



How to read and write chess move notation

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Contents

1	How to read and write chess move notation	3
1.1	Standard Algebraic Notation (SAN)	4
1.2	Square names	4
1.3	Piece names	5
1.4	Move notation	5
1.5	Capture of piece	7
1.5.1	En passant capture	7
1.6	Disambiguation Moves	9
1.7	Promotion	13
1.8	Castling	15
1.9	Check	16
1.10	Checkmate	17
1.11	End of the game	18

List of Figures

1.1	How to write the chess move notation	3
1.2	How to read the chess move notation	4
1.3	Names of Chess squares	5
1.4	Pawn movement from a2 to a3 - notation : a3	6
1.5	Knight movement from b1 to a3 - notation : Na3	6
1.6	Pawn capturing piece at e5 - notation : dxe5	7
1.7	Before En passant capture move	8
1.8	En passant capture move	8
1.9	After En passant capture move - notation : cxd6	9
1.10	Rook at a3 captures the black rook - notation : Raxd3	10
1.11	Rook at g3 captures the black rook - notation : Rgxd3	11
1.12	Rook at d1 captures the black rook - notation : R1xd3	11
1.13	Rook at d6 captures the black rook - notation : Rgxd3	12
1.14	Queen at b1 captures the black rook - notation : Qb1xe4	12
1.15	Queen at e1 captures the black rook - notation : Qe1xe4	13
1.16	Before promotion	14
1.17	After promotion - notation : b1=Q	14
1.18	King side castling	15
1.19	Queen side castling	16
1.20	Queen giving check to king - notation : Qf8+	17
1.21	Queen giving checkmate to king - notation : Qc7#	18

Chapter 1

How to read and write chess move notation

Learn how to easily [read](#) or [write](#) the notation of chess moves. This is especially useful for kids and beginners. Whenever you refer the chess games by others to learn from their games, all you get is bunch of letters, numbers and special symbols. Unless you know how to decipher them, you can not understand the moves or the game. The moves are written in a notation called [Standard Algebraic Notation](#) or [SAN](#)

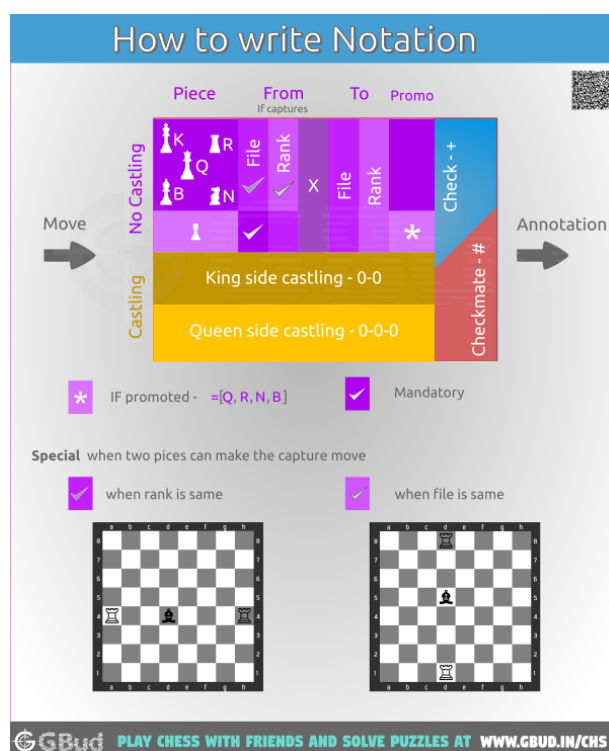


Figure 1.1: How to write the chess move notation

[Download](#) the large size pdf file of this infographics on write chess move annotation at the [How to write chess move notation chart](#) page.

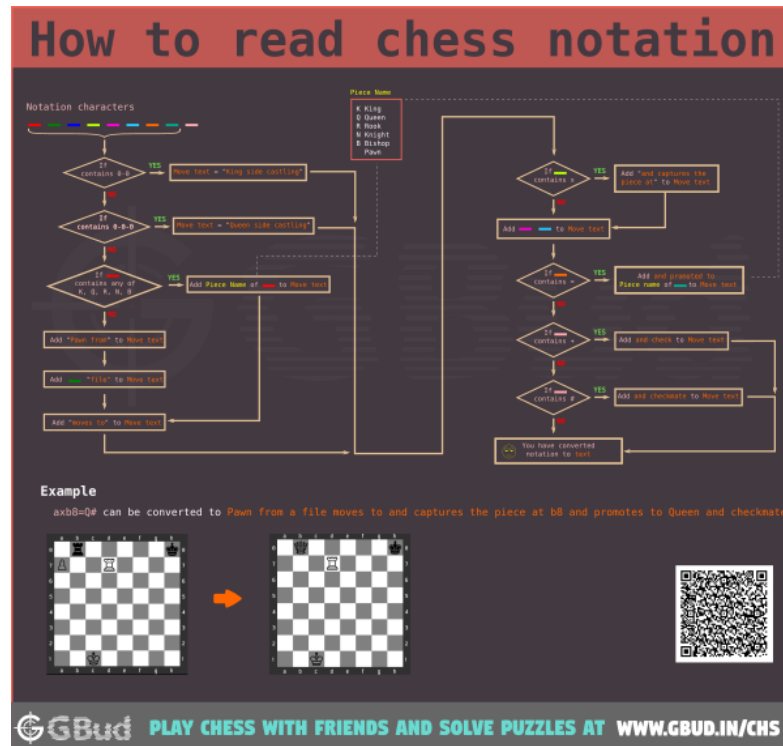


Figure 1.2: How to read the chess move notation

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1.1 Standard Algebraic Notation (SAN)

Standard Algebraic Notation or SAN is the short form for defining the [chess moves](#). Each notation gives the information of the [piece](#) which is moved, [square](#), whether the move results in a [capture](#), [check](#), [checkmate](#), [promotion](#) or [castling](#).

