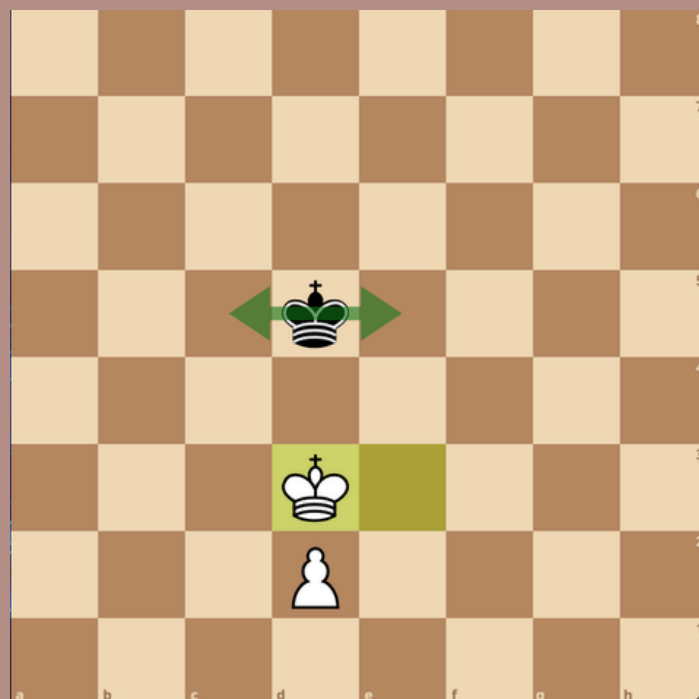


Opposition

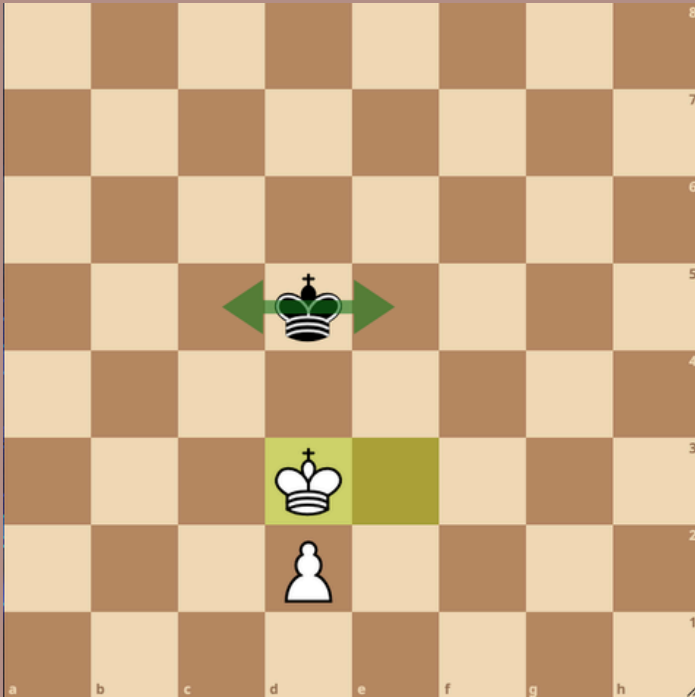
Authored by
Temporary_Coffee

King-and-pawn endgames are some of the most delicate positions in chess. One bad move, and your engine evaluation of “white mates in 23 moves” can go to “black mates in 14 moves.” This lesson teaches a concept that even grandmasters frequently use to navigate these positions!



Opposition takes advantage of the fact that you cannot skip your turn in chess. Opposition occurs when the kings are an odd number of squares apart, and is typically used in endgames. The side that doesn't have to move has opposition. The goal of opposition is to force the opponent's king to continually make room for your king, usually with the goal of promoting a pawn.

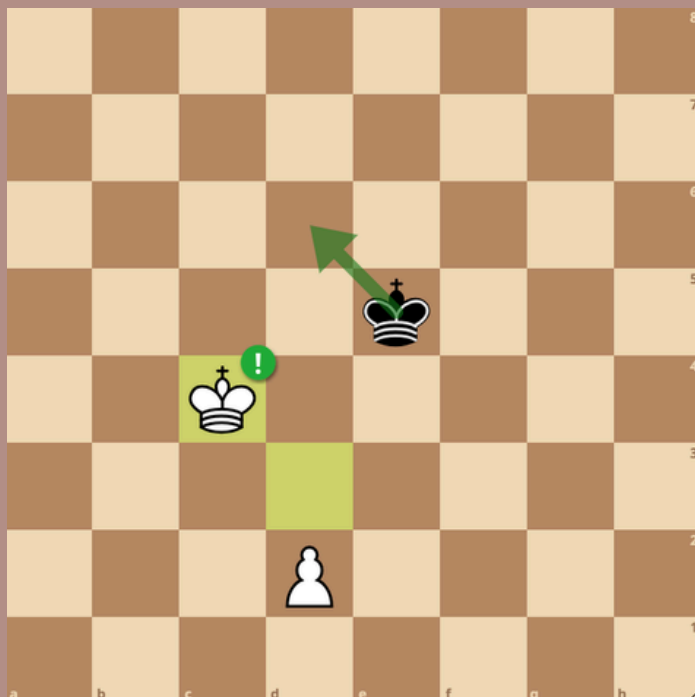
1. Kd3



This is the premise of opposition. Black's king is forced to move out of the way for white's king. White has opposition. Black's king could also move back, but that will be covered after black's lateral moves are discussed.

1. ... Ke5

2. Kc4! ...



Black's only real option is Kd6. If black plays Ke4, white can just advance the pawn.

(If Ke4):

