

# **PART TWO – ENDGAMES FOR CLASS “E” (1000-1199)**

## **Part Two**

**Endgames for Class “E” (1000–1199)**

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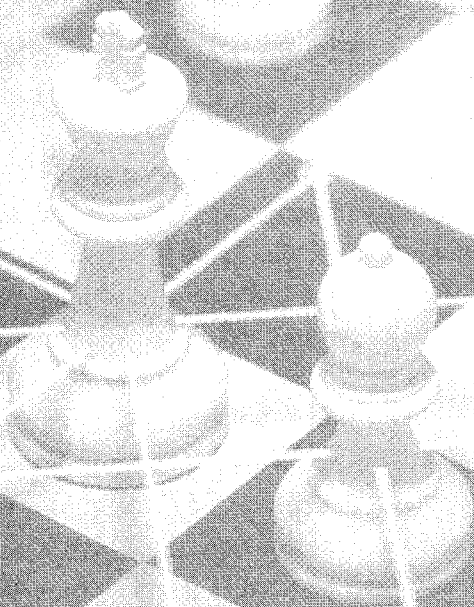
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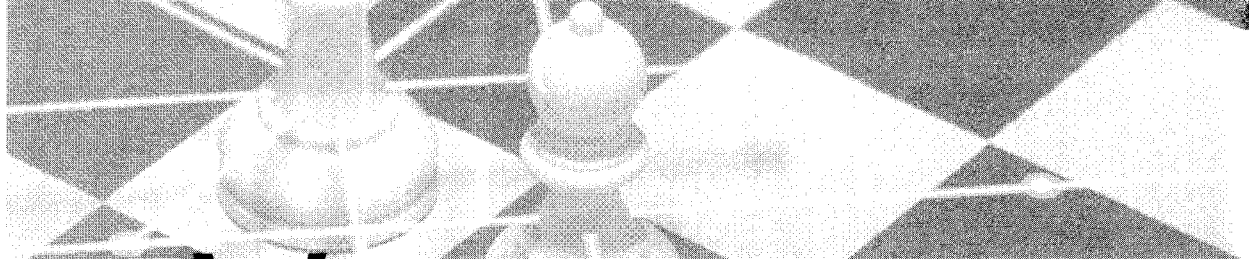
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**M**y first rating was 1068. Aside from the overkill mates (see Part One), I knew nothing at all about endgames. This didn't seem to affect me too much because I lost the vast majority of my games rather quickly and rarely had need of any endgame skills at all. However, now—as an International Master—I'm very aware of the plight of the beginning tournament player, and can't allow the level of total endgame ignorance I possessed when I was a class "E" neophyte to carry over to my students. Instead, I always demand that they learn a few endgame basics that, though easy to absorb, will create a simple but highly useful foundation for later moves up the rating ladder.

Here in Part Two, you'll learn what material advantages do and don't win, and you'll take your first step into the world of serious endgame knowledge—you'll develop an appreciation for the powers of the King, the mysteries of the ***Opposition***, and the drawing proclivities of the rook-pawns.

Sound daunting? It's all far easier to understand than you might imagine, and a couple hours effort will make you the master of this extremely important material.

# What Can (or Cannot) Mate vs. Lone King

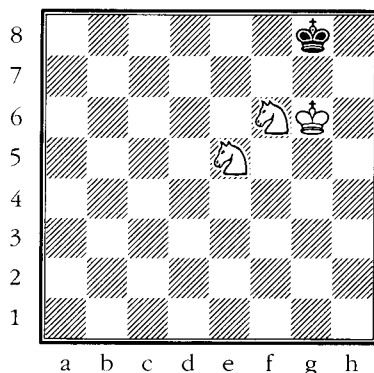
When you reach a position where your opponent has lost everything but his King (which, of course, can't be captured), it's a *must* to know what material you'll need to force a checkmate. On the other hand, you can save many poor positions by leaving your opponent with an insufficient amount of mating material when you are the one with the lone King. Clearly, a knowledge of what can (or cannot) mate vs. a lone King is extremely important!

- 1 ➤ **Queen** = CAN!
- 2 ➤ **Two Rooks** = CAN!
- 3 ➤ **Rook** = CAN!
- 4 ➤ **Two Bishops** = CAN!
- 5 ➤ **Bishop and Knight** = CAN!
- 6 ➤ **Pawn** = CANNOT! (Unless it can successfully promote.)
- 7 ➤ **Bishop** = CANNOT!
- 8 ➤ **Knight** = CANNOT!
- 9 ➤ **Two Knights** = CANNOT!

