

BOOK 2 OF THE LITTLE EXPLORERS LIBRARY

First Moves

The board, the pieces, and your first puzzles





This book belongs to

For the grown-up: one page at a time, five minutes, read together. Every puzzle has one right answer, and the answers are at the back. Say the names of the squares out loud: a letter, then a number. That is the whole secret.

For the explorer: this is Pip, and this is Nell. They are going to show you their board.

THE BOARD

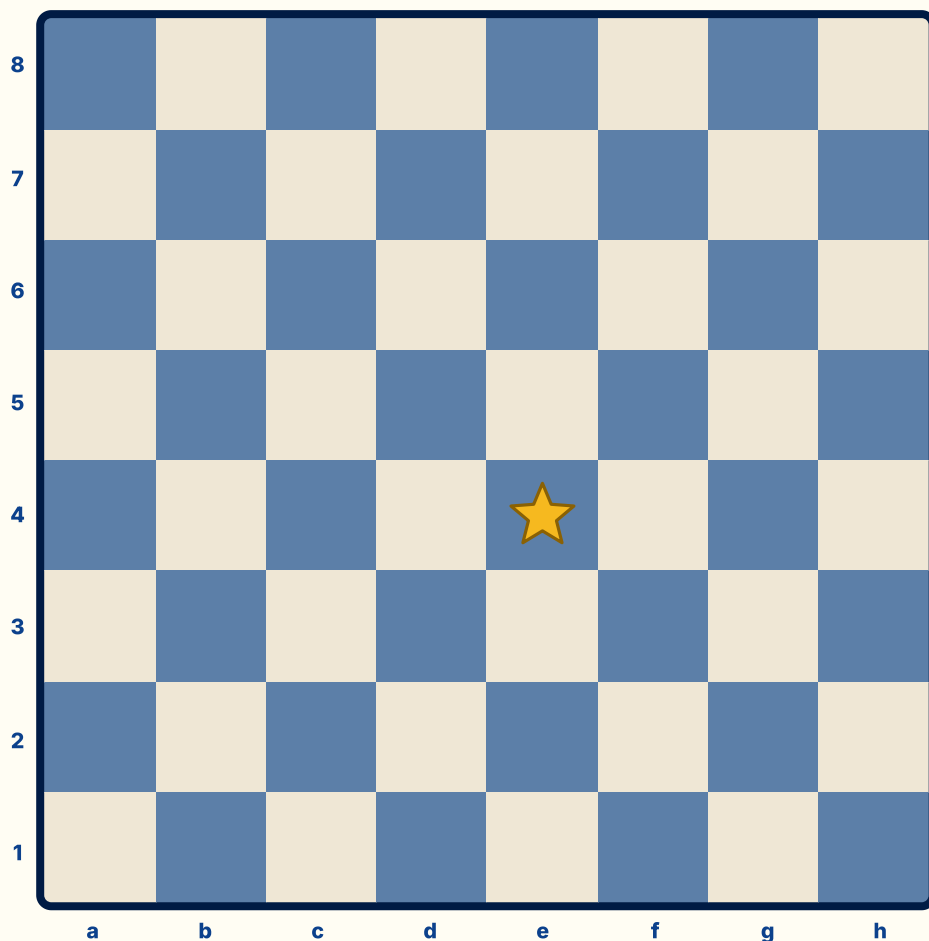
Sixty-four squares, and every one has a name

A chessboard has 64 squares. Light ones and dark ones, taking turns, like a chequered floor.

Every square has a name, like a seat in the cinema: a letter from the bottom and a number from the side.

The star is on **e4**. Run your finger along the bottom to the letter e, then up to the number 4.

Now find **a1**. It is in the corner, and it is a dark square.



THE PIECES

Six friends, and what to call them



Pawn
8 EACH



Rook
2 EACH



Knight
2 EACH



Bishop
2 EACH



Queen
1 EACH



King
1 EACH

Each side has 16 pieces: 8 pawns, 2 rooks, 2 knights, 2 bishops, 1 queen and 1 king. Say the six names out loud, then say them backwards.

SETTING UP

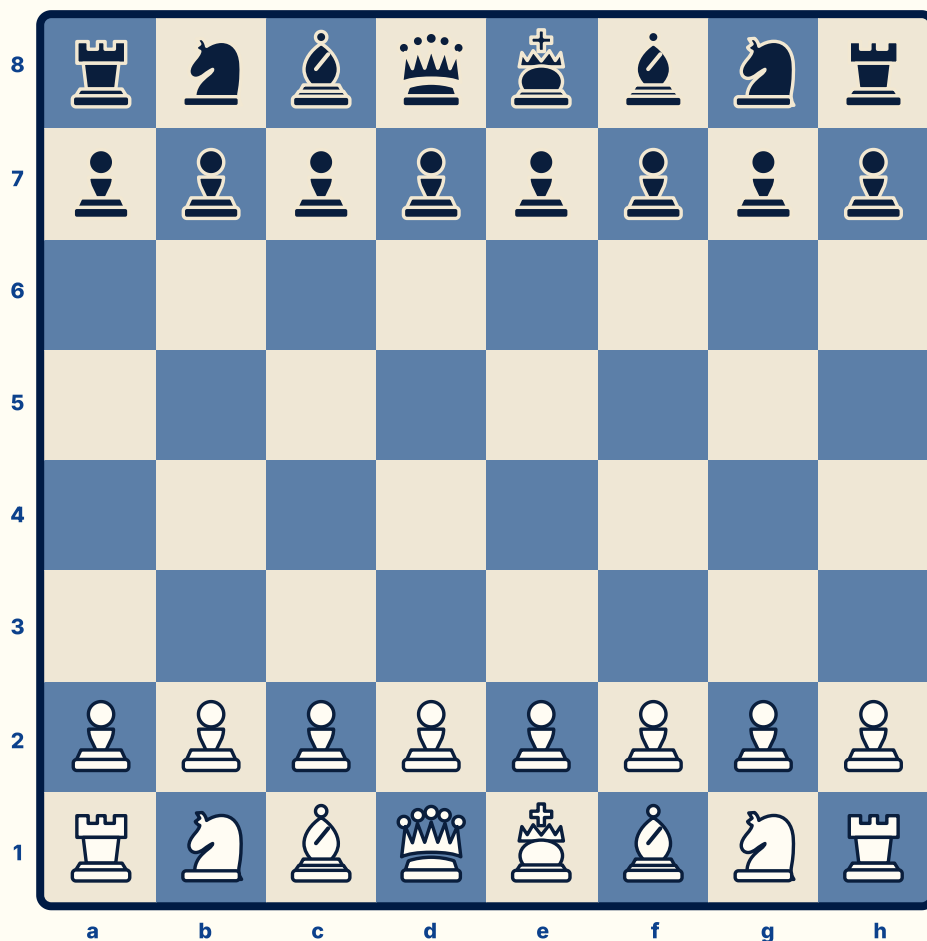
Everybody in their place

The pawns stand in a row in front, like a little wall.

Behind them, from the corners in: rook, knight, bishop. Then the queen and the king in the middle.

The queen stands on her own colour. The white queen on a light square, the black queen on a dark one. Look at the board and check.

Find both queens. Then find both kings. The white king starts on **e1** and the black king on **e8**. Say both out loud: the letter, then the number.





