

6. The King, Check and Checkmate

Objectives:

1. Practice rules for all the chessmen
2. Solve problems with all the chessmen
3. Use check and rules of illegal moves in elementary positions

The main objective of lesson 6 is to teach the rules of movement for the king. The meaning of check and how to get out of check are taught, as well as the meaning of an illegal (invalid) move. **Checkmate is not introduced until lesson 7.**

Lessons 6, 7 & 8 will take substantial amounts of time to teach. In general, the younger the students, the more review and practice the teacher must provide every day. **Review is critical**, particularly for the younger students. Once checkmate is learned (after lesson 7), students should play the game often to reinforce the rules.

The check and checkmate lessons are particularly important in that they teach the student how the game of chess is won, and the object of the game is to win. Until this point, the students won a game by getting a pawn to the end, or capturing all of the opponent's pawns, or blocking the opponent's men. **After lesson 7, students should play until checkmate is achieved.**

Again, lessons 6 through 8 are not necessarily intended to be completed in any specific amount of class time. How long each lesson takes, and how much practice and review the students need, should be decided by each teacher.

Outline of lesson:

1. Review of all chessmen
2. Apply the rules of movement to the king
3. Check and getting out of check
4. Illegal (invalid) moves

**PART 1:
REVIEW OF
ALL
CHESSMEN**

Set up a simple position that contains at least one of each of the chessmen, then ask questions that require the students to name squares that any man is attacking, name diagonals, ranks, files, light/dark squares, capture/recapture, etc. Be sure to review the *en passant* capture.

**PART 2: APPLY
THE RULES OF
MOVEMENT
TO THE KING**

Place a king in the center of an otherwise empty board. State and demonstrate the rule of movement for the king (one square, any direction). Then have students name the other squares the king is attacking (a total of eight squares). Write rule #1 for the king in a list on the board.

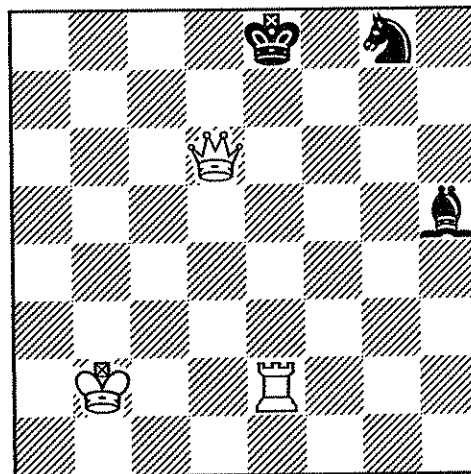
**rule #1:
movement**

Rule #1 for the king: The king moves one square in any direction.

Demonstrate that a king captures the same way it moves. By now the students are accustomed to the idea that pieces capture the same way they move. (Only pawns move differently from the way they capture.)

**Deductive
Reasoning**

Set up the position on the right. Ask the students to figure out whose turn it is to move, and to explain how they know which side has just moved, even to know what that side's last move was.



Often students will explain that it is white's turn to move because white moves first. Because this is a position from the middle of the game, that answer is not correct.

The correct answer is that it is black's turn to move. We can figure that out because black is in "check" and white's most recent move was to move the rook to e2.

**Definition of
check**

Check means that the king is in danger. Nothing more than that, just that the king is in danger.

King safety is paramount

Explain that the rules of chess are different from those of The Pawn Game. No longer do players win by getting a pawn across the board or by capturing the other player's pawns. The most important rule of chess is that the king must always be kept safe.

king most exposed in center

Place a lone king on a square on the edge of the board, have the students count the number of squares it can attack (five), then do the same for a lone king in the corner (three). Ask: "In chess you are to protect (hide) your king, so where is the worst part of the board to place your king if you are trying to hide your king?"

emphasize king safety

Students should say why the center is the worst place for the king (because the king is most exposed to attack in the center). Emphasize king safety from here on. The king is to be "hidden" and protected from attack until late in the game.