We've already seen (in Part One) that a King and Rook (or more) vs. a lone King mates easily. Thus, the first three items on our list need no comment. (If you are not 100% sure that you can mate in those situations, go back and master those endgames!) Two Bishops (4) is too complex for this section but will be examined later in the book (though, considering your specific target rating, you might find that you will never have a need to learn it). Bishop and Knight (5) might never occur in your whole chess lifetime and is far too difficult to waste your precious study time on (in other words, this book won't examine Bishop and Knight vs. King at all). The basics of a lone pawn (6) will be presented here in Part Two, and a deeper knowledge of King and pawn vs. King will be presented in Parts Three and Four. Bishop (7) and Knight (8) are sad facts, but you simply can't mate your opponent with King and minor piece vs. King even if he's trying to help you! This leaves us with the final item on the list, two Knights vs. a lone King.

The odd case of two Knights vs. King is the most frustrating and unfair situation on our list. Two pieces up and White can't win against proper defense! How is that possible? Let's take a look.

Diagram 38



**One move draws, one loses**

The first thing that must be understood is that White only has a chance to deliver mate in this endgame if black's King willingly steps onto a corner square.

In the diagramed position, White has correctly herded black's King to the side of the board and has even driven him near that important corner square. Black is in check by the f6-Knight and only has two legal moves. If he moves to the poisoned square on h8 he'll be mated by Nf7. However, if he avoids it with 1...Kf8 then White will never be able to force mate. In other words, Black can only get mated if he blunders.

#### **USEFUL ADVICE**

When defending a King vs. Two Knights endgame, as long as you avoid a1, a8, h1 or h8 (any corner square), you'll draw the game.

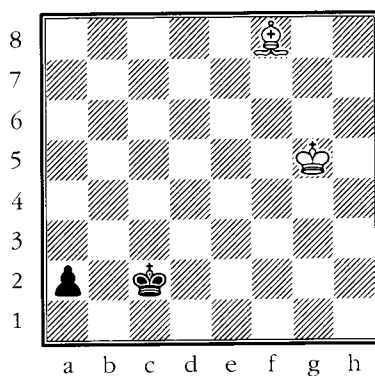
# Minor Piece vs. Queen

Inexperienced players occasionally think that a lone minor piece (i.e., a Bishop or Knight) might be able to put up some resistance versus a lone Queen. Let me assure you that nothing could be further from the truth! We will explore both possibilities (Bishop vs. Queen and Knight vs. Queen) and demonstrate beyond any shadow of a doubt that the poor minor piece is completely outgunned.

## Bishop vs. Queen

This is a no contest! One poor Bishop can't hope to face off against a mighty Queen!

Diagram 39



**Black to move**

**1...a1=Q**

It's important that Black promote his pawn immediately else White will prevent it by Bg7.

Black should treat a Queen vs. Bishop situation in the same way as a King and Queen vs. lone King. The only difference: you must be a bit careful about stepping onto the colored squares controlled by the Bishop.

**2.Bd6 Kd3**

The game can't be won without help from the King!

### USEFUL ADVICE

In a Queen vs. dark-squared Bishop endgame, stay on light-squares as often as possible and the Bishop becomes a non-entity.

**3.Kf5 Qf1+**

Black will patiently kick the enemy King around a bit and, after some prodding, make it give ground to black's monarch.

**4.Ke5 Qe2+**

Black's Queen continues to torment white's King.

**5.Kf5 Qh5+**

Finally pushing the enemy King back, since 6.Kf4 Qh2+ wins the Bishop.

**6.Kf6 Ke4**

Black's King will always step closer to white's whenever it's possible to do so.

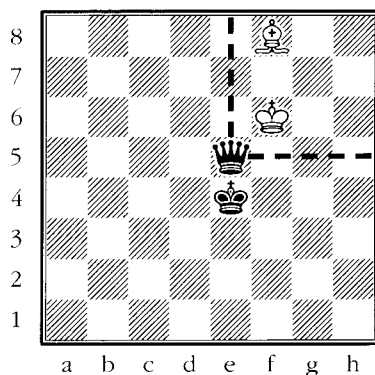
**7.Bf8**

Trying not to move the Bishop too far from its King since that could easily lead to its loss. For example: 7.Bg3 Qf3+ snares the adventurous Bishop.

