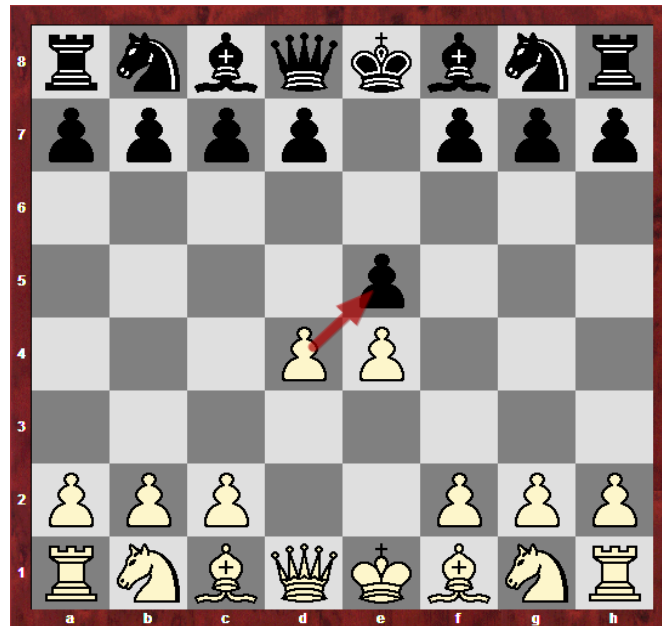


## Openings - Danish Gambit

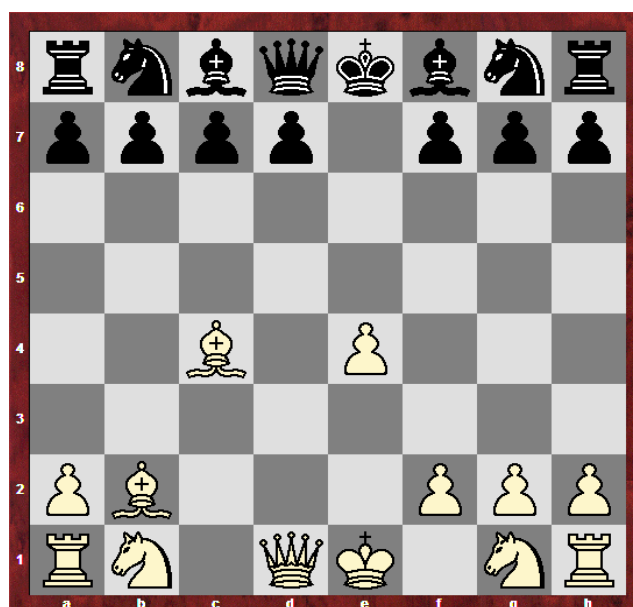
The Danish Gambit is a chess opening for white that begins with the move e4. Provided black responds with the move e5, white then sacrifices some pawns immediately to gain a lead in development (i.e., white gets his/her pieces into play more quickly).

The following game (Sherwood v Cooper, Ilkeston 1997) sets out the moves involved.

1.e4 e5 2.d4.

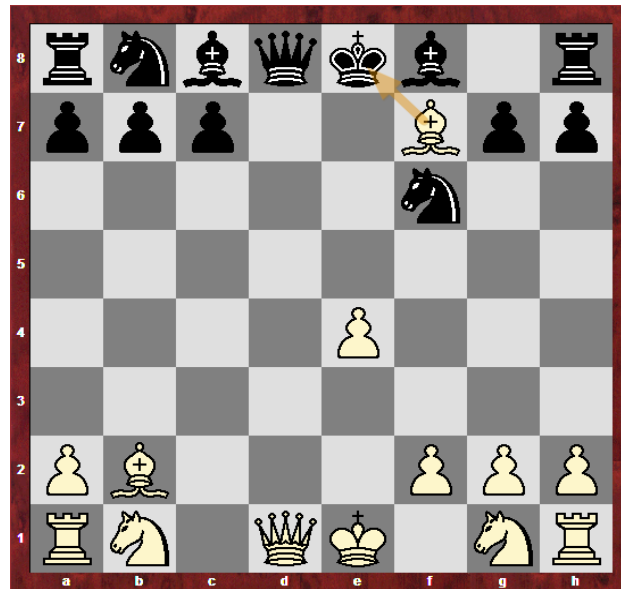


Δ. **exd4**. Black takes the white d –pawn and is immediately offered the white c pawn with the move **3.c3**. Black accepts the pawn with the move **dx c3**. The next moves are **4.Bc4 cxb2** **5.Bxb2** leading to the position below with white’s two bishops already developed for the price of 2 pawns.

