

MY FIRST BOOK OF

Chess Tactics

David MacEnulty



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Russell Enterprises, Inc.
Milford, CT USA

My First Book of Check Tactics

by David MacEnulty

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David MacEnulty

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For
Elizabeth and Edward

Acknowledgments

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I am also grateful to Mitchell Fitzko, Alex Beltre, Fritz Gaspard and Elizabeth Vicary Spiegel, all of whom made important suggestions that have been incorporated into this book. I am also deeply indebted to Grandmaster Miron Sher and National Master Bruce Pandolfini for lending their wisdom to this project.

Most importantly, I thank my students at C.E.S. 70; they taught me a lot about how and why people learn. They were the inspiration for this book, and I have used many positions from their tournament games in this work.

Several years have passed since the first version of this book appeared. I have made several additions and, I hope, improvements in this edition. I am further indebted to Mitchell Fitzko for his proofreading of this edition. He saved me from many embarrassing errors. Those that remain are entirely my fault.

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Introduction

This book is based on three big ideas:

- 1) Tactics are based on basic patterns that can be learned through organized study.
- 2) Tactics are the ways chess players gain a material advantage; all other things being equal, the player with a material advantage has the better chances to win the game.
- 3) The chess player who knows tactics beats one who doesn't.

There is a famous quote that chess is 99% tactics. Whether that particular number is true or not, there is no question that tactics contribute mightily to winning and losing chess games. Many opening ideas are based on tactical considerations, many games are won or lost due to middlegame tactics, and many of the common checkmate patterns rely on tactics for their implementation.

When I first started teaching, I was frustrated by the search for material on tactics. Most of what was available was either too difficult for beginners, or was not thematic in approach. I couldn't find a book that broke the patterns down in the way my beginning students needed. I started borrowing a little here, a little there, and finally realized I would have to create my own materials. The more I learned about teaching, the more I learned what my students needed, and the better I was able to construct puzzles to help them learn in an organized, sequential way.

My first training was as a musician. I spent thousands of hours practicing scales, intervals, and many other exercises to master my craft. These technical exercises are based on the idea that musicians' fingers and ears must have an automatic response to the thousands of musical patterns they perform. Since repetition is the mother of retention, musicians practice these patterns over and over and over.

This book, then, is a chess version of music technique books. First, the students are given a very basic idea, or pattern, and then they have a chance to practice it with many examples. Just as a musician learns to play one note, then another, then a third, and then joins them together for a simple tune, chess players must learn one pattern, then another, and then join them together for a connected series of moves.

Musicians need ear training; chess players need eye training. We need to be able to see patterns on the chessboard just as a musician hears patterns of sound. This can only be done by repetition. We must see the pattern many times in multiple variations before it becomes an automatic part

of our repertoire. Indeed, pattern recognition is the key to success in every field. Whether the arena is woodworking, house painting, writing, horseback riding, sales, business, medicine, or anything else, those who have fully integrated the relevant patterns and know how to appropriately and creatively apply them will perform at a very high level.

I strongly suggest that, just as a musician practices an exercise many times, the student go through this book several times. The more times a player sees a pattern, the more that pattern becomes a working part of the player's vocabulary. As the great martial artist Bruce Lee once said, "Without technique there can be no art." This is a book designed to develop an important aspect of chess technique, that of tactical thinking.

At this early stage in a chess player's development, verifying the answer is critical. For this reason, I have provided answers at the bottom of the page. The answers can be quickly checked without having to go to the end of the chapter or the end of the book to find the correct move. The print on these answers is intentionally small, making them easy to cover while trying to solve the problems. Once you think you have the answer, check your work by looking at the correct solution given at the bottom of the page. After verifying the answer, look at the pattern again to lock the pattern in your brain.

At the end of each chapter there are a few games featuring the tactic presented in that chapter. In each game, one player makes some significant error(s). Errors in chess invite a tactical response. A large part of winning at chess is taking advantage of the mistakes of your opponent. All chess players make mistakes. Recognizing and punishing your opponent's mistakes are essential to playing winning chess. An unpunished error can turn a bad move into a winning attack.

The final section of puzzles, Mixed Tactics Part Two, are a step up in difficulty from the earlier ones. In the earlier puzzles the tactic is simply there, waiting for you to find it. In the final section, the student must find the move that sets up the tactical trick. These will require a lot of thought and a lot of patience -- two qualities chess players are known for.

If the final puzzles seem too difficult at first, set up the position on a board and try to figure it out without moving the pieces. The trick is to do them in your head, as you would if you were playing a real game with a live opponent. This takes a lot of practice, but the rewards are well worth the effort.

If, after about fifteen minutes of trying to figure out the solution, you are still stuck, I recommend looking up the answer and trying to visualize all the moves, again without moving the pieces. After you can correctly see the moves without touching the pieces, then practice the sequence moving the pieces.

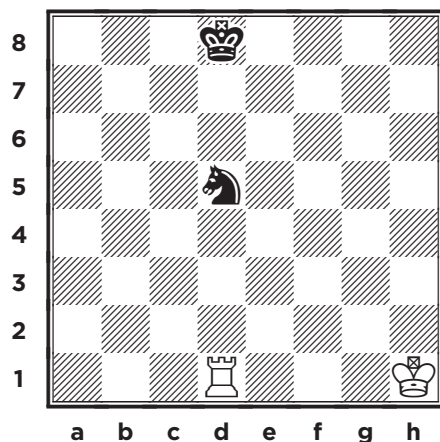
CHAPTER 8

Pin

Hold an enemy piece in place.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

A pin keeps a piece from moving. A piece that can't move has lost its power. A pin occurs when a queen, rook, or bishop attacks an enemy piece, and if that piece were to move, there would be an attack on another piece behind it.



Pieces that can Pin:

Only the queen, rook, and bishop can Pin.

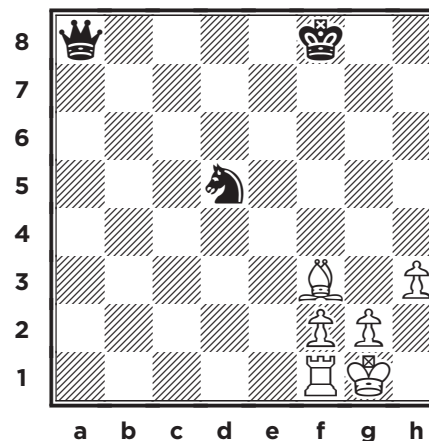
These are the three long-range pieces, those that can travel across the whole board in one move.

Their ability to attack along an entire rank, file, or diagonal gives these three pieces the power to Pin.

In the diagram above the d1-rook attacks the d5-knight, and if the knight were to move, Black's d8-king would be under attack.

This is called an *Absolute Pin*, because the pin is against the king. Moving out of an absolute pin is illegal, since it puts the king in check.

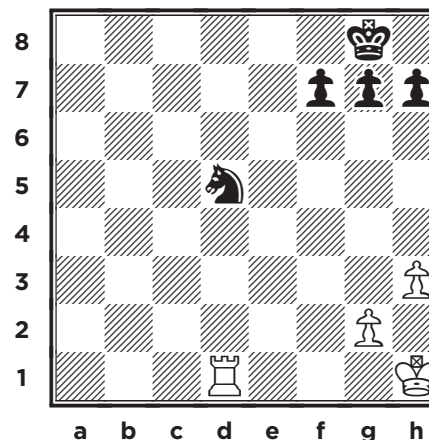
A Relative Pin is a pin against any piece other than the king.



What to do:

- 1) Look for enemy pieces lined up on the same rank, file, or diagonal.
- 2) Find one of your pieces that can attack the front piece and, attacking through it like an X-ray, hit the second piece.
- 3) Attack!

