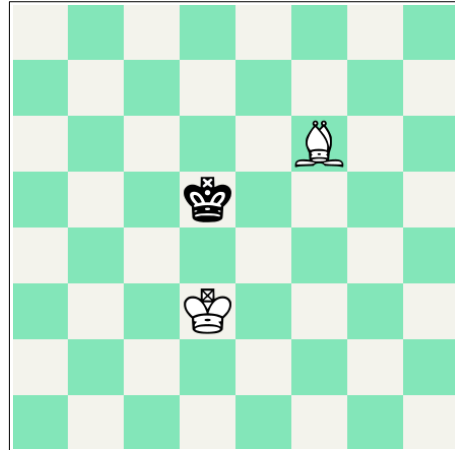


# When Games are Drawn

In chess, games that do not end with one side or the other winning the game are said to be drawn, or end in draws. There are many reasons a game ends in a draw. In this paper, we'll go over some of those reasons.

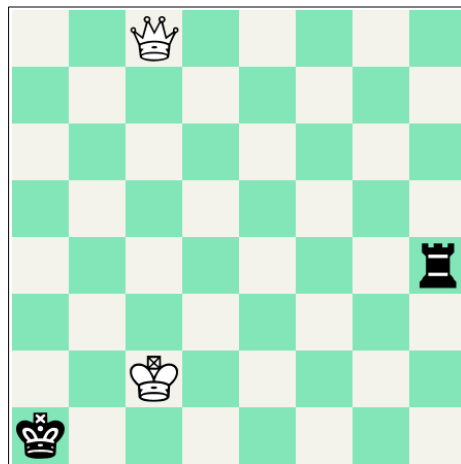
## ***Lack of Mating Material***

The first reason for a draw is lack of checkmating material. If every pawn is exchanged and the game is reduced to two kings, the game is a draw. Even with an extra knight or bishop it's impossible for the stronger side to win. In the position at right, all Black has to do is keep his king on white squares and White cannot win. Even if Black's king should stray to the black squares, White can do no better than check with the bishop. White's king will always have a flight square. A king and a knight cannot win against a lone king; for that matter, even a king and two knights cannot win as the knights stalemate the very move before checkmate. To win without pawns you need a king and a rook; or a king, bishop, and knight, or a king and two bishops.



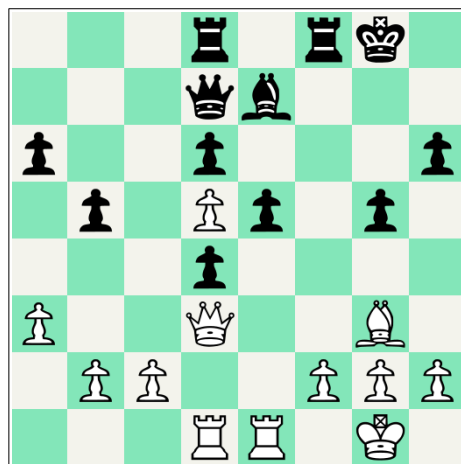
## ***Stalemate***

Another reason for a draw is stalemate. Stalemate occurs when one's king is NOT in check but that player has no legal move. In the position at right, it looks hopeless for Black with a rook against a queen but by playing ...Rc4+! Black forces Qxc4 and now, Black's king is not in check but he has no legal moves. The result is stalemate and the game is a draw.



## ***Perpetual Check (threefold repetition)***

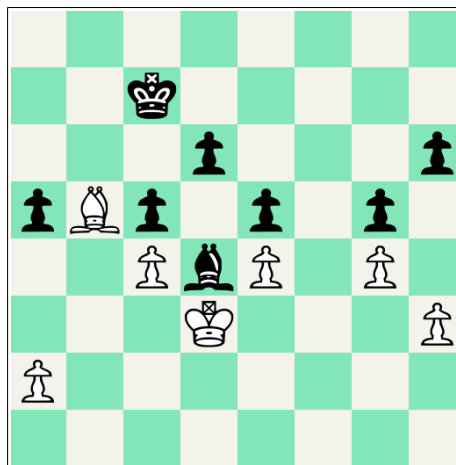
If one player can continuously check the other player and the other player cannot escape the checks, that is known as "perpetual check" and the game is a draw. In the position at right from one of my games, I was not too happy with my position after 22...Qd7. But because Black's bishop blocks his queen from reaching the kingside, I found a draw with 23. Qg6+! Kh8 24. Qxh6+ Kg8 25. Qg6+ etc. As Black cannot escape the checks, the game is drawn.