THE PAWN

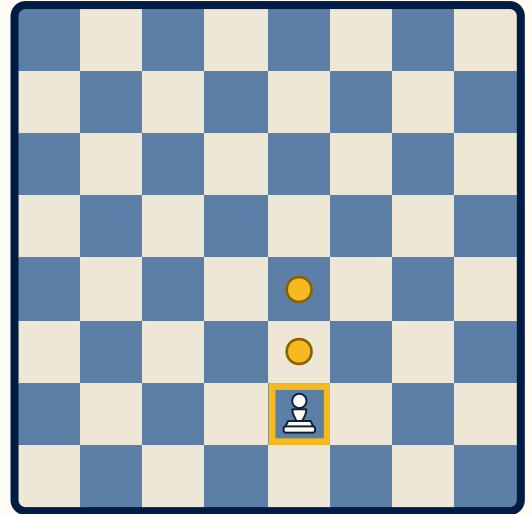
One square forward. Two on its very first move.

This is Pip. Pip is a pawn.

A pawn walks forward, one square at a time. It never walks backwards, and it never walks sideways.

On its very first move, a pawn may take two steps instead of one, because it is excited.

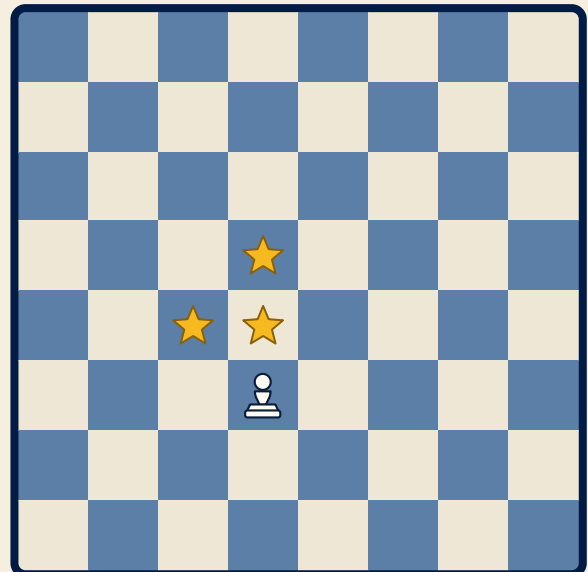
WHERE IT CAN GO



★ PUZZLE

Where can Pip walk?

Pip has already moved once. Only one star is a square Pip can walk to. Which one?





THE ROOK

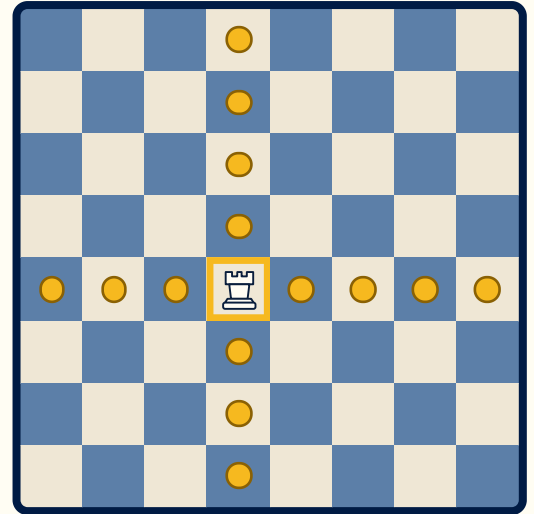
Straight lines: up, down or across, as far as it likes.

The rook looks like a little castle tower.

It slides in straight lines: up, down, left or right. It can go one square or all the way across the board.

It cannot go slantways, and it cannot jump over anything.

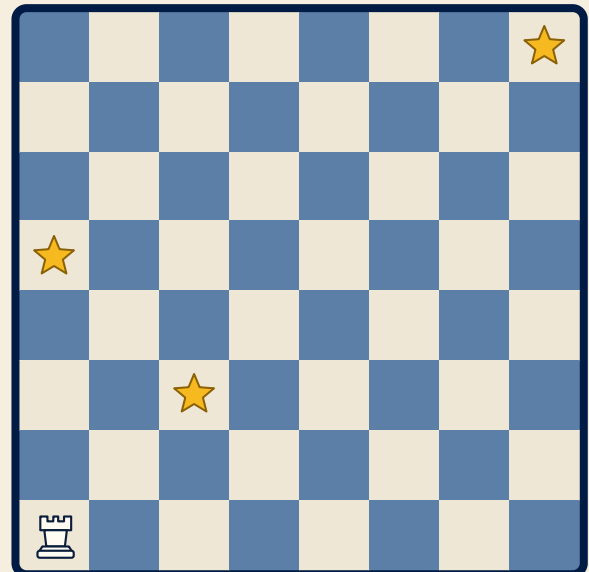
WHERE IT CAN GO



★ PUZZLE

The rook's road

The rook is in the corner. Only one star is on a straight road from the rook. Which one?





THE BISHOP

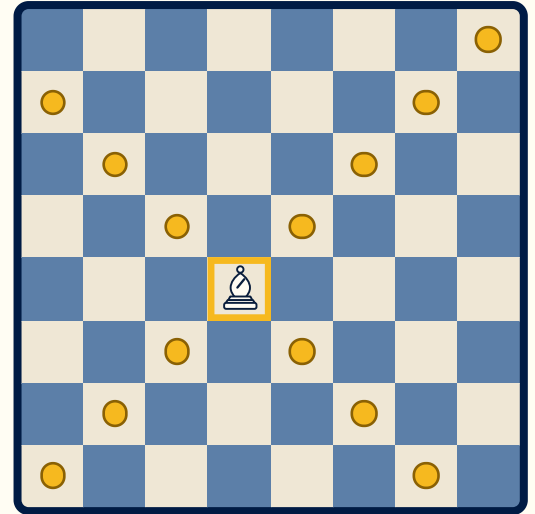
Slantways, as far as it likes. It always stays on its own colour.

The bishop has a pointy hat.

It slides slantways, along the diagonals, as far as it likes.

Look: a bishop that starts on a light square stays on light squares for ever. It can never touch a dark one.

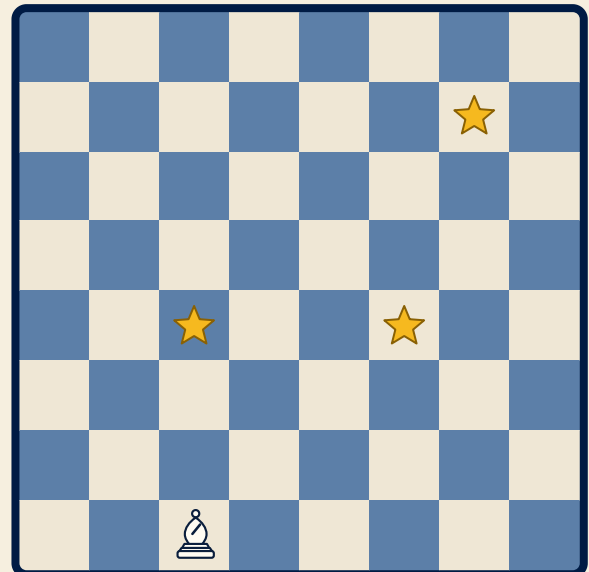
WHERE IT CAN GO



★ PUZZLE

The bishop's slide

Only one star is on a slantways line from the bishop. Which one?





