



# CHESS PUZZLES



— **500** —

**Practice Exercises to  
Take Your Game  
to the Next Level**



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Adams Media  
New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

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# INTRODUCTION

## So you want to become a better chess player?

Whether you are new to chess, seeking to improve your online rating, or preparing for a club tournament, playing this game requires some commitment and practice. But you can do it, and *Beginner Chess Puzzles* is here to help!

Packed with five hundred puzzles and insights to help you hone your skills, this book will guide you as you learn and practice:

- **Fundamentals of chess**—including how to capture your opponent's pieces, how to defend your own pieces, and how to react when your king is in check.
- **Tactics**—forced sequences of moves that win your opponent's pieces, including forks, pins, and skewers; discovered attacks and checks; and removing the defense.
- **Defense**—including how to escape from a bad position with a stalemate, and how to avoid tactics for your opponent when defending.
- **Checkmate patterns**—enabling you to recognize the most common checkmates very quickly.
- **And more!**

In a chess game, nobody is going to tell you the **motifs** (basic tactics that can occur in different positions) and **patterns** (specific arrangement of pieces that frequently result in good outcomes, such as delivering checkmate) in the current position. Therefore, it is important to learn to recognize them without any hints! Each of the twelve lessons in this book includes three primary motifs or patterns, along with eight puzzles to help you practice each motif or pattern. At the end of each lesson is a workout section with sixteen puzzles that can include any of the

motifs and patterns you've learned so far in the book. By solving the workout puzzles without knowing what to look for in advance, you learn to spot these motifs on your own and be ready to find them in your own games too!

Motifs and patterns you learn later in this book build and expand on the ones you learn earlier. Remember learning to read? You started with recognizing the letters and associating them with their sounds, then moved on to piecing them together. Now you can instantly recognize and understand not just entire words but full sentences and paragraphs. In the same way you learned to read, you can use the pattern-matching capabilities of your brain to recognize the chess pieces and see the squares to which they can move!

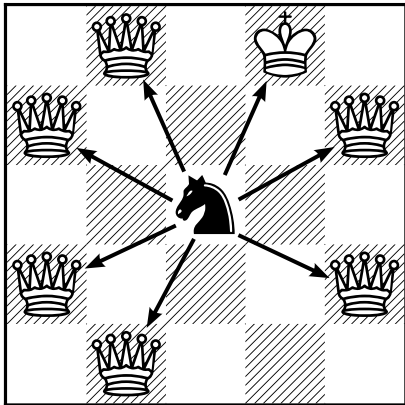
With the essential knowledge and practice provided in this book, you will be able to work your way to using increasingly complicated tactics that allow for beautiful checkmates. Let's get started!

# Knight Forks

Win material with a knight fork, a move with a knight that attacks two or more pieces at the same time.

Knights are extremely good at giving forks. It's like their superpower! In fact, the most common forks are knight forks (and, as mentioned earlier, forks are the most common tactic in chess).

Why are knights so good at giving forks? There are a few reasons for this:



- Because knight moves can't be blocked, there are limited options to defend against knight attacks.
- Knights can attack up to seven pieces at the same time! In this regard the knight is as powerful as a queen.
- Knights are less valuable than rooks and queens, so any attack by a knight on a rook or queen threatens to win material—no matter if the piece is defended or not.

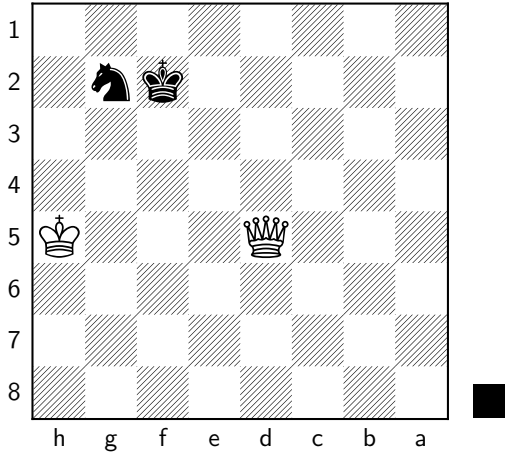
Many knight forks are also checks. If a knight gives check, the opponent can only defend by escaping with the king or by capturing the knight, because the option to block the check is not available against knight checks. If a knight gives check and attacks another piece at the same time, it is very often not possible to defend against both threats.

