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100 Basic Endgames You Must Know

A Starter's Guide to Chess Endings

New In Chess 2026

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Introduction

Being ignorant is not so much a shame, as being unwilling to learn.

Benjamin Franklin, US politician and inventor (1703-1790)

Since my first book on endings (*100 Endgames You Must Know*) was published, I have received suggestions and criticisms from club players and trainers in different countries. For some time I have been convinced that it is not possible to make progress without listening to other people's opinions. Criticism is the best fuel you can find.

A frequent suggestion is that the book could have been simpler. In fact, when I put it together, it was my intention that it should be simpler than the ones I had studied, but clearly it is very advanced for those who are just starting out in the world of chess, or who have never studied endgame theory.

From those considerations, and at the suggestion of my editor, who also thought that it was a good idea, there has emerged the need to make this new book, in which I'm attempting to compile the 100 most basic endings which are at the same time the most useful in practice.

My objective is to cover the needs of club players, starting from that key moment when their games are no longer decided by serious tactical mistakes. Having reached that point, they are faced with the problem of how to exploit the advantages they obtain. These are the players who will find the following pages the most useful.

Of course, some will have long put off the moment for correcting this lacuna in their play. Some will even be strong players already, since it is possible to win many games without being a good endgame player. I invite them too to grasp the opportunity now to learn, without much effort, a number of important things packed into just a few pages.

Most of the endings we are going to study are very basic. They are ones that an experienced player can handle, or should be able to handle, with ease, and which are essential to know, in order:

- 1) not to suffer continual disappointments through being unable to exploit advantages accumulated in the middlegame; and
- 2) more importantly, not to face the simplification stage with uncertainty.

This book is the basic endgame survival kit.

If you maintain your enthusiasm for chess over the years ahead, all the positions you will encounter here are ones you would eventually learn through practice; one day this position, another day that one. These might arise in your own games, or in the ones you see on the boards next to yours, as long as you have the curiosity to wonder what you should have done better, when things have not gone well for you.

Now you have the chance to learn almost all of them, in an 'organized' and 'graduated' way, and, if you do so with sufficient care and attention, it will be useful to you forever.

The usefulness of studying endings

A Chess game is divided into three stages: the first, when you hope you have the advantage, the second when you believe you have an advantage, and the third... when you know you're going to lose!

Savielly Tartakower, Franco-Polish grandmaster (1887-1956)

The ending is the third stage of the game, the one that comes after the opening and the middlegame. Logically, it is the one that occurs least often, because the opening is inevitable and the middlegame is almost certain to occur. Even so, many games do reach the endgame.

It is not possible to determine the exact percentage, because the moment when the ending begins is not clearly defined. In order to reach an approximation, we shall consider that the ending is the stage of the game in which there are no queens, and there remain a maximum of two pieces (besides the kings and pawns). With these conditions, we find more than 3,000,000 games in the 2025 Mega Database. Therefore we could say, without straying too far from the truth, that 100% of games reach the opening, 99% the middlegame, and 30% the ending.

Judging from my experience as a trainer, I believe that the games of players who are learning reach the ending more often than those of experienced players, for two powerful reasons:

- 1) because they have a greater tendency to exchange pieces;
- 2) because they continue games with a greater material imbalance.

The same effect can be observed in rapid games (at all levels), and the reasons are the same.

Therefore, the frequency of their occurrence is a sufficient reason for studying endings. But there is another more important one, which is the need to exploit, with the least effort and the greatest certainty, the advantages gained in the earlier stages of the game. And the final reason: the improvement in general understanding of the game that is obtained through studying them.

The durability of endgame knowledge

As a final argument, we should remember that endgame theory is immutable, and it remains so even in Chess960 (or, as it is also called, FischerRandom) mode, whereas the opening theory changes constantly, even without altering the rules of the game.

A few years ago, there was very heavy rainfall in some regions of Spain. As I listened to the news, my attention was drawn to a case where the downpour had destroyed a modern bridge, but a nearby Roman bridge had remained standing. I found myself wondering how it could be that the product of a much more advanced civilisation was less resistant than the ancient one. Whatever might be the real cause, it pleased me to think that the reason is that the builders of the Roman bridge had made it with the intention that it should last for ever.

That is the attitude with which you should study the endings, and because of their nature, this is possible.

