:

Relative Pin

A relative pin is a when the value of a pinned piece is relatively lower than the piece behind it.

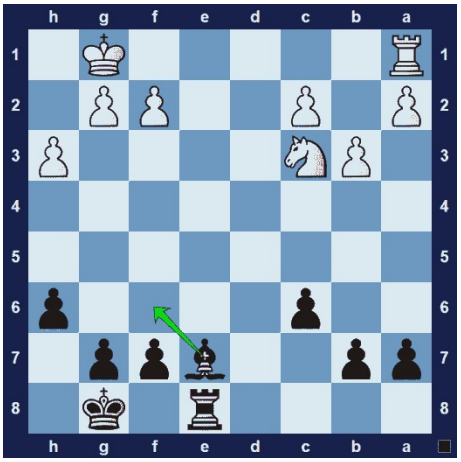


Diagram above: Black plays 1... Bf6 and pins the white knight on c3. It is a relative pin because moving the knight would expose the higher-valued rook on a1.

Absolute Pin

Diagram above: 1.Bc4 pins the black queen. The queen can't escape the pin because it would leave the black king in check. The best black can do is 1... Qxc4, giving up the queen for the bishop. When a piece is pinned to the king, it is referred to as an absolute pin.

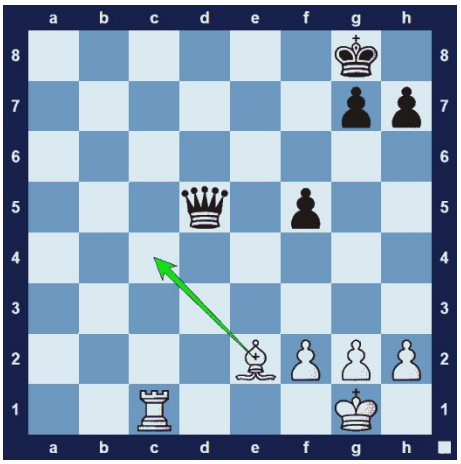


Diagram above: 1.Bc4, the black queen cannot escape the pin because she is pinned absolutely to the king.

Cross Pin

A cross-pin occurs when a piece is pinned from two directions.

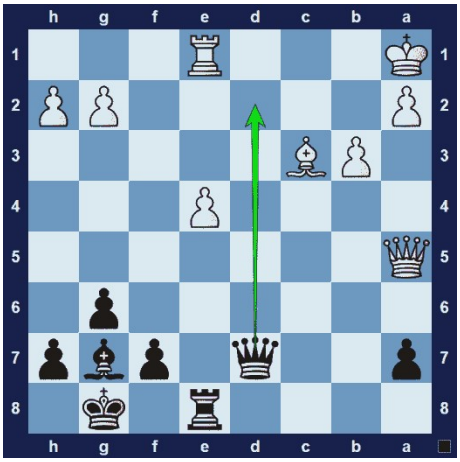


Diagram above: 1... Qd2!, a double-attack threatening Qxe1 as well as Bxc3+. White cannot play 2.Bxc2 because the bishop on c3 is absolutely pinned by the black bishop on g7. Note how the white bishop on c3 is pinned in two directions:

- 1... Qd2 2.Bxg7 Qxa5
- 1... Qd2 2.Rf1 Bxc3+

Situational Pin

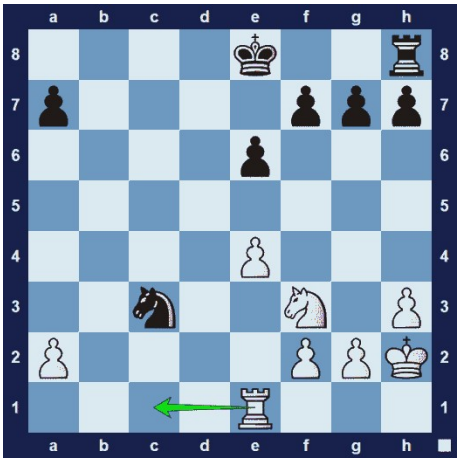


Diagram above: 1.Rc1 illustrates a situational pin. Even though there are no pieces behind the black knight, moving the knight will allow 2.Rc8+, a skewer on the black king and rook.

