

# MY FAVORITE KING AND PAWN ENDINGS FOR STUDENTS

by Pete Tamburro



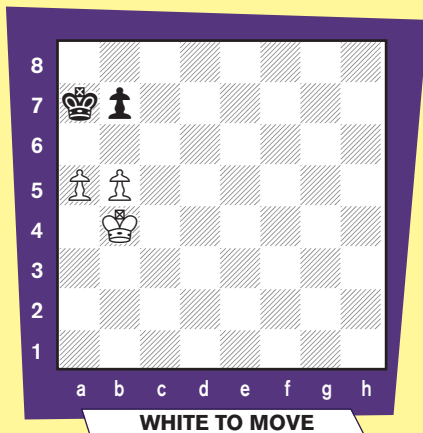
So far, we have looked at king and pawn vs. king, and king and pawn vs. king and pawn, and have found that these endings can be very tricky.



Every chess teacher will tell students that they have to learn the key king and pawn endings and the key rook and pawn endings in order to grow as chess players. These endings are the most common in chess.

The essential idea of all king and pawn endings is to either get down to the winning king and pawn vs. king ending or to queen a pawn somehow before that. These endings are as tricky as their cousins we studied in the last two articles.

In ending number one we have:



If you have been reading our previous articles, you know two things are important: don't stalemate Black and when you're with king and pawn vs. king, be aware of the opposition and keeping it. White wins in all variations:

**1.Kc5 b6+**

A clever try at tricking White. If White falls for: 2.axb6+ Kb7 3.Kb4 Kxb6, we have a draw! However, White sees right through this and plays:

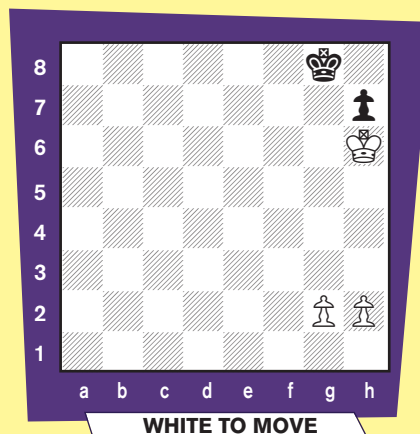
**2.Kc6** which is followed by **2...bxa5 3.Kc7 a4 4.b6+ Ka6 5.b7**

**a3 6.b8=Q a2 7.Qa8+** and wins the pawn.

What happens if Black doesn't check? What would you play against 1...Kb8 or 1...Ka8? If Black plays:

**1...Kb8 2.Kb6 Ka8 (2...Kc8 3.Ka7) 3.Kc7 Ka7 4.a6 bxa6 (4...b6 5.Kc6) 5.b6+ and wins, as above or 1...Ka8 2.Kb6 Kb8 3.a6 bxa6 4.Kxa6 Ka8 5.b6 Kb8 6.b7.**

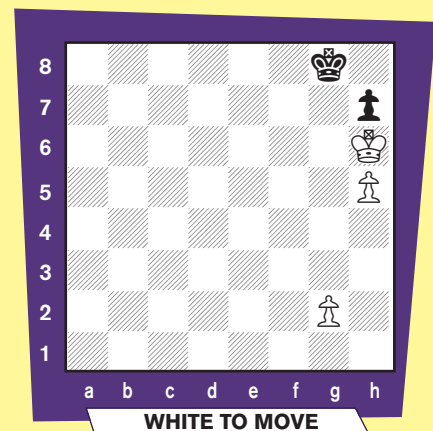
You can see how important gaining the opposition was in that last line. One move can make a difference in this kind of ending. The two on one pawn ending I saw as a kid was in *The Art of Chess* by James Mason, revised by Fred Reinfeld.



You can learn a lot from this position. You know that the black king is just going to shuttle between g8 and h8, and at some point you will have white pawns on h5 and g5. Then, you have to push the pawn to g6, and, after he takes, you recapture and ... hmmm, what square will the king be on?

If it's on g8 after the exchange, you win. If it's on h8, you only draw. So, how do you figure it out? Well, you

count it out! In this position, after you've moved the h-pawn as far as you have, this is your time to make the right decision:

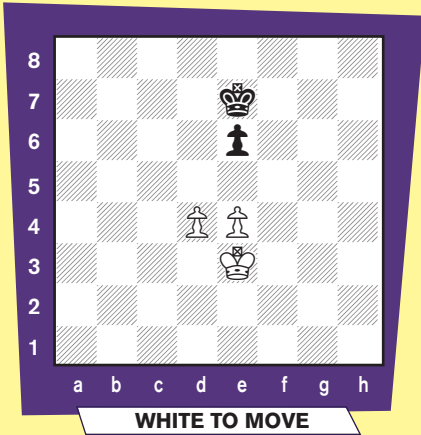


What I learned many years ago, by counting it out, was that if the king was on g8 when I reached this position, I would be more cautious and play g3, and if the king was on h8, I would be more bold and play g4.

