

# The Bishop and Knight Checkmate

The bishop and knight checkmate in chess is the checkmate of a lone king which can be forced by a bishop, knight, and king. With perfect play, checkmate can be forced in at most thirty-three moves from any starting position where the defender cannot immediately win one of the pieces, and stalemate is avoidable.

Checkmate can only be forced in the corner of the same colour as the squares on which the bishop moves. An opponent who is aware of this will try to stay first in the center of the board, and then in the wrong-coloured corner. The checkmating process can be divided into three phases:

1. Driving the opposing king to the edge of the board.
2. Forcing the king to the appropriate corner.
3. Delivering a checkmate.

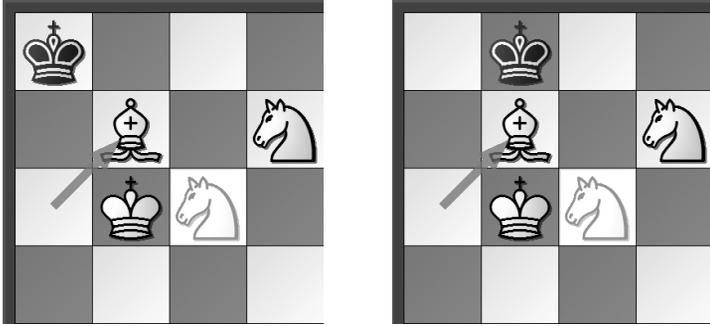
In the following hierarchical model, to successfully deliver a checkmate in the KBNK endgame, the chess-player is instructed to always try to execute the highest *achievable* goal listed below. The goals are listed in order of preference, goal 1 being the most preferred. The chess-player is expected to know how to avoid stalemate, piece blunders, and threefold repetitions. Apart from descriptions of the goals we also illustrate most of the concepts behind them.

1. Deliver checkmate.
2. Prepare the knight for checkmate.
3. Restrain black to a minimal area beside the right corner.
4. Build a barrier and squeeze black king's area.
5. Approach black from the center.
6. Block the way to the wrong corner.
7. Push black towards the right corner.
8. Push black towards the edge.
9. Approach with the king.
10. Bring the knight closer.
11. Keep the kings close.

See the following pages for further explanations. You will find example games containing automatically generated instructions at the following website:  
<http://www.milan-vidmar.si/KBNK/kbnk.games.htm>

### Goal 1: Deliver Checkmate

A checkmating procedure is the following: two consecutive checks with the minor pieces are delivered, the later one resulting in one of the two types of checkmate positions shown in Fig. 1.



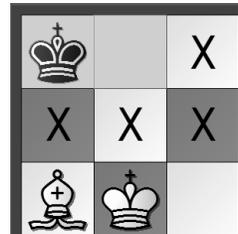
**Fig. 1.** Checkmate can be delivered by the bishop or the knight, always in the corner of the bishop's colour ("right" corner). Each arrow indicates last bishop's move.

### Goal 2: Prepare the Knight for Checkmate

This goal applies when the king and the bishop restrain the defender's king to only two squares: the corner square and a square on the edge of the board right beside the corner square (see Fig. 2). The task of the attacker is to prepare the knight so that it is ready for the checkmating procedure.

### Goal 3: Restrain Defending King to A Minimal Area Beside The Right Corner

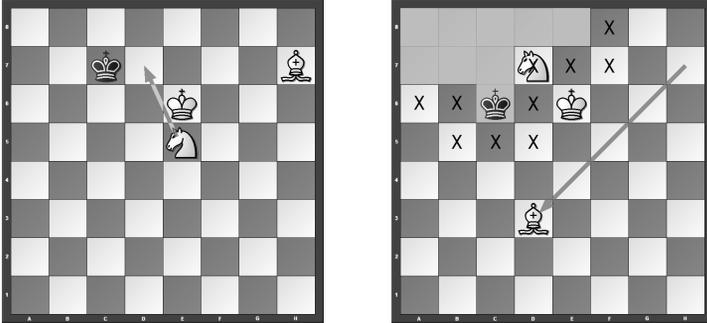
The task of the attacker is to take squares away from the defending king until it is driven to the edge of the board, and consequently to the corner square. The chess-player is advised to aim for the type of position shown in Fig. 2 where the king and the bishop restrain the defending king to a minimal area beside the right corner.