Other tries are certainly no better: 7.Bc7 Qh6+ 8.Ke7 Kd5 9.Bd8 Qg7+ 10.Ke8 Ke6 and mate follows next move; 7.Be7 Qh6+ 8.Kf7 Kf5 and black's progress is obvious.

**7...Qe5+**

Diagram 40

**Making use of the Box technique****8.Kg6 Qe8+**

Threatening the King and Bishop at the same time.

**9.Kg7 Kf5**

Tightening the box until mate occurs.

**10.Ba3 Qg6+ 11.Kh8**

11.Kf8 Ke6 followed by 12...Qf7 mate.

**11...Ke6**

Intending 12...Kf7 followed by 13...Qg8 mate.

**12.Be7 Kf7!**

Not falling for 12...Kxe7?? when the game is drawn by stalemate!

**13.Bf8**

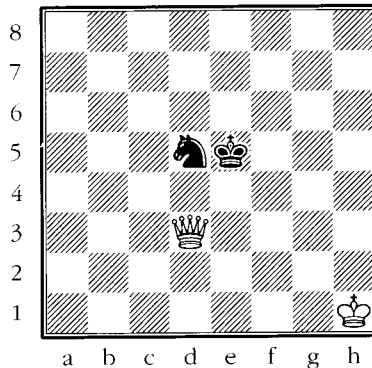
“Please take my Bishop!” Of course, Black is on to the stalemate and will avoid touching white’s Bishop.

**13...Qg8** mate. Black won by treating the endgame as a King and Queen vs. lone Queen ending—the Bishop was more ghost than threat, and in some cases its presence helped Black avoid stalemate!

## Knight vs. Queen

As with Queen vs. Bishop, Queen vs. Knight is a fairly simple win, but here the Knight’s strange leaping powers create some nasty forking possibilities!

Diagram 41



**White to move**

**1.Kh2**

Bringing the King over to help its Queen, but not falling for the horrific 1.Kg2?? Nf4+ when white’s Queen and King are forked.

**1...Ke6 2.Qd4**

The Queen moves up and takes command of a few more squares. White’s King and Queen will continually do this so that, slowly but surely, the enemy King will be pushed to the side of the board.

**REMEMBER**

A Knight can be tricky! If you’re not paying attention, it can fork and win a Queen, so be careful!

**USEFUL ADVICE**

In this endgame, the stronger side's plan is easy—push the enemy King to the side of the board and mate it. However, make sure you don't let the Knight fork your King and Queen.

**2...Ne7**

A trick! Do you see what Black is hoping for?

**3.Qe4+**

Again, White's on guard and doesn't fall for 3.Kg3?? Nf5+ when the pesky Knight has saved the day.

**3...Kf6 4.Kg3**

White's King has to get as close to black's King as possible.

**4...Ng6 5.Kg4**

Threatening Qf5+ followed by Kg5.

**5...Ne5+ 6.Kh5**

White's King and Queen are surrounding black's King and Knight. Soon he'll be forced to step back to the fatal sidelines.

**6...Ke6**

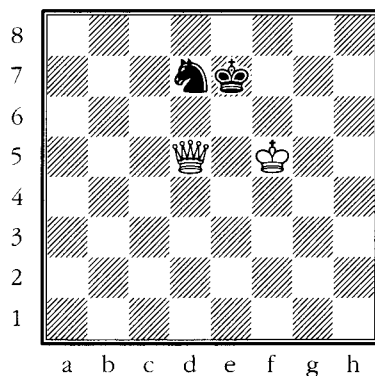
On 6...Nd7, White would continue the squeeze by 7.Qc6+ Ke7 8.Kg5 (and not 8.Kg6?? Ne5+ and there goes white's Queen!).

**7.Kg5 Kd6 8.Kf5 Nd7 9.Qd4+ Ke7**

Also hopeless is 9...Kc6 10.Ke6 Nc5+ 11.Ke7 Kb5 12.Kd6, etc.

**10.Qd5**

Diagram 42



**Patience is a useful quality**



Patiently taking more squares away from black’s pieces. Though 10.Qb4+ Kf7 11.Qb7 Ke7 12.Qc7 Ke8 13.Ke6 Nf6+ 14.Kd6 is even faster, our basic Box plan will make your life easier by offering a constant (and highly effective) idea to follow.

