

<img src='covers/strategyforge.puzzle.webp' alt='StrategyForge – The Grandmaster's Workbook' style='max-width:92%;display:block;margin:0 auto;'/>

# StrategyForge – The Grandmaster's Workbook

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**A** *Story Time-style strategy puzzle workbook – every position is drawn from the app's shipped, engine-verified tactics bank. No position is made up.*

## About this book

Part of the **Strategyforge** Companion Book Program. Free to download and print under **CC BY-NC-SA 4.0**. Every puzzle is a real, engine-verified tactic – solve it, then turn the page to check your move and the reason it works.

## Contents

1. Connect Four – Win or Block
2. Chess – One-Move Tactics
3. Capture Cascade – Chain Every Capture

## How to use this book

This capstone workbook mixes THREE strategy games – every position is drawn from the app's shipped, engine-verified banks (no position is made up).

1. **Connect Four** – drop one disc to WIN (make four) or to BLOCK red's four. The arrow shows the column; the ring shows where your disc lands.
2. **Chess** – White to move; find the ONE move (mate, fork, or win the material).
3. **Capture Cascade** (solitaire chess) – EVERY move must capture, and you win by ending with exactly ONE piece. The numbered arrows show the whole capture chain in order.  
Say your move out loud, then **turn the page** to check it and read *why* it works.

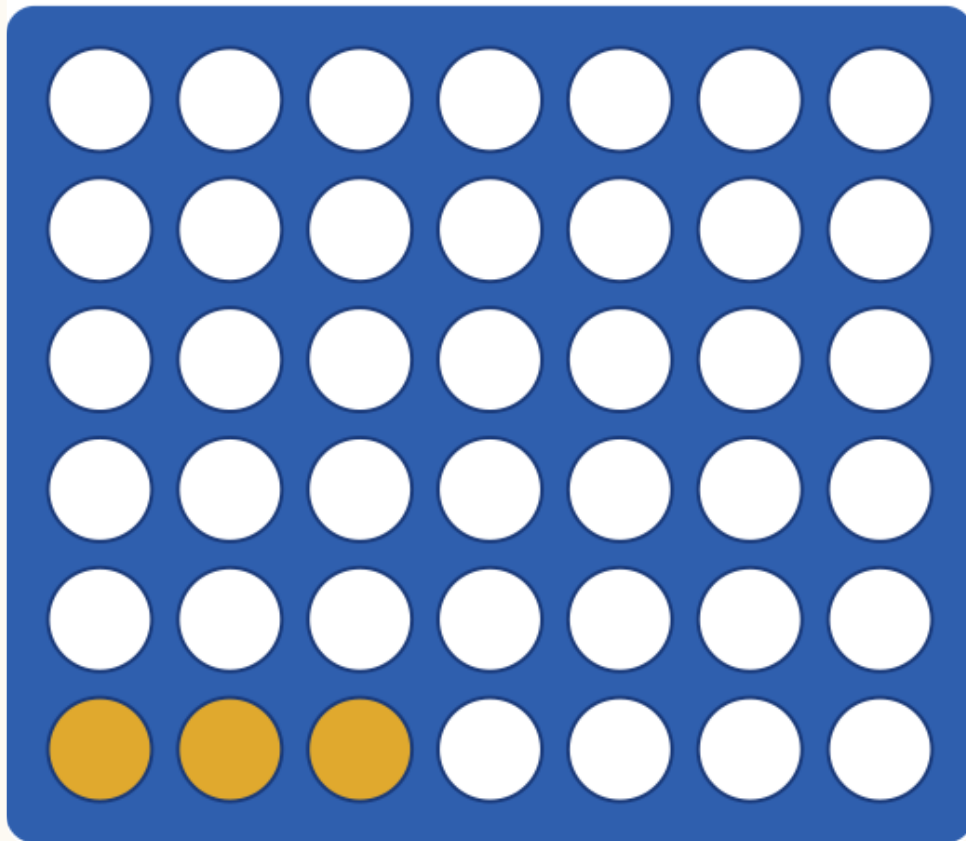
## Connect Four – Win or Block

### Puzzle 1

**You (gold) to move** – which column wins?

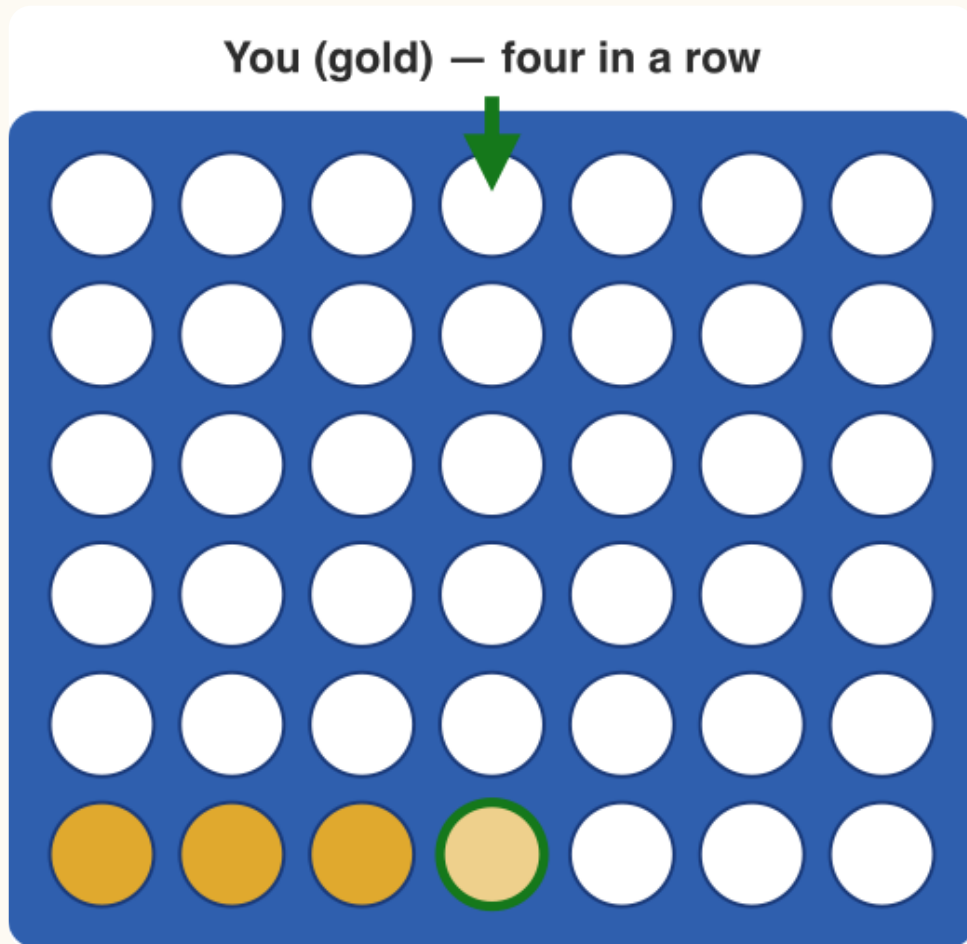
You are yellow. Drop a piece to make four in a row and win.

**You (gold) — four in a row**



*Hint:* You already have three in a row along the bottom. One more on the end finishes it.

## Puzzle 1 – Answer



**Drop in column 4 (arrow) – it makes four in a row (horizontal).**

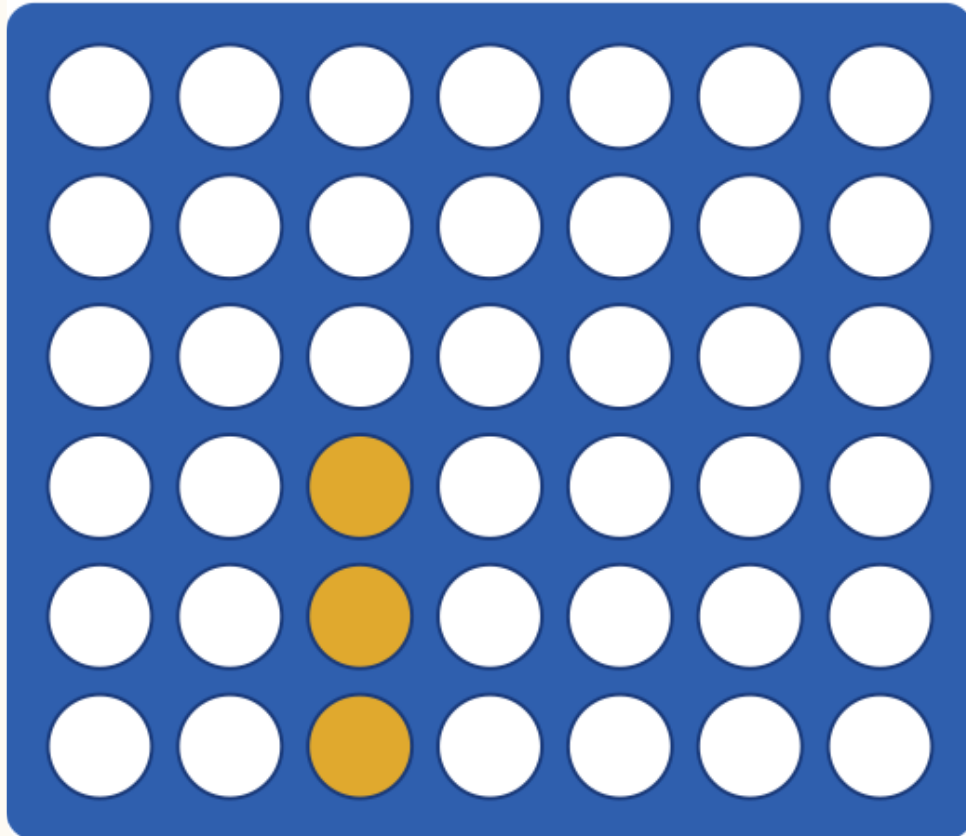
Dropping in column 4 completes yellow's four-in-a-row across the bottom.  
Always check for your own winning move before anything else.

## Puzzle 2

**You (gold) to move** – which column wins?

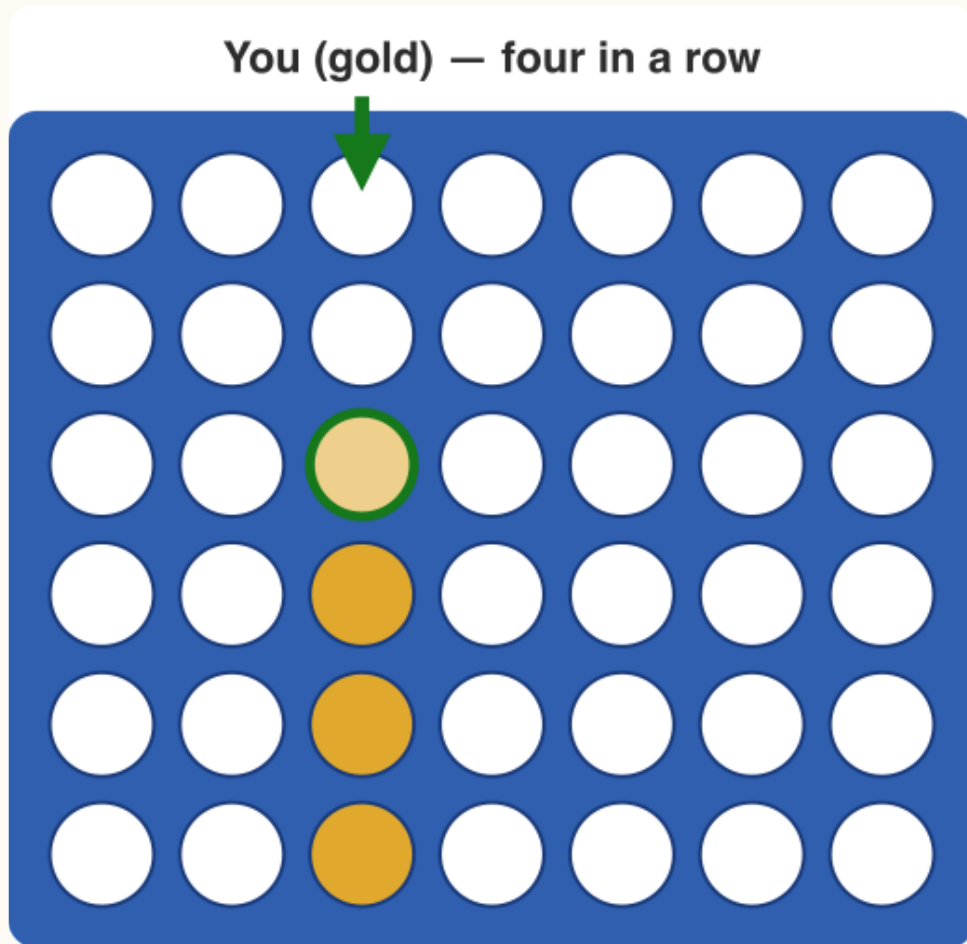
You are yellow. Drop a piece to win.

**You (gold) — four in a row**



*Hint:* You have three stacked in one column. Add the fourth on top.

