

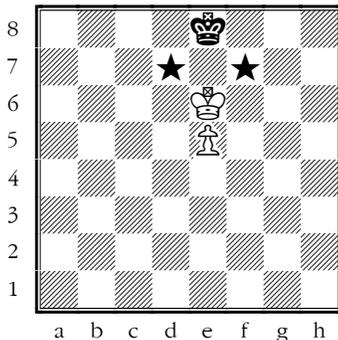
Opposition, Technique & Advanced King Play

Part 1: Opposition Explained with Basic King and Pawn Endings

Concepts:

- Basic King and Pawn play!
- The goal of “every” King and Pawn ending: “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th”!
- What is *opposition*?
- “Defensive opposition” and other King and Pawn ending drawing methods!

Step 1, The Goal: King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th... Always Wins the Game

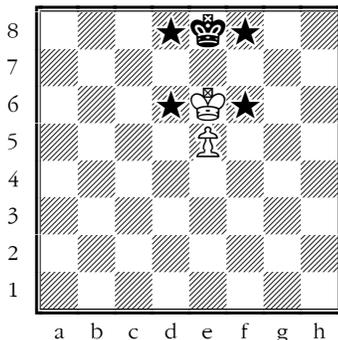


The **goal** position: “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th always wins the game”!

The most important thing about being a good endgame player in chess is to always have a “goal” or a “long term plan”. When it comes to King and Pawn endings, “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th” is your **ultimate goal** because it is a winning position regardless of whose turn it is to move!

A simple example has black to move. Here, black is “in *opposition*” which means the King is being opposed and must move – thus giving white the winning square for the King: 1...Kd8 allows 2.Kf7! Followed by 3.e6, 4.e7 and e8=Queen; 1...Kf8 allows 2.Kd7 and “the pawn goes marching on” along the e-file once again...

Step 1, The Goal Continued: White Wins Even when Black has the Opposition

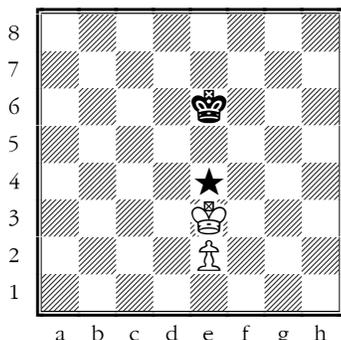


White wins, even with black controlling the opposition...

With white to play, black controls the opposition. Though the position is slightly more complex, it is still a win. White must sidestep to either f6 or d6, and black will move directly in front of white, maintaining the opposition; therefore, preventing the white King from leading the way.

Generally the King should lead the Pawn (as will be explained in more detail later); however, that rule can be broken in this position: 1.Kf6 Kf8 2.e6! Ke8 3.e7 Kd7 (only move – as black is in *Zugzwang*) and 4...Kf7 followed by 5.e8=Queen, winning. The black King was “squeezed” out of the e8-square via *Zugzwang*. 1.Kd6 was also winning via the same pattern of advancing the pawn and finally 4.Kd7...

Step 2, The Tool: Opposition is the Tool Used to Reach Your Ultimate Goal

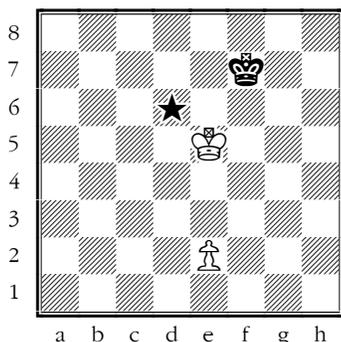


White plays 1.Ke4! taking the opposition and forcing black to “lose ground”.

The best “study method” to use when learning endgame patterns is to start with the most basic example or “goal position”, and then move “backwards in time” in order to see how that position might actually be reached in a real game. Here we see **opposition** in action as **the tool** used to reach our goal position in Step 1!

After 1.Ke4, black is in opposition and must surrender territory. Black is in Zugzwang because if the King could stay on the e-file forever, white would have no way to advance the pawn or make progress. However, after the forced 1...Kd6 (or 1...Kf6) white continues 2.Kf5 Ke7 3.Ke5!, regaining the opposition. This pattern repeats...

Step 2, The Tool Continued: The King Must Lead His Pawn, Until the Right Time!

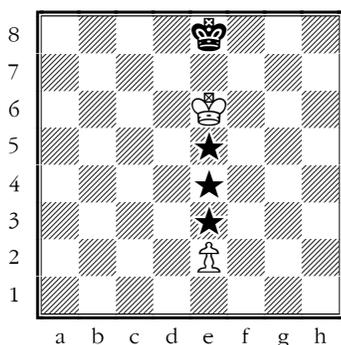


Black played 3...Kf7, and white continues 4.Kd6! - Gaining more ground.