## How to Spot a Knight Fork

With some practice, knight forks are easy to visualize and you will be able to spot them very quickly! They are sometimes possible in the opening, especially on squares c7 and f7. In the starting position, c7 is only protected by the queen and f7 only by the king. On c7 a knight would fork rook and king, and on f7 it would fork rook and queen—if the pieces were still on their initial positions.

Use the following puzzles to begin looking for knight forks.

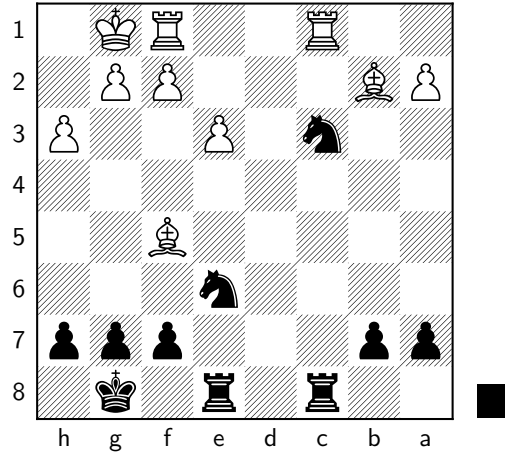
## Puzzle 57



**Black to draw**

Petrova–Franca, Titled Tuesday 2020

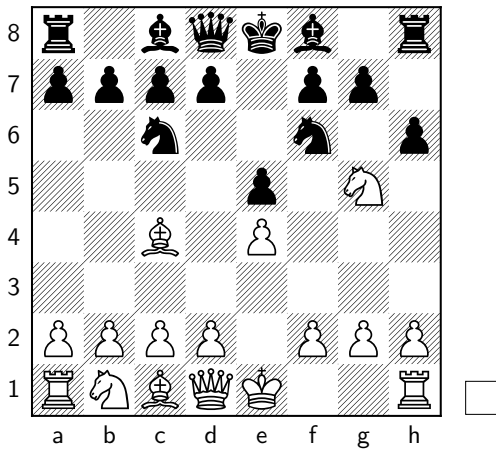
## Puzzle 58



**Black to win**

Anwar–Maheswaran, Mumbai 2009

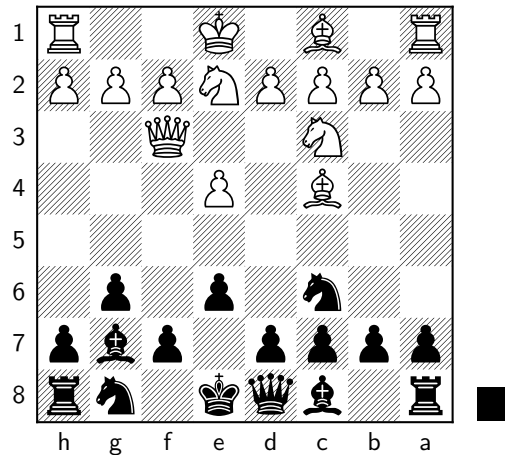
## Puzzle 59



**White to win**

Opening analysis

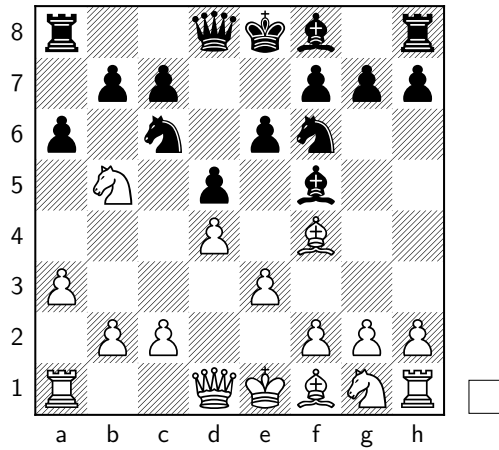