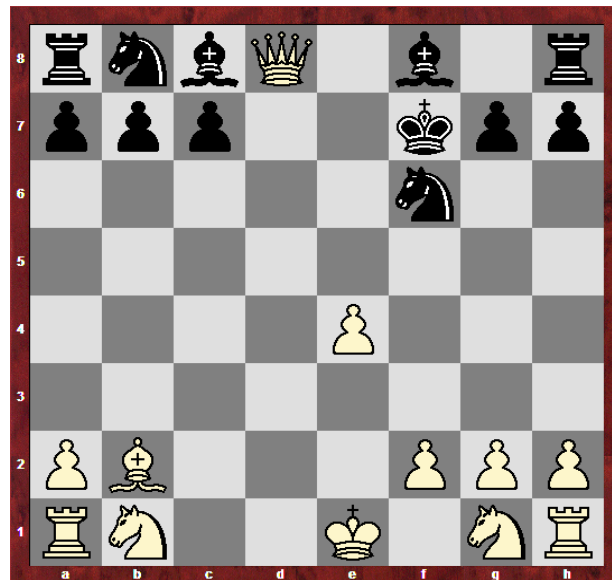


An opening gambit occurs when a player offers material to his/her opponent to gain time/space on the board. One of the best ways to defend against a gambit is to offer the material back to your opponent at an opportune time. In the case of the Danish Gambit, where the above position is reached, black plays 5... d5 giving up a pawn. The next moves played in the game were as follows:

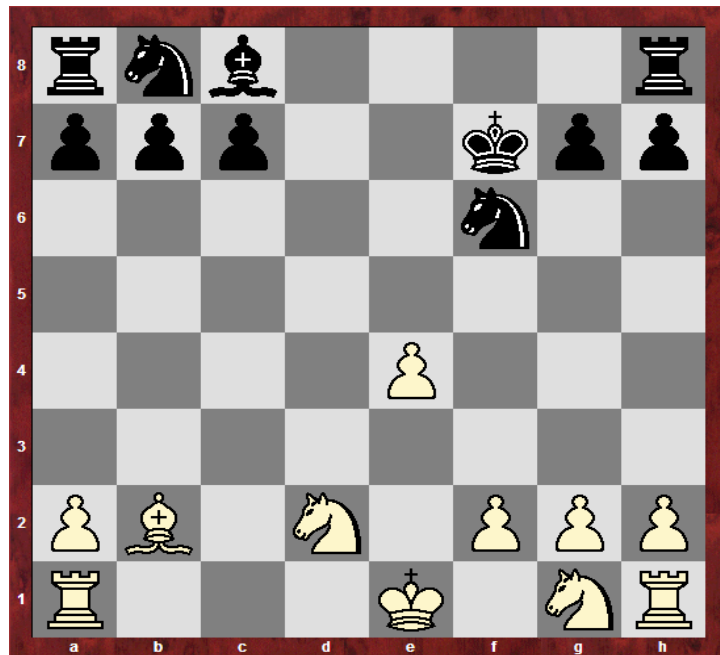
**6.Bxd5 Nf6 7.Nc3.** White could also have played the move 7.Bxf7+ (see diagram below).



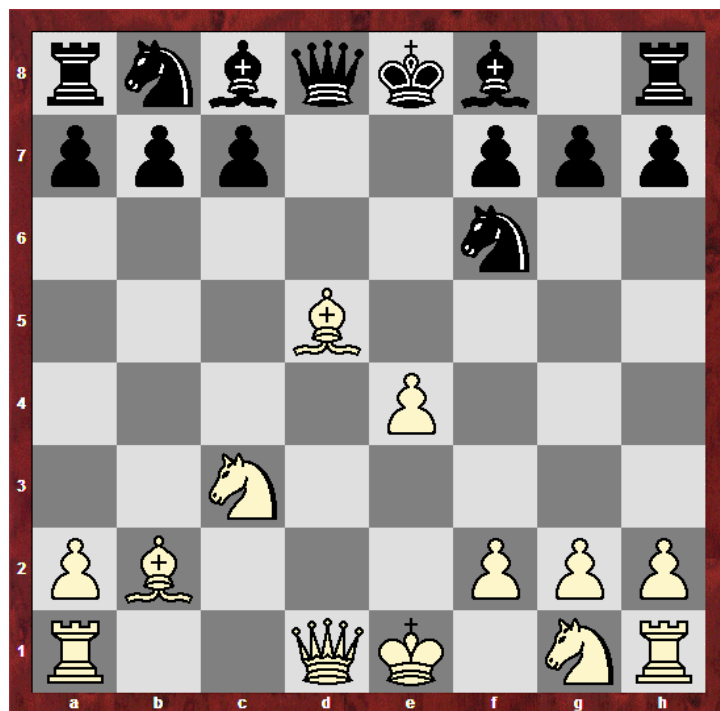
Kxf7 is followed by 8.Qxd8 resulting in the loss of the queen (see diagram below). How does Black capture the white queen from this position?