1.2 Square names

The square names are between a1 and h8 among the 64 [squares](#) in the chess board.

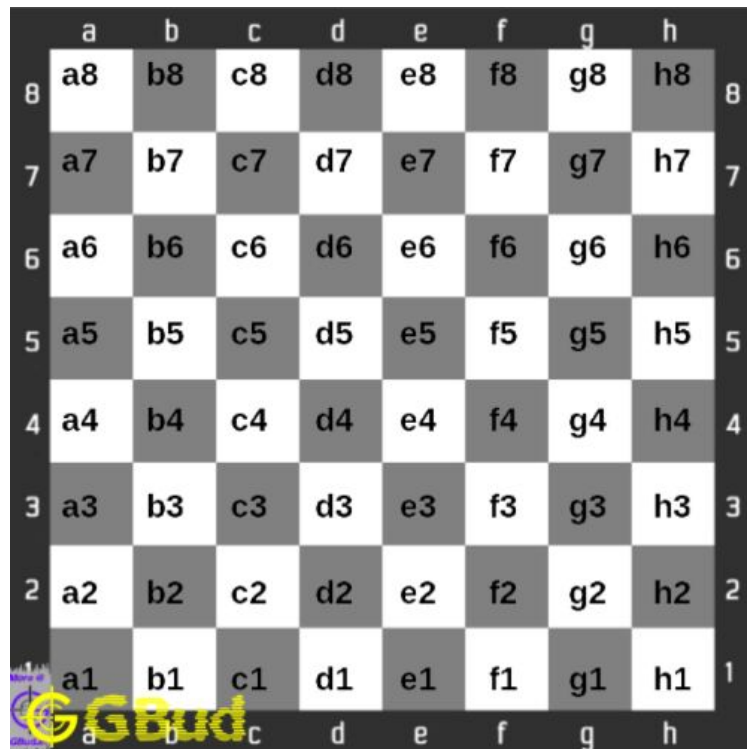


Figure 1.3: Names of Chess squares

1.3 Piece names

The pieces such as the [King](#), [Queen](#), [Bishop](#), [Rook](#) and [Knight](#) are identified by the letters K, Q, B, R and N respectively. Pawns are not given any letter.

1.4 Move notation

Each move is identified by the [piece](#) followed by the destination [square](#). [Pawn moves](#) are exceptional in this move notation where only the destination square is mentioned. For example, the pawn movement from [a2](#) to [a3](#) is defined by the notation [a3](#), whereas the movement of knight from [b1](#) to [a3](#) is defined by [Na3](#).