The growth of online play and modern rates of play

There was a time when games were adjourned after a certain move had been reached (move 40 was the most usual). If the position was sufficiently simplified, then the players would get out their endgame books and would immediately try to profit from that written knowledge. But for some time now, games have been played without interruption right to the end, and, as a rule, the final moves are made under great time pressure. Furthermore, more and more games are contested at fast rates of play online, and many more such tournaments are being held. It is no longer possible to learn the theory during the adjournment of a game. We need to be prepared for the positions we might have to face.

The selection of endings and the structure of the book

Let's talk a little about how I selected the endings and how I structured their explanation. This will be useful for those readers who wish to maintain a mental map of the territory they are going to cover and who want to make their own decisions as to what to read. Not all the choices have been easy.

Most of the positions studied are **theoretical endings**. They include all those which I consider to be indispensable and which are easy to understand, even if you have not reached a high playing level.

I have also included a few more theoretical endings, some of them more complicated and others less common. I have done this for two reasons:

- 1) because they seemed to me to be a logical extension of the ones already explained; and
- 2) because their solution reveals some technique which I have considered useful to know or to learn; in short, because I think they form part of the overall idea.

Even so, there are sections of endings theory which I have felt obliged to address but also to leave incomplete. The complexity of the required explanations and the effort needed to study them right now is the reason for this. The reader will make his own decision whether to tackle this more complex study when the time is right.

In addition to the theoretical endings, I have selected some **techniques and concepts** which experienced players use almost automatically and with which club players need to become familiar, sometimes more so than with the purely theoretical manoeuvres. These techniques can normally be applied to positions with more pawns, which in simplified terms we refer to as 'practical positions'.

In the introductions to the chapters or to the endings themselves, I often 'harp on' about an idea; the idea that we have already learnt something, and that therefore it is time to learn something else, which represents the logical next step. From the very first chapter onwards, I have adopted a graduated approach, linking together each piece of knowledge, building what has gone before, and answering the questions which arise naturally, when the answers are not too complicated. There are some cases where it is better to leave those answers for a later stage.

In this way, I wish to transmit to the reader the sensation of ground that is covered step by step. In many cases, taking one more step is going to demand a special effort to fully understand the previous one, and that effort can also imply time. In other words, in more than one case, moving on slowly is not just a good idea, but the best one.

Each chapter opens with a very brief introduction, to put us in the right frame of mind to begin. In it, I classify the level of complexity and usefulness of the endings in that chapter. I shall divide the level into Low (up to 1000 Elo rating), Medium (between 1000 and 1500) and High (above 1500), but in some cases there is a further assessment. The usefulness is **Maximum** (when it is not possible to play without knowing these positions), **High** (when you are going to come across them frequently or when they are necessary in order to understand others), **Medium** (when you will normally encounter them only occasionally) and **Low** (when they don't occur often but are useful in order to have an overview of endgame theory and to facilitate the study of other endings in the future).

Of course, each reader should make up their own mind about following these recommendations or not.

In each section, I refer to some statistics which are interesting, but these are not intended to be exhaustive. It is a small bonus, to satisfy (or perhaps stimulate) some possible curiosity.

Finally, in most of the chapters (or sometimes with a group of endings which are logically connected) there is a 'conclusions' section. These conclusions summarize in a few sentences the most important rules that we have learnt and are useful as a short revision or recap.

The conclusions are very brief, but don't rely on them: reading the rules is no substitute for the work of playing through all the positions from start to finish.

Some advice on how to study endings

A common mistake in the study of endings is to study them too early, although this is less harmful than the more classic mistake of never studying them at all.

Can both these mistakes be avoided at the same time? I think so. Every player should have the freedom and the judgement to decide which endings to study at any given moment. But how should you choose when you are not sure? It depends on what you want to know, and on the difficulty you found in assimilating the previous ones.

The exceptions

It is very useful to focus on the exceptions, because they help us to understand better and to remember better. Exceptions have their beauty, and I encourage readers to look for them and find some that I have not shown.

Which endings a player needs to learn is dependent on their playing level, but the approach to learning them isn't; a player should make an effort to learn them thoroughly because that way they will learn them for ever.

In some chapters, as he makes progress, the reader is prepared to work out a few things independently. Doing so is an exercise of incalculable value. I suggest this in a few cases but the enthusiastic reader can apply it to many others.

Regarding typical errors

It is also useful to discover typical errors (and to study them). Some errors are repeated, in some endings more than in others, because making them is (seemingly) the natural continuation.

