

First published in 2004 by Gloucester Publishers plc (formerly Everyman Publishers plc), Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT

Copyright © 2004 Chris Ward

The right of Chris Ward to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

### **British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1 85744 374 8

Distributed in North America by The Globe Pequot Press, P.O. Box 480,  
246 Goose Lane, Guilford, CT 06437-0480.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT  
tel: 020 7253 7887; fax: 020 7490 3708  
email: [info@everymanchess.com](mailto:info@everymanchess.com)  
website: [www.everymanchess.com](http://www.everymanchess.com)

Everyman is the registered trade mark of Random House Inc. and is used in this work under license from Random House Inc.

*To Debbie*

### **EVERYMAN CHESS SERIES (formerly Cadogan Chess)**

Chief Advisor: Garry Kasparov

Commissioning editor: Byron Jacobs

Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.

Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.

Production by Navigator Guides.

Printed and bound in the US by Versa Press.

---

# Contents

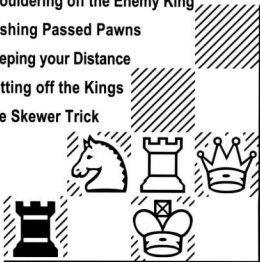
	Bibliography	4
	Introduction	5
1	The Basics	7
2	Rook versus Pawn(s)	21
3	Rook and Pawn versus Rook	35
4	Introducing More Pawns	55
5	Tricky Situations and Advanced Techniques	70
6	Applying Principles to Practical Play	86
7	Twenty Questions	104

## Chapter One

---

# The Basics

- The 'Monster' King
- Every King Should Know its Limitations
- Checking from the Side
- Shouldering off the Enemy King
- Pushing Passed Pawns
- Keeping your Distance
- Cutting off the Kings
- The Skewer Trick

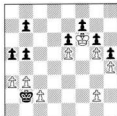


## The 'Monster' King

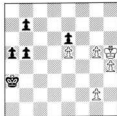
'King and pawn endings, minor piece endings, rook endings, queen endings; what do they all have in common?' I once recall asking a class of juniors. I was prepared for the sarcastic answer 'They're all endings!' but not by the particularly witty response 'They're all boring!' Regarding the latter, some may think that way, but they are usually the individuals who throw away a lot of their hard opening and middlegame work by not making the most of the pieces that remain in the endgame.

The point I was really hoping to make is that all endgames involve kings. Although we spend the early part of the game tucking away our own king into safety and planning devious ways to attack the enemy monarch, there comes a stage in every game where one decides that checkmate is no longer a reality and it could be time for the king to start pulling its weight like every other piece.

### Example 1



**Diagram 1 (W)**  
Hungry kings in action!



**Diagram 2 (W)**  
Thirsty work!

(Diagram 1) Of course an art in itself is knowing exactly when that time is, but in this book on rook and pawn endgames I can safely say that it's all the time! See here how both kings are ready to have a field day with the enemy pawns.

**1 Kxf7 Kxc2 2 Kxg6 Kxb3 3 Kxh5 Kxa3 (Diagram 2)**

The pawns have dropped like flies as the kings captured them on light squares and dark squares alike. White will win the race to promote a passed pawn.



**NOTE:** Generally in endgames it is usually deemed a good idea to try and create a passed pawn as soon as possible.

The outcome of this particular position depended on the tempi situation and, specifically, whom it was to move. White started and was always favourite in the race to promote a pawn. Note that in accordance with the previous note, Black would have had a better (but still not good!) practical chance with 3...b4 4 axb4 a4.

All that is 'king and pawn' endgame territory, where tempi are absolutely vital. Devoid of a rook or two this position is not of so much interest to this book but I just wanted to make the point that when a king is on the case there are few pieces that are as effective.



**TIP: The king is a tremendous piece. Use it!**

In all endgames it is advisable to get your king into the thick of the action rather than watching from the sidelines. However...

## Every King should know its Limitations!

Just as every man must know his limitations (well according to Clint Eastwood), the same must be true of kings. Actually, I guess it is the man (or woman) operating the king that matters, but anyway take a look at the next example.

### Example 2



**Diagram 3 (W)**

Here today...



**Diagram 4 (B)**

Gone tomorrow!

(Diagram 3) White has a passed pawn and advancing it immediately causes a big problem.

**1 h4! Kg3 2 h5 Kg4 3 h6 (Diagram 4)**

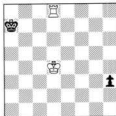
and White wins as the pawn promotes. In all fairness there was no point in chasing the pawn, as it is abundantly clear that unless it takes a breather, the black king will never catch the soon-to-be queen.

**WARNING: The king is a great piece, but it is also a slow one.**

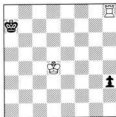


## Example 3

Regarding the king and pawn, here is a similar situation:



**Diagram 5 (W)**  
So near yet so far!



**Diagram 6 (B)**  
Not so fast, bucko!

(Diagram 5) Kings really are awesome pieces. Only the queen can control every square within touching distance of itself (as a king does), and thus when it appears on the scene it has a massive impact. The problem invariably is getting it on the scene.



**TIP: Centralise your king.**

This tip is universal advice to all endgames based on the premise that the king can access any part of the board in the quickest time when positioned here. Returning to Example 3, though, that is still not going to be quick enough regarding halting the runaway black pawn. Fortunately, help is on hand!

**1 Rh8! (Diagram 6)**

The rook attacks the pawn from behind. It is ready to guzzle the pawn where it stands or should it advance one square further. The resulting ending is king and rook versus the lone king – an easy win for White.



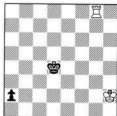
**TIP: Rooks belong *behind* passed pawns.**

I offer this tip now but I can assure you that it will be a recurrent theme throughout this book.

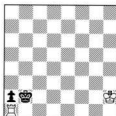
## Rooks belong behind Passed Pawns

There, I'm even repeating it now so as to help you commit it to memory!

## Example 4



**Diagram 7 (W)**  
Decisions, decisions!



**Diagram 8 (W)**  
Blocking is overrated!

(Diagram 7) In this example there is a very dangerous black pawn that is ready to promote. Having spent a lot of time with juniors I notice that they place a lot of comfort value in blocking passed pawns. Here

**1 Rg1? Kc3 2 Ra1 Kb2 (Diagram 8)**

would ensure that the rook is able to give itself up for the pawn before (or as soon as) it turns into a queen, allowing White to draw.

It's true that White will not lose with 1 Rg1? but to say that

**1 Ra8!**

is more effective is somewhat of an understatement. The rook is ready to take the pawn (or queen) on a2 or a1 and, most important of all, it has attacked the pawn before the black king is close enough to protect it. White wins easily.