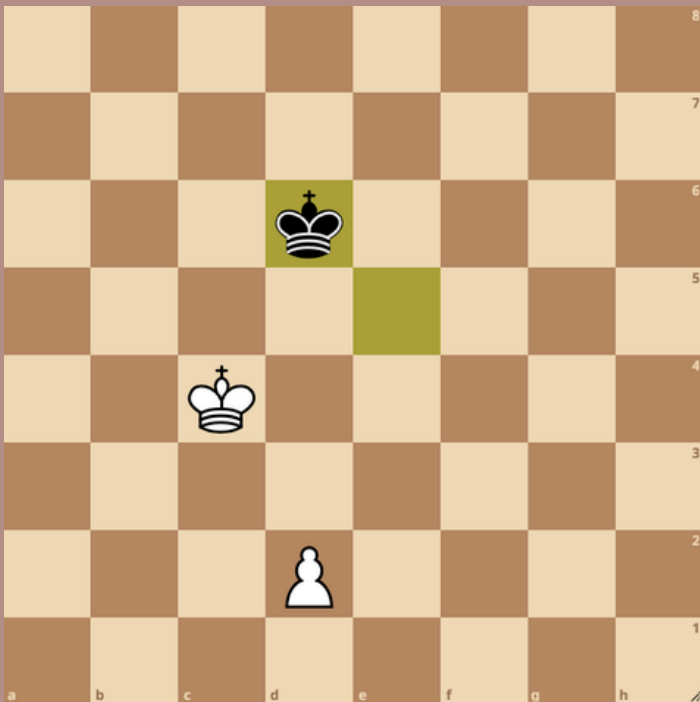
3. d4 Kf5 4. Kd5 Kf6

5. Kd6 Kf7 6. d5 Ke8

7. Kc7 Ke7 8. d6+ Ke6

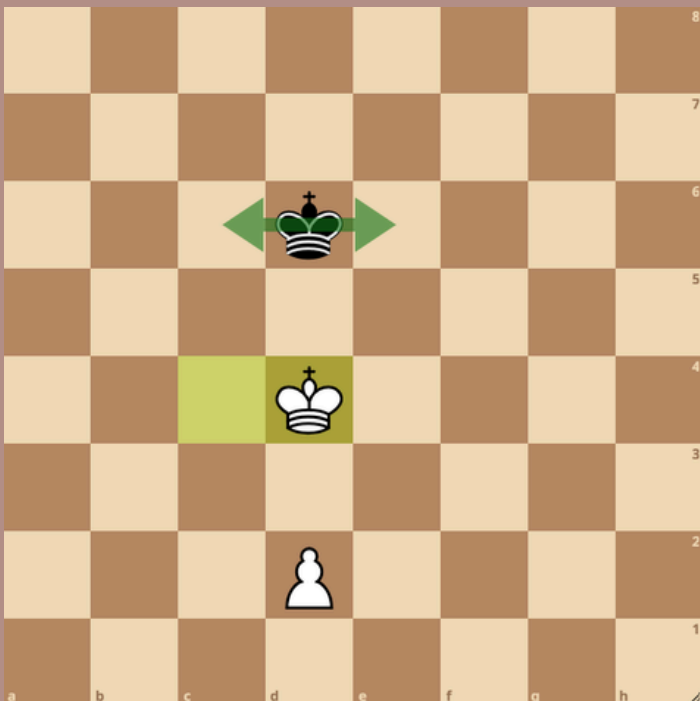
9. d7 Ke5 10. d8=Q

2. ... Kd6



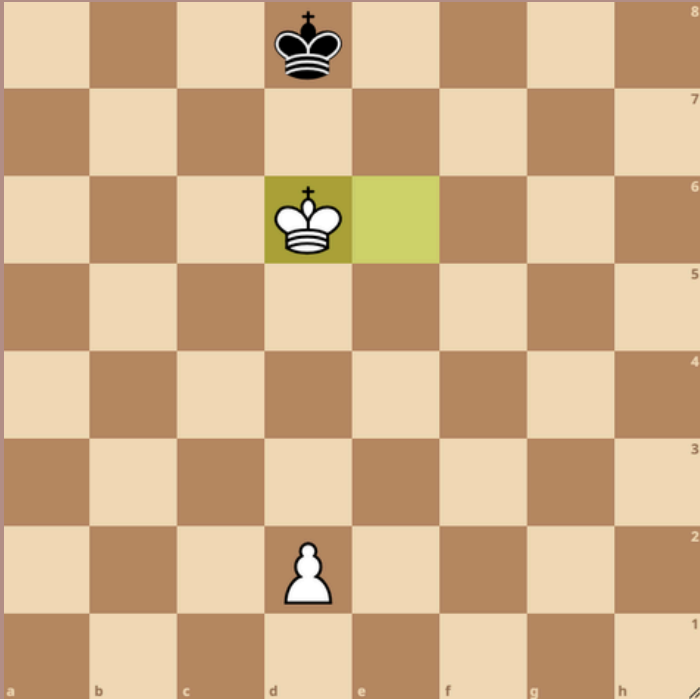
Opposition presents itself again. If white plays Kd4, black's king is forced to move out of the way a second time.

3. Kd4 ...



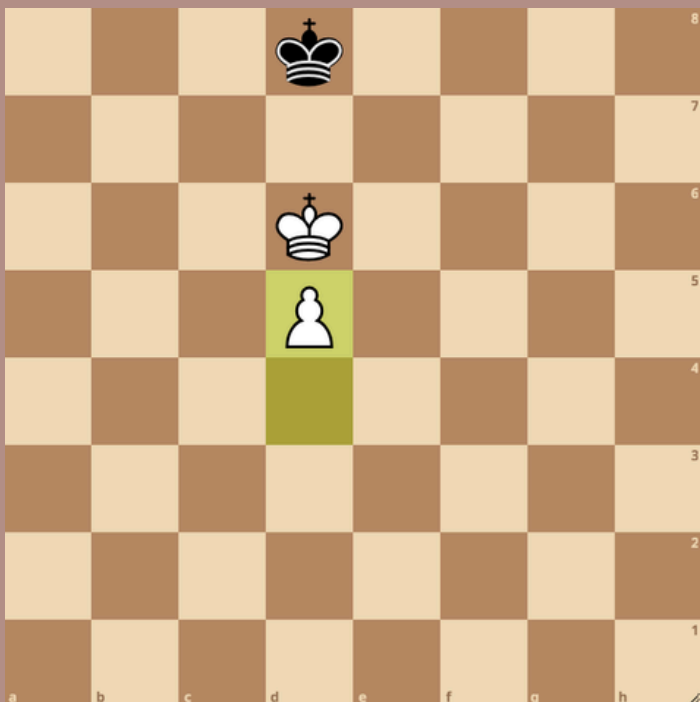
This position is the same as the starting position, except both kings are one square further down the board. White is making progress. White has opposition once more.

3. ... Ke6
4. Kc5 Kd7
5. Kd5 Kc7
6. Ke6 Kd8
7. Kd6 ...



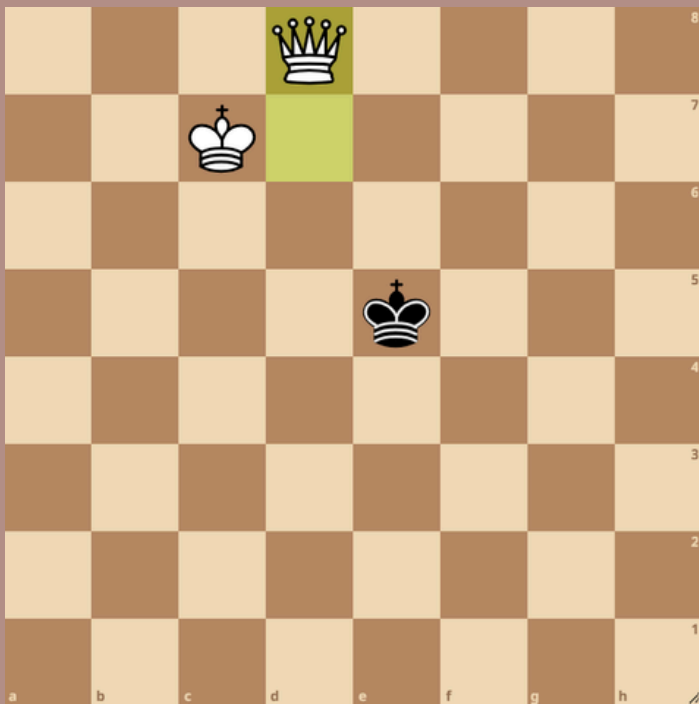
White repeats the same maneuver twice.

