



And Then There Were None!

Exercises for Delivering Checkmate
With a King and Queen

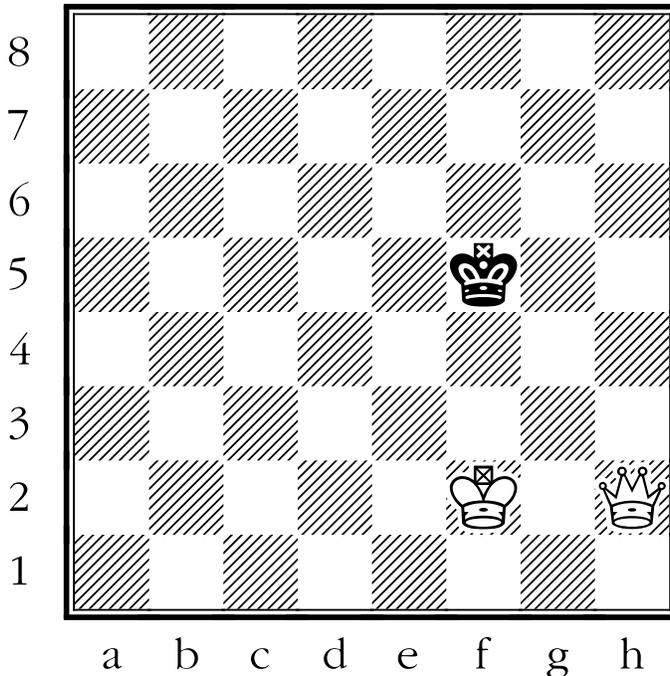
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Imagine that you're White in the position shown below, and that it's your turn to move.



Against a strong player or a computer, could you checkmate Black in less than 10 moves?

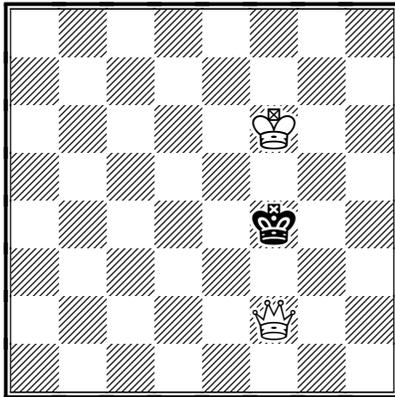
Reaching a position like this is great for White -- as long as that player knows how to complete the victory. Many, many players who know all the rules of chess have trouble discovering the strategy it takes to force checkmate here. And that can be **FRUSTRATING!** (Not to mention *embarrassing!*)

The following pages are intended to help chess students learn, step-by-step, a good strategy for **FORCING** checkmate against a lone king. Three **EXTREMELY** important ideas for White to use in a position like the one shown here are:

- **White MUST force Black's king to an edge of the board!**
- **White MUST use his own king to help trap Black's king!**
- **White does not need to give check often, but MUST be giving check when Black's king has run out of possible moves!**

Exercise 1

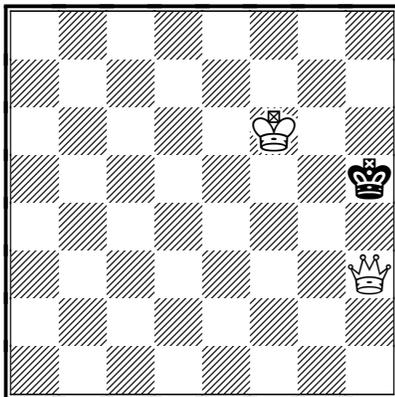
**Problem
1**



Is Black in check? Yes No

How many possible moves does Black have?

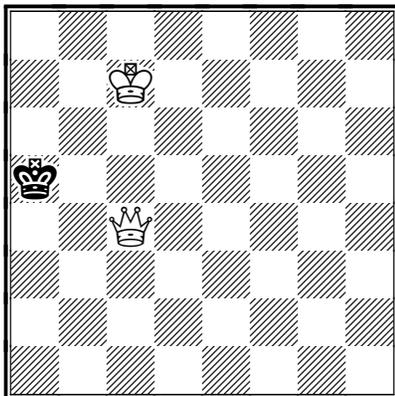
**Problem
2**



Is Black in check? Yes No

How many possible moves does Black have?

**Problem
3**



Is Black in check? Yes No

How many possible moves does Black have?

Answers

Problem 1: Yes, Black is in check. Black has 2 possible moves (to either side).
 Problem 2: Yes, Black is in check. Black has 0 possible moves (checkmate).
 Problem 3: No, Black is not in check. Black has 0 possible moves (stalemate).

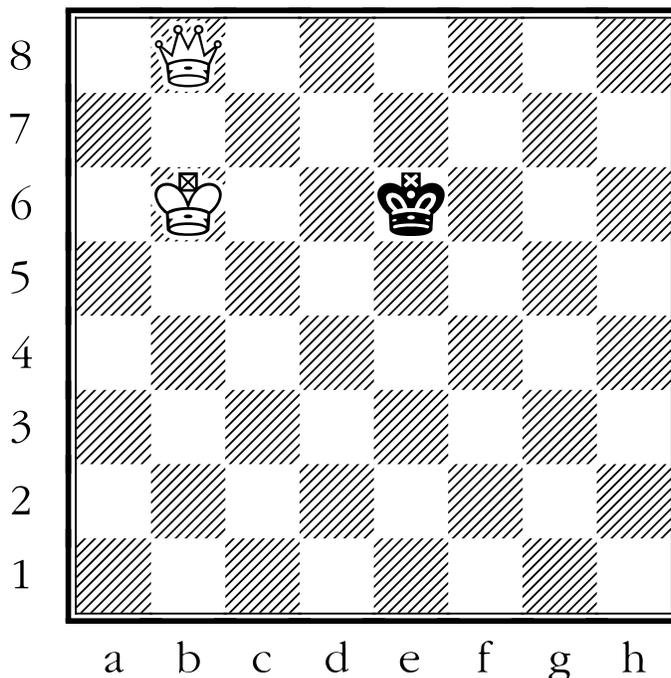
Exercise 2

Black is running out of time -- running out of MOVES! The challenge for White is to trap the black king. As you do the problems on the next 6 pages, that challenge will also be YOURS!

First, you'll study the position. You'll look at Black's possible escape routes. Since you know that you must force the black king to the edge of the board, you'll choose which direction you want to force him to go. You'll cut off Black's escape routes until none are left.

You'll use your king and queen as a team. Individually, all these two pieces can do is chase the black king around, and around, and around, and around. And around. And around. (And get very boring!) Working together, they can efficiently force checkmate.