That is why it is useful to understand not only the specific mechanism of the error, but also under what precise conditions it operates. Sometimes there is a specific circumstance which, hidden under a deceptive veil, makes it easier to commit the error.

Who is this book aimed at?

We have already discussed this, but now I am going to try to be more specific. The book is aimed above all at four groups of players:

- players who are just starting out and have many years of chess ahead of them, with a rating of between 800 and 2000;
- club players who play a lot of rapid games and need to understand well enough to be able to play without thinking in typical situations;

- strong club players who have ignored endings for a long time but perhaps now feel that they need them;
- trainers who have pupils in all those categories.

List of theoretical results for the different material relationships

Here we present a non-exhaustive list of the most common material relationships and their correct theoretical result.

Ending	Correct result	Comment
♔+♚ vs ♔	win	very easy
♔+♞ vs ♔	win	very easy
♔+♙♙ vs ♔	win	easy
♔+♙♗ vs ♔	win	difficult
♔+♗♗ vs ♔	draw	but if the defender has a pawn they can lose
♔+♙ vs ♔	draw	no winning chances
♔+♗ vs ♔	draw	no winning chances
♔+♚ vs ♔+♞	win	very difficult
♔+♞♞ vs ♞	win	easy
♔+♞ vs ♔+♙	draw (almost always)	easy
♔+♞ vs ♔+♗	draw (almost always)	sometimes difficult
♔+♞♙ vs ♔+♞	draw	difficult; often lost
♔+♞♗ vs ♔+♞	draw	easy
♔+♙♙ vs ♔+♗	win	very difficult

I have included in the list only the material relationships which seem to me to be common. Some others have been well studied but knowledge of them is merely a matter of scientific curiosity.

For the curious among you, a much more complete list can be found in the book *Fundamental Chess Endings* by Karsten Müller and Frank Lamprecht.

Definitions of some basic concepts

Let's define a few important endgame concepts which we use repeatedly throughout the chapters of this book. Each reader should check whether they are familiar with them or not: if he is, then he can skip them, but if not they should focus on understanding them fully.

- 1) **Passed pawn:** a pawn which can advance towards the queening square without opposition from other pawns, on its own file or on adjacent files

The passed pawn is at the heart of the play in the endgame. Its importance increases with every exchange of pieces.

2) Zugzwang: this is a situation where the side to move only has moves which worsen his situation

Zugzwang comes in various scenarios: it may affect only one side or both sides (mutual zugzwang). It can affect each side differently (causing one to win and the other to draw), or it can happen that even though the side in zugzwang must worsen their position, the final result remains the same.

What matters for us is that zugzwang is almost impossible in the middlegame but is very common in the ending.

In order to understand its importance, all you need to do is observe that the ending of rook and king against rook could not be won without zugzwang. This explains why beginners have difficulties in this scenario.

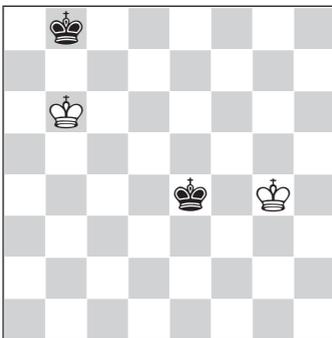
In spite of being very popular, it continues to surprise, and for that reason you should always be on the look-out for it.

3) Stalemate: a situation which arises when the player whose turn it is to move has no legal move and his king is not in check. The game ends immediately in a draw

Once again, what concerns us is that while stalemate is almost impossible in the middlegame, it is very common in the ending, and the player who is not aware of it will stumble into it again and again.

4) Opposition: this is a situation in which the kings, both on squares of the same colour, are facing each other with one square between them

The player who has just moved is said to have the opposition, or said to have taken the opposition.



The kings on b6-b8 are in opposition on dark squares on the b-file; the kings on e4-g4 are in opposition on light squares on the fourth rank.

When the kings are placed opposite each other, the enemy king is prevented from advancing, and if it has to move, it will have to move backwards or to one side, enabling the other king to advance to the next rank. Opposition is most important when it is combined with zugzwang, and for that reason its

effectiveness is greater when there are few pawns left, or when those that are there are blocked.

Opposition is a very powerful visual concept which is useful for explaining king manoeuvres, but it is not an article of faith which tells us the right move in every position.

It has huge importance in pure pawn endings but it can also be useful in endings with a single piece.