7. ... Ke8
8. d4 Kd8
9. d5 ...



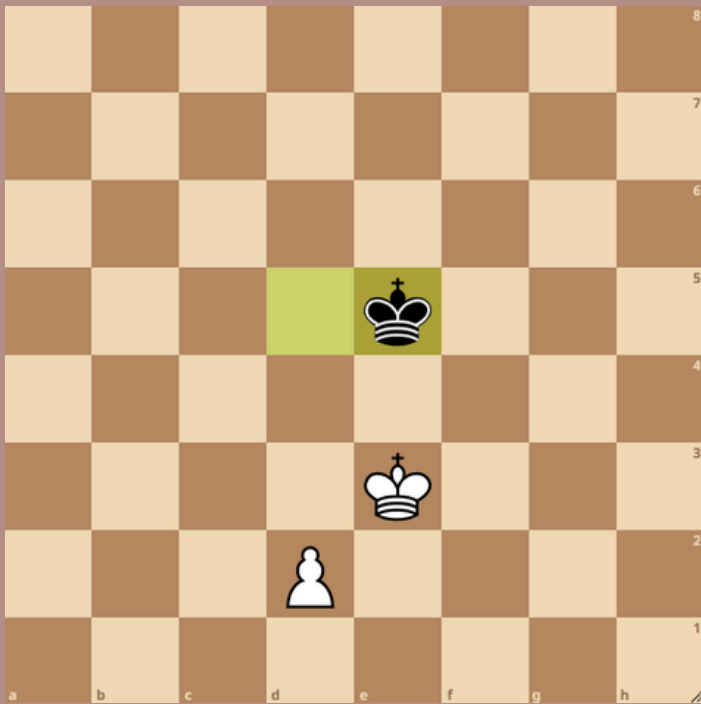
White advances the pawn. Knowing when to advance the pawn is something that will be discussed later.

9. ... Ke8
10. Kc7 Ke7
11. d6+ Ke6
12. d7 Ke5
13. d8=Q



White used opposition to promote the pawn, and will soon win the game.

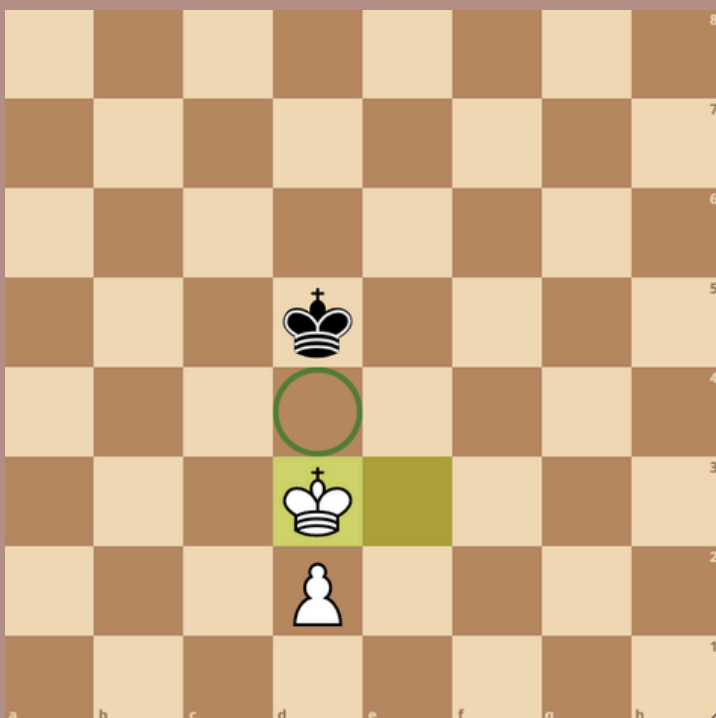
This is the basic idea of opposition - forcing the enemy king to make space to (usually) aid in promoting your pawn. Notice that if, in the original position, it had been black to move instead of white, the game would have been a draw. See below for an example. This highlights how important move order is and thus why opposition is important to learn.



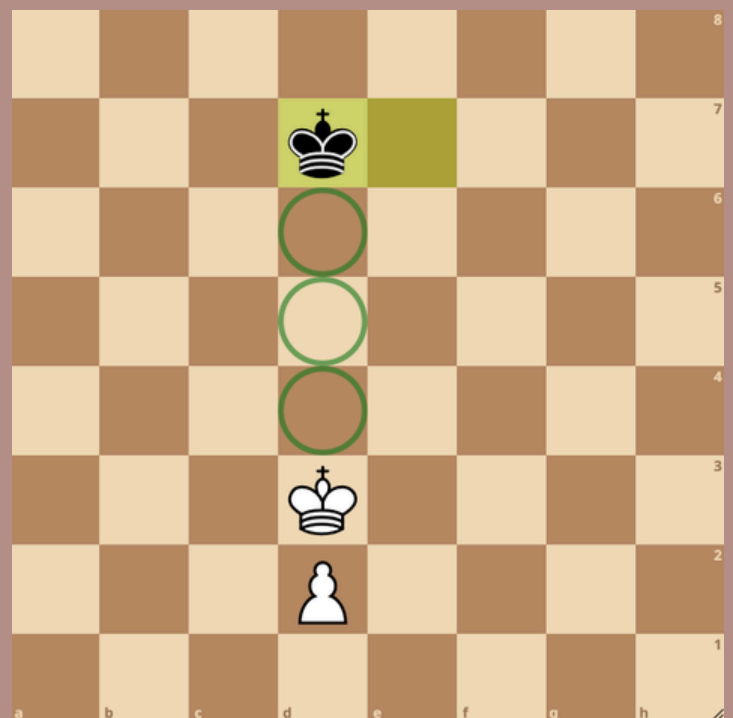
This is what would have happened if it was black's turn instead of white's. This game is a draw because black has the opposition. Knowing when these types of positions are draws will also be covered later in the lesson.

Below are all instances of opposition.

