

**Part One**

**Endgames for Beginners (Unrated-999)**

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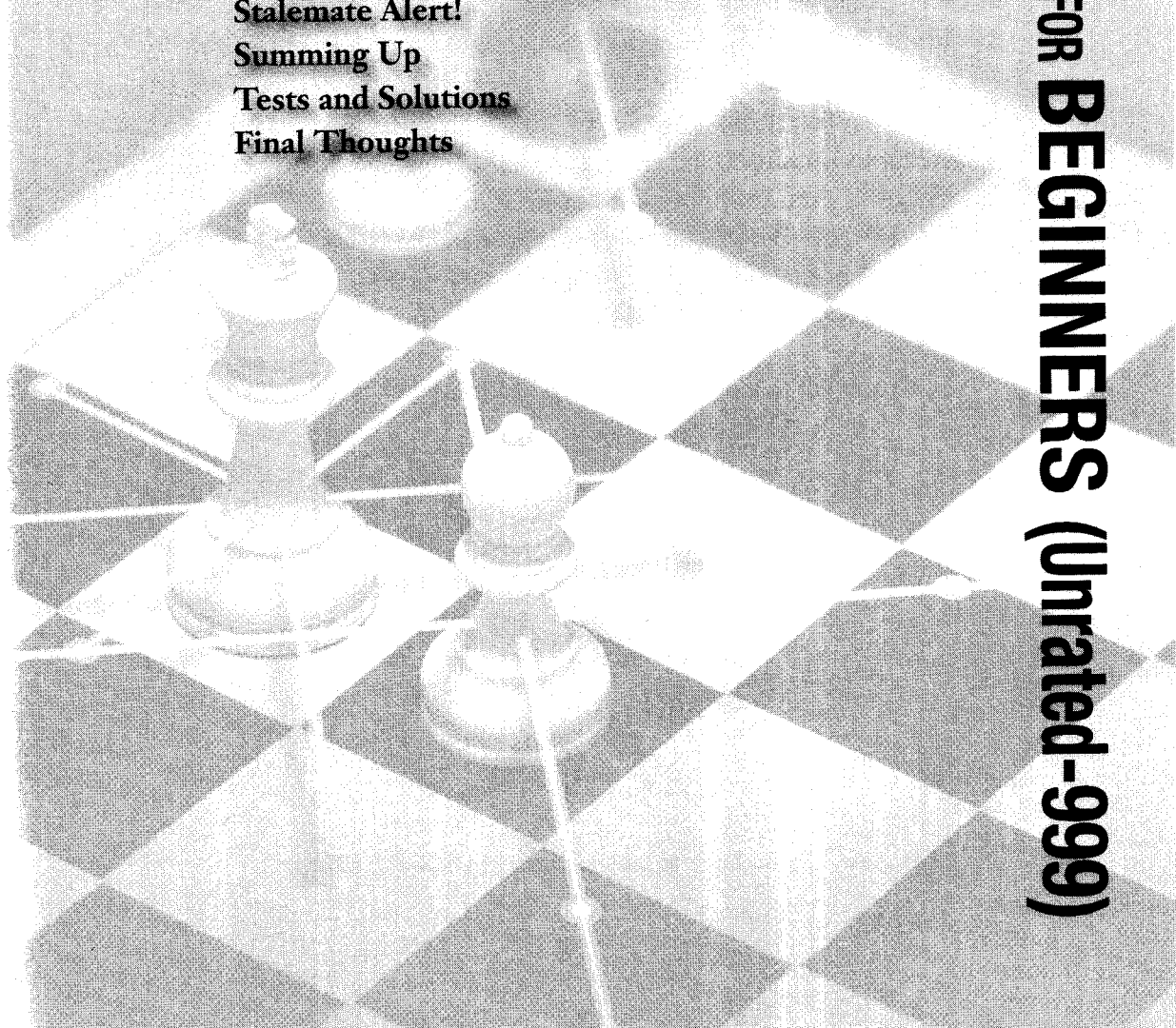
King and Rook vs. Lone King

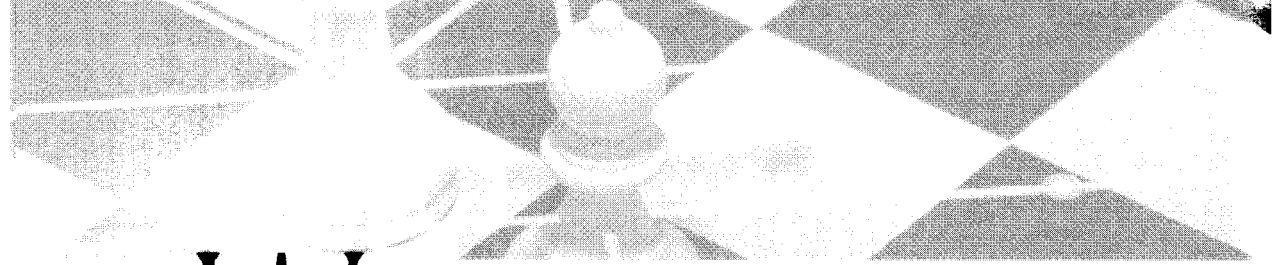
**Stalemate Alert!**

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**W**e all have to start somewhere, and though endgames should take a back seat to tactics and the basics of strategy when you're a beginner, it *is* annoying (if you equate pain, agony, and self-loathing to annoying) to find yourself with an extra Queen in the endgame and not know how to deliver checkmate.

Since you'll be called on to perform these endgame mates over and over again, spending the hour or two it will take to master these extremely easy-to-learn positions is a *must*! Think about it: an hour of work for a lifetime of endgame confidence. Quite a deal, isn't it?

When players first learn the game, they are often taught to always play to the last breath since "nobody ever won a game by resigning." Though the defender's fate is more or less a foregone conclusion when he's a Rook or more down, it doesn't hurt him to continue and watch the final mating net unfold—thus learning how to do it when he is on the winning side. Eventually, the beginner will resign such situations when he begins to play against experienced tournament players, but at first it's not a bad idea to always play them out and see if the opponent knows his stuff. Don't doubt that your opponents *will* play them out, so this chapter is a must if you've just learned to play the game.

Beginners only need to be aware of two endgame situations: ***Overkill Mates*** (one side has an enormous amount of material versus the lone enemy King) and ***Stalemates*** (one side has no legal moves, but is *not* in check).

# Overkill Mates

You've played a pretty good game (no shame in feeling proud after a great effort). Though you were not able to get an early mating attack, you picked up some extra material and, as the game continued, added to your booty until you found yourself way, way ahead. Trading and more devouring of enemy units ensues until an overkill endgame is reached. What do you do now?