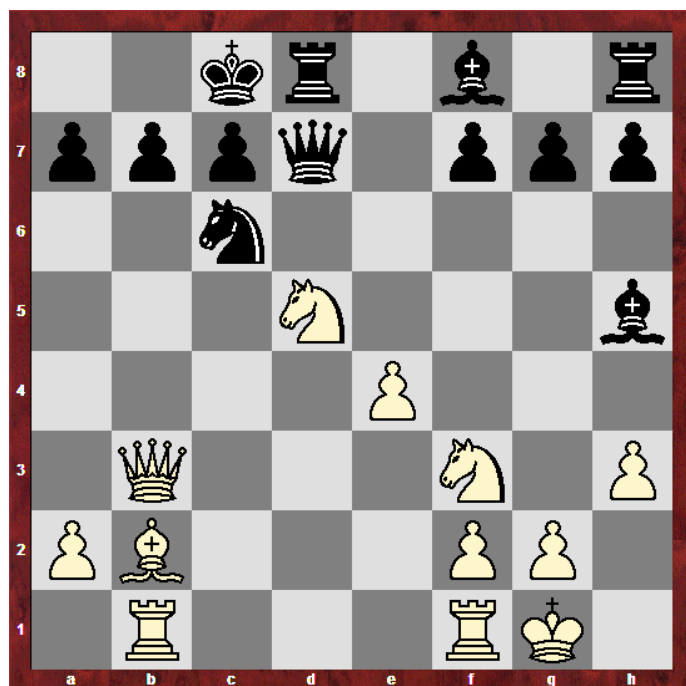
The answer is to play Bb4+, exposing the Queen to a discovered attack from the black rook on H8. White then blocks the check with the move 9.Qd2 which is followed by Bxd2+ 10.Nxd2. This leaves the following position with both sides level on material.



The actual game continued as follows from the **move 7.Nc3**



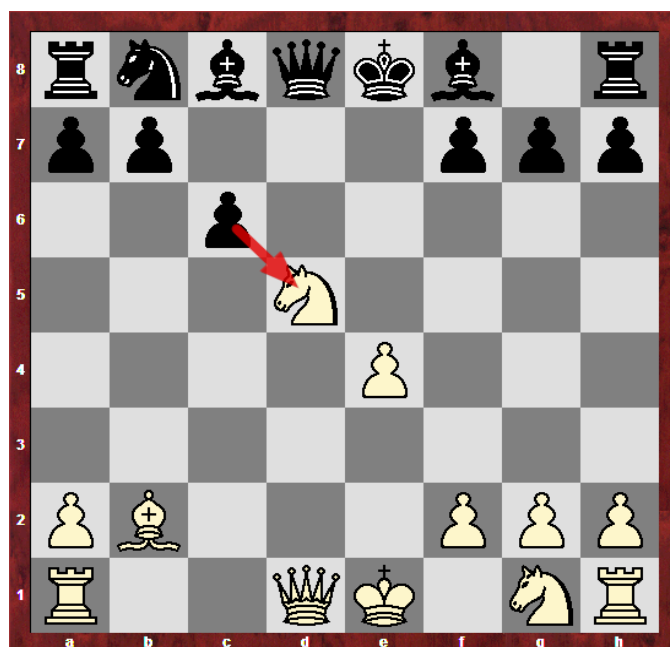
...Nxd5, 8.Nxd5, c6. A safer sequence of moves for black would be 8.... Nc6 9.Nf3 Bg4 10.h3 Bh5 11.0-0 Qd7 12.Rb1 0-0-0 13.Qb3 yielding the position in the diagram below. In it black has an extra pawn but white has a more active position which compensates for the loss of the pawn. White has a centralised knight on d5 and more space in the centre and potential threats against blacks king on the open "b" and "c" files.



However, the above position is still a better option for black than what occurred after the **move 8...c6 (see below)**.

The move **8...c6** was a big mistake by Black, but can you see why? What are the follow up moves that gave white a winning advantage?