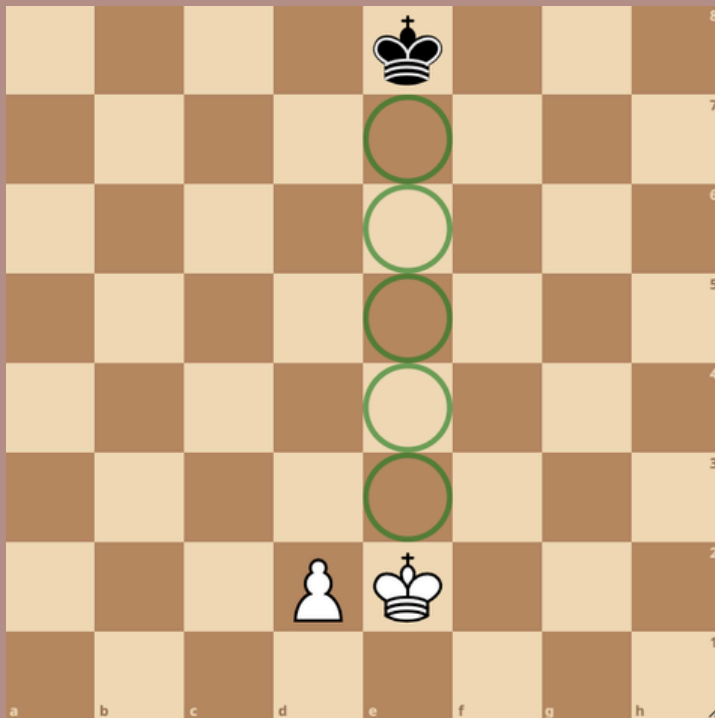
1



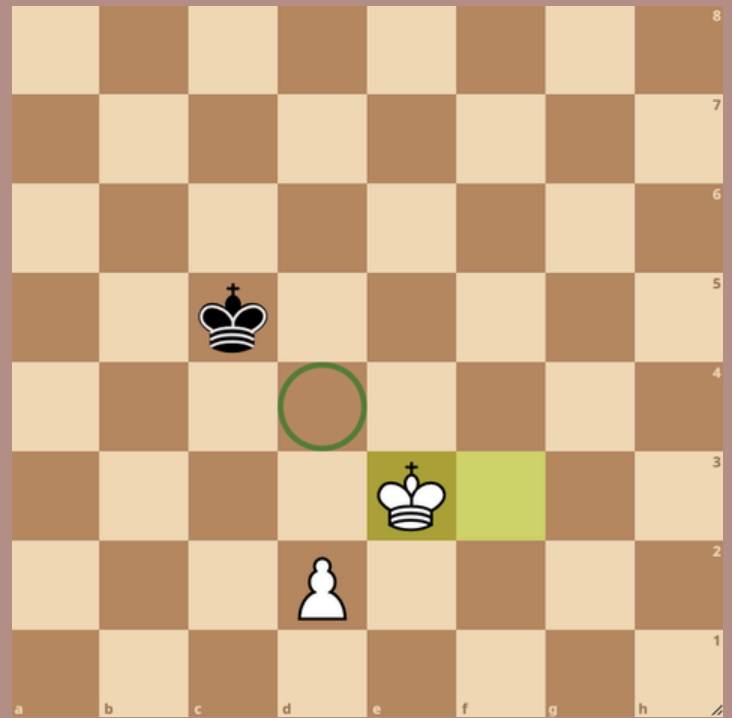
2



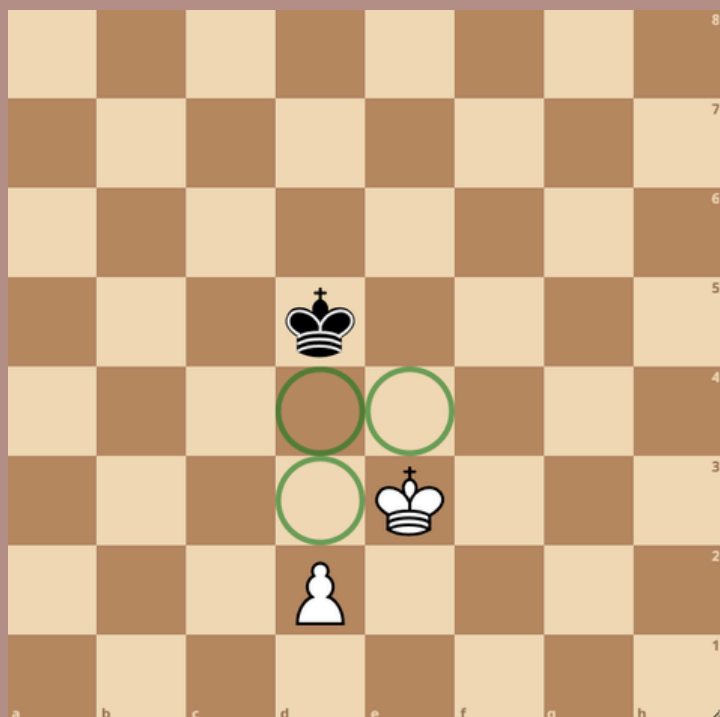
3



4

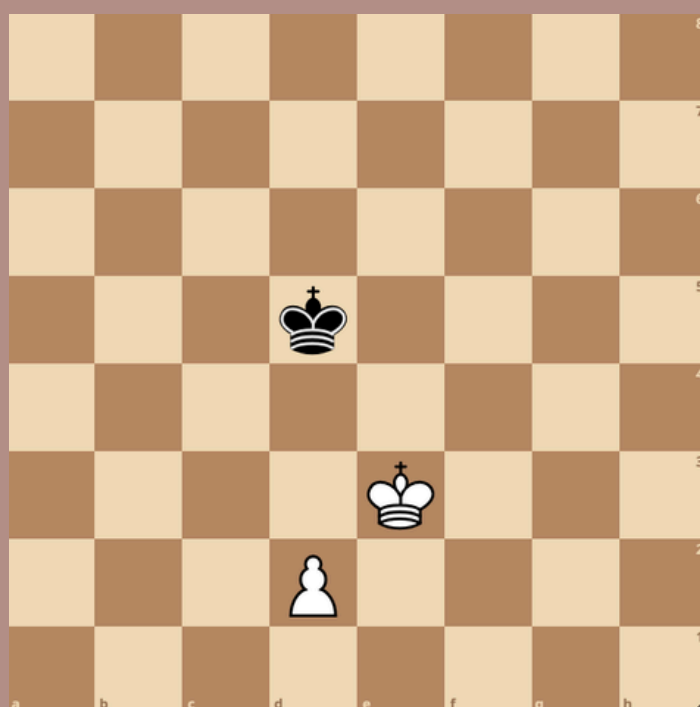


The maximum odd number of squares between the kings at one time cannot be greater than five due to the geometry of the board. Opposition can also be diagonal! In example 1, white has opposition since it's black's turn (white's king just moved, indicated by the slightly yellow squares). In example 2, black has opposition since it's white's turn. In example 3, the odd number of squares indicate the kings are in opposition, though we cannot tell who has opposition in the absence of the yellow squares. In example 4, white has opposition since it's black's turn. Notice if black plays Kd5, white can follow with Kd3, which is the same position as example 1.



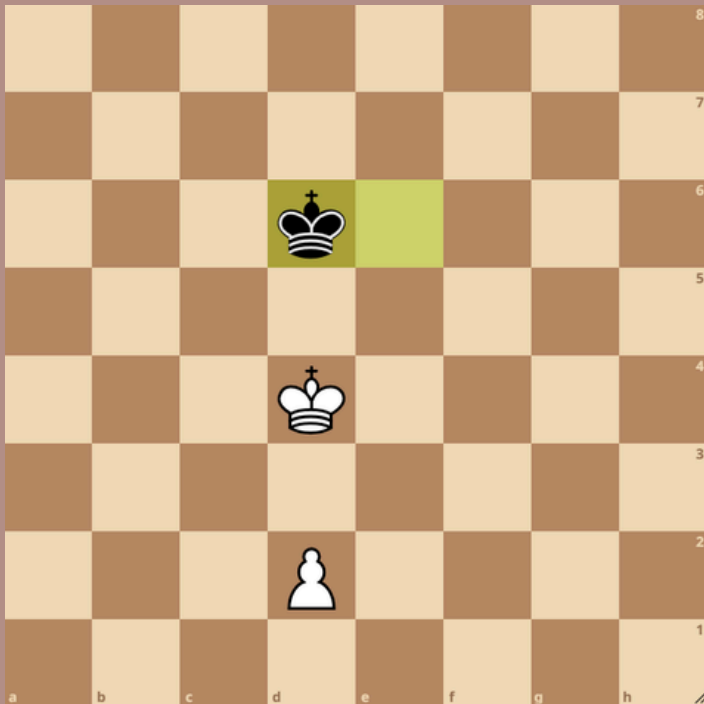
Note that the kings are not in opposition in this position, since it cannot really be said that there are an odd number of squares between them. The kings are in an L-shape instead of a vertical or horizontal line.