In keeping with our “ultimate goal”, the white King continues to make progress along the e-file. White leads with the King and needs not use the pawn until the King has reached its goal square on e6. Please see *Drawing Example 2* for details on the consequences of moving the pawn too early – returning the “defensive opposition” to black.

After 4.Kd6!, we see the “winning pattern” in action: Oppose the enemy King along the e-file (the same file as the pawn) and then take whichever square the black King gives up. After 4.Kd6!, black must once again move back to the all important e-file – 4...Ke8 – and white reaches the goal square with 5.Ke6...

Step 3, Finish the Job: The Pawn Goes Marching On...

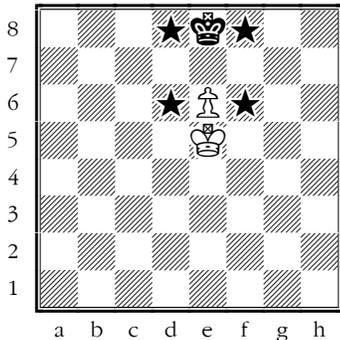


White now moves the pawn to e5 – winning!

Once the white King has reached its goal square (the 6th rank on the same file as the pawn), the remaining moves are an obvious and easy matter of technique! The pawn will move from e2-e5, achieving “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th” – and the game is over.

The “three step approach” provided in this lesson – 1) recognize your goal position, 2) use opposition as the tool to achieve your goal, leading the way with the King, 3) and finally, follow with the pawn to the finish line – is a winning technique/pattern that works with every pawn excluding the corner or “Rook pawn” (see *Drawing Example 3* for more information on why the Rook pawn leads to a draw).

Drawing Example 1, The Basic Draw: Never Lead with the Pawn

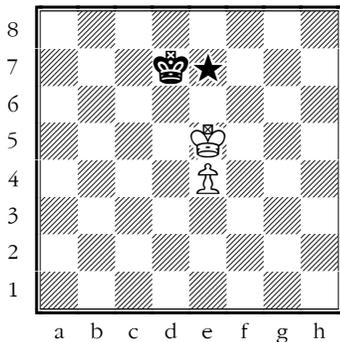


*Black's last move:
1...Ke7-e8 – waiting to
gain opposition...*

As mentioned in the second diagram of Step 1 – the King should always “lead the pawn” in this winning technique. As they march up the board towards the ultimate goal of promotion, the basic pattern referenced in Step 1 will **not** work if the roles of the King and Pawn are reversed (i.e. “**Pawn** on the **6th**, and **King** on the **5th**). Example:

After 1...Ke8, white has two attempts at progress. Either choice will be met by the black King on the **corresponding square (Part 2)** and the game will end in a forced draw. After 2.Kf6 Kf8! (2.Kd6 met by 2...Kd8) 3.e7+ (any other white move allows 3...Ke7 and black simply repeats the pattern with Ke8 next move) 3... Ke8 and after 4.Ke6 (any other move losses the pawn) black is stalemated...

Drawing Example 2, Defensive Opposition Continued...

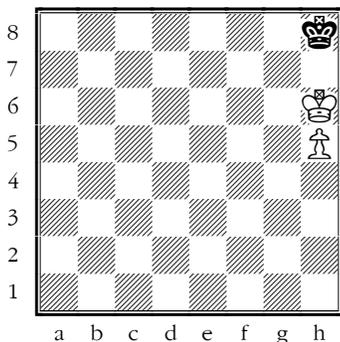


*If black can force white's
pawn to lead, the black
King can hold a draw!*

Knowing that a defender can hold a draw by moving straight back from the pawn and **waiting for opposition on the corresponding square (Drawing Example 1)** – we now see why the white King must lead his pawn. Because of this, white must also prevent defensive opposition that “blocks” the white King from doing so.

This diagram highlights what would happen if black were to gain the opposition (note that if it were white's turn, 1.Kf6 wins easily according to the winning method used in Steps 2 and 3). Black plays 1...Ke7! And after 2.Kf5 Kf7! 3.e5 (only move that makes progress) 3...Ke7! 4.e6 (if 4.Ke4 then 4...Ke6 holds the opposition) and 4...Ke8! - drawing...

Drawing Example 3, The Rook Pawn Draw – The Enemy King Holds the Corner



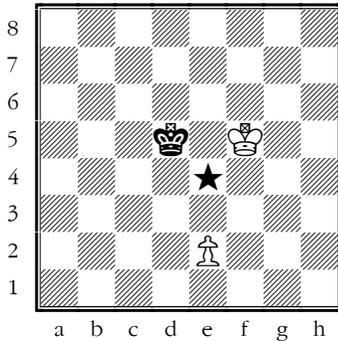
*The King can't be forced
away from the corner!*

Our final example of the basic “King and Pawn ending draws” is the study of Rook Pawns. The ultimate goal position, “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th” is ineffective when advancing the corner pawn because the enemy King (in this case black) is not forced to “**make a choice**” as he normally is when faced with the **opposition**.