Once Black's king is against an edge, you will **CONSTANTLY BE ON ALERT** for the terrible danger of giving stalemate instead of checkmate. Before making a move, you'll make absolutely, positively, without-a-doubt sure that Black is either in check or has a possible move. Should you accidentally give stalemate, you will wail, gnash your teeth, perhaps even rend your garments. Then, like every good chess player, you'll learn from your blunder and stubbornly go back into battle!



Problem 4

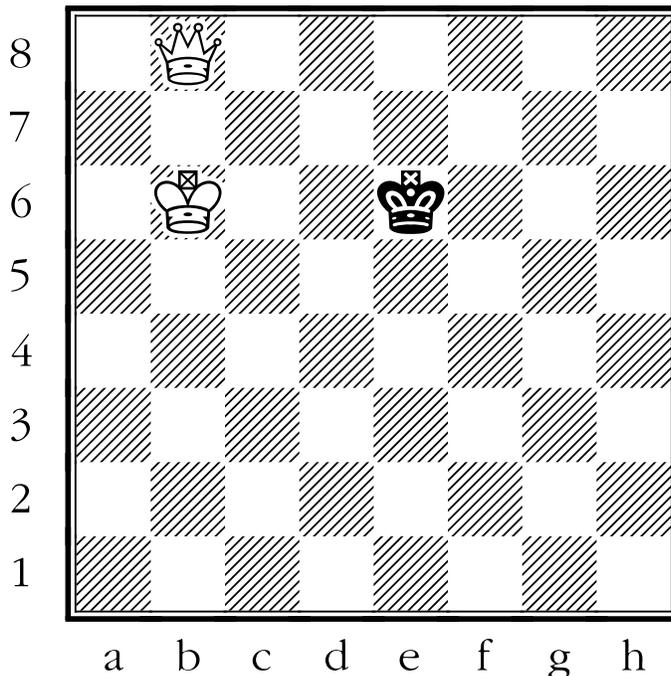
Write down **HOW MANY** different moves the black king could make:



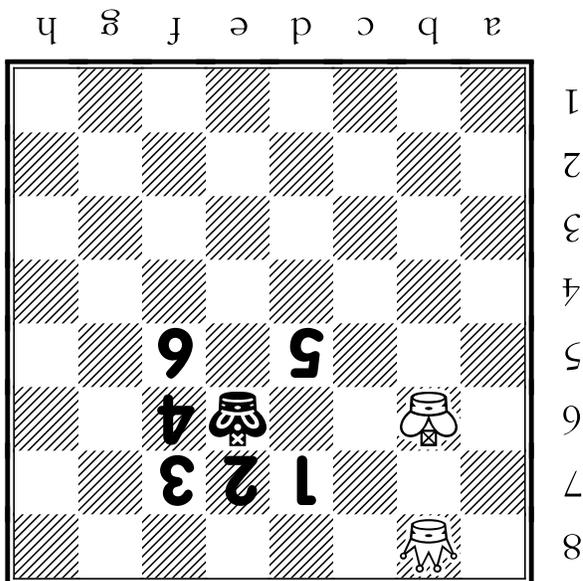
If there are more than ZERO moves, then there's some serious work to be done!

White must work until there are NONE.

And when Black has no possible moves left, White must be giving CHECK!

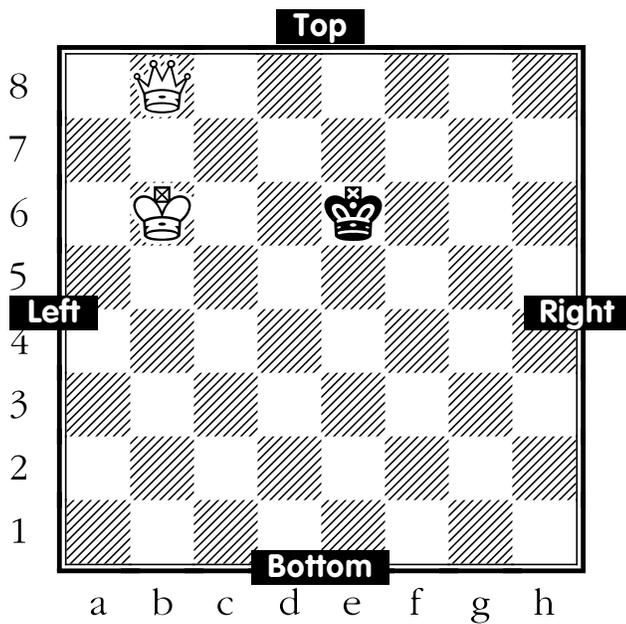


Answer 4



Black is starting with 6 possible moves. That's way too many!

Problem 5



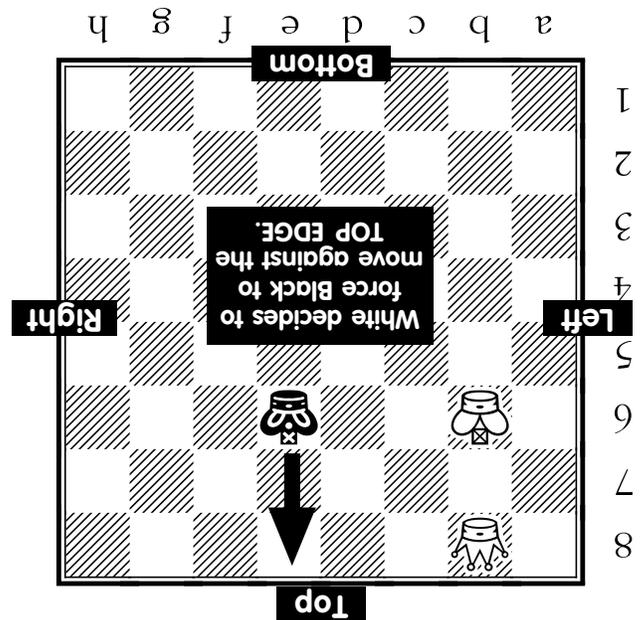
To force checkmate, White must first push Black's king to an edge of the board. White should decide which edge of the board is most handy.

