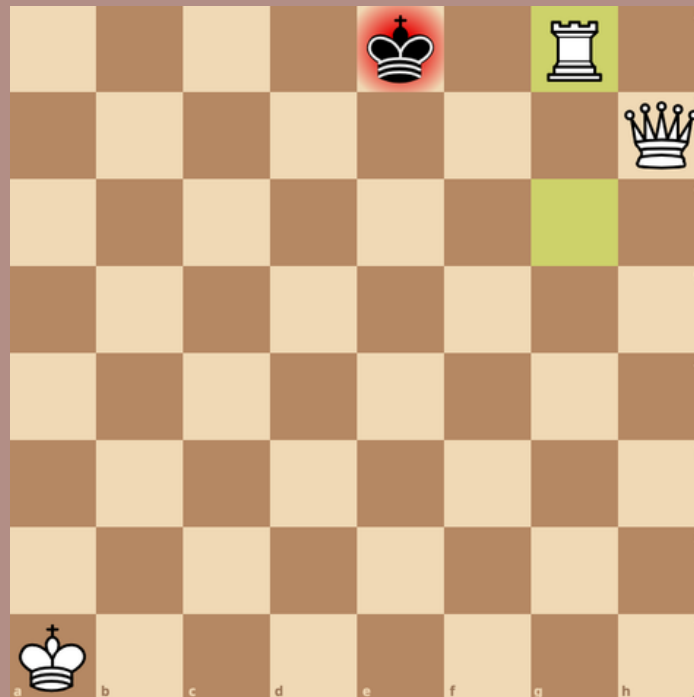


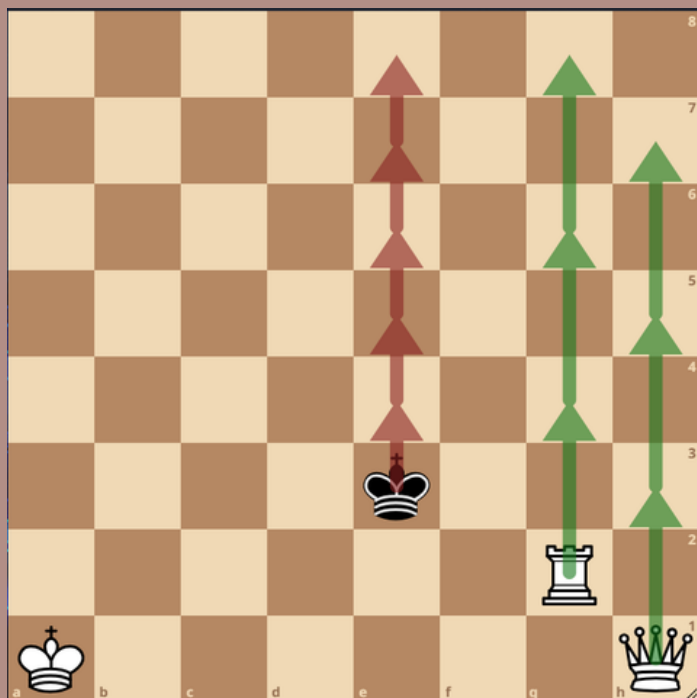
Ladder Mate

Authored by
Temporary_Coffee

Knowing how to convert winning positions into checkmates is crucial. The ladder mate is one of the easiest and most fundamental checkmates.



The ladder mate is a checkmate pattern where the enemy king is slowly pushed to the edge of the board with an alternating queen-rook sequence (or any combination of rook/queen). It is called ladder mate due to its alternating nature. Below is an example of the ladder mate's structure.



Don't be intimidated by this! The ladder mate is simple once you break down this structure. Notice the alternating nature of the queen and rook.

