

Rook Behind the Pawn

Chess

The single most useful rule in rook endings.

Rooks belong behind passed pawns — your own and your opponent's.

Tarrasch's rule

Your passed pawn

Its scope grows as the pawn advances.

Rook behind it

Their passed pawn

Your rook's scope shrinks as the pawn advances — which is what restrains it.

Rook behind it

Rook in front

The rook has no moves and no future.

Passive and usually losing

THE COMMON MISTAKE

✗ **Blockading a passed pawn with the rook in front**

✓ **Behind it, or use the king to blockade**

A rook in front of a pawn is entirely passive; a rook behind it keeps its full range.

The rare exception is when the rook in front also defends a critical square, but the rule holds almost always.