**NOTE:** The underlying theme is that rooks like to be **ACTIVE** and they can do that best from behind passed pawns.

## Example 5

(Diagram 9) Black has two passed and connected kingside pawns that are not troublesome yet but are certainly there for the future. At the moment the passed pawn on a3 is more of a concern and it is quite clear that the white king is too far away to offer any help in that department. However, the rook is on hand to help.

An example of extremely poor play would be

**1 Rc1?! a2 2 Ra1 Kb3 3 Kg4?**

I am hoping to convey the message that a blocking policy is rarely good in this type of situation, but the next example will demonstrate

that White still has a defensive resource available.



Diagram 9 (W)  
How to stop that pawn?



Diagram 10 (W)  
Black wins

### 3...Kb2 4 Rd1 a1Q 5 Rxa1 Kxa1 (Diagram 10)

The black king eventually reappears on the kingside in order to help escort his h- and g-pawns home.

**NOTE: A draw is better than a loss!**

Bearing in mind this rather obvious remark, in fact White has numerous ways in which to avoid defeat. Take, for example

### 1 Ra8 Kb3 2 Kh2

This is not a productive move in itself but I am merely using this to show how the rook can be extremely effective all by itself.

### 2...a2 3 Kg2 Kb2 4 Rb8+ Kc2 5 Ra8 Kb1 6 Rb8+ Kc2 7 Ra8



Diagram 11 (B)  
Looking for cover



Diagram 12 (B)  
Caught in a trap

The reader should see a pattern emerging. White attacks the pawn



(from behind of course!) and as soon as it threatens to promote due to the support from its king, the white rook checks the monarch away again. Black should accept a draw (either offered or by repetition) after

**7...Kb2 8 Rb8+ (Diagram 11)**

and not walk into something like

**8...Ka1? 9 Kf2 h5 10 Ke2 h4 11 Kd2 h3 12 Kc2 h2**

Or 12...g5 13 Re8 g4 14 Re1 mate.

**13 Rh8 (Diagram 12)**

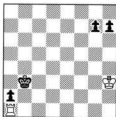
Black will lose his h-pawn and get mated.

## Checking from the Side

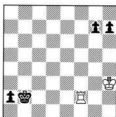
Let's look at another important technique available to the rook.

### Example 6

You should recall that two moves into our previous example we reached the following position (**Diagram 13**).



**Diagram 13 (W)**  
Time to re-activate!



**Diagram 14 (B)**  
Checking forever!

Having played passively and made the poor decision to block the pawn with the rook, White continued playing like a wet lettuce and capitulated via 3 Kg4? Kb2. In fact, even here he could have saved the day via

**3 Rf1! Kb2 4 Rf2+ Kb1 5 Rf1+ Kb2 6 Rf2+ (Diagram 14) 6...Kb3 7 Rf3+ Kb4**

And not 7...Kc4??, after which the rook will take up its rightful place behind the pawn via 8 Ra3 and then it will be bagged!

**8 Rf4+ Kb5 9 Rf5+ Kb6?**

This is going too far. Black should accept that White can check for-

ever and acquiesce to a draw.

### 10 Rf1

Ironically, now Ra1 followed by taking the pawn is unstoppable (and a good idea!), as the black king has strayed too far.

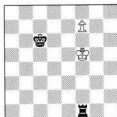


**TIP:** Whilst it is usually best to activate a rook from behind, occasionally consider sideways checks.

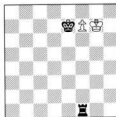
## Shouldering off the Enemy King

This is a very important concept in any endgame and essentially refers to the simple idea of maximising your own king whilst if possible simultaneously reducing the scope of the enemy king. Take the following very simple case.

### Example 7



**Diagram 15 (W)**  
Opt to shoulder!



**Diagram 16 (W)**  
The return of the black king

(Diagram 15) The white king is in check, and first and foremost he will obviously want to escape to a square that protects his passed pawn on the seventh rank. When deciding between e6 and g6, however, he shouldn't just toss a coin! Observe the failure of

**1 Kg6? Kd7 2 Kg7 Ke7 (Diagram 16)**

The black king has returned in time so as to combine forces with the rook to both stop and net the passed pawn. In contrast

**1 Ke6!**

'shoulders off' the black king. Now Black is unable to make progress because his king can't get to where it wants to be, i.e. the e7-square. Hence

**1...Re1+ 2 Kf6 Rf1+ 3 Ke7**

and a draw could be agreed.

## Pushing Passed Pawns

So far we have seen passed pawns both succeeding and failing to make a nuisance of themselves. In order to compare passed pawns, take a look at the following extreme case.

### Example 8



Diagram 17 (W)

The a-pawn has remained at home

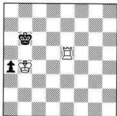


Diagram 18 (B)

Your time is up!

(Diagram 17) A dinky little move for White to play here is 1 Re6, preparing the Rd6 that would drive the black rook away. Here, though, that is unnecessary in view of the simple

**1 d8Q+ Rxd8 2 Kxd8 Kb7**

Clearly 2...a5 3 Ra1 nets the pawn immediately.

**3 Kd7 Kb6 4 Kd6 a5**

Alternatively 4...Kb5 5 Kd5 a5 6 Rb1+ Ka4 7 Kc4 Ka3 8 Kb5 a4 9 Rb4 or 9 Ra1+, also bagging that pawn.

**5 Kd5 a4 6 Kc4 Ka5 7 Re5+ Kb6 8 Kb4** (Diagram 18)

and White wins. Whilst White's d-pawn cost Black his rook, Black's own passed pawn never really got out of the traps.

**NOTE:** A famous adage runs 'Passed pawns are meant to be pushed'.

Clearly the closer pawns are to promotion, the more dangerous and similarly the more valuable they become. As it would no doubt force your opponent to take note, it does follow that you should get on with pushing passed pawns. However...

**WARNING:** Each plan should be taken on its own merits. Forgoing a sensible king centralisation, for example, in favour of pushing a doomed passed pawn would not be bright!

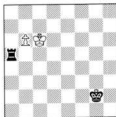


## Keeping your Distance

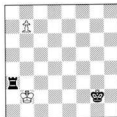
Rooks really are superb pieces and I always maintain that the most common mistake amongst weaker players is that they just assume that they will appear in the endgame and consequently make little provision for them to play a significant role in the middlegame.

They are of course long-range pieces, which means that they are very capable of fulfilling the same duty from a distance as they are close up. Indeed, often being too near can be detrimental.

### Example 9



**Diagram 19 (W)**  
How bad is that?



**Diagram 20 (B)**  
Nowhere to go!

(Diagram 19) Here the move

**1 b7**

is extremely obvious because White is naturally very eager to increase his pawn's value from one point to nine points! It can now be noted that the black rook is on the worst possible square on the entire board. Placed on a7 at least it could give itself up for the pawn immediately, and from anywhere else it could get behind the pawn or to the back rank. Black can play on for a bit, but with careful play White will successfully achieve his goal.