CIRCLE the EDGE that White should aim for:



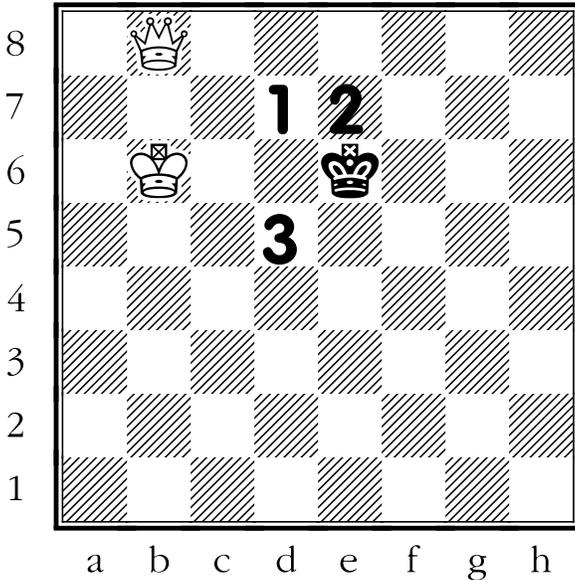
Answer 5

Black's king is closest to the TOP edge. White's king is in a good position to help push Black toward the top (rank 8) Of course, White could also use one of the other edges and do just fine. It just might take a few extra moves to force checkmate. That's not a problem except for players who are using a chess clock.



Problem 6

**WRITE OR DRAW
A STRONG MOVE FOR WHITE**

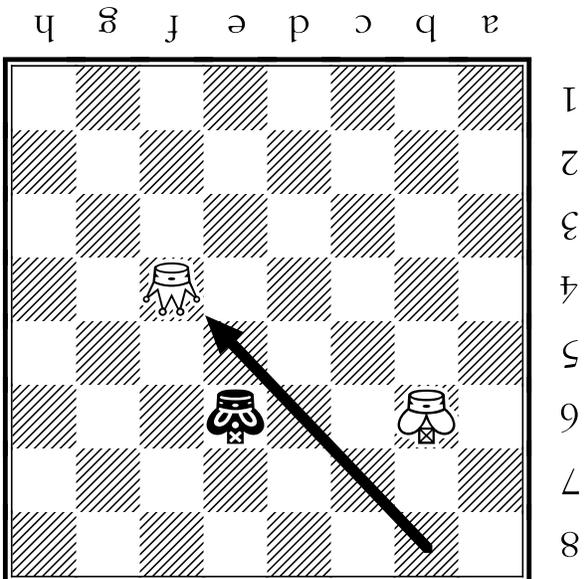


**Here's a
hint!**



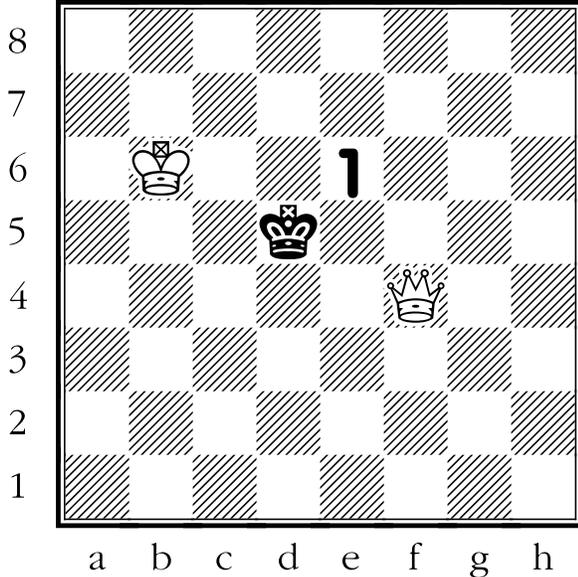
Find a move so that Black's king is allowed to move **ONLY** to one of the 3 numbered squares.

Answer 6



White played Qf4
 This move greatly limits where Black can go. Black will try to move toward the center of the board by playing Kd5.
 Note that White is NOT trying to give check. White's concern right now is to cut off Black's main escape routes.

Problem 7



WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.

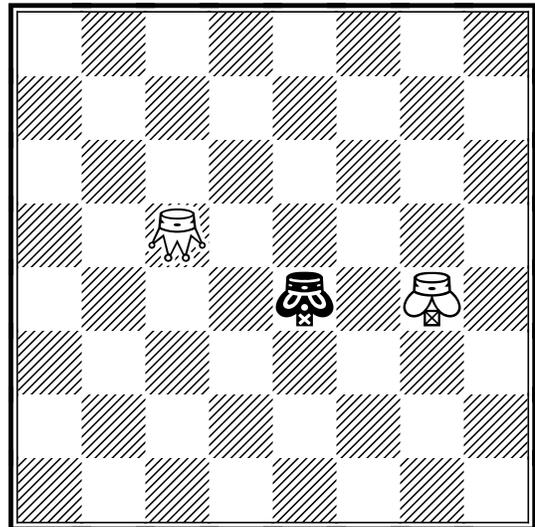
Here's a hint!



After White makes this king move, Black can move **ONLY** to the square marked by the "1".

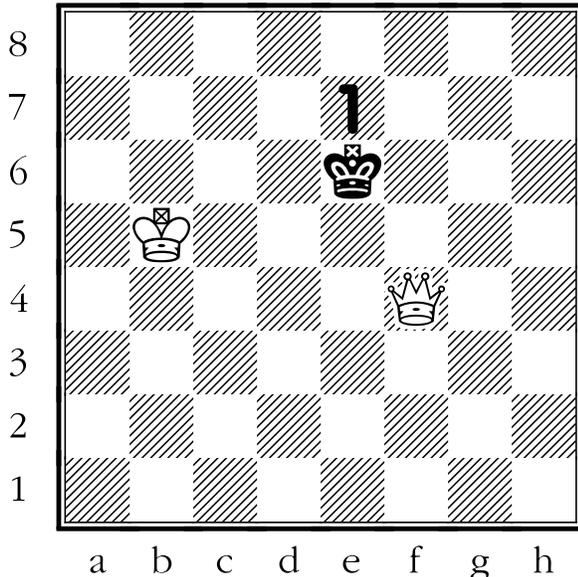
Answer 7

The kings are now face-to-face. Black is left with one move, a move toward the edge of the board: Ke6.



White played **Kb5**

Problem 8



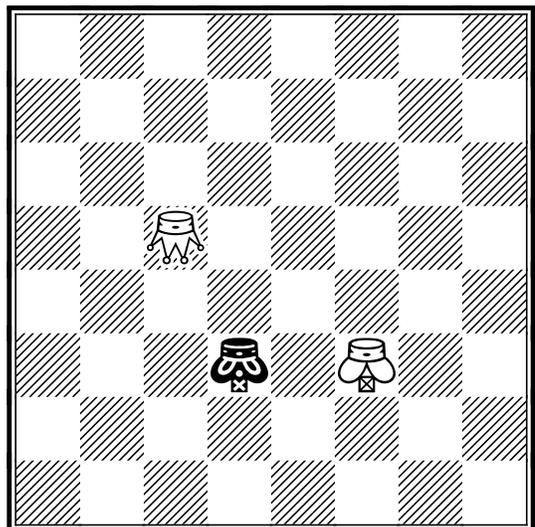
WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.