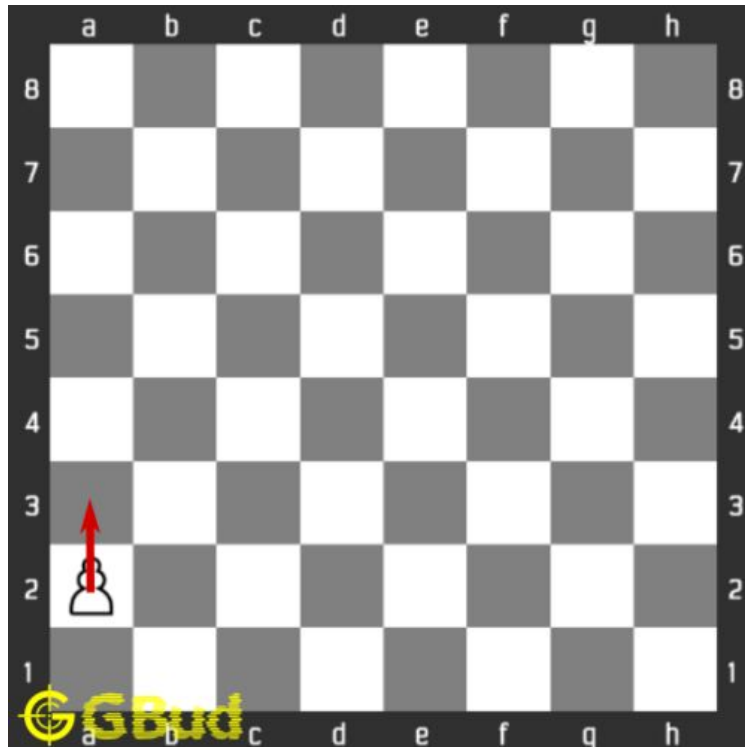


Figure 1.4: Pawn movement from a2 to a3 - notation : a3

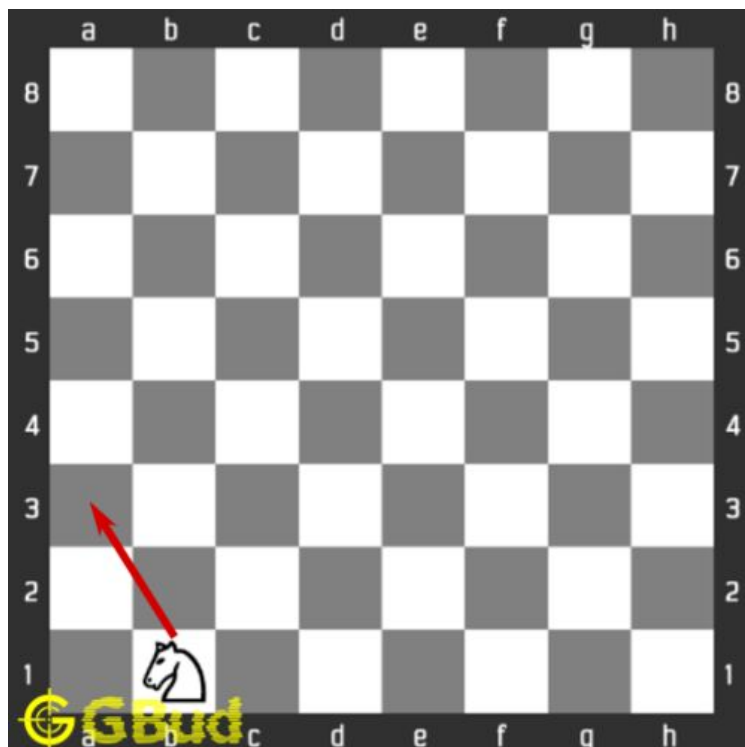


Figure 1.5: Knight movement from b1 to a3 - notation : Na3

1.5 Capture of piece

The letter x is used to identify a **capture**. The capturing **piece name** followed by x followed by the destination **square** during a capturing move. In case of **Pawn** is the capturing piece, the **file** of the capturing pawn's source square is mentioned.

For example **dxe5** defines that the pawn from file d captures the piece at the square e5.

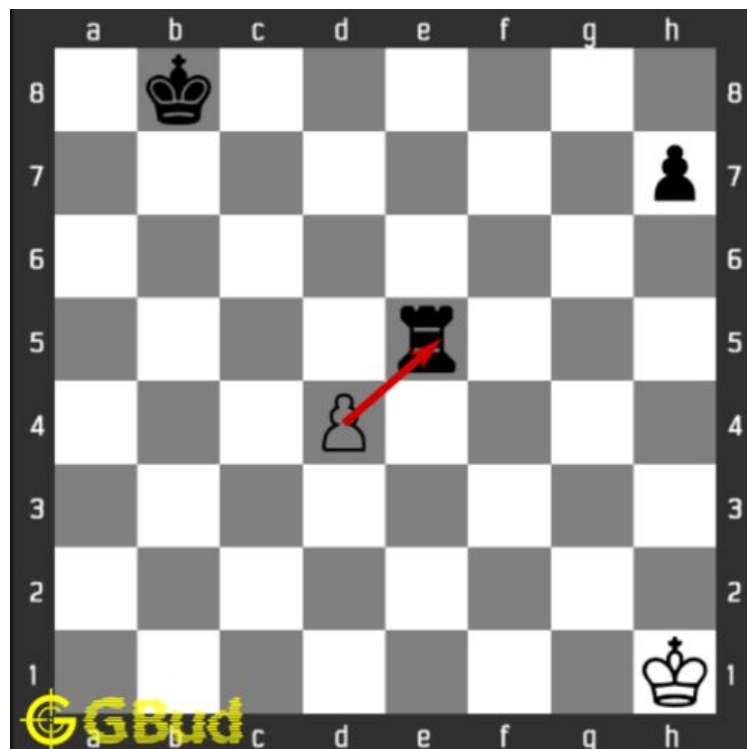


Figure 1.6: Pawn capturing piece at e5 - notation : dxe5

1.5.1 En passant capture

In case of **en passant capture**, the **file** of the capturing pawn's source **square** followed by a combination of the letter x and the destination square of the capturing piece is mentioned. For example **cxd6** mentions that the pawn from c file captures the pawn at d file through en passant capture.