**1...Ra6+ 2 Kc5!**

Upon 2 Kb5? Black can get himself off the hook via 2...Ra1. The rook will then be able to get behind the pawn, this being especially evident after 3 b8Q?? Rb1+. Note also that after 2 Kc7, the pin 2...Ra7! saves the day.

**2...Ra5+ 3 Kc4 Ra4+ 4 Kc3 Ra3+ 5 Kb2 (Diagram 20)**

That's the end of the line regarding checks for Black and there are no pins or skewers to help save the day either. Instead, he can either re-

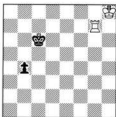
sign or knuckle down to the unenviable task of trying to defend king and queen versus king and rook.



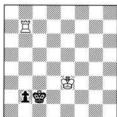
**TIP:** Unless the rook is required for a particular reason such as offering cover, it is good to get into the habit of keeping the rook as far away as possible from the enemy king.

## Cutting off the King

### Example 10



**Diagram 21 (W)**  
Out of sight but not out of mind!



**Diagram 22 (W)**  
Black's king is in time

(Diagram 21) Here White's king is as poorly placed as it could possibly be and Black has a very obvious plan of using his king to help escort his pawn to the end of the board. A very plausible continuation might be

**1 Kh7 Kd5**

The white king is not around yet, but this is still a good habit to get in to. The priority is to stay in touch with the pawn but if Black can engage in any 'shouldering', then all the better.

**2 Rb7 Kc4 3 Kg6 b3 4 Kf5 Kc3 5 Ke4 b2 6 Ke3 Kc2 7 Rc7+ Kb3 8 Rb7+ Kc2 (Diagram 22)**

and Black draws.

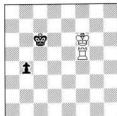
It should be said that this sort of race is not untypical in rook endings. Kings do end up on opposite sides of the board. One reason for this is that a king may need to travel a distance to eliminate enemy pawns in order to create a 'passer' of its own. Another possibility is that a king makes a decision to journey up the board in order to help promote a passed pawn. That is often necessary with an enemy rook behind the pawn, and a typical outcome is that the king forces the enemy rook to sacrifice itself for the pawn. This gain in material, how-

ever, leaves the king offside, and then the long trip back starts. The big question is whether the king gets back in time to halt the opponent's pawn without having to give up its own rook for it.

Clearly in this example it proved a bridge too far. However, sometimes opportunities are missed and on move one the useful 'cut off' technique could have been employed in the form of **1 Rg5!! (Diagram 23).**



**Diagram 23 (B)**  
Wait for me!



**Diagram 24 (W)**  
What to play: 5 Ke5 or 5 Kg5?

This move cuts off the king in that an attempt to go beyond the third rank would be illegal! Specifically, White has prevented the king from getting close to its pawn.

### **1...Kb6**

Hardly constructive but were the king and pawn any further apart then it would be the end of the road for the pawn. Observe both **1...Kd6 2 Rb5** and **1...b3 2 Rg3 b2 3 Rb3.**

### **2 Kg7**

The rook has everything under control but the white king is required to force the win of the pawn and secure victory.

### **2...Kc6 3 Rf5**

Providing the white king with more room although here it could easily approach via the h-file.

### **3...Kb6 4 Kf6 Kc6 (Diagram 24) 5 Kg5**

Although **5 Ke5?** brings the king back in the right direction, that is a bad move because it breaks the 'cut off' and thus allows the black king to advance with its pawn. With Black still unable to do anything useful, White has plenty of time to retrieve his king, but it just needs a bit of care.

### **5...Kb6 6 Kg4 Kc6 7 Kg3 Kb6 8 Kf2 b3**

This is destined to fail but White's king was soon there anyway.

9 Rf3 b2 10 Rb3+

and White wins. Even if this weren't check, the pawn would drop off.

## The Skewer Trick



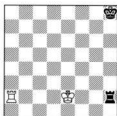
**TIP: Always watch out for checks.**

This doesn't mean always play a check if you see one, but rather that less can go wrong and more right if you are always on the ball regarding checks that you can make in a given position or your opponent can make after your intended move.

### Example 11



**Diagram 25 (W)**  
Don't get complacent!



**Diagram 26 (W)**  
Well and truly skewered

(Diagram 25) White seems to have done everything right (well, except being a pawn down in the first place!). He has his rook behind Black's passed pawn and, whilst the enemy king resides in a far corner, the white king is much nearer the threat on a2.

Without due care and attention, though, he could be in for a rude awakening.

**1 Ke2?**

White probably noticed that moving his king to the third rank enables Black to check and promote his pawn. 1 Ke2?, however, suffers a crueler fate!

**1...Rh1! 2 Rxa2**

White may have seen what's coming now but it is too late. As is nearly always the case, the checks run out as the enemy king approaches the rook, for example 2 Ra8+ Kg7 3 Ra7+ Kf8 4 Ra8+ Ke7 5 Ra7+ Kd8 6 Ra8+ Kc7 7 Ra7+ Kb6 and Black wins.

**2...Rh2+ (Diagram 26)**



This cheeky skewer picks up the white rook on a2 and wins.

**NOTE: Life isn't always fair!**

Okay, I'm sure you didn't need me to tell you that and probably more relevant is my advice that White could have avoided this trap with **1 Kg2! (Diagram 27)**



**Diagram 27 (B)**

Active rook versus passive rook!



**Diagram 28 (B)**

It's a draw

Amazingly, this odd-looking move is the saviour because it becomes clear that unless the white king can make it to c2 (which it can't) then the only safe squares for it (i.e. ones that avoid immediate checks and the skewer) are g2 and h2.

Black doesn't deserve to win because his own rook is completely passive and thus in direct opposition to my 'activate the rook' and 'rooks belong behind passed pawns' tips.

The white rook must stay on the a-file barring temporary excursions to give checks. Play might continue with

**1...Kg8 2 Ra8+ Kf7 3 Ra7+ Ke6 4 Ra6+ Kd5 5 Ra5+ Kc4 6 Ra8 Kb3 7 Rb8+ Kc2 8 Ra8 (Diagram 28)**

before Black realises that he can't realistically hope to make any progress. Every time the black king protects the pawn on a2, it is checked away by the white rook.

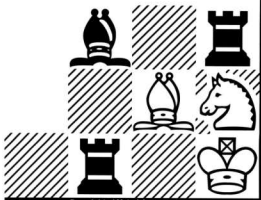


## Chapter Two

---

# Rook versus Pawn(s)

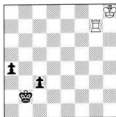
- Rook versus Split Pawns
- Rooks vs. Two Connected Passed Pawns
- That Sixth Rank Myth
- Rook vs. More Pawns
- Rook vs. Three Connected Pawns



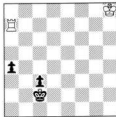
Already Chapter 1 will have provided you with some of the basics regarding situations of a lone rook against pawns. Generally a rook does well to try and stop an enemy passed pawn from behind, but if the enemy king is in the vicinity, the rook can only realistically expect to win if its own king has an input.