5) Bodycheck: this is the situation where one king is placed in the path of the other, preventing him from reaching a crucial square

This is of great importance in pawn endings and rook vs pawn endings, but it is also encountered in a few others. It is a similar concept to opposition, with which it overlaps at times, but its objective is not the same.

6) Triangulation: this is a manoeuvre in which the king moves back and forth, returning to its starting square in three moves instead of two, which would be natural

In other words, triangulation is a way to lose a tempo. If the opponent's king cannot imitate this loss of a tempo, we shall be back at the starting position but with the other side to move. This can transform an unfavourable zugzwang situation into a favourable one.

Triangulation is common in theoretical endings, and when we have gained a good understanding of it, we shall come across it ourselves and be able to make use of it in practical endings over the board. It occurs most frequently in pawn endings, but it can also arise in others.

Terms used in the book

Rook's file, knight's file, etc: the name 'rook's file' is usually given to either of the two on which the rooks begin the game. Sometimes it is more intuitive simply to call them a-file and h-file, because some of the rules are drawn from the geometry of the chessboard. The same applies to the knights' files (b- and g-) and the bishops' files (c- and f-).

Mega Database (or simply the Mega): this is the standard games database, the one most used at present. We shall refer to it on several occasions. The 2025 Mega Database (the present iteration) contains around 11 million games.

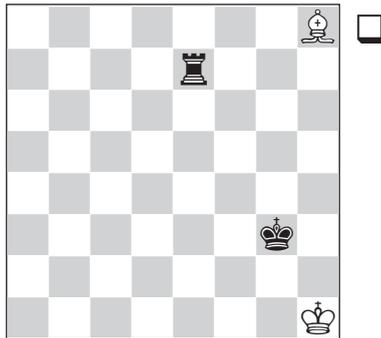
Elo rating system: this is the standard way of rating players, used by the International Chess Federation (FIDE), by some national federations and even by some online playing platforms. The system is named after the mathematician Arpad Elo. The different ratings in different federations are not totally interchangeable, but they are useful to us as a partial form of reference.

Jesús de la Villa
Pamplona, December 2025

ENDING 14 Rook vs bishop – the right corner

The struggle of rook vs bishop is one of the most interesting scenarios in this chapter. There are two important things you should know:

- 1) In a normal position, the correct result is a draw.
- 2) If you are forced to go to the edge with your king, there is one corner where you lose and another where you can draw. The safe corner is the one on the opposite colour to the bishop, and we call it the right corner.

Position 14.1

White's king is in the corner, but it's the right corner. Although Black threatens mate, White can apply the defensive mechanism, which is very simple.

1. ♔d4!

It's a matter of occupying the correct diagonal to block the check on g1. The other move that draws is 1. ♔c3, preventing the check on e1 for now, in order to seek the correct diagonal subsequently.

1... ♞e1+ 2. ♔g1

And now Black, if he doesn't want the game to end in stalemate immediately, must release the bishop, which moves away again, ready to cover the king when necessary.

2... ♞e2 3. ♔d4 ♞d2

At this point, let's point out a mistake which is easy to make. Now we need to move the bishop, which has several correct moves, but we must be careful not to place it on the wrong square.

4. ♔c5

The wrong move, but an easy one to make, is 4. ♔e3?, because 4... ♜h2+! 5. ♔g1 ♞e2 follows, and the bishop, unable to give check, is lost.

To avoid making this mistake, it's enough to remember the following rule:

Don't place your bishop near the opponent's king.

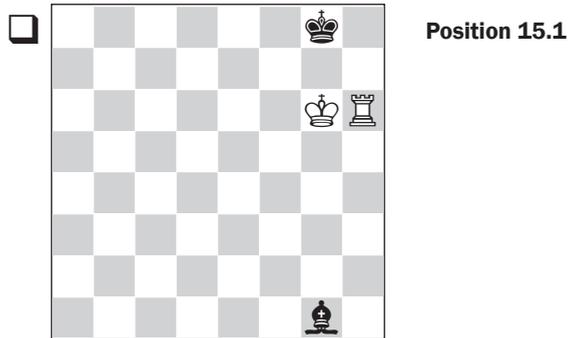
4... ♖c2 5. ♕b6 ♜b2 6. ♕c5

White can't set Black any further problems.

ENDING 15

 The wrong corner

Now let's see what happens when the king is trapped in the other corner, the one with the same colour as the bishop, which we will call the **wrong corner**.