PART 3: CHECK AND GETTING OUT OF CHECK

rule #2: check

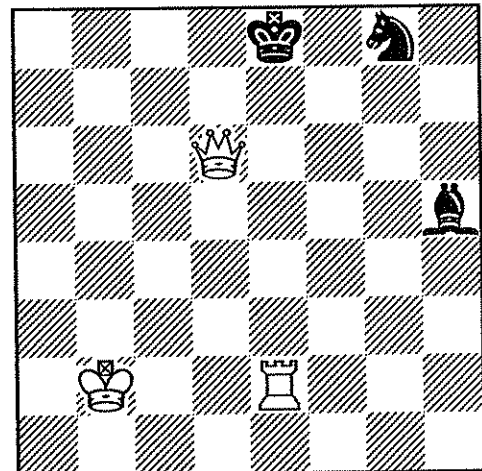
Rule #2 for the king: When the king is in check (a position in which a king is under attack), it must get out of check immediately.

demonstrate check and getting out of check

On the board, write the definition of check as rule #2 for the king. (Check means that the king is in danger.) In the position on the left, what is putting the king in check? (The rook.)

three ways out of check

List the following three options under rule #2 for the king. Remind students that if a player is in check, he must get out of check **immediately**. The three ways to get out of check are:



- i. RUN AWAY: MOVE the king to a safe square, or
- ii. CAPTURE the man that is checking the king, or
- iii. BLOCK the check by interposing a man between the attacker and the king.

find the ways out of check

Have the students find three ways out of check. Running away means moving to a safe square. In this position, that is f7.

Capturing means taking the piece that is attacking the king. In this position, that is B x e2.

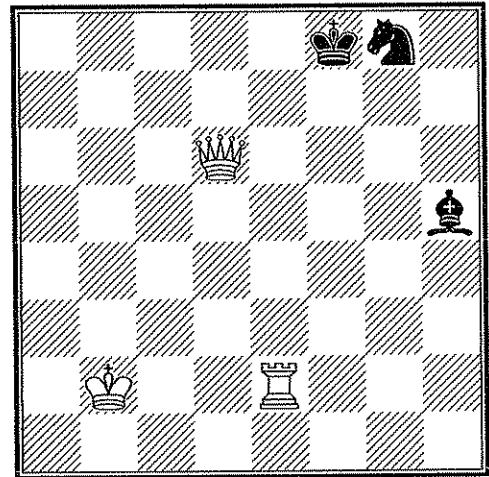
Blocking means putting something between the attacking piece and the king. In this position, that is Ne7.

rule #3: no illegal moves

Rule #3 for the king: A player cannot make a move that puts or leaves his own king in check.

This is an illegal (or invalid) move and the player must take that move back and make a legal move. A player does not automatically lose by making an illegal move. Both players are responsible for making sure that all moves played are legal.

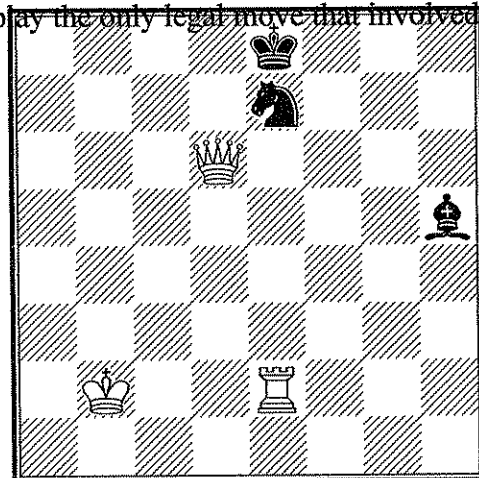
For example, if black had tried to run away by moving Kf8, what would white do? White would silently point out that the queen controls f8, so black may not move the king to that square. What must black do now?



Black does not lose because of the illegal move, so black takes back the invalid move and makes the only move now available: Kf7. What can't black play Bxe2? Because of the touch-move rule. Black touched his king and has a legal move with it. Black must play the only legal move that involved moving the king.

touch-move rule

PART 4: CHECKMATE



Staying with our position, ask what would be white's best move if black chose the option to block the check. Place the knight on e7 so that the position on the left is showing.

White has many moves. Rxe7, moving the king anywhere, moving Qb8+. Any legal move should be noted as a possibility, but one move is better than any of the rest.

there is never a move better than checkmate

The best move is Qxe7#. Rxe7+ is a good move, but black may then play Kf8. After Qxe7 the game is over.

definition of checkmate

Checkmate is a compound word, and for there to be a checkmate both parts of the compound word must be met: 1) the king must be in danger (check) and 2) there must be no way out.

Before the players agree that the position is checkmate, have them identify the chessman attacking the king (giving check) and make sure that there is no way to run, block or capture to get out of check.

**PART 5:
PLAYING THE
GAME**

The only way to win is to checkmate their opponent. There are more rules to learn but it is time to play.