## Puzzle 2 – Answer



**Drop in column 3 (arrow) – it makes four in a column (vertical).**

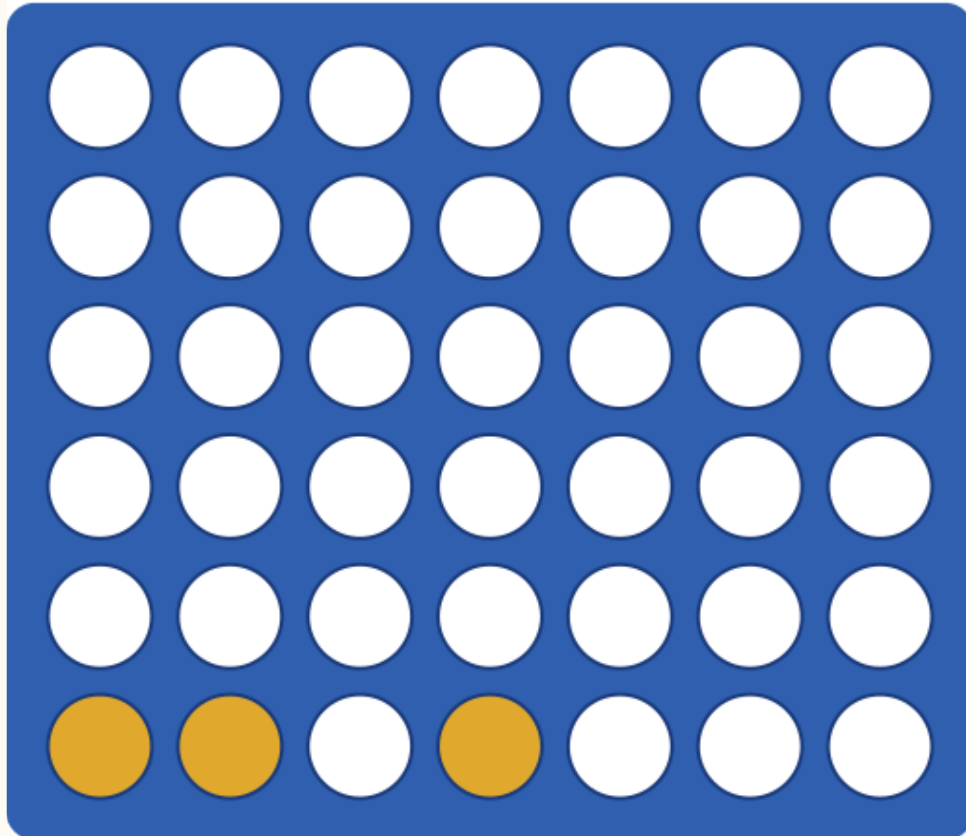
Three yellow pieces are stacked in column 3 – dropping there again makes four vertically. Vertical threats are easy to miss because you scan across, not up.

## Puzzle 3

**You (gold) to move** – which column wins?

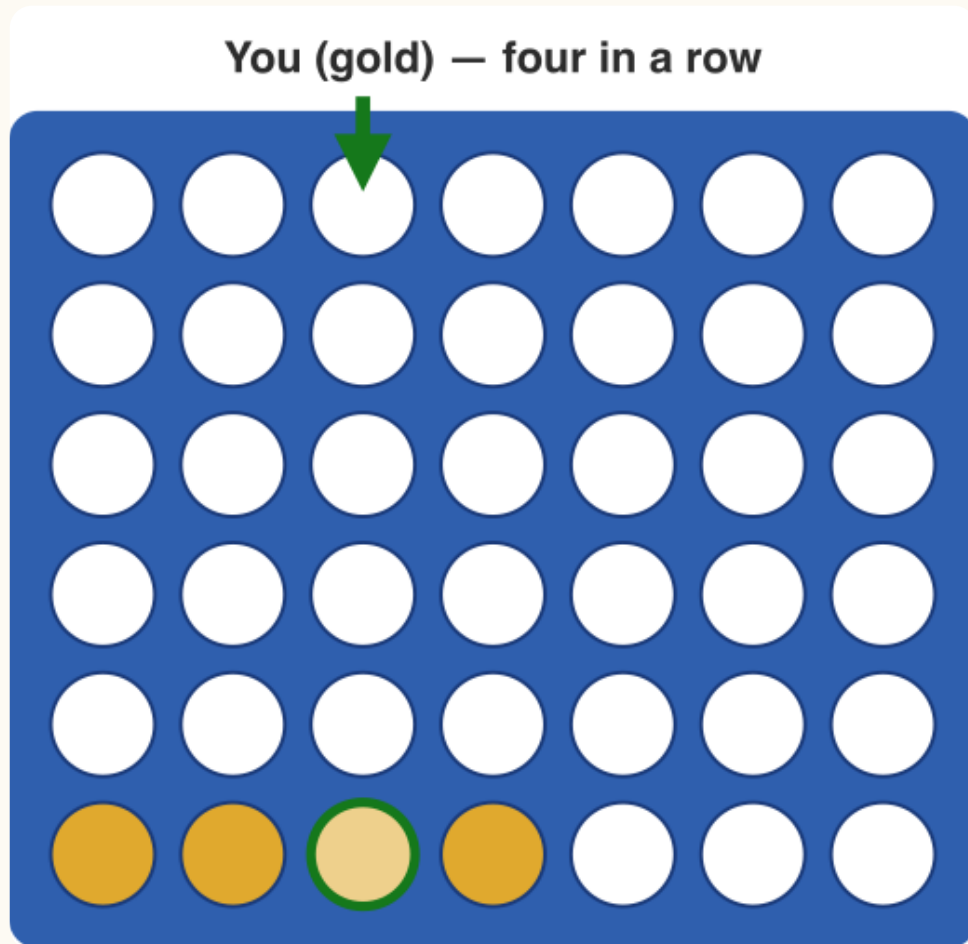
You are yellow. There is a winning move hiding in a gap.

**You (gold) — four in a row**



*Hint:* Look for the empty square BETWEEN your pieces, not just on the ends.

## Puzzle 3 – Answer



**Drop in column 3 (arrow) – it makes four in a row (horizontal).**

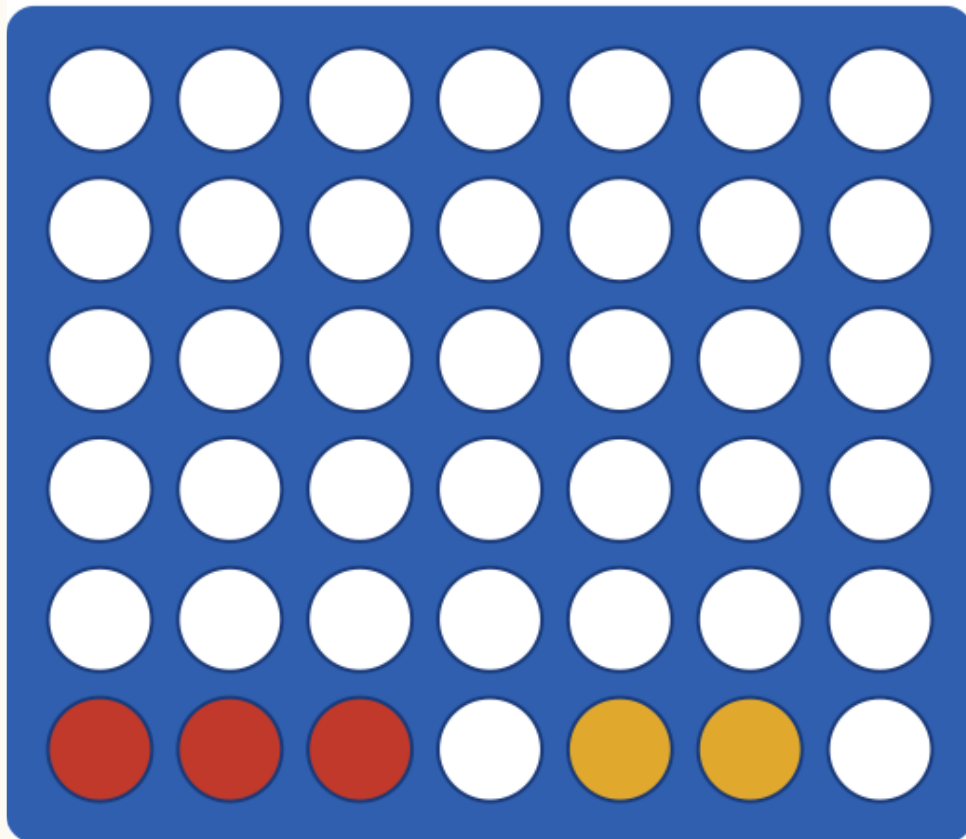
Filling the gap in column 3 links your pieces into four across the bottom. Gap threats are the ones opponents forget to block.

## Puzzle 4

**You (gold) to move** – stop red's threat.

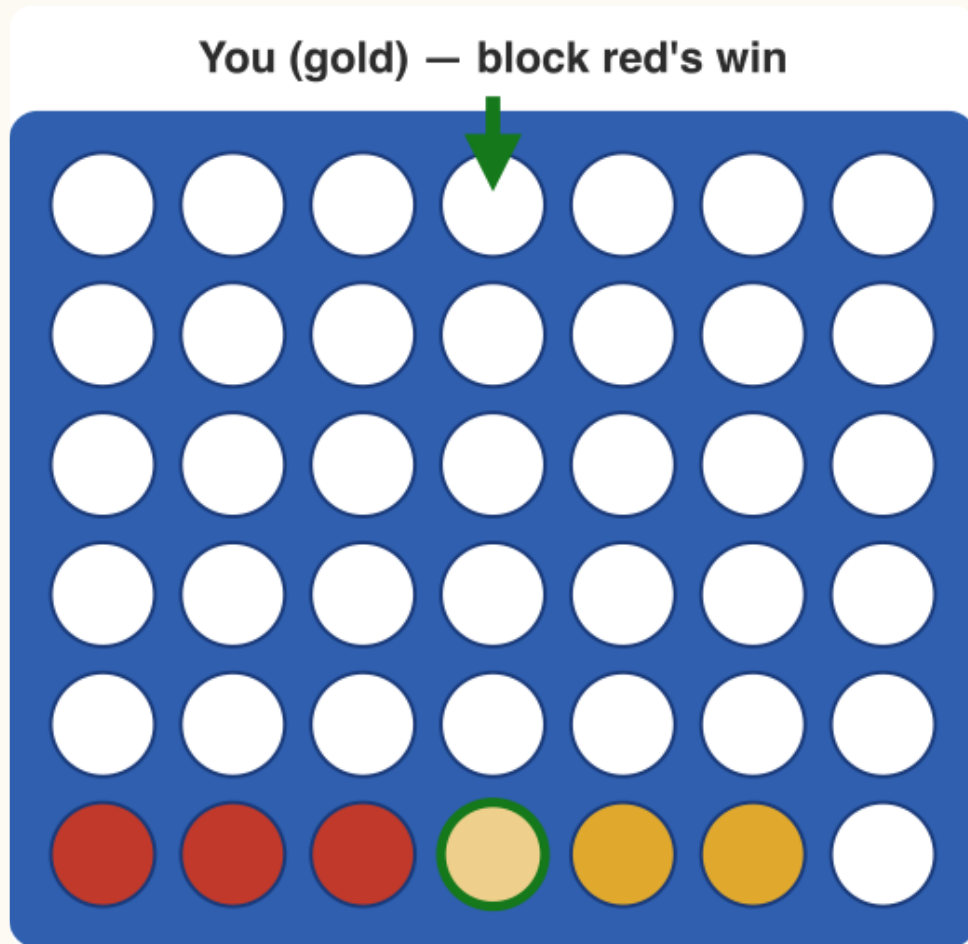
You are yellow. Red is about to win – stop the threat.

**You (gold) — block red's win**



*Hint:* Red has three in a row. Where would red drop to make four?

## Puzzle 4 – Answer



**Drop in column 4 – it blocks red's four in a row (horizontal).**

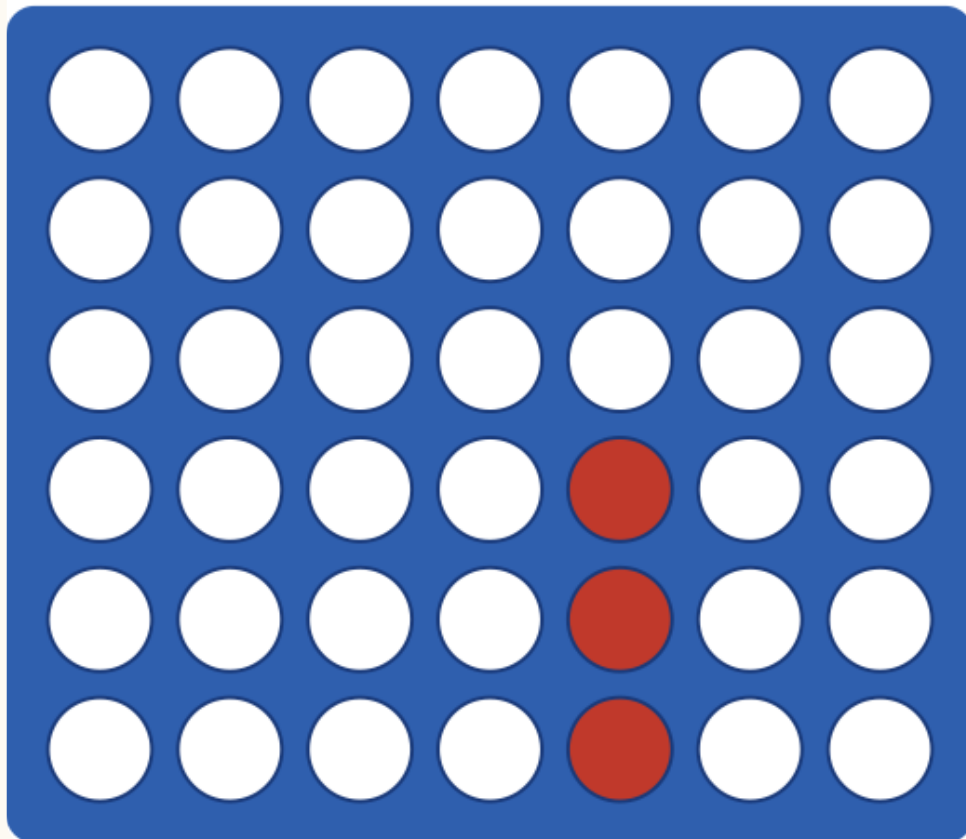
Red threatens to complete four across the bottom by dropping in column 4, so you must play there first. Reading the OPPONENT's threats is as important as finding your own.