## Puzzle 60



**Black to win**

Fitler–Wong, Grande Prairie 2009

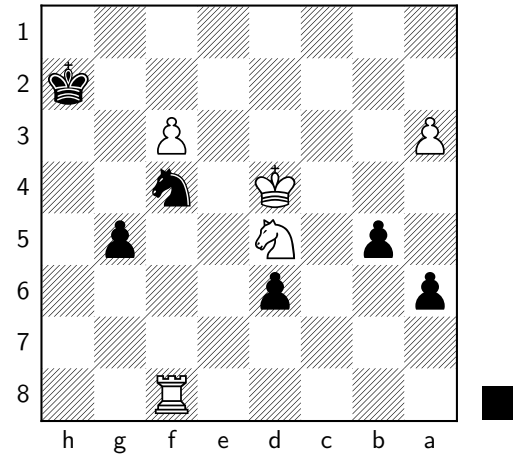
## Puzzle 61



White to win

Amrhein-Daoud, Lehrte 2016

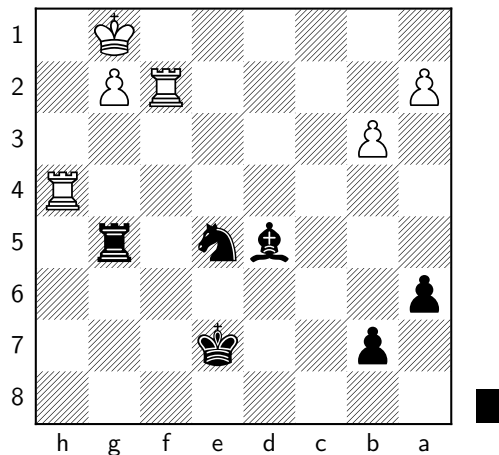
## Puzzle 62



Black to regain material

Heim-Nedev, Chess Olympiad, Yerevan 1996

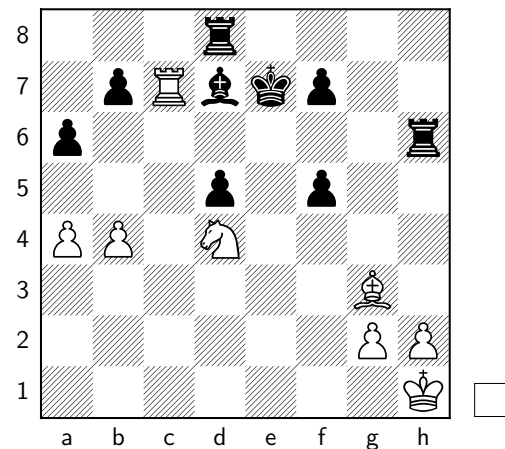
## Puzzle 63



Black to win

Shirov-Salov, Wijk aan Zee 1998

## Puzzle 64

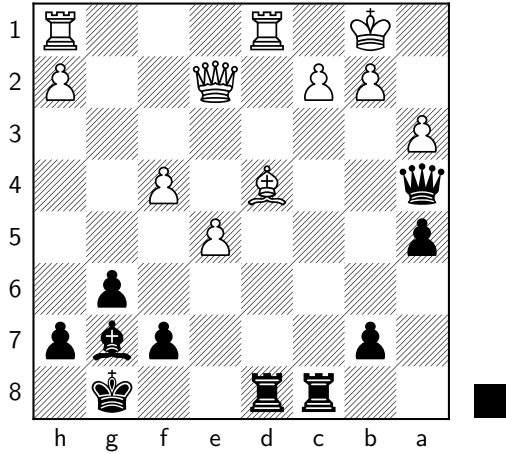


White to win

Rublevsky-Macieja, Polanica-Zdrój 1998



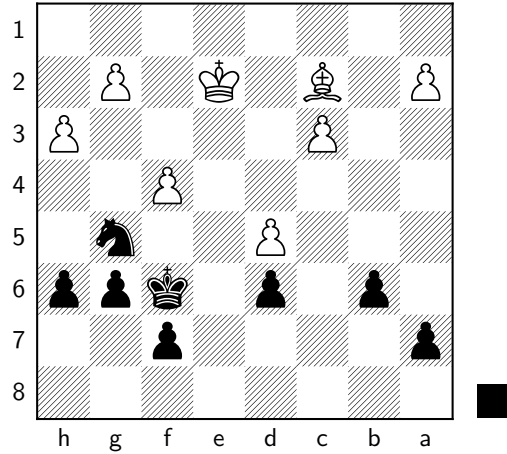
## Puzzle 65



**Black to win**

Malicka–Mirza, Titled Tuesday 2020

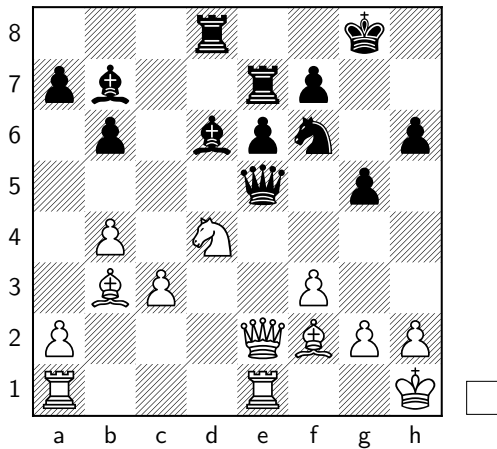
## Puzzle 66



**Black to defend**

Labeledz–Lis, Chotowa 2023

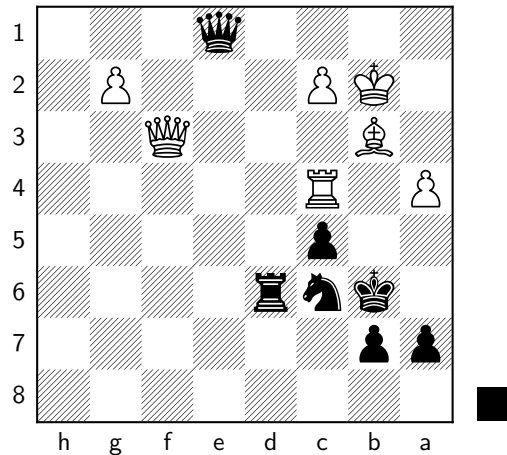
## Puzzle 67



**White to win**

Pinquito–Haldeman, Dos Hermanas 2003

## Puzzle 68



**Black to win**

Gelman–Balaji, Titled Tuesday 2020

**Puzzle 54:** Black just attacked White's knight on b3 with the pawn on a4. Black's rook on a8 defends a5 and a4, and the bishop on f8 defends c5. Therefore, White has to move **1.Nd4**.

Bonus question: How would White defend against **1...c5**? (**Answer:** b5 would be the only safe square for the knight.)

**Puzzle 55:** Black just attacked White's bishop on d3 with the pawn on c4. White must retreat the bishop with **1.Bc2**, because c4, e4, f5, and g6 are protected by the pawns on d5, e6, and f7, while the pawn on h7 is protected by the rook on h8. Chess players call the pawns on f7, e6, d5, and c4 a **pawn chain**.

**Puzzle 56:** Black's queen on f5 is attacked by the pawn on g4. The squares g4, f3, and d3 are protected by the knight on e5, f4 by bishop and queen, f2 by king and queen, e4 and b1 by the rooks.