THE KNIGHT

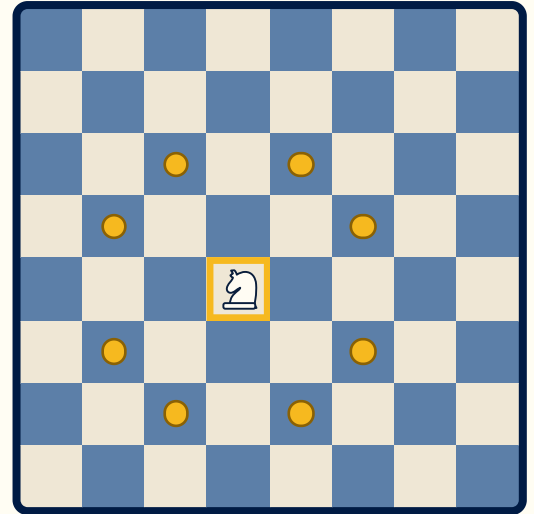
An L shape: two squares,
then one to the side. It jumps.

This is Nell. Nell is a knight, and she is the only piece that can jump.

She hops in an L shape: two squares one way, then one square to the side.

Anything in the way? She jumps right over it.

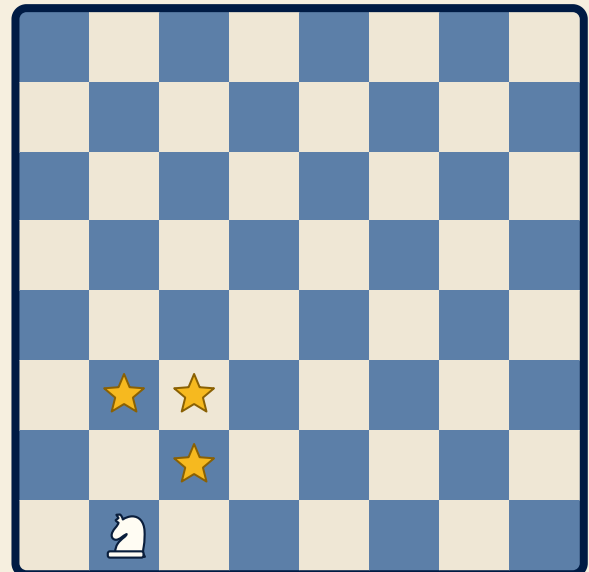
WHERE IT CAN GO



★ PUZZLE

Hop, Nell, hop

Nell is on her starting square. Only one star is a hop away. Which one?





THE QUEEN

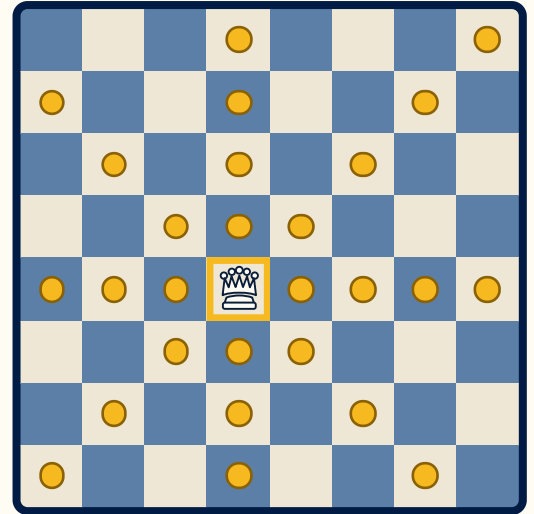
Straight or slantways, as far as she likes. The strongest piece.

The queen wears a crown, and she can do what the rook does and what the bishop does.

Straight lines, slantways lines, as far as she likes.

She is the strongest piece on the board, so look after her.

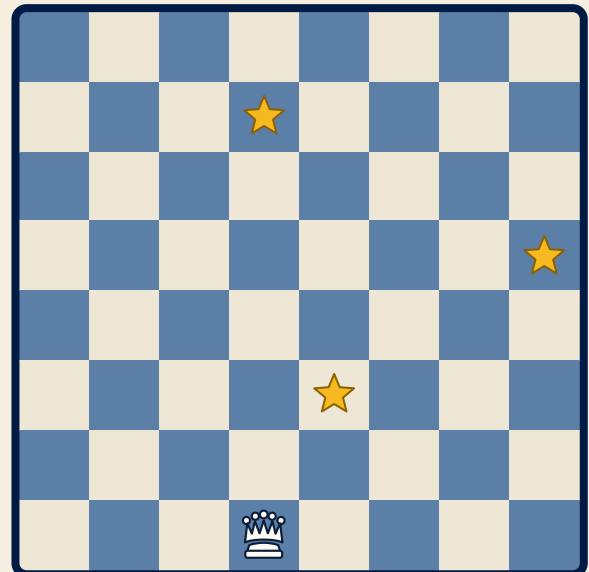
WHERE IT CAN GO



★ PUZZLE

Too far for the queen

The queen can reach two of these stars. One is too far even for her. Which one?





THE KING

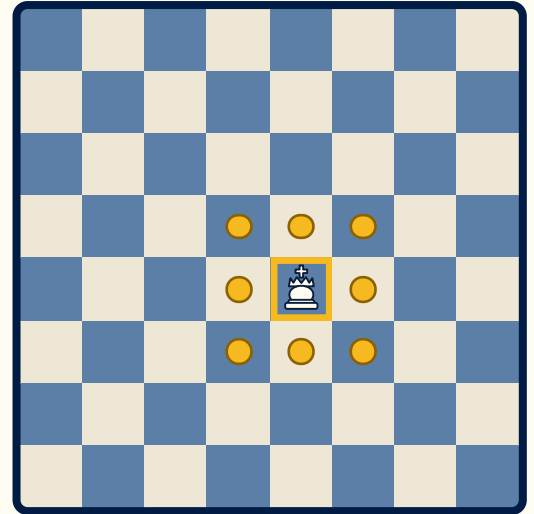
One square in any direction. Keep him safe.

The king has a little cross on top. He is the most important piece of all.

He moves one square at a time, in any direction. Just one.

If the king is trapped, the game is over. So everybody looks after him.

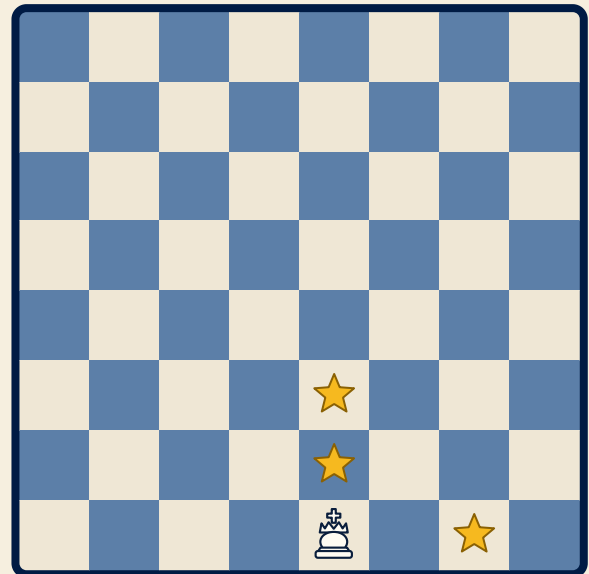
WHERE IT CAN GO



★ PUZZLE

The king's tiny step

Only one star is a single step from the king. Which one?



TAKING

Landing on somebody

When your piece lands on a square where an enemy piece is standing, you take it. The enemy piece comes off the board.