## Rook versus split Pawns

### Example 12



**Diagram 1 (W)**  
The rook or bust!



**Diagram 2 (B)**  
Hassle those pawns!

**(Diagram 1)** It's White to play here, and as a defensive aid I think that we can pretty much write off the white king. What is therefore abundantly clear is that if White has to give his rook up for one of Black's pawns, then the other one will promote.

In view of that, obviously 1 Rg1? would be futile, as after 1...c2 the black a-pawn would soon join its compatriot in touching down. White must keep his rook as active as possible.

**1 Rb7+! Ka2 2 Rc7!**

The key is for White's rook to check the king in front of one of the pawns and then attack the other.

**2...Kb3 3 Rb7+ Kc4 4 Rc7+ Kb4 5 Rb7+ Kc5 6 Rc7+ Kb4 7 Rb7+ Ka3 8 Rc7 Kb2 9 Rb7+ Kc2 10 Ra7 (Diagram 2) 10...Kb3 11 Rb7+**

The rook is rightly relentless. Thanks to its constant buzzing about, White obtains a draw.



**TIP:** The rook should be kept flexible and active at all times.

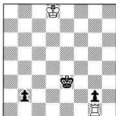
### Example 13

**(Diagram 3)** Here is another case of how the rook can work wonders

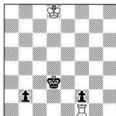
by flitting around.

**1 Rb1!**

Black was threatening 1...Kf2, but now a trip down to White's second rank would allow the rook to pinch the pawn with check.



**Diagram 3 (W)**  
Ducking and diving!



**Diagram 4 (W)**  
The black king swoops

**1...Kd3**

Also note that after 1...Kf3 2 Ke7 Kg3 3 Kd6 Kh2, possible (and of course best!) is 4 Rxb2 as the remaining pawn is pinned.

**2 Rg1!**

Notice the symmetry here. 2 Kd7? would allow 2...Kc2 but the text prevents 2...Kc2 because of 3 Rxc2+. Black cannot make any progress and the game is drawn.

However, don't get too carried away, as a slight alteration to our starting position (**Diagram 4**) makes all the difference.

It is White to play but I can offer no good suggestions. That is, of course, because there aren't any! Black threatens 1...Ke2 but this time 1 Rb1 doesn't cut the mustard because of 1...Kc2.

**NOTE: The closer together the split pawns are, the easier it is for the king to control them.**

Frankly, the above note is obvious whereas the positions above are quite obscure. Nevertheless, the clear difference between the two is that in the latter the pawns are one file nearer to each other. The quicker accessibility for the black king to either pawn completely changes the assessment.

## Rook versus two connected Pawns

**NOTE: Generally connected pawns are superior to isolated pawns in rook endings.**

Though I am obviously making quite a lot of them in this book, usually I am wary of making generalisations, as it is nearly always possible to find exceptions to the rule. Clearly, two connected passed pawns on their home squares aren't going to be as worrying to someone as two isolanis on the seventh rank, and the above note refers to pawns of similar advancement.

I will return to the isolated versus connected pawns debate with rooks present in future chapters but for now let me talk about situations involving a rook against connected pawns.

## Example 14

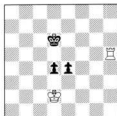


Diagram 5 (W)  
Time to approach

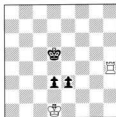


Diagram 6 (W)  
Subtlety required

(Diagram 5) Nobody can deny that Black's pawns look like a tasty duo. It is amazing, though, how weaker players can overestimate their value in situations such as this.



**WARNING:** Never underestimate the value of pieces in endgames.

The white rook is cutting off the black king and the next stage is getting the king in on the act. Here a simple procedure is to approach the pawns from the side:

**1 Kc2 Ke6**

The pawn advances hold no future, for example 1...d3+ 2 Kd2 Ke6 3 Ke3 Kd6 4 Kxe4 d2 5 Rd5+.

**2 Kb3 e3 3 Ke4 e2 4 Rh1 Ke5 5 Kd3**

Now White picks off one pawn and the other follows shortly, for example

**5...Kd5 6 Kxe2 Ke4 7 Kd2 Kd5 8 Kd3 Ke5 9 Rh4**

and White wins.



**TIP:** Pawns frequently become more relevant in endgames but never forget that a rook is worth five points.

If we shuffle everything up the board one rank then obviously the same procedure would be applicable. Bringing all the pieces down one rank, though, requires White to employ more subtlety.

## Example 15

(Diagram 6) 1 Rh8

In case you were wondering, clearly there isn't enough time to bring the king round now, for example 1 Kc1 Ke5 2 Kb2?? e2 3 Rh1 d2 when a disaster has occurred!

1...Ke4 2 Rd8

White's aim is to force Black to advance one of his pawns. That would then enable his king to slip into the gap.

2...Kf3!? (Diagram 7)

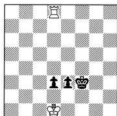


Diagram 7 (W)  
Black sets a trap

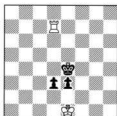


Diagram 8 (B)  
Black doesn't want to move

Note how 2...e2+ 3 Kd2 Kf3 4 Rxd3+ Kf2 5 Re3 loses easily and that instead Black has one sneaky trap to set.

3 Ke1!

The simplest. Certainly White is advised to avoid 3 Rxd3? Kf2 when in view of ...e3-e2+-e1Q he must concede his rook.

3...Ke4

Again advancing the pawns is of no use, as 3...d2+ 4 Kd1 Kf2 5 Rf8+ Kg3 6 Ke2 Kg4 7 Rf1 demonstrates. Granted though, Black is soon going to be forced to do something like that anyhow.

4 Rd7! (Diagram 8)

Now Black would rather 'pass' but in the rules of chess, alas, such a 'move' is not allowed!

4...d2+ 5 Ke2 Kf4 6 Rd4+ Ke5 7 Kxe3

and the d-pawn is next – White wins easily.

## That Sixth Rank Myth

We have just seen an example where a king and rook defeat a king and two connected pawns on the sixth rank. What then should we make of the frequently touted remark that 'two connected passed pawns on the sixth rank always defeat a rook'. Clearly that refers to instances where the defending king (i.e. the one paired with the rook) isn't on hand to help. Check out this following example.

### Example 16



**Diagram 9 (W)**  
Whoever is to move wins!



**Diagram 10 (B)**  
Touchdown imminent!

**(Diagram 9)** With Black on the move he could hold up the pawns with 1...Re7, after which his king would return to clean up. Alas, the pawns get to go first.

**1 d6 Kb4 2 e7**

Equally successful here would be 2 d7.