Now that we've seen the idea of opposition, as well as how to identify opposition, let's try the same opening position in this lesson with black fighting back harder. This will also address the aforementioned "what if black moves back instead of laterally" question.



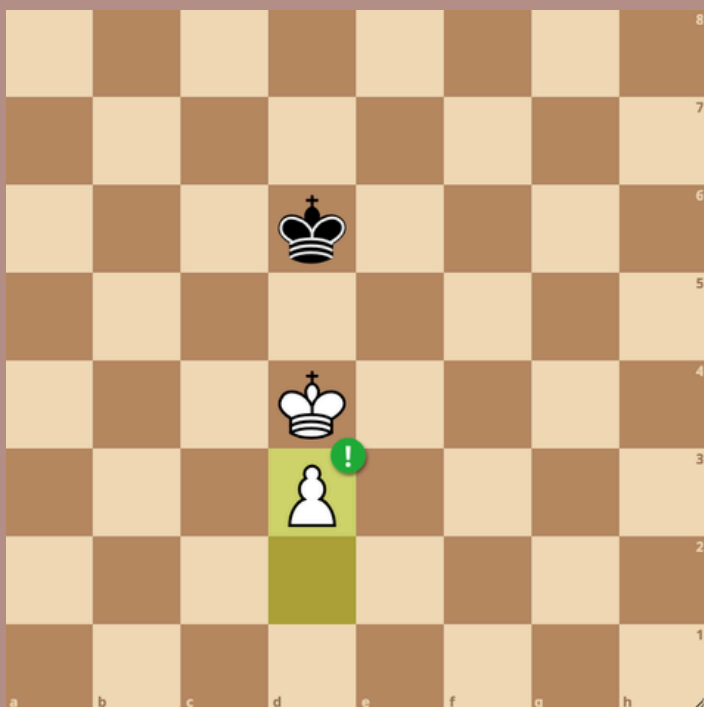
1. Kd3 Ke6

2. Kd4 Kd6



Hang on. Black has just gained opposition. Has white made a mistake? If only there were some way to give the turn back to black while preserving the positioning of the kings...which is exactly what the pawn on d2 can do!

3. d3 ...

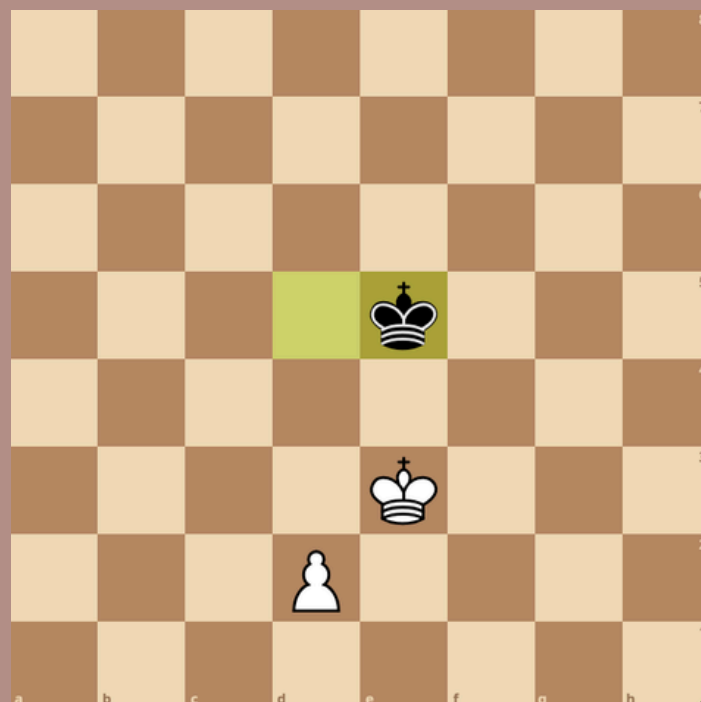


White passes on the turn to black while maintaining the positioning of the kings! This is called a “waiting move.” Now white has opposition. Remember this idea.

3. ... Kd7
4. Kd5 Ke7
5. Kc6 Ke6
6. d4 Ke7
7. d5 Kd8
8. Kd6 Ke8
9. Kc7 Ke7
10. d6+ Ke6
11. d7 Ke5
12. d8=Q ...

If you find yourself in a position where you need to give the move to the opponent and thus seize opposition, try playing a waiting move!

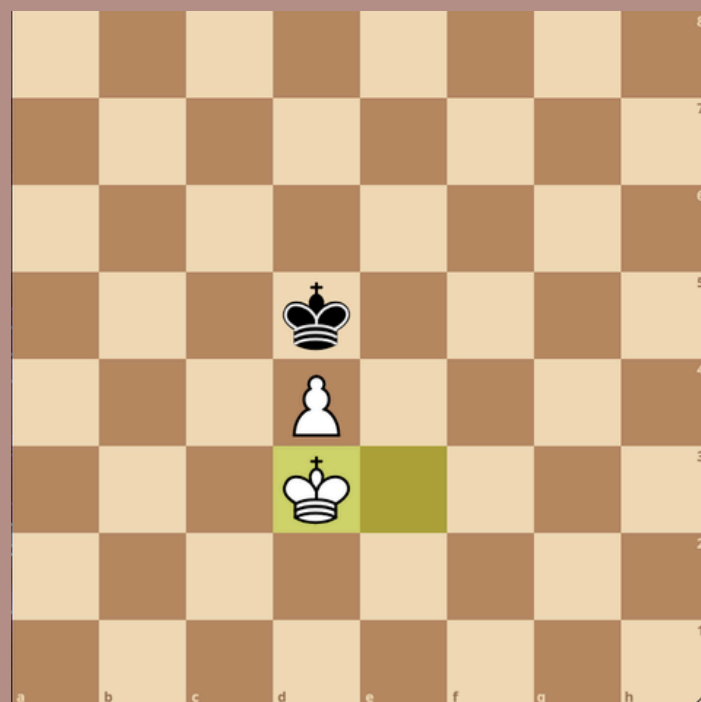
This final section fills two promises made earlier - why exactly the very first position on page 6 was a draw, and knowing when to advance your pawn (page 4). Here was the position on page 6:



