

The Objective of Chess

Part 6 – The Alternatives to Checkmate – Resignation; Draws; and Stalemate

I. Resignation.

A player may resign a game at any time during the game (does not need to be when it is his or her move) with the same effect as a checkmate - the opposing player wins. For OTB games, a resignation may occur either by the player announcing he or she is resigning, or in a more “traditional” manner of turning his or her King over on the chessboard. For playing online and with computer chess games, instead there is a command/button for resigning the game.

As noted earlier in this tutorial, the chess notation for a White win is 1-0 and for a Black win 0-1. Sometimes the notation will include an annotation indicating that one of the player's resigned (e.g., White resigned or Black resigned). However, this is not universally true. If no checkmate occurs (no # symbol attached to the last move in the notation) and no annotation is present, it is not sufficient to just look at the notation for moves in the game and see who played the last move. This is because a player may resign at any point in the game. Therefore, the notation for the result of the game will indicate who resigned - e.g., a notation ends in 43.Qd2 with neither the symbol # or any annotation such as White resigned, but the result is 0-1, then although White made the last move, Black won the game because White resigned.

Both winning by a checkmate or resignation by the opposing player is worth one (1) point for the player who won the game, and a loss is worth zero (0) for the losing player in tournament play. Winning and losing by checkmate or resignation may affect the players' ratings. One aspect of good etiquette for playing chess is to recognize when to resign a game because the opposing player has an overwhelming advantage, and that it is only a matter of time before the player will be crushed in the defeat of a checkmate.

Many beginners, and indeed even more experienced players, will “battle to the bitter end.” However, the better part of valor in such a dire situation is for the player to resign, going onto another game in the hopes of winning when all is lost in the game being played. That is not to say to give up quickly when one has made a mistake. Remember that the opposing player also can make one or more mistakes, or blunder, allowing the player to seek an escape with one of the other alternatives, draw or stalemate. Equally important to remember is that a player must closely examine the position on the board to determine if a draw or stalemate possibility exists on the board. The player also should play through in his or her mind possible lines of play from the position to see if there are

moves and/or pawns advances that may be employed seeking to trap the opposing player into a draw or stalemate, especially if he or she seems to be concentrating on checkmating and not paying attention, or is under significant time pressure in a time-controlled game.

II. Draws.

A draw of a game (often referred to as a **drawn game**) may occur via several methods. A drawn game results in neither player winning, and each player is awarded 1/2 point. Some consider and call a stalemate a draw, but while it is the equivalent to a draw from point value, the position on a chessboard is given its own special label. Thus, a stalemate also results in neither player winning, and each player is awarded 1/2 point. The notation for both a draw and a stalemate is 1/2-1/2. As with checkmate and resignation (and also stalemate), a drawn game may affect the players' ratings.

There are additional requirements and limiting parameters under Article 9 of FIDE's Laws of Chess, with which a player needs to be familiar. Some draws require a player to claim the draw, instead of offering to draw. Under FIDE's Laws of Chess, a claim of a draw is the equivalent of an offer to draw. Where the term "offer" is used, it also means situations in which a claim of a draw occurs. When playing chess online and against chess computer programs, FIDE's Laws of Chess usually are implemented automatically by the online program or the chess program for draws that a player may claim, and applied when a player offers a draw - the opposing player may accept or reject the offer.

1. When playing time-controlled chess, "[a] player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before stopping his clock and starting the opponent's clock." In friendly games, usually an offer or claim of a draw may be made at any time by either of the players.
2. When a player may claim a draw, "[i]f the player makes a move without having claimed the draw he loses the right to claim ... on that move."
3. When playing time-controlled chess, the players' chess clocks are immediately stopped and the claim examined. If the claim is correct, then the game is immediately drawn. If the claim is incorrect, in time-controlled chess penalties are inflicted on the player who incorrectly claimed the draw (e.g., see Article 9.5.b in FIDE's Laws of Chess).
4. "No conditions can be attached to the offer."

5. “[T]he offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent accepts it, rejects it orally, rejects it by touching a piece with the intention of moving or capturing it, or the game is concluded in some other way.”

Types of Draws.

1. Agreed Draw.

A draw may occur when **the players agree**. In tournament and other regulated chess games, usually a governing rule prohibits the players from agreeing to a draw before an established set number of moves have been made by the players, commonly seen is thirty (30) moves. In such situations, both White and Black must have completed their moves through the number established before either one may offer for the players to agree to a draw. In friendly games, the players can agree to a draw whenever they wish to do so. If a draw is not accepted, either player may offer to draw later in the game including on the next move. There is no limit to the number of offers for draw that can be made.

