

# MY FAVORITE KING AND PAWN ENDINGS FOR STUDENTS

by Pete Tamburro



There are thousands of king and pawn ending positions and almost a similar number of books on them.



Several fine chess authors (Jeremy Silman comes to mind in today's world of writers on the endgame for students) do a wonderful job of explaining king and pawn endings from scratch.

Knowing what to do in king and pawn endings is just as important as knowing the openings and knowing all your chess combination patterns. When I was a very young player I had a hard fought game with a master who ended up a pawn up and simply expected to win. Because I played a lot of gambits back then, I often ended up a pawn down in an ending!

So, I had a lot of experience and study in king and pawn endings and managed to draw the game. After the game, I asked him why he refused my draw offer because we both knew it was drawn. I'll never forget his reply: "You had to show me you could do it." Let's hope when it's your turn to show somebody, you'll be able to do it, too!

Nowadays, I like to teach my students not only the basics, but give them positions that are a little bit challenging, so they start to realize that even in tough positions, you can look for some basic ideas to help you win.

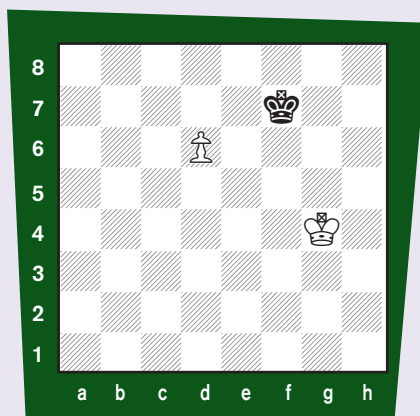
Since there really are no move sequences to memorize in endings as there are in openings, remembering ideas become even more important. Themes such as these will become crucial to winning a game: opposition, the rule of the square, queening with check, the king in front of the pawn, how to win a tempo, etc.

I thought I'd start a series on some of my favorite endgames so you, the

reader, would not only learn from them, but enjoy them as well.

Let's start with an easy one with a trick in it.

## King and Pawn Ending A



By this time, my students know that the opposition is very important, so they invariably play the right first move.

**1. Kf5** **Kf8!**

Since I give them the white pieces, I always play ... Kf8 and watch about three quarters of them play 2. Ke6, which is a big mistake, as I then get the opposition back with 2. ... Ke8 and they can't queen the pawn: 1. Kf5 Kf8 2. Ke6 Ke8 3. d7+ (you never want to check with the pawn on the seventh if you're the one a pawn up) Kd8 4. Kd6 stalemate.

**2. Kf6!** **Ke8**

**3. Ke6** ...

Now, there's a difference. Both kings are on e6 and e8 as mentioned above, but this time it's Black's move. The king with the move loses the opposition. He's the one that can't stay

there, and stare at White eye to eye. He has to blink, and his blink is his next move;

**4. ...** **Kd8**

**5. d7** ...

No check this time!

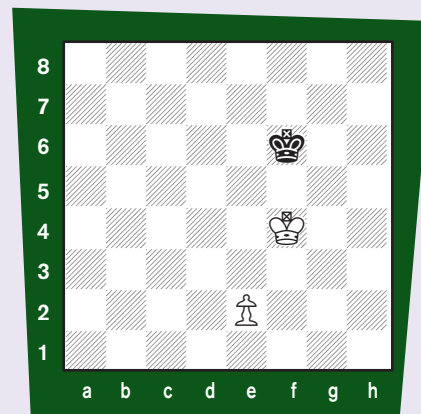
**5. ...** **Kc7**

**6. Ke7**

And the pawn queens courtesy of his escort, the king. Notice how one move makes a difference. If Black had gone right to e8 on his first move, then White would have played 2. Ke6 and gained the opposition. This is also well worth remembering if you're the one that's a pawn down. It might save you if you know the trick.

This next ending is about the opposition as well and about keeping your king IN FRONT OF the pawn. If White plays 1. e4 in our next diagram, he will only be able to draw (**1. e4 Ke6 2. e5 Ke7! 3. Kf5 Kf7!**) and that is a mistake you don't want to make if you're White.