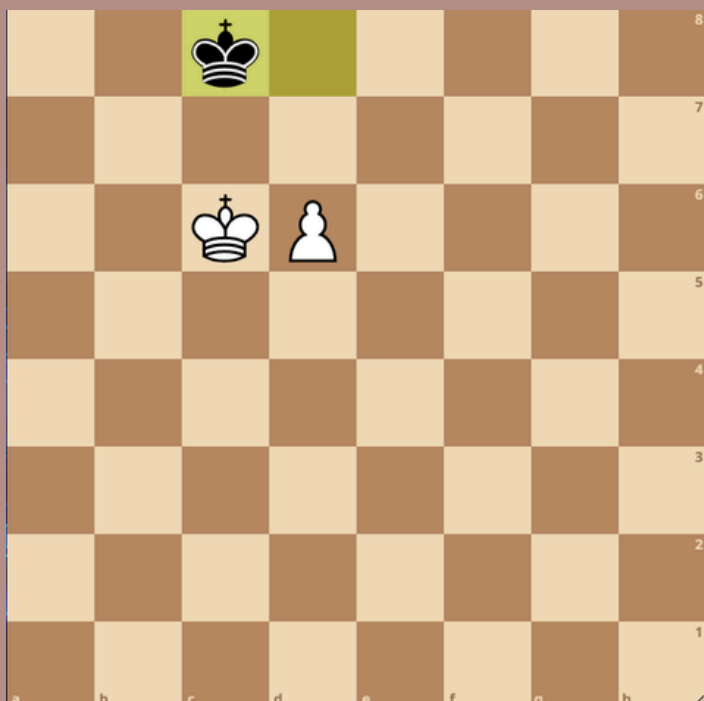
Why is it drawn? - It's drawn simply because white doesn't have the necessary space to make progress. Any lateral king movement would be mimicked by black. Any pawn movement would simply result in the white king being behind the pawn, which is virtually never winning. Note that any backwards king movement would have the same effect as any forwards pawn movement.

When do you advance your pawn? - The same explanation above applies. If your king has space to not be blocked by their own pawn, or you want to play a waiting move, push the pawn!

1. ... Ke5
2. d4+ Kd5
3. Kd3 ...



White cannot win this with correct play from black, because it will eventually transpose into something like the below position.



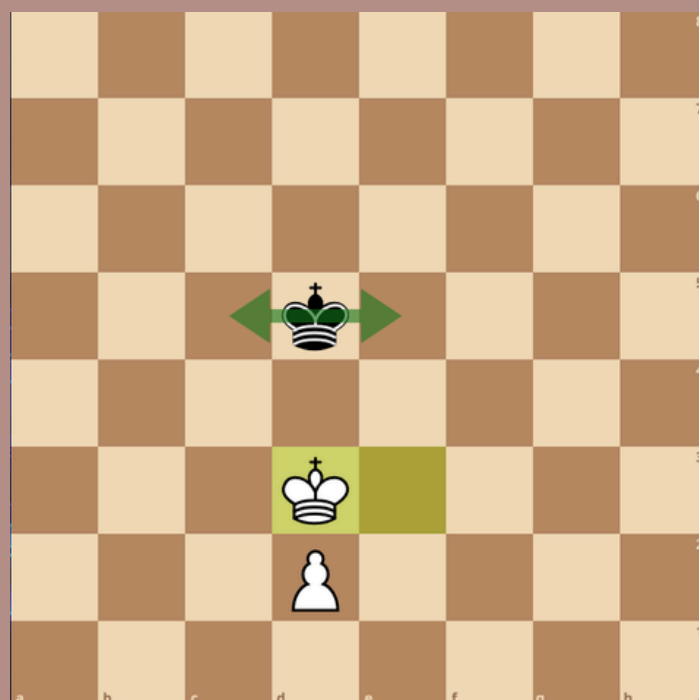
(3. ... Kd6, 4. Kc4 Kc6,
5. d5+ Kd6, 6. Kd4 Kc7
7. Kc5 Kd7, 8. d6 Kd8
9. Kc6 Kc8)

White cannot play d7+
due to Kd8 and Kd6 -
stalemate.

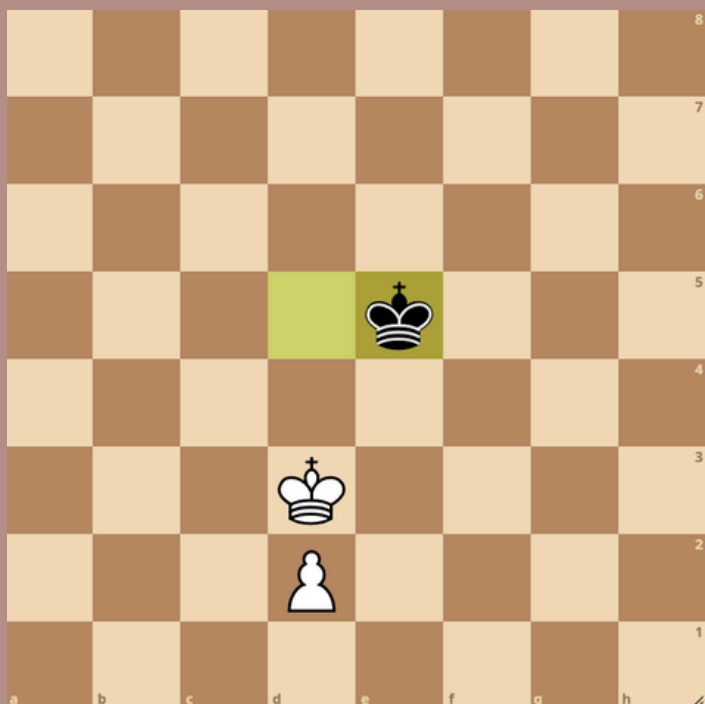
It is possible to win **if black makes a mistake**, which
is why the previous paragraph said “correct play.”
There are several places where black could have
made mistakes, but one of them is 8. ... Kc8.



The reason why this is suddenly winning for white is because black concedes opposition if white follows-up with 9. Kc6 ... This leads to 9. ... Kd8, 10. d7 Ke7, 11. Kc7 ... and white is promoting the pawn. However, do not rely on this method, as it is far better to simply not make that mistake in the first place. Opposition can be used to win the games you should win, and draw the ones you shouldn't. While the concept may not seem hard to understand, its execution proves much more of a challenge. Thus, here is a tip to spotting the right move in opposition positions.