**Fig. 2.** A minimal area.

### Goal 4: Build A Barrier and Squeeze Defending King

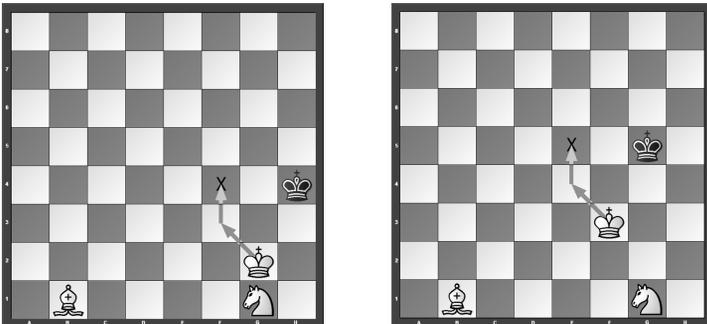
The attacker is advised to build a *barrier* that holds the defending king in an area beside the right-coloured corner. When such barrier is built, the attacker should aim to squeeze the constrained area in order to further restrain the king:



**Fig. 3.** In the position shown in the left diagram, the attacking side could build the barrier in the following manner: 1.Ne5-d7 Kc7-c6 2.Bh7-d3!, leading to the position on the right. The area around the right-coloured corner to which the defending king is confined, could be squeezed further, e.g., after 2...Kc6-c7 3.Bd3-b5.

### Goal 5: Approach Defending King from Central Side

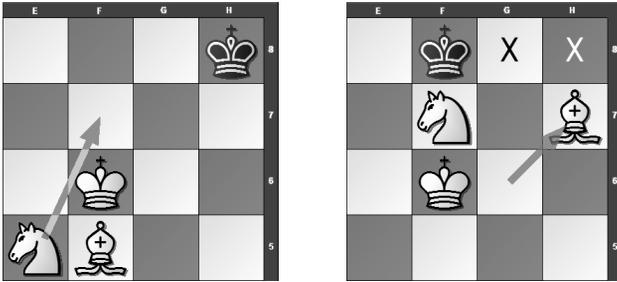
A part of the basic strategy is to drive the opposing king to the edge of the board. In order to achieve this, it is beneficial for the attacking side to occupy squares closer to the center of the chessboard than the defending king does. The attacker should aim to approach the opposing king from the central side of the chessboard:



**Fig. 4.** White king aims to approach the opponent's king from the central side of the board. By playing 1.Kg2-f3 (left diagram) white decreases the distance to the square beside black king that lies on a straight line between black king and the center of the board. If black responds with 1...Kh4-g5 (right diagram), white again follows this rule and moves towards e5 with 2.Kf3-e4, centralising the white king.

## Goal 6: Block the Way to the Wrong Corner

When defender's king is already pushed to the edge of the board, the attacker's task is to constrain as much as possible the defending king's way to the wrong-coloured corner. At the same time, the attacker should try to keep restraining the king to the edge of the board. Fig. 5 shows an example of a typical position that often occurred in simulated games.

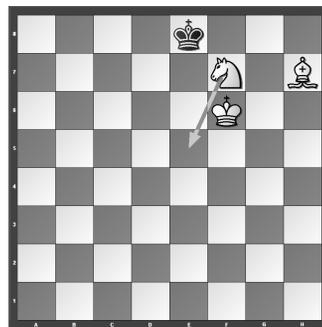


**Fig. 5.** In the position on the left, white pieces lure the defending king out of the wrong corner: 1.Ne5-f7+ Kh8-g8 2.Bf5-g6 Kf8 (note that this is the only available square, since h8 is attacked by the knight) 3.Bh7! The last move in this sequence takes under control square g8, and sets up the blockade one square farther from the wrong corner.

## Goal 7: Push Defending King Towards The Right Corner

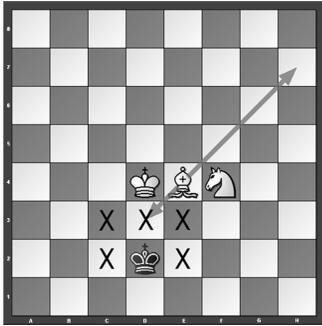
The attacker is advised to push the defending king towards the right-coloured corner, at the same time not allowing it to move further away from the edge of the board. The diagram in Fig. 6 shows the relevant example for this rule.

**Fig. 6.** Black king's distance from the right corner (a8) should decrease, and black king should not be allowed to move away from the edge of the chess-board. This is achieved by the move 1.Nf7-e5, and black cannot resist white's goals: after 1...Ke8-f8 2.Ne5-d7+ Kf8-e8 3.Kf6-e6 black should move closer to the right corner with the only available move 3...Ke8-d8.



### Goal 8: Push Defending King Towards the Edge

The attacker is advised to arrange the pieces in such way so that the defending king is pushed towards the edge of the board, and cannot immediately increase the distance from the edge (see Fig. 7).



**Fig. 7.** Due to coordinated activity of the white pieces, if it was black to move, the black king would no longer be able to stay on the second rank. By moving the bishop on a safe square along the b1-h7 diagonal, white leaves the move to the opponent, forcing the black king towards the edge. Afterwards, white king approaches closer to the black king, restraining it to the edge of the board.

### Goal 9: Approach With the King

The attacker is advised to move the king closer to the opposing king.

### Goal 10: Bring the Knight Closer

The attacker is advised to bring the knight closer to the defending king.

### Default Goal: Keep the Kings Close

If none of the above goals is achievable, at least keep the king as close as possible to the defending king, and - if possible - strive for the opposition of the kings.