White can push Black another step closer to the edge of the board. **HINT:** choose a move that forces Black onto the marked square.

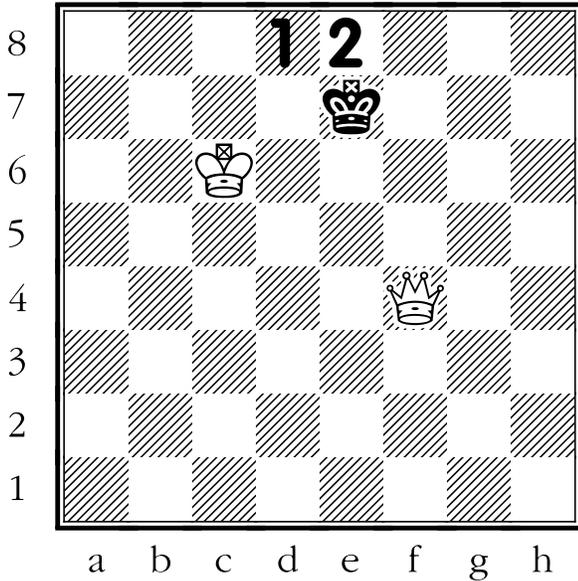
Answer 8

White's king has again moved **directly across** from Black's king. Black must take another step toward the edge: Ke7.



White played **Kc6**

Problem 9



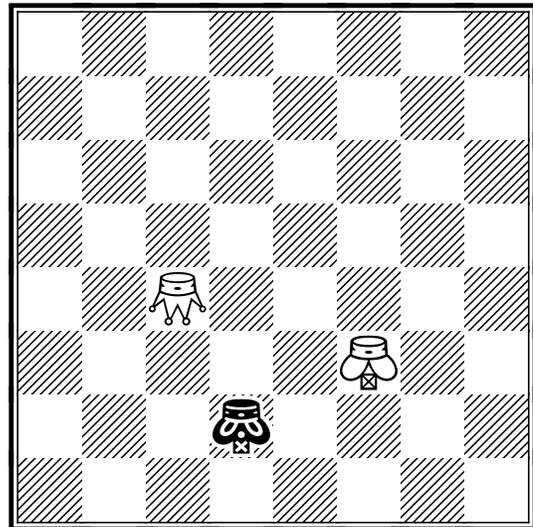
WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.



White's king is in a good location on the 6th rank. A small queen move pushes Black to the edge -- to either d8 or to e8.

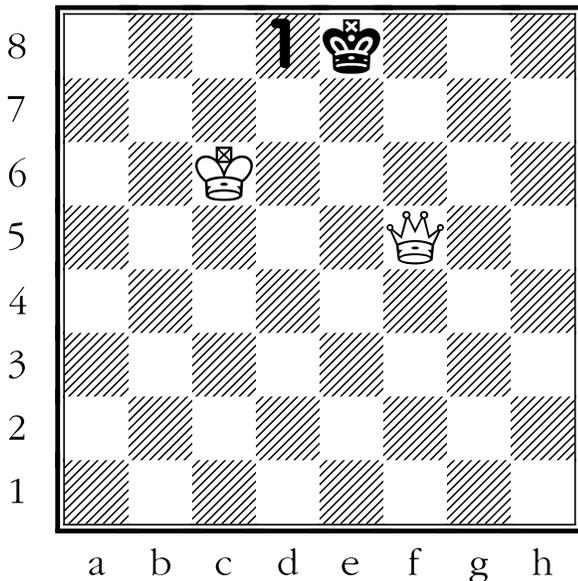
Answer 9

White's simple advance is more powerful than giving check would be. Black must face his fate on the edge! He plays Kc8.



White played **Qf5**

Problem 10



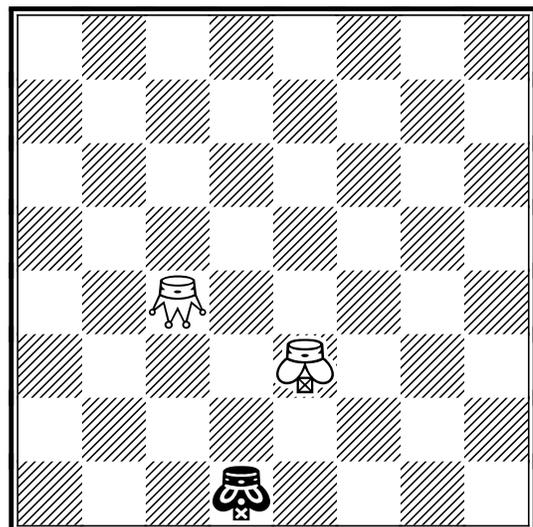
WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.



White must avoid staminate. Before making a move, White makes positively sure that Black will either be in check or have a possible move.

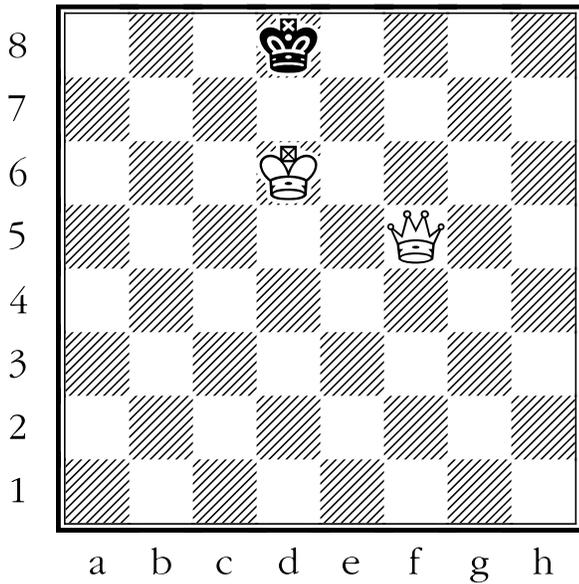
Answer 10

After Black plays his only possible move by White's king. White waits patiently. (Kd8), his king will be trapped on the edge.



White played **Kd6**

Problem 11



WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.