**2...Ra8**

If Black wants to try and play on, then 2...Ra1+ 3 Kf2 Rd1 4 e8Q Rxd6, or of course 2...Rd7 3 e8Q Rxd6, would survive longer. However, grovelling on with king and rook against king and queen is, as I've said before, no fun and should be a lost cause.

**3 d7 (Diagram 10)**

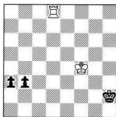
and White wins – either pawn is ready to promote. Having the white king up with the pawns will only help his cause, but irrespective of that we can conclude the following:



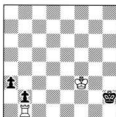
**TIP:** Two connected pawns on the sixth rank will defeat a rook provided the rook can't win one of the pawns immediately, the king partnering the rook can't have a significant input and the king with the pawns isn't detrimentally placed.

One would imagine that 'a significant input' would refer to the king being instantly active in the role of stopping the pawns. However, there is another way in which it can have an influence, as illustrated below.

## Example 17



**Diagram 11 (W)**  
Watch this space!



**Diagram 12 (B)**  
Black doesn't want to move!

**(Diagram 11) 1 Rd2+!**

As our previous rule concluded, the pawns are too far advanced to deal with directly. For example, 1 Rb8 a2 or 1 Ra8 b2.

**1...Kg1**

If 1...Kh1 then 2 Kg3 and it's a forced back rank mate next turn. Clearly that is a significant input! And while I'm here, 1...Kh3 leaves the monarch detrimentally placed because of 2 Rd3+ Kh4 3 Rxb3 when the remaining pawn is stopped in the nick of time, i.e. 3...a2 4 Ra3.

**2 Kf3! b2**

2...Kf1 allows mate in one, while 2...Kh1 3 Kg3! is again decisive. The line 2...a2 3 Rd1+ Kh2 4 Ra1! is similar to the text.

**3 Rd1+ Kh2 4 Rb1 (Diagram 12)**

Now after 4...a2 5 Rxb2+ both pawns fall. Unfortunately, moving the king and being mated by 5 Rh1 is the only alternative!

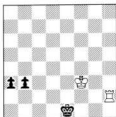
## Example 18

**(Diagram 13)** This example is very similar to the previous one. Here Black has the option of running his king to the queenside but, as seen in the note to Black's first move, this doesn't actually help his cause.

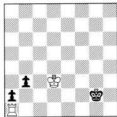
**1 Ke3 Kf1**

Or 1...Kd1 2 Kd3 Kc1 3 Kc3 and, having achieved this position due to

the continuous back rank mate threats, the pawns are now ripe to be eaten!



**Diagram 13 (W)**  
White utilises a mate threat



**Diagram 14 (B)**  
Threatening Kc3

**2 Kd3!**

Now the white king is close enough to the pawns to offer assistance in halting them.

**2...a2**

2...Kg1 loses after 3 Rd2 Kf1 4 Kc3.

**3 Rh1+ Kg2 4 Ra1! (Diagram 14) 4...b2**

Or else 5 Kc3 and the pawns would drop in succession anyway.

**5 Rxa2**

Pinning and hence winning the b-pawn.

## Rook versus more Pawns

The topics up for discussion in this section include situations in which the rook is up against several pawns. Of course there are millions of scenarios that could be dreamt up in this category, while factors such as how far advanced the pawns are and how strong they are in terms of whether they are connected or isolated certainly come into play. However, first up I'd have to observe that the title in itself is deceptive. One mustn't forget that we are really talking about king and rook versus king and pawns. The king with the rook must be able to have a major role if the rook is to triumph.

### Example 19



**TIP: The first step in these situations is to identify the 'danger' pawns.**

Though they are passed, clearly the doubled a-pawns are of little con-



cern to White right now. This is because they are isolated and could only prove to be a threat if:

- a) They (or one of them) get further up the board.
- b) The black king can assist in their advance so that they are not just picked off as soon as the white rook gets behind them.
- c) The white king is nowhere to be seen, i.e. on the other side of the board and unable to return in time to help out.

The d-pawn is also not much to worry about, but it is easy to envisage the connected h- and g-pawns having a big say. Hence the priority is to get the white king ready for action in that area.

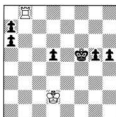


Diagram 15 (W)  
Pawns don't mean queens!



Diagram 16 (B)  
The rook is the boss

(Diagram 15) 1 Ke3!

**TIP:** It is nearly always beneficial for the king partnering the rook to be in close proximity to its enemy number. This reduces the influence it can have in ushering the pawns forward

Also sensible here is 1 Ke2!. Usually it makes more sense to centralise the king. On e3 the white king can get to the g- and h-files just as quickly as it can from e2 and on e3 obviously it has more 'shouldering' ability. The downside (not effective here) is that Black could try to distract the king by offering a pawn. Under different conditions ...d4+ could be a worthwhile sacrifice to gain time.

**WARNING:** You should always take care as one casual move could undo so much hard work.

Okay, again very obvious advice but let's see what could happen if White ignored king activation in favour of unnecessarily premature pawn grabbing: 1 Ra8?! h4 2 Rxa7 Kf4 3 Rxa6?! h3 4 Ke2?! h2 5 Rh6 Kg3 (threatening ...Kg2 and ...h1Q) 6 Kf1? (actually 6 Rh5! g4 7 Ke3 Kg2 8 Kf4 g3 9 Kg4 h2 10 Rxd5 h1Q 11 Rd2+ demonstrates how an active rook can seemingly work miracles; however, it's clear that after

initial errors, accurate play is required just to hold the draw) 6...d4. With the white king and rook tied up there is no satisfactory way to halt this pawn and Black will win.

#### 1...h4 2 Rd8

It's not so much the pawn that this rook is after but the chance to 'cut off' the black king.

#### 2...Ke5 3 Re8+ Kf5 4 Rd8 (Diagram 16)

Showing who is boss! Of course this repetition is not necessary but it was useful to demonstrate that, in contrast to the belief of the majority of weaker players, it is White who is in the driving seat in this materially imbalanced situation.

#### 4...Ke5 5 Kf3 d4

Please note that I'm not categorically stating that White is winning this example all along; I'm simply reiterating just how powerful rooks are in endgames. I'm also warning against over-valuing pawns when making a comparison with pieces, although here they can obviously make a nuisance of themselves. Specifically, it is quite possible that 5...a5! may keep Black's chances alive. Indeed, 6 Kg4 d4 may draw as it looks difficult for White to monitor all of the passed pawns as well keeping his king close to its opposite number.

A useful exercise is to study this one yourself. Often such positions end in a race. Can a king get back to assist its rook in rounding up a dangerous passed pawn or does a draw have to be forced by the rook before the defending king can usher the pawn home? I can tell you that 5...a5!? offers some fascinating variations.

#### 6 Re8+ Kf5

Upon 6...Kd5 7 Rg8 the h- and g-pawns drop quickly and the important thing is that the white king is still easily close enough to help out with the d-pawn and even the a-pawns.