## Puzzle 5

**You (gold) to move** – stop red's threat.

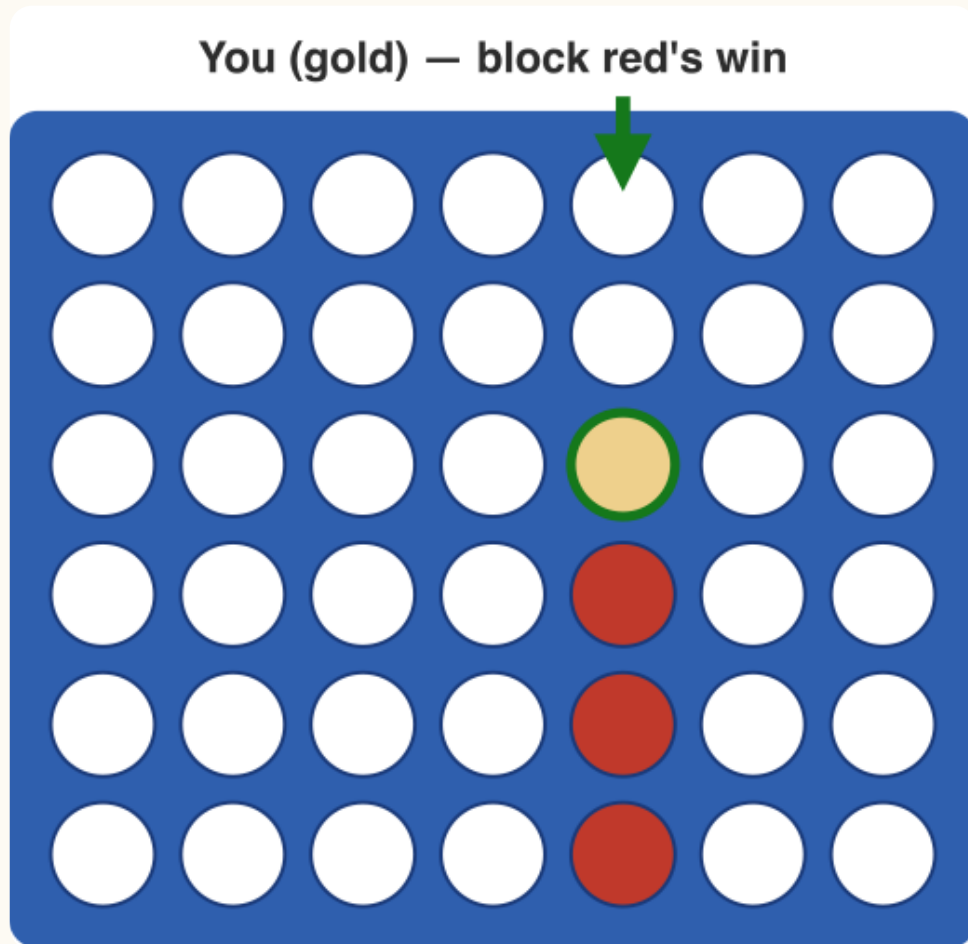
You are yellow. Block red's winning move.

**You (gold) — block red's win**



*Hint:* Red has a tall stack. What happens if red drops on top?

## Puzzle 5 – Answer



**Drop in column 5 – it blocks red's four in a column (vertical).**

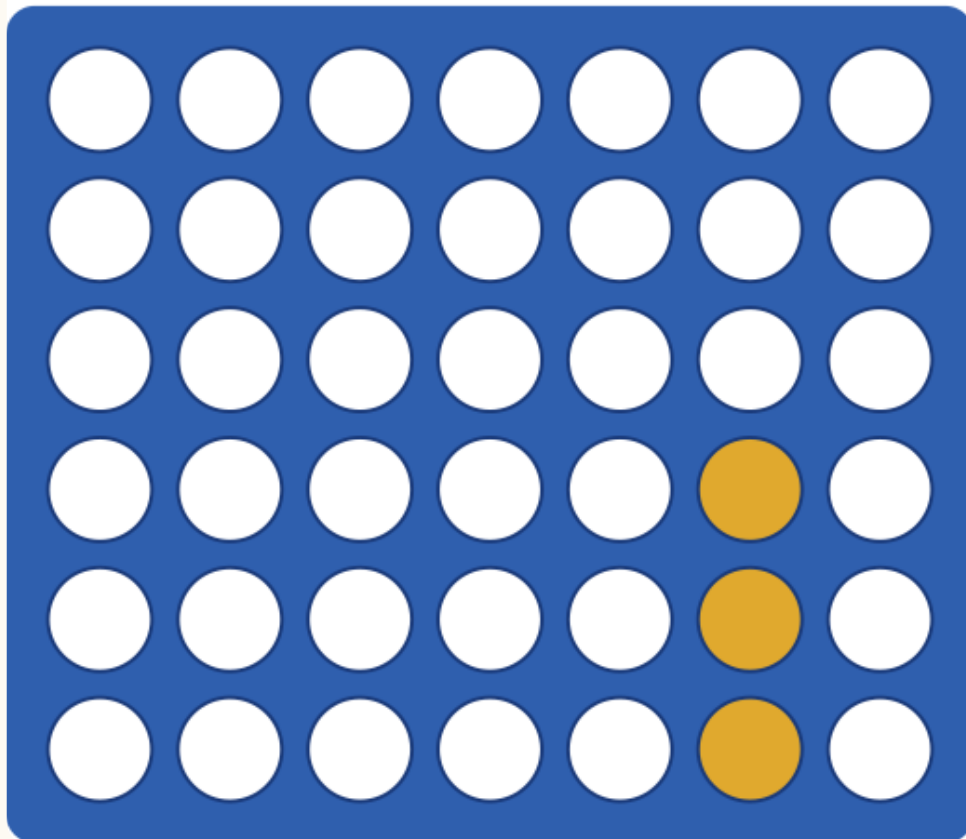
Red has three stacked in column 5 and would win by dropping there – you have to cap it. Vertical threats climb fast; watch every column that reaches three.

## Puzzle 6

**You (gold) to move** – which column wins?

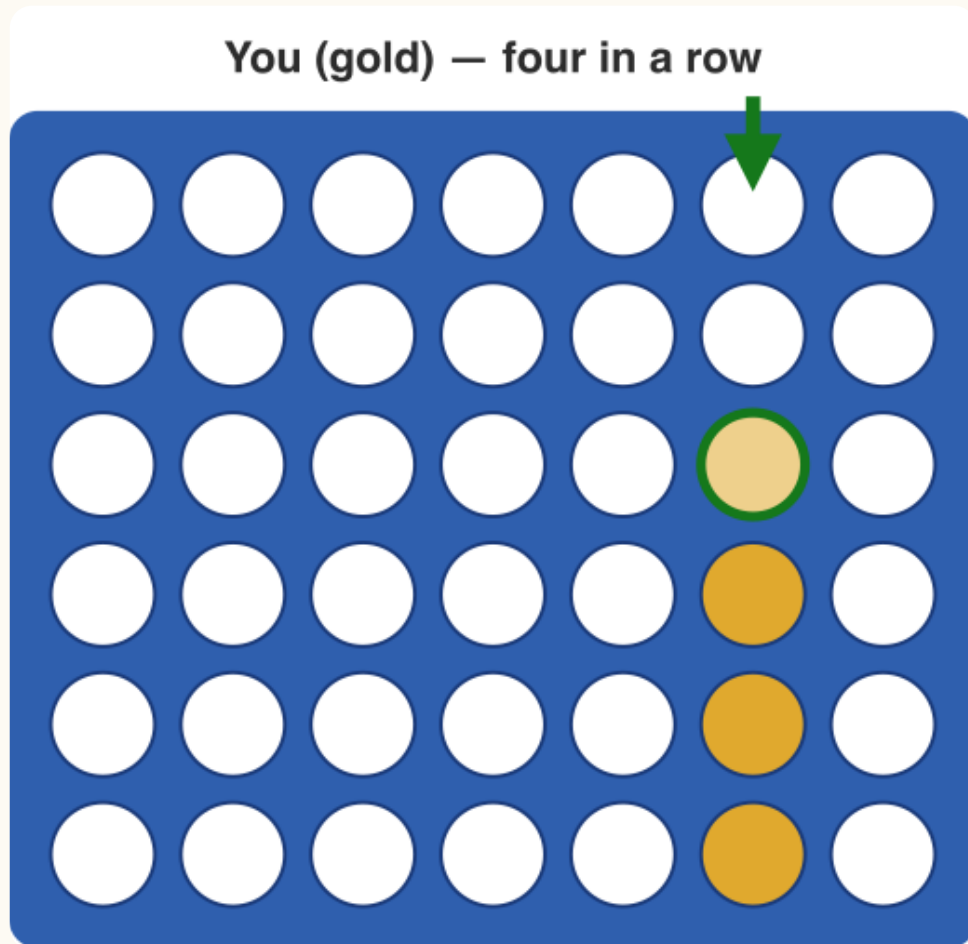
You are yellow. Find the win.

**You (gold) — four in a row**



*Hint:* Stacked threats win going straight up.

## Puzzle 6 – Answer



**Drop in column 6 (arrow) – it makes four in a column (vertical).**

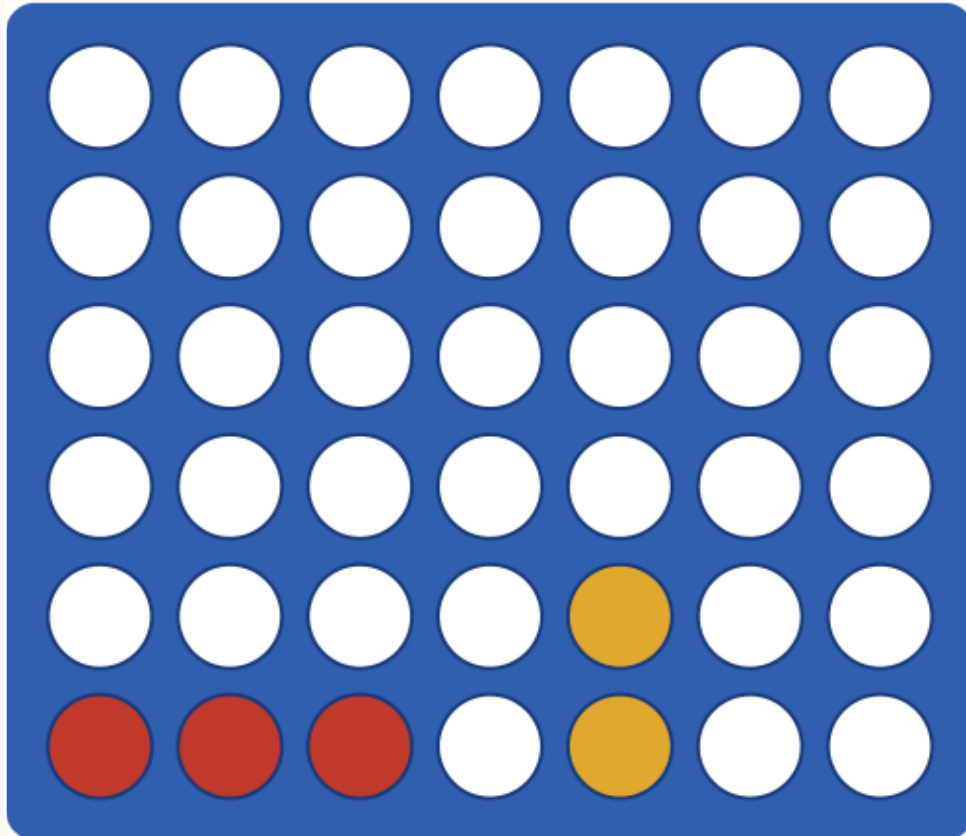
Column 6 holds three yellow pieces; one more wins. Getting three of your own stacked forces the opponent to respond – and if they don't, you win.