In order to figure it out, look for checks and captures from the following position reached with the move **c6**.



Looking for checks, it quickly becomes clear that the only white piece that can deliver a check from the above position is the knight on d5. There are two choices of move, Nc7+ or Nf6+. In both cases,

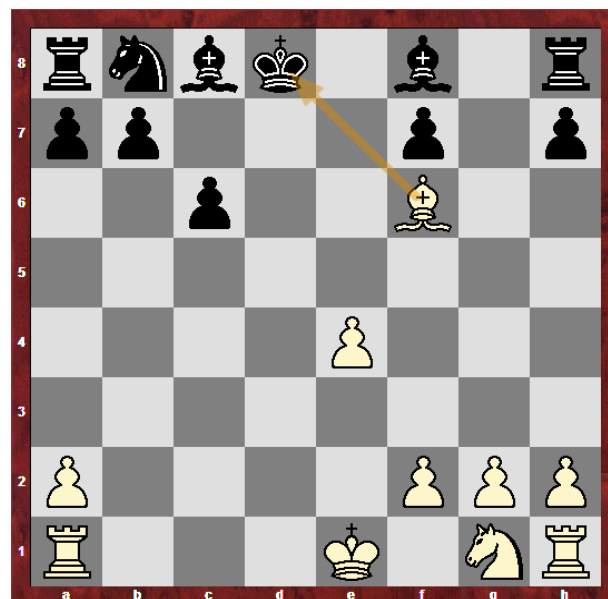
you will see that the knight is captured (by the queen or the pawn on g7 depending on which check is chosen).

So how do you decide which move is better? Comparing both moves, Nc7 simply allows the knight to be captured by the black queen with no follow up move being apparent.

**9...Nf6+** on the other hand would result in white winning material if the knight is captured by black (see diagram below).

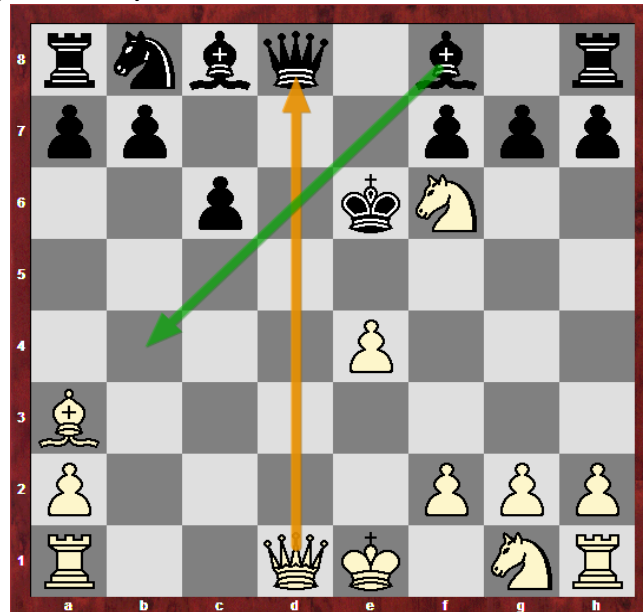


The sequence of moves following 9...Nf6 would be ...gxf6, 10.Qxd8, kxd8, 11.Bxf6+ forking the king on d8 and the rook on h8. When the king moves out of check, the Bishop on f6 captures the rook on h8 with a winning material advantage (A white knight (worth 3 points) has been traded for a pawn (one point) and a rook (5 points)). See position below after white plays Bxf6 forking King and Rook.

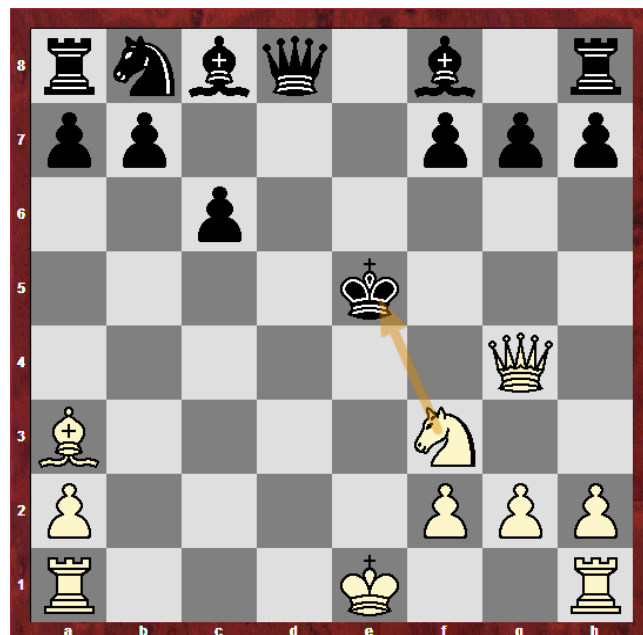


In the actual game black saw that capturing the knight on f6 would lead to a loss of material. So he moved the king out of check to the e7 square instead of capturing the knight. Unfortunately for him, this did not solve his problems! Again look for checks and captures after the move **9...Ke7**.