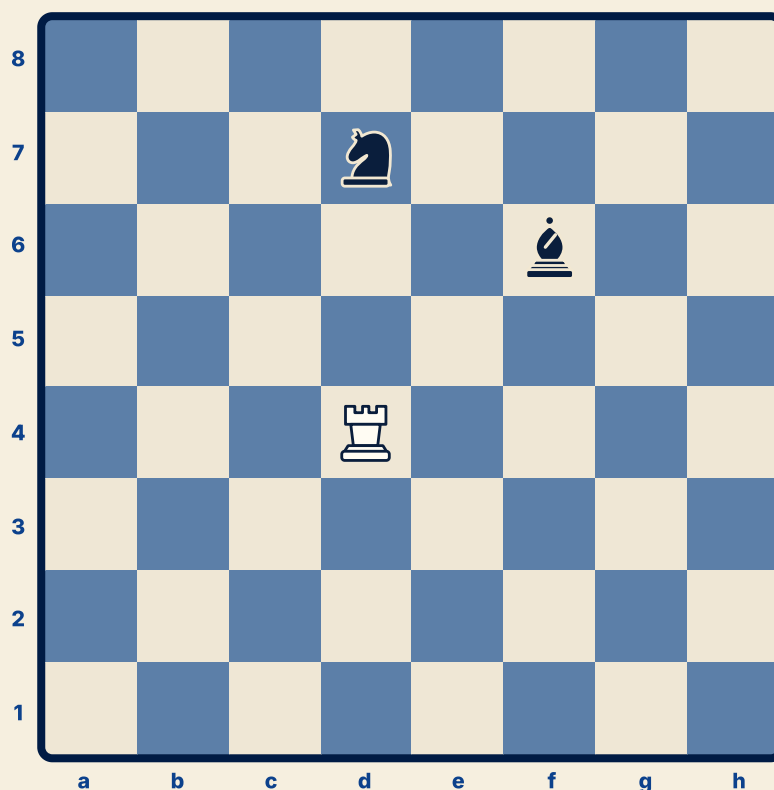
You take the same way you move. A rook takes along its straight road. A bishop takes along its slantways line.

There is one exception, and it is Pip: a pawn walks straight, but it takes slantways.

Which one can the rook take?

★ PUZZLE

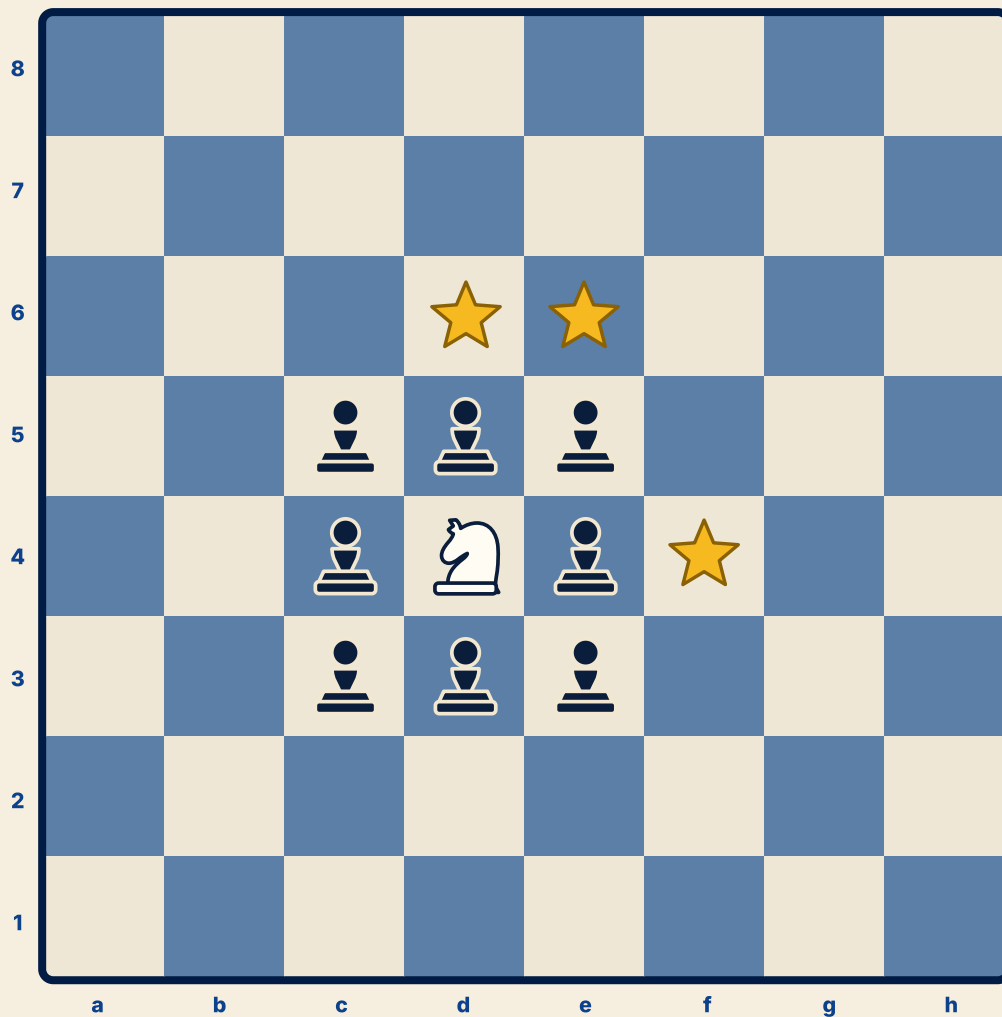
The rook can take only one of the two black pieces. Which one?



Hop over

★ PUZZLE

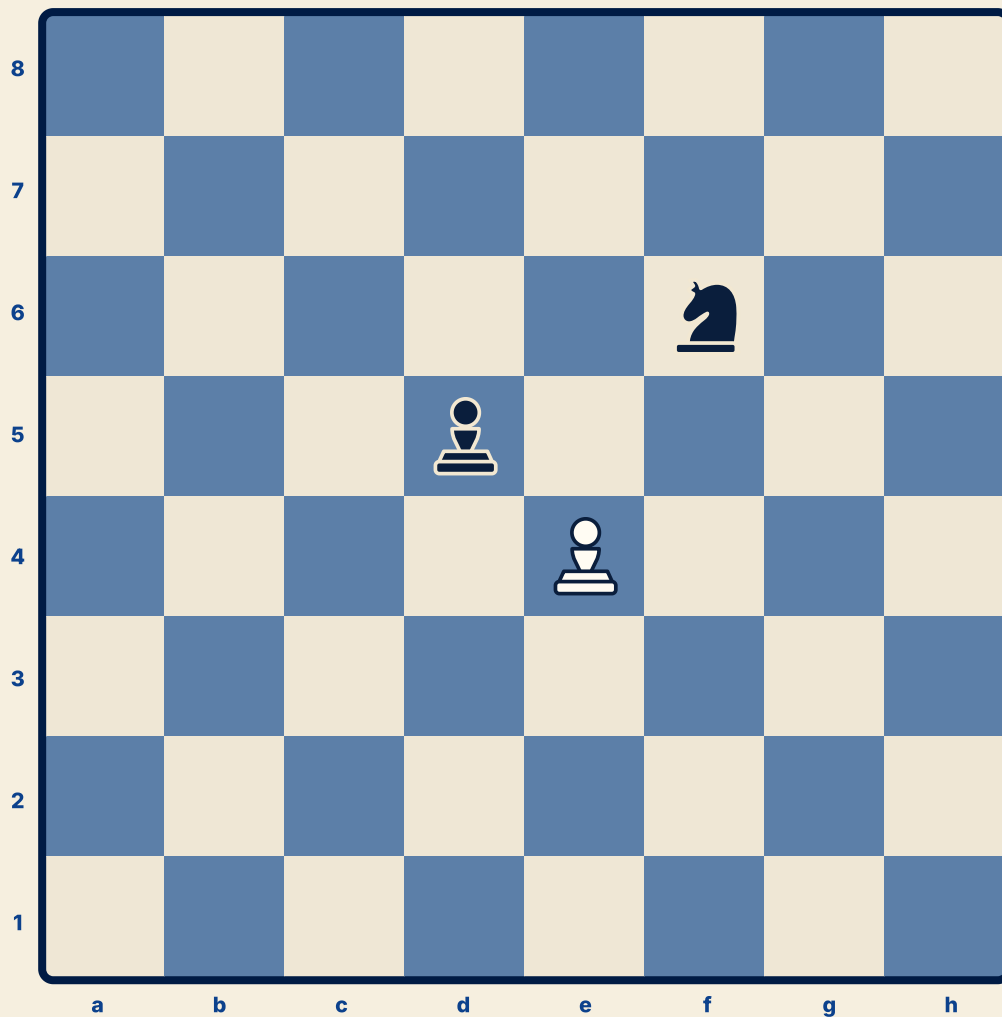
Nell is surrounded, but knights jump.
Only one star is a hop away.
Which one?