To win an overkill endgame, you only need to learn two techniques: the *Staircase* and the *Box*.

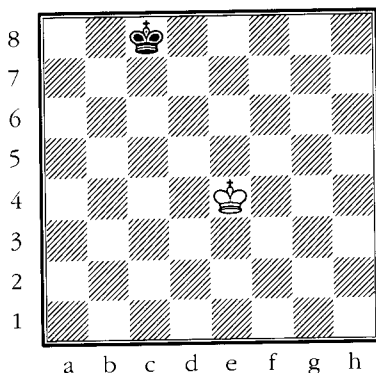
## The Staircase

When you are up by a Queen and a Rook, or even by two Queens (or more!), one must wonder if your opponent (who could give up and show a bit of respect) is bullheaded or simply enjoys suffering and/or pain. Whatever his reasons for continuing might be, you are the one who must now demonstrate how easy it is to score the victory.

Though there are many ways to force a quick mate in such situations, the simple device recommended here (the Staircase) makes all endgames where you are up by two major—also known as *heavy*—pieces (Q + Q or Q + R or R + R) a no-brainer to win. The three key components of the Staircase are:

- 1 Push the enemy King to one of the four sides of the board.

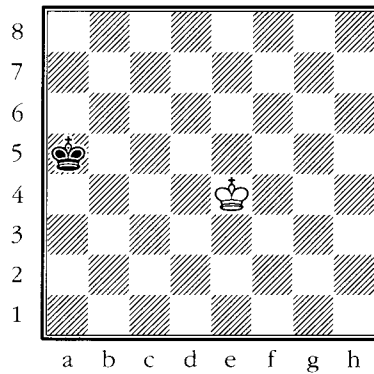
Diagram 1



**Black's King is on the side of the board**

In diagram 1, we see black's King situated on the side of the board, while white's King stands proudly in the middle.

Diagram 2

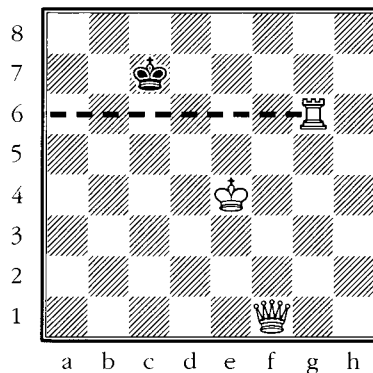


### Black's King is still on the side of the board

In diagram 2, black's King still resides on the side of the board. There are four sides to the board, and trapping a King on any of them is good.

**2** Use one of your heavy/major pieces (Rook or Queen) to cut the enemy King off from a rank or file.

Diagram 3



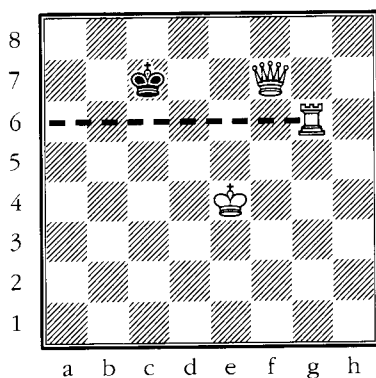
### The Rook traps the enemy King

In diagram 3, the Rook traps the enemy King on the last two ranks. The line from the Rook to the queenside (g6-a6) represents an imaginary force field that black's King can't pass through.

**3** Use the other major piece to check the King off the next file or rank.

In diagram 4, White has just played Qf7+. Black's King can't move towards the middle due to the Rook's "force field," thus it must step to the board's side.

Diagram 4



### Kicking black's King off the 7th rank

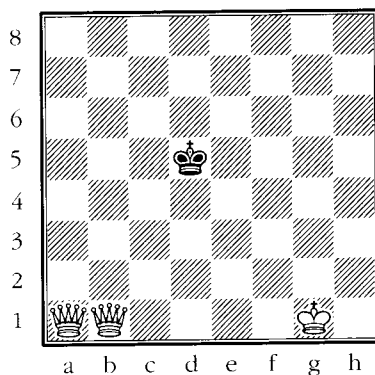
After **1...Kc8** (or **1...Kb8** or **1...Kd8**), the Queen now stops the King from moving forward. This frees the Rook from “King-containing duty,” allowing it to administer the final blow with **2.Rg8** mate. Note how the movements of the Rook and Queen resemble steps up or down a Staircase.

Repeating this information in paragraph form: As in almost all mating endgames, you need to push the enemy King to the back rank. The point of the Staircase is to use one major piece (Rook or Queen) to keep the enemy King from stepping onto a rank or file. Then the other major piece will give check along the next rank or file, forcing the target King to step closer to its doom on the side of the board.

Play over the positions in this section quickly (it's not rocket science, so there's no need to ponder it), and the Staircase will rapidly become engrained in your mind.

## King and Two Queens vs. Lone King

Diagram 5



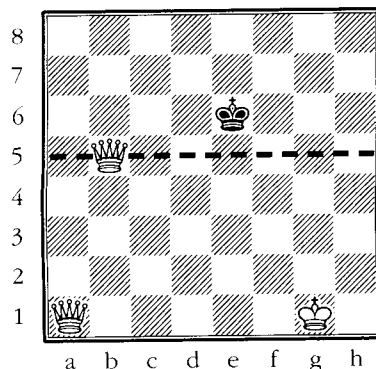
**Misery is Black's only companion**

White uses his two Queens to push the black King to one of the board's edges (once there, it can't step backwards out of harm's way), where it will be mated.

### 1.Qb5+ Ke6

Or 1...Ke4 2.Qaa4+ (The quicker 2.Qae5+ Kf3 3.Qbe2 mate doesn't follow the advocated Stairway method, so we'll "pretend" it doesn't exist and stick to our theme—trust me, nobody cares if you mate in three or five, as long as you succeed every time!) 2...Ke3 3.Qbb3+ Kd2 4.Qaa2+ Ke1 5.Qbb1 mate.

Diagram 6



### Force field along the 5th rank

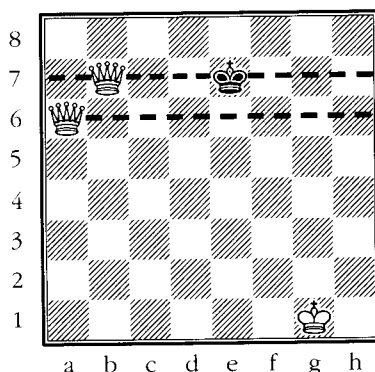
After 1...Ke6 the whole 5th rank is "mined" by white's b5-Queen.

### 2.Qaa6+

Note how black's King can't move up to the 5th rank since the Queen on b5 controls all the squares there. Even faster is 2.Qae5+ Kf7 3.Qbe8 mate, but this has nothing to do with our recommended (easier to learn) technique.