Positional Tactics

A positional advantage is often achieved by means of a tactic that does not win material, but gains a strategic advantage. In the position below white has a bad bishop, whilst black has a good bishop (because the pawn-structure in the center makes the black bishop more active).

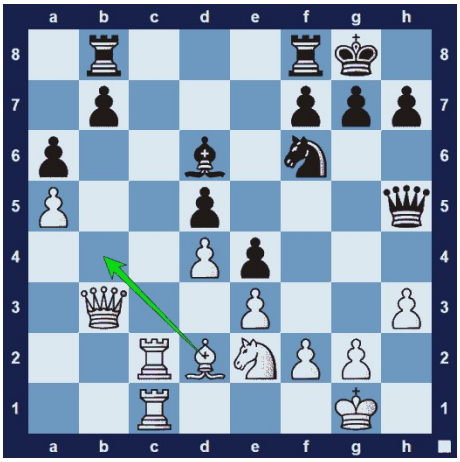


Diagram above: 1.Bb4 forces black to allow the exchange of the bishops because black's bishop is pinned to the rook on f8. This exchange will give white increased control of the c-file, particularly of the c5-square and c7-square. At the same time the rook on c2 now defends the knight on e2.

Remove the Defender

When a chess piece performs an important defensive task we refer to that piece as a defender. Since that piece serves important an important role, the piece itself becomes vulnerable to tactical ideas.

There are 2 logical ways to exploit an important defender:

1. Capture or
2. Overload

Capture the Defender

Also known as undermining. In the diagram below, black's queen is only defended by the knight on c6. This gives white a tactical opportunity:

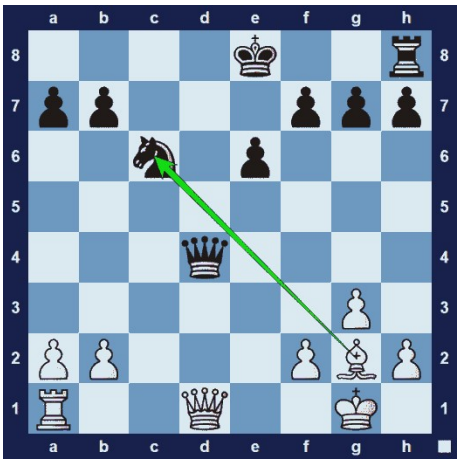


Diagram above: 1.Bxc6+ removes the defender of black's queen by capturing it. Since black must deal with the check first, white will capture the black queen on the next move.

Overload the Defender

The other logical way to remove a defender is to overload it (sometimes referred to as a deflection tactic).

In the diagram below, black's rook defends the bishop on b4. However, this rook also defends against a Back Rank Mate, else white could play Re8#. This gives white an opportunity to overload the defender:

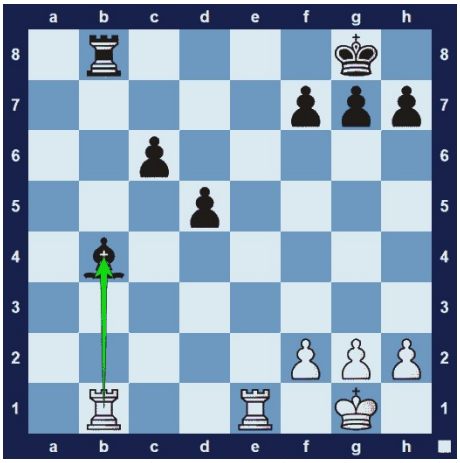


Diagram above: 1.Rxb4 wins the bishop because black's rook on b8 is overloaded.

Demolition of Pawn Structure

Demolition of Pawn Structure refers to removing the defenders (pawns) in front of castled king, usually at the cost of a sacrifice. The Greek Gift Sacrifice is an example of this tactical idea. (The attacking player will sacrifice a bishop to demolish the pawn-barrier in front of the enemy king).