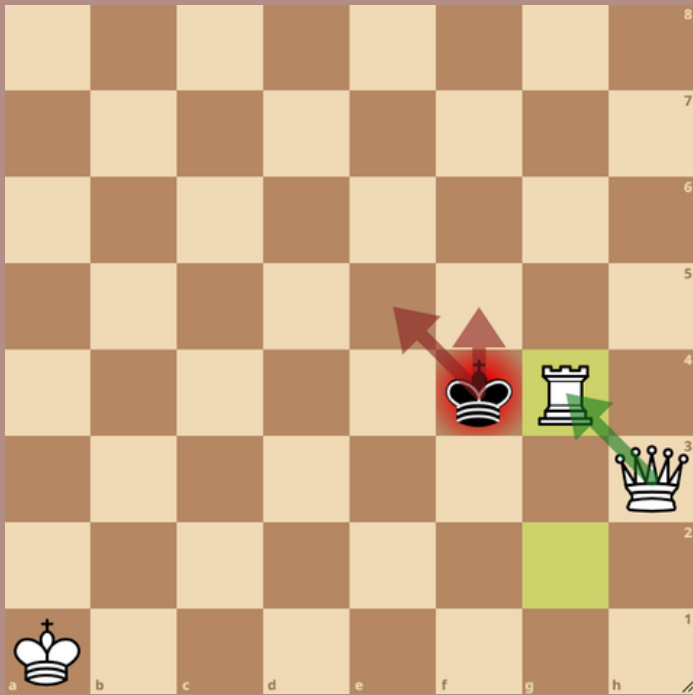
1. Qh3+ ...



This is the first “step” of the ladder. Black's king is forced backwards.

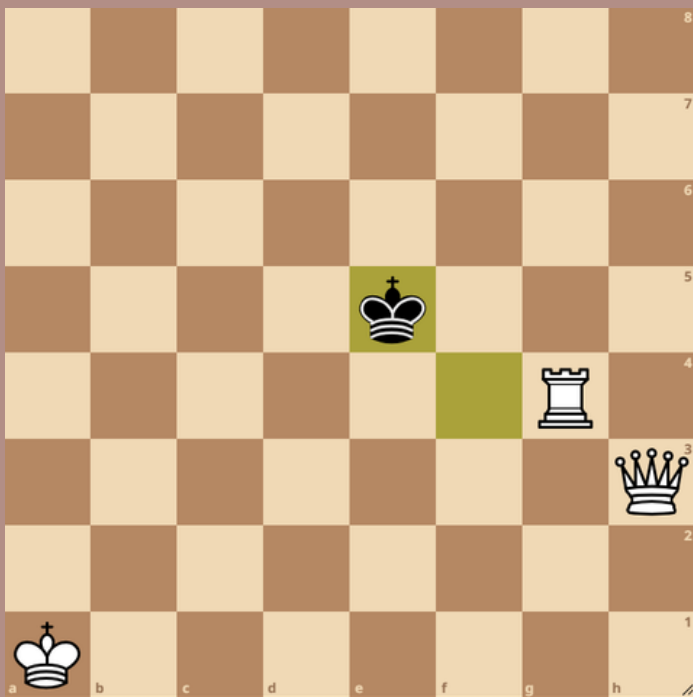
1. ... Kf4

2. Rg4+ ...



Black's king can play any move besides 1. ... Kf4, it doesn't matter. White's queen defends the rook, repeating the alternating pattern.

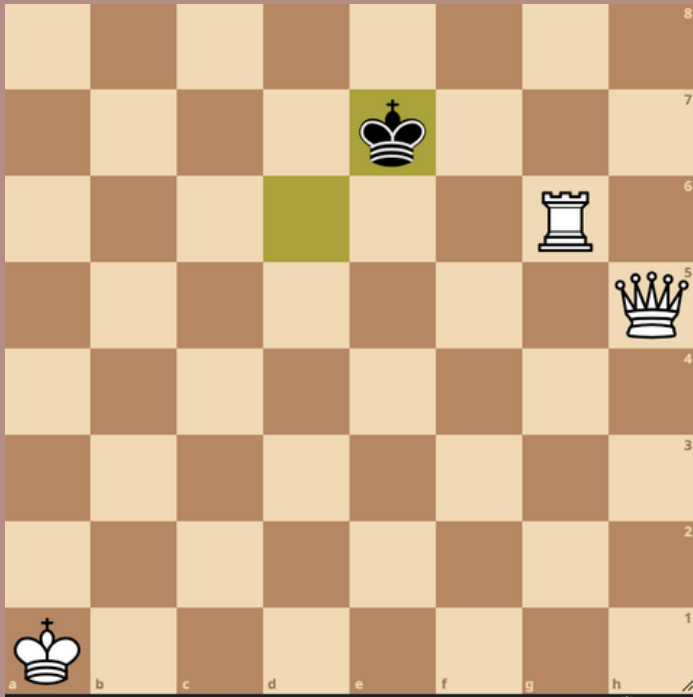
2. ... Ke5



Notice this position is exactly the same as the starting position, except all the pieces are shifted up the board. White only has to repeat this pattern to checkmate black's king.