Pip takes

★ PUZZLE

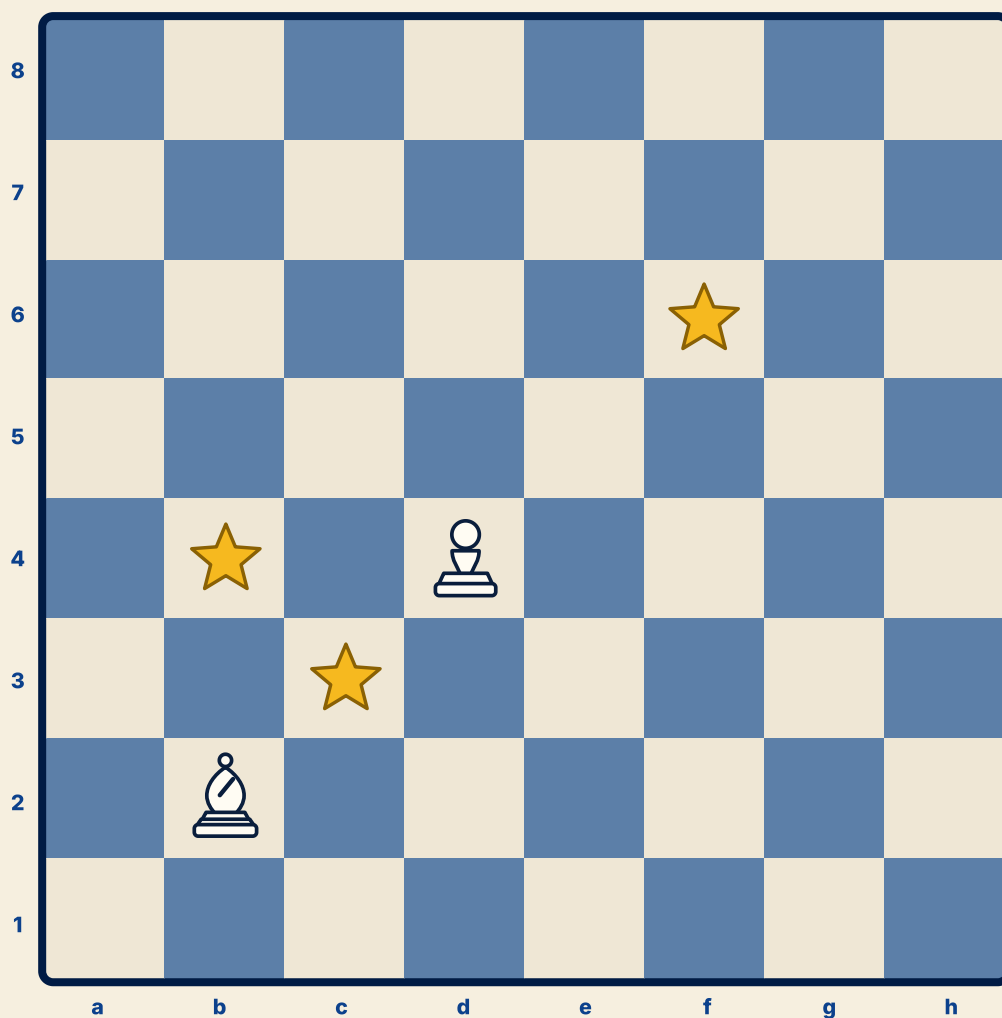
Pip walks straight but takes slantways.
Only one black piece can Pip take.
Which one?



Something in the way

★ PUZZLE

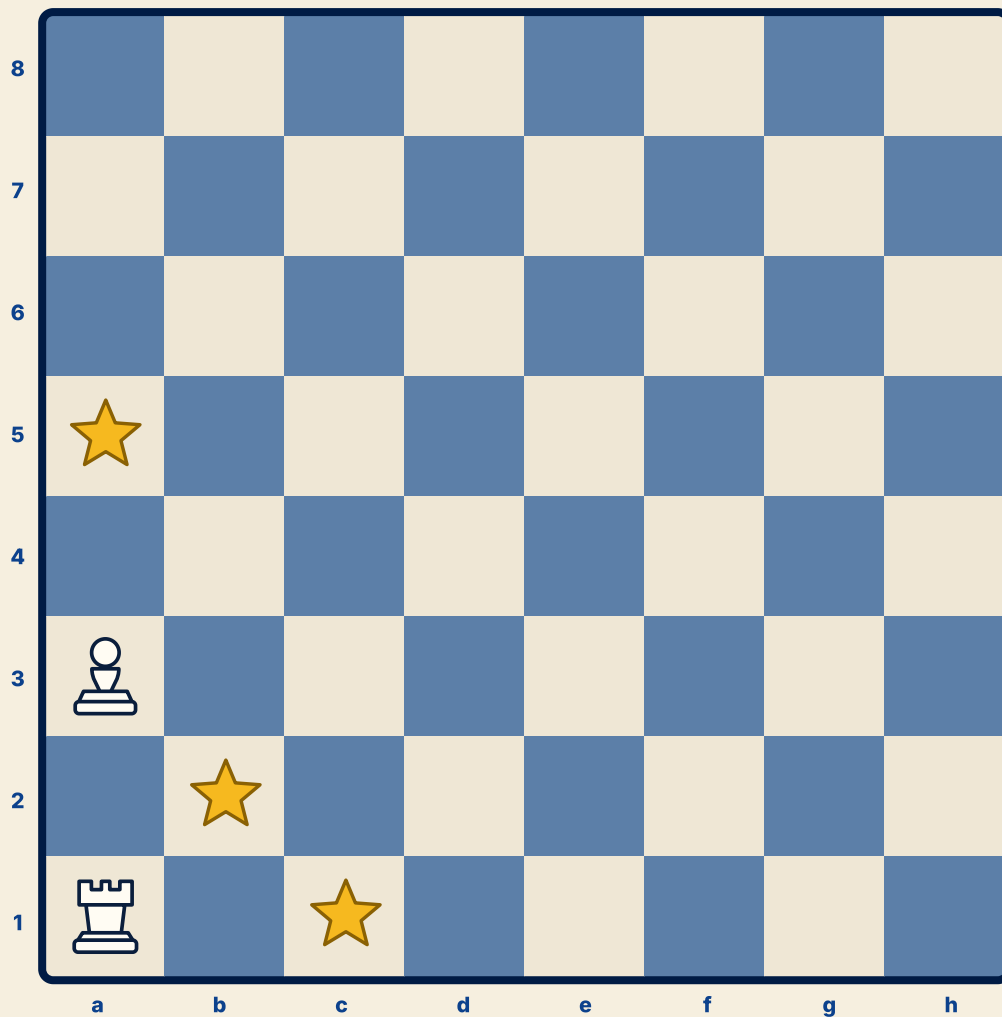
The bishop wants to slide up its line, but one of Pip's friends is standing on it. Only one star can the bishop reach. Which one?