The example is from the game Mikhail Chigorin vs David Janowski, Hastings (1895):

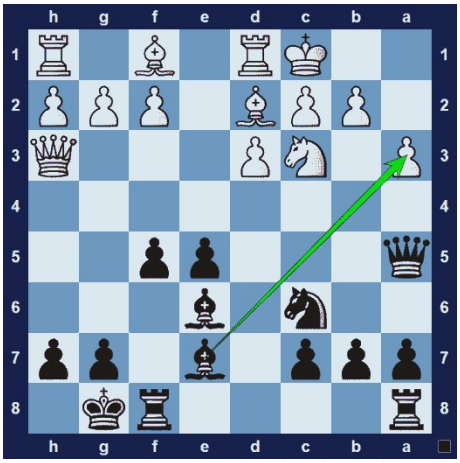
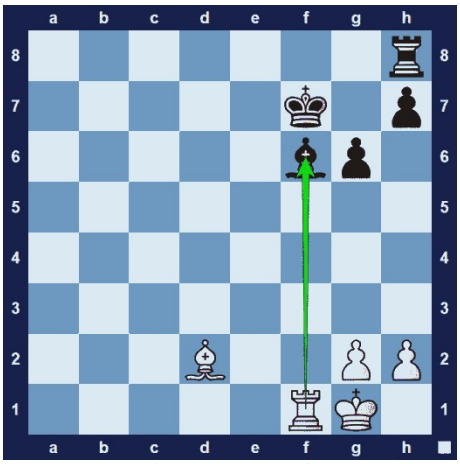


Diagram above: Black played 13... Bxa3, demolishing the pawn structure that defend the white king. If white accepts the sacrifice then 14.bxa3 Qxa3+ 15.Kb1 Nb4 and there is not much white can do about the threat of 16... Ba2+ 17.Nxa2 Qxa2+ 18.Kc1 Qxc2#

Sacrifice

A tactical sacrifice (in contrast to a positional sacrifice which gives you a strategic compensation) is when you temporarily sacrifice a higher-valued piece in order to create a new target that you can immediately exploit. The point is that the value of this new target will exceed the value of the sacrifice you made.

In the first tactic presented in this list of chess tactics, white sacrificed their rook for a bishop in order to setup a pin:



1.Rxc6+ Kxf6 2.Bc3+ Kf7 3.Bxh8. White temporarily sacrifices material but wins it back, with interest, on the following moves.

Simplification

Simplification actually refers to a strategic idea where the player with a material advantage wants to simplify the situation by exchanging as many pieces as possible. The goal is to achieve a relatively risk-free endgame situation.

In the example below white has a clear advantage, thanks to the extra unopposed pawn on the a-file. But things aren't over yet–one mistake can still ruin the game for white! White finds a way to simplify the situation by exchanging all the remaining pieces and achieves a risk-free winning position.

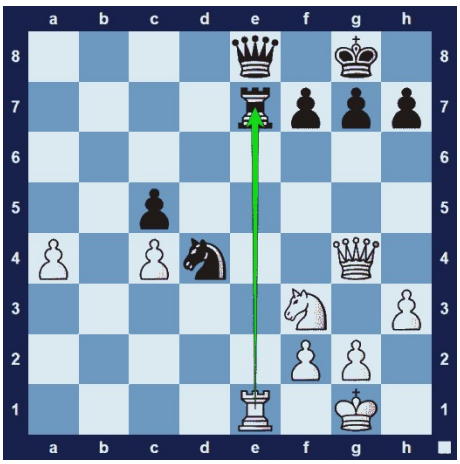


Diagram above: White plays 1.Rxe7 Qxe7 2.Qc8+ Qf8 3.Qxf8+ Kxf8 4.Nxd4 cxd4 5.a5 1-0

Skewer

A skewer is a chess tactic that occurs when an attacked piece must move to safety but will expose a lower-valued piece (or target) behind it:

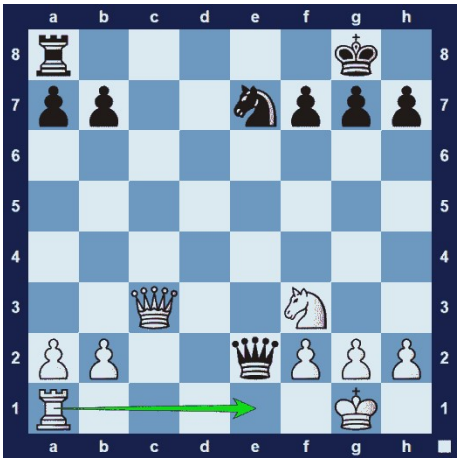


Diagram above: 1.Re1 is a skewer on the black queen. If the queen moves to a safe square, white will capture the undefended knight on e7.

