

Lesson 13: Attack and Defence



Attack or Threat?

Do you remember this position from the previous lesson on Scholar's Mate? White has just moved their queen to h5. From here it **ATTACKS** three pawns: e5, f7, and h7.

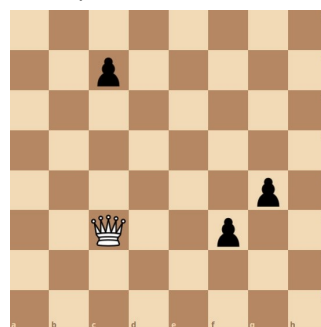
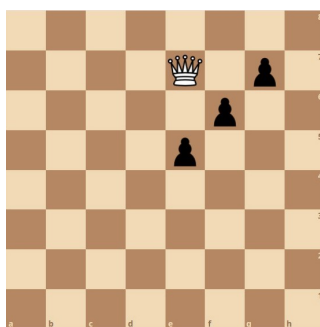
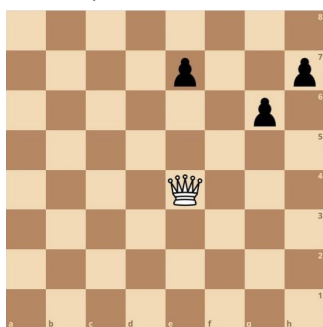
Two of the pawns are **DEFENDED** by Black pieces: the king defends the pawn on f7 and the rook on h8 defends the pawn on h7. White could capture these pawns (1 point) but would lose their queen (9 points).

White does have a **THREAT**: to capture the pawn on e5. A threat is a move a player would like to make if they get the chance.

ATTACKS, **DEFENCES**, and **THREATS** are important ideas in chess and it's worth making sure you know the difference between them.

Puzzle Corner

Circle the pawns the White queen is threatening in the positions below?



It's a numbers game



When you are attacking a piece that is also being defended by your opponent, it's often a good idea to compare the number of attackers and defenders.

Here White has three pieces attacking the pawn on d5 and Black has two pieces defending it. White can safely capture the pawn with their knight. Black re-captures with the knight; White captures with the rook; Black captures with the rook. Finally White captures with the queen. A lot of pieces have been swapped (EXCHANGED) but White has won a pawn.

It's usually best to capture with your lowest value piece first. It would be a terrible mistake for White to capture the pawn on d5 with their queen. After the exchanges, Black would have the advantage. Why not try it to make sure?

Attack or defend

Alexander Alekhine was famous for his attacking play; Tigran Petrosian was well known for being a great defender. Both made it to the very top: World Champion! There are many ways to play a game of chess. Attack or defend? You're in charge—you choose!

Grandmaster Test



White has just moved their knight to g5. Which pawn is White now threatening? What's the best way for Black to defend that pawn?

Defend or flee

If one of your pieces is attacked and you don't want to lose it, you have two choices: defend it or move it. If it was Black's move in the position in the green box, they could either defend the pawn by moving their Queen to e6, or move the pawn to safety on d4.



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