The rook is blocked

★ PUZZLE

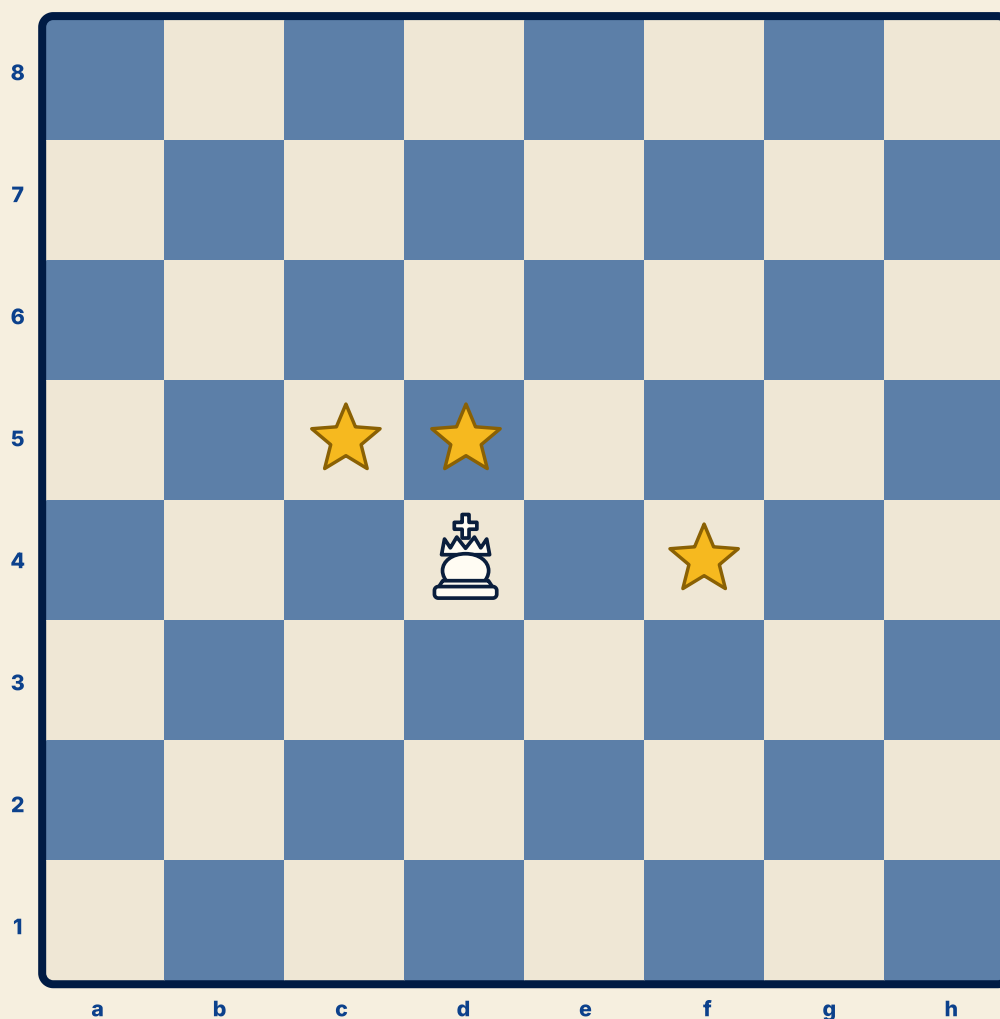
The rook's road up the board is blocked by its own pawn. Only one star can the rook reach. Which one?



One step too many

★ PUZZLE

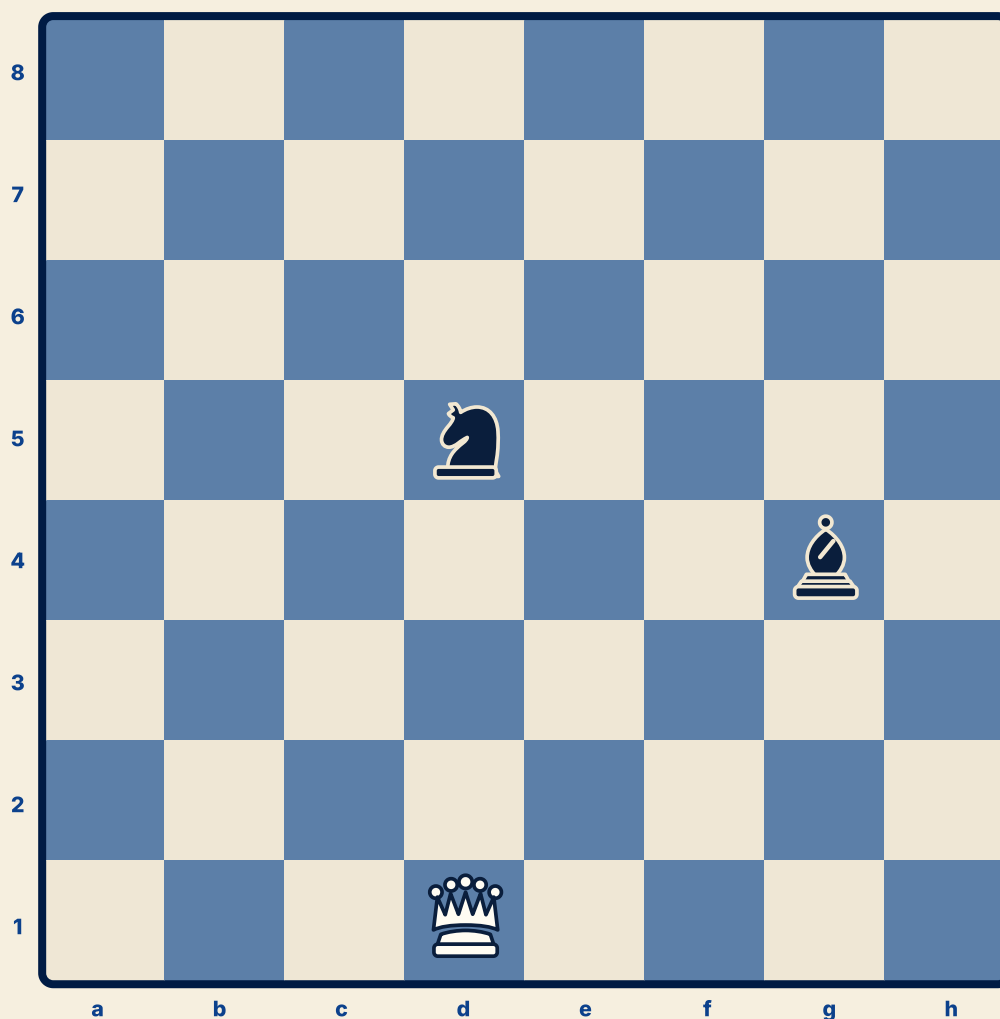
The king can step to two of these stars.
One is too far for him. Which one?