Due to its visual resemblance to a pin, a skewer is sometimes referred to as a “reversed pin”.

Tempo Tactics

In chess, time is measured in moves. If you gain time by making a threat that forces your opponent to defend passively, you have gained a tempo in the process.

In the example below black wants to play 1... Nxe3 2.Qxe3 Bd4! pinning the queen to the king. However, white is currently threatening bxa5. If black can find a way to move the queen and make a threat at the same time, he will be gaining the tempo he needs.

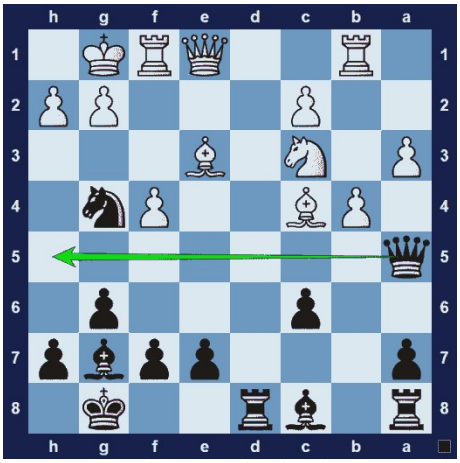


Diagram above: Black plays 1... Qh5! threatening Qxh2# White is forced to find a defense, which will then allow black to play 2... Nxe3 3.Qxe3 Bd4!

A single tempo move is also referred to as a zwischenzug. In some situations you can even gain a number of tempos in a row, which can often be converted to some advantage.

Trapped Pieces

When a chess piece becomes severely limited in its mobility, such piece is often vulnerable to tactics, particularly to being trapped:

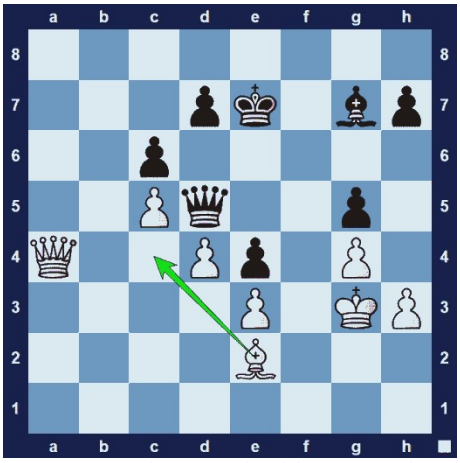


Diagram above: Black's queen is severely limited in her mobility. White can take advantage of this fact and win the queen by playing 1.Bc4, winning the trapped queen.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a (mostly) endgame technique used to force your opponent into zugzwang. Triangulation is typically achieved when a king moves in a triangle to create the effect of "losing a move". The point is that the same position is achieved after one side made 3 moves, whereas the other side made only two moves.

In the example below it is white's turn to move but white can't make any progress because black currently has the opposition. However, by means of triangulation white can reach the same position and hand the move to black:

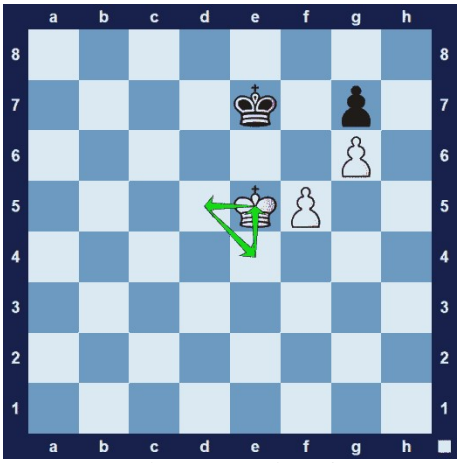


Diagram above: 1.Kd5 Kf6 2.Ke4 Ke7 3.Ke5 reaches the same position, but this time it's black's turn to move, handing the opposition to white. With the correct technique white will now be able to create an unstoppable passed pawn.