### **10...Nf8**

And not 10...Nf6? 11.Qe6+ when the Knight is lost.

### **11.Qc5+ Kf7**

Obviously, moves like 11...Kd7?? and 11...Kd8 allow 12.Qxf8.

### **12.Qc7+ Ke8**

Black’s King has finally been pushed back to the side of the board.

### **13.Kf6**

Threatening 14.Qe7 mate.

### **13...Nd7+ 14.Ke6 Nf8+ 15.Kd6**

There are no more checks and Qe7 mate is still a threat. The noose is tightening around black’s neck!

### **15...Ng6**

Covering the e7-square and giving the black King a place to run to on f8.

### **16.Qg7**

A complete killer that hits the Knight and also takes away the f8-square from black’s King. The Knight is hanging but any Knight move allows 17.Qe7 mate. That only leaves one other choice.

### **16...Kd8 17.Qd7 mate.**

As we saw, to safely win this endgame you should:

- Always be on the lookout for Knight forks!
- Use your King and Queen as a team.
- Chase the enemy King to the side of the board.
- Be patient! As your Queen and King cut off more and more of the board, he’ll eventually be forced to give ground and run for the sidelines, which is just where you want him!



# Understanding the King

Players that are starting out tend to think of the King as an annoyance—something that demands constant protection, but gives very little back in the life and death battles that ultimately determine a game's result. This view is as wrong as wrong can be, and the following material shows just how critically important the King is to success in chess.

## Use Your King!

In chess, the opening and middlegame is a dangerous time for each side's King—both of them suffering from a “wanted dead-or-alive” mentality. The enormous threat of enemy pieces crashing through the center and mating one's King has led books and teachers to give the student a bit of excellent advice: castle as quickly as possible (this gets it out of the center and activates the Rooks) and shield the needy monarch behind its pawns.

Sadly, wisdom in one situation isn't always wisdom in another, and what passes for correct opening and middlegame strategy can often be wrong in the endgame. The truth is, *the King is a very strong piece* (at least as strong as a Bishop or Knight)! Unfortunately, the terror created by the game's early phases causes most players to lose sight of this piece's true worth.

The endgame poses very different problems and needs than the other phases. With minimal material remaining on the board, both players need to make use of everything they have left. Furthermore, in the endgame, pawns and Kings take on enormous significance. Since the threat to the Kings is no longer real (the enemy's limited army no longer poses any danger to his Majesty), both players should rush their King to the center of the board as quickly as possible!

LET ME REPEAT: Once the board clears of pieces, a player must make use of everything he has. The time has come for the King—which is finally safe from a possible assault by a large enemy force—to emerge and lead the remains of his army to the final victory. The message here is very simple: when an endgame occurs, rush your King to the center of the board!

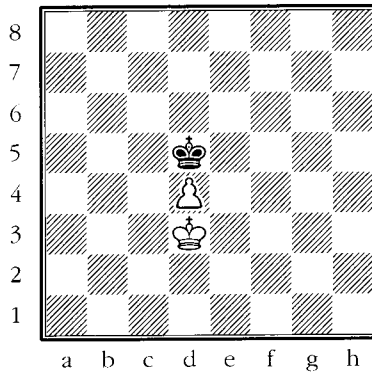
**USEFUL ADVICE**

In the endgame, pawns and the Kings take on enormous significance. In general, when an endgame is reached, rush your King to the center of the board.

Because of the King's importance, the tournament “E” player (i.e., those with a rating under 1200) needs to take the first steps in understanding the basic movements of the King and the white and black King's relation to each other. It is *very* important to look over the following examples again and again until the ideas are fully absorbed.

To start, let's take a quick look at a critically important endgame that occurs all the time:

Diagram 43



**Black to move**

Though White cannot mate with a King and lone pawn, he CAN promote his pawn to a Queen—a Rook will do, but why not go for the biggest gun possible? As a result of this fact, every King and pawn vs. King situation is all about one thing: can the pawn promote? The position in diagram one is a common one and shows a simple but intense battle: White wants a new Queen (which will lead to an easy win), and Black wants to stop this from happening (which will lead to a draw).