The perpetual check is a special case of a draw by threefold-repetition: if the same position occurs with the same side to move each time, a player may claim a draw by threefold repetition. Note that this doesn't have to be in sequence. The same position can occur at any point in the game!

### **Players agree to a draw**

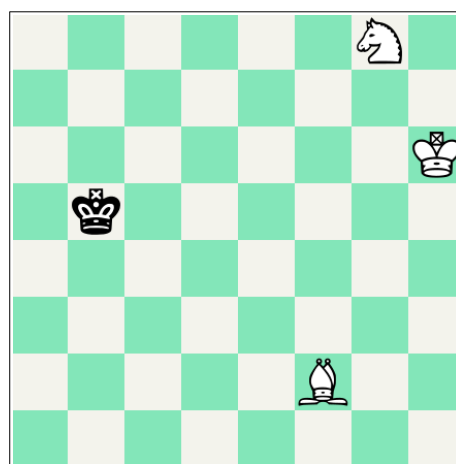
Another reason for a draw is that neither side can make any progress so the players agree to a draw. In the position shown from one of my games, after 42. a4 neither side can make any progress because the bishops travel on opposite colors and the pawns are blocked. Unless one of the kings can break through to the other side, the game is usually drawn. Players can also agree to draws for other reasons, but typically games should be played out if possible.



### **50-Move Rule**

If no pieces are captured nor pawns advanced in 50 moves, either player may claim a draw. For example, although White [can win](#) with a bishop and knight against a lone king, the mate is difficult and sometimes even strong players are unable to deliver mate within 50 moves.

After 75 moves without a capture or pawn advance the game must be declared a draw.

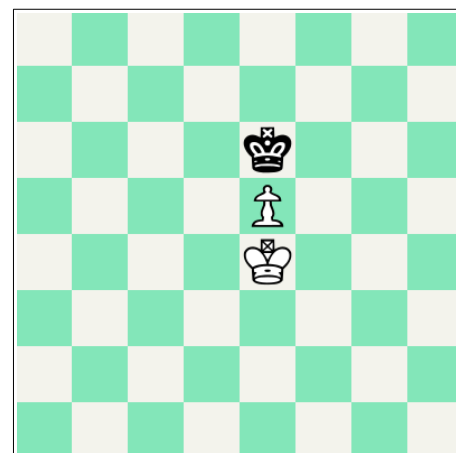


### **Well-known draws**

There are some positions that are well-known draws. Let's take a look at some now.

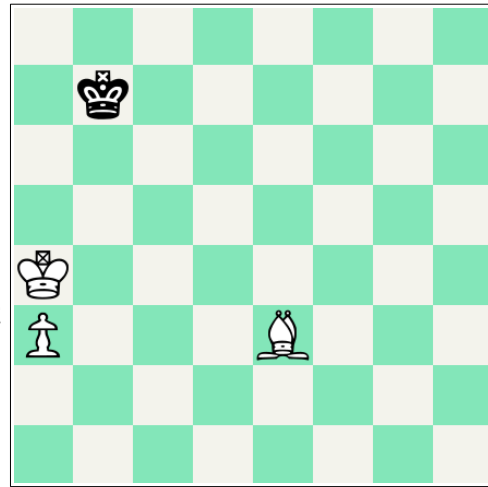
#### **King and Pawn vs. King with the Defender's king in front of the pawn**

In order to win White must promote the pawn however this is not possible here. When the defending king blocks the pawn directly the game is a draw. After 1. Kd4 Ke7 2. Kd5 Kd7 3. e6+ Ke7 4. Ke5 Ke8! 5. Kf6 Kf8! 6. e7+ Ke8 7. Ke6 Black is stalemated (any other king move by White loses the pawn!). It is important that Black "have the opposition," that is, be able to confront White's king directly. 4...Kf8? and 4...Kd8? both lose. Work it out.