We will know the king is trapped, with no possibility of escape, when it's on one of the two squares of the wrong corner (in this position, g8 and h8). In that case, the defender loses. If the king can escape from these squares, it's usually a draw. The key to the winning manoeuvre is to attack the bishop and at the same time threaten mate on the back rank.

In the diagram, we have selected one of the most resistant positions for the bishop. We shall see why as we go through the variations.

1. ♜h1

This is the only winning move. The black king must not be given time to leave the corner. If it reaches the f8-square, it almost always results in a draw.

1. ♜h7? ♔f8! and now it's impossible to force the king into the wrong corner.

1... ♕f2

Black is trying to keep the bishop on the files close to the kings, so that the rook can't attack it while at the same time threatening mate on the back rank.

2. ♜f1 ♕g3 3. ♜g1

The bishop must be forced out of the shadow of the white king. Now it can't go to the f4- or h4-squares, since the discovered check by the king would win it.

3... ♖f2

A) 3... ♖h4 4. ♗h5+;

B) 3... ♖f4 4. ♗f5+ and in both cases White captures the bishop.

4. ♖g2 ♖c5

The bishop can also be attacked by the rook on other squares.

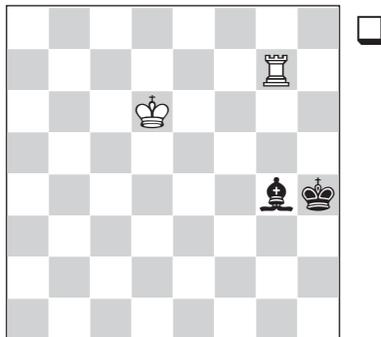
5. ♖c2 ♖d6 6. ♖c8+ ♖f8 7. ♖a8

Zugzwang – it's mate next move.

ENDING 16 The battle with the king on the edge

We need to consider one more situation, a bit more complicated than usual, but necessary, so that we don't leave this chapter with incomplete ideas that can lead us to make mistakes. We know now that the side with the bishop loses if his king is trapped in the wrong corner but draws in the right corner. But what happens when the king is in another area of the board altogether? Can it be forced to go to the wrong corner or not? In a normal position, the defender's king can remain in the centre or else head for the right corner. But when the king is already on the edge of the board, a fierce battle ensues: the side with the bishop might be losing, or it might be a draw if played correctly but still he ends up losing. This usually happens if the king can't easily move to the right corner and the defender has to stay on high alert for many moves.

Position 16.1
Radosavljevic-Djordjevic
 Yugoslavian Championship
 Banja Vrucica 1991



In this practical example, the black king is on the edge. The right corner is the one on h8. The wrong corner is at h1.

1. ♗e5 ♗h5

The king moves in the normal direction (towards h8). Trying to leave the edge doesn't work: 1... ♗g3 2. ♗e4! and the black king has to return to the h-file.

2. ♗f6!

Making it difficult to advance towards the right corner. 2.♔f4 ♕e6 3.♖g5+ ♚h6 would be easier for Black.

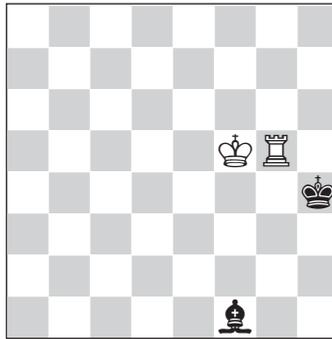
2...♕h3 3.♖g8

Waiting for the bishop to move away from its king.

3...♕f1 4.♖g5+ ♚h4

The black king has to move away from its objective, because if 4...♔h6, then 5.♖g1, with the double threat of capturing the bishop and delivering checkmate, and then if 5...♕e2 6.♖h1 ♕h5 7.♖h2, it's zugzwang and the bishop is lost.

5.♔f5



5...♕a6?

The blunder, in the form of a very natural move. Other bishop moves also lose in a similar way.