- Alternate variation 1: 1.Kd5 Kd7 2.Kd4 Kd6 3.Ke4 Ke7 4.Ke5
- Alternate variation 2: 1.Kd5 Kd7 2.Kd4 Kd6 3.Ke4 Kd7 4.Kd5 Ke7 5.Ke5

Two Rooks on 7th Rank

An example of the power of two rooks on the 7th rank is the Blind Swine Checkmate Pattern. It demonstrates the power of two connected rooks on the 7th rank. It's often impossible to defend against this checkmate pattern–which is why you should be very aware of the danger presented by two connected rooks on the 7th rank.

The example below demonstrates how difficult it is two stop two rooks on the 7th rank. The position is from the game Swiderski – Nimzowitsch, 1905:

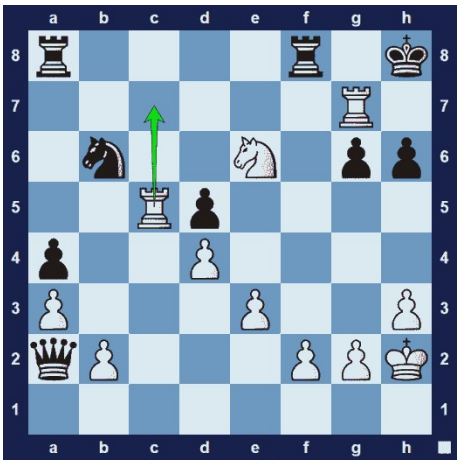


Diagram above: White plays 2.Rcc7! threatening 3.Rh7+ Kg8 4.Rcg7# Black can sacrifice some material to delay the checkmate but he can't prevent the eventual outcome.

Weak Back-Rank

A weak back-rank refers to the situation where is a castled king is trapped behind their own shield of pawns and rely on a rook or queen to defend the back rank. This means you can sometimes overload the piece that is supposed to defend the weak back-rank:

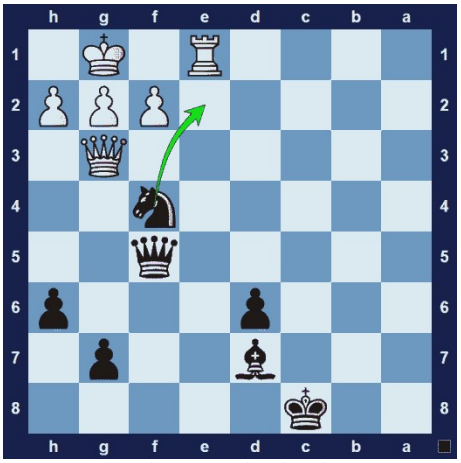


Diagram above: Black plays 1... Ne2+, forking white's king and queen. If white captures the knight, 2.Rxe2, then black can exploit the weak back-rank by playing 2... Qb1+ 3.Re1 Qxe1#

X-Ray

X-Ray refers to the ability of long-range pieces to see "through" an enemy piece. This tactical idea is sometimes referred to as an x-ray attack, but it can also be used as a defensive tactic.

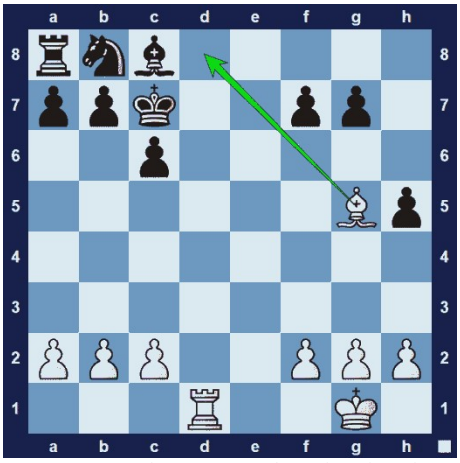


Diagram above: 1.Bd8# is checkmate thanks to the ‘s X-Ray ability of the bishop. The bishop “attacks” the b6-square even though the enemy king obstructs its view. (This particular checkmate pattern is known as Reti’s Mate.)

X-Ray Attack

X-Ray chess tactics occur when two of your pieces defend one another “through” an enemy piece. When this tactical idea is employed in an offensive way, it can be referred to as an x-ray attack.