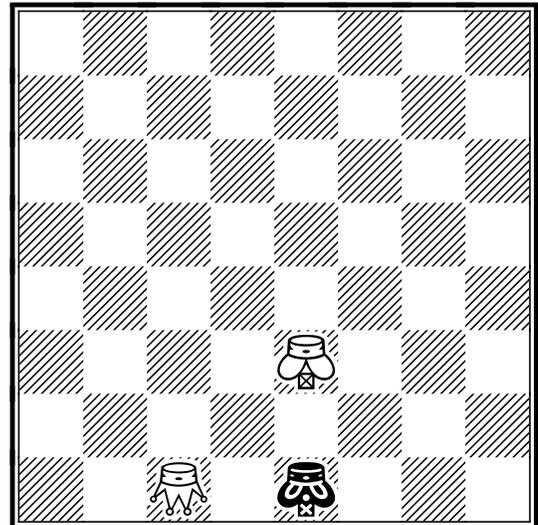


White has 2 ways to give check and reduce Black's possible moves to NONE. Pick one!

Answer 11

White hadn't given a single check until this move -- but sure made it count!

a b c d e f g h



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White played Qf8\#

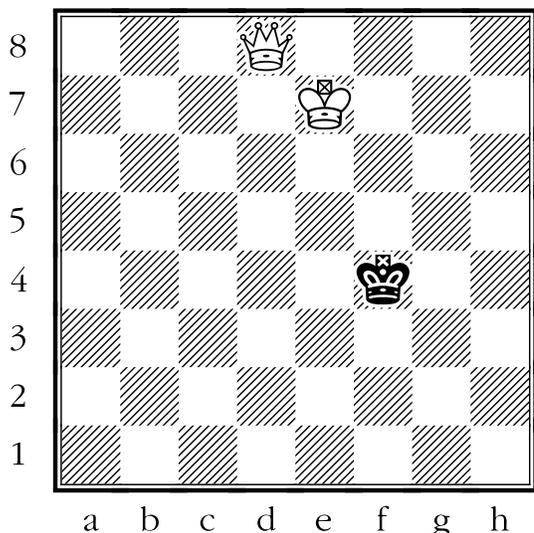


Looks like one of our star chess pieces just got carried away! In the heat of battle, it can happen to the best of us.

Luckily, friends are standing by to remind the victorious queen that the game is over, done, history. Now that she's successfully trapped the king, he must be allowed to stick around for the next game!

(I believe that folks who like to fish call this rule "catch and release".)

Exercise 3



a b c d e f g h

White has just promoted a pawn.

Against a strong player or a computer, could you checkmate Black in less than 9 moves?

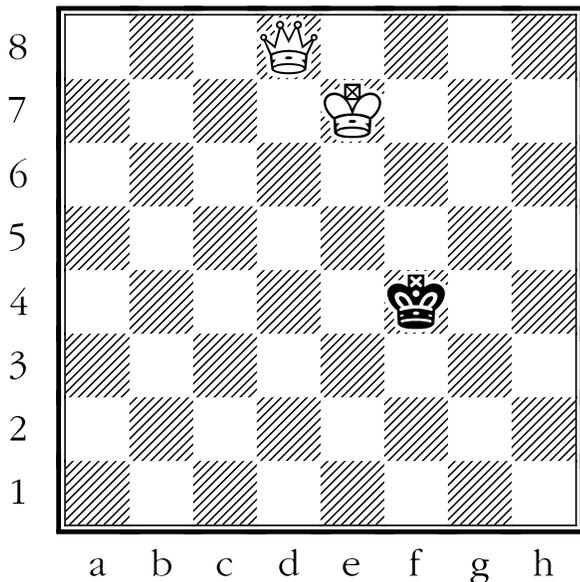
Right now, Black's king is unrestricted. White must reduce his possible moves until there are NONE!

In the previous exercise, we saw that White used his king to bulldoze Black toward the edge. White's king will again need to be active in this exercise!

We also saw, in Exercise 2, that White didn't worry about giving a lot of checks. Instead, White's queen took away possible escape squares. Black was left with very few choices for where to go -- and these choices led him closer and closer to the edge of the board.

Once Black's king was along the edge, the risk of **stalemate** became very high! Again, we'll see White make very carefully planned steps during the closing moves of the game.

Problem 12



a b c d e f g h

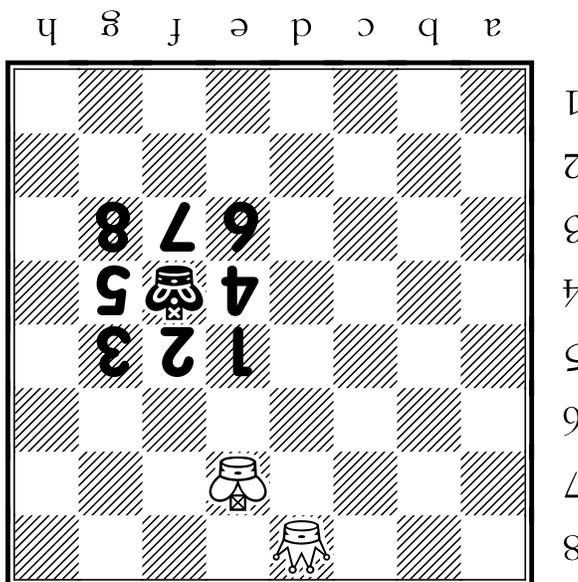
To start this exercise, write down how many possible moves Black could make right now:



If there are more than ZERO moves, there's work to be done. Black must have zero moves, and be in check!

Answer 12

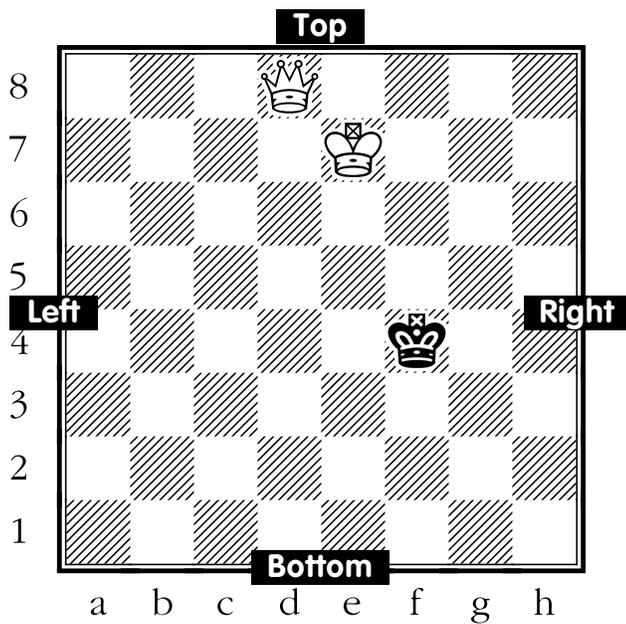
Black can go in any direction. That's 8 possible moves. Frankly, that's way too many



a b c d e f g h

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Problem 13



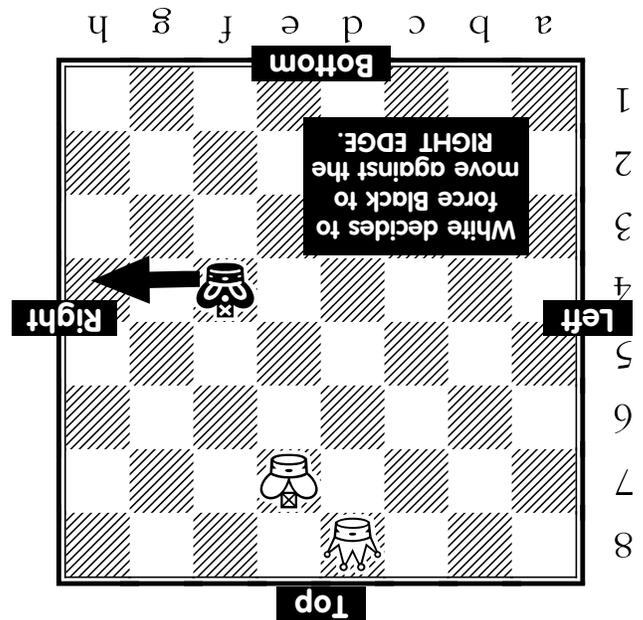
To force checkmate, White must first push Black's king to an edge of the board. White should decide which edge of the board is most handy.

CIRCLE the EDGE that White should aim for:

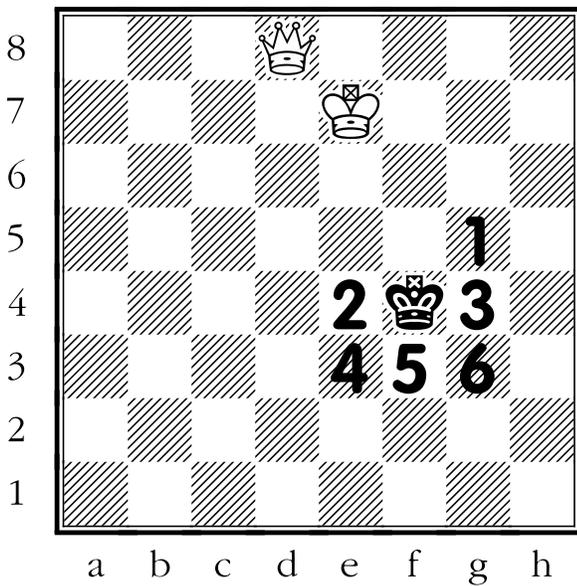


Answer 13

Black's king is closest to the RIGHT edge. White could also easily force checkmate along the BOTTOM edge. White could start with a queen move (as in the last exercise). But this time she starts with a king move, since she knows that the white king MUST be moved toward the black king before checkmate can be forced. To delay being checkmated for as long as possible, Black will try to stay toward the center of the board.



Problem 14



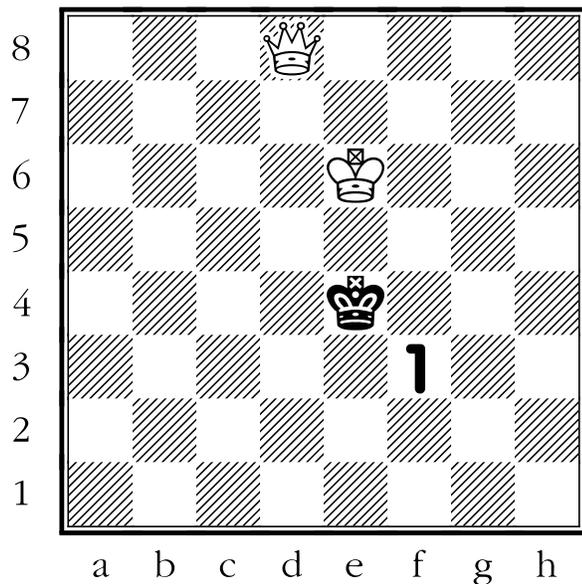
WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.

Here's a hint!



White knows that during endgames, kings can gain power as they move toward the center!

Problem 15



WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.

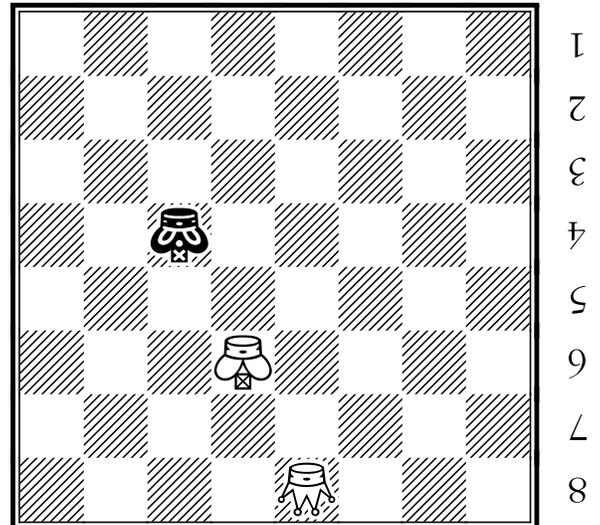
Here's a hint!



With a precise move of her queen, White reduces Black's possible moves to just one!

Answer 14

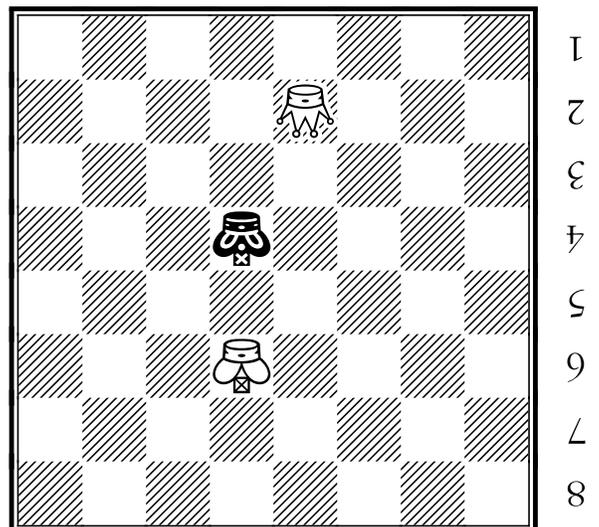
Now that White's king is closer to the center, he'll be able to pursue Black no matter where he runs. Black tries Ke4.