## Puzzle 7

**You (gold) to move** – stop red's threat.

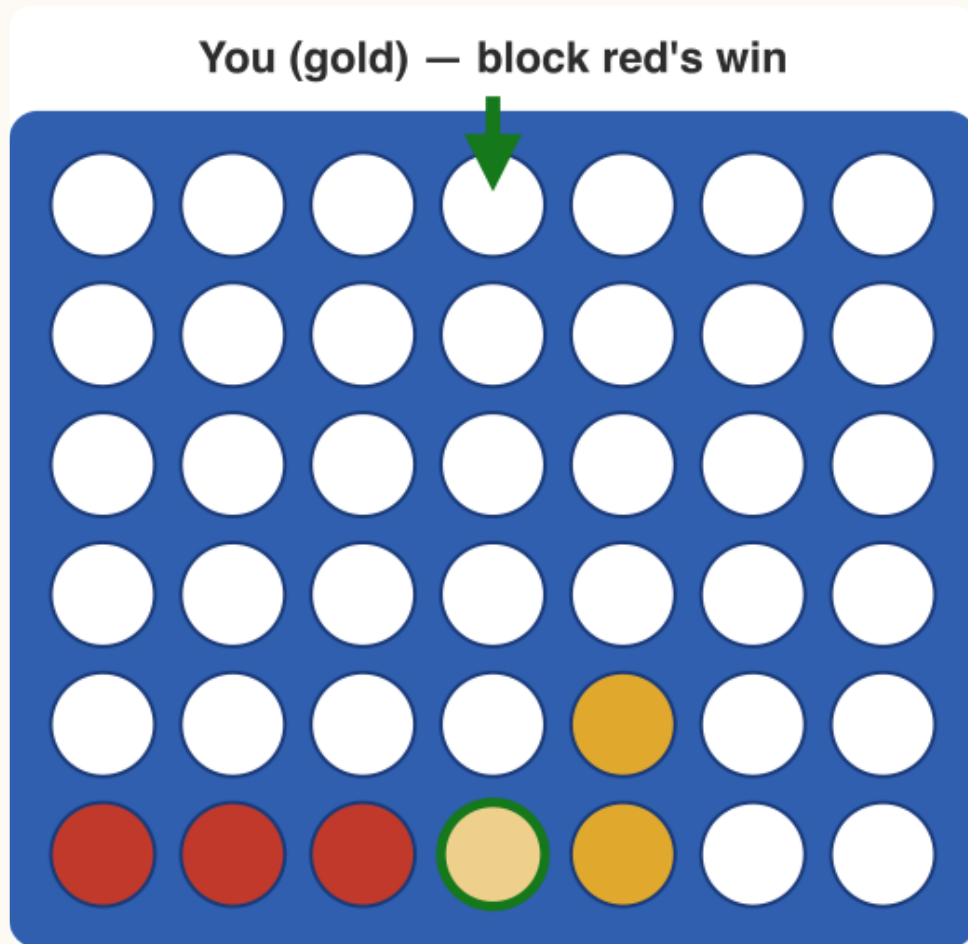
You are yellow. Red threatens to win – find the only defence.

**You (gold) — block red's win**



*Hint:* Red's three-in-a-row on the bottom needs one square to finish.

## Puzzle 7 – Answer



**Drop in column 4 – it blocks red's four in a row (horizontal).**

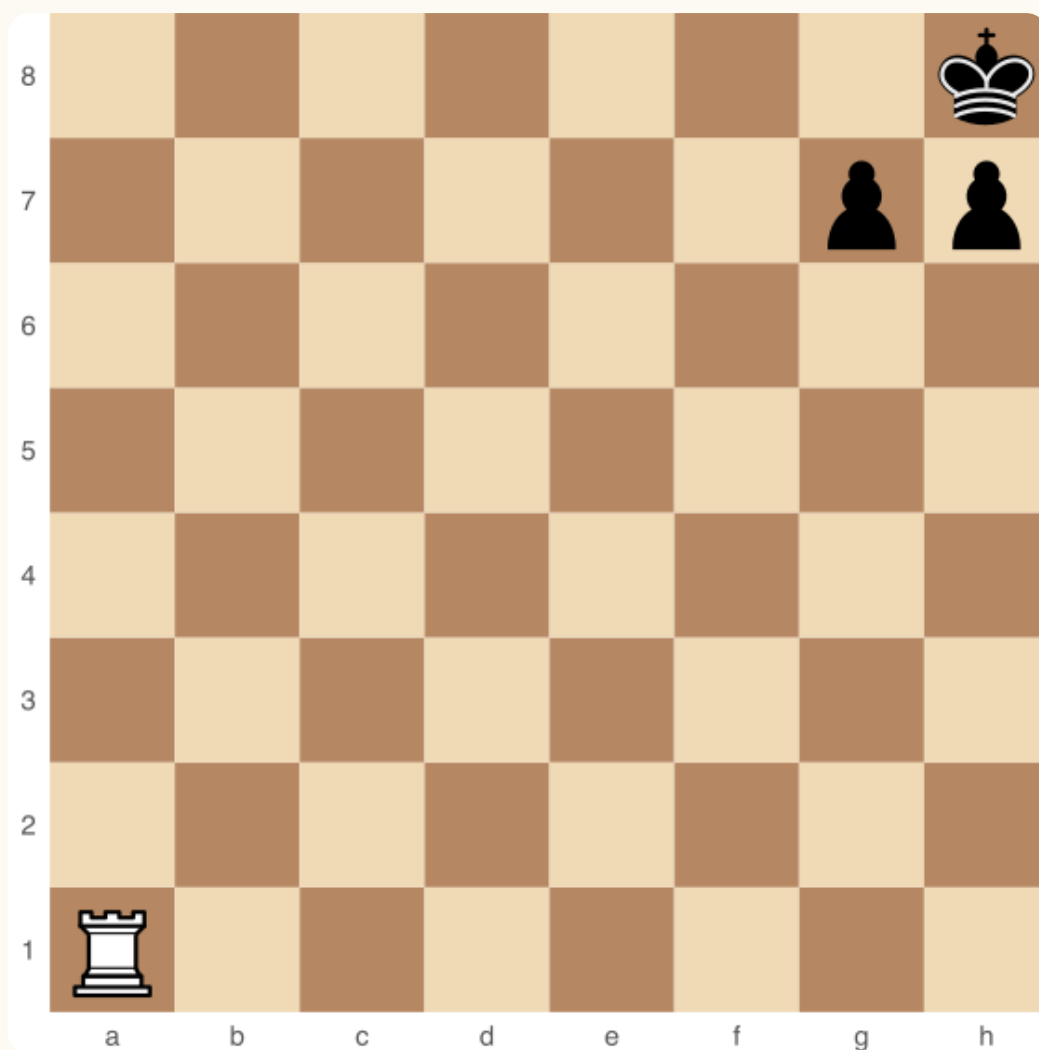
Red completes four across the bottom by dropping in column 4, so blocking it is forced. When you have no winning move of your own, defence comes first.

## Chess – One-Move Tactics

### Puzzle 8

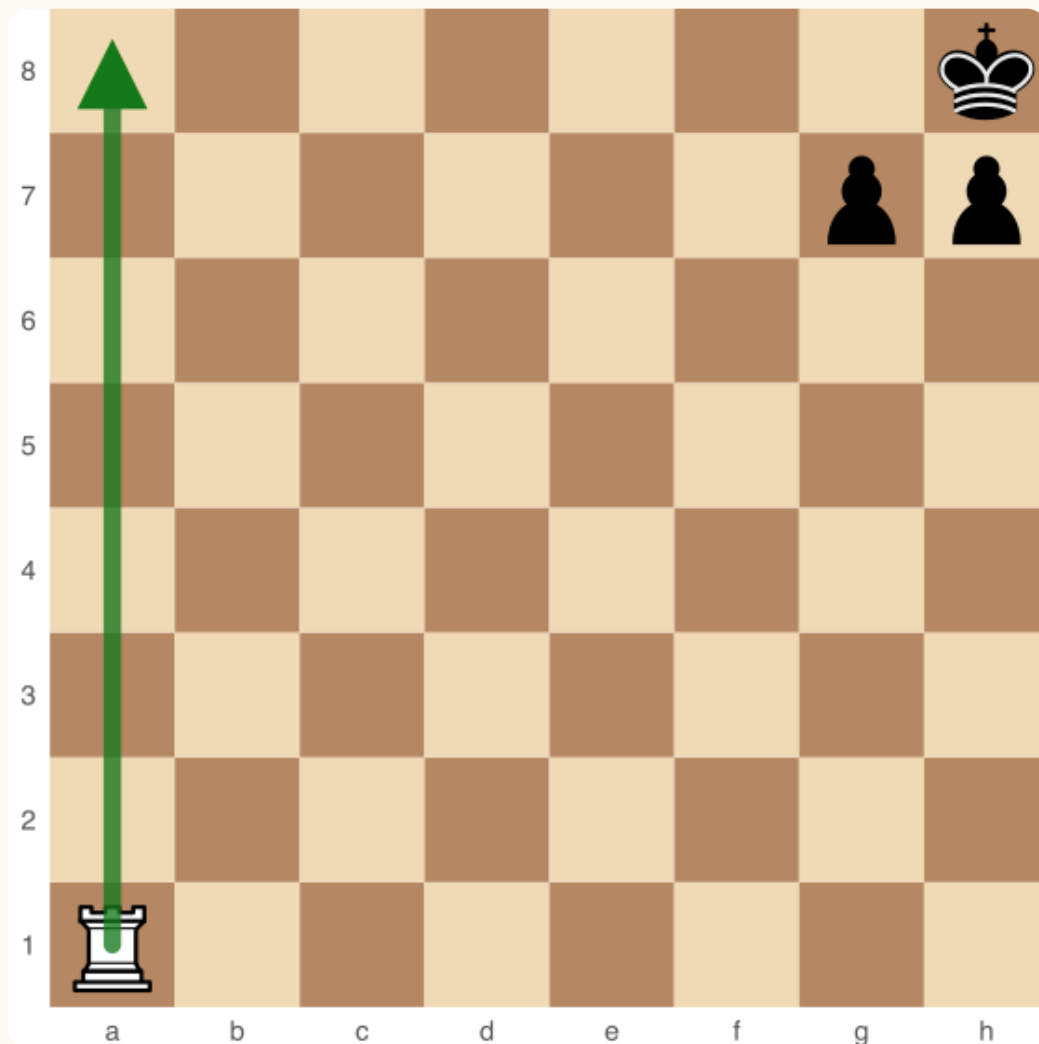
**White to move** – find the one move.

White to move. The black king is stuck on the back rank – deliver checkmate in one.



*Hint:* Your rook rules a whole file or rank at once. The king's own pawns block its escape.

## Puzzle 8 – Answer



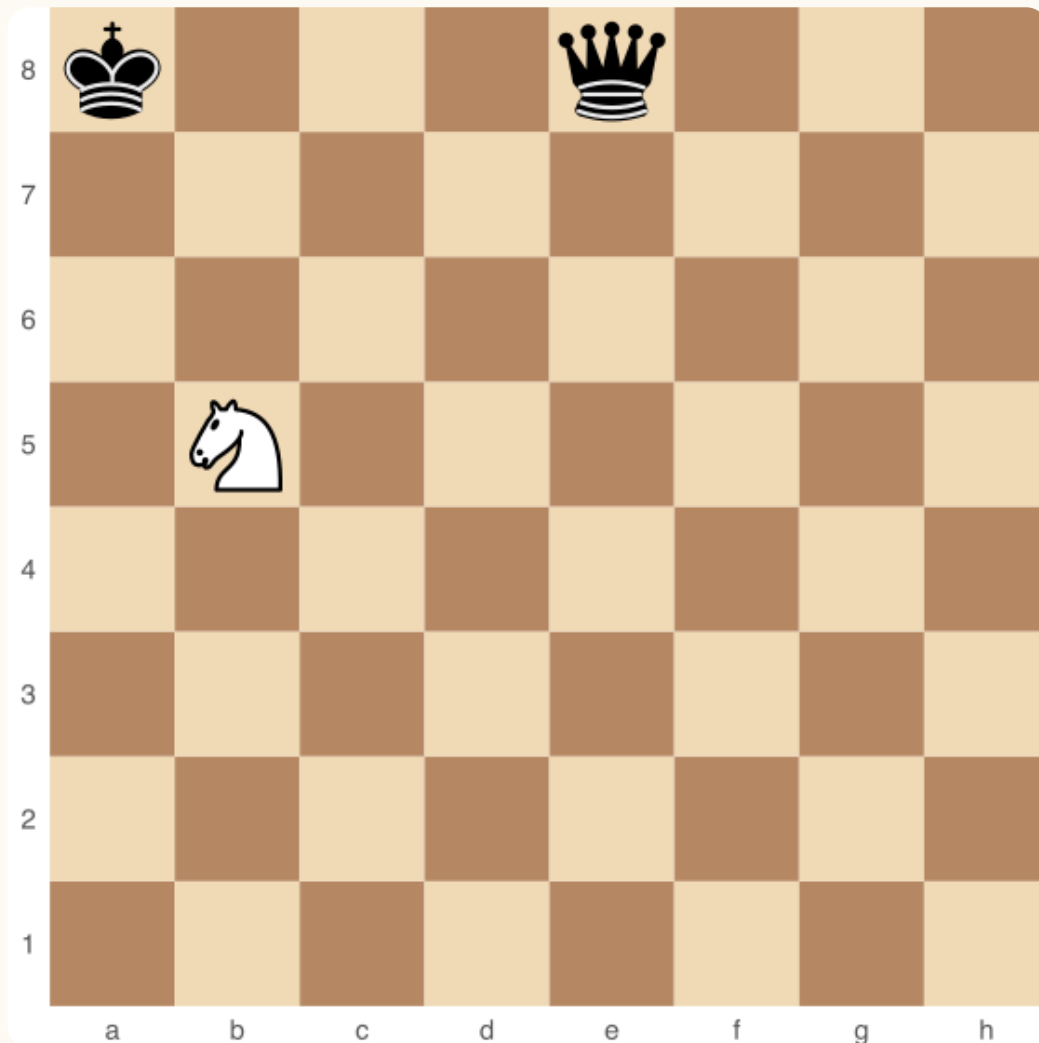
**a1→a8 – checkmate in one.**

Ra8 is checkmate: the rook covers the entire 8th rank, and the king's own pawns on g7 and h7 take away every escape square. This is the classic 'back-rank mate'.