3. Qh5+ Kd6

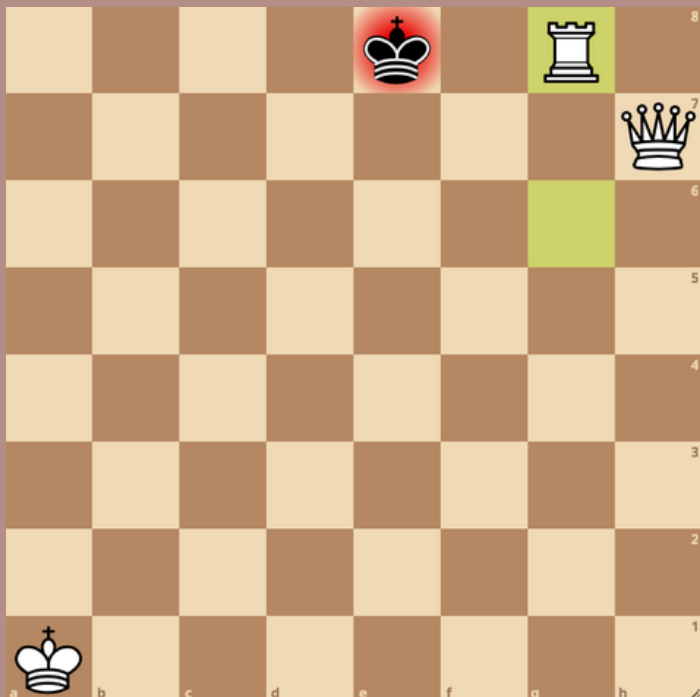
4. Rg6 Ke7



Checkmate is near.