### 2...Ke7 3.Qbb7+

Diagram 7



#### REMEMBER

The two ways you can botch this endgame is to give your Queens away, or to allow stalemate. Avoid those things and you'll win every time.

### Trapped like a rat!

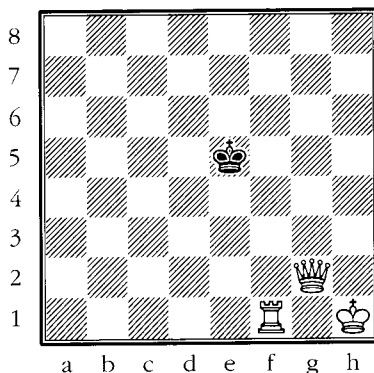
Black's King is forced back to the last rank

### 3...Kf8 4.Qaa8 mate.

## King, Queen, and Rook vs. Lone King

This calls for the same rank-by-rank or file-by-file Staircase technique as in the two-Queen example.

Diagram 8



### REMEMBER

Watch out for your Rook—unlike the two Queens, the Black King can approach the Rook and threaten to take it.

**Let the checking begin!**

### 1.Qg5+

White elects to push the King to the edge of the board rank-by-rank. He could have done the same thing file-by-file with 1.Qe2+ Kd5 2.Rd1+ Kc5 3.Qc2+ Kb4 4.Rb1+ Ka5 (or 4...Ka3 5.Qb3 mate) 5.Qa2 mate.

### 1...Kd4

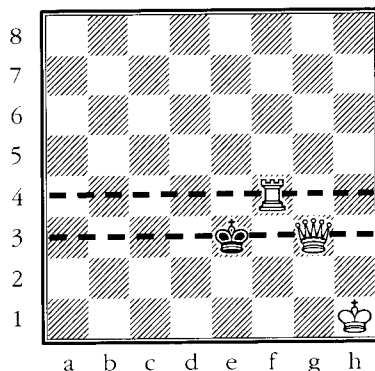
Or 1...Ke6 2.Rf6+ Ke7 3.Qg7+ Ke8 4.Rf8 mate.

### 2.Rf4+

Notice how White is making sure his Rook is guarded by its Queen!

### 2...Ke3 3.Qg3+

Diagram 9



**The crowned goat is herded towards the 1st rank.**

Both the 3rd and 4th ranks can no longer be stepped on by the black King, and White is slowly but surely herding it towards the edge of the board.

**4...Ke2 4.Rf2+**

Not 4.Qh2+ since that would free up the 3rd rank and allow 4...Ke3 (though that tiny mistake could easily be rectified by 5.Qg3+ Ke2 6.Rf2+, transposing back into the game).

**4...Ke1 5.Qg1mate.**

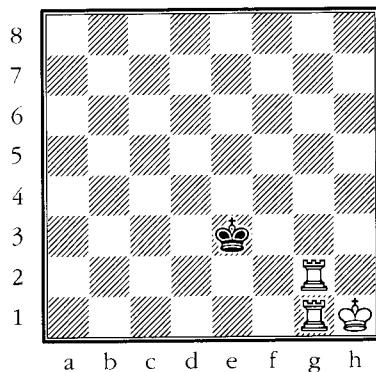
## King and Two Rooks vs. Lone King

Once again, the stronger side should push the opponent's King towards the edge of the board since, once it's there, it can no longer step backwards out of harm's way. Of course, this example is harder than the previous two since the King can approach white's Rooks and threaten them.

**USEFUL ADVICE**

Keep your Rooks as far from the enemy King as possible. That way the King can't attack them.

Diagram 10



**Push black's King to the side**

**1.Re1+**

The plan is as follows: take files/ranks away from the enemy King while pushing it towards the side of the board, and keep your Rooks as far away from the beleaguered monarch as possible. Your goal (trapping the King on the side), mixed with patience and safety, will always get the job done.

**1...Kd3**

Now black's King can't cross over the e-file since it is controlled by a white Rook. Also possible was 1...Kf3 when 2.Rf2+?? Kxf2 is the stuff of nightmares. However, mate will occur fairly quickly if White remembers to keep his Rooks far away from black's King: 1...Kf3 2.Rg8! Kf2 (Threatening the other one.) 3.Re7 (And not 3.Ree8 since then our "Staircase footwork" wouldn't be possible.) 3...Kf3 4.Rgf8+ Kg4 5.Rg7+ Kh5 6.Rh8 mate.

**2.Rg8**



Gaining distance from the black King so the Rook can give check without being attacked.

**2...Kd2**

Threatening this Rook is an act of defiance, but White won't let it be taken.

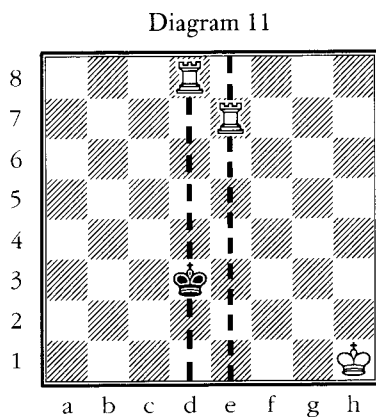
**3.Re7**

This Rook creates checking distance while retaining its grip on the e-file fence. Now White is finally ready to push the black King to the queenside, where it will meet its doom.

**3...Kd3 4.Rd8+**

**REMEMBER**

Rooks usually prefer to check at a distance!



**Black must step to the left**

The two Rooks control the e- and d-files, thus forcing the black King to the left.

**4...Kc4**

The King was forced to step to the left since the d-file has been annexed by one Rook, while the e-file is untouchable due to the presence of the Rook on e7.

**5.Rc7+**

Now the Rooks control the c- and d-files, and black's King must get even closer to the dreaded edge of the board.

**5...Kb5 6.Rb8+**

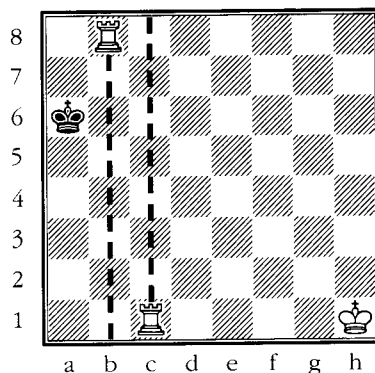
Black's King has finally been forced to the side of the board.

**6...Ka6**

Stopping 7.Ra7+ due to 7...Kxa7.

**7.Rc1**

Diagram 12



### Trapped on the a-file!

The Rook on the b-file leaves black's King trapped on the a-file, waiting to be mated. Now the other Rook steps a safe distance away from the enemy King in preparation for the final, soul-destroying check.