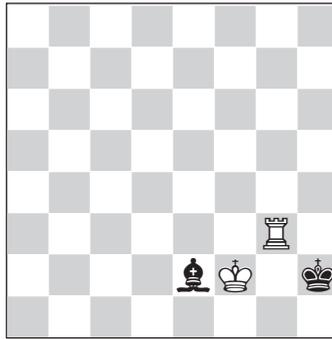
Only two moves (which transpose into each other) draw, and both involve the black king having to advance one more step toward the wrong corner: 5...♔h3! 6.♔f4 ♕e2! (or 5...♕e2 first) 7.♖g3+ ♚h2! (not 7...♔h4 8.♖g2, with the now typical double attack) and although the king is in the losing zone, White is unable to keep it there and at the same time complete the encirclement by moving his king to the f2-square. It's essential that the bishop should prevent the move 8.♔f3, which is why ♕e2 needed to be played on move 5 or 6.

6.♔f4 ♚h3 7.♖g3+ ♚h2

The black king has to go to the wrong corner, because 7...♔h4 allows the typical double attack with 8.♖g6.

Now, unlike the variation on move 5, White can play 8.♔f3 and complete the encirclement.

8.♔f3! ♕e2+ 9.♔f2



The black king can no longer escape and White wins as we saw in **Ending 15**.

9... ♖h5 10. ♖g5 ♜d1 11. ♗d5 ♜g4 12. ♗d8 1-0

Conclusions from the ending of rook vs bishop

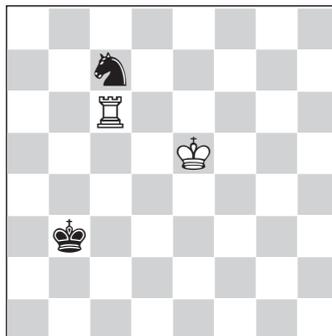
- 1) King in the corner of the same colour as the bishop = loss.
- 2) King in the corner of the opposite colour to the bishop = draw.
- 3) King on any other square on the edge = normally a draw, but there is a risk of losing.
- 4) King in any other position = easy draw.

Statistics

In the Mega Database we find 5,094 games with the pawnless ending of rook vs bishop, 73% of which ended in a draw.

ENDING 17 Rook vs knight – knight separated from the king

Position 17.1



Here, there is just one very important idea:

In the rook vs knight struggle, the knight must stay close to its king.

We shall see that when the knight moves away from its king, it almost always ends up being captured. In some positions, it's not possible to calculate all the possible variations, but keeping the objective in mind helps us choose the correct moves. The knight must move and will only be safe if it moves closer to its king. On other squares it will be trapped.

1... ♖b5!

Let's see how the black knight is trapped on the other squares:

A) 1... ♗a8? 2. ♖c8 ♗b6 3. ♖b8 and this pin ensures the capture of the knight;

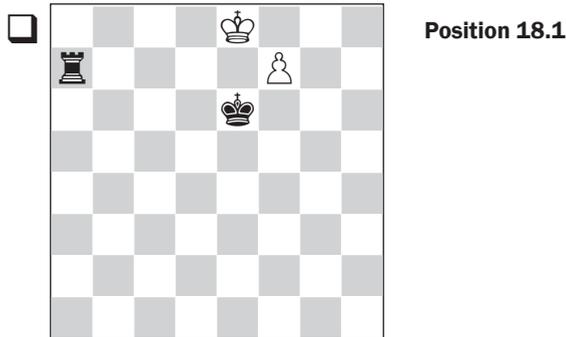
B) 1... ♗e8? 2. ♖c8 ♗g7 3. ♖c7 ♗h5 (3... ♗e8 4. ♖e7 and the knight is trapped)

4. ♖h7 ♗g3 5. ♖h3, pinning the knight, which will be captured.

2. ♖b6 ♗c4 3. ♖c6+ ♗b4 4. ♗d5 ♗c3+ 5. ♗d4 ♗b5+ ½-½

From now on, it's easy to keep the king and knight together.

ENDING 18 Rook vs knight – pawn promotion to a knight



If the knight is next to the king, then it's safe, even on the edge of the board, and this fact is of particular importance, because it can be a logical consequence of the very frequent ending of rook vs pawn.

1.f8 ♗+!

The only saving move, since promotion to a queen would allow an immediate checkmate. Now the defence is exceptionally easy, since there is always only one safe square for the knight to go to, and whenever it's separated from its king, it must move back closer.

1... ♗d6

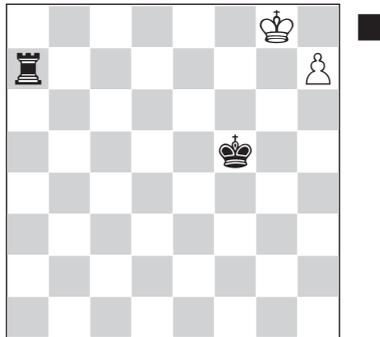
If 1... ♗f6, then 2. ♗d7+ ♗e6 3. ♗f8+.

