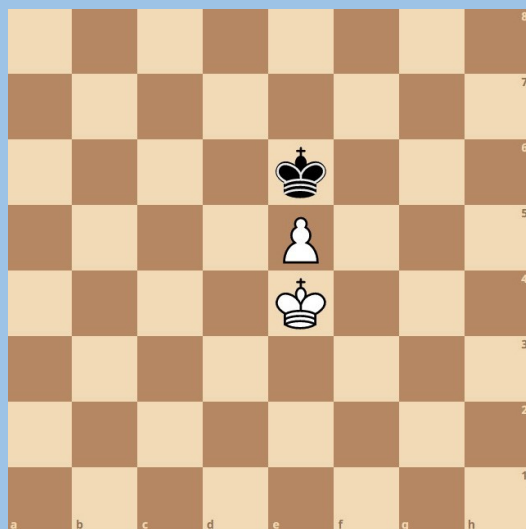


Lesson 27: The Endgame, Part I

King and Pawn Endgames



In the last two lessons we learned about the **OPENING**, where players develop their pieces. Next comes the **MIDDLEGAME**: each side attempts to gain an advantage, using tactics to win material, or launching an attack against their opponent's king. When many pieces have been exchanged, we reach the **ENDGAME**.

Endgames look simple: there are fewer choices of move. However, every move can make the difference between winning and losing.

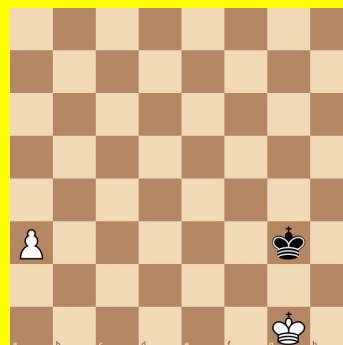
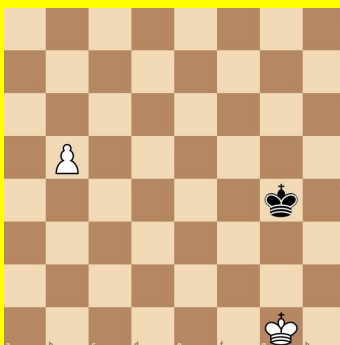
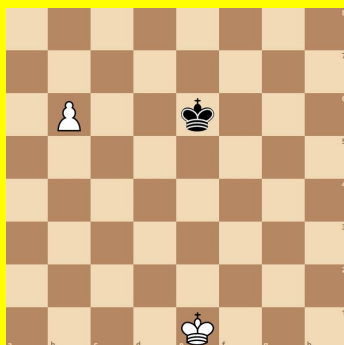
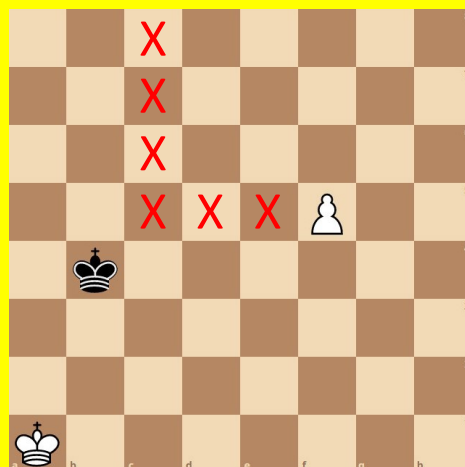
There's a lot to learn, even about endgames with a single pawn on the board.

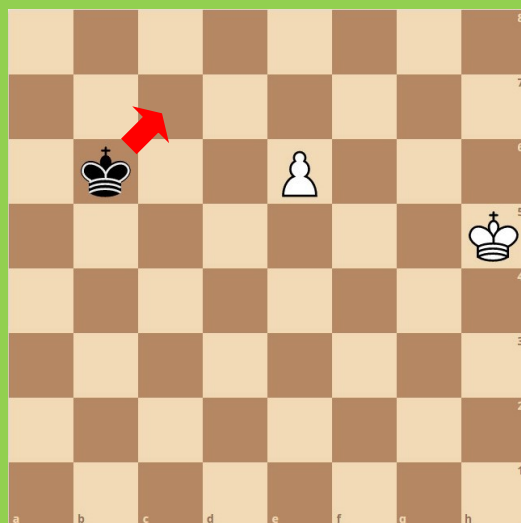
The Square of the Pawn

Each side's strategy is clear. White will win if they can safely promote their pawn. Black will draw if they can prevent promotion.

When the White king is unable to help the pawn, it's a race. There's an easy rule to help you calculate who wins. Imagine a square with the pawn at one corner. The length of the sides is the number of squares the pawn must move to promote.

Black will stop the pawn if they can move their king inside the **SQUARE OF THE PAWN**. If not, White wins. In the diagram above it's a draw: 1...Kc5 2. f6 Kd6 3. f7 Ke7 4. f8=Q+ Kxf8. Using the same method, can you work out whether Black (to move) can stop the White pawn in the diagrams below?





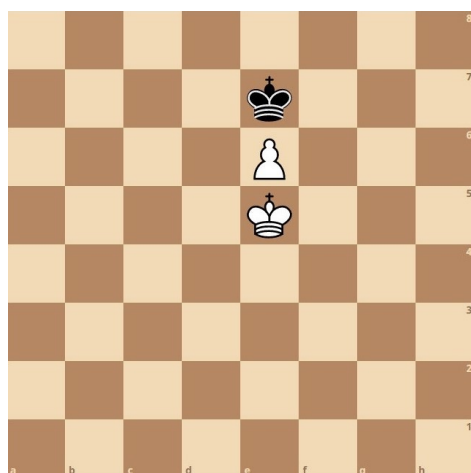
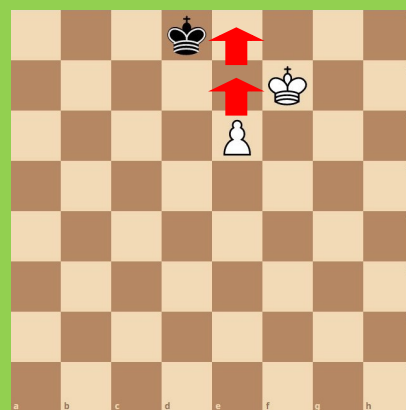
Shepherding the Pawn

If the Black king can move into the square of the pawn, White will need to use their king to support the pawn's advance. It's Black's move in the diagram on the left. They begin with 1...Kc7, moving inside the square of the pawn.

It would now be a mistake to advance the pawn: 2. e7 Kd7. The pawn is lost and the game ends in a draw. Instead, the White king must move to support the pawn with 2. Kg6.

Black attempts to block the promotion with 2...Kd8, heading for e8, but White stops this plan by playing 3. Kf7 reaching the diagram on the right. White's next moves are 4. e7 and 5. e8=Q. Black is powerless to prevent promotion.

If Black had played 2...Kd6, attacking the White pawn, 3. Kf7 would still have won the game. The White king defends the pawn and shepherds it to promotion over the next two moves.



Grandmaster Test

It's Black's move. They've managed to block the pawn and are very close to achieving the draw. There are now two options:

1. Move straight back to e8.
2. Move diagonally back to d8 or f8.

One choice draws, the other loses. Which one will you choose? We'll learn more about this position next week.

Grandmaster Test—Lesson 26

Answer: 1. Rf8+ forces checkmate. There are two possibilities: 1...Nxf8 2. Rxf8+ Qxf8 3. Qh7#, or 1...Qxf8 2. Qxh7#. Fischer won the game and went on to become World Champion. He then gave up competitive chess for the next 20 years!