In the diagram above, the bishop on f3 attacks the enemy knight on d5. If the knight were to move, the black queen on a8 would be under attack. The knight is pinned to the queen. This is called a relative pin, because it is not illegal to move the knight. In this position, moving the knight is not a good idea, but at least it does not break the rules.



A pin can even be against an empty square, as in the diagram above. Here the knight is pinned to d8. Moving the knight would allow 1 Rd8#.

Pins are a very important part of chess. This chapter is divided into six parts:

Part 1 Find the Pin.

Part 2 Piling On the Pinned Piece. Since a pinned piece can't (or shouldn't) move, a good thing to do is to attack it again. We call this "piling on."

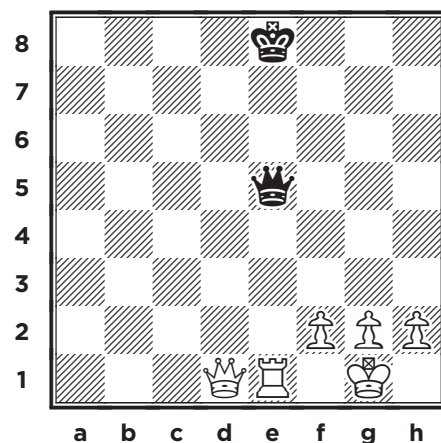
Part 3 A Pinned Piece Does Not Protect. A pinned piece, having lost the power to move, is often not effective in protecting other pieces.

Part 4 Breaking a Pin, Avoiding a Pin, and Nullifying the Danger of a Pin

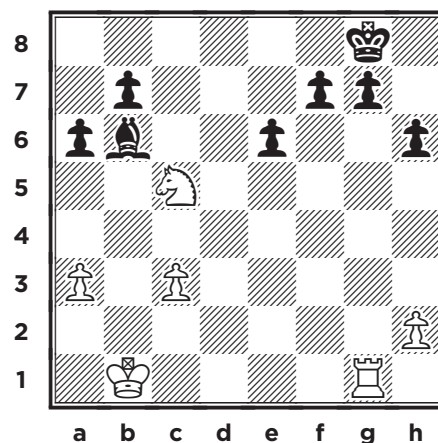
Part 5 Illusory Pins. Sometimes a pinned piece does protect. To make that point, we have included a couple of famous examples when a pinned unit will move, allowing the loss of the queen but winning the game.

Part 6 Escape from a Pin. Not all pins render the piece powerless. Sometimes there are clever ways to escape.

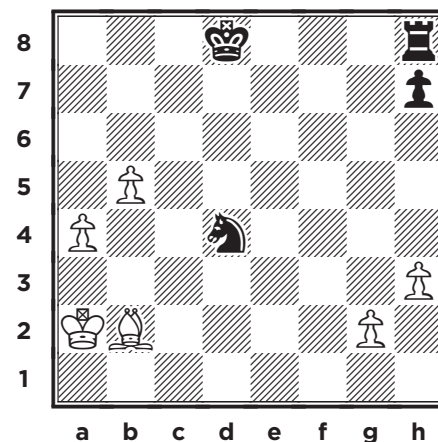
Pin Examples



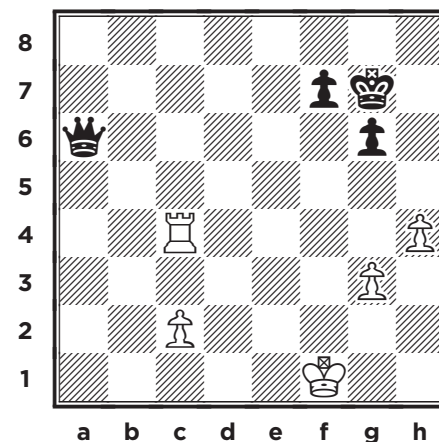
The white e1-rook pins the black queen to the king.



The black b6-queen pins the white knight to the rook.



