

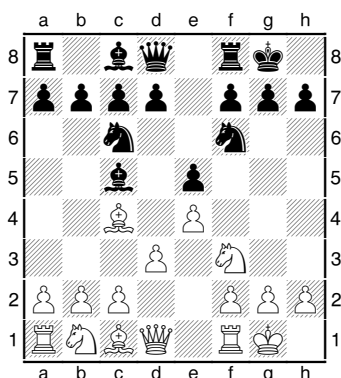
Gungahlin Junior Chess Club

Kings and Things

The King starts the game as the weakest piece in your army. As your opponent is doing their best to attack and checkmate your King, you need to keep it safe at all times. However as the game goes on and pieces get swapped off, it becomes less risky for your King to move into the open, and towards the end of the game, your King becomes a fighting piece in its own right.

King Safety

At the start of the game keeping your King safe is the most important thing to do. The best way to do this is to castle, putting your King behind a solid wall of pawns. Also, by placing some of your pieces near your King, you can make it very hard for your opponent to checkmate you.



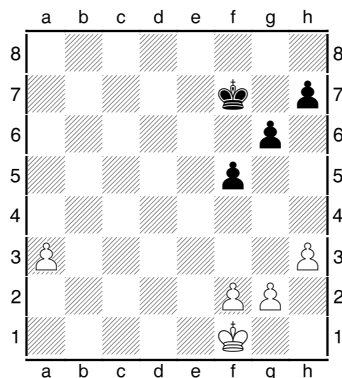
The diagram shows one of the safest arrangements for your King (either as White or Black). Both Kings have moved away from the centre, making it harder for the other sides pieces to attack. Each King also has a wall of pawns in front, stopping any checks from long range pieces. Also the Knight on f3 (or f6) is an important defensive piece, protecting both h2 and also stopping the Queen getting to h4. Finally, if Black tries a double attack on f2 with **Ng4**, the Rook on f1 defends the pawn.

One important thing to remember is not to move your pawns in front of your King, unless you have to. If, for example, Black decided to play the silly move **g6**, then the White Bishop could zoom all the way to h6, threatening the Rook on f8 and covering the squares around the Black King.

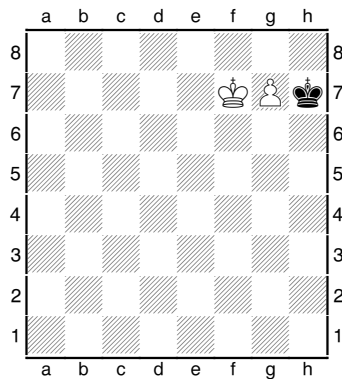
The Active King

Once lots of pieces have been exchanged, your King has another job to do. Instead of being afraid of the wide open board, your King can come out and help your army.

In the endgame the King becomes a very strong piece, being as strong as a Rook. This is because in the endgame the main idea is to promote one of your pawns, and your King is excellent at escorting them up the board. Also the King can stop enemy pawns from doing the same thing, as pawns aren't very good at running away from Kings.



This position may look pretty even (White has an extra pawn), but it is a simple win for White. The White pawn on a3 is threatening to move up the board to become a Queen, so the Black King has to run over to the a file to catch it. But while this is happening the White King runs up the board, either via f4 or d4, and captures the Black pawns, starting from the back. By the time the Black King gets back from the a file, all his pawns are gone!



White to Checkmate in 2 moves