## King and Pawn Ending B



**1. Ke4!** **Ke6**

Trying to keep the opposition, but White has a move in reserve that doesn't make his king move and lose the opposition.

**2. e3 Kd6**

**3. Kf5 ...**

Now, White threatens a horizontal opposition and a nice escort for the pawn up the e-file.

**3. ... Ke7**

Nothing else works either: 3. ... Kd5 4. e4+ Kd6 5. Kf6 Kd7 6. e5 Kd8 7. Kf7 (7. Ke6 Ke8 8. Kd6 Kd8 9. e6) wins.

**4. Ke5 ...**

Keeping the king in front of the pawn to make the black king back off.

**4. ... Kd7**

**5. Kf6 Ke8**

No better would be 5. ... Kd6 6. e4 Kd7 7. e5 Ke8 8. Ke6 and wins.

**6. Ke6 Kf8**

**7. e4 ...**

Yes, you can even play 7. Kd7 Kf7 8. e4 Kf6 9. Kd6 Kf7 10. e5 Ke8 11. Ke6.

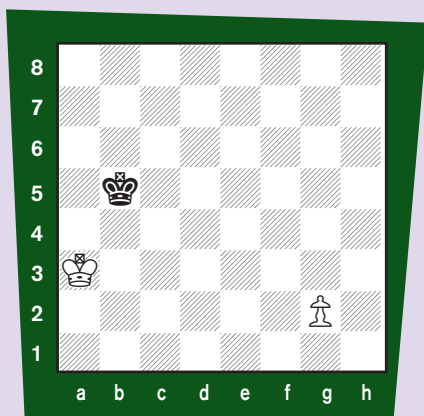
**7. ... Ke8**

**8. e5 Kf8**

**9. Kd7 and wins.**

OK, this opposition stuff is a snap, huh? Let's make you work just a teeny bit harder with diagram C.

### King and Pawn Ending C



Here, Black's king is one file closer to your pawn's file than you are. The first question you should ask yourself, though, in this position, is whether

Black, after you play 1. g4 is in your "square." After you put the pawn on g4 in your mind (that means before you touch the pawn!), you should then draw a diagonal line from g4 to the end of the board which is c8.

The "square" you make with the corners at g4, c4, c8 and g8 tells you whether the black king can catch you if you make a run for g8. If the black king can enter your square after you move, that means he can catch you. It's better than going, "I go here, he goes there; I go here, he goes there, etc." I've seen young players actually try doing it with their fingers! Now you can just look in an instant and KNOW!

So, you can't move your pawn right away in diagram C. Getting the opposition seems like a good plan combined with hustling over to help your pawn. Let's see:

**1. Kb3 Kc5**

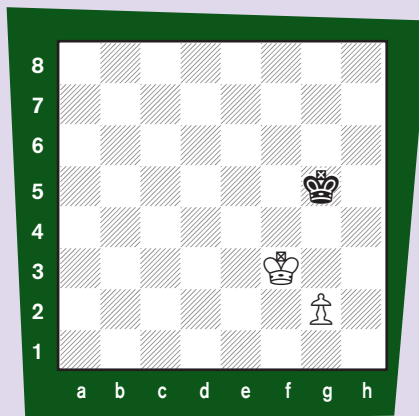
**2. Kc3 Kd5**

**3. Kd3 Ke5**

**4. Ke3 Kf5**

**5. Kf3 Kg5**

**OK, let's take a breather, here!**



Notice how we've now reached a position that is very closely related to the one before this. Now you must know what to do!

**6. Kg3 Kf5**

**7. Kh4 Kf6**

**8. Kh5 Kg7**

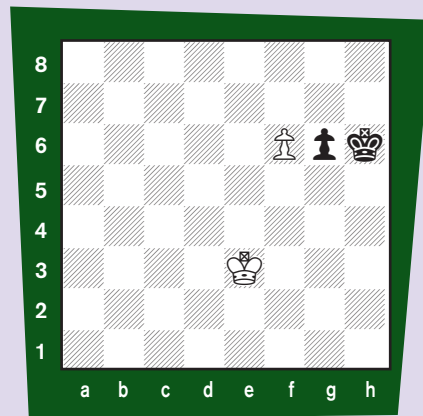
**9. Kg5**

And—voilà!—the king is in front of the pawn and having the opposition,

and we win.