#### 7 Re4! (Diagram 17)



Diagram 17 (B)  
Rook domination

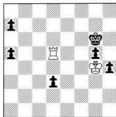


Diagram 18 (B)  
Good technique

Excellent play. The rook is an absolute star.

### 7...d3

A different road would be 7...h3 8 Rxd4 h2 9 Kg2 Ke5 10 Ra4. White still has plenty of time here, and the only way that things could go wrong is if he were to dilly-dally and the black king made it over the help an a-pawn with the white king still languishing on the kingside. In this variation that is a highly unlikely outcome seeing as White is about to pick off the a-pawns in succession!

### 8 Rd4 a5

White has all the other pawns under lock and key and, as I stated earlier, without the black king offering support a solitary black a-pawn doesn't become a concern for some while.

### 9 Rd5+!

Forcing the king back – a good habit to get into.

**TIP: Always look out for opportunities to force the opponent's king back and away from the action.**

### 9...Kg6 10 Kg4! (Diagram 18)

To be honest, White can win pretty much however he likes now. Nevertheless, this shows good technique. The a- and d-pawns are going nowhere and all resistance will be broken when the g- and h-pawns are eliminated.

### 10...Kf6 11 Rxd3 a4 12 Ra3 Kg6 13 Rxa4 Kf6 14 Ra6+ Ke5 15 Kxg5 h3 16 Rxa7 h2 17 Rh7

and White wins. I told you the rook is a good piece. Unless Black resigns beforehand, all five black pawns will be successfully removed!

## Example 20



**Diagram 19 (W)**  
White has a pawn!



**Diagram 20 (B)**  
Fulfilling its destiny!

In our previous example White was rightly favourite for the full point, but he did have to work quite hard. White has an easier plan in Diagram 19, in which he is in the arguably more realistic situation of still having a pawn left himself.

### 1 Rd7!

Black currently has four passed pawns which White should be able to stop, and indeed he could have taken one immediately. However, a very early tip in this book was to try and create a passed pawn as soon as possible. Black's d-pawn is not a threat and so White gets straight on the case of removing Black's queenside pawns.

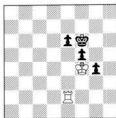
### 1...h4 2 Rxb7 f5 3 Rxa7 h3+ 4 Kh2 f4 5 a4 f3 6 Kg3 (Diagram 20)

White wins easily. The black pawns are blocked and White can concentrate on promoting his own pawn. The cumbersome black king is powerless to do anything about this. Even if it could get remotely close, the white rook would cut it off a file or two from its desired destination. White's task in this example was made infinitely easier thanks to the presence of a pawn of his own.

## Rook versus three connected Pawns

Although it occurs relatively rarely in practice, as many seem intrigued by the prospect I will just say a few words about the fascinating scenario of a rook (and king!) versus king and three connected pawns.

### Example 21



**Diagram 21 (W)**  
Pawns under control



**Diagram 22 (B)**  
Sitting pretty

**(Diagram 21)** Here the black pawns are in a nice chain, but it soon becomes clear that they are not yet far enough advanced to cause White any problems.



**1 Re1!**

**TIP:** Always be on the lookout for the time when a 'waiting move' is best.

Essentially the text 'freezes' White's position. Now Black must give way, thus allowing an infiltration.

**1...Kf7 2 Ke5 Ke7**

Upon 2...g3, the cheeky upstart is eliminated via 3 Rg1.

**3 Ra1! (Diagram 22)**

As usual, the rook makes a menace of itself. Now the black king is in danger of being trapped on the back rank.

**3...Kf7 4 Ra7+ Kg6 5 Kxe6**

This is perfectly acceptable. Black's pawns are three tempi away from being abreast on the sixth rank (the situation we know is required for the pawns to defeat the rook). That aside, the white king is not far from its black counterpart.

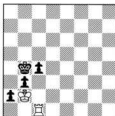
**5...f4 6 Ke5 Kg5**

**6...f3 7 Kf4 f2 8 Ra1 Kh5 9 Kg3** is also to no avail.

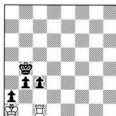
**7 Rg7+ Kh4 8 Kxf4**

and the g-pawn is next – White wins.

## Example 22



**Diagram 23 (W)**  
White aims to draw



**Diagram 24 (W)**  
Stalemate tricks?

**(Diagram 23)** In the first chapter it was asserted that 'passed pawns are meant to be pushed'. This position would certainly provide the unprepared with a headache!

**1 Ka1!**

This is the only move that saves White. Taking a look at the alternatives we have:

a) 1 Rc3 a1Q+! and the white king is overworked with 2 Kxa1 Kxc3.  
 b) 1 Rxc4+ Kxc4 2 Ka1 (White may feel that he has some stalemate chances but a little subtlety wins Black this king and pawn ending) 2...Kb4 3 Kb2 a1Q+! (were the a-pawn absent, White would have to choose 4 Kb1 here in order to be able to retain the 'opposition'; alas, he can't ignore the queen!) 4 Kxa1 Ka3 5 Kb1 b2 6 Kc2 Ka2 and the pawn will promote.

c) 1 Rh1 c3+ 2 Ka1 Ka3 and the devastating ...b3-b2+ is inevitable.

**1...Ka3**

Read on to see what becomes of 1...c3.

**2 Rc3!**

Pinning the b-pawn and thus preventing 2...b2+.



**TIP: As a defensive resource, always look out for stalemate possibilities.**

'Where did that come from' I hear you ask! Well, first note that 2 Rc2! was the other available defence. That would cover the b2-square and the major point is that the game could be stopped after stalemate with 2...bxc2.

**2...Kb4 3 Rc1 c3 (Diagram 24) 4 Rxc3!**

Totally justifying my last tip!

**4...Kxc3**

with stalemate. Actually, I've just noticed something amusing. If we revisit the Diagrams 23 and 24 but instead with Black to move (it was White in the example), then we can see that the first leads to the other. Yes, 1...c3+ is winning because after 2 Rxc3 again there is that overloading 2...a1Q+, as 3 Kxa1 Kxc3 4 Kb1 b2 is easy. Hence the better practical try for White is 2 Ka1 (Diagram 24) 2...b2+ 3 Kxa2. Now when taking the rook Black must be careful what he promotes to as both a queen and a rook would leave it as stalemate. Hence he should bring into play a new knight or bishop when the win is trivial.

Don't worry, I'm not going to say



**WARNING: Beware of under-promotions!**

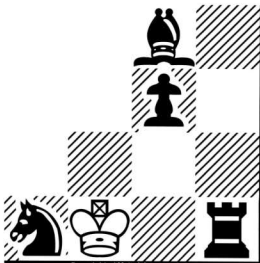
Oops, sorry I just did!