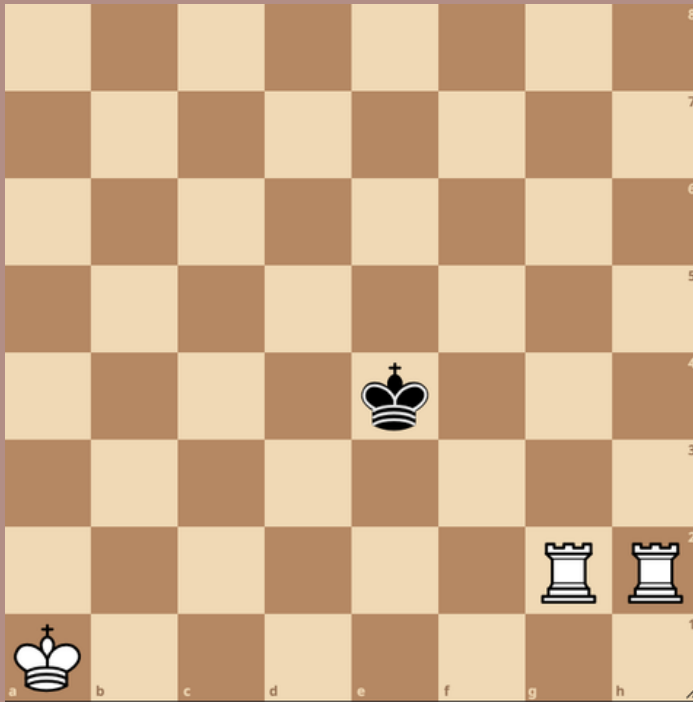
5. Qh7+ Ke8

6. Rg8#



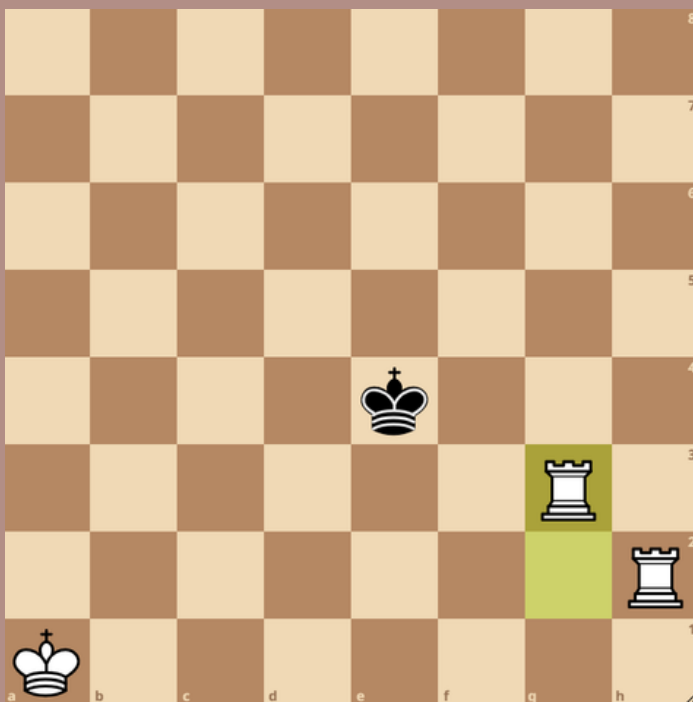
This is the essence of the ladder mate. White's pieces take turns to slowly force black's king to the edge of the board.

As stated before, the ladder can be performed with any combination of queen and rook. Below are examples of rook + rook and queen + queen.



Rook + Rook. Same idea as queen + rook. The only difference is that the rooks don't defend each other in the ladder, so some extra movement is necessary.

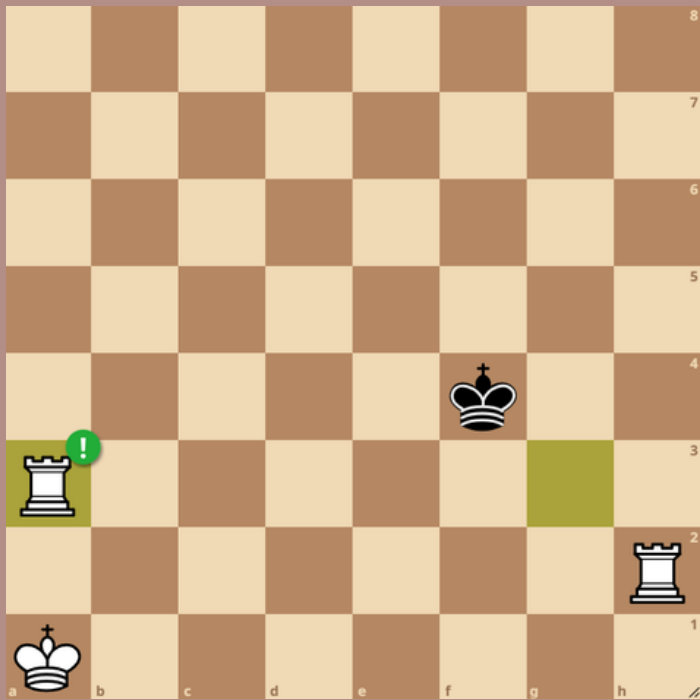
1. Rg3 ...



At first, this might seem like a strange move. However, remember that the ladder is performed with alternating pieces, thus white's pieces must be slightly staggered.

