

Gungahlin Junior Chess Club

Roving Rooks

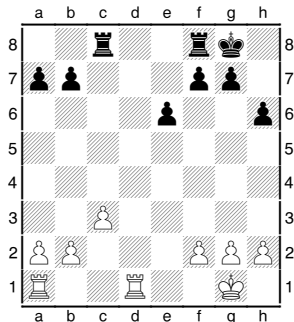
The Rook is the first of what are called the “Major” pieces. It is a major piece because it is more powerful than either the Knight or the Bishop.

The power of the Rook is because it can move as far as it wants in a straight line. On an empty board it only takes a Rook at most 2 moves to get to any square it wants. And because it moves in a straight line it is not restricted to squares of one colour, like the Bishop.

The only drawback a Rook has is that it starts in the corner of the board. However this is only a small problem, as any good chess player will quickly develop their minor pieces allowing the Rook to get to the centre of the board.

Taking the Highway

What Rooks really like are open files. Take a look at the following diagram.



The White Rook on d1 is able to move the entire length of the board. Its partner on a1 isn't able to do as much. In fact the Rook on d1 can move to 11 squares, while the a1 Rook can only move to 2. The Black rook on f8 is in the same boat as it only has 2 squares it can move to. The Rook on c8 is a little better off, although it can only move as far as c3 because of the White pawn.

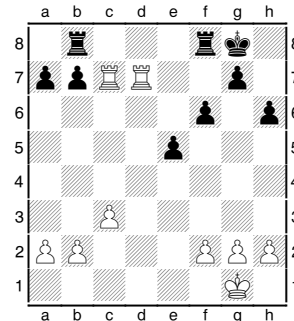
In chess the d-file is called an “Open File” because it is not blocked by pawns of either colour. The c-file is called a “Semi-Open File” because it is only blocked by a pawn from one side. Can you see where another “Semi-Open File” is located? Which side is most likely to use it?

Because Rooks can move long distances across the board, they really like open files. They are like highways into the enemies position.

Seventh Heaven

Rooks, like other pieces, love to take things. The more enemy pieces they can capture, the happier they are. So they like to move to places where they can threaten the most things. Often the best place to put your Rook is on your opponents 7th rank.

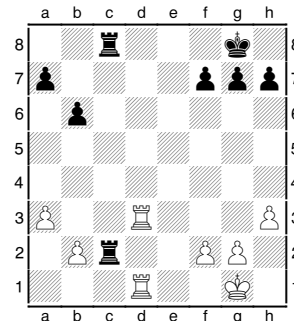
In the previous diagram White should play **1.Rd7** to attack the pawn on b7. To save the pawn Black has to play **1... Rb8** leaving both black Rooks stuck behind pawns. Then White can bring the other Rook to d1 to have two active rooks versus two passive ones.



If one Rook on the 7th is good, two Rooks are fabulous. You will soon discover that Rooks work well in pairs. In the above diagram White is able to use the Rooks to force checkmate. **1.Rxg7+ Kh8 2.Rh7+ Kg8 3.Rcg7#**

Back Rank Trouble

Rooks can also deliver the most annoying checkmate there is. The Back Rank Mate.



In this position the Black King is trapped behind a wall of his own pawns. White wins quickly with **1.Rd8+ Rxd8 2.Rxd8#** as the King is attacked from the side by the rook, and cannot escape by moving forward or backwards!