

Open Files

Chess

Where rooks belong, and how to win a file.

Files are the rook's medium; without one, a rook does very little.

1

Identify the open and half-open files

Open: no pawns. Half-open: only enemy pawns.

2

Put a rook on it

Usually the one that is doing least.

3

Double the rooks

Two rooks on a file are far more than twice one.

4

Contest or seize

If the opponent contests, trading is often fine — you can occupy it first next time.

5

Invade the seventh

A rook on the seventh rank attacks pawns and confines the king.

IF NO FILE IS OPEN

Create one with a pawn break

Aim rooks at a half-open file

Target the enemy pawn on it

Two rooks on the seventh rank — 'pigs on the seventh' — are frequently decisive on their own.