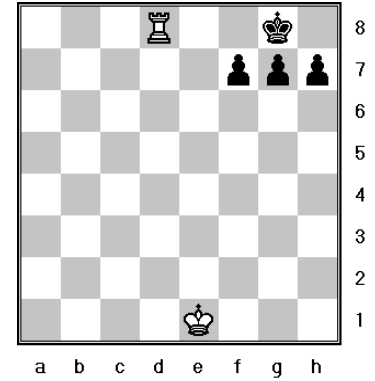
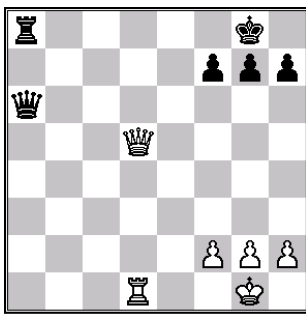


Back Rank Mates

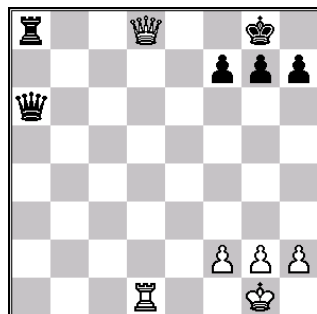
A back rank mate is a checkmate on the 1st or 8th rank with a rook or queen. Notice the Black king in the diagram to the right. He is in a castled position with all three pawns in front of him still on their original squares. Black has no piece that can capture White's rook or block the check. Black has left their king with no escape. Remember this position. Engrave it into your mind so that you will never forget it! Always be on guard against it. Always be ready for your opponent to make the fatal mistake of leaving their king on the back rank with nowhere to hide.



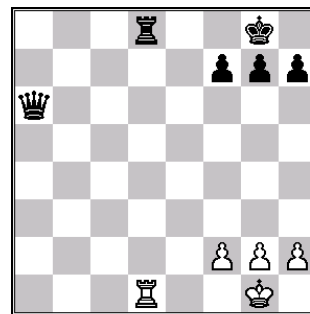
The back rank mate can occur in a number of ways. Take a look at the following examples.



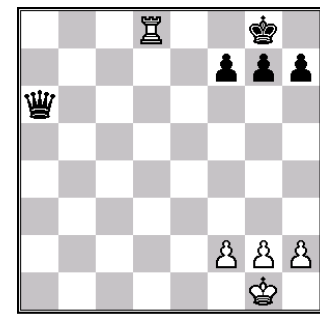
White To Move



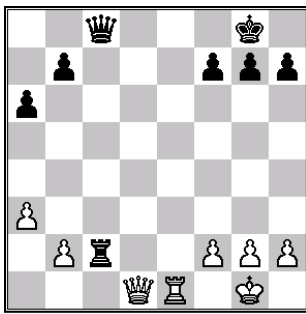
a b c d e f g h



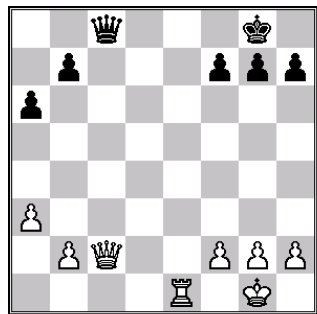
a b c d e f g h



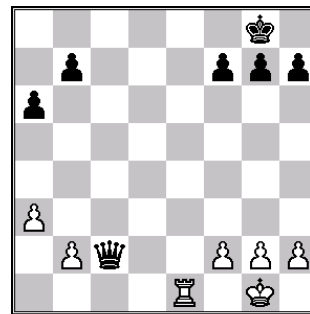
Checkmate!!



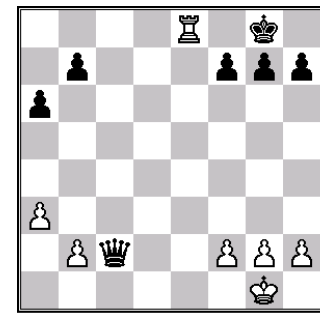
White To Move



a b c d e f g h



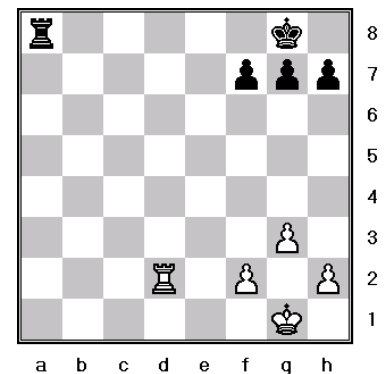
a b c d e f g h



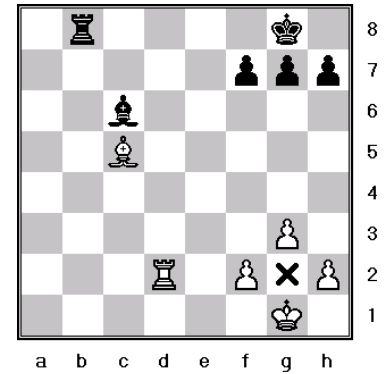
Checkmate!!

Now that we have a good idea of what a back rank mate is we need to learn how to defend against it.

Whenever your king is on the back rank with the pawns in front of him all on their original squares with no rook on the back rank it should set off a warning alarm to you. You should think: **DANGER!! BACK RANK MATE!!** To be safe you should move one of the pawns in front of your king one square like the diagram to the right shows. Now if Black's rook on a8 moves to a1 White's king now has the g2 square as an escape square.



While White's moving their g pawn in front of their king in the last diagram worked well it might not always work out that way. In the diagram to the right you see that White has pushed their g pawn to give their king an escape square, but there is one problem, Black's bishop on c6 is on the a8-h1 diagonal, preventing White's king an escape square from Black's threat of rook to a1, Checkmate!! So White would do better to move their h2 pawn to h3 where Black's bishop cannot prevent him from escaping.



Before you push a pawn to create an escape square look to see if your opponent can prevent your king from escaping there. If your opponent has a light squared bishop it is best to push your h pawn so your king can escape to a dark square. If they have a dark squared bishop then pushing your g pawn would allow your king to escape to a light square.

Remember:

1. When your opponent's king is castled and the pawns in front of their king are still on their original squares, look for ways you can back rank mate them.
2. If your king is ever in the position described above look for the quickest and best way to defend against the back rank mate.
3. How can you defend against the back rank mate?
 - Move either your g or h pawn. Look at the position on the board to determine which is best.
 - Keep a rook on the back rank. Most often this will keep your king safe from the back rank mate.
 - Keep a piece like a knight or bishop close so they can block check as seen in the diagrams below.