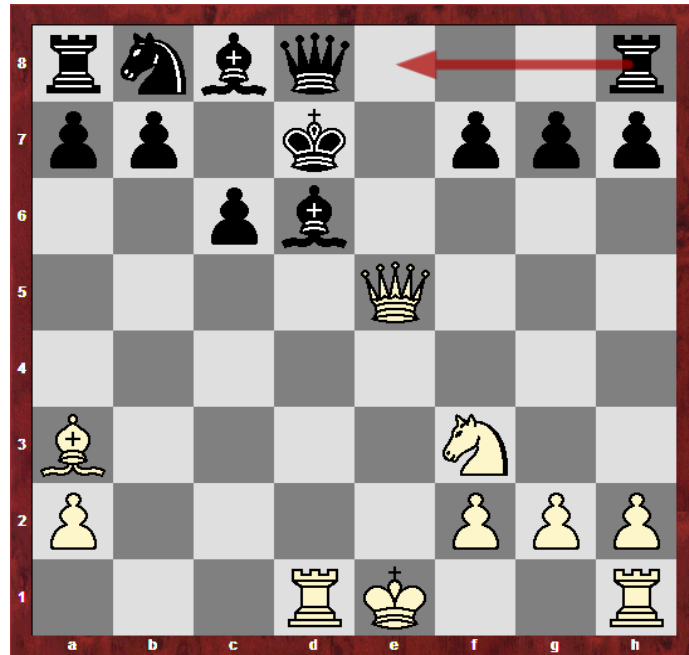
**10.Ba3+ Ke6** (see diagram below)



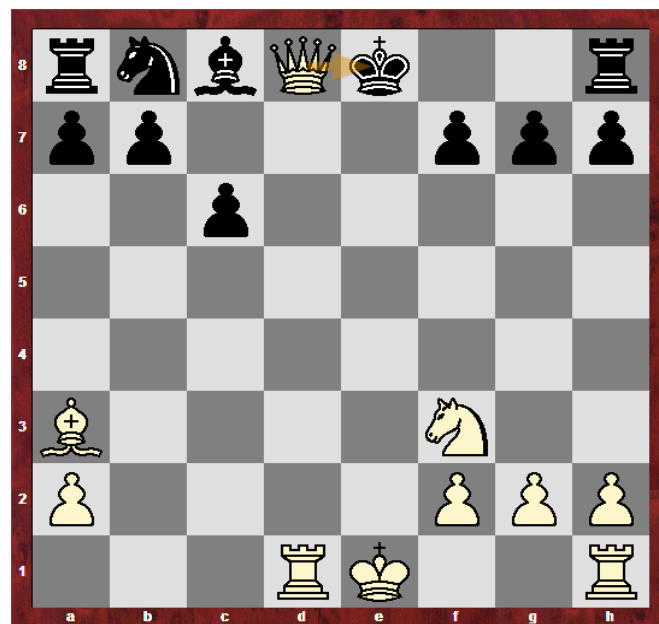
From the above position, White can win a piece through the following sequence of moves (Qxd8 followed by Bb4 check, Bxb4, Rxd8, Nxh7). However, he found a better alternative. **11.Qg4+ Kxf6 (giving up a piece)**. Despite being a piece down, white has plenty of compensation because the black king is very exposed. **12.e5+ Kxe5**. Giving up yet more material to further expose the black king). **13. Nf3+** bringing another piece into play. (see diagram below).



Play continued **Kf6 14.Qg5+ Ke6 15.Qe5+ Kd7 16.Rd1+ (bringing another piece into play for white) Bd6** (see diagram below). Can you see how white gets checkmate in just two further moves?



17.Qxd6+ Ke8 18.Qxd8# See final position below.



### Some lessons about defending against Opening Gambits.

1. Return material to counter the gambit and gain some time back to develop your own pieces
2. Castle if possible
3. Exchange pieces to lessen your opponents threats (i.e., you will be decreasing the number of attacking pieces your opponent has)
4. Always be suspicious when offered material!!