

Lesson 14: Forks

Double Attack!



In the last worksheet we learned how to attack and defend: White attacks a piece, Black defends it; White attacks a second piece, Black defends that too. It's often easy to cope with one threat at a time.

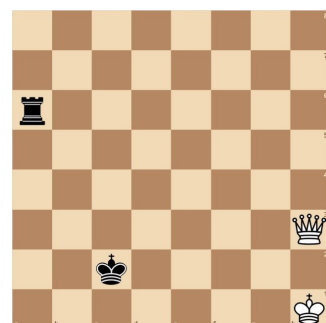
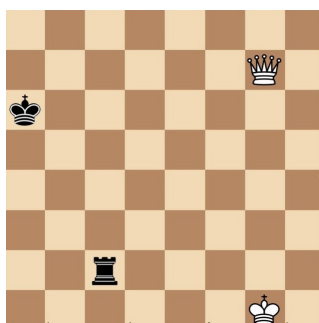
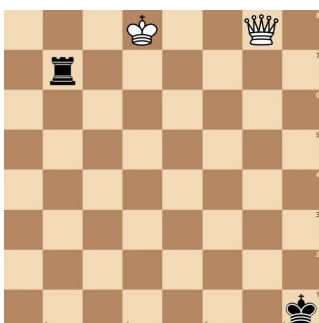
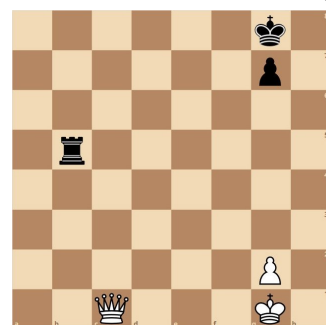
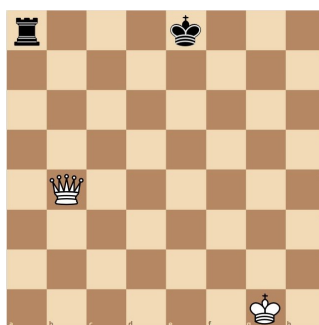
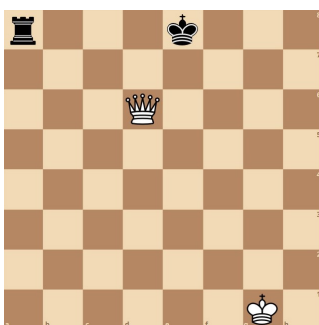
That all changes if you can threaten two pieces at the same time. Here the White queen is attacking the Black king (it's check) and the Black rook on h8. Black has no choice: he has to block the check by moving his queen, bishop or knight to

e7. White will then be able to capture the Black rook.

When one piece attacks two or more pieces, in different directions, it's called a FORK.

Puzzle Corner

Can you find a move for the White queen to safely fork two of Black's pieces?



Knight forks



Knights are great pieces for getting forks. Like the queen, they attack in 8 different directions at once. Their unusual L-shaped move makes knight forks hard to spot, even for experienced players.

Here the White knight has captured Black's pawn on f7. From here it attacks the Black queen and the rook on h8. Black can only save one of these pieces: if she moves the queen White will capture the rook; if she moves the rook White will capture the queen. Black cannot capture the knight on f7 with her king as it is being defended by the White bishop on c4.

Tactics

A tactic is a clever move that leads to an immediate advantage. A fork is one tactic but there are many others: pins, skewers, discovered attacks, sacrifices. We'll learn about them all in later worksheets.

Tactics are the building blocks to better chess. Look out for them in your games.

Grandmaster Test



Boris Spassky reached this position as Black in the 1966 World Championship. He had been expecting White to capture the rook on f7 with his knight. He would then have captured the White knight on e3 with his queen with hopes of achieving a draw.

Instead, Tigran Petrosian played an astonishing move: queen to h8, where it can be captured by the Black king. Can you see what White had planned?

Extreme forks



Here the Black knight is attacking three pieces: the rook on a1, king on e1, and the queen on e3. When three or more pieces are threatened by a single piece, it is called a FAMILY FORK.

Grandmaster Test—Lesson 13

Answer: Black should defend the pawn on f7 by castling. White can still capture the pawn but will lose a bishop and a knight (6pts) and gain a rook and a pawn (6pts), roughly a fair swap.