UIL Chess Puzzle Practice Material

• This year’s UIL Chess Puzzle Test includes “solve the mate” positions similar to last year’s, but it also tests other kinds of chess knowledge—knowledge that relates directly to other school skills, such as basic geometrical reasoning and computation, as well as critical and creative thinking.

• Each test will still be 20 questions, and one point will be given for each correct answer. No deductions will be made for incorrect answers. Students will be given 30 minutes to complete the test. Finishing early is not rewarded, even to break ties.
• Tie-breaking procedures have been changed. Tie breaks will now be decided by a more difficult test of 16 questions for which students have only 10 minutes. Incorrect answers are penalized by subtracting 1.25 from the final score. So, on the tie-break test, it’s smart to be sure of an answer instead of racing to circle answers to all the questions.

• Below are some study guides and sample questions that reflect the general approach of this year’s UIL Chess Puzzle Test.
How to answer questions on the test.

• In order to answer many of the 20 questions on this test, you’ll need to know how “to read and write chess.” The system is called “figurine algebraic notation,” or “FAN” for short. It’s simple and depends on two easy systems, one for the board and one for the pieces.

• Every square on the board has an “address” made up of a letter and a number.
Now we know that every square has a name.

Next we just have to learn how to read and write the names of the pieces that move across the board. See the next panel.
Every piece is indicated by a logical abbreviation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piece</th>
<th>Letter Abbreviation (Algebraic Notation)</th>
<th>Figurine Symbol (Figurine Algebraic Notation—used in the puzzles test.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rook</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(because “K” is already taken by the King!)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawn</td>
<td>(a-h)</td>
<td>[Image]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• In the first diagram, White just played 1.e4
• In the second diagram, Black Played 1...♕ f6
The United States Chess Federation offers a concise explanation of algebraic notation here: http://archive.uschess.org/beginners/read/

But the test makes it even easier by using figurine algebraic—using outlines of the pieces rather than letters.

Of course, you will also need to know how the pieces and pawns move. For a short but comprehensive course in moving the chess pieces, again go to the U.S. Chess Federation site: http://archive.uschess.org/beginners/letsplay.pdf

Now answer each of the questions below. Be sure to read each question carefully and then choose the letter of the single, best answer from the choices below each question.
1- White to move—can you force checkmate in one move?

a) e7  
b) h7  
c) f6  
d) None of the above
2- White to move—how can you put black’s king in checkmate in one move?

a) f7
b) d4
c) xh7
d) None of the above
UIL Chess Puzzles

3- Can White put Black’s king in checkmate in one move? If so, can you find the move?

a) g8
b) c4
c) f6
d) None of the above
4- White can force checkmate in two moves. Can you find the first move?

a) \text{a4} \\
b) \text{e4} \\
c) \text{f4} \\
d) \text{h8}
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5- It’s White’s move, and White can force checkmate in **two** moves. What’s his first move?

a) ♕ b7

b) ♕ b3

c) ♕ c4

d) ♕ c5
6- Which side has the greater value of material left on the board?

a) White  
b) Black  
c) Material is equal.  
d) It depends on whose move it is.
7- It’s White’s move. He has a way to force checkmate in two moves. Can you find his first move?

a) 0-0-0
b) ad1
c) (d)d1
d) 1- e4
8- White can checkmate Black in three moves. Find White’s first move.

a) ♕a8
b) ♕h1
c) ♕xg7
d) ♕e5
9- Black just played d7-d5. Now it’s White’s move, and he can force checkmate in one move! What’s his move?

a) exf6
b) exd6 e.p.
c) e6
d) ♙ xd5
10- White to move and win! Find the first winning move.

a) ♕f4
b) e4
c) ♕e4
d) ♕e2

Go to the next page to see the correct answers and explanations.
Chess Puzzle Practice Test:
Correct answers and explanations

Below we give the correct answers to the practice test. Feel free to email us about questions or comments. We want to hear from you!

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Question #1

Correct Answer: b, h7

Explanation: Moving to h7, the pawn puts Black’s king in check. Black can’t capture the pawn—it’s protected by White’s bishop on c2. And Black’s king has no legal moves, because White’s knight and e-pawn cover other possible king-move squares.

Question #2

Correct Answer: c, Rxh7

Explanation: The white rook on h7 checks the king. The black king can’t take the white rook because it’s protected by White’s knight on g5. Finally, the black king can’t move to g8 because White’s bishop on c4 controls that square.
Question #3

Correct Answer: c, Bf6

Explanation: Notice that, in the diagrammed position, Black’s king has no legal moves. (The white rook on g1 controls the entire g-file.) So when the White bishop moves to f6 (where it’s safe from capture and there’s no black piece that can block the check) and puts the black king in check, it’s checkmate!

Question #4

Correct Answer: c, Rf4

Explanation: Keep in mind that the goal is to mate in only two moves. When White moves 1. Rf4, that leaves Black only one legal move, 1. ... Kh8. Then White plays 2. Rf8 checkmate!
Question #5

Correct Answer: d, 1. Kc5

Explanation: Although White, who is a queen ahead, can checkmate in many ways, the challenge is to mate in two. Only one move accomplishes this. After 1. Kc5, Black has only two possible responses. If he plays 1. ... Ka4, then 2. Qb5 is checkmate. If Black instead plays 1. ... Ka6, then 2. Qb6 is checkmate.
Question #6

Correct Answer: a

Explanation: A simple way to explain the relative material values of the pieces is:

Queen = 9
Rook = 5
Bishop = 3
Knight = 3
Pawn = 1

Kings aren’t counted in this way, since they are infinitely valuable.

So in the position diagrammed, Black’s material adds up to 11. White’s material adds up to 13.
Question #7

Correct Answer: a, 0-0-0 (castles long)

Explanation: Castling is an important move, and you should know the rules for castling on either side of the board. In this puzzle, after White castles long, Black is helpless against the threat of 2. R(d1)d3, checkmate. (Notice that when there are two pieces that can move to the same square, we show which piece we mean by putting information about its current location in parentheses. In move two, either White rook could move to d3, so we indicated the one on d1.)
Question #8

Correct Answer: b, Qh1

Explanation: White forces mate in three moves. That means White’s moves leave Black no choice. After 1. Qh1+, Black must play 1. ... Kg8. Then White plays 2. Qh7+, leaving Black no other move than 2. ... Kf8. Finally, 3. Qh8 is checkmate. (We leave out the “+” that indicates check when giving the move choices in the test.)
Question #9

Correct Answer: b, exd6 e.p.

Explanation: “En passant,” or “in passing” is an important pawn move to understand. There is a good online explanation of *en passant* here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/En_passant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/En_passant)

In Puzzle 9, after the *en passant* capture, Black’s king is in check from the White queen, and Black has no way to escape checkmate.
Question #10

Correct Answer: c, Ke4

Explanation: Endgames are important because many long, tough games come down to just a few pieces. In a king-and-pawn endgame, an important principle is to advance your king ahead of your pawn. Here White can force a win only with 1. Ke4, gaining the “opposition” so he can promote his pawn to a queen. Then he will easily checkmate the lone Black king. For an online explanation of “opposition,” go to: