

CHECKMATE STRATEGY

There are two ways to win a chess game. One way is solid, steady, and unspectacular. You gradually outplay your opponent, piling small advantage on top of small advantage. You win a little material advantage along the way, and finally score a win in the end game.

The other way is harder but much more satisfying. You activate your pieces early in the game, generating threats that push your opponent back to the wall. You blast through the pawns and pieces guarding his King with a brilliant sacrifice, crown your achievement with an amazing checkmate, seemingly conjured out of thin air.

What makes a successful attack possible? In general, two conditions must be met:

1. You need an advantage in space, particularly in the area of the board where your opponent's King is located.
2. You must have more pieces available for attack than your opponent has for defense.

Conducting a successful mating attack requires mastering three key attacking skills:

1. **Strip away the Pawns in front of the enemy King.** After castling King-side, the three Pawns in front of the King constitute a powerful defensive barrier. As long as these Pawns are in place, it's very hard to get at the enemy King.
2. **Use the power of check to mobilize your pieces.** The cry of "check" forces your opponent to ignore everything else and move the King to safety. While he's moving his King he can't mobilize his other pieces.
3. **Calculate the follow-up accurately.** Sacrificing pieces is easy, the hard part is calculating the follow-up.

The weakest point in Black's defensive position at the very beginning of the game is the square f7. (In White's position, it's the square f2). Because the Pawn on these squares are only guarded by the King, as opposed to the squares e2 and e7; which are guarded by the King, Queen, Bishop, and Knight on f8 for black and f1 for White.

Strategy is difficult to teach. **The secret to a winning checkmating attack is learning how to spot the conditions that make an attack possible, how to break through your opponent's defenses, and how to push your opponent's King off his square forcing him into the open where he is vulnerable to attack.** With this knowledge you will win more often and enjoy the game more.