**7...Ka7**

The impudent King threatens the other Rook too.

**8.Rb2**

Both Rooks are out of the black King's reach and mate can finally be administered.

**8...Ka6 9.Ra1** mate.

That's it for the Staircase! Play around with it a bit more and, when it becomes mindlessly easy, move on to our next technique.

## The Box

This is a very important endgame idea, and chances to use it will occur remarkably often throughout your chess career. Keep in mind that the Box isn't always the fastest way to mate, merely the easiest to learn.

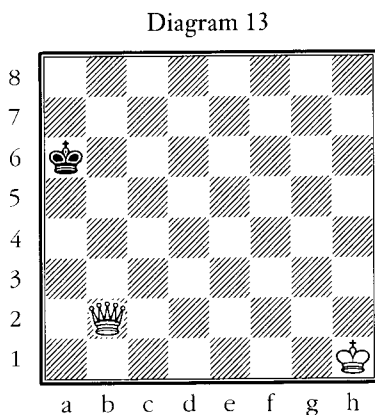
In the case of both King and Queen vs. King, and King and Rook vs. King, the goal is to imprison the enemy monarch in an ever-shrinking Box.

The point about using both King and Queen to force mate is an important one. Chess is a team game where your pieces depend on your whole army to get a job done. Since a lone Rook or even Queen can't mate the enemy King, you will have to get your King involved if you wish to score the full point.

In most endgames—basic and complicated—King participation is a huge part of a successful winning campaign or defensive stand.

Two mandates for a successful Box:

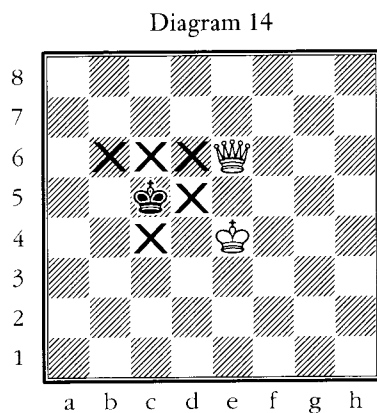
➤ Use your King!



**White needs his King!**

In diagram 13, White can't mate without the aid of his King. Thus he needs to march it over to the queenside immediately!

➤ Trap the enemy King in an ever-shrinking Box and then slowly but surely tighten it.



**Black's King is running out of room**

In diagram 14, White has just moved his Queen from g6 to e6, taking a whole group of squares away from black's King (as shown by the X's). After **1...Kb5 2.Kd4 Kb4 3.Qb6+** one can see how quickly the Box shrinks. Mate follows **3...Ka3 4.Kc3 Ka4** (or **4...Ka2 5.Qb2** mate) **5.Qb4** mate.

In diagram 15, black's King is trapped on the a- and b-files. However, by playing **1.Rc3**, the King's available territory shrinks into a small Box on a2, a1, b2, and b1. Notice that white's King firmly defends its Rook on c3.

#### USEFUL ADVICE

A lone Queen can't mate the enemy King! Unlike the previous cases of two Rooks vs. King, and two Queens vs. King, white's King must join in the hunt or mate can't be achieved

**REMEMBER**

If you have a Rook, make sure the enemy King can't capture it.

Diagram 15

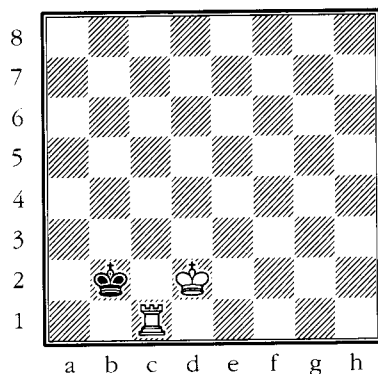
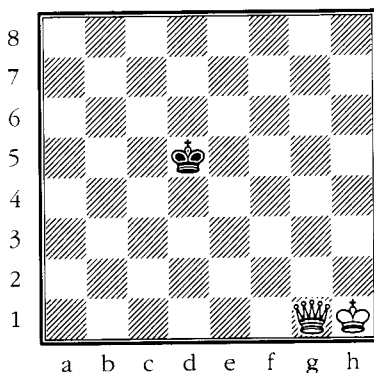
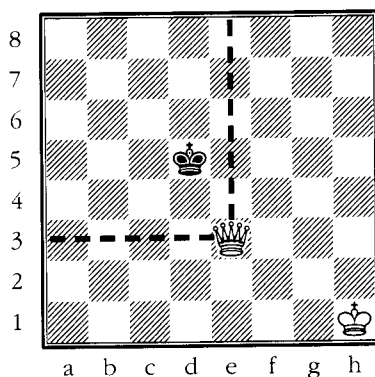
**Shrink the Box****King and Queen vs. Lone King**

Diagram 16

**White needs to use both Queen and King****1.Qe3**

This move immediately traps the black King in the diagramed Box.

Diagram 17

**REMEMBER**

Black's King can't step into or over the "invisible" lines that the Queen creates.

**Trapped in a Box!**

Of course, 1.Qe3 isn't the only way to win. One other way (though there are many—some are faster, but this doesn't concern us since we want to stick with our Box theme) is: 1.Qg4 (creating a Box from g4-a4 and g4-g8) 1...Ke5 2.Kg2 Kd5 3.Qf4 (tightening the Box, which now runs from f4-f8 and f4-a4) 3...Ke6 4.Qg5 (black's world continuously shrinks) 4...Kd6 5.Qf5 Kc6 6.Qe5 Kb6 7.Qd5 Kc7 8.Qe6 Kb7 9.Qd6 Kc8 (Or 9...Ka7 10.Qb4 Ka8 and now White rushes his King up so it can help deliver mate: 11.Kf3 Ka7 12.Ke4 Ka6 13.Kd5 Ka7 14.Kc6 Ka8 15.Qb7 mate) 10.Qe7 Kb8 and now that black's King is trapped on the back rank, White need only swing his King over to end the game: 11.Kf3 Kc8 12.Ke4 Kb8 13.Kd5 Kc8 14.Kc6 Kb8 15.Qb7 mate.

### 1...Kc4 2.Kg2

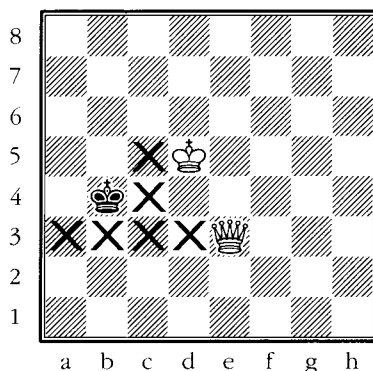
White's King rushes up so it can help its Queen push the enemy monarch to the edge of the board.