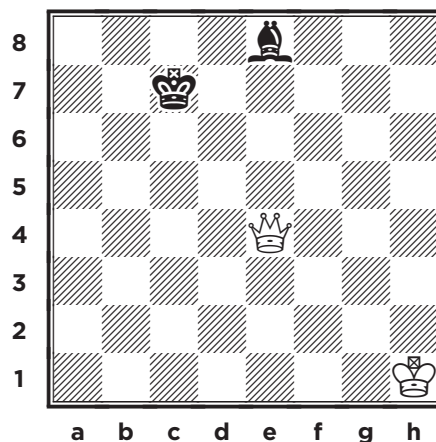
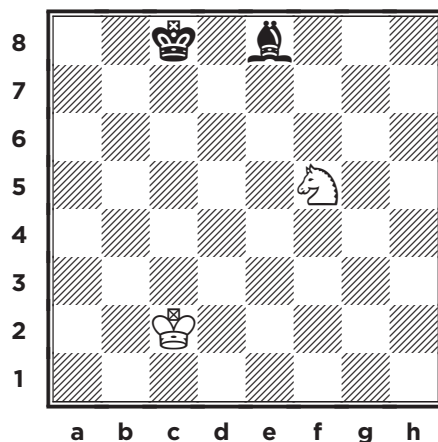
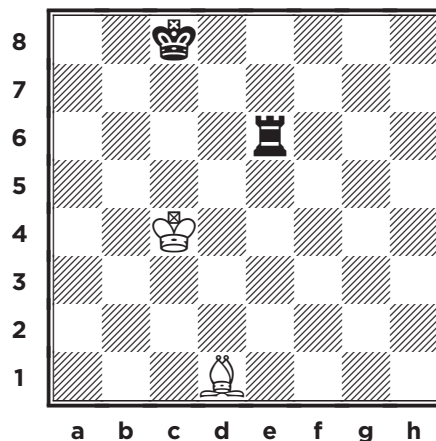
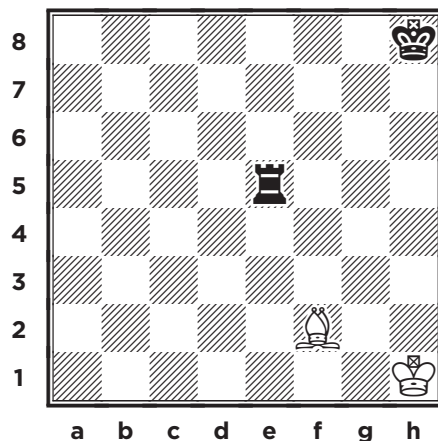
The white b2-bishop pins the black knight to the rook.



The black a6-queen pins the white rook to the king.