1. ... Kf4

2. Ra3 ...

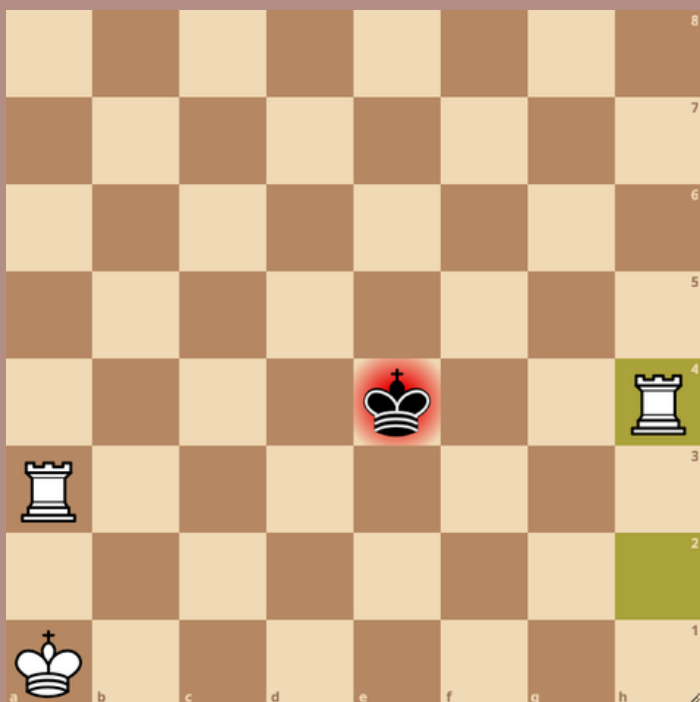


This again may seem strange, but if white were to continue the ladder and play 2. Rh4 instead, white's rook on g3 would be undefended, and black could simply take it with 2. ... Kxg3. White must play Ra3 to create space between the rooks and the king, since the rooks do not

defend each other. It should also be noted that white could play Rb3 instead, but that is a slightly inferior move since it doesn't create as much space as Ra3 does.

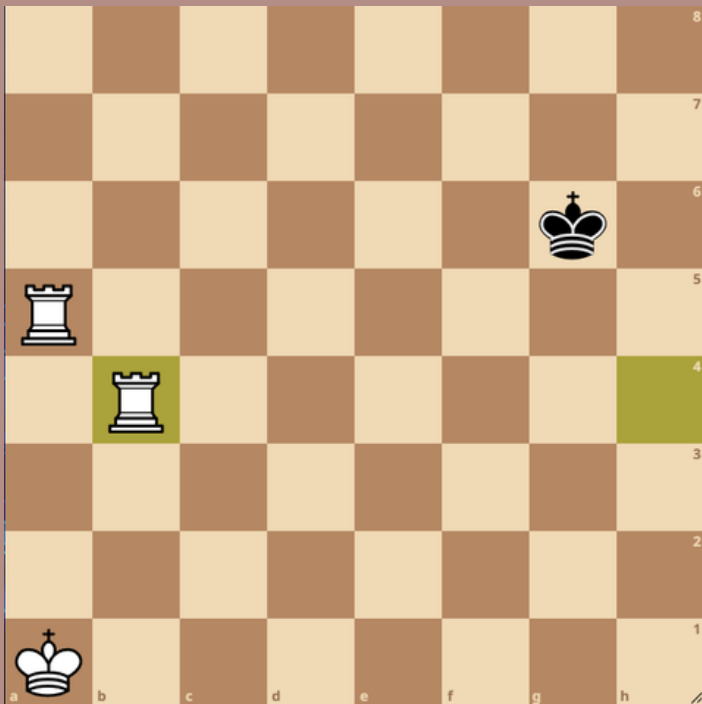
2. ... Ke4

3. Rh4+ ...



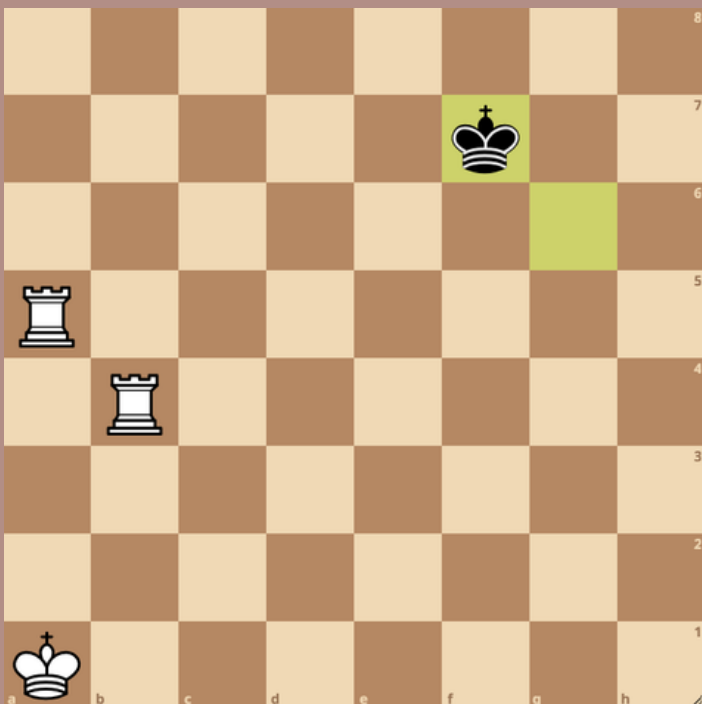
Notice that white's rooks are not next to each other. That is okay. The ladder mate doesn't dictate a width for the ladder used. It only needs to have alternating rungs.