Two ways to take

★ PUZZLE

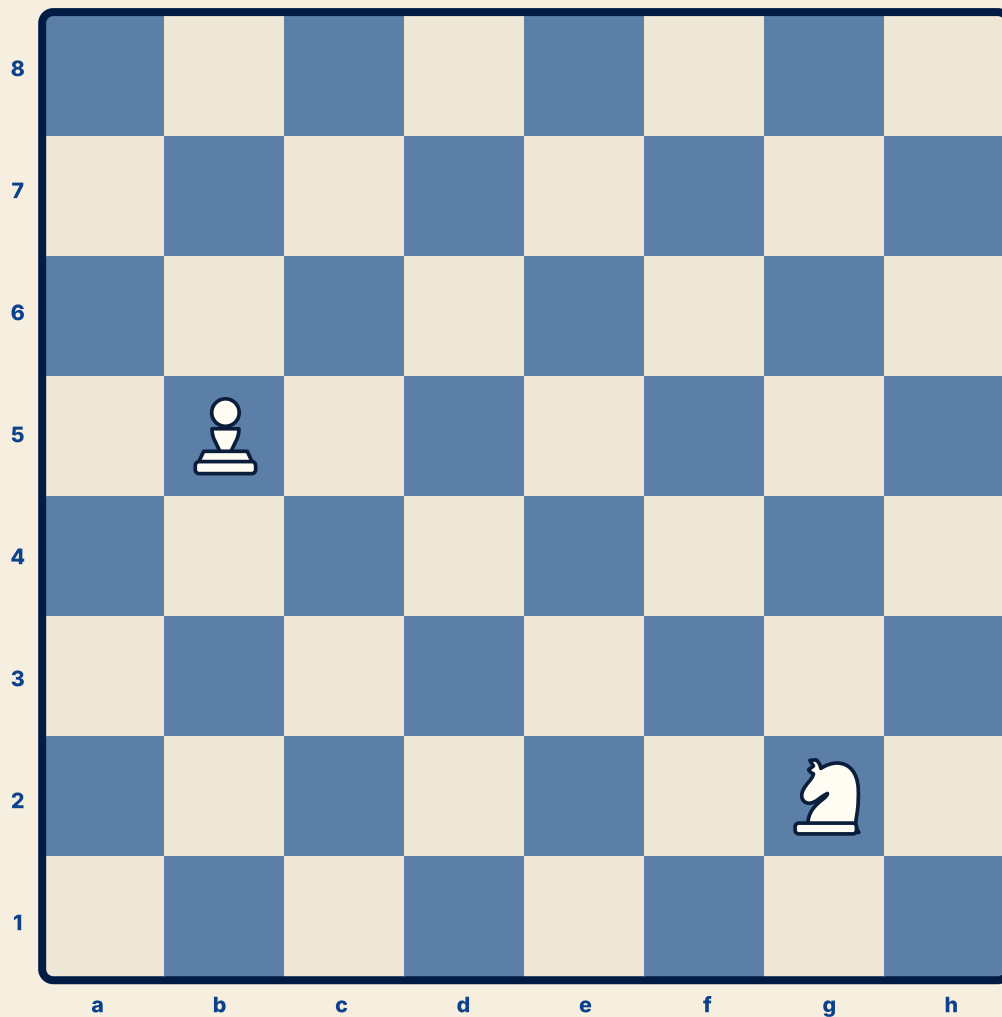
The queen can take both black pieces.
Point to both of them, then choose
which one you would take.



Where is Nell?

★ PUZZLE

Every square has a name: a letter and a number. Pip is on b5. What is the name of the square Nell is standing on?



YOUR TURN

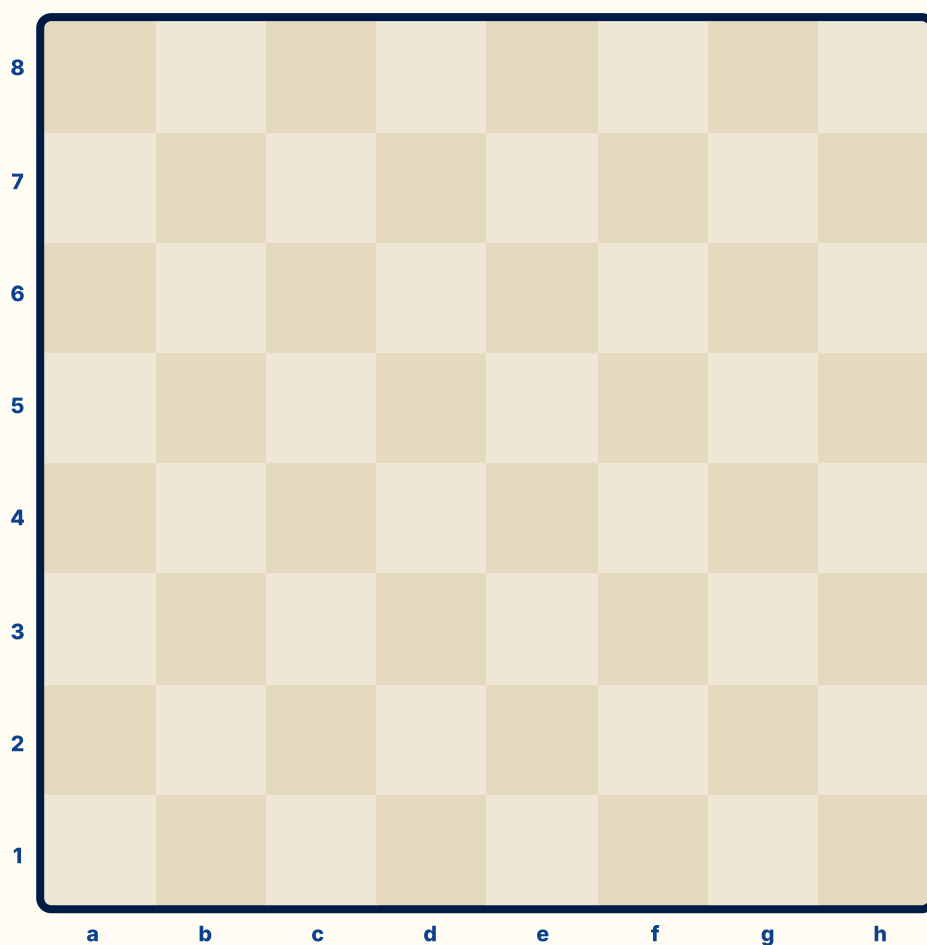
Make your own puzzle

Draw Pip on any square you like.

Now draw three stars. Only one of them should be a square Pip can walk to.