PART 1 FIND THE PIN

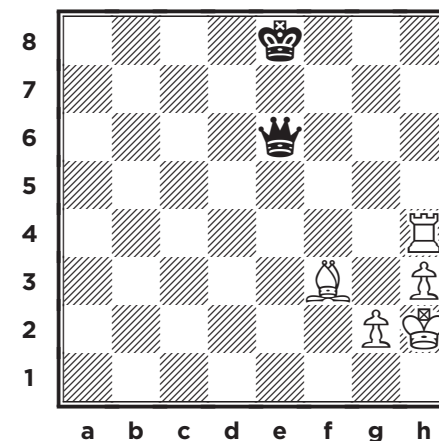
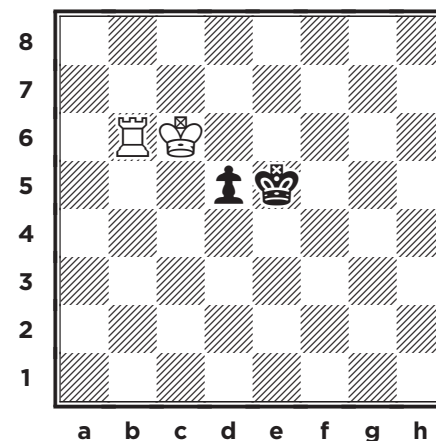
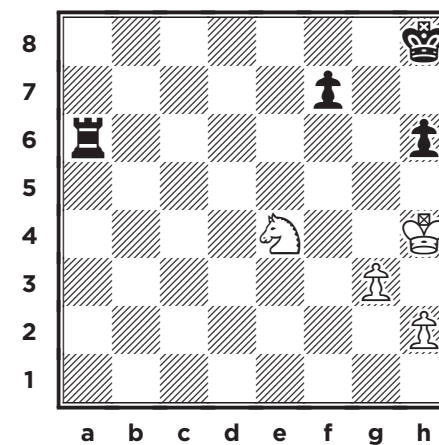
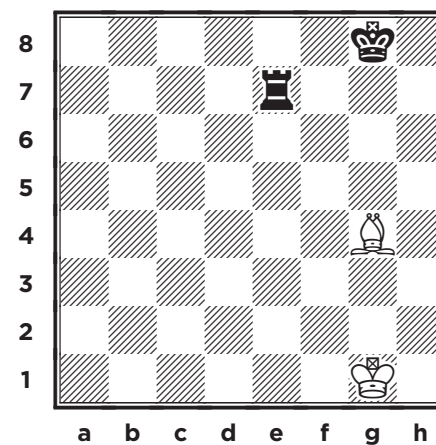
Bishop Pins



Answers:

1. 1 Bd4 pins the rook to the king.
2. 1 Bg4 pins the rook to the king.
3. 1... Bg6 pins the knight to the king.
4. 1... Bc6 pins the queen to the king.

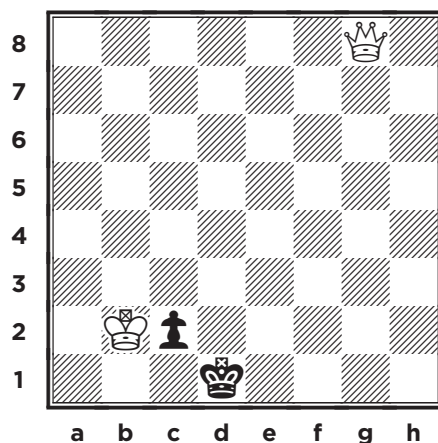
Rook Pins



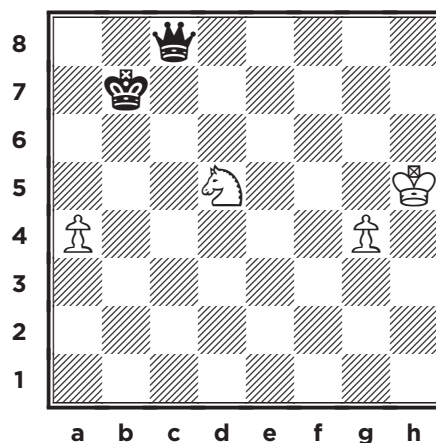
Answers:

5. 1... Rg7 pins the bishop to the king.
6. 1... Ra4 pins the knight to the king.
7. 1 Rb5 pins the pawn to the king.
8. 1 Re4 pins the queen to the king.

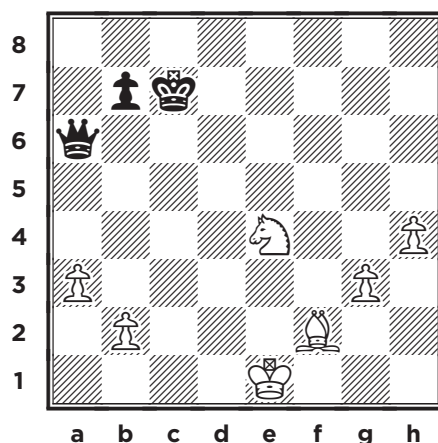
Queen Pins



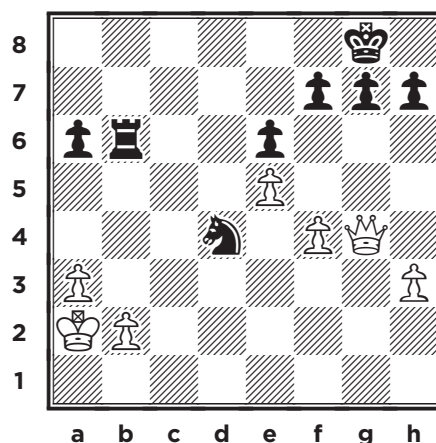
9. White to move.