Here black can simply play 1...Kg8, and there is no “i” file for white! After 2.Kg6 Kh8 3.h6 Kg8 4.h7+ Kh8 – white will stalemate black with 5.Kh6 or surrender the pawn with any other King move. In order to win with a “Rook Pawn”, white must prevent the black King from ever reaching the corner!

*****BONUS POSITION*****

Sidestepping the Opposition – The “Walking the Pawn-Dog” Winning Technique!



Sidestepping the pawn's file, in an attempt to avoid the tool used in Step 2, does not help black's cause to draw the ending. White wins by leading and protecting the pawn as it moves up the board!

Not discussed in the diagrams of Step 2 is what happens when the defending King chooses to “sidestep” the e-file, thus avoiding giving white direct opposition. Our current position could have occurred if black chose 2...Kd5 instead of 2...Ke7 in the first diagram of Step 2. As long as white maintains to the **rule of keeping the pawn behind the King** (mentioned in *Drawing Example 1* and explained further in Part 2) white should be able to advance the Pawn alongside the King, up the e-file, eventually promoting.

The white King leads the pawn - “walking the pawn like a dog” - toward the promotion square e8. After 1.e4+! Kd6 2.Kf6! (not 2.e5+ as after 2...Ke7, black is again blocking the e-file and white will be forced to advance the pawn, eventually leading to the draw position discussed in *Drawing Example 1*) 2...Kd7 3.e5! Kd8 - if 3...Ke8 then 4.Ke6 and we have reached “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th” – 4.Kf7 Kd7 5.e6+ Kd8 6.e7+ Kd7 7.e8=Queen, winning! Did you notice how the King used his clear path on the f-file to “walk the pawn” up the e-file? This is a key pattern!

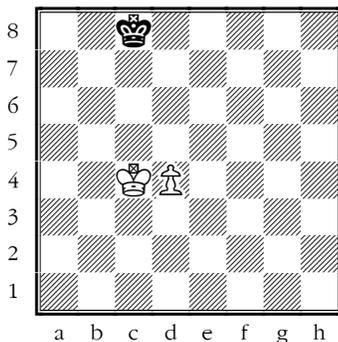
Opposition, Technique & Advanced King Play

Part 2: Distant Opposition

Concepts:

- More King and Pawn Play!
- More examples of defensive opposition!
- Making waiting moves in King and Pawn endings!
- What are “corresponding” squares?

Distant Opposition, Example 1: Maintaining Enough Distance to Hold Opposition

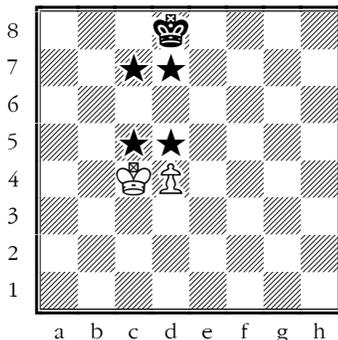


White must attempt to make progress with the King first, not the pawn!

In our first example the result is a draw with best play, regardless of whose turn it is to move. Though there exists three ranks (5th, 6th, and 7th) between the white and black Kings, black is already in control of the “**Distant Opposition**”.

Black's move 1...Kd8! maintains enough distance, and the King is prepared to meet both 2.Kc5 and 2.Kd5 with the opposition (see next diagram). 2.d5 would allow 2...Kd7, and we are now on familiar territory where white's pawn has moved in front of the King. After: 3.Kc5 Kc7 4.d6+ Kd7 5.Kd5 and 5...Kd8 - where black is ready to meet white on either 6.Ke6 with 6...Ke8! or 6.Kc6 with 6...Kc8!, drawing.

Distant Opposition, Example 1 - Part 2: “Meeting” on the Corresponding Square

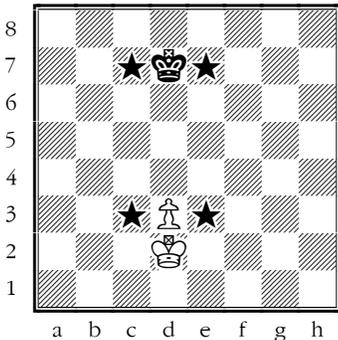


Black must “wait” to gain the opposition after white's King advances!

As mentioned in the first diagram, the black King is prepared to meet both 2.Kc5 and 2.Kd5 on the correct “corresponding square”. This will prevent white from ever gaining the opposition on the black King, therefore forcing white's **pawn to lead the way**, inevitably ending in a draw!