## Puzzle 9

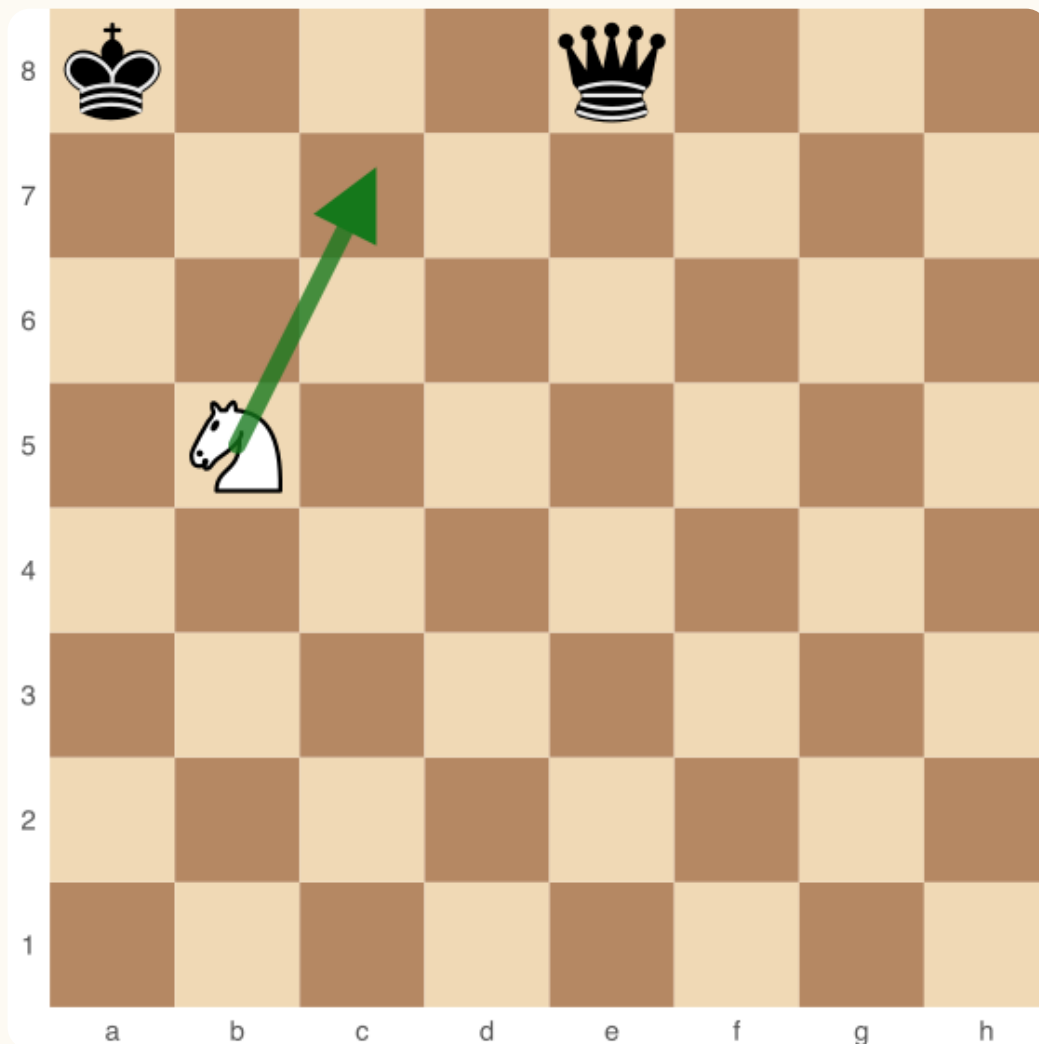
**White to move** – find the one move.

White to move. Your knight can attack the king and queen at once – find the fork.



*Hint:* A knight on the right square can hit two pieces at once. Which square attacks BOTH a8 and e8?

## Puzzle 9 – Answer



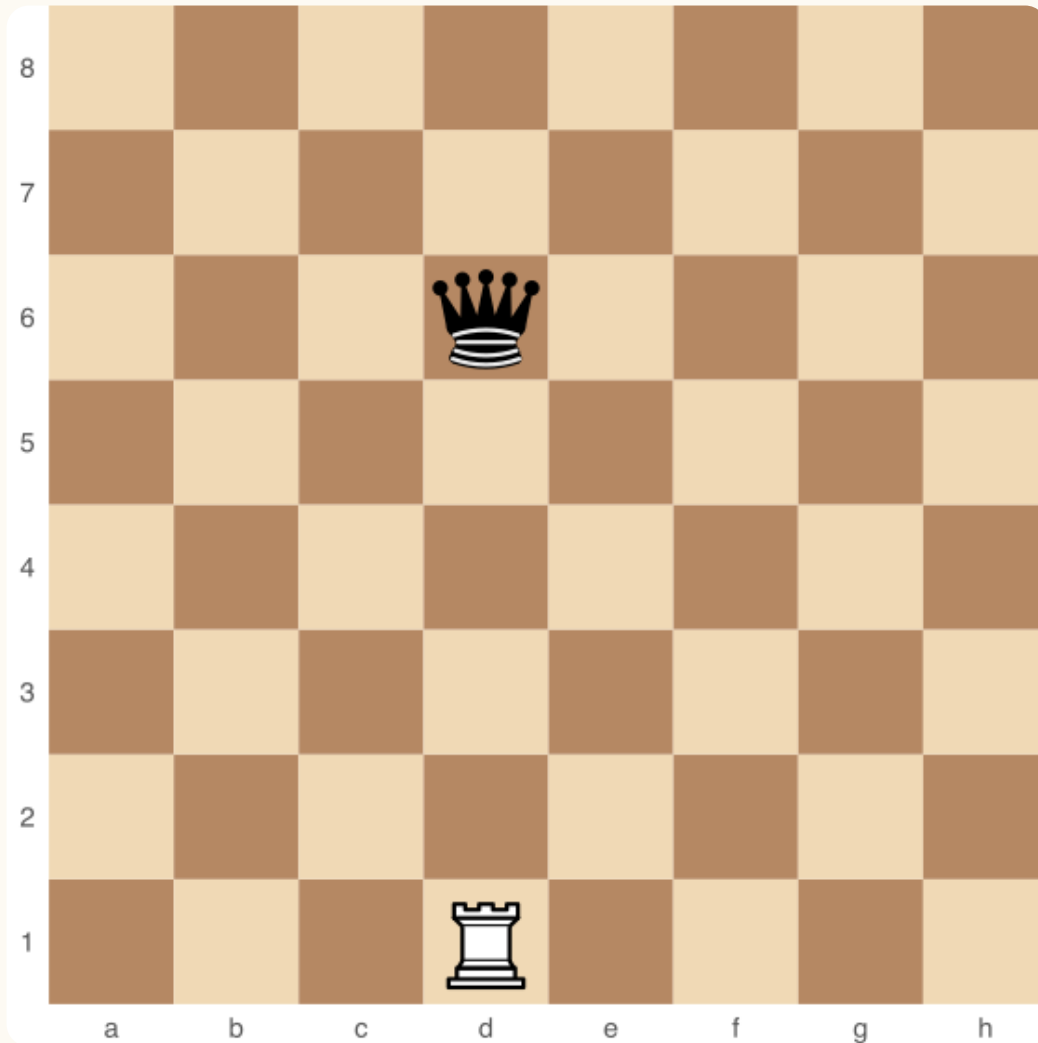
**b5→c7 – the fork.**

Nc7 forks the king on a8 and the queen on e8 – the king must move out of check, and then you take the queen for free. The knight fork is the trickiest tactic to see because knights jump.

## Puzzle 10

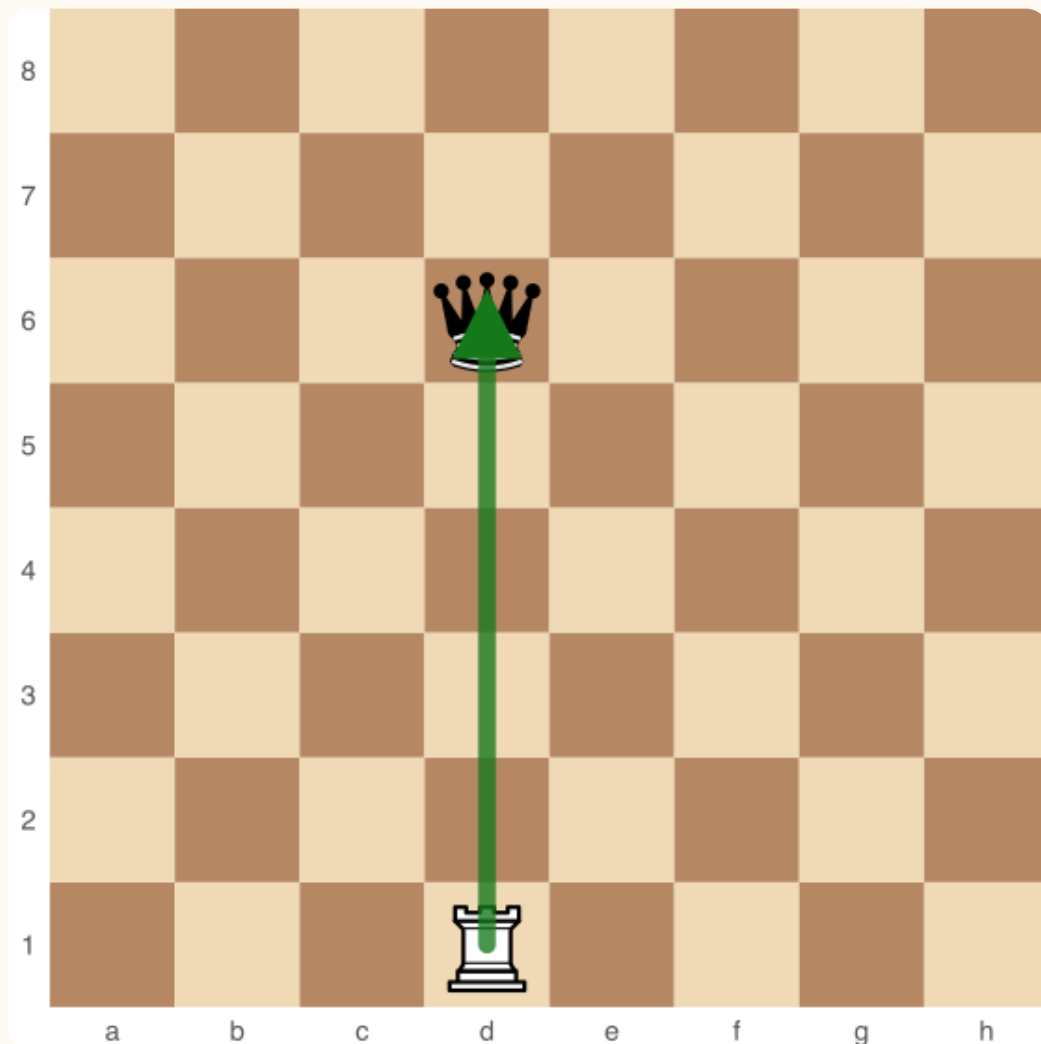
**White to move** – find the one move.

White to move. Black left the queen undefended – win it.



*Hint:* Look straight up the file your rook is standing on.

## Puzzle 10 – Answer



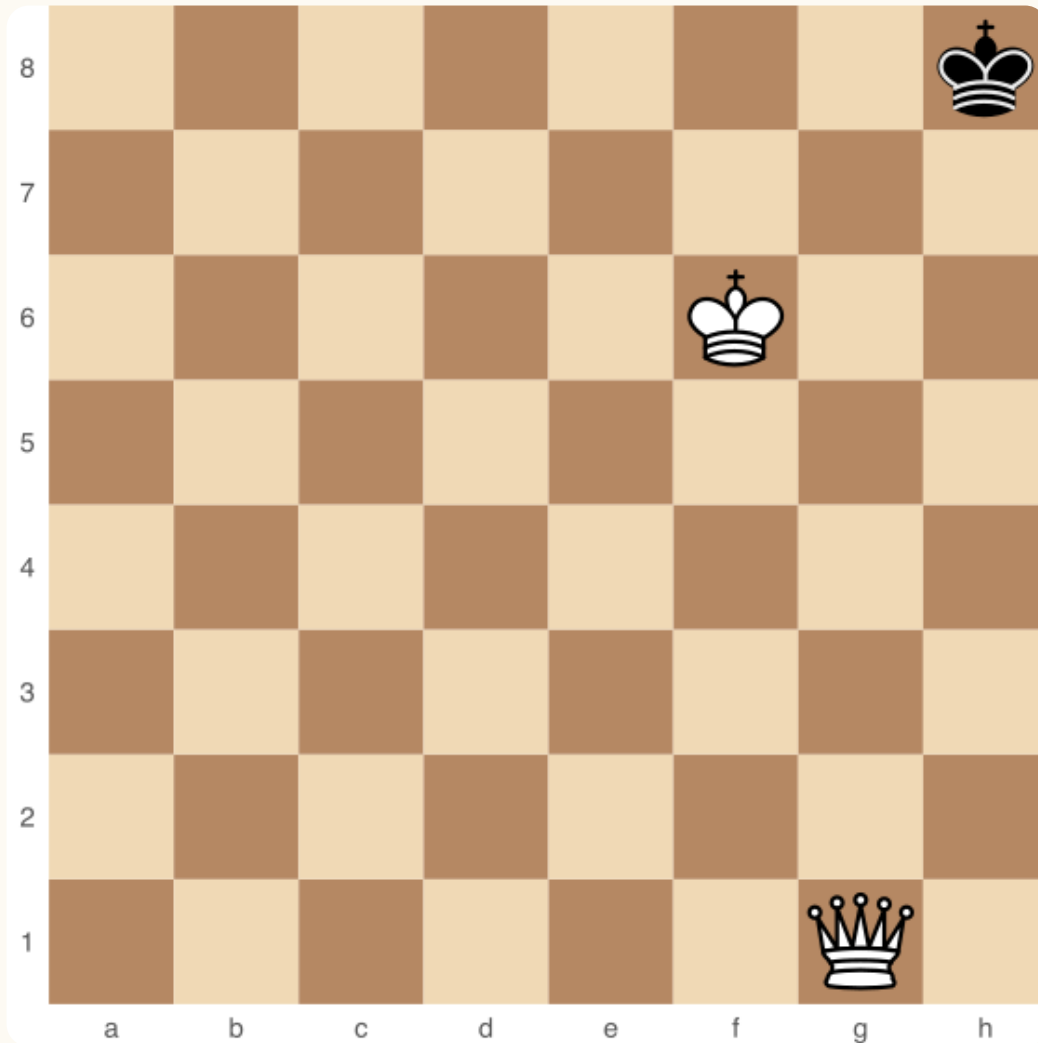
**d1→d6 – win the material.**

Rxd6 wins the queen – it sits on the same open file as your rook with nothing defending it. Before every move, scan for undefended enemy pieces you can just take.