Here's how it works out:

**1.h4 Kh8 2.h5 Kg8 3.g3 (3.g4 Kh8 4.g5 Kg8 5.g6 hxg6 6.hxg6 Kh8 7.g7+ Kg8 and draws) 3...Kh8 4.g4 Kg8 5.g5 Kh8 6.g6 hxg6 (6...Kg8 7.g7 Kf7 8.Kxh7) 7.hxg6 Kg8 8.g7.**

The next diagram looks pretty common. It can be. There are two items to pay attention to here: the opposition and the move e5. You want to restrict Black with the e5 move because your pawn then controls the key f6 and d6 squares. You can't play d5 because the exchanges lead to a drawn position you already know about. The big thing with e5 is that if you play it at the wrong time you may give the opposition to your opponent who will save the draw. Let's look:



**1.Kf4 Kf6 2.Kg4**

The pawn move won't work now because Black would gain the opposition: 2.e5+ Kf7 3.Kg5 Kg7.

**2...Kg7**

If Black goes for the opposition right away with 2...Kg6, then White gets it back with 3.e5 Kg7 4.Kg5 Kf7 5.Kh6 Kf8 6.Kg6 Ke7 7.Kg7 and the black king is forced off the defense of his pawn.

**3.Kg5 Kf7 4.Kh6 Kf6**

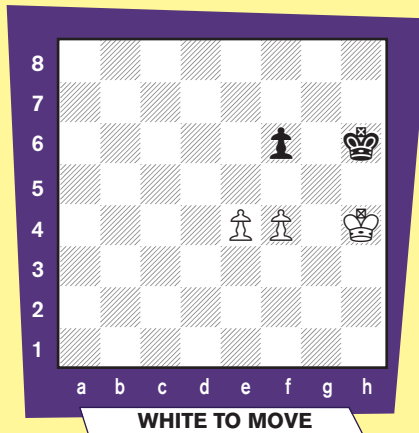
And, again, Black tries to get the

opposition, but White has that pawn move in reserve. This is very important to remember.

**5.e5+ Kf5 6.Kg7 Ke4 7.Kf6 Kd5 8.Ke7 Kxd4 9.Kxe6**

And White wins.

Let's say we move everybody over a little in our starting diagram. We do it because now we have a position with a little less space:



The same ideas as this last diagram are in effect. Watch how it works:

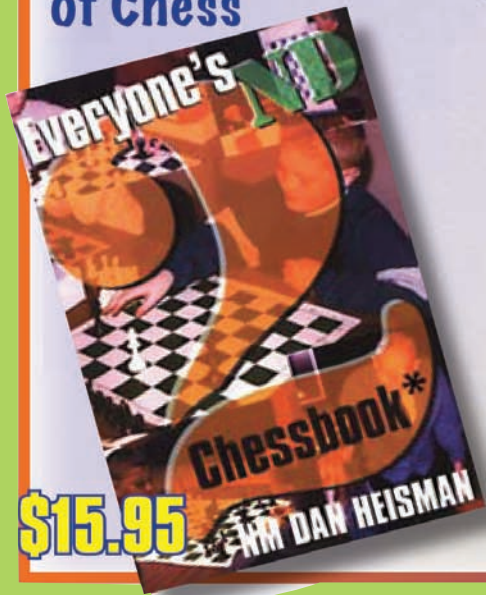
**1.Kg4 Kg6 2.Kf3 ...**

Wrong moves to make: 2.e5 fxe5 3.fxe5 Kf7 4.Kf5 Ke7 5.e6 Ke8 6.Kf6 and the tempting 2.f5+ Kf7 and White can't break Black's hold on the opposition. If you contrast this with the f5 line that is played, you learn that the strong pawn advance should only be played when necessary to gain the opposition. If you play it too soon, Black then can plan his "opposition defense." If you hold onto the move to play it when Black does have the opposition, then you gain the opposition and win. But you shouldn't do it until the black king is in a defensive position with no moves to spare.

**2...Kf7 3.Ke3 Ke7 4.Kd4 Kd6 5.f5**

And wins. And you should know how from here. As you can see, understanding what the opposition is and how to gain it are the most important skills you can have as a chess player when you reach a king and pawn ending. And you will.

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