2.Kc5 is met by 2...Kc7, if then 3.Kd5 Kd7 4.Ke5 Ke7, etc. If 2.Kd5 immediately, then 2...Kd7 and black is **maintaining the opposition** with the white King. If then 3.Ke5 Ke7 4.d5 (only other try) Kd7 5.d6 Kd8! (the defending King must always retreat **straight back from the pawn**) and once again, black is ready to meet 6.Ke6 with Ke8 and after 7.d7+ Kd8 8.Kd6 stalemates the black King for a draw...

Distant Opposition, Example 2 - Part 1: Recognizing the Corresponding Square

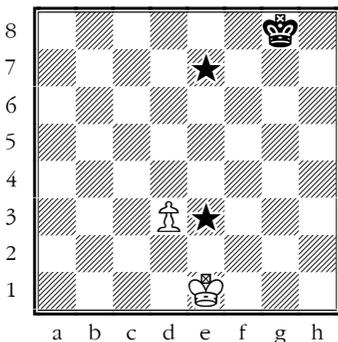


Even at further distances,
the white Pawn should
NEVER lead!

In this position black is using the knowledge of corresponding squares to his/her advantage in order to **maintain the Distant Opposition**. Black found that the corresponding square to e3 is e7, and c3 is c7. This means that black will only move to one of these squares, after white has chosen a path and moved to the square first.

With the last move, 1...Kd7! - black recognizes that even at these far distances, he can **wait and maintain** the opposition! 2.Ke3 is met by 2...Ke7!, while 2.Kc3 is met by 2...Kc7! One example line is: 2.Ke3 Ke7 3.Ke4 (if 3.d4 then simply 3...Kd6 and white has lost winning chances by advancing the pawn ahead) 3...Ke6 4.Kd4 Kd6! - drawing!

Distant Opposition, Example 2 - Part 2: Finding the Corresponding Square

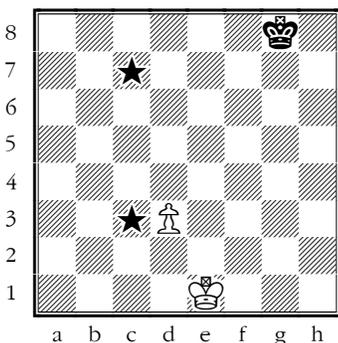


"Finding" the
corresponding square can
help you draw a game!

Our next position shows the white pawn on d3, yet the King's have changed position. Here we see that if white tries to make progress along the e-file, the King will eventually be met on e3 by the enemy King on the corresponding square e7. If 1.Ke2 Kf8 2.Ke3 Ke7, and white is once again being held back by Distant Opposition.

Unless a Passed-Pawn can "out run" the enemy King (which the d-pawn obviously cannot here), white must find a way to improve the King's position to **"lead his pawn"** to promotion. White must find and recognize what the opponent's corresponding squares are and avoid them. White will then have avoided Distant Opposition...

Distant Opposition, White Wins by Avoiding the Corresponding Square



Avoid the "Distant
Opposition" and
win the game!

In many cases, the defending King will already be too close to the pawn for the following idea to be possible (as in Example 2, Part 1 where the black King was already on the d-file, and therefore in the best position to wait and maintain the opposition). However in this instance with the black King is a few files away, and so white has a small window to make the right choice and win the endgame!

1.Kd2!, headed for the Queen-side where the enemy King cannot reach the corresponding square c7. After: 1...Kf7 2.Kc3 Ke6 (or 2...Ke7) 3.Kc4 Kd6 4.Kd4! - and the opposition is won for white - 4...Kc6 5.Ke5 Kd7 6.Kd5 Ke7 7.Kc6 Ke6 8.d4 Ke7 9.d5 Kd8 10.Kd6!, easily winning.

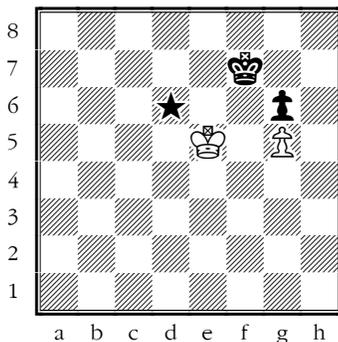
Opposition, Technique & Advanced King Play

Part 3: Irregular Opposition

Concepts:

- More King and Pawn Play, with further examples of “corresponding squares”!
- What is *irregular* opposition?
- The famous “King Dance” position!
- Introduction to **advanced** King and Pawn ending ideas?