### 2...Kd5 3.Kf3 Kc4 4.Ke4

Depriving the black King of the use of the d5-square.

### 4...Kb4 5.Kd5

Diagram 18



### White's King and Queen are a team

The poor black King is running out of options since white's two pieces are taking more and more squares away from it.

### 5...Kb5

The end comes even faster after 5...Ka4 6.Kc5 Ka5 7.Qa3 mate.

### 6.Qb3+ Ka6

Already trapped on the side, the end is very near.

### 7.Kc6

White's King must come close so it can support the Queen's final move.

**7...Ka5**

Or 7...Ka7 8.Qb7 mate.

**8.Qb5** mate.

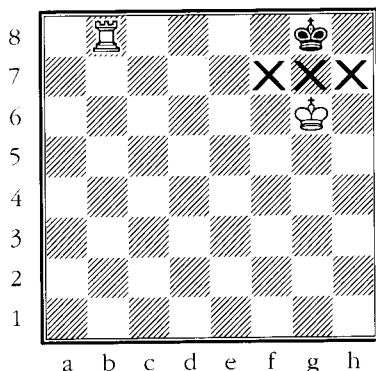
Study this endgame carefully until you can easily checkmate your friends and your computer from the starting position of diagram 16.

## King and Rook vs. Lone King

This ending is by far the hardest we'll study in this beginner to 1000 section. As in Queen and King vs. Lone King, White can only mate if his King participates in the process. And, as with the other positions we've explored, we'll solve this one by using the "shrinking Box technique."

First, let's start from the end and show the most basic winning situation.

Diagram 19



### A mate based on a team effort

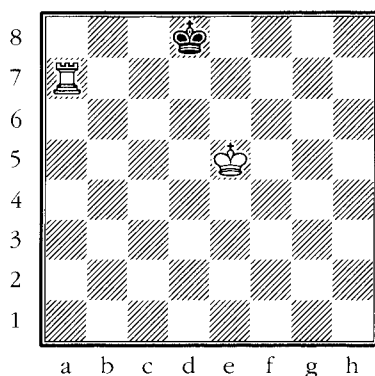
A team effort has led to the mating of the black King. White's King has deprived its counterpart of f7, g7, and h7, while the Rook calls check and dominates the whole back rank.

Clearly, White needs to do two things to win the King and Rook vs. lone King endgame:

- He needs to employ both his King and Rook. The lone Rook can't mate the enemy King.
- He needs to drive Black to the edge (any edge!) of the board.

Our next position shows how we reached that final mate.

Diagram 20



### White's King to the rescue

Black is trapped on the back rank. However, a mate isn't possible without help from the white King.

#### 1.Kd6

The move to d6 (1.Ke6 is just as good) threatens mate, but black's King doesn't intend to stay around and let it happen!

#### 1...Ke8

Or 1...Kc8 2.Rh7 (giving Black a move he doesn't want and putting distance between the Rook and the black King) 2...Kb8 3.Kc6 (calmly walking the black King down) 3...Ka8 4.Kb6 Kb8 (an example of forced suicide) 5.Rh8 mate.

#### 2.Rb7

The only way White can win is to force the black King to step in front of white's. The direct approach doesn't work: 2.Ke6 Kd8 3.Kd6 Ke8, etc. The seemingly innocuous 2.Rb7 gives away a move and sets up a situation where Black will be forced to do the very thing he dreads: to step in front of the white King and allow an instant mate.

#### 2...Kf8

Putting off the inevitable, which would have instantly occurred after 2...Kd6 3.Rb8 mate.

#### 3.Ke6

Now we can see white's strategy: Not wanting to play 3...Ke8 due to 4.Rb8 mate, Black is forced to flee to the right. However, he will soon run out of board and this will force him to dance the other way—right into white's web!

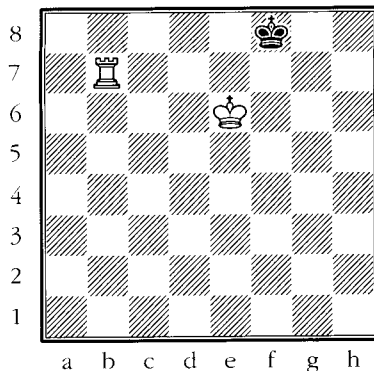
#### USEFUL ADVICE

White will usually mate his opponent by forcing the enemy King to self-destructively step in front of white's (thus giving us the kind of position shown in diagram 19).

#### REMEMBER

In general, put as much distance as possible between your Rook and the enemy King!

Diagram 21



**Dead King walking!**

**3...Kg8 4.Kf6**

Calmly walking the enemy King down. White prepares for black's forced self-immolation.

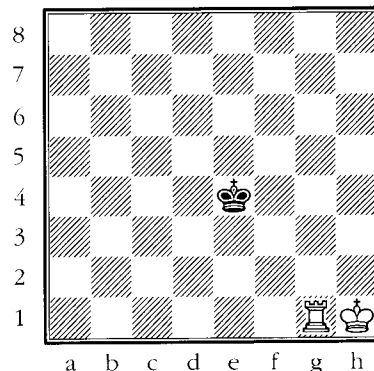
**4...Kh8 5.Kg6**

Now Black has nowhere to go, so with head held high he steps into Death's embrace.

**5...Kg8 6.Rb8 mate.**

We are finally ready to see how to get black's King to the side of the board. It can't be mated in the middle, so chasing it to any edge is absolutely essential!

Diagram 22



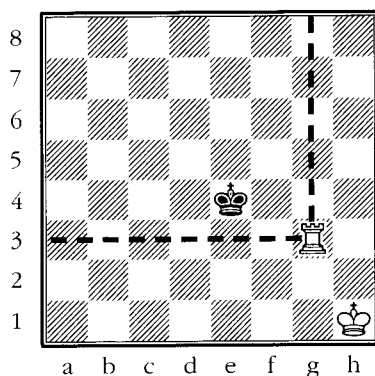
**Black's King can't be mated in the middle**

**1.Rg3**

This move creates our first Box from g3-g8 and g3-a3, as shown in diagram 23.



Diagram 23



**The Box is created**

**1...Kf4 2.Kg2**

It is imperative that you use your King in this endgame! Both of white's pieces **MUST** work together if he wishes to succeed in pushing the black King to one of the edges of the board.

**2...Ke4 3.Rf3**

Tightening the Box, which now runs from f3-f8 and f3-a3.

**3...Kd4 4.Kf2**

4.Re3?? tightens the Box again, but also allows the "unfortunate" 4...Kxe3.