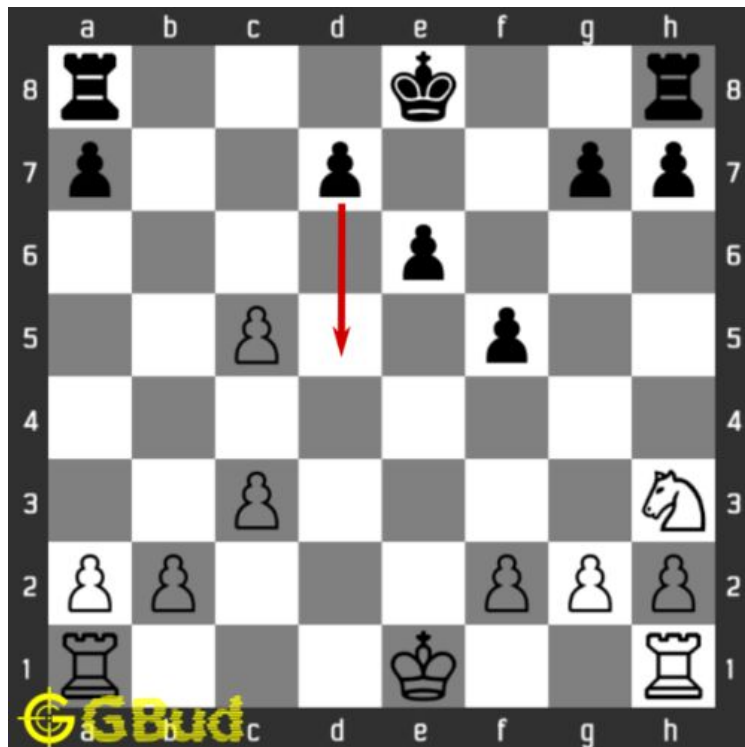


Figure 1.7: Before En passant capture move



Figure 1.8: En passant capture move

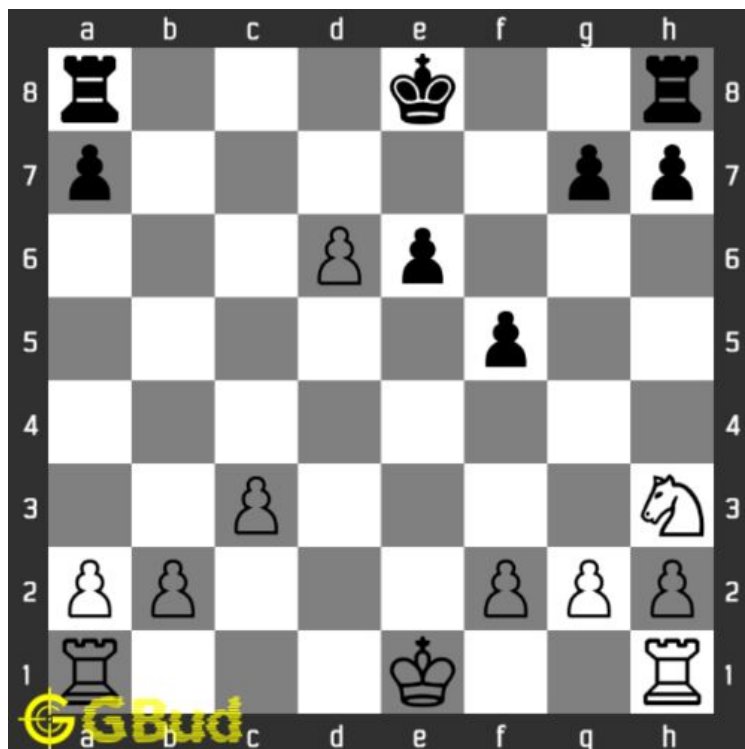


Figure 1.9: After En passant capture move - notation : cxd6

1.6 Disambiguation Moves

If multiple [pieces](#) are able to reach the destination [square](#), a special notation is used to identify the piece that make the [capture](#). This is done in the following order

1. If the [files](#) of the pieces are different, then the file of the capturing piece is mentioned. For example, the black rook at d3 can be captured by the white rooks at a3 and g3. A simple notation of Rxd3 does not give information on which white rook captures the black rook. Hence the notation given is [Raxd3](#) in case the white rook at a file captures the black rook or [Rgxd3](#) in case the white rook at g file captures the black rook
2. If the files of the pieces are same, then the [rank](#) of the capturing piece's source square is mentioned. For example, the notation given is [R1xd3](#) in case the white rook at d1 captures the black rook or [R6xd3](#) in case the white rook at d6 captures the black rook
3. Complex board positions arrive at the end game where a player might have [promoted](#) several [pawns](#) which can be [promoted](#) so that a clear identification about the capturing piece is required. If both the file and rank of the pieces are not sufficient to identify the capturing

piece, as shown below, then the origin square is added to the notation. In case of the white queen from rank 1 capturing the black rook at e4, the notation giving rank alone is not enough. Both the queens at b1 and e1 have rank 1. Hence, if the white queen at b1 captures the black rook then the notation is [Qb1xe4](#). If the white queen at e1 captures the black rook then the notation is [Qe1xe4](#).