Irregular Opposition: The King Makes Progress Without “Directly” Opposing

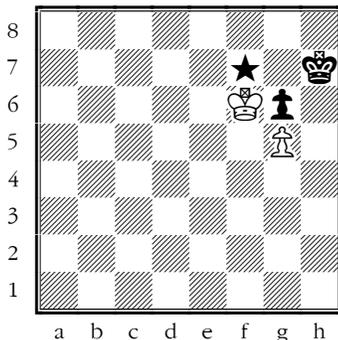


The **goal** position: “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th can be reached here!”

The name of this technique is “irregular”, yet it is arguably the most **practical** (which means commonly reached) method of opposition in King and Pawn endings. Because most endgames will not reach positions where the King's line up directly, knowing how to make progress and outplay the enemy when their positions are “irregular” is key!

Here white starts off with the move 1.Kd6! – and though the Kings are not **directly** opposing each other on a rank or file, the black King is still in Zugzwang and must move, giving up the e6 square. The game continues: 1...Kf8 (best) 2.Ke6 Kg7 3.Ke7! Kg8 4.Kf6 and 4...Kh7. Because black must guard the g-pawn, the King is forced toward the edge.

Irregular Opposition, Example 1 Diagram 2

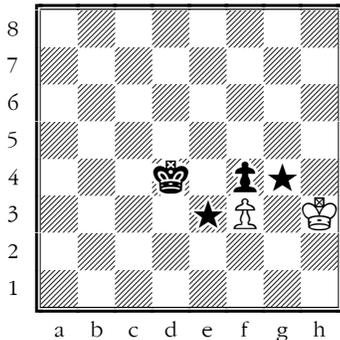


“Irregular Opposition” leads to direct opposition - winning the g6-pawn!

White now makes the final obvious move, 5.Kf7: black is in opposition; forced to move to the h8-square; and the g-pawn falls. White has achieved “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th”, and is easily winning after 5...Kh8 6.Kxg6 Kg8 7.Kh6 Kh8 8.g6 Kg8 9.g7 Kf7 10.Kh7 and 11.g8=Queen!

White's ability to make progress, despite never directly opposing the enemy King, was based on the fact that black **had to guard** certain key **squares** (like e6, f6, and eventually the pawn on g6). Because black's King was “tied down” to those squares, white was able to **move around** the King, forcing black to lose ground and allow white's King to make progress towards the precious pawn on g6.

Famous Irregular Opposition Example: *The King Dance*, Diagram 1

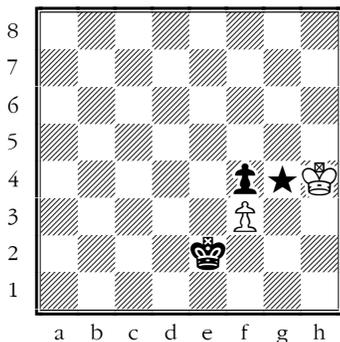


Whoever moves first wins in this famous "King Dance" position!

This position brings together all the ideas of basic, distant (with the kings being 3 files apart), and irregular opposition. Even if this position never occurs in your own game, the concept is very important and extremely useful. Here the squares e3 and g4 are corresponding squares, commonly referred to as “**don't touch me first**” squares...

This means that whoever moves to the e3 (black) or g4 (white) first will lose after the enemy immediately moves to the corresponding square. Example: 1...Ke3 is met by 2.Kg4, guarding the f3-pawn and placing the black King in Zugzwang (the f4-pawn falls). On the other hand, 1.Kg4 by white is met by 1...Ke3, returning the favor and winning...

Famous Irregular Opposition Example: *The King Dance*, Diagram 2

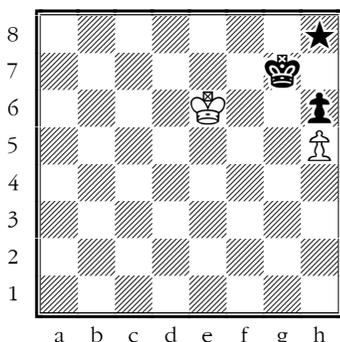


White is forced to g4 and black delivers the final blow: 3...Ke3, winning!

The question then becomes: Who can force their opponent to the “don't touch me” square first, and how? Both sides must strive to reach a square that attacks the enemy pawn but **isn't a “don't touch me” square**. The most obvious squares are g5 for white and e2 for black. Typically, the more active King – so in this case, the King who moves first – will win the “King Dance” by reaching the key square first!

Assuming it is black to play, 1...Kd3 is the correct move. White is now forced to “dance” away from the g4-square (as 1.Kg4 obviously losses immediately to 2...Ke3). 2.Kh4 is the only move (2.Kg2 would allow 2...Ke3 easily winning the f3-pawn and the game) and after 2...Ke2! white **must** play 3.Kg4, and black retreats with 3...Ke3, winning...

Irregular Opposition Still Works – But Fails Because of the Rook Pawn (Corner)



After obvious moves, the above position is drawn.