Sometimes, a player - especially beginners and average players - may recognize that he or she likely will lose the game and will offer a draw and even repeated draws. Repeatedly offering a draw in such situations, however, is very annoying and should not be engaged in. If the opposing player does not accept a first or second draw offer, he or she probably is intelligent enough to have already figured out the situation on the board and what the opposing player is trying to do. In cases where a player makes repeated draw offers, he or she usually is just being obnoxious and trying to distract the opposing player’s attention, perhaps hoping he or she will make a bad move or blunder. A player should always play with courtesy and professionally, avoiding such childish tactics. The player will develop a good reputation as opposed to a bad one, such as being a “poor loser.”

Sometimes, a player (often a higher rated one) may offer a draw to the opposing player (often a lower rated one) as a courtesy to prevent the opposing player from losing a game. Other times, the position of pieces and pawns on the chessboard dictate that unless one of the players makes a bad move or blunder, neither one will be able to checkmate the other. The continuation of the game will just be a series of so-called “cat and mouse” moves. In such cases, a draw should be accepted. It is not a bad thing to get a draw.

2. Insufficient Material.

A draw occurs when neither player has sufficient material (available pieces and pawns) along with his or her King on the chessboard to force checkmate on the opposing player’s King. Under FIDE’s Laws of Chess, “[t]he game is drawn when a position is reached from which a checkmate cannot occur by any possible series of legal

moves, even with the most unskilled play. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing this position was legal.” There are three situations where a player can never checkmate the opposing King. In a fourth situation, a forced checkmate is only possible from extremely rare positioning of the Knights and Kings on the chessboard. However, opportunistic checkmating is possible in the fourth situation. While not technically meeting FIDE’s requirement for a draw that a checkmate cannot occur even with the most unskilled play, the players usually agree to a draw. Further, in such a situation, the game may end either by the so-called three-move repetition draw or fifty-move draw (discussed under subsections 4 and 5 below).

When just two Kings are on the chessboard, a checkmate is not possible.

Neither King can threaten, attack/check the opposing player’s King because the Kings can never be located on adjacent squares and Kings can move only one square at a time.

When there is a King + Bishop v. King, a checkmate cannot occur.

The opposing King will always be able to escape a check from the Bishop because the player’s King cannot control all the squares other than the square in the diagonal line of attack/check from the Bishop, in the any of the anatomy of mate patterns.

When there is a King + Knight v. King, a checkmate cannot occur.

The opposing King will always be able to escape a check from the Knight. The player’s King is unable to control all the squares other than the intended checkmate square for an attack/check by the Knight, in the any of the anatomy of mate patterns. The Knight also must attack/check the opposing King from a distance away due to the Knight’s unique L-shape moving pattern (covered extensively in The Knight tutorial). Therefore, the Knight can only control the intended checkmate square and cannot provide any assistance to the King in blocking the opposing King from fleeing to other squares (escape squares).

The fourth situation involves King, Knight + Knight v. King.

As mentioned above, most often players agree to a draw because a player generally cannot force checkmate on the opposing King except for extremely rare positioning of the Knights and Kings. If the players continue playing, however, and the opposing player moves his or her King toward a corner square instead of keeping the King in the middle of the chessboard, then opportunistic checkmating may occur. Also, either the so-called three-move repetition draw or fifty-move draw may be claimed by a player if the requirements for those types of draws occur. Two checkmate examples for King, Knight + Knight v. King are shown in the diagrams on the next page.

DIAGRAM OBJ-6A

[FEN: "k7/2NN4/1K6/8/8/8/8 b - - 0 92"]