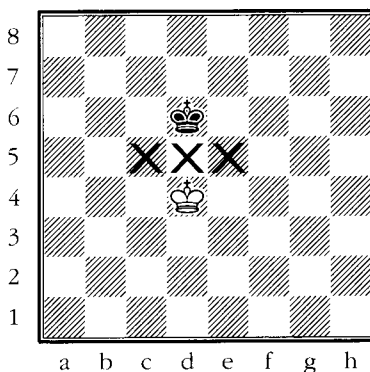
**1...Kd6 2.Ke4 Ke6 3.d5+ Kd6 4.Kd4 Kd7 5.Ke5 Ke7 6.d6+ Kd7 7.Kd5 Kd8 8.Kc6 Kc8 9.d7+ Kd8 10.Kd6 stalemate.**

Black managed to achieve his goal (draw). But do you know how he did it? Could White have improved his play? To understand what was going on and what the moves for both sides meant, you need a basic knowledge of Opposition. So, let's leap into that subject, thoroughly master it, and then return to the position in diagram one.

# Opposition

The quest for domination between two opposing Kings is called the Opposition, whereby one King tries to become stronger than the other.

Diagram 44



## Basic Opposition

### Whoever moves loses the Opposition

This diagram illustrates the most basic and direct form of Opposition (Of course, the absence of other material means that neither side can win. I'm just illustrating Opposition here and nothing else!). Both Kings would like to advance and gain ground, and both Kings have moved into a position that prevents the other from doing so. In such a situation it is a *disadvantage* to have the move since you must give up control of one of the blockade squares (shown by the three Xs in the diagram) and thus allow the opponent a way into your position. Thus Black to move would give White the *power of the Opposition* or, more simply put, the Opposition.

#### 1...Kc6

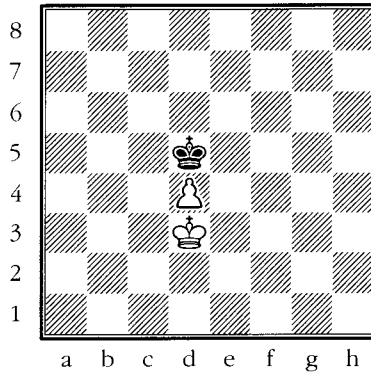
Poor Black would like to say "pass" but this luxury is denied him. Note that 1...Ke6 would allow White to make inroads by 2.Kc5 while 1...Kd7 allows White to advance and keep the Opposition by 2.Kd5.

#### 2.Ke5 White has successfully penetrated into the enemy position.

As you can see, owning the Opposition often allows your King to make advances into enemy territory. While this means nothing in a barren King vs. King situation, basic Opposition and the need to effect penetration into the hostile camp has enormous importance in a pawn endgame.

Let's go back to our earlier King and pawn vs. King position and study it more deeply.

Diagram 45



**Black to move**

In this initial position, White has an extra pawn *and* also possesses the Opposition (i.e., King's facing off with Black to move). Sounds good for White, doesn't it? Yet, the game is a dead draw *if* Black stops the white King from penetrating to the front of its pawn. This can only be done by using the knowledge you've gained of basic Opposition.

### 1...Kd6!

Though not strictly necessary at this early stage, it shows good form and an understanding of what eventually must be done to save the game. The easiest way to fathom the importance of 1...Kd6 is by looking at what happens after 1...Ke6, namely 2.Ke4, when White has the Opposition. Compare this with the actual game continuation.

#### **RULE**

When your King has to step away from the pawn, always go straight back!

### 2.Ke4 Ke6

It seems that the positions after 1...Ke6 2.Ke4 and 1...Kd6 2.Ke4 Ke6 are the same. However, this isn't quite true. In the position after 1...Ke6 2.Ke4 it's Black to move and this means that White has the Opposition. In the game continuation—1...Kd6 2.Ke4 Ke6—it's White to move, meaning that Black has taken the Opposition and stopped white's King from stepping past its pawn. Please ponder this small but subtle difference until the concept of Opposition and the importance of who has the move completely sinks in.

An important mistake—that we will fully explore in Part Three—is 2...Kc6??. This let's white's King move forward (and step in front of its pawn) by 3.Ke5 when White wins (again, you can jump ahead to Part Three if you want an immediate explanation of this). Moves like 2...Kc7?? 3.Ke5, 2...Kd7?? 3.Kd5, and 2...Ke7?? 3.Ke5 also allow white's King to step in front of its pawn and *should be avoided!*

**RULE**

Don't let white's King step in front of its pawn unless you have no choice.

**3.d5+**

Retreating by 3.Kd3 or 3.Ke3 achieves nothing due to 3...Kd5.