## Chapter Three

---

# Rook and Pawn vs. Rook

- Defending King on the Case
- Defending King out of Town



When learning rook and pawn endgames it is really a good idea to start with the absolute basics. By this I'm referring to scenarios in which both sides have a rook but one player has a pawn too. If only rooks were involved then a defender could adequately prevent a pawn from promoting simply by getting behind it. However, the presence of kings naturally complicates things. Essentially, I'm going to split this chapter into two parts: one in which the defending king is able to blockade the pawn and the other where it cannot.

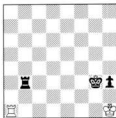
## Defending King on the Case

By this, I'm referring to the defending king being able to have an active role in blockading the enemy pawn. Within this category I want to discuss two types of pawn: the outside pawn (a-, b-, g- and h-) and the central pawn (c-, d-, e- and f-).

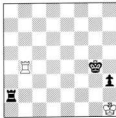
### The Outside Pawn

When blockaded, a rook's pawn provides fewer winning chances than any other pawn.

#### Example 23



**Diagram 1 (W)**  
Sit tight!



**Diagram 2 (B)**  
Going nowhere!

(Diagram 1) Without the rooks it is a simple draw. The presence of rooks, though, doesn't enhance Black's winning chances one iota!

**1 Rc1**

Seeing as Black is threatening nothing, there is no reason whatsoever for White to alter his defensive formation. Hence the rook stays on the back rank, where of course it fulfils the important duty of preventing mate.

**1...Ra3 2 Rb1 Ra2 3 Rb3+**



In fact Black isn't threatening anything anyhow, so if he wants White could also sit tight, for example 3 Rc1 Rh2+ 4 Kg1 Rg2+ 5 Kh1 and Black can do nothing to make progress.

**3...Kg4 4 Rb4+ Kg3 5 Rb3+ Kg4 6 Rb4+ (Diagram 2) 6...Kf5**

The black king has nowhere to hide. It sets about eliminating the checks by reducing the distance between itself and the rook. Alas, that enables White to adhere to the golden rule (not that this is a remotely critical situation).

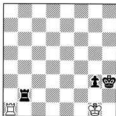
**7 Rh4**

Yes, it's 'rook behind passed pawn' time and now this one is doomed.

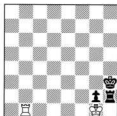
**7...Ra3 8 Kh2**

with a draw after Rxh3.

## Example 24



**Diagram 3 (W)**  
Acceptably passive



**Diagram 4 (W)**  
A losing attempt!

(Diagram 3) The knight's pawn at least offers some cover for the attacking king, but providing the defender is sensible, the winning chances are still extremely limited.

**1 Rc1**

**TIP:** When defending against a rook's pawn or a knight's pawn, a perfectly acceptable defence is to keep the king on the 'queening square' and the rook 'passively' guarding the back rank.

We have already seen and will continue to see active rooks buzzing all around the board, checking the opponent's king, attacking pawns and all sorts. Here the white rook remains comparatively passive but under these conditions it is an adequate solution.

**1...Ra2 2 Rb1 Rg2+ 3 Kh1 Rh2+ 4 Kg1 Ra2**

Ironically the only serious winning attempt is a more-than-serious



losing attempt! Check out 4...g2?? (Diagram 4).

Now Black threatens ...Rh1+, but 5 Rb3+! Kg4 6 Kxh2 is not what he is looking for!

**5 Rc1 g2 6 Rc3+ Kg4 7 Rb3**

The other easy draw option was 7 Rc4+ Kh3 8 Rc3+ Kg4 9 Rc4+. The king has nowhere to hide and 9...Kf3 10 Rc3+ Kf4 11 Rc4+ Ke3 12 Rc3+ Kd4 13 Rg3 bags that pawn.

**7...Rc2 8 Ra3**

with a draw. The king is cut off from the pawn and hence there is no way for Black to make progress.

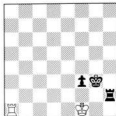
## The Centre Pawn

Included in this category is the bishop's pawn. As examples with e- and f-pawns are essentially the same as ones with d- and e-pawns, this is where I will start.

### Example 25



**Diagram 5 (W)**  
Introducing the h-file!



**Diagram 6 (W)**  
The white rook can't help

(Diagram 5) **1 Kg1**

The truth is that White is already lost in this position. It is clearly too late for the white rook to try and get active, i.e. 1 Ra8 (hoping to check the black king from behind) 1...Rb1 mate. Meanwhile, the consistently passive 1 Rc1 Rh2 is what 1 Kg1 attempts (unsuccessfully) to avoid.

**1...Rg2+!**

1 Kg1 constituted White's best try as after 1...Rh2 he could at least pin the f-pawn with 2 Ra3. Of course Black might only be teasing, or perhaps he might find the winning plan of 2...Rb2 3 Ra1 Rg2+ 4 Kf1 Rh2 next time round!

2 Kf1

2 Kh1 Rh2+ 3 Kg1 f2+ transposes to the main line and is curtains!

2...Rh2 (Diagram 6)

And here we see the critical difference between this situation and our previous two examples. The white rook is unable to cover the whole of the back rank as the black rook swings to the other side of the pawn in order to threaten mate on h1.

3 Kg1 f2+ 4 Kf1 Rh1+

and Black wins.

**WARNING: Passive defence does not work against a centre pawn.**

However, one must not panic and vow here and now never to be a pawn down. First of all, because you'll never be able to uphold this vow(!) and, secondly, because there are other defensive techniques available.

## Example 26



Diagram 7 (W)  
Aiming for Philidor



Diagram 8 (B)  
Getting ready to check

(Diagram 7) In this position White can draw with careful play.

1 Ra3!

**NOTE: This is known as the 'Philidor technique'. Remembering this idea will save you many half-points.**

The text prevents the enemy king from advancing. If it is allowed to do so then Black will win, for example 1 Rc1? (this passive defence will fail) 1...Kf3 2 Ra1 (it is too late for 2 Rc8 now: 2...Rb1+ 3 Kd2 e3+ 4 Kd3 Rd1+ 5 Kc2 e2 6 Rf8+ Kg4 7 Rg8+ Kf5 8 Rf8+ Kg6 9 Re8 e1Q) 2...e3 3 Rc1 Rh2 and, just as we saw with the f-pawn in the previous example, the white rook is powerless to help out.

1...e3

There is no other way for Black to try to progress. Where it is currently placed, the black rook stops the white king from advancing. Even if it could get to d3, White could (though he wouldn't forced to) just swap rooks in order to enter a drawn king and pawn ending.

This text carries the threat of ...Kf3, after which the white rook is forced to retreat. However, whilst it can prevent the check on b1, the recurring theme is that it can do nothing about ...Rh2-h1.

## 2 Ra8! (Diagram 8)

White must continue actively. From here the white rook has fantastic hassling options.