**4...Ke4 5.Ke2**

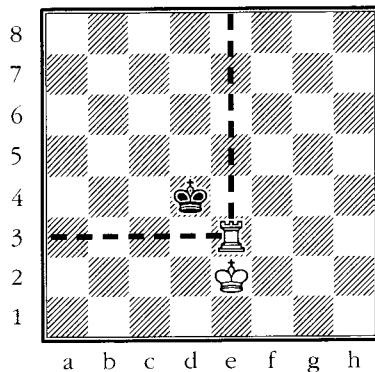
White's King, which will take squares away from the enemy monarch and will defend the Rook, always wants to be right in the midst of the action!

**5...Kd4**

No better is 5...Ke5 6.Kd3 Kd5 7.Rf5+ Ke6 8.Ke4 Kd6 9.Re5 when White returns to the same kind of Box tightening that we see in our main line.

**6.Re3**

Diagram 24



**Slow and steady**

#### REMEMBER

Let me repeat (for the umpteenth time!) an important point: there are faster ways to force mate! However, our goal is to employ the simple but effective Box strategy—we are sacrificing speed for the slow, sure, and easy-to-learn approach.

You would be getting a feel for the method by now: shrink the box with the Rook, move the King, shrink the box with the Rook, move the King. Repeat until mate occurs.

**REMEMBER**

White is *not* in any hurry. Just follow the prescribed process and the game will literally win itself.

**USEFUL ADVICE**

In general you want to keep your Rook as far away from the enemy King as possible. One of the few exceptions is when you're creating Boxes in an effort to push the enemy King back to one of the board's corners or sides.

**6...Kc4 7.Rd3**

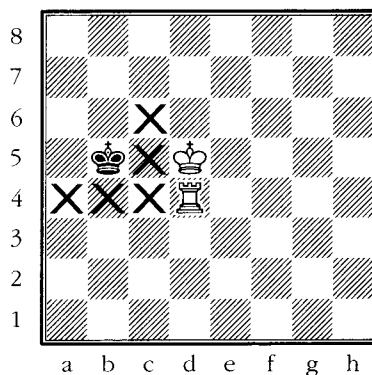
Forming a new (and rapidly shrinking!) Box from d3-d8 and d3-a3.

**7...Kb4 8.Ke3 Kc4 9.Ke4**

As before, there are many ways to win (don't screech that your computer announces a faster mate—the word “faster” has absolutely no meaning in the present context!), but putting the white King in the enemy's face is always a good idea in this particular endgame.

**9...Kc5 10.Rd4 Kb5 11.Kd5**

Diagram 25



**White's King takes away c5 and c6 from Black**

The white Rook and King join forces to dominate black's only existing unit.

**11...Kb6 12.Rb4+ Kc7**

Black doesn't want to play 12...Ka5, 12...Ka6, or 12...Ka7 since that would instantly trap his King on the edge—something he's trying desperately to avoid.

One sample: 12...Ka6 13.Kc6 Ka7 (13...Ka5 14.Rc4 Ka6 15.Ra4 mate) 14.Rb1 (black's King will soon be forced to commit suicide) 14...Ka8 15.Kc7 Ka7 16.Ra1 mate.

### 13.Rb2

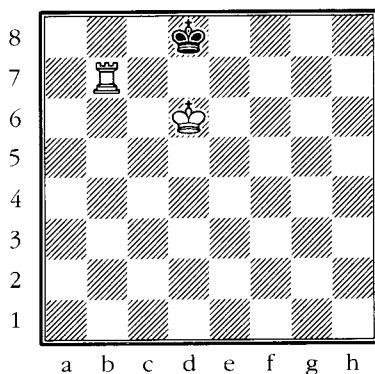
A quiet move that forces Black to move to the back rank or step in front of white's King. Naturally, 13.Rb5, 13.Rb3, or 13.Rb1 would all have the same effect.

### 13...Kd7 14.Rb7+

Black is finally forced to the edge.

### 14...Kd8 15.Kd6

Diagram 26



**It's all over**

### 15...Ke8

Or 15...Kc8 16.Rb6! when Black must commit suicide by 16...Kd8 17.Rb8 mate. After 15...Ke8 we get the scenario from diagram 20—black's King tries to avoid stepping in front of white's King, but it soon runs out of board and must embrace Armageddon against its will.

### 16.Ra7 Kf8 17.Ke6 Kg8 18.Kf6 Kh8 19.Kg6 Kg8 20.Ra8 mate.

That's it! You now know the winning ideas for all overkill endgames.

# Stalemate Alert!

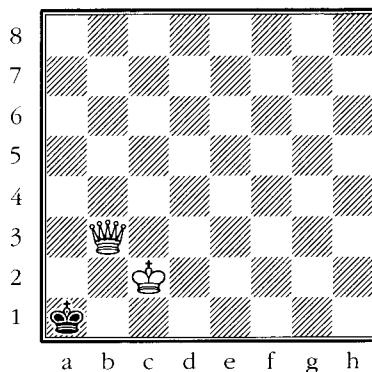
When I played in my first tournament (at age twelve), it suddenly occurred to me that I didn't know the difference between checkmate and stalemate. Later in life I got a long distance phone call from a couple in New York who had somehow found my number. It seems they had a disagreement over what a checkmate and stalemate were, and had placed a bet. The man was positive that he was going to win the wager, and he was stunned when I explained that he was completely wrong.

Just in case you are suffering from the same confusion I (and that couple) did, let's clarify both (using Black as the weaker side):

STALEMATE: Black's King is *not* in check, but there is no legal move on the board that would not result in the King's capture. Since you're not allowed to purposely place your King on an attacked square, a state of "stalemate" is said to exist and the game is declared a draw.

CHECKMATE: When White is threatening to capture the black King and Black can't do anything to prevent its loss, the game is declared over due to checkmate, with White winning the game as a result.

Diagram 27

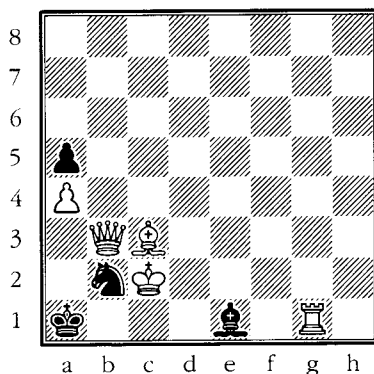


**Suicide is not allowed!**

If White has the move in diagram 27, he wins by 1.Qb1 mate or 1.Qb2 mate or 1.Qa3 mate or 1.Qa4 mate. In each case the black King is threatened with capture and has no way of preventing it!

If *Black has the move* in diagram 27, there are only three possible places for the black King to go: ...Ka2, ...Kb2, or ...Kb1. However, ...Ka2 would allow Qxa2, ...Kb2 would allow both Qxb2 and Kxb2, and ...Kb1 would allow both Qxb1 and Kxb1. A King is not allowed to step onto an attacked square, which means Black doesn't have a legal move. Thus, the game ends in stalemate and is declared drawn.