**3...Kd6**

Once again stepping in front of the pawn and denying white's King access to the e5-square.

**RULE**

When you can step in front of your opponent's pawn, do so!

**4.Kd4 Kd7!**

Faithfully adhering to our rule of stepping straight back from the pawn. As shown previously, stepping to the side via 4...Ke7 allows White to take the Opposition by 5.Ke5.

**5.Ke5**

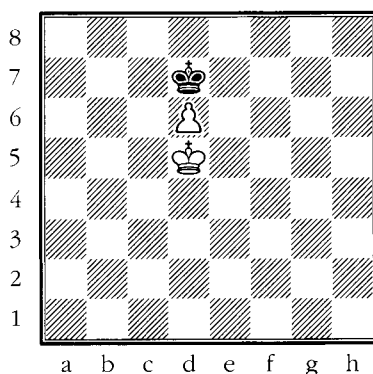
Nothing is to be gained by 5.Ke4 due to 5...Kd6.

**5...Ke7**

And Black once again has the Opposition.

**6.d6+ Kd7 7.Kd5**

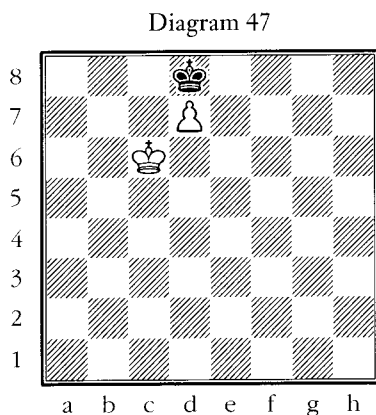
Diagram 46

**A do or die position**

Black has three legal moves to choose from. One draws, two explode in black's face.

**7...Kd8!**

This is where things get serious! Now stepping to the side loses: 7... Kc8?? 8.Kc6 (taking the Opposition) 8...Kd8 9.d7 and we reach an enormously important situation:

**Whoever moves fails**

If it's Black to move (as it is here), White wins because Black is forced to step to the side via 9...Kc7 and allow White to take ownership of the critical queen-ing square on d8 with 10.Kc7. In the game, we reach this same position, except that White will have the move.

**8.Kc6 Kc8 9.d7+ Kd8**

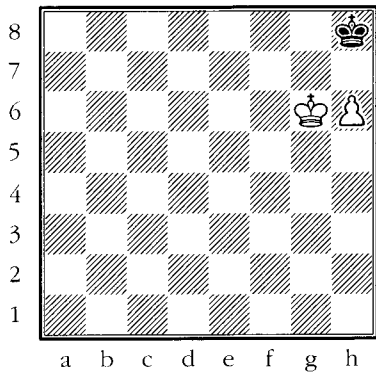
This is the same position as was reached in the note to black's 7th move (diagram 47). However, now it's White to move instead of Black, and this means the game is drawn.

**10.Kd6** stalemate and thus drawn. Of course, any other King move by White would have allowed 10...Kxd7.

## Rook-Pawns

In most endgames, the presence of rook-pawns (a-pawns or h-pawns) gives the defending side drawing chances that normally would not exist. The reason for this resides in the diminished activity of any King that steps in front of such a pawn (since that King can now only move towards the center of the board—going the other way would make the poor monarch fall off the edge of the world). This diminished activity allows many stalemate possibilities that simply don't occur with other pawns.

Diagram 48



**Draw**

In this position White to move would win if he possessed any other pawn but a rook-pawn. However, the fact that it's an h-pawn ensures an easy draw:

**1.h7**

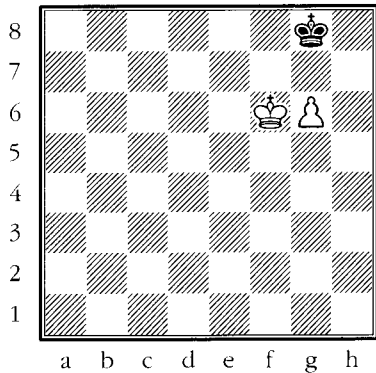
Normally Black would be forced to step to the other side of the pawn, allowing the white King to step forward and take control of the all-important queening square (as illustrated in diagram 49). However, because the blasted thing is an h-pawn, the game ends in immediate stalemate!

**RULE**

King and rook-pawn vs. lone King: If the defender's King gets in front of the pawn, the game will *always* be a draw!