White played Ke6

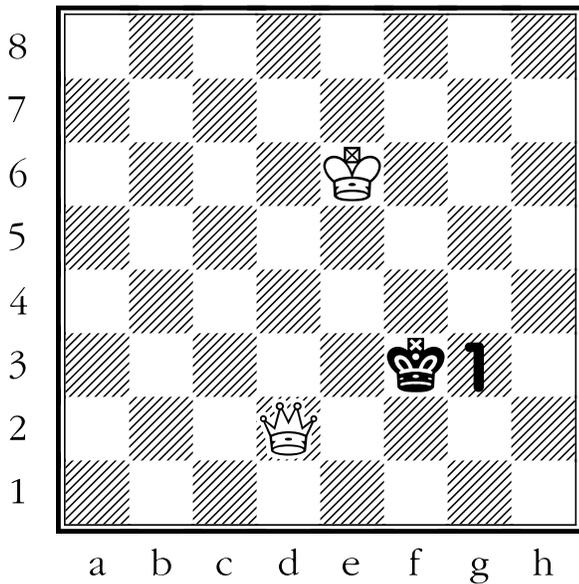
Answer 15

White's king has sealed off the top. The queen has cut-off any chance of escape toward the left or bottom. Kf3 is forced.



White played Qd2

Problem 16



WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.

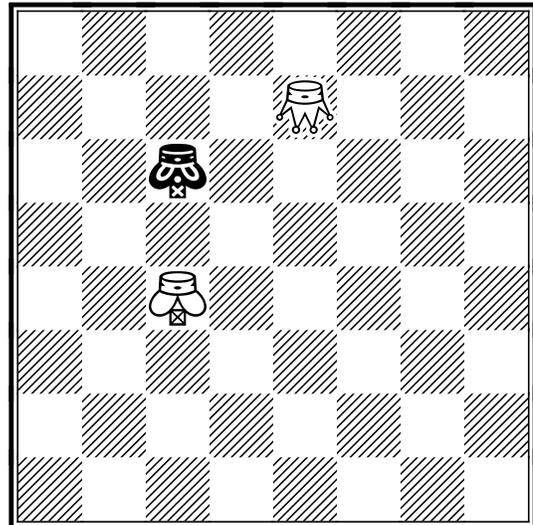


White's king continues to accept a big part of the responsibility for trapping his adversary.

Answer 16

White's king has again moved into *opposition* with Black's king. This forces another step toward the edge: Kg3.

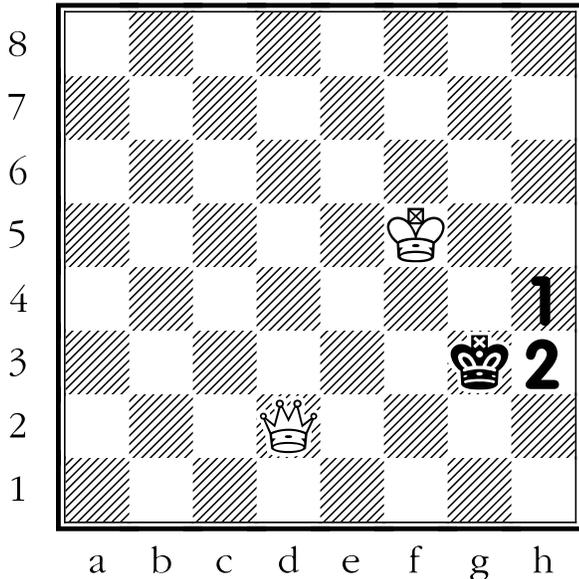
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White played **Kf5**

Problem 17



WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.

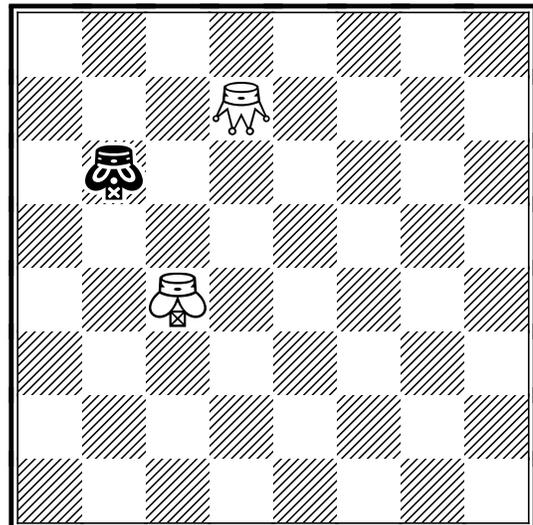


Giving check is NOT White's most powerful weapon here. Making Black avoid check by moving to the edge is very powerful.

Answer 17

Black is given two options. One is bad, the other worse! If he goes to h4, White gives checkmate on g4. So he plays Kh3.

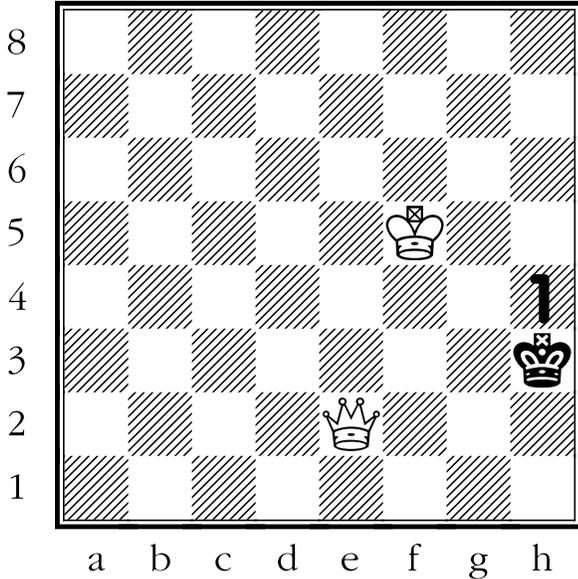
a b c d e f g h



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White played **Qe2**

Problem 18



WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.