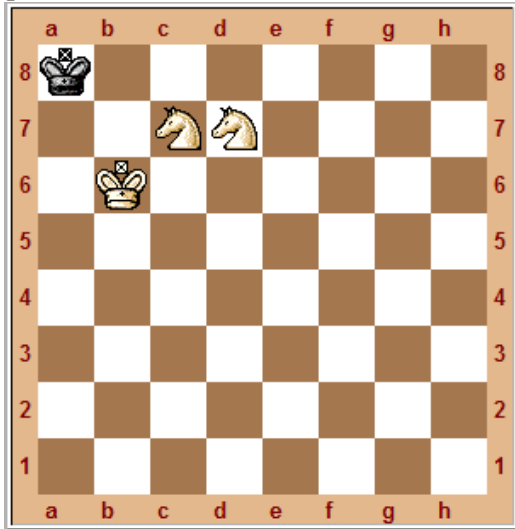
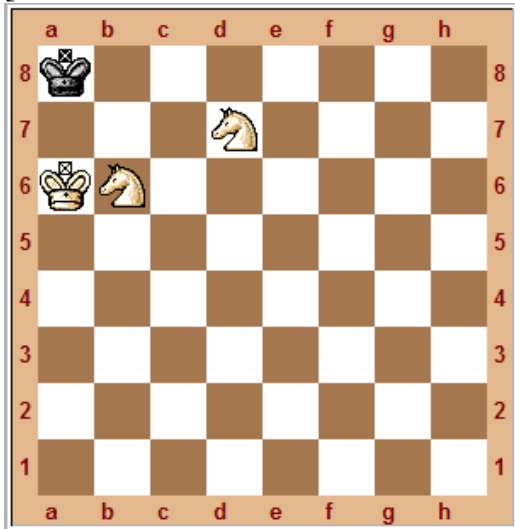


DIAGRAM OBJ-6B

[FEN: "k7/3N4/KN6/8/8/8/8 b - - 0 103"]



3. Perpetual Check.

A draw may be agreed to by the players when a perpetual check situation exists. FIDE does not specifically recognize this type of draw, because the situation essentially is covered under the other types of draws set forth in FIDE's Laws of Chess. Therefore, this type of draw cannot be "claimed." However, such a situation may result in either the so-called three-move repetition draw or a fifty-move draw (discussed under subsections 4 and 5 below), which may be claimed by a player.

A perpetual check occurs when an opposing King is in check, and:

- a. the player will be able to force the opposing player to submit to an endless series of consecutive repetitive checks on his or her King; and
- b. the opposing player will be unable to move the King to any square where it cannot again be put in check on the next move; and
- c. the opposing player has no other available pieces or pawns to move or advance to break up the repetitive checking of the opposing player's King.

4. Three-Move/Same Position Draw.

A draw may be claimed by a player with the move for the so-called “three-move (also seen as three move, 3 move, or 3-move) repetition draw. The use of the word “repetition” (commonly and usually seen in chess texts) actually is a misnomer because it implies that the same position on the board must be reached through three consecutive moves, which is incorrect. Thus, FIDE's Laws of Chess specifically provides “(not necessarily by a repetition of moves).” Practically speaking, unless the position is reached in consecutive moves, claiming this type of draw is difficult unless the players have kept very accurate records of the moves made in the game so that the claimed position can be determined to have been or is about to be reached. Online chess playing sites and chess programs usually keep track and automatically declare the draw, instead of a player having to claim the draw.

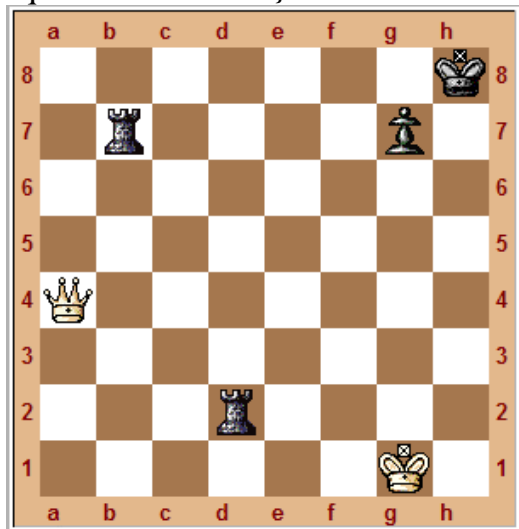
A player may claim this draw when the player has the move and the same position on the chessboard has just occurred for the third time, or is about to occur for the third time and the player with the move declares and notes his or her intention to make the next move that will cause the position to be reached for the third time. Under FIDE's Laws of Chess, “[p]ositions ... are considered the same, if the same player has the move, pieces of the same kind and colour occupy the same squares, and the possible moves of all the pieces of both players are the same. Positions are not the same if a pawn that could have been captured en passant can no longer in this manner be captured or if the right to castle has been changed temporarily or permanently.”

Let's look at a diagram of a board position (next page). White to move. If Black had the move, checkmate would occur with Rb1#. White's Queen cannot adequately defend White's King from being checkmated against Black's Rooks, therefore Black seemingly has a won game. However, White spots an opportunity to use consecutive checks to force a draw.