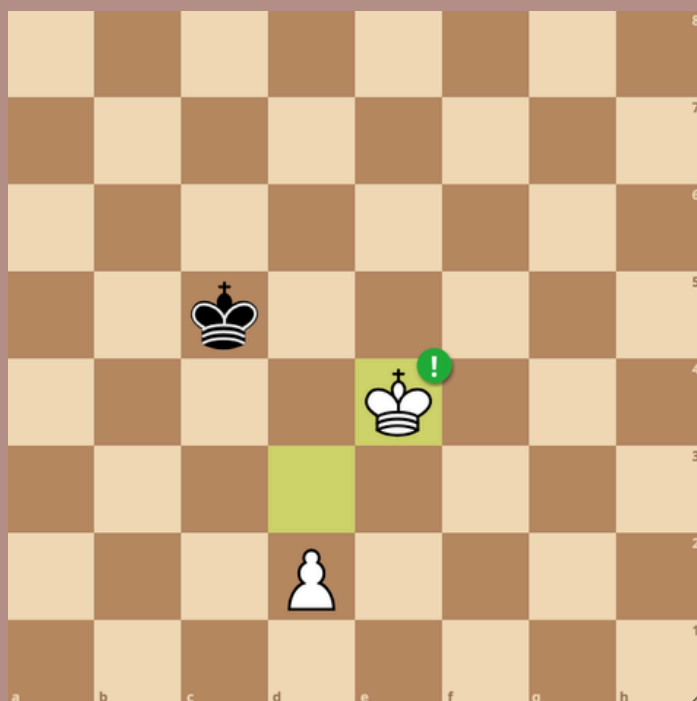
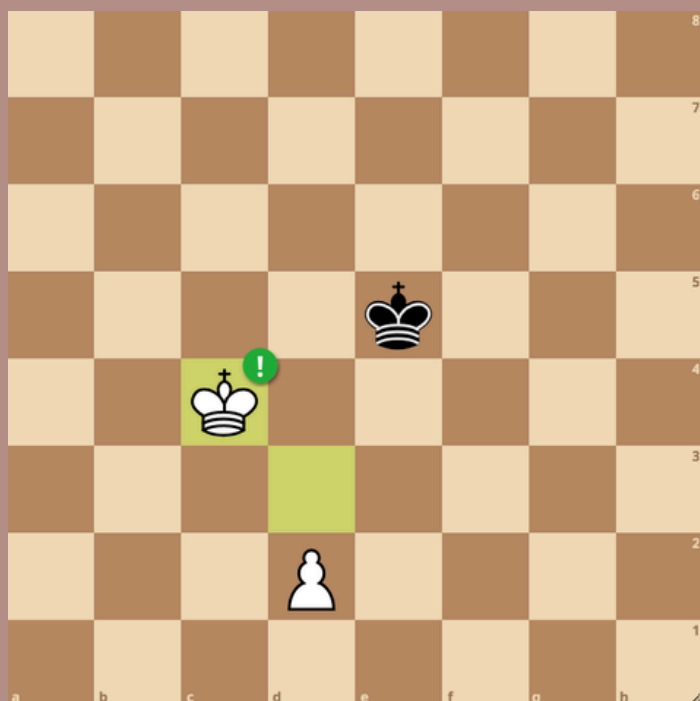


White has successfully claimed opposition.



Black moves to the side.
Now what? Should white simply take opposition again with Ke3?

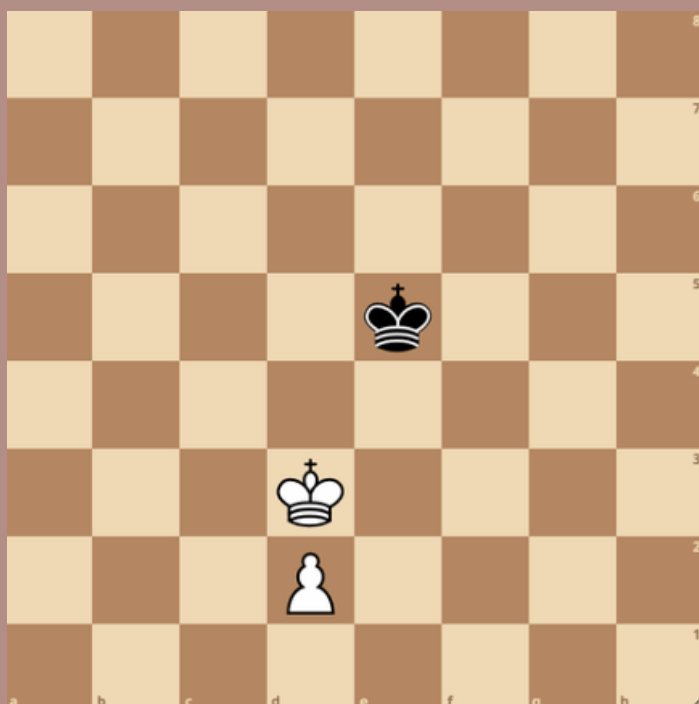
White should not play Ke3! Instead, white should advance forward diagonally. **After the opponent's king has stepped aside, claim the space it has just vacated.** This applies to whichever direction the king moves.



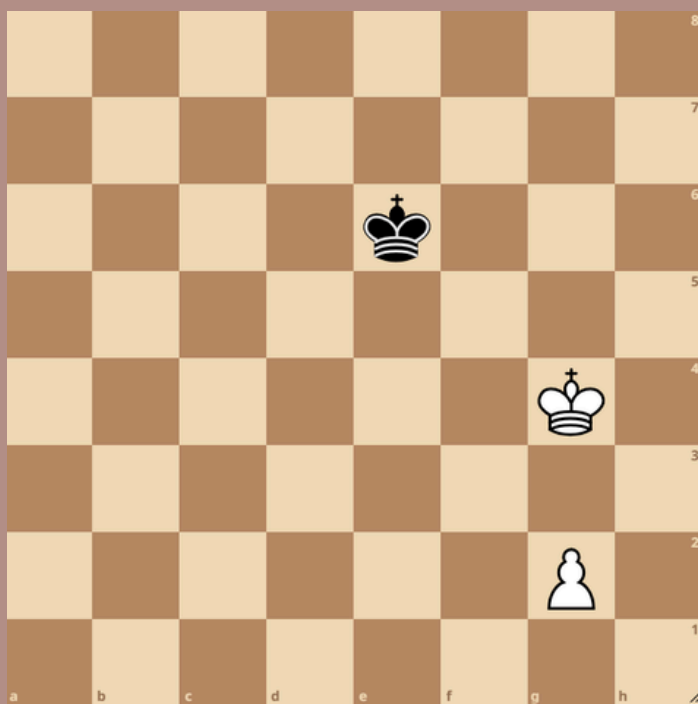
Remember that opposition is not valuable by itself. Opposition is only a means (getting the opponent's king out of the way) to the end (usually, promoting a pawn). Constantly shuffling the kings back and forth claiming opposition does not do anything by itself.

Now it's your turn! Below are example positions with their solutions. In examples 1 and 2, try to promote the pawn. White to move.

