

Gungahlin Junior Chess Club

Finding Safe Squares

Just as you need to know about Good and Bad Trades, you also need to be able to spot Safe and Unsafe Squares.

A Safe square is a square where you move one of your pieces to, without your opponent being able to safely take it.

At first finding Safe squares takes a lot of thinking, but with a little practice you will soon be able to see where your pieces can safely go, no matter what the position is.

Some Simple Rules

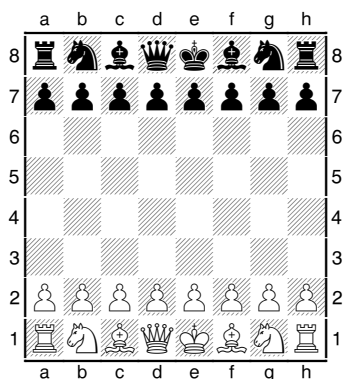
There are some simple rules for spotting safe squares. Firstly, any square not attacked by an enemy piece is safe. So you can move any piece safely to a non-attacked square.

If an enemy piece is attacking a square it can still be safe if it is defended by one of yours. If it is, then your piece is still safe if it is attacked by a piece that is stronger or of the same value.

Why? Because if your opponent captures one of your pieces, then when you take back, you capture a piece that is either the same or more. If it is more then you have gained material (ie your army is now stronger).

In the Beginning

At the start of the game there are plenty of safe squares.



For example the 4th & 5th rank are safe squares for both sides. Also the 3rd rank is safe for white pieces, while the 6th rank is safe for black pieces. However, if any White piece was on the 6th rank, then it would be captured by a black

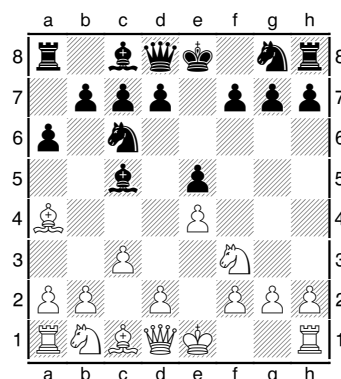
pawn.

How to see safe squares

There are a couple of different ways to see safe squares. One way is to look at a square you wish to check, and then try and see if any enemy pieces can move there.

The second way is to look at every enemy piece and imagine every square they can move to. By doing this you quickly build up a map of safe and unsafe squares on the board.

While the second method is slower it is actually better to start this way.



In this position it is Black to move. By looking at Whites possible moves you can avoid moving your pieces to bad squares. Here is a list of White pieces and their capturing moves.

Pawns: b2-a3, a2-b3, c3-b4, c3-d4, d2-e3, e4-d5, e4-f5, f2-e3, f2-g3, g2-h3, h2-g3

Knights: b1-a3, f3-d4, f3-e5, f3-g5, f3-h4

Bishops: a4-b5, a4-c6, a4-b3, a4-c2

Rooks: h1-g1, h1-f1

Queen: d1-c2, d1-b3, d1-e2

King: e1-e2, e1-f1, O-O

Now it is unsafe for any Black piece to move to a square attacked by a pawn. In this case the Black Bishop should not move to a3, b4, d4 or e3. Also capturing on f2 is a bad trade.

Also it would be unsafe to put the Queen on a square attacked by a Pawn, Knight, Bishop or Rook. So Black cannot try for a quick checkmate with Qd8-h4, as White would capture it with Nf3-h4!