Let's look at the same position pushed one file to the left.

Diagram 49



**White to move wins**



As in the previous position, it's White to move (Black to move would draw since he can retain the Opposition: 1...Kf8 2.g7+ Kg8 3.Kg6 stalemate). However, though this led to an immediate draw when White had an h-pawn, the fact that the pawn is now on the g-file gives White instant victory:

**1.g7 Kh7**

Here we see the difference! With the h-pawn, black's King could not step to the right. Here he can, and that proves to be his undoing.

**2.Kf7**

Grabbing control over the queening square.

**2...Kh6 3.g8=Q Kh5 4.Qg3!**

The most accurate move. White forces black's King to step back towards the white ruler.

**4...Kh6 5.Qg6 mate.**

In general, if you are defending a King and pawn endgame, the presence of rook-pawns enormously increases your chances for a successful (drawn) result.



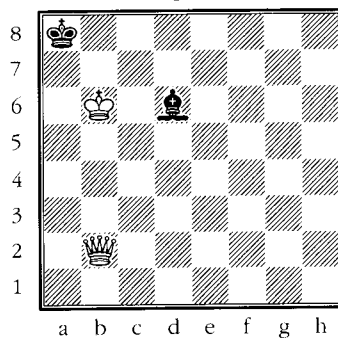
# Summing Up

- Two Knights vs. Lone King is a draw. Mate can only be delivered if the defender's King *willingly* steps onto a corner square.
- Queen vs. Bishop (no pawns for either side) or Queen vs. Knight (no pawns for either side) is easily winning for the Queen.
- The King is a strong piece and *must* be used in the endgame.
- The Opposition is an extremely important tool that allows one King to become stronger than another.
- Rook-pawns add to the defender's drawing chances in most endgames.

# Tests and Solutions

## TEST 1

Diagram 50

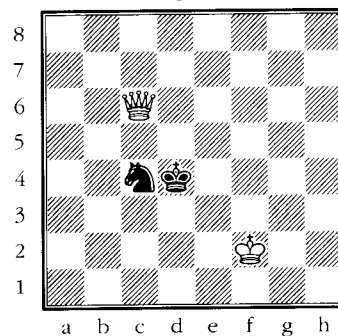


White to move

Does White have anything to worry about?

## TEST 2

Diagram 51

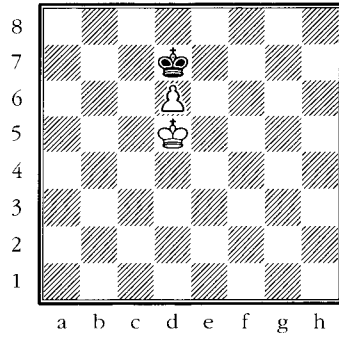


White to move

Is 1.Kf3 a good move?

**TEST 3**

Diagram 52

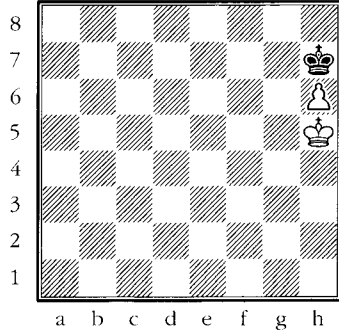


**Black to move**

Where should Black move his King?

**TEST 4**

Diagram 53

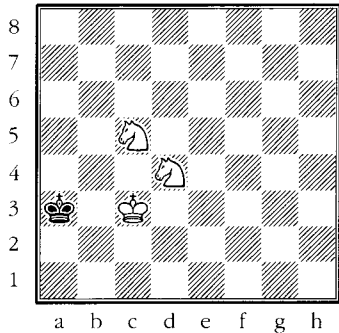


**Black to move**

Which King move is correct?

**TEST 5**

Diagram 54

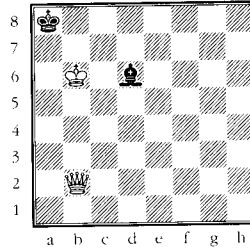


**White to move**

Can White win?

**SOLUTION 1**

Diagram 50

**White to move**

Does White have anything to worry about?