## Puzzle 11

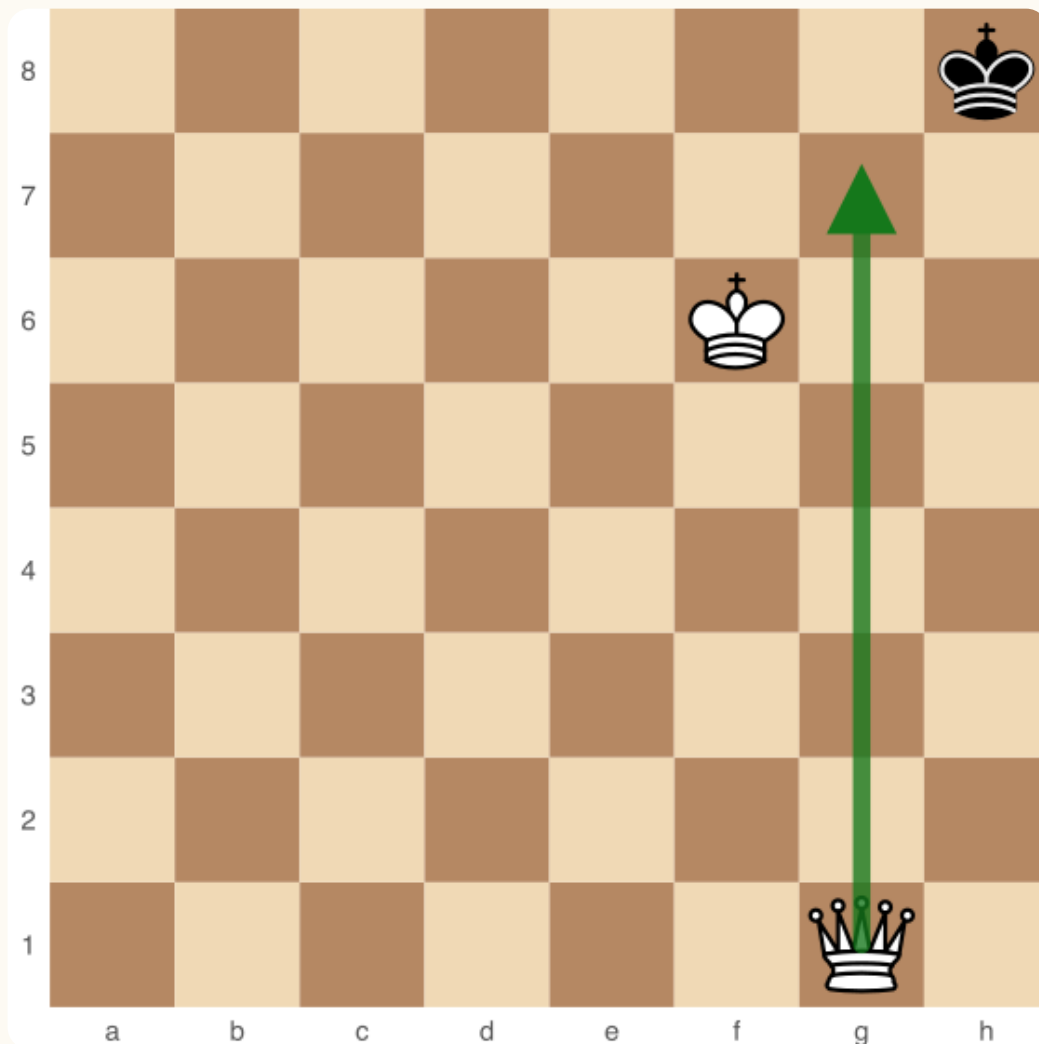
**White to move** – find the one move.

White to move. Your king supports the queen – checkmate in one.



*Hint:* Bring the queen right next to the king. It is safe because your own king guards it.

## Puzzle 11 – Answer



**g1→g7 – checkmate in one.**

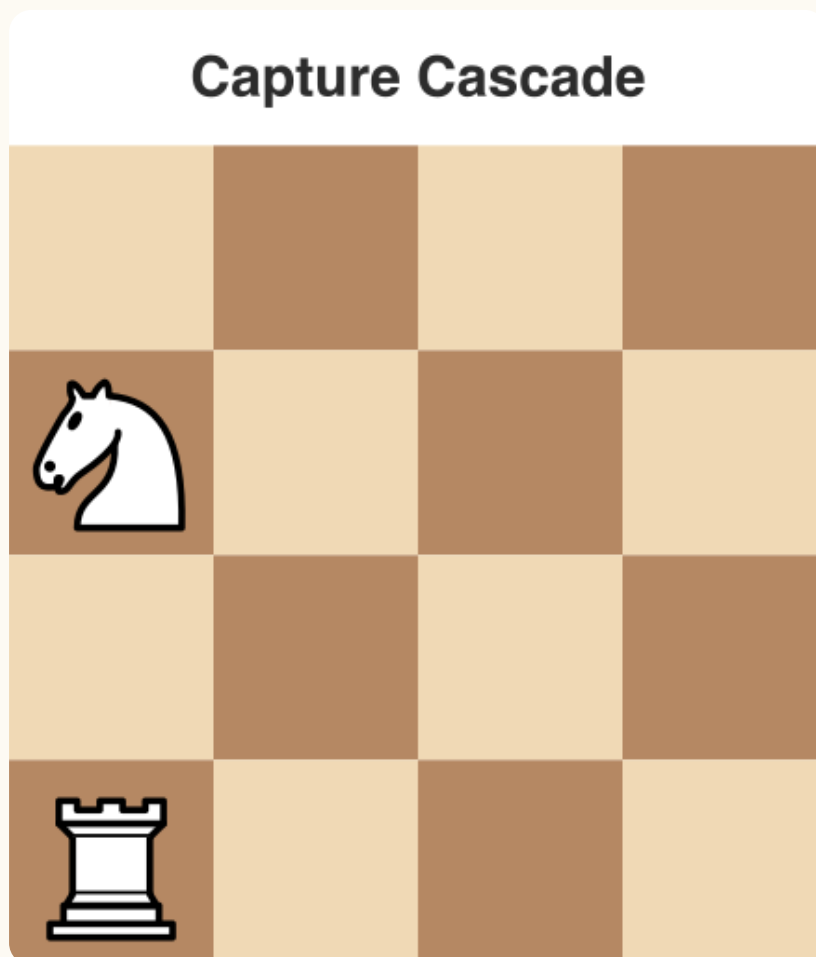
Qg7 is checkmate: the queen attacks the king and covers g8 and h7, and the black king can't capture it because your king on f6 defends g7. A queen needs a friend to mate this close.

## Capture Cascade – Chain Every Capture

### Puzzle 12

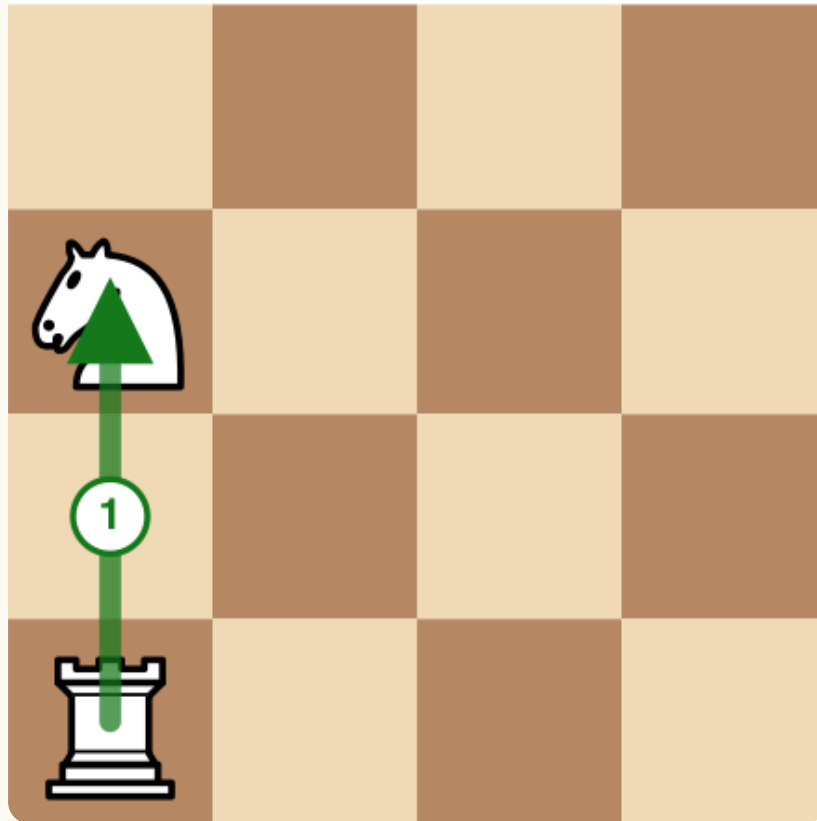
**Capture Cascade** – 2 pieces, 1 capture. Every move **MUST** take a piece; end with one.

Every move must capture. With two pieces, one capture wins – line up the rook.



## Puzzle 12 – Answer

### Capture Cascade



#### 1. R a1 → a3

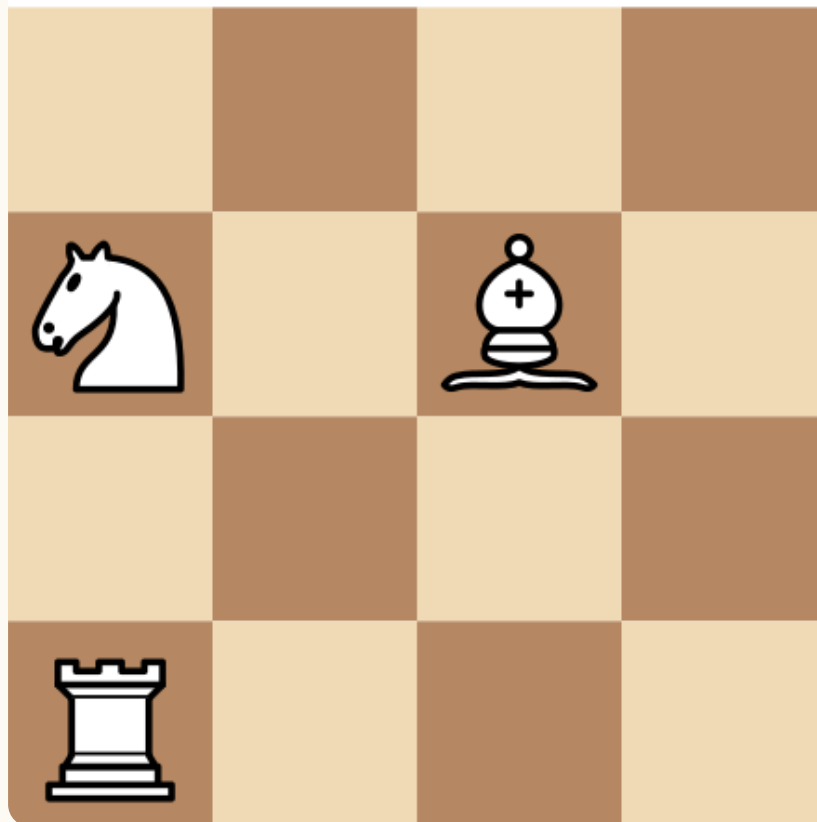
The rook slides up the a-file and captures the knight, leaving one piece. That is the whole idea of Capture Cascade: end with exactly one piece, and every single move must be a capture.