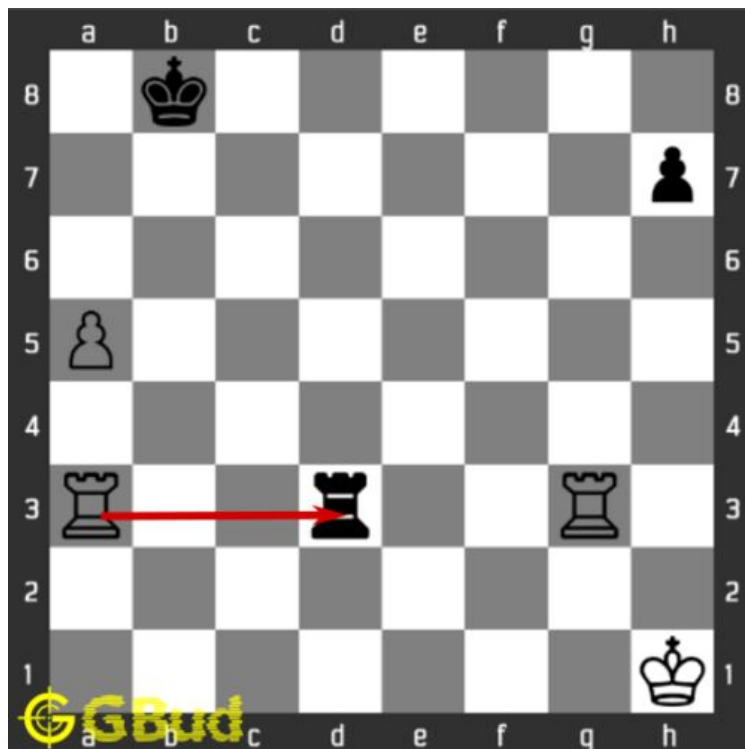


Figure 1.10: Rook at a3 captures the black rook - notation : Raxd3

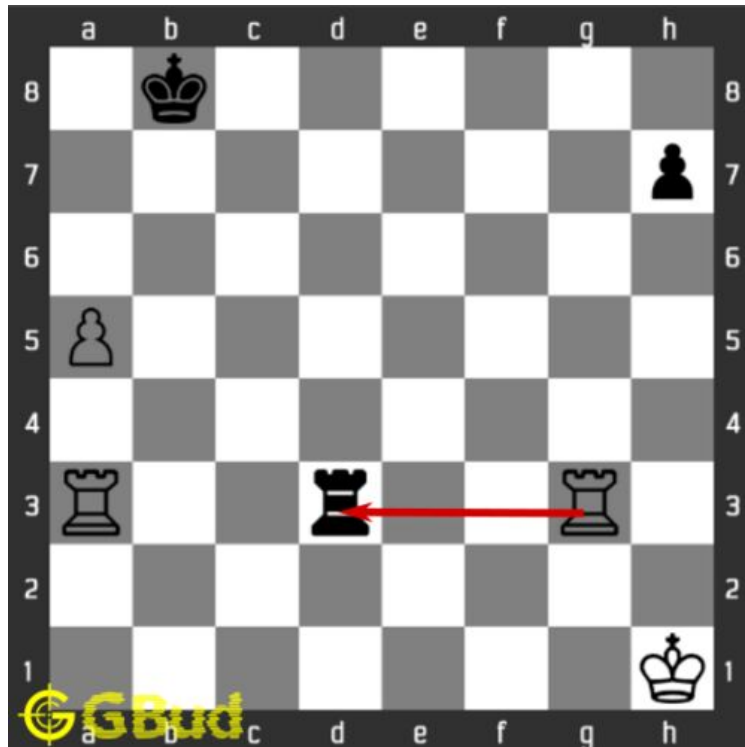


Figure 1.11: Rook at g3 captures the black rook - notation : Rgxd3

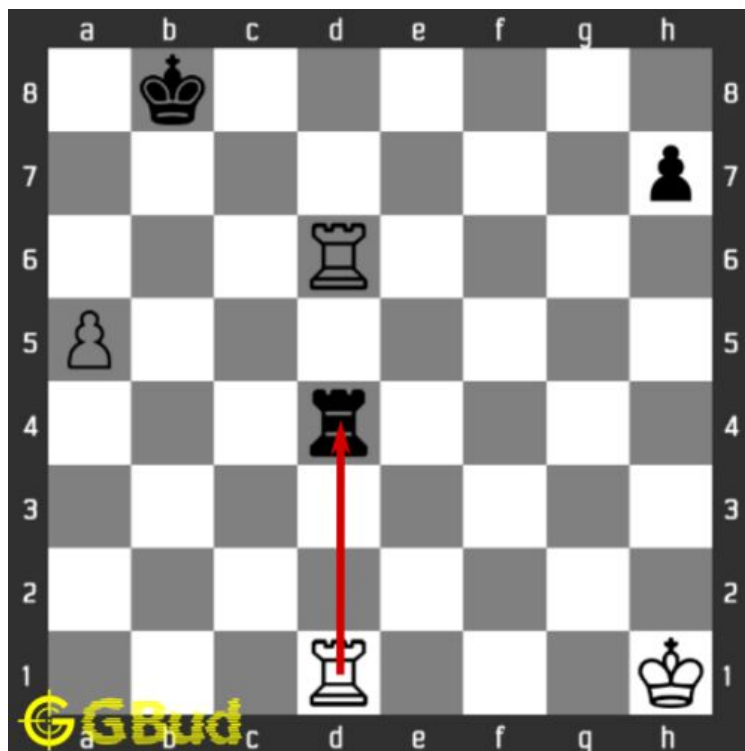


Figure 1.12: Rook at d1 captures the black rook - notation : R1xd3

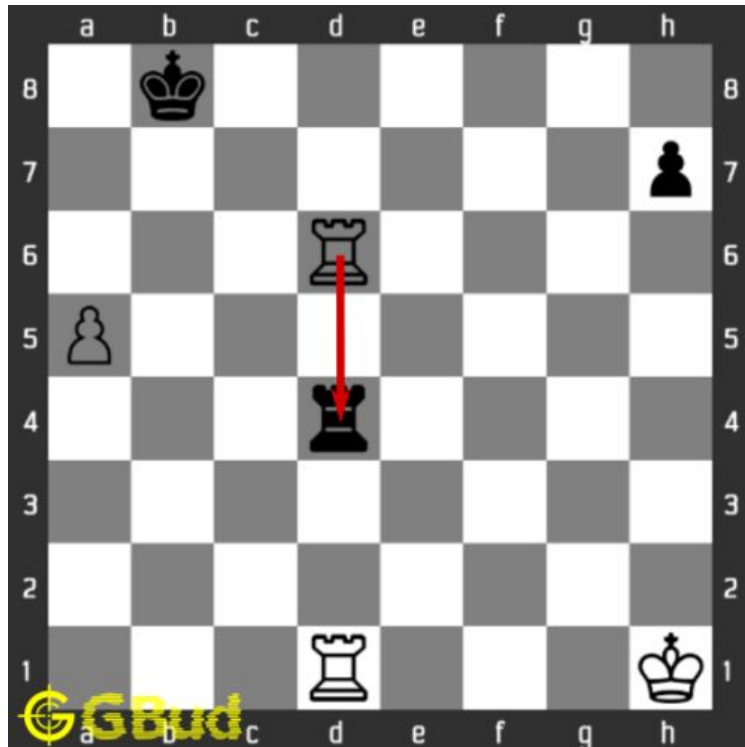


Figure 1.13: Rook at d6 captures the black rook - notation : Rgxd3

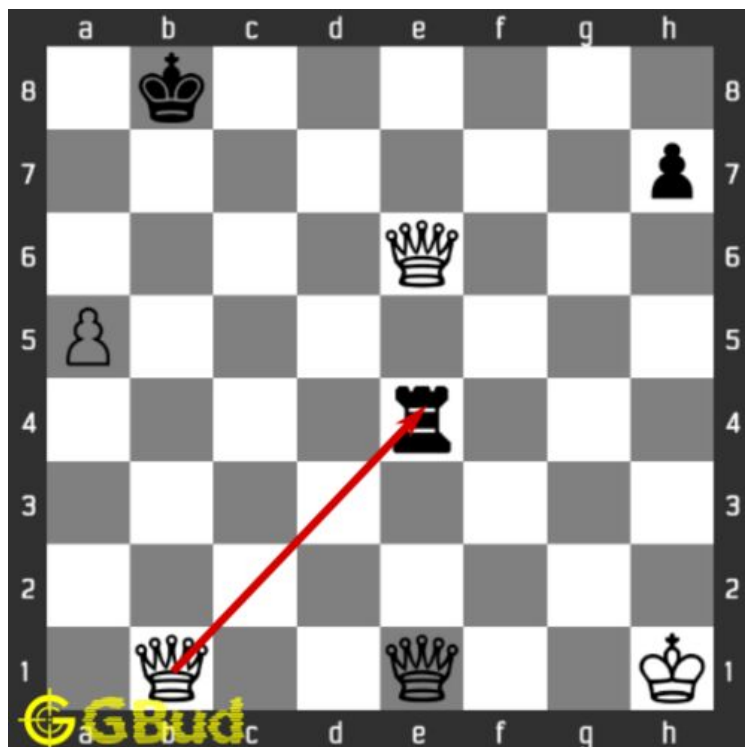


