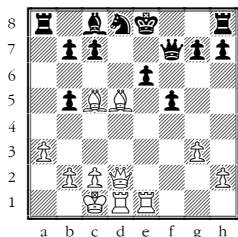


3. Castle your King into safety

At the start of the game your King is on a central file, but this is a dangerous place to be. So, castle into safety at the side of the board.

Why is it risky to leave your King in the middle of the back row?

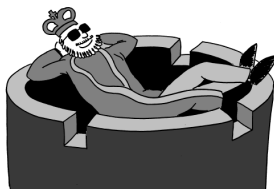
- All the opponent's pieces will be trying to get to the centre, where they can easily reach your King.
- Also, the centre files are the ones most likely to become open, and the King can be attacked by Rooks. The King may be mated or lose the chance to castle. You may lose pieces trying to defend your King.



In this diagram, the White Queen and Rooks are attacking the Black King. The poor King is stuck in the middle because the White Bishop on c5 stops the King from castling into safety.

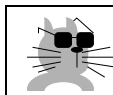
You really must get your King out of the danger zone and safely castled.

Castling also gets your Rook into the game, near the centre where it can support Pawns and be ready when files are opened.



When you are castling, make sure you move your King first, and then the Rook. You are allowed to move both at the same time, but it is safer to move the King first, two squares towards the Rook.

Never move your Rook first, because your opponent can make you play just the Rook move, leaving your King where it was. So move your King first. Castling is a King move!

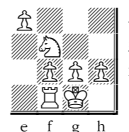


Know how to castle properly: King first, then the Rook.

As we have just said, castling is supposed to make your King safe. But you need to take care what you do with the other pieces around your castled King.

Can you recognise safe castled King's positions?

The best castled King's position



Pawns are a good barrier to protect your King. This is one of the safest positions to have.

The Pawns are a fine castle wall for the King, so it's best to leave them where they are, or move only one of them just one square forward.