## Puzzle 13

**Capture Cascade** – 3 pieces, 2 captures. Every move **MUST** take a piece; end with one.

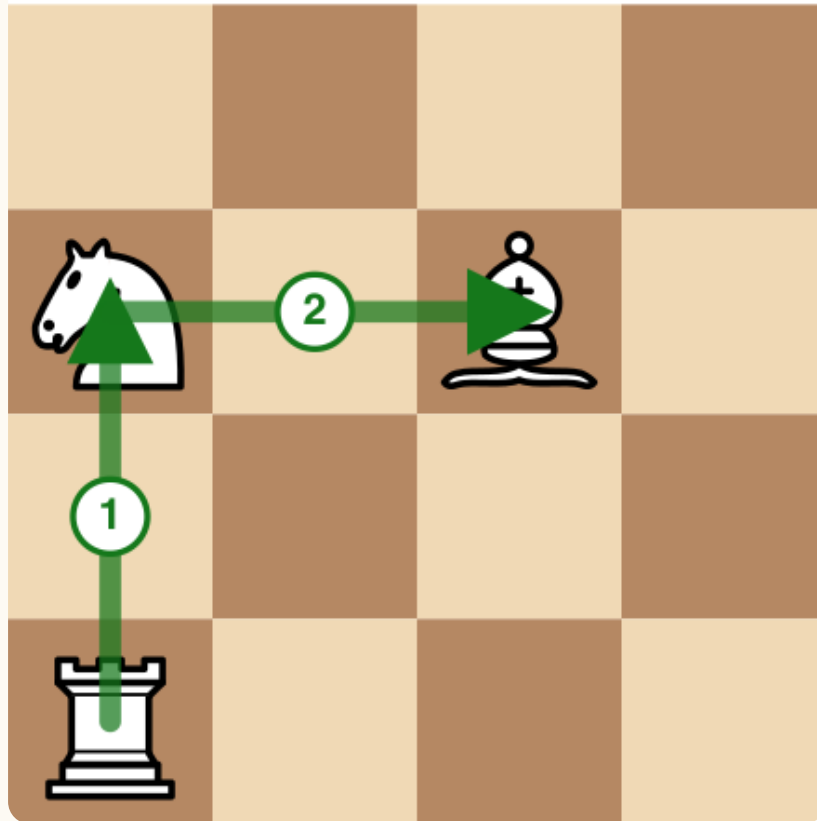
Capture up the file first, then along the rank. Order matters.

### Capture Cascade



## Puzzle 13 – Answer

### Capture Cascade



**1. R a1→a3 2. R a3→c3**

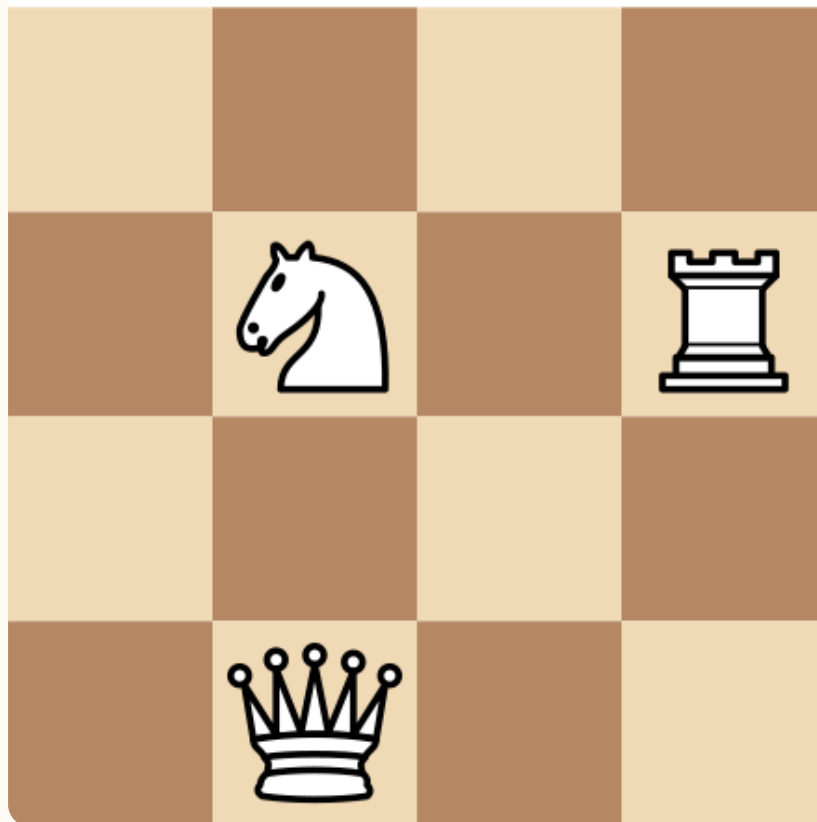
Rook takes the knight (a1→a3), then the rook takes the bishop along the 3rd rank (a3→c3). Plan the whole chain before you touch a piece – that is looking ahead.

## Puzzle 14

**Capture Cascade** – 3 pieces, 2 captures. Every move **MUST** take a piece; end with one.

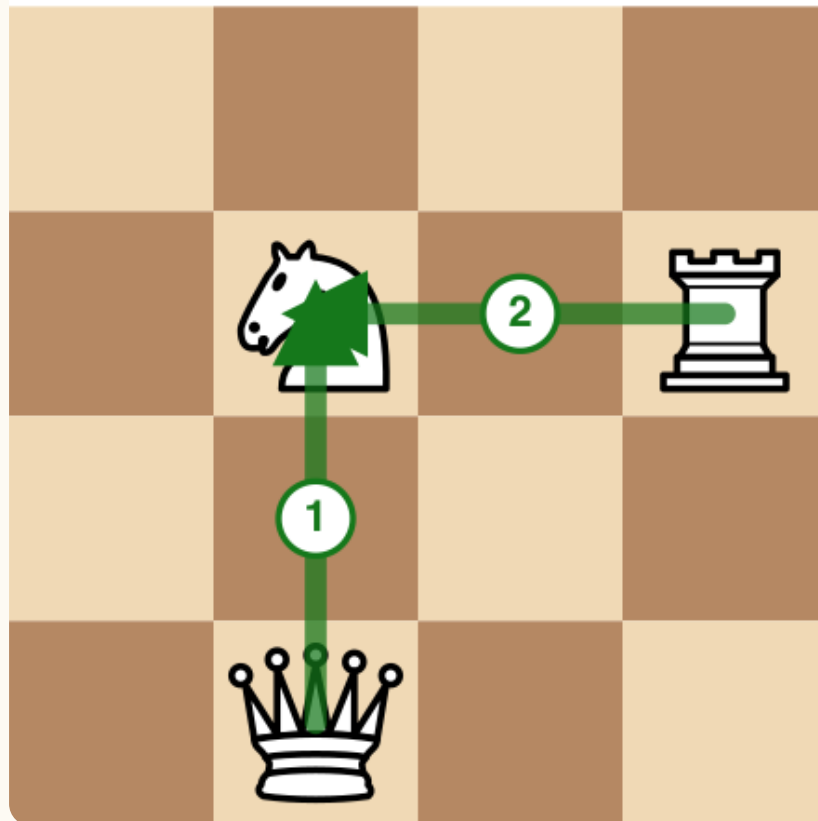
The queen moves like a rook or a bishop. Capture up, then across.

### Capture Cascade



## Puzzle 14 – Answer

### Capture Cascade



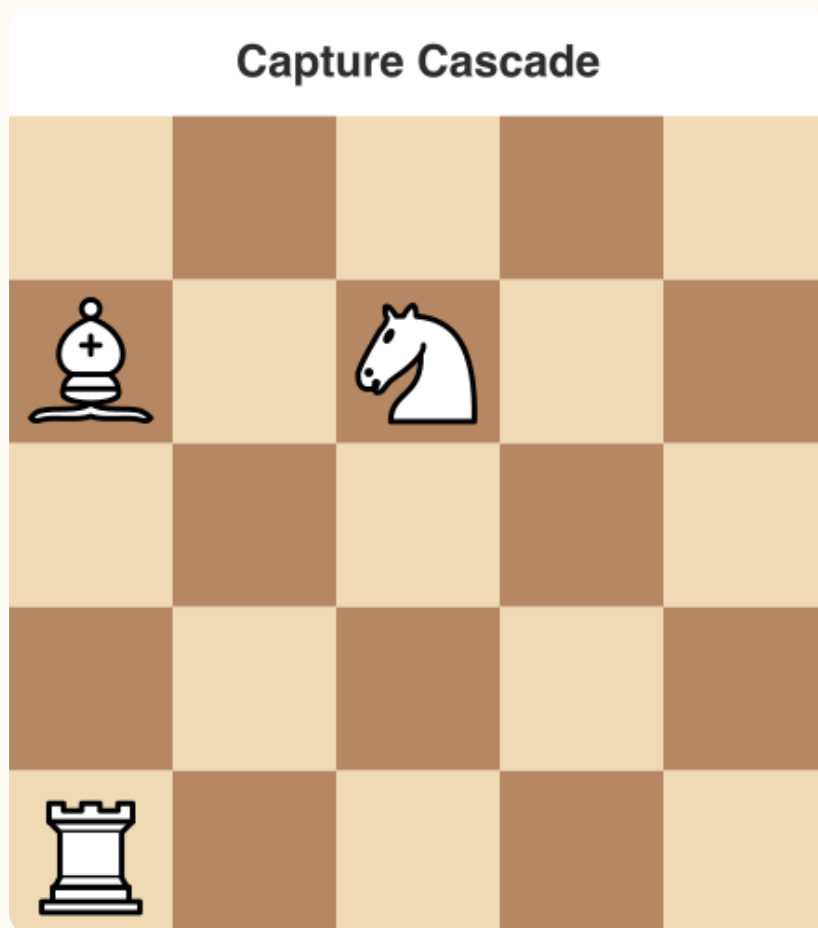
**1. Q b1→b3 2. R d3→b3**

Queen takes the knight up the b-file, then takes the rook across the 3rd rank. The queen's flexibility lets one piece clean up a whole line.

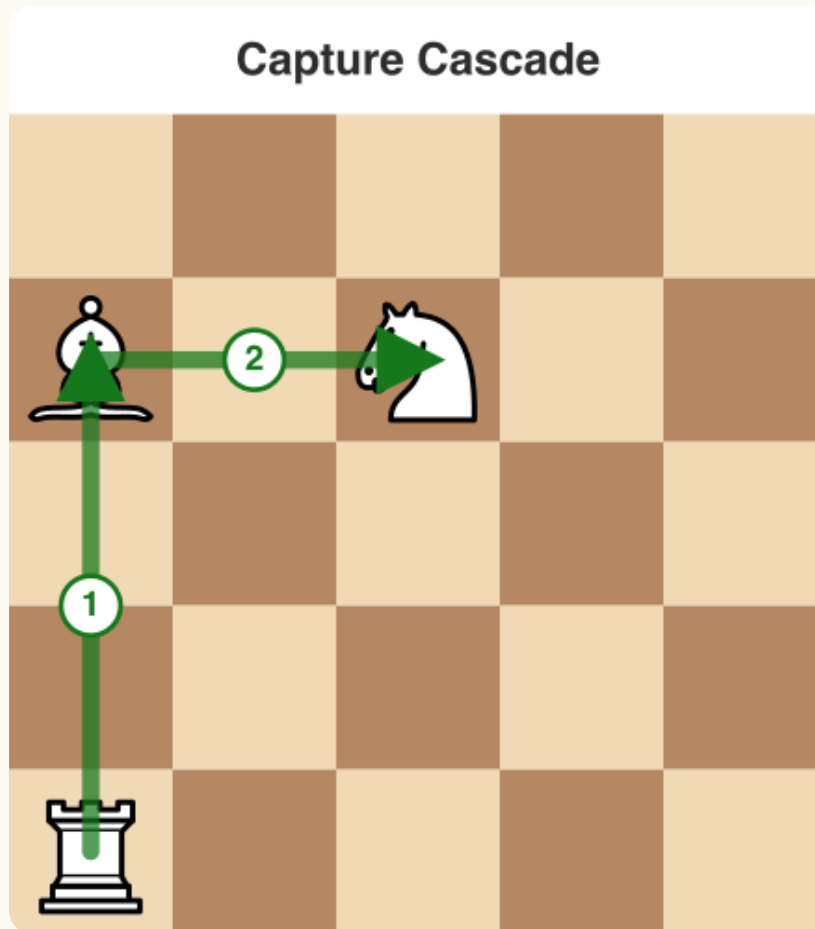
## Puzzle 15

**Capture Cascade** – 3 pieces, 2 captures. Every move **MUST** take a piece; end with one.

Long file capture first, then hop along the rank.