2. ♗g6 ♖g7 3. ♗f8 ♖e7+ 4. ♗d8 ♖a7 5. ♗e8 ½-½

The exception: promotion in the corner

We have seen that the knight is safe on the edge of the board, next to its king, but it's not safe in the corner, because there its manoeuvrability is reduced, and it's very easily captured.

Position 18.2



1... ♔g6! 2. h8 ♞+ ♔f6

Zugzwang, and the knight is immediately lost.

Conclusions from the ending of rook vs knight

- 1) Knight next to its king = draw.
- 2) Knight separated from its king = loss.
- 3) Knight next to its king, both placed on the edge = draw.
- 4) Knight next to its king, but in the corner = loss.

Statistics

In the Mega Database we find 5,598 games with rook vs knight (without any pawns), 77% of which end in a draw. It's interesting to see that there are more games than with the bishop and that the percentage of draws is greater.

CHAPTER 9

Queen vs pawn

This chapter is a continuation of our study of pawn endings, since this ending normally arises from one of these.

We're going to study just a few positions, but these will be enough to play them correctly. All of them are easy to learn, enjoyable and easily remembered. Most have several exceptions, which makes learning them more complicated, but also makes it more productive and easier to remember.

A queen wins easily against a pawn in most cases

For the queen to have any problems in winning, the pawn must be at least on the sixth rank and almost always on the seventh. So we shall only study those positions. Even in these cases, the queen wins easily if it can be placed in front of the pawn, because it is unable to be dislodged.

Chapter level and usefulness of each ending

Endings 55, 56 and 57 are very basic and of maximum importance. They are intended for players rated 1000-1500.

The rest of the chapter is a bit more complicated, but it complements the first three endings and in the end is essential. I recommend studying it in a single session for those readers who find the first three endings easy, but its study can be postponed for anyone who found these difficult.

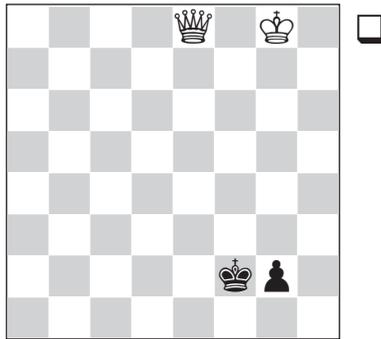
As always, any player with a lower rating who feels capable of understanding them 'can' tackle them, and anyone with a higher rating who feels that they don't have a detailed understanding of them 'should' do so.

ENDING 55 Pawn on the seventh rank – the winning manoeuvre

The first thing to be learnt is the winning manoeuvre against a pawn on the seventh rank, which works perfectly against the b-, d-, e- and g- pawns (i.e. knight's pawns and centre pawns).

If the queen can start by giving check, the attacker can always win by using a simple manoeuvre which is easy to remember, even though it can be quite long-winded.

Position 55.1



First phase: the queen checks (so that the pawn doesn't have time to queen), at the same time moving closer to the position of the opponent's pawn and king.

1. ♚f7+ ♔e2

The defender's king tries not to move in front of the pawn, because this would make it easier for the enemy king to approach.

2. ♚e6+ ♔f2 3. ♚f5+ ♔e2 4. ♚e4+ ♔f2 5. ♚f4+ ♔e2

The moment this relative position of the three pieces involved occurs, the queen stops giving checks and instead attacks the pawn from behind:

6. ♚g3! ♔f1

And now with another check the attacker forces the opponent's king to move in front of the pawn:

7. ♚f3+ ♔g1

Once the king has been forced in front of the pawn, the attacker's king moves one square closer.

8. ♔g7!

The manoeuvre is repeated until the attacker's king is close enough to support a checkmate with the queen:

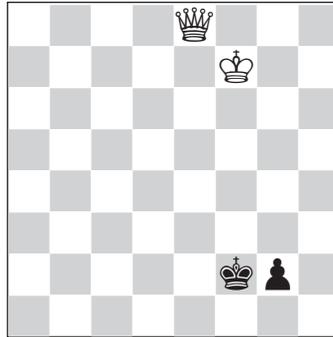
8... ♔h2 9. ♚f2 ♔h1 10. ♚h4+ ♔g1 11. ♔g6 ♔f1 12. ♚f4+ ♔e2 13. ♚g3 ♔f1 14. ♚f3+ ♔g1 15. ♔g5 ♔h2

Once the attacker's king is very close, you have to look for a mating position, which in this case occurs by allowing the pawn to queen.