3. ... Kf5
4. Ra5 Kg6
5. Rb4 ...



White must reposition the rook to create space between the king and rook.

5. ... Kf7

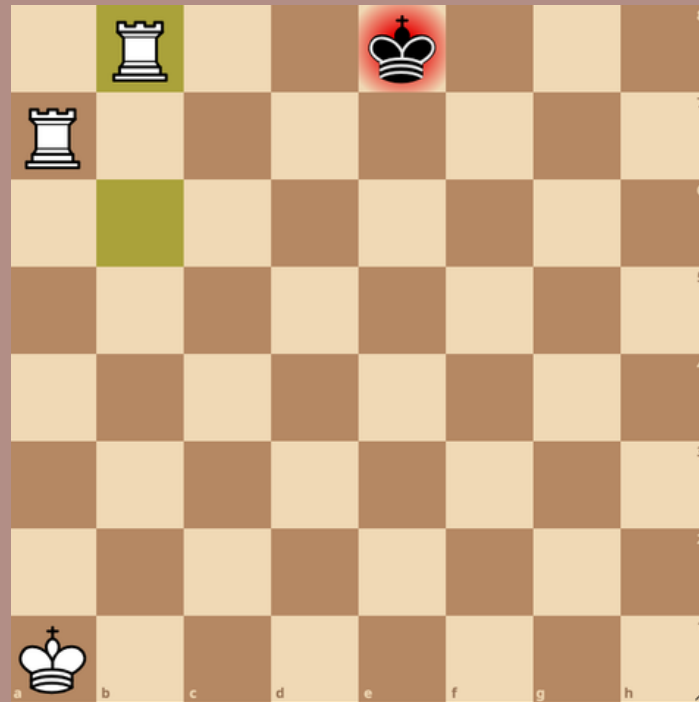


White may be tempted to play Rb7+, but remember the ladder is not about checks either. It only needs an alternating pattern. White should continue as if nothing has changed.

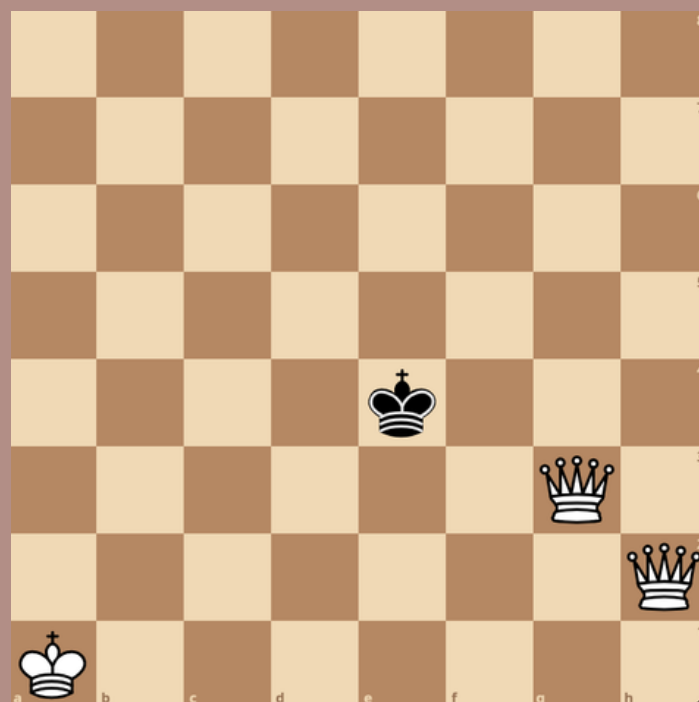
6. Rb6 Ke7

7. Ra7+ Ke8

8. Rb8#



Finally, let's do the ladder with Queen + Queen. The only thing that is different about this position is the increased chance to accidentally stalemate your opponent. Other than that, it is the same. Try this one on your own! The solution is on the next page.



(Qhh4 is not a typo!
To discover why, see
the lesson about
chess notation.)