Figure 1.14: Queen at b1 captures the black rook - notation : Qb1xe4

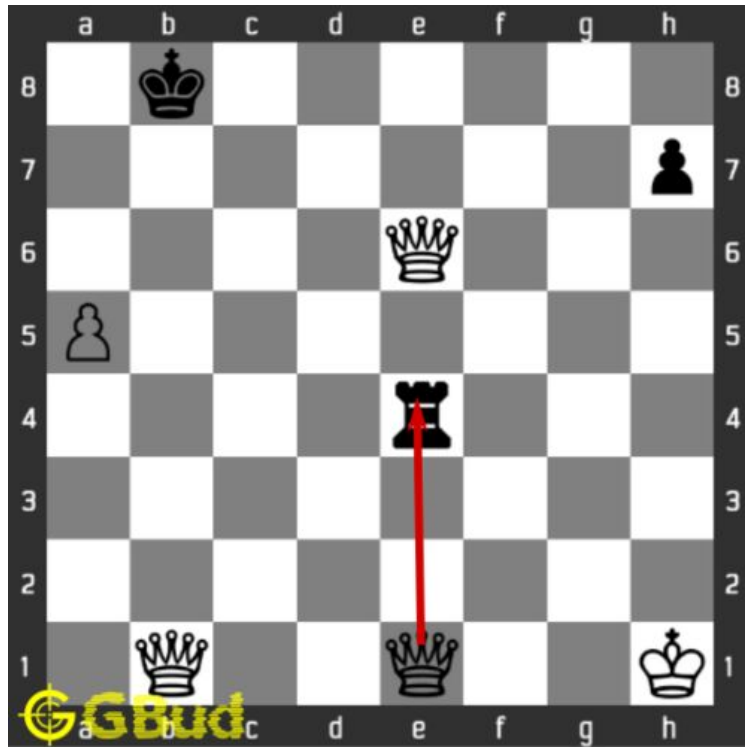


Figure 1.15: Queen at e1 captures the black rook - notation : Qe1xe4

1.7 Promotion

The **Pawn** promotion is identified by the combination of the destination **square**, symbol = and the **piece** selected after the promotion. The piece selected after promotion could be among **Queen**, **Rook**, **Knight** and **Bishop**. For example, the **pawn at b2** advances to b1 and **promoted** to a queen. Corresponding notation is b1=Q