Also important are cases when using irregular opposition is effective in making progress and forcing the enemy King to lose ground, but nonetheless leads to drawn positions due to other important factors in the position. For example, here white has a Rook Pawn.

After 1.Ke7, white forces the black King to lose ground, surrendering the f6 square. After 1...Kg8 2.Kf6 Kh7 3.Kf7 Kh8 4.Kg6 Kg8 5.Kxh6 – white has used the irregular opposition technique successfully; however, the endgame is still a draw after 5...Kh8 – as white is left with a Rook Pawn, and the black King will easily “hold the corner.”



Opposition, Technique & Advanced King Play

Instructor's Guide

The importance of understanding King and Pawn endings, from the most basic examples of “King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th” - to the advanced positions of Distant and Irregular Opposition, should **never be underestimated**. Players who skip these important steps will find themselves ill equipped when trying to solve (and play) more complicated endgames with minor pieces and Rooks.

Essentially, a chess player's ability to make the right decision in many other types of endgames is based on their King and Pawn ending knowledge. This is because all pieces (besides the King) can be lost or exchanged for one another; therefore, there is always the potential for a King and Pawn ending to occur in a game. The only way for a beginning chess player, especially a child, to master King and Pawn endings is deliberate and repeated practice of the basics, as well as experience in solving the more complex examples.

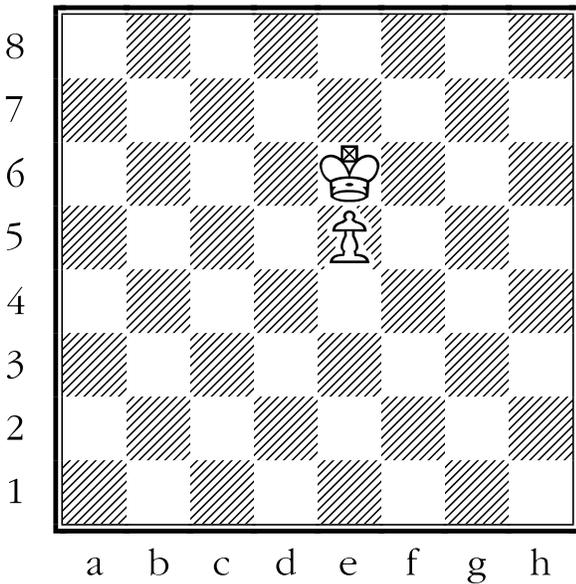
Because there truly is no easy transition from the basic concepts of opposition to the more advanced, make sure your students genuinely understand all the fundamentals of Part 1 before moving onto the Distant (Part 2) and eventually Irregular (Part 3) examples of opposition and advanced King play. Use the worksheets for practice during this process.

Practical Notes and Advice – Lesson 15:

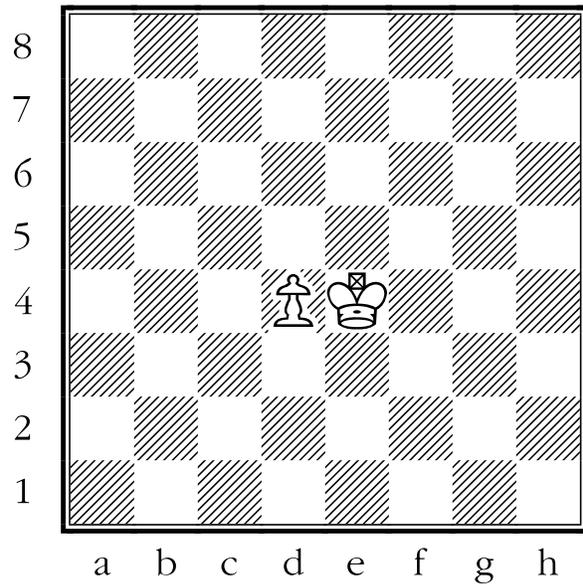
- **Have your student(s) practice the three-step pattern explained in Part 1 – trying the pawn on different files so that the child can realize for him/herself that this technique - culminating in King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th - works with every pawn (except the Rook Pawn).**
- **Let them try on their own, offering very little feedback at first. They will often make the mistake of advancing the pawn too early – either allowing the enemy King to take defensive opposition, or advancing the pawn in front of their King, thus allowing the drawing methods explained in Parts 1 and 2 to occur.**
- **Let them learn from experience that advancing the pawn carelessly, neglecting their ultimate goal position, doesn't work. Then remind them of the winning technique, asking them to try and keep to the rules/principles. The defender should eventually try moving to the side file (see the “Bonus Position” of Part 1).**