## Puzzle 15 – Answer



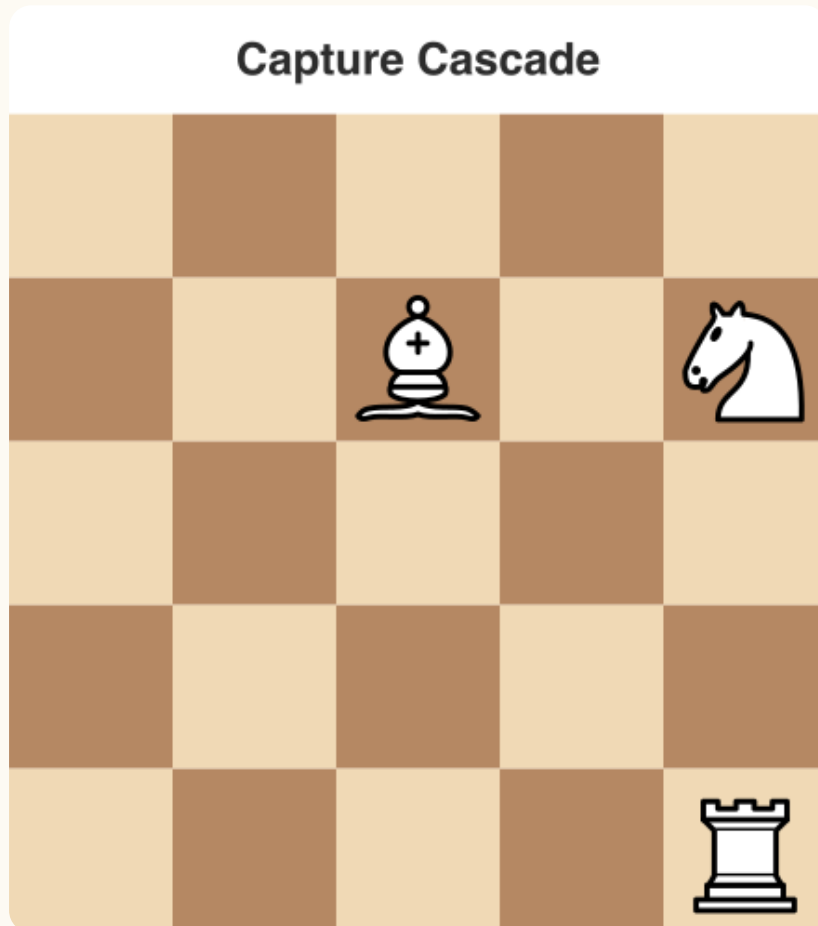
**1. R a1→a4 2. R a4→c4**

Rook captures the bishop up the a-file (a1→a4), then captures the knight along the 4th rank (a4→c4). Reading which capture keeps your options open is the core skill.

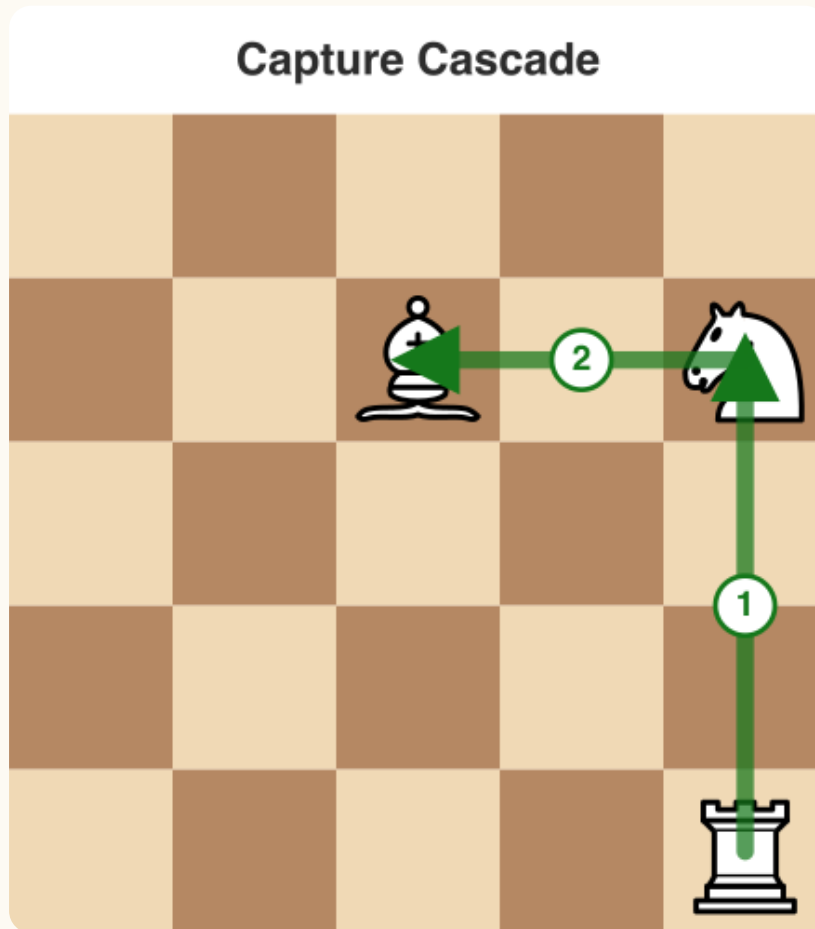
## Puzzle 16

**Capture Cascade** – 3 pieces, 2 captures. Every move **MUST** take a piece; end with one.

Up the e-file, then left along the 4th rank.



## Puzzle 16 – Answer



**1. R e1→e4 2. R e4→c4**

Rook takes the knight (e1→e4), then takes the bishop (e4→c4). Notice there is only one order that works – that is why you plan ahead.

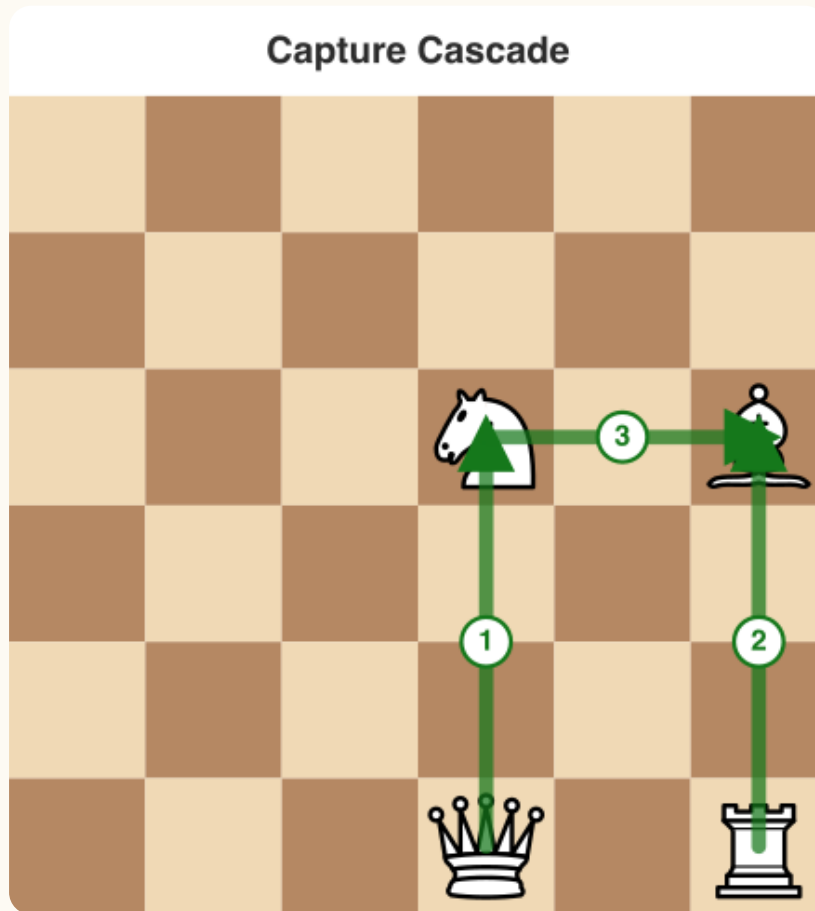
## Puzzle 17

**Capture Cascade** – 4 pieces, 3 captures. Every move **MUST** take a piece; end with one.

The queen can capture in three different directions. Trace the loop: up, across, down.



## Puzzle 17 – Answer



**1. Q d1→d4 2. R f1→f4 3. Q d4→f4**

Queen up to take the knight (d1→d4), across to take the bishop (d4→f4), then down to take the rook (f4→f1). Four pieces, three captures, one survivor – a full lookahead chain.

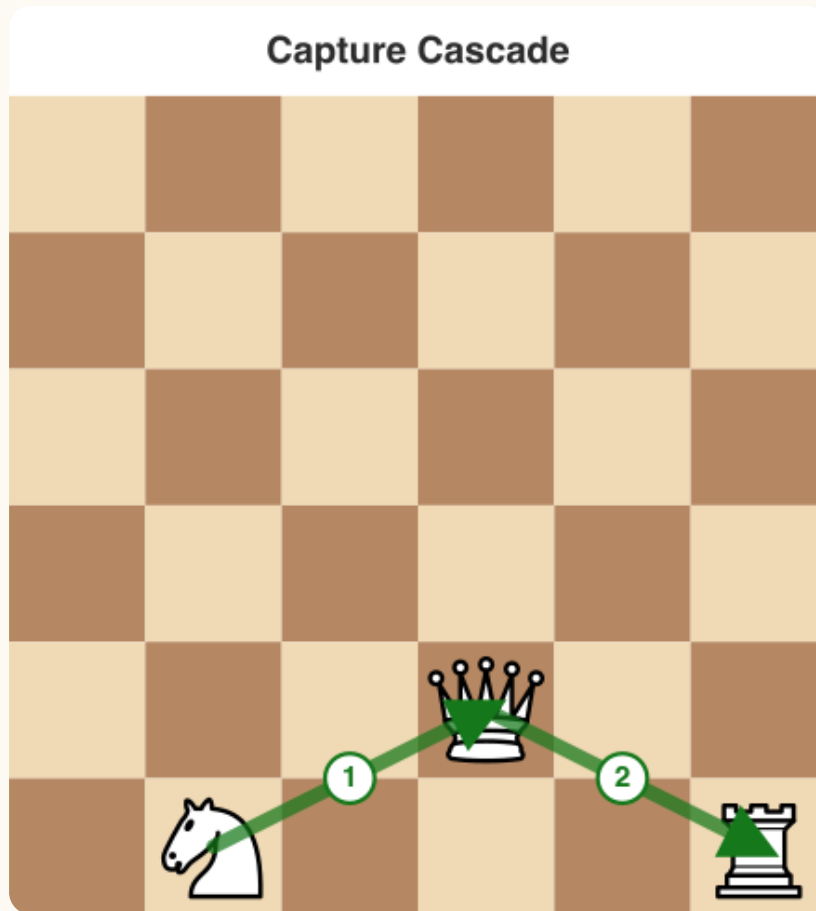
## Puzzle 18

**Capture Cascade** – 3 pieces, 2 captures. Every move **MUST** take a piece; end with one.

Which piece can even start? Only one of them can capture on the first move.



## Puzzle 18 – Answer



**1. N b1→d2 2. N d2→f1**

The knight jumps to take the queen (b1→d2), then jumps again to take the rook (d2→f1). The queen can't reach anything on move one, so the knight **MUST** start – there is exactly one solution. Seeing the second jump before you make the first is lookahead.

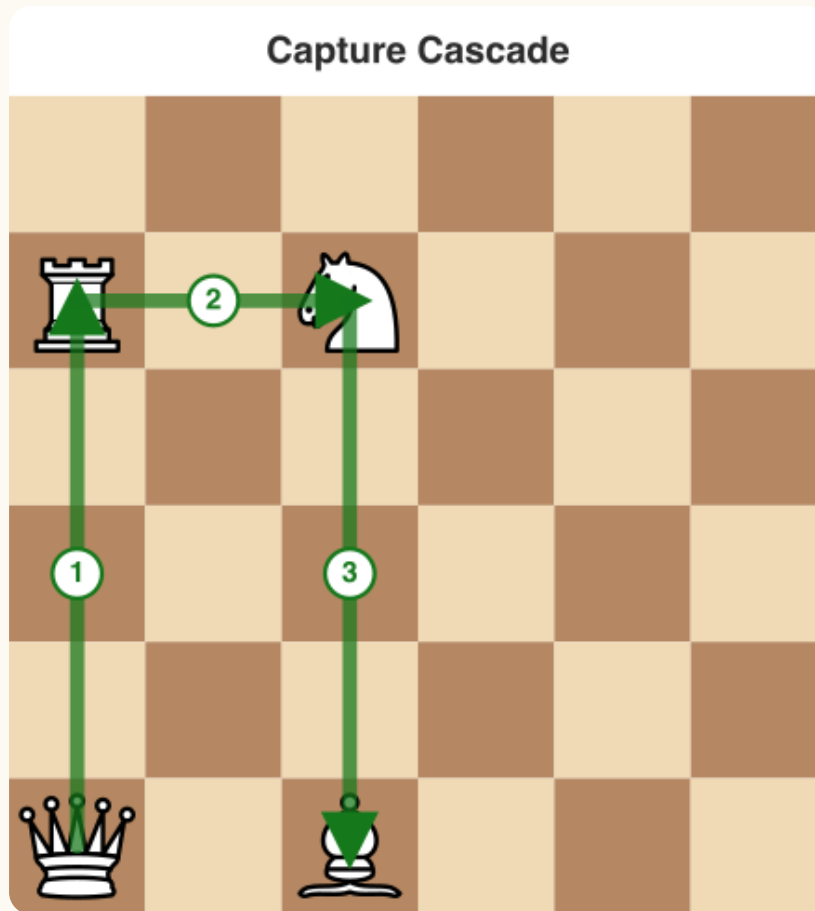
## Puzzle 19

**Capture Cascade** – 4 pieces, 3 captures. Every move **MUST** take a piece; end with one.

The queen makes a rectangle: up, across, down. One corner at a time.



## Puzzle 19 – Answer



**1. Q a1→a5 2. Q a5→c5 3. Q c5→c1**

Queen up the a-file to take the rook (a1→a5), across the 5th rank to take the knight (a5→c5), down the c-file to take the bishop (c5→c1). Four captures fail; three succeed – plan the whole route first.

## Keep playing

Play the live tactics trainer at [\*\*spark-and-anvil.org/play/strategyforge\*\*](https://spark-and-anvil.org/play/strategyforge) and read the cast's strategy stories at [\*\*spark-and-anvil.org/cast/strategyforge\*\*](https://spark-and-anvil.org/cast/strategyforge).