Figure 1.16: Before promotion

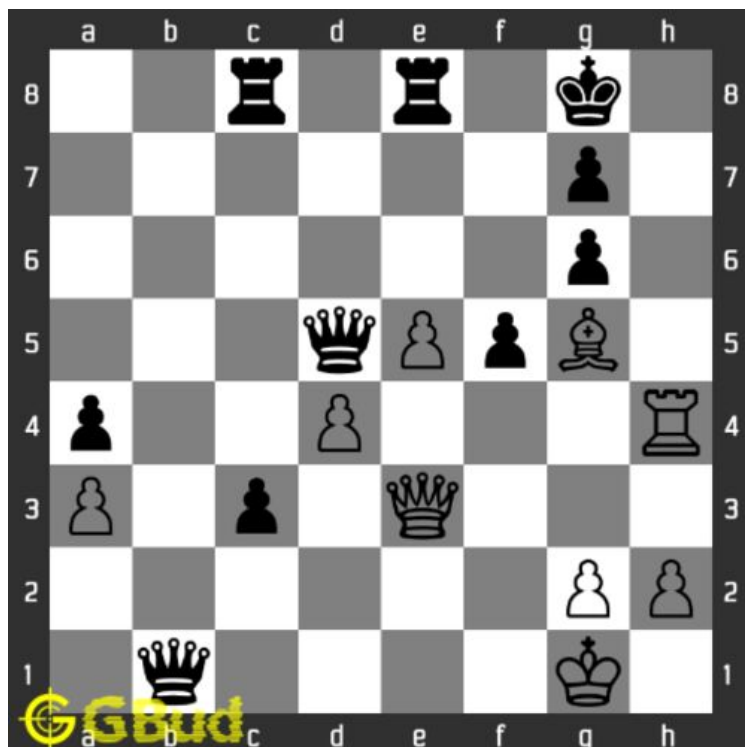


Figure 1.17: After promotion - notation : b1=Q

1.8 Castling

castling is identified by the notation 0-0 for **king side castling** and 0-0-0 for **queen side castling**.