Diagram 28



**Black to move**

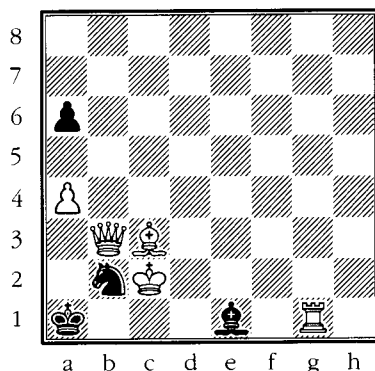
**Many pieces, still a stalemate**

**REMEMBER:**

The differences between checkmate and stalemate: in the case of a checkmate, the enemy King is in check and can't escape capture. In the case of a stalemate, the enemy King is *not* attacked, he has no legal move, and thus the game is drawn because a player can't be forced to do something illegal.

A stalemate can occur when Black has a lone King or several pieces. In diagram 28, a close look tells us that none of black's pieces can legally move—any move of the e1-Bishop hangs the King to Rxa1, any move of the Knight hangs the King to Bxa1, the pawn is blocked by its white counterpart and can't move, and black's King can't move to a2 (due to Qxa2) or b1 (due to Kxb1). However, at the moment black's King isn't under attack, which means that the game will be declared drawn by stalemate since you are never allowed to make an illegal move.

Diagram 29

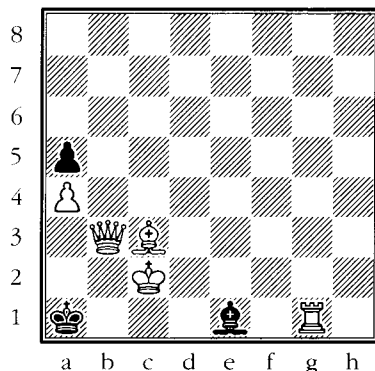


**Black to move**

**Not a stalemate**

In diagram 29 Black does *not* draw by stalemate because he has a legal move: **1...a5** (which he must play), which would be met by **2.Qxb2** mate, or **2.Bxb2** mate, or **2.Qa3** mate, or **2.Rxe1** mate.

Diagram 30



**Check and mate!**

This is similar to Diagram 28, but this time black's King is under direct attack by the c3-Bishop. Since **1...Ka2** and **1...Kb1** both illegally place the King on an attacked square, and since **1...Bxc3** isn't legal since it allows **Rxa1**, the game ends with checkmate and a white victory.

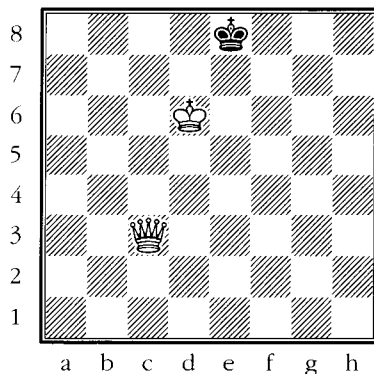
**USEFUL ADVICE:**

Mastering the overkill checkmates means you have also become acutely aware of stalemate disasters.

It's very important to know what a stalemate is—when you are winning the game you want to avoid falling for one and tossing your win into the garbage. However, when you are the weaker side, being aware of possible stalemate swindles will occasionally save you a precious half point.

Our next example illustrates a nice blend of basic mate strategy with a stalemate spider-sense.

Diagram 31



**White to move**

**1.Qg7!** This is the move that best fits in with our endgame philosophy: trap the King on the back rank and mate will surely follow. After **1...Kd8** (forced) **2.Qd7** it's mate.

Another move that fits in with this concept is **1.Qc7**, trapping the black King, when **1...Kf8 2.Ke6 Kg8 3.Kf6 Kh8 4.Qg7** is mate.

Notice how nice and simple these moves are, but what about **1.Qf6**? This seems effective, but there's one problem: the game suddenly is drawn due to stalemate! That's right, Black has no legal moves because he's not allowed to move his King into check.



# Summing Up

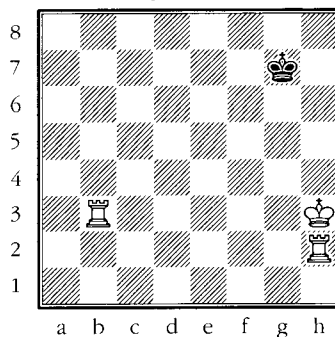
- In the endgame, the enemy King can rarely be mated in the middle of the board. You almost always want to chase it to one of the four sides, or to a corner.
- The Staircase maneuver is the easiest way to make use of a lopsided material count such as two Queens vs. lone King, Queen and Rook vs. lone King, or two Rooks vs. lone King.
- The Box is a technique that enables you to limit the enemy King's space. As you shrink the Box, you force his King to eventually retreat to the side of the board, where you will finally be able to mate it.
- If you are left with King and Queen vs. lone King, or King and Rook vs. lone King, you can't mate with the major piece alone. You will need to use both your major piece and King to finish the enemy off.
- Watch out for stalemates! There is nothing worse than setting your opponent up for the killing blow, then botching the whole thing to a draw by overlooking that you've stalemated his King! In situations where stalemates might be possible (i.e., the King has limited squares to move to), always take a moment before moving and ask, "When I play this move, will his King have a legal square to go to?"



# Tests and Solutions

## TEST 1

Diagram 32

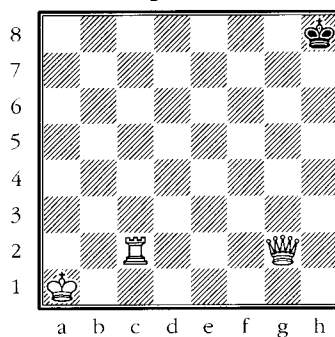


**White to move**

White has a forced mate in four.

## TEST 2

Diagram 33

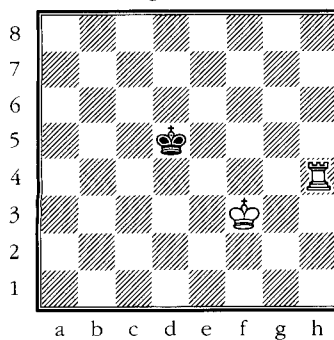


**White to move**

Is it wise to play 1.Rc7, trapping the enemy King on its back rank?