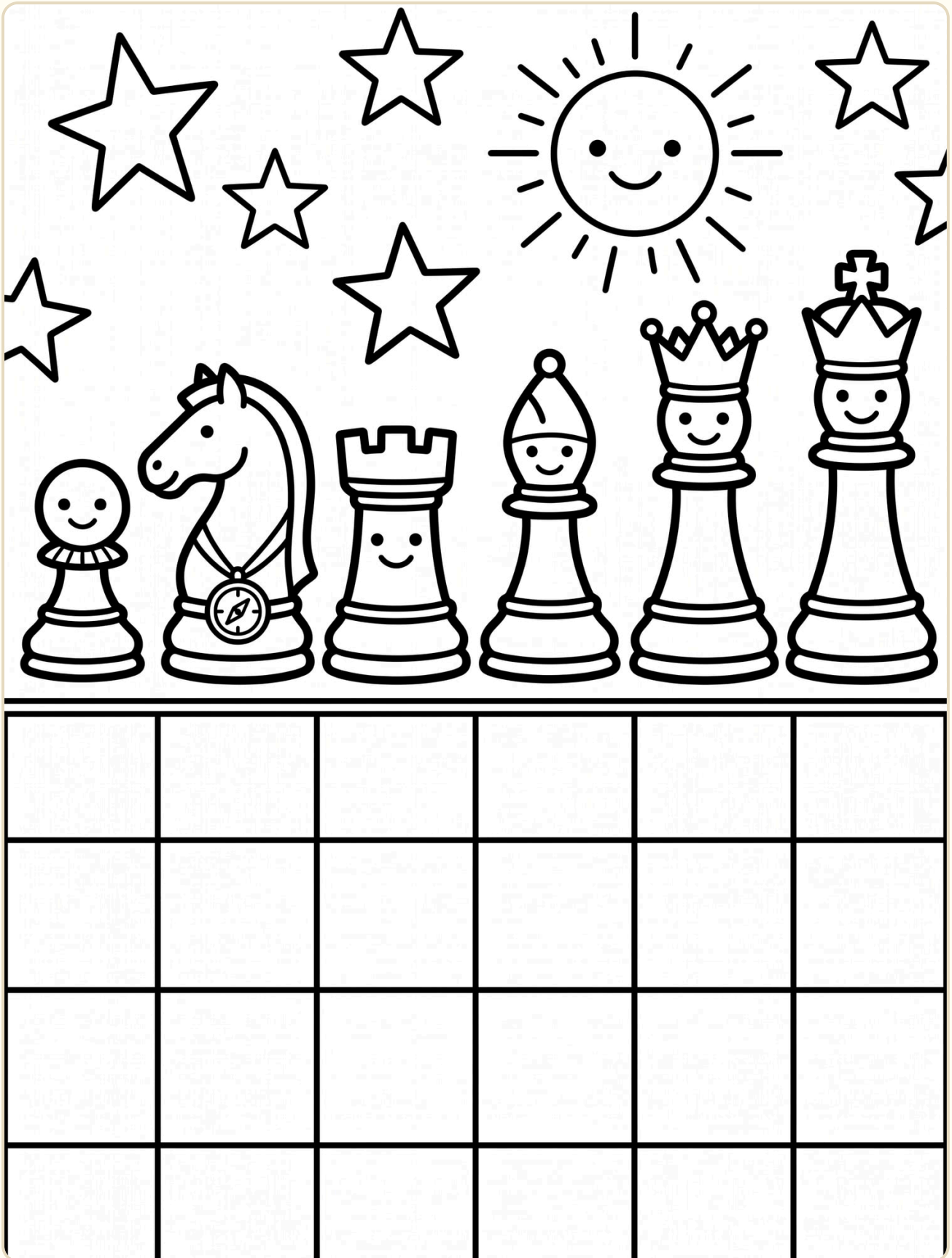
Give it to somebody and ask: which star?

Then try it with Nell. Remember: two squares, then one to the side.

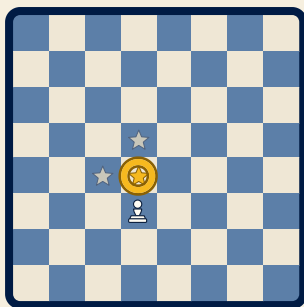


Colour the whole team

Pip, Nell, and the four friends from page 4. Which colour is the queen?



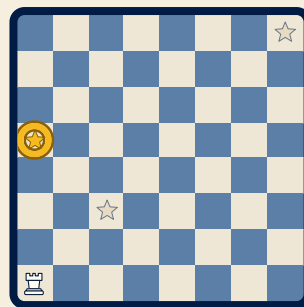
Did you find them?



1. Where can Pip walk?

PAGE 6

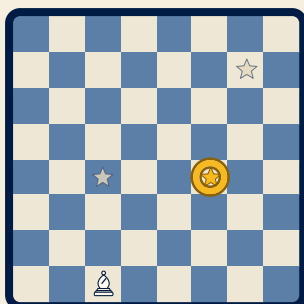
Straight ahead, one square. Two squares is only for the very first move, and Pip has already used it.



2. The rook's road

PAGE 7

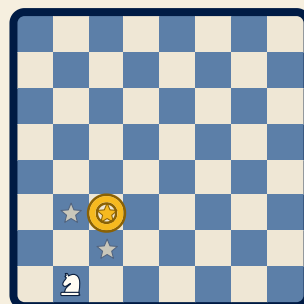
Straight up the a-file. The other two stars are slantways, and rooks never go slantways.



3. The bishop's slide

PAGE 8

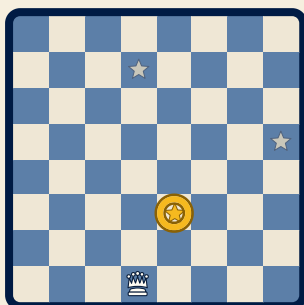
c1, d2, e3, f4: a slantways line. The bishop cannot go straight up to c4, and g7 is not on its line.



4. Hop, Nell, hop

PAGE 9

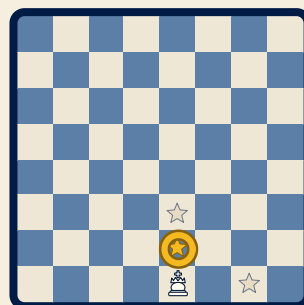
Two up and one across lands on c3. Straight up to b3 is not an L, and c2 is only one and one.



5. Too far for the queen

PAGE 10

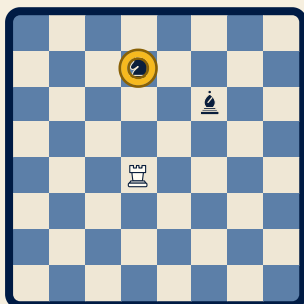
Straight up to d7, slantways to h5. But e3 is not straight and not slantways from d1, so even the queen cannot get there in one move.



6. The king's tiny step

PAGE 11

One square, straight up. e3 is two squares away and g1 is two squares away, and the king only ever takes one step.



7. Which one can the rook take?

PAGE 12

The knight on d7 is straight up the rook's road. The bishop on f6 is slantways from the rook, and rooks never go slantways.



Two up and one across:
e6. Nell jumps over the
pawns as if they were
not there. d6 is straight
up and f4 is straight
across, and neither is
an L.



The pawn on d5 is one square slantways forward, so Pip can take it. The knight on f6 is too far away.



c3 is the next square on the line. f6 is on the line too, but the pawn on d4 is in the way and bishops cannot jump. b4 is straight up, and bishops do not go straight.



Along the bottom row to c1. a5 is up the road, but the pawn on a3 blocks it. b2 is slantways.



c5 and d5 are both one step away. f4 is two squares across, and a king only ever takes one.



Straight up the d-file to the knight on d5, or slantways to the bishop on g4. The queen can do both, but only one on this turn.



Run your finger along the bottom to the letter g, then up to the number 2. Nell is on g2.



Little Chess Explorers

First Moves is the Little Chess Explorers programme for Junior and Senior Infants, on paper. In the programme, children do all of this live, with a coach, on a floor board or at a table, whichever suits the group.

This book is free: read it, print it, and pass it on.

Every puzzle in this book has exactly one right answer, and every answer was checked by computer against the rules of chess before it was printed.

littlechessexplorers.com

Book 2 of the Little Explorers library. © 2026 Little Chess Explorers. littlechessexplorers@gmail.com. Not for sale.