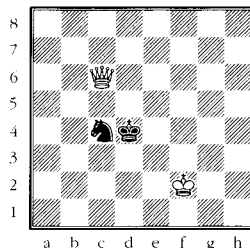
A Queen easily overpowers a poor Bishop. In this position White has many ways to end the game, however, most face certain stalemate potholes:

- 1.Qh8+ (a good move) 1...Bb8 2.Qc8?? and the game ends via stalemate (and a draw) since Black can't legally move his King or his Bishop. Instead, 2.Qh1 mate ended matters in a happier way.
- 1.Qg7 (another good move) 1...Bc7+ 2.Qxc7?? stalemate (and draw). Always make sure your opponent has a legal move and this won't happen to you. Instead, 2.Kxc7 (giving black's King the a7-square) 2...Ka7 3.Qa1 mate was the way to go.
- 1.Ka6 (threatening Qb7 mate) 1...Bb4 2.Qxb4?? stalemate (and drawn). Why didn't White ask, "If I eat that Bishop, what can my opponent do?" If White had posed this simple question, he would have instantly seen that 2.Qxb4 was a move to avoid! One (of many) sufficient alternative was 2.Qh8+ Bf8 3.Qxf8 mate.
- 1.Qg2+ (by playing on light squares, White avoids any tricks by the enemy Bishop) 1...Kb8 2.Qb7 mate.

As in all endgames, stalemates play an important part in the defender's hopes and must always remain in the stronger side's mind as something to avoid at all costs.

**SOLUTION 2**

Diagram 51

**White to move**

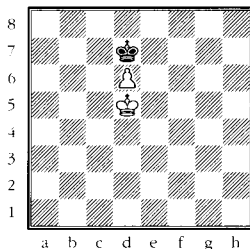
Is 1.Kf3 a good move?

No, 1.Kf3?? allows Black to draw by 1...Ne5+, forking the King and Queen. Though Black will end up a whole Knight to the good, a lone Knight can't mate and so the game must be abandoned as a draw.

In a Queen vs. Knight endgame, there are only two ways the stronger side can blow it: stalemate or missing a Knight fork. If you have the side with the Queen, simply use some care and make sure neither of these possibilities occur.

**SOLUTION 3**

Diagram 52

**Black to move**

Where should Black move his King?

**1...Kd8**

If you didn't instantly play this move, go back and read over the material that covers this endgame! Remember: the defender must keep his King in front of the enemy pawn and, when it does have to move, it should go straight back so it can take the Opposition when the other King moves forward.

**2.Ke6 Ke8**

Taking the Opposition and stopping the white King from moving forward.

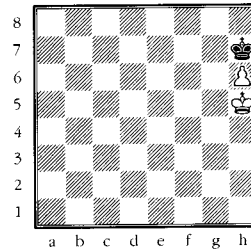
**3.d7+**

Or 3.Ke5 Kd7 4.Kd5 Kd8, etc.

**3...Kd8 4.Kd6** stalemate.

**SOLUTION 4**

Diagram 53

**Black to move**

Which King move is correct?

Normally the defender always want to go straight back with his King in such situations. However, if he is facing a rook-pawn then it doesn't matter; either move suffices for a draw.

**1...Kg8**

Of course, 1...Kh8 would show good form, but here you simply can't go wrong.

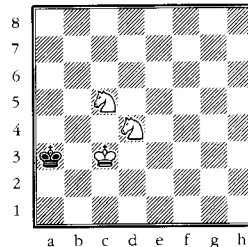
**2.Kg6 Kh8**

Everyone in the room would know that the fix was in if Black played 2...Kf8?? (Where is that King going?) because 3.h7 forces resignation.

**3.h7**,  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ . If this were any other pawn (other than another rook-pawn), White would win because the black King would have to step to the other side of the pawn. However, since there isn't another side to the pawn the game is drawn by stalemate.

**SOLUTION 5**

Diagram 54

**White to move**

Can White win?

No, two Knights can't win against correct defense:

**1.Nb5+ Ka2 2.Kc2**

Two pieces up and White has black's King cornered. Incredibly, it's still a draw!

**2...Ka1 3.Nb3+**

What else? 3.Nc3 is an immediate stalemate.

**3...Ka2 4.Nd2 Ka1** and White can't put his opponent away.



## Final Thoughts

Mastering these easy to learn endgames has given you your first taste of serious endgame theory. Knowing what can and can't mate is *must know* information, while a basic knowledge of the Opposition is crucial if you wish to thrive in the arena of players rated over 1000! These set up the foundation for the far more complex endgames you'll be learning as your overall chess strength continues to rise.