**TEST 3**

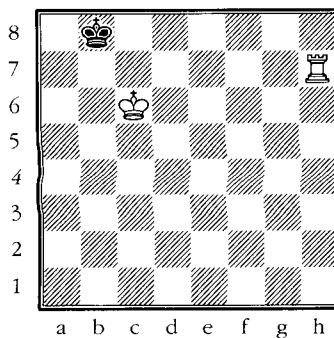
Diagram 34

**White to move**

Trap the enemy King in the smallest possible Box.

**TEST 4**

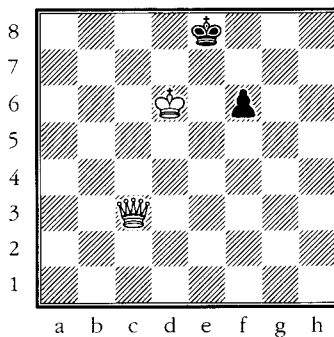
Diagram 35

**White to move**

How do you finish Black off?

**TEST 5**

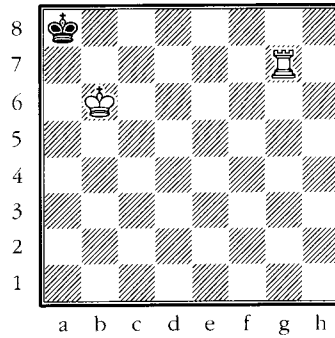
Diagram 36

**White to move**

Can White safely take the pawn on f6 with his Queen? Should he do so?

**TEST 6**

Diagram 37

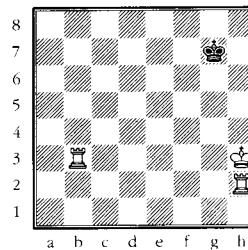
**White to move**

It's mate in one, can you find it?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**SOLUTION 1**

Diagram 32

**White to move**

White has a forced mate in four.

White makes use of the Staircase to force mate in four:

**1.Rb6!**

This traps black's King on its 2nd rank. An alternative solution is 1.Rf3! Kg6 2.Rg2+ Kh5 3.Rf4 Kh6 4.Rh4 mate.

**1...Kf7 2.Ra2!**

This sets up a Staircase and also makes both Rooks safe from attack by placing them as far from the enemy King as possible.

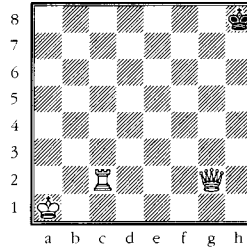
**2...Ke7 3.Ra7+**

A perfect Staircase: one Rook stops the enemy King from stepping up to its 3rd rank while the other Rook forces the King back to the vulnerable 1st rank.

**3...Kd8 4.Rb8** mate.

## SOLUTION 2

Diagram 33



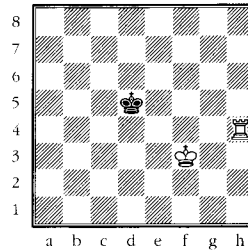
White to move

Is it wise to play 1.Rc7, trapping the enemy King on its back rank?

No! Though 1.Rc7 seems very strong, you are taking the h7 square away from the defending King, while the Queen is depriving the black monarch of g7 and g8. This means it doesn't have any legal moves and a draw by stalemate results. Instead, the simple **1.Rc1** (1.Rc3, 1.Rc4, or 1.Rc5 also mate on the h-file, while 1.Qb7 followed by 2.Rc8 mate also does the job) **1...Kh7 2.Rh1** mate is quick and painless.

## SOLUTION 3

Diagram 34



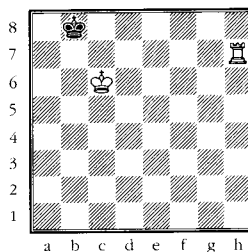
White to move

Trap the enemy king in the smallest possible Box.

**1.Re4!** immediately traps the black King in a Box whose borders are from a4 to e4 to e8. Once you learn to recognize and create such Boxes, mating with a King and Rook vs. King will prove easy.

**SOLUTION 4**

Diagram 35

**White to move**

How do you finish Black off?

To mate, you need black's King standing in front of yours. However, if you play 1.Kb6 he skips away by 1...Kc8, while the tempting 1.Rb7+ Ka8 2.Kb6?? is a draw by stalemate.

**1.Rg7**

White just wants to give Black the move so he will step in front of white's King. There are many ways to do this (1.Rg7, 1.Rf7, 1.Re7), though one nice alternative is 1.Rh8+ Ka7 2.Rg8 (Any Rook move along the back rank from h8 to c8 would serve the same purpose, which is to force black's King to commit suicide by stepping in front of white's King.) 2...Ka6 3.Ra8 mate.

Note that 1.Rd7 isn't as good since 1...Kc8 stops Rd8+

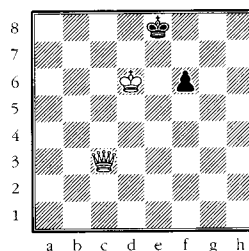
**1...Ka8**

Of course, 1...Kc8 is met by 2.Rg8 mate.

**2.Kb6 Kb8** (No choice!) **3.Rg8** mate

**SOLUTION 5**

Diagram 36

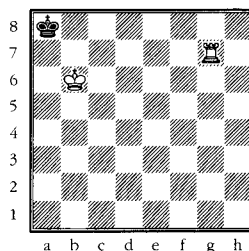
**White to move**

Can White safely take the pawn on f6 with his Queen? Should he do so?

Taking the pawn is a horrible blunder since a stalemate occurs after 1.Qxf6??. Sticking to our "trap the enemy King on the side of the board" rule via 1.Qc7 is simplest *and* safest!

**SOLUTION 6**

Diagram 37

**White to move**

It's mate in one, can you find it?

If you know the difference between checkmate and stalemate, the right move is obvious: **1.Rg8** mate. However, if you don't know that difference, then 1.Rb7?? might prove attractive. Sadly, this creates a stalemate and a draw. If you didn't get this right, please go back and study the material under Stalemate Alert!

## Final Thoughts

So you've learned to play chess, you've played a bunch of games online or with friends face to face, you've picked up an opening idea or two by glancing in a chess book, and you've also begun to recognize a few tactical tricks—often by painful experience! Now, having carefully gone over this chapter, you're able to finish-off an opponent if you reach an Overkill endgame situation.

It's time to put aside this book and continue to gain valuable over-the-board experience by crossing swords with players equal to or a bit better than yourself. If money is available, you can accelerate your progress by taking lessons. Of course, going over tactical quizzes is always a great idea—books featuring mates in one, two, and three, plus “White to play and win” tactical puzzles are plentiful and very useful.

Or, Study Part Two—which will put you one step ahead of your expected endgame IQ—and *then* put aside this book and follow the earlier advice.

In either case, once you feel you've improved and reached a higher rating/skill level, it will be time to crack open this book anew and move on the next series of endgame lessons.