Lesson 15: King and Pawn Endings

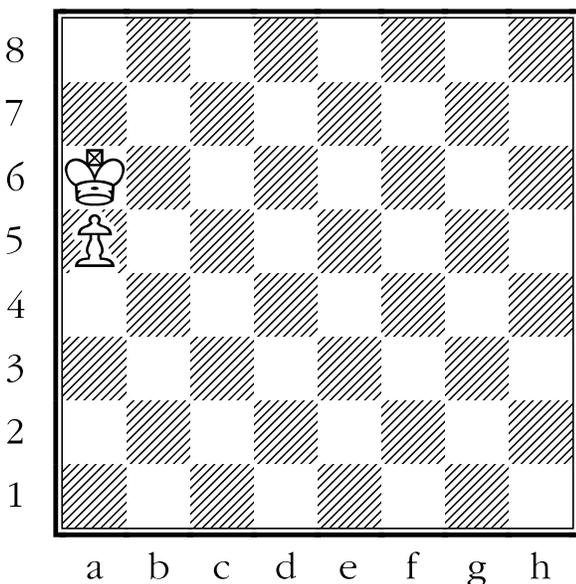
In the following diagrams black is drawing with defensive opposition **only** if the black King is placed on the right square(s). Draw a star on the square(s) that would give a draw to black **regardless of whose turn it is to move**. If there is no way to draw, circle the white King.



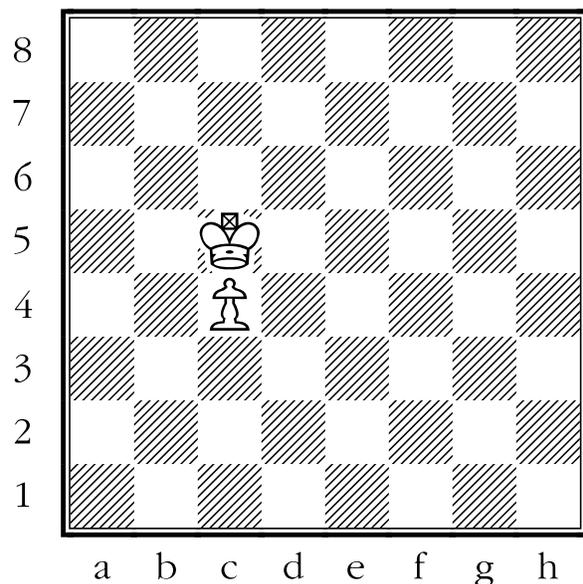
Are there any "drawing" squares for the black King regardless of whose turn it is?



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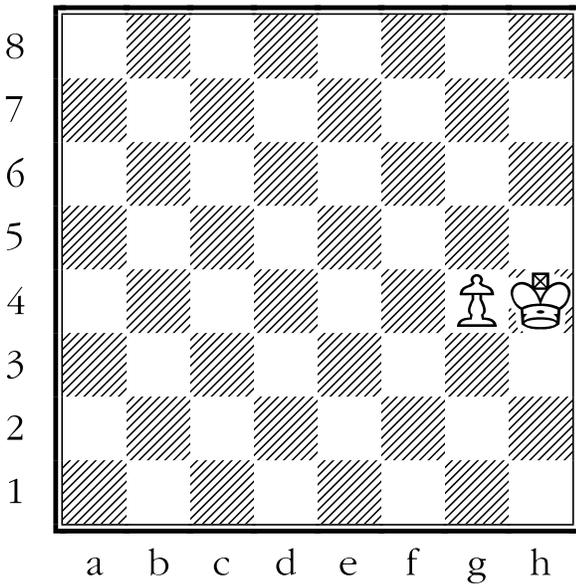
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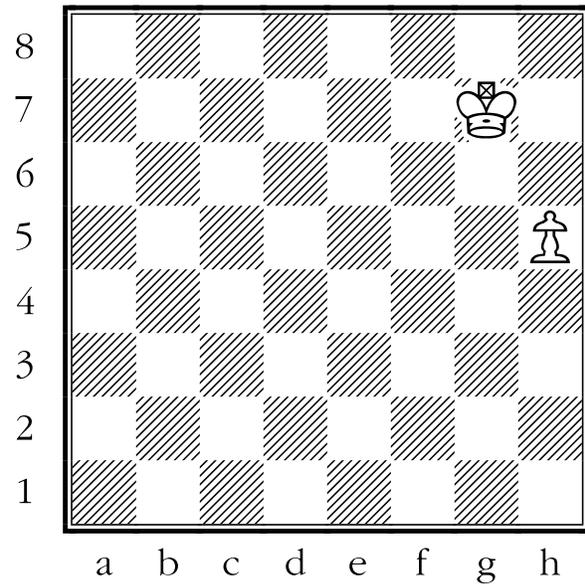
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Lesson 15: King and Pawn Endings