16. ♔h4 g1♚ 17. ♚h3#

A very special case

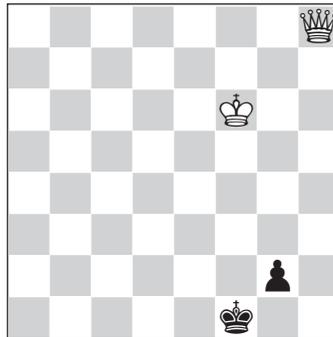
Although it's very rare, it's useful to know that there may be positions in which the queen is unable to give check on its first move.



Position 55.2

For example, the position in this diagram. In such a case the position is a draw, because the black pawn will queen on its next move.

The queen is unable to check but can pin the pawn



Position 55.3

We could consider this an exception to the previous point, or simply another special case. Simply put, if the queen can't give check, it will still win if it can at least pin the pawn. White can only win with

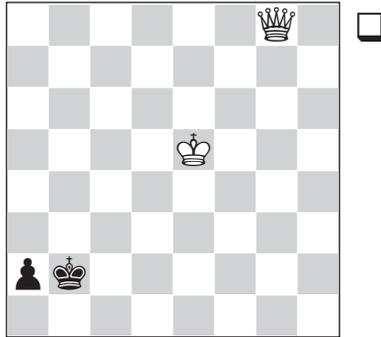
1. ♔h3!

and after the black king moves White resumes the checking routine that we've already studied.

ENDING 56 The exception with the rook's pawn

The manoeuvre we have seen to win against a knight's pawn doesn't work against a rook's pawn.

Position 56



The white queen can give checks; the first phase starts the same way.

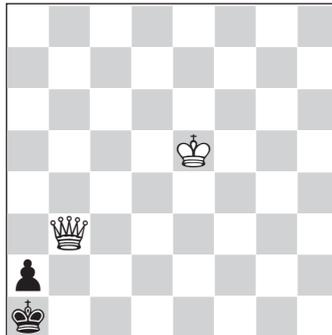
- 1. ♔g2+ ♚b1 2. ♕f1+ ♚b2 3. ♕e2+ ♚b1 4. ♕b5+ ♚c2 5. ♕c4+ ♚b1 6. ♕b4+ ♚c2 7. ♕a3**

The queen makes the same manoeuvre as with the knight pawn, in order to force the king to move in front of the pawn.

- 7... ♚b1 8. ♕b3+**

We've now reached the position where the king is forced to move in front of the pawn in order not to lose it.

- 8... ♚a1!**



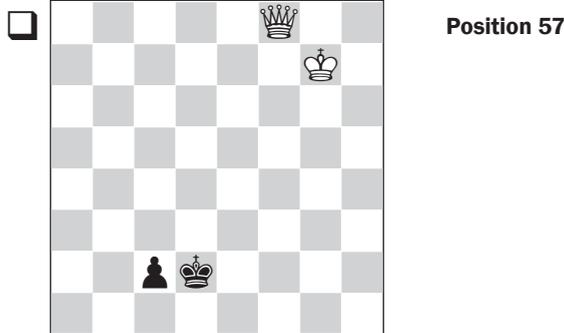
But now the king is situated in front of the pawn and has no move. White is unable to use the time to move his king closer. The queen must move again or else the game will end immediately in stalemate.

- 9. ♕c3+ ♚b1**

Once again the pawn threatens to queen. There is nothing useful that White can do, so the position is a draw.

ENDING 57 The exception with the bishop's pawn

The bishop's pawn is a similar case to the rook's pawn, but with some particular aspects.



1. ♕d6+ ♔c1

Other moves also lead to a draw. The king voluntarily moves in front of the pawn because it can't avoid this in the long run (as we saw in the previous two endings).

And in this way, it moves to the 'right side' of the pawn. Once on that side, the king will not need to get in front of the pawn ever again, as we shall see.

2. ♔f6

The white king moves one square closer, but will be unable to approach any further.

2... ♔b2

The black king is now on the right side of the pawn.

3. ♕b4+ ♔a2 4. ♕c3