DIAGRAM OBJ-6C

[FEN: "7k/1r4p1/8/8/Q7/8/3r4/6K1 b - - 0 71"]

1.Qe1+ Kh7 2.Qh5+ Kg8 3.Qe1+ Kh7 4.Qh5+ Kg8 {White can claim the draw because on White's next move checking Black's King from e1 the pieces will be on the same squares three times}



5. Fifty-Move Draw.

A draw may be claimed by a player with the move for the so-called “fifty-move” (also seen as fifty move, 50 move, or 50-move) draw. When there have been 50 consecutive moves in a game where no capture has occurred, and no pawn has been advanced if one or more pawns are on the chessboard, or a player who has the move declares and notes his or her intention to make his or her next move that will cause the fifty moves to have occurred, then the player may claim a draw. This type of draw is rare, practically speaking, because the players often agree to a draw before reaching the fifty moves.

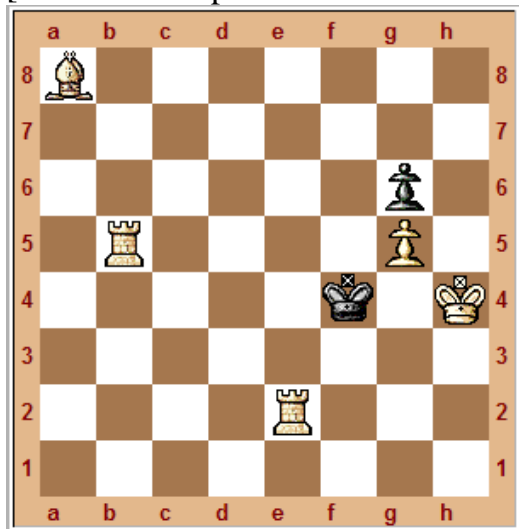
III. Stalemate.

A stalemate occurs when a King is not in check, but is entombed on a square from which it cannot escape on the player's move (blocked/prevented from moving, or moving and capturing, off the square) and the player has no other piece that can be moved and/or pawn that can be advanced. A player may stalemate his or her own King, which could be intended or unintended. The opposing player also may stalemate the player's King, which could be intended or unintended. Below is an example of a stalemate taken from one of my games. I inadvertently stalemated my opponent's King by concentrating too much on checkmating the opposing King and not paying sufficient

attention to the positioning of the pieces and pawns on the chessboard. I completely forgot that my Bishop was on a8, blocking Black's King from moving to f3. A painful and blunder, leading to not winning a game that I should have easily and quickly won.

DIAGRAM OBJ-6D

[FEN: "B7/8/6p1/1R4P1/5k1K/8/4R3/8 w - - 0 61"]



Closing a mating net and checkmating, or doing a stalemate, are examples of entombing the opposing King that result in ending the game. However, **entombment** may occur with any of the pieces, and the pawns. For example, entombing a pawn occurs when it is blocked from advancing and cannot capture. **Entombment simply, then, is trapping a piece or pawn**, although doing so is not necessarily easy and can be quite difficult. Trapping the piece or pawn removes it from being used either offensively or defensively, permanently or for a period of time, for tactical and/or strategic reasons during the game.

Entombment does not necessarily mean a piece is located only on a square from which it cannot escape, or a pawn is blocked from advancing. The three-move repetition draw example above, occurring through consecutive attacking/checking moves with White's Queen forcing Black's King to move between the same two squares, occurred because Black's King effectively was entombed by Black's pawn and Black's Rooks could not be used to block the checks, thereby restricting Black's King to moving only between h7 and g8 to escape consecutive attacks/checks by White's Queen.

Something a player needs to watch out for while playing is if an opponent is faced with losing the game (or may simply want to end the game for any reason without winning), he or she might try to maneuver for a draw or a stalemate in order to split the game point 1/2 to each player instead of having the player win the whole point via a checkmate or resignation! Of course, if the player is faced with the prospect of losing or wishes to end

a game without winning for some reason, then the player might try to maneuver for a draw or stalemate too!!! The permutations and possibilities, while not limitless, are so vast and varied that further discussions and reviews of various types of checking, checkmating, drawing, and stalemating, are left to other tutorials.

Part 1 – Checkmate and Checking

Part 2 – Attacks and Threats

Part 3 - Checkmates (simple and complex); Anatomy of Mate/Patterns; Mating Net; Pattern Recognition

Part 4 – Simple Checkmates and Controlling Squares

Part 5 – Rapid Checkmates – Fool’s Mate, Scholar’s Mate, Three-Move Mate

Mark Lowery’s Exciting World of Chess