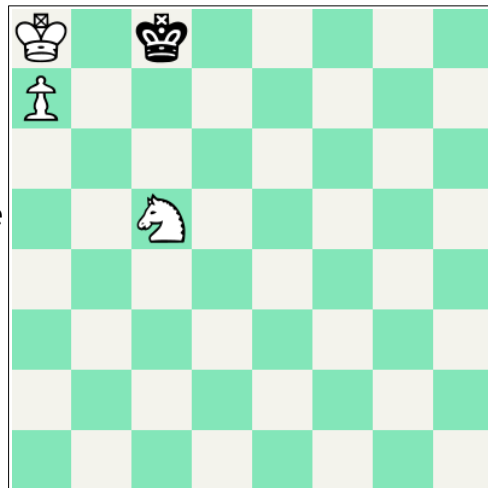
### ***Bishop of the wrong color for the rook pawn***

Ordinarily a minor piece and pawn versus a lone king is an easy win: the king and minor piece simply escort the pawn to the queening square, being careful not to stalemate the defender's king along the way. Here, however, the bishop does not control the queening square a8, and after 1. Kb5 Ka8 2. Ka6 Kb8 3. a4 Ka8 4. a5 Kb8 5. Kb6 Ka8 6. a6 Kb8 7. Bf4+ Ka8 Black cannot be winkled out of the corner. If White moves the bishop (say 8. Bg5) to free Black's king, after 8...Kb8 9. a7+ Ka8! any move by White either stalemates or loses the pawn. With a bishop on g6 instead of g5 White could simply play 10. Be4 mate!



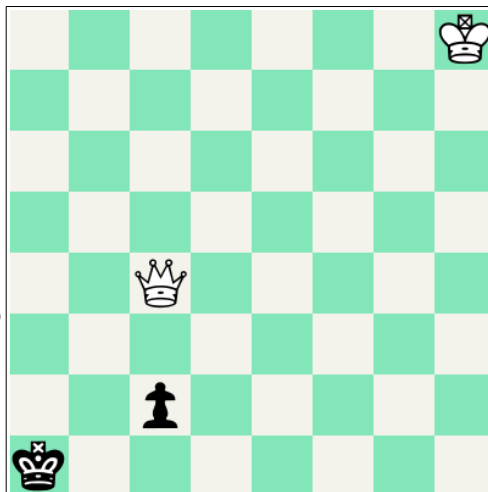
### ***Knights cannot "lose" a move***

White's king is trapped and unable to unblock his pawn. If it is White's move, he simply plays 1. Na6 and his king escapes. However, if it is *Black's* move, Black plays 1...Kc7 keeping White's King in the corner. As White's knight cannot move without giving up control of either c7 or c8 it cannot force Black's king from c7 and c8. If White has a *bishop* on c5 instead of a knight, the win is easy regardless of who moves first. Work it out.



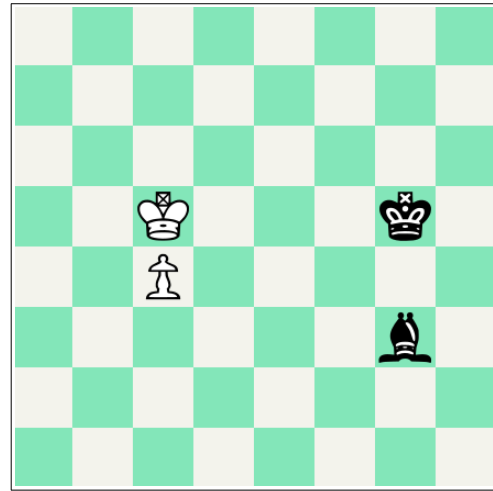
### ***The mighty pawn!***

Sometimes even a queen cannot win against a pawn. Here queen-takes-pawn is stalemate. White can try Qa4+ but then Black replies ...Kb2 threatening to queen his own pawn. If White then moves his Queen to pin Black's pawn to Black's king, Black's king simply retreats to the corner. White will never be able to capture the pawn. The problem here is that White's king is too far from the scene. Positions of this kind can sometimes be won if White's king is near enough to support the queen with mate after the black pawn promotes.



### ***Minor piece vs. pawn***

A minor piece draws against a pawn provided the minor piece can control some square the pawn has yet to cross. The minor piece then sacrifices itself for the pawn. In this position, Black simply shuttles the bishop on the b8-a2 diagonal and takes the pawn when it advances to c7.



Against a rook's pawn the knight may find it difficult to sacrifice itself for the pawn. In this position, 1. Nxb7+! Nxb7 2. a6! and if 2...Kc7 3. a7! and the pawn queens.