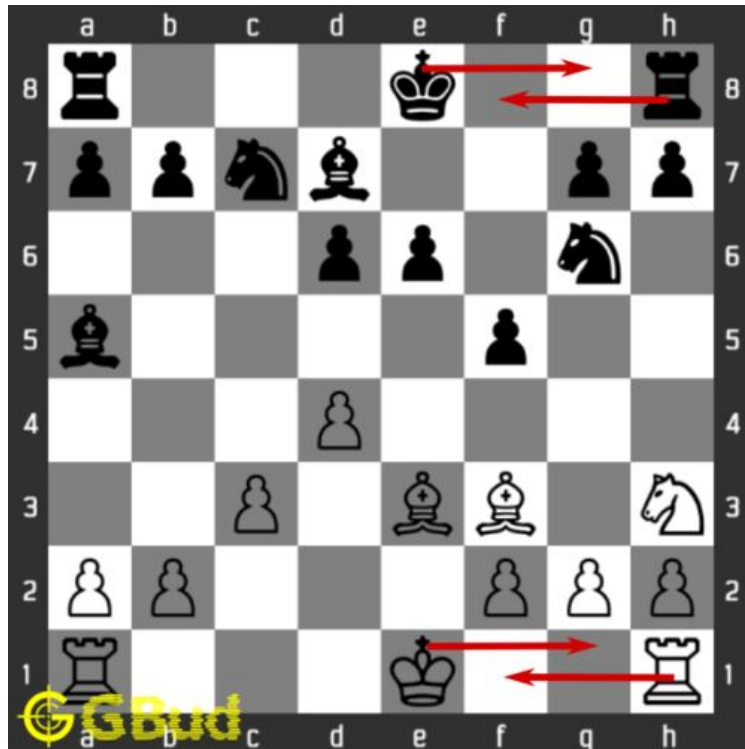


Figure 1.18: King side castling

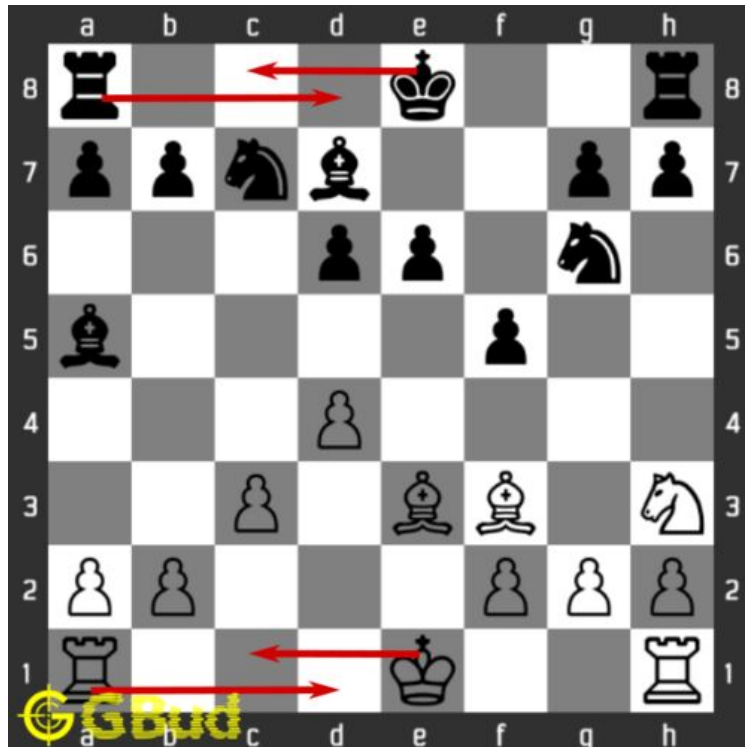


Figure 1.19: Queen side castling

1.9 Check

A [check](#) is identified by a suffix of symbol + to the notation. For example, the movement of queen from e7 to f8 and resulting check is annotated by [Qf8+](#)

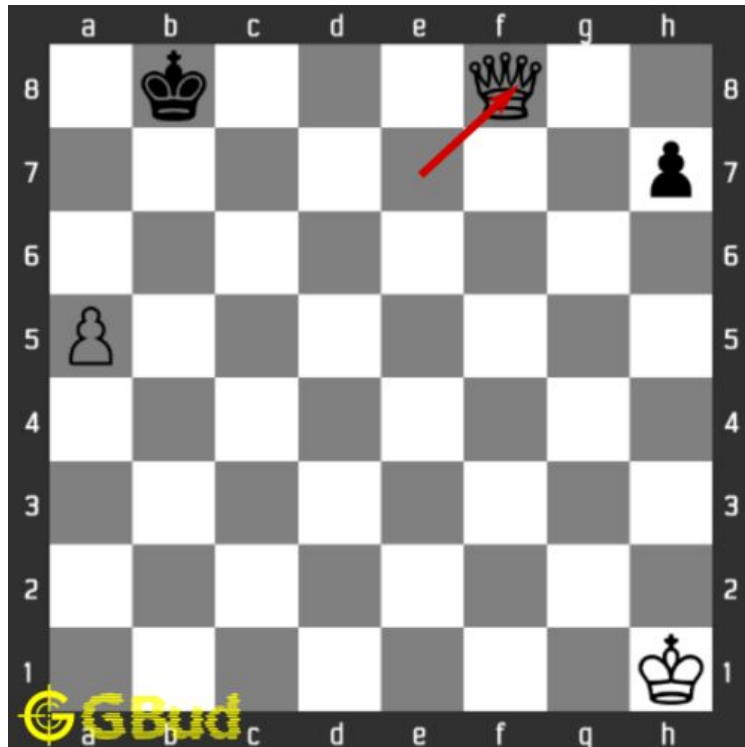


Figure 1.20: Queen giving check to king - notation : Qf8+

1.10 Checkmate

A **checkmate** is identified by the addition of symbol # to the notation. For example, the black king can not escape the attack by the white queen movement from g3 to c7. Hence it is a **checkmate** and the notation for checkmate is **Qc7#**

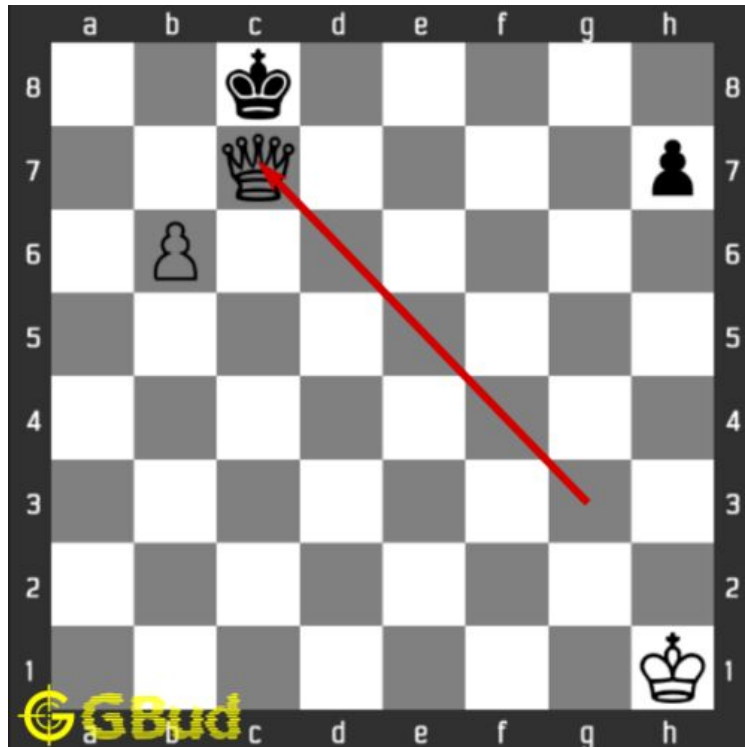


Figure 1.21: Queen giving checkmate to king - notation : Qc7#

1.11 End of the game

End of the game is identified any of the following

1. 1-0 for white as the winner
2. 0-1 for black as the winner
3. 1/2-1/2 for the [draw](#) of the game

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