As with all learning, there are building blocks in chess. We start simply and then add on slowly. As you can see from the next diagram, we've added a new face—a black pawn.

### King and Pawn Diagram D



It doesn't take a chess computer to figure out that you had better get your king over to where the action is! If it were Black's move, simply moving the black pawn and scooting the king over to g6 would make the game a draw. You want to win! Let's look at how to do it.

**1. Kf4 Kh7!**

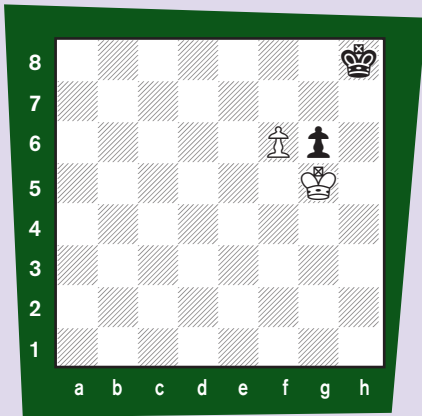
The best defense. You'll see why. 1. ... g5+ doesn't work: 1. ... g5+ 2. Kf5 g4 3. Ke6! (Not 3. f7? Kg7 4. Ke6 Kf8 and you lose!) 3. ... g3 4. f7 Kg7 (4. ... g2 5. f8=Q+ and queening with check allows the queen to stop the g-pawn) 5. Ke7 Kg6 6. f8=Q g2 7. Qg8+, wins the pawn.

**2. Kg5 Kh8!**

Black is being really clever here. Against my students, I always play this move, and, time after time, pawn hungry young people grab that g6-pawn. Do you see anything wrong with snatching the pawn?

**(See diagram top of next page)**

Well, if you've been taking to heart what we've been looking at here, you will immediately see that if you take with 3. Kxg6?? you will only draw because 3. ... Kg8 will gain the opposition and all you will have is that awful drawing check on the seventh rank with the pawn. What do you do? Of course! Gain the opposition!



3. Kh6!
4. Kxg6
5. f7

- Kg8
- Kf8
- ...

With no check and, again, a familiar position.

These were the easy ones because they are the more elementary ones. They had some tricks, but as long as you kept key ideas like opposition, the square of the pawn and queening with check in mind, you were OK. Hopefully, you've also learned to be a bit trickier when you're the one that's a pawn down!

Next time out...

you'll be looking at some positions that require not only knowledge, but

a little  
**IMAGINATION!**

OUR  
APOLOGIES

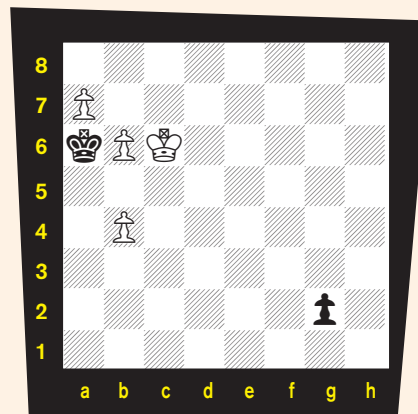
To  
**Alec**  
Getz,  
misidentified  
as Alex Getz  
in the April issue of  
*Chess Life for Kids*.



(continued from page 4 contest winners)

## APRIL COVER PUZZLE SOLUTION AND WINNER!

And if you "got it together" and tried to solve the cover puzzle, you should have wound up with the following position:



Of course, 1. a8=Q or 1. a8=R is checkmate. But the directions said to checkmate in two moves. There are two ways to do this: 1. a8=N g1=Q 2. Nc7 mate, and 1. a8=B g1=Q 2. Bb7 mate.

**My second graders chose the entry from Olympia Serban of Maine as the winner.** She will receive a copy of *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess*, and *Chess Tactics for Kids* by Murray Chandler.

Thanks to everyone who entered. I really enjoyed reading your answers. I hope you have fun reading our glossary in this issue.



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