10. Black to move.



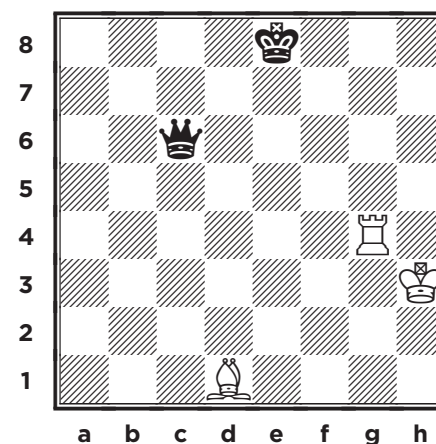
11. Black to move.



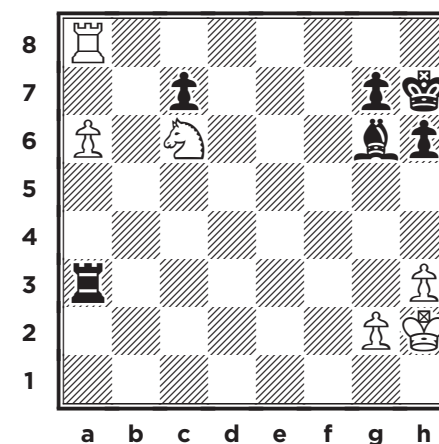
12. White to move.

Mixed Pins: Find the Pin

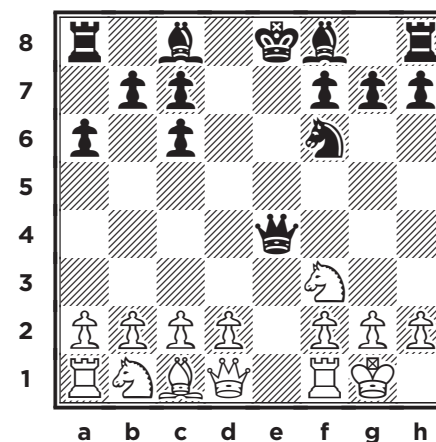
This is a mixture of pins with the bishop, rook and queen.



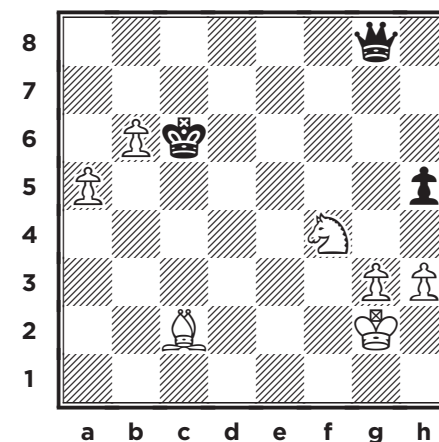
13. White to move.



14. Black to move.



15. White to move.



16. Black to move.

Answers:

9. 1 Qb3 pins the pawn to the king. Black's c2-pawn was about to promote, but now White will take the pawn next move.

10. 1... Qc5 pins the knight to the king.

11. 1... Qe6 pins the knight to the king.

12. 1 Qg1 pins the knight to the rook.

Answers:

13. 1 Ba4 pins the queen to the king.

14. 1... Be4 pins the knight to the rook.

15. 1 Re1 pins the queen to the king.

16. 1... Qa2 pins the bishop to the king.