1. Qhh4+ Kf5
2. Qgg5+ Ke6
3. Qhh6+ Kf7
4. Qgg7+ Ke8
5. Qhh8#

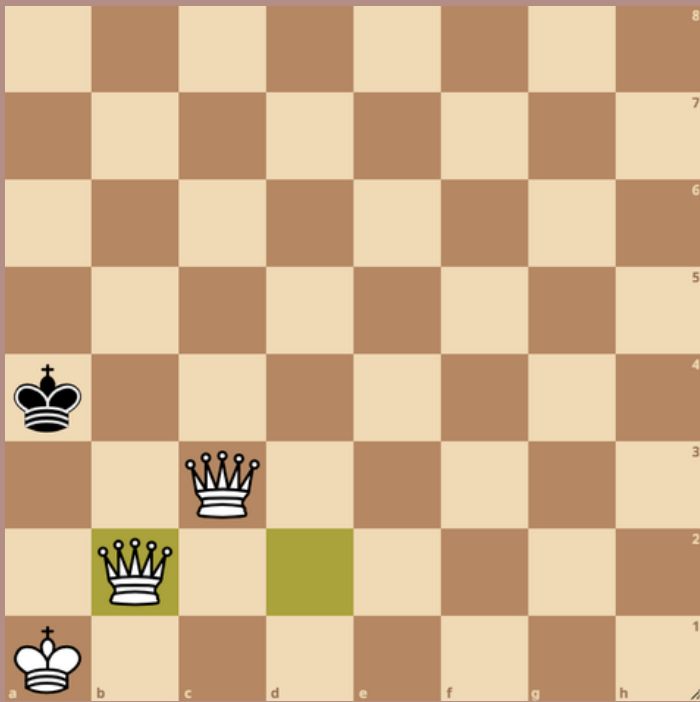
Note that the ladder mate can also be performed laterally! Below is an example of how to perform a lateral ladder mate.

1. Qhf2 ...



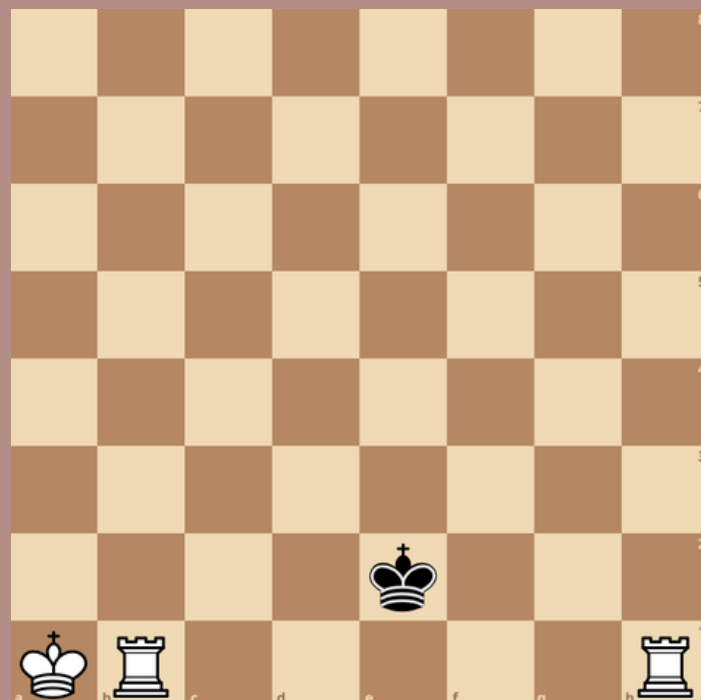
This is what a lateral ladder looks like.