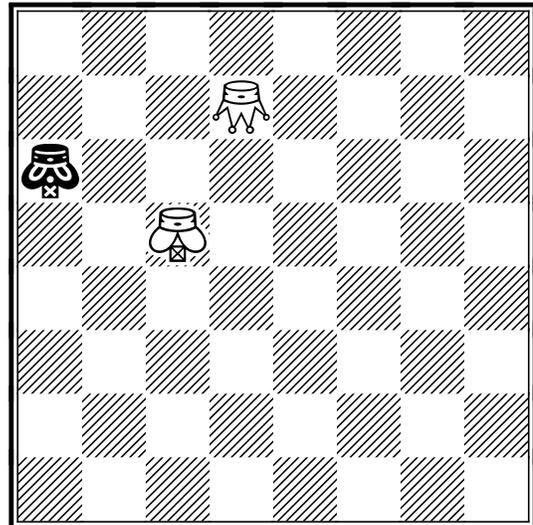


White must avoid stamete. The queen is too powerful to advance her to f2!! What move forces the black king to face his doom on h4?

Answer 18

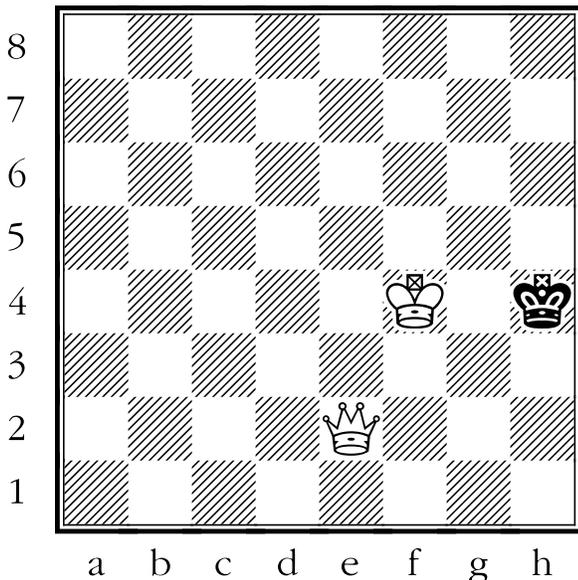
Black has been walking the plank. He now takes his last step, to h4. White will have to decide how to feed the alligators!

a b c d e f g h



White played **Kf4**

Problem 19



WRITE OR DRAW WHITE'S MOVE.

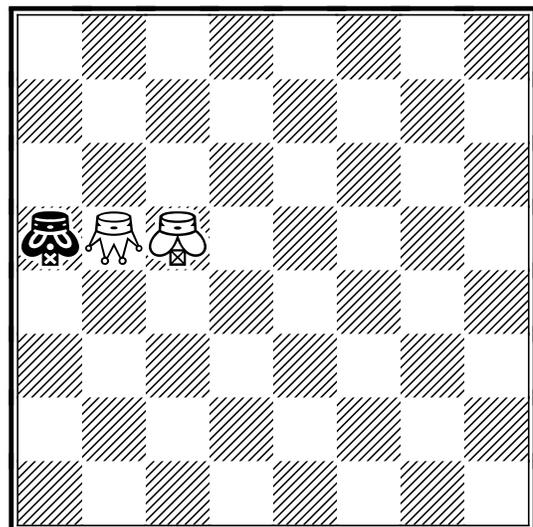


Hmm. Will it be up close and personal, or from a short distance? White chooses up close!

Answer 19

Qh2 would also have dropped the plank. The crucial role for White's king this time was to guard his queen from capture.

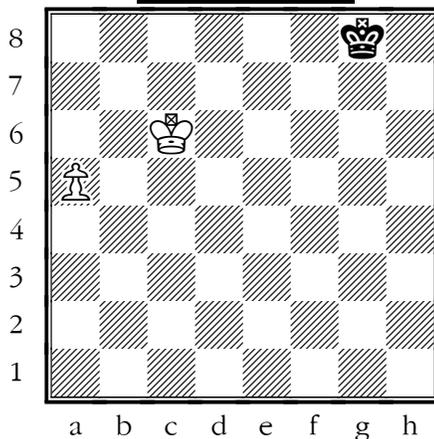
a b c d e f g h



White played **Qg4#**

Exercise 4

Problem 20

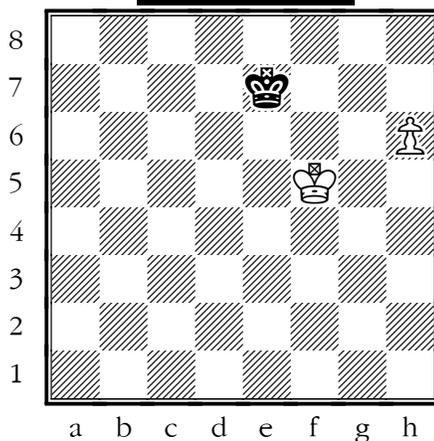


Play as **BLACK** in each of the three positions on the left against a strong chess player or against a computerized chess game.

White should move first. White should try to promote his or her pawn advantage into a **queen** advantage.

Your job as Black is to stay out of checkmate for as long as possible! (HINTS: Move toward the center of the board anytime you get a chance. Always look for the possibility that your opponent may blunder and you may earn a draw by capturing White's pawn or queen, by getting into stalemate, by the 50-move rule, or by the repeated position rule.)

Problem 21

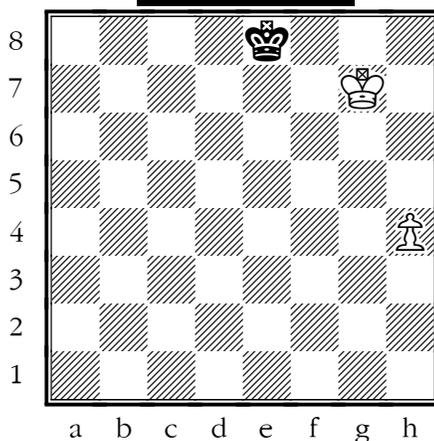


Pay close attention to the strategy that your opponent uses to force you into checkmate. If you don't understand a certain move, hopefully you'll be able to discuss it together!

Exercise 5

Now play the three positions on the left as **White**! If at all possible, play against a strong chess player or against a strong chess computer.

Problem 22



(Computers usually are not as tricky as experienced chess players can be in these kinds of positions! Some players are very clever in the way they'll set traps in order to get a draw instead of a loss! Computers usually aren't programmed to take into account that humans can be vulnerable to such nefarious traps!)

As a final reminder: actively use your king; force the black king to the edge; and be on constant alert against making a blunder that would cause a draw. Good luck!

Additional exercises for forcing checkmate against a lone king can be found at www.professorchess.com.