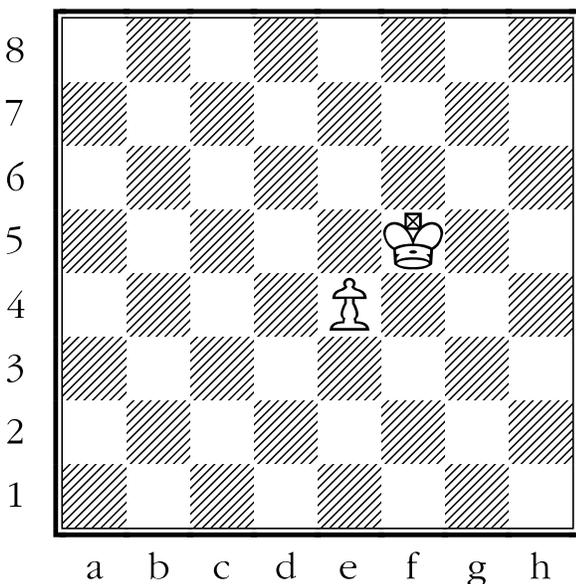
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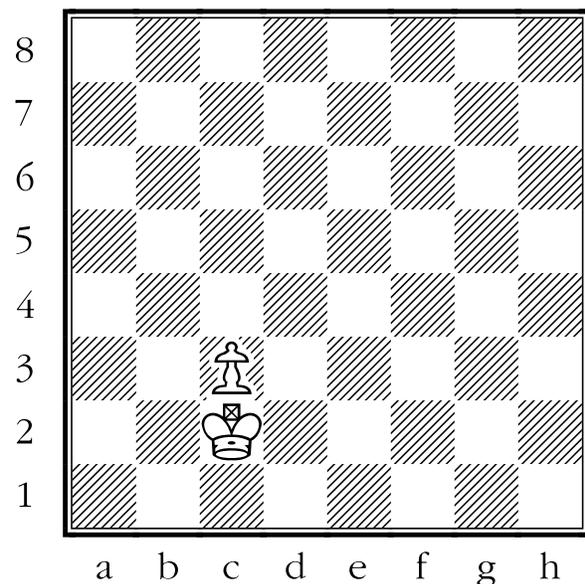
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Opposition, Technique & Advanced King Play

Answer Key

Worksheet Page – “King and Pawn Endings”:

Diagram #1 – Circle the white King: White has achieved King on the 6th, Pawn on the 5th and is winning regardless of the position of the black King or whose turn it is to move.

Diagram #2 – Stars on a8, b8, c8, c7 and c6 – four squares total: Obviously a8 and b8 “hold the corner”, but black can also trap the white King to the Rook file from the c-file. For example if the black King was to start on c6: 1.Ka7 Kc7 2.a6 Kc8 3.Ka8 (if 3. Kb6 then 3...Kb8) 3... Kc7 4.a7 Kc8 stalemates white in the corner.

Diagram #3 – Stars on e6, d6, e8 and d8 – four squares total: e6 and d6 obviously maintain a direct opposition on the white King and force the e5-pawn to lead the way, therefore drawing. E8 and d8 hold the “distant opposition” and prepare to meet any advance of the King (f5, e5, or d5) with direct opposition. **NOTE:** c7, d7, e7 and f7 would draw if black were to move, but if it were white's turn to move the white King can gain the opposition by coming forward to the correct corresponding square. C8 and f8 would also draw on black's turn by “waiting for the opposition” on the correct corresponding square (either d8 or e8 respectively).

Diagram #4 – Circle the white King: Though there are several squares that might draw if it were black to move, and maybe even a few that would draw on white to move – There are no squares that draw **regardless** of whose turn it is to move.

Diagram #5 – Stars on g6, h6, g8 and h8 – four squares total: g6 and h6 obviously maintain a direct opposition on the white King and force the g5-pawn to lead the way, therefore drawing. G8 and h8 hold the “distant opposition” and prepare to meet any advance of the King (g5 or h5) with direct opposition. **NOTE:** f7, g7 and h7 would draw if black were to move, but if it were white's turn to move the white King can gain the opposition by coming forward to the correct corresponding square. F8 would also draw on black's turn by “waiting for the opposition” on g8.

Diagram #6 – Circle the white King

Diagram #7 – Circle the white King

Diagram #8 – Every safe square along the b, c and d files would lead to a forced draw regardless of whose turn it is to play: This position is designed to show the severe



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disability of having the pawn in front of the King when trying to win King and Pawn Endings. Even on d8 and b8 the black King can wait to meet both 1.Kd3 or 1.Kb3 with 1...Kc7! and black is ready to meet any advance by the white King with opposition. There exists a total of 13 forced drawing squares: c4, b5, c5, d5, b6, c6, d6, b7, c7, d7, b8, c8 and d8.