



‘CrownTales’

Big Ideas on the Board

A SPARK & ANVIL STRATEGY BOOK

CrownTales – Big Ideas on the Board

A Spark & Anvil companion book – free to download and share.

Ages 9-14. Game: draughts / checkers.

Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Learn and play free at spark-and-anvil.org.

This volume teaches strategy through the app's cast – 6 big ideas, one per chapter.

Contents

1. Chapter 1 – The Forced Capture
2. Chapter 2 – Two Threats at Once
3. Chapter 3 – The Multi-Jump
4. Chapter 4 – Crown a King
5. Chapter 5 – Opposition and Tempo
6. Chapter 6 – The Safe Draw

*Draughts looks gentle and hides real depth. The other CrownTales books teach the moves; this one teaches how to **play well**, through the cast you know. One big idea per chapter.*

Chapter 1 – The Forced Capture

Leapford lives by the one rule that shapes everything in draughts: **if you can jump, you must**. A capture is not a choice – it is forced. And strong players turn that rule into a weapon.

"I don't just wait for jumps," said Leapford. "I *offer* one – because I know they have to take it, and I know what happens next."

Because a capture is forced, you can place a piece where the opponent *must* jump it – leading them into a trap where your next move captures more than you gave. Giving up one piece to win two is the beating heart of draughts strategy. It only works because the jump is forced.

Say it out loud: *A jump is forced – so I can offer one to spring a trap.*

Your turn: The "Forced Jump" workbook pages show a piece you can offer. What must the opponent take – and what do you win back?

Offering a piece feels wrong at first. Learning to give one to win two is the moment draughts stops being simple.

Chapter 2 – Two Threats at Once

Prong makes the move every game rewards: **two threats at the same time**. In draughts, that means placing a piece so the opponent faces two forced jumps at once, or two traps, and can only escape one. Whatever they do, you come out ahead.

"One threat they wriggle out of," said Prong. "Two, and they are cooked."

The fork in draughts often uses the forced-capture rule from Chapter 1: you set up a position where every legal jump they are forced to make loses material. They have no good option – that is a fork.

Say it out loud: *Two threats at once – every answer loses.*

Your turn: The "Two Threats" pages ask you to find the move that leaves the opponent no safe jump.

A double threat is the sweetest move in draughts. Train your eye to spot the position where all their forced jumps lose.

Chapter 3 – The Multi-Jump

Skipjack's specialty is the **chain**: a single move that leaps over several enemy pieces one after another, capturing them all in one turn. A man that reaches the right square can zig-zag across the board, clearing three or four pieces at once.

"One jump is nice," Skipjack laughed. "Four in a row is a party."

Setting up a multi-jump takes planning – you line the enemy pieces up (often by *forcing* them there, Chapter 1) so that one jump sweeps the lot. Seeing a multi-jump two moves before it happens is a real skill, and it wins games in a single turn.

Say it out loud: *Line them up, then sweep the whole chain in one jump.*

Your turn: The "Chain" pages show a position with a hidden multi-jump. Find the square you jump to that keeps capturing.

Multi-jumps hide in plain sight. The more you look for the chain, the more often you find it.

Chapter 4 – Crown a King

Kingsley knows the goal that changes a game: get a man to the **far row** and it is crowned a **king**, free to move and jump *both* forwards and backwards. A king is worth far more than an ordinary man – it controls twice the board.

"Push a man home and crown it," said Kingsley, "and suddenly you have the strongest piece on the board." Volant adds the grandest version, the long-range flying king of the big 10x10 game, sweeping whole diagonals.

So playing well means racing a man toward promotion while blocking the opponent's – the player who crowns the first king usually takes control. But do not chase a king so hard that you leave the rest of your pieces in a trap.

Say it out loud: *Get a man to the far row – a king rules twice the board.*

Your turn: The "Crowning" pages show a man near the back row. Find the safe path to promotion – and spot the trap that stops the opponent's king.

The first king often decides the game. Learning to race for it safely is a big step up in skill.

Chapter 5 – Opposition and Tempo

Regina rules the endgame with an idea called **opposition** – controlling *who is forced to move*. When only a few pieces remain, the player who has to move often has to step into a losing square. Regina counts the moves so that the *opponent* is the one squeezed.

"I do not need more pieces than you," said Regina. "I need you to be the one who must move."

This is **tempo** – using your moves so that the opponent runs out of safe ones first. It is quiet, careful counting, and it turns equal-looking endings into wins.

Say it out loud: *Control who must move – opposition wins the endgame.*

Your turn: The "Opposition" pages show a small endgame. Find the move that leaves the opponent forced to step into a loss.

Opposition feels like counting a puzzle, and it is. Getting it right is how close draughts endgames are won.

Chapter 6 – The Safe Draw

Bastian holds the **double-corner fortress** – the safe squares in the corner where a lone king can dance forever, never trapped. Sometimes a game is lost on material but *not* lost on the board: if you can reach the double corner and hold it, a losing-looking game becomes a **draw**.

"Not every game can be won," said Bastian. "But a game you cannot win, you can still refuse to lose."

Knowing the drawing fortresses is a real strategy: when you are behind, steer for the safe corner; when you are ahead, know that you must break the fortress to convert your win. A draw saved is half a point earned.

Say it out loud: *Behind on the board? Steer for the safe corner and hold the draw.*

Everything in this book meets here: use the forced capture (Chapter 1), fork with double threats (Chapter 2), sweep with multi-jumps (Chapter 3), crown the first king (Chapter 4), win the endgame with opposition (Chapter 5) – and when the game turns against you, hold the safe draw.

Your turn: The "Fortress" pages show a losing-looking ending. Find the move that reaches the safe corner and holds.

Saving a draw from a lost position is one of the most satisfying skills in draughts. It takes calm counting – exactly what getting good feels like.

Keep playing at spark-and-anvil.org – the trainer runs these ideas as live positions, with the cast beside you.

Keep playing

- Play every idea in this book as a live puzzle: <https://sparkanvil.org/play/crowntales>
- Meet the cast + read their chapter stories: <https://sparkanvil.org/cast/crowntales>
- Find more free companion books: <https://sparkanvil.org/books>

(Scan the QR codes on the printed edition, or type the links above.)