4 Attack and Capture

Now that we have met two of the chessmen, we can look at some of the things that they can do.

The king “attacks” each of the squares it could move to (whether it is that player's turn to move or not).

The king cannot move to a square that is ATTACKED by an enemy man (any square that an enemy man could move to).

That means that the two kings can never stand next to each other - there must always be a space (or a man) in-between, so here the white king cannot move up and the black king cannot move down (not even diagonally).

Some people say that the kings are surrounded by a force field that keeps them apart, others say that they have very bad body odour.

For this special game, White gets to make move after move, while Black stands motionless.

How many moves are needed to pick up the coins, while steering clear of the force field?

d6 then h5 = 8.

going via h5 first = 10.
Same game, same rules.

This time it is 11 – via g4-d4-c8.

If you go the other way, starting with c8, then it takes 12 moves.

The white rook can move to any of the squares marked with an x. It may also move to the d6 square.

That is because the rook, like the king, like all chessmen, can capture enemy men (only one per move!).

White has moved the rook from d3 to d6, capturing ('taking') the black rook that was on d6.

Captured chessmen are removed from the board. If you insist on lining them up by the side of the board, please do it neatly.

Children (and many adults) like to talk of “eating” the enemy chessmen and it is a good word, clearly expressing the way the white rook has removed the black one from the board.

One very important aspect of ‘attack’ is the ‘x-ray’.

We normally speak of a piece ‘attacking’ one or more enemy units.

Sometimes, we refer to all the squares a piece can move to as being attacked by it.

What is rarely mentioned is that a piece ‘x-rays’ squares that it is not permitted to move to.
In our example here, the white rook x-rays the squares a3, d7 and d8.

Seeing these x-ray attacks is an essential part of becoming a chessplayer, but one that is almost never taught to beginners. The lack of this ‘automatic’ sight places great hurdles in the path of developing players - they simply do not “see” important possibilities.