1



2



Solution 1

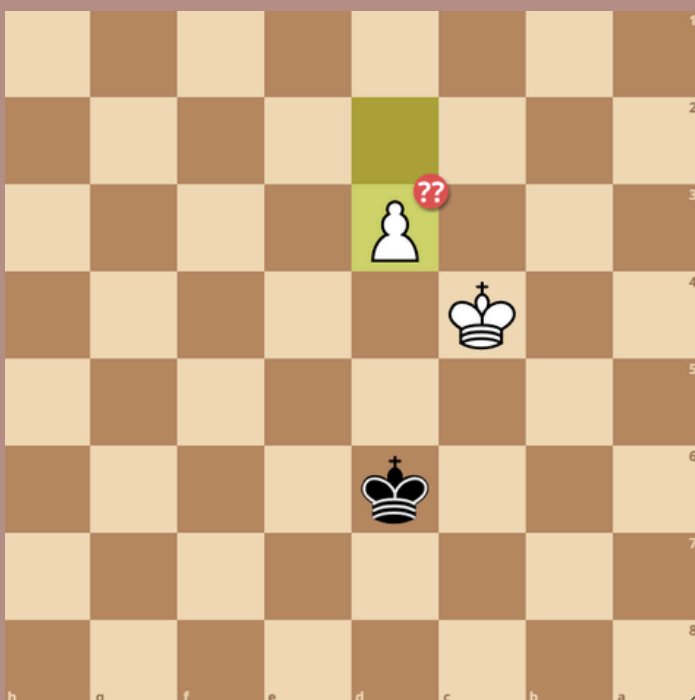
1. Kc4 Kd6, 2. Kd4 Kc7, 3. Ke5 Kd7, 4. Kd5 Ke8,
5. Kc6 Kd8, 6. d4 Kc8, 7. d5 Kd8, 8. Kd6 Ke8
9. Kc7 Ke7, 10. d6+ Ke6, 11. d7 Ke5, 12. d8=Q

Solution 2

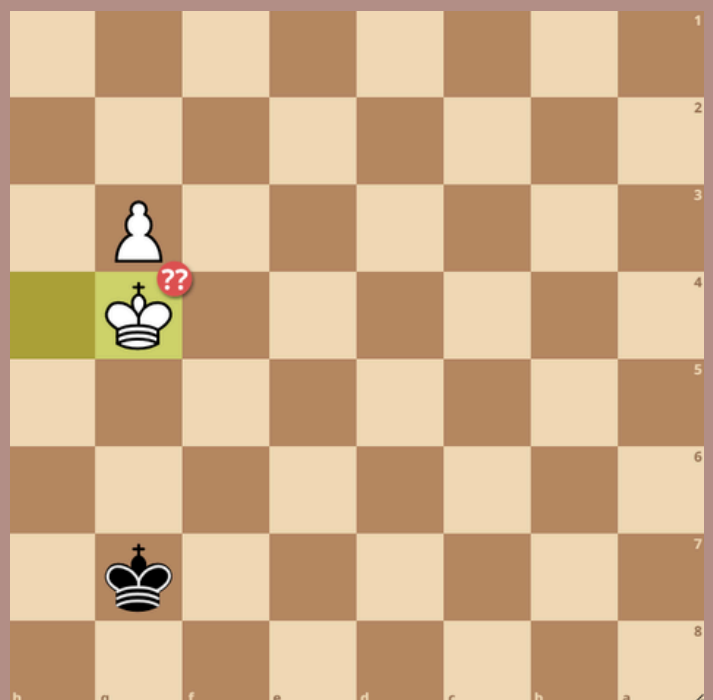
1. Kg5 Kf7, 2. Kh6 Kg8, 3. Kg6 Kh8, 4. g4 Kg8,
5. g5 Kh8, 6. Kf7 Kh7, 7. g6+ Kh8, 8. g7+ Kh7,
9. g8=Q+ Kh6, 10. Qg6#

In examples 3 and 4, do the opposite. White has just made a terrible mistake. Play as black and try to draw the game.

3



4



Solution 3

1. ... Kd6!

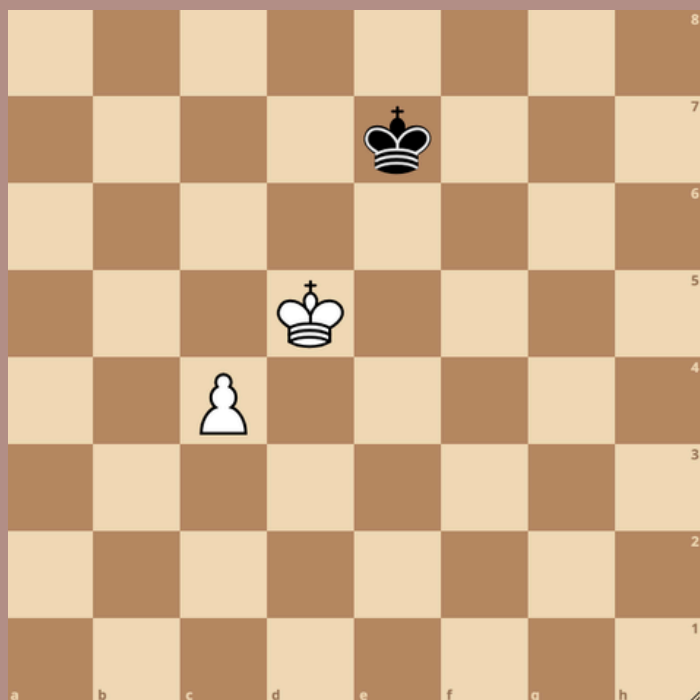
Solution 4

1. ... Kg6!

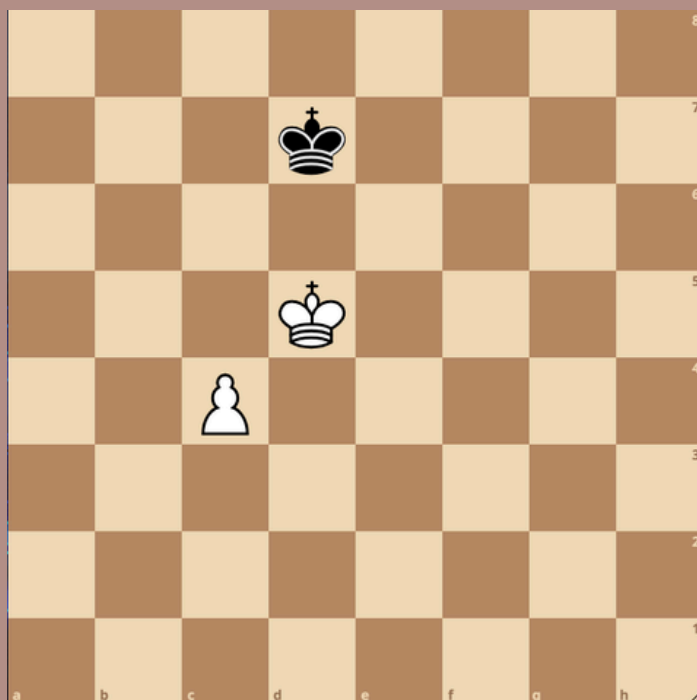
It may seem odd that the solutions are only one move, but that's all black needs to draw the game! White's king cannot make progress.

In examples 5 and 6, determine whether the position is winning for white or drawn without significant calculation (use opposition). White to move.

5



6



Solution 5

Yes. Notice the positioning of the kings is exactly like if black had just stepped out of the way for white (see page 14 for further clarification). A potential solution is:

1. Kc6 Kd8, 2. Kb7 Kd7,
3. c5 Kd8, 4. c6 Ke7,
5. c7 Kd7, 6. c8=Q+

Solution 6

No. Black has opposition, and white has no waiting moves.

Opposition can get much more complicated than this. This lesson merely served as an introduction to the concept. After you have practiced more with opposition and feel comfortable using it, check out the follow-up lesson: “Triangulation.” Spoiler: Triangulation offers a way to win king-and-pawn endgames where your king is behind the pawn **in certain positions**.