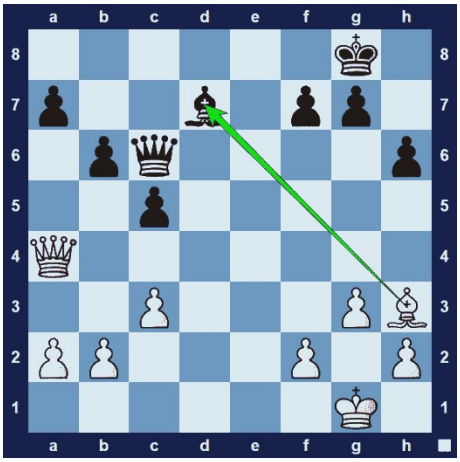


Diagram above: 1.Bxd7 wins the black bishop because the white queen on a4 supports the white bishop on d7, through x-ray.

X-Ray Defense

In the diagram below black just played 1... Qd1+, hoping for 2.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 3.Qe1 Rxe1# However, white can defend with the help of an X-Ray Defense.

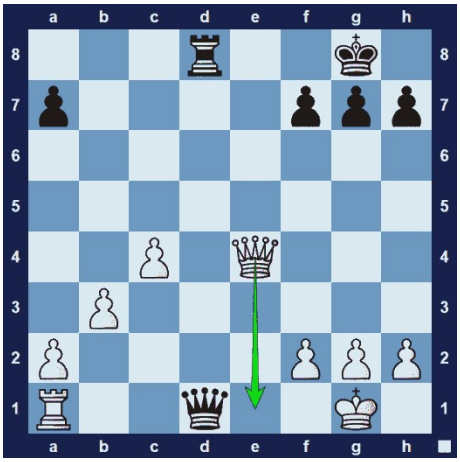


Diagram above: 1.Qe1–white uses the X-Ray ability of the queen and rook to defend against the possible Back Rank Mate. If white played 1.Rxd1? then black wins with 1... Rxd1+ 2.Qe1 Rxe1#

Zugzwang

In the position below it is black's turn to move and since black is essentially forced to make a bad move, he is in zugzwang:

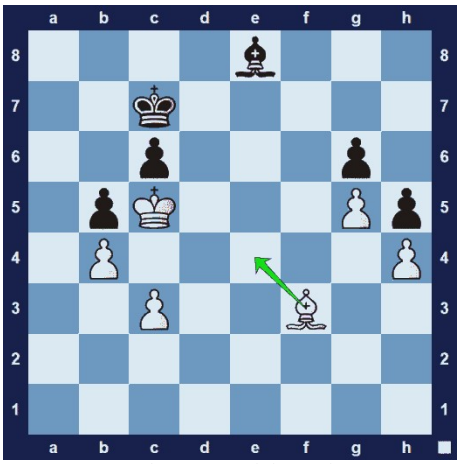


Diagram above: White plays 1.Be4. Now, any move black plays, is bad.

- 1.Be4 Bd7 2.Bxg6 1-0 or
- 1.Be4 Bf7 2.Bxc6 1-0 or
- 1.Be4 Kd7 2.Bxc6+ 1-0 or
- 1.Be4 Kb7 2.Kd6 1-0

Zwischenzug

A zwichenzug or "in-between-move" tactic, refers to the effective use of an intermediate move (usually a check, threat or capture) to gain a tempo. The idea is best explained by means of an example:

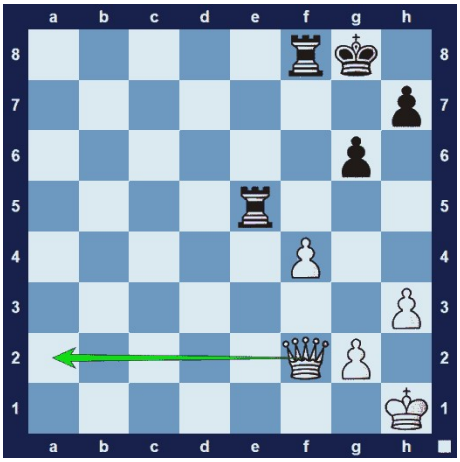


Diagram above: White wants to capture the black rook on e5 with their pawn. At the moment the f4-pawn is pinned. (1.fxe5? Rxf2). Instead, white first plays the zwischenzug move (1... Qa2+) to get the queen out of the way. Black must deal with the check then white can capture the rook on the next move.