The only safe square is c2. The white queen can capture the black queen, but Black can recapture: **1...Qc2 2.Qxc2 Bxc2**.

**Puzzle 57:** Black is a knight against queen down in the endgame but escapes with the royal fork (forking king and queen) **1...Nf4+ 2.Kg5 Nxd5**. A minor piece (knight or bishop) alone is unable to checkmate the king; therefore, the game immediately ends with a draw.

**Puzzle 58:** Black can win the exchange with the knight fork **1...Ne2+ 2.Kh2 Nxc1**.

**Puzzle 59:** This position was reached after the opening moves **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5**. Now White threatens **Nxf7**. Black blundered with **4...h6??**, and now White can win with **5.Nxf7 Qe7 6.Nxh8**.

Bonus question: Can you see how Black could have defended against the knight fork instead of playing **4...h6??** (**Answer:** **4...d5** is the best defense, because it blocks the attack by the bishop on f7. Then **5.Nxf7?** can be answered with **5...Kxf7**.)

**Puzzle 60:** White has just played the unfortunate blunder **Ng1-e2**, allowing Black to win with the knight fork **1...Ne5**, attacking the queen on f3 and the unprotected bishop on c4. Because the knight now blocks e2, the queen is unable to run away and protect the bishop at the same time.

**Puzzle 61:** This is an example of a knight fork on c7 in the opening. White wins a pawn and the exchange with **1.Nxc7+ Kd7 2.Nxa8**.

**Puzzle 62:** Black is a rook down for two pawns but can regain the rook with the backward knight fork **1...Ne6+ 2.Ke4 Nxf8**.

**Puzzle 63:** Black can win with the knight fork **1...Nf3+**, attacking the king and the rook on h4 at the same time. Note that **2.gxf3** is not a legal move now, because this would put the king in check by the rook on g5. The pawn on g2 is pinned by the rook on g5 (more on pins in Lesson 6).

The best continuation for White would be **2.Rxf3 Bxf3**, leaving Black up a bishop for a pawn in the endgame. White wouldn't be able to capture with the pawn on g2, which would still be pinned.

**Puzzle 64:** White can win with the knight fork **1.Nxf5+ Kf6 2.Nxh6**. Note that Black can't play **1...Bxf5**, because the bishop is pinned by the rook on c7 (more on pins in Lesson 6).

**Puzzle 65:** White's bishop on d4 is insufficiently protected. Black can win with the trade **1...Rxd4 2.Rxd4 Qxd4**.

**1...Qxd4?** would lose the queen for the rook and bishop after **2.Rxd4 Rxd4**.

**Puzzle 66:** The knight on g5 is attacked by the pawn on f4. **1...Nh7** is the only defense, because **Nxh3** would fail to **gxh3**, **Nf3** to **Kxf3**, **Ne4** to **Bxe4**, and **Ne6** to **dxh6**.

**Puzzle 67:** Black is threatening checkmate with **Qxh2#**, but White can win with a trade because of the battery on the e-file: **1.Qxe5 Bxe5 2.Rxe5**, and White is a bishop up.

**Puzzle 68:** Black can win with the knight fork **1...Ne5**, attacking White's queen and rook at the same time.

White can try **2.Qe4** to attack Black's queen, but **2...Nxc4+** is with check, so White has no time to capture the queen, and after **3.Qxc4**, Black has won the exchange.

White can also try a counterattack with **2.Re4**, but then after **2...Nxf3**, the knight is protecting the queen, so after **3.Rxe1 Nxe1**, Black is a rook up.

**Puzzle 69:** Black can win with the pawn fork **1...g5+**, attacking White's king and rook at the same time. The pawn is protected by the rook on c5.

**Puzzle 70:** White has left the bishop on g5 insufficiently protected, and Black can win because of the diagonal battery with **1...Bxg5 2.Nxg5 Qxg5**.