### 2...Kf3

The white rook was able to venture away because (aside from ...Kf3) there was no immediate threat, for example 2...Rb1+ 3 Ke2 Rb2+ 4 Ke1 and nothing's doing.

### 3 Rf8+ Ke4 4 Re8+ Kd3 5 Rd8+

with an easy draw as there is no hiding place for the black king.

It is completely clear that understanding and being able to employ this third rank (Philidor's) technique could salvage you a draw or two, but occasionally you may not be able to reach our basic position (for example, if you have just captured to liquidate a pair of pawns, reducing the situation from 2 v 1 to 1 v 0).

## Example 27

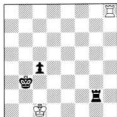


Diagram 9 (W)  
Time for a 'short' story

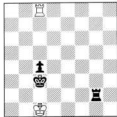


Diagram 10 (W)  
A critical decision!

(Diagram 9) In this case White has to employ more subtlety in his defence.

### 1 Re8!

It is important that White doesn't get confused with the 'Philidor' po-

sition here. The black king has already advanced to White's third rank and so 1 Rh3+? fails dismally to 1...c3. Black is threatening the back rank mate and 2 Rh1 Ra2 should by now be 'old hat'.

I will not confuse you further. 1 Rc8!, logically placing the rook behind the passed pawn, is the best move.

### 1...Kc3 (Diagram 10)

It should be clear to you that after 1...c3 the white rook can check forever (well, you know what I mean!). As for 1...Rg1+ 2 Kd2, well then White's king and rook combine to prevent the pawn advance. White threatens the checks again and so Black has nothing better than a repetition via 2...Rg2+ 3 Kc1.

### 2 Kb1!

White had a big decision to make here and this is absolutely the correct one. As 2 Rd8 Rg1+ 3 Rd1 Rxd1+ 4 Kxd1 Kb2 is of no use, White had to move his king.

**WARNING:** For a successful defence the king must go to the short side of the pawn.

The 'short' side is the side with the fewer files and the reason why soon becomes clear.

### 2...Rg1+ 3 Ka2 Rc1

This may look like a funny move until you observe that 3...Kd3 4 Kb2 Rg2+ 5 Kc1 Kc3 6 Kb1 is just going round in circles! The text prepares ...Kd2 and the chance to advance the pawn.

### 4 Rh8! (Diagram 11)

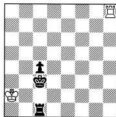


Diagram 11 (B)  
Preparing to check

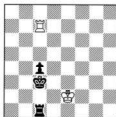


Diagram 12 (W)  
No checking distance

Chapter one tendered the tip about bearing in mind the sideways check, and utilising this concept here is the only way for White to achieve a draw.

### 4...Rd1



Preparing to block the checks that save the day as shown in the following variation: 4...Kd2 5 Rh2+ Kd3 6 Rh3+ Ke2 7 Kb2 Rd1 8 Kc3 Rc1+ 9 Kb2 Rg1 10 Kc3 Rg4 11 Rh8 Ke3 12 Rc8. What should be apparent there is that the white rook had plenty of 'checking distance'. In order for the king to close the gap it had to come too far out of position. This is essentially the reason why the defending king must choose the 'short' side over the 'long' side.



**NOTE:** When the passed pawn in question is on the d- or e-file then there is just about enough checking distance if the king selects the 'long' side. However, I would recommend the defending king use the 'short' side every time.

5 Re8! Kd3 6 Kb2 Rd2+ 7 Kc1 Rh2 8 Re7!

White holds his ground, with the text just being a 'passing move'.



**TIP:** When not wanting to alter your defensive set-up, try to employ a minimalist rook move as a 'waiting' move.

8...Kc3 9 Kb1!

Once again correctly selecting the 'short' side of the enemy passed pawn. While we're here, though, let's take a look at the probable consequence of opting for the 'long' side instead: 9 Kd1? Rh1+ 10 Ke2 Rc1! (Diagram 12). 10...Kb3? 11 Kd2 makes no progress and perhaps after 11...Rh2+ 12 Kc1 Kc3 White might see the light via 13 Kb1!. But 10...Rc1! wins after 11 Ra7 (the problem with 11 Rh7 now is that White's own king drastically reduces his ability to check the enemy monarch) 11...Kb2 12 Rb7+ Ke2 13 Ra7 c3 14 Ra8 Rb1 15 Rc8 Rb7 16 Rc6 Kb2 17 Kd3 Rd7+ 18 Kc4 c2 19 Rb6+ Kc1 20 Rh6 (or 20 Kc3 Kd1) 20...Rb7 (facilitating the black king's escape from in front of the pawn via the b-file) 21 Kc3 Kb1 and the pawn will promote next turn.



**TIP:** Whilst it may be vital to know the correct 'short side' drawing technique should it arise, it is equally as important (i.e. it's worth half-a-point) to know how to punish the incorrect 'long side' defender.

9...Rh1+ 10 Ka2 Rc1 11 Rh7

And here we are again!

11...Rd1 12 Re7!

White has demonstrated that he has the required drawing technique.

## Defending King out of Town

Defending rooks can be a real nuisance to the attacker, but in the vast majority of cases the defending king is required to have an input in order to achieve a satisfactory defence. It couldn't be worse placed than in the following example.

# starting out: rook endgames

Endgames with kings, rooks and pawns are by far the most common type – it is estimated that rook endgames are reached in nearly one in five of all chess games. It's clear that a firm understanding of them is required in order to become self-assured in this typical phase of the game. And yet it is exactly this area in which many players drop precious points or half-points through a lack of either technique or understanding.

In this easy-to-read guide, Grandmaster and well-known endgames expert Chris Ward begins with the absolute fundamentals of rook endgames. He gradually arms the reader with the indispensable knowledge and confidence needed to move onto slightly trickier positions. Using examples from practical play, Ward highlights the correct plans as well as the typical mistakes made by both attacker and defender. As is commonplace with the renowned Starting Out series, there are an abundance of notes, tips and warnings throughout the book to help the improving player. Starting Out: Rook Endgames is perfect for those who have previously honed their chess skills with the earlier books Starting Out in Chess, Tips for Young Players and Improve Your Endgame Play.

- Covers all crucial rook endings
- Easy step-by-step guide to better endgame play
- Ideal for the improving player
- User-friendly layout to help readers absorb the key ideas

**Chris Ward** is a Grandmaster and a former British Champion. He is also a highly successful coach and a popular author thanks to his attractive and humorous style. His earlier works for Everyman include *Starting Out: The Nimzo-Indian* and the very popular *It's Your Move* series.

ISBN 1-85744-374-8



UK £13.99

US \$18.95

[www.everymanchess.com](http://www.everymanchess.com)

published in the UK by Gloucester Publishers plc  
distributed in the US by the Globe Pequot Press

**EVERYMAN CHESS**

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

# starting out: rook endgames

CHRIS WARD



Copyrighted Material

**EVERYMAN CHESS**