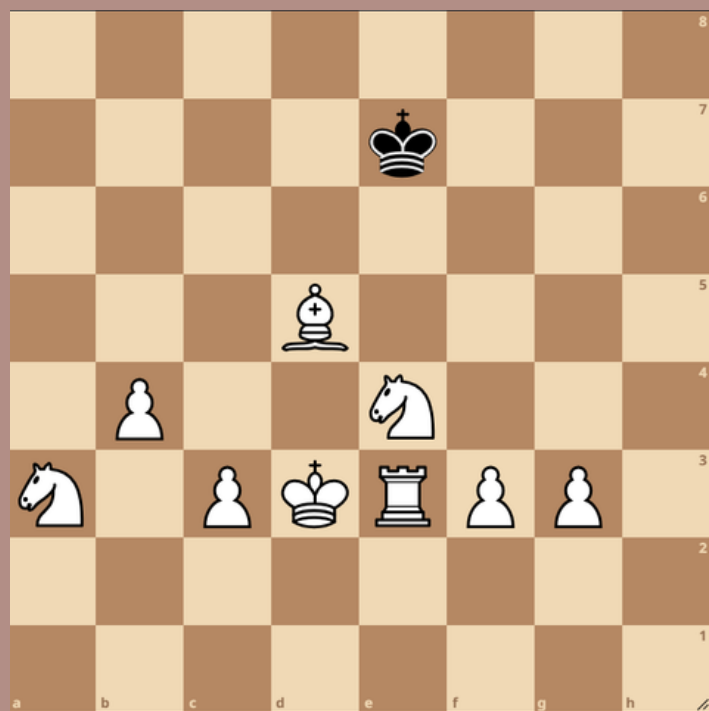
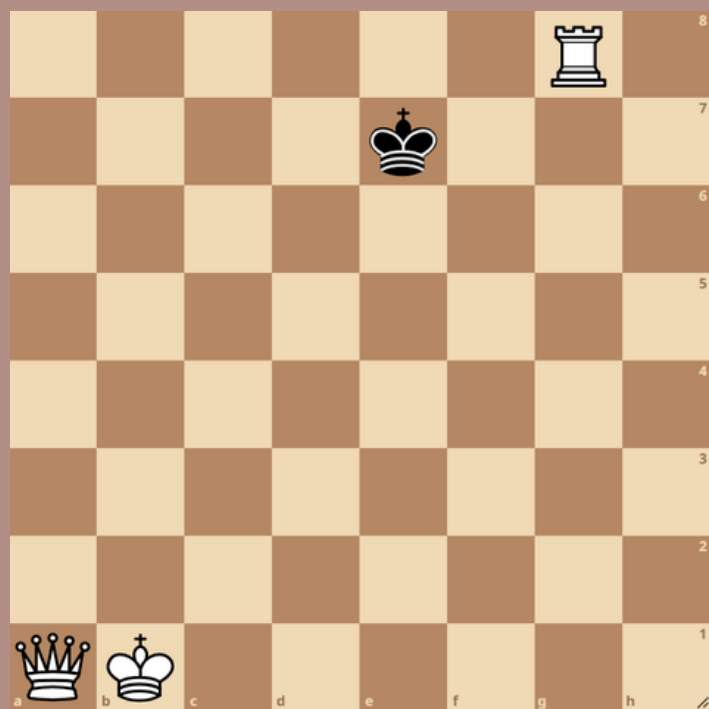
1. ... Kd5
2. Qge3 Kc4
3. Qfd2 Kb5
4. Qec3 Ka4
5. Qa2+ Kb5
6. Qab2+ Ka4
7. Qca3#



Do not fall for the stalemate trap of 5. Qdb2.

This is the idea of the ladder mate! Note that while the ladder isn't usually the most move-efficient way of checkmating, it is by far the easiest and can be performed with seconds on the clock. Computers can usually find a checkmate sequence that is a couple moves shorter, but humans are obviously not computers. Even chess grandmasters use the ladder mate. Try the ladder mate for yourself! Below are example positions, with their solutions afterwards.





Puzzle 1

1. Rb2+ Kd3
2. Rh3+ Kc4
3. Rg2 Kd5
4. Rg4 Ke5
5. Rh5+ Kf6
6. Ra4 Kg6
7. Rb5 Kf6
8. Ra6+ Ke7
9. Rb7+ Kd8
10. Ra8#

Puzzle 2

1. Rg6 Kf7
2. Qg7+ Ke8
3. Rf6 Kd8
4. Rf8#

**Rg6 cuts off
black's king's
space.**

Puzzle 3

1. Rb2+ Kd3
2. Rh3+ Kc4
3. Rg2 Kd5
4. Rg4 Ke5
5. Rh5+ Kf6
6. Ra4 Kg6
7. Rb5 Kf6
8. Ra6+ Ke7
9. Rb7+ Kd8
10. Ra8#

**Nd2+ clears
the pieces to
set up the
ladder.**

Next time you find yourself with with a spare rook and queen, try out the ladder mate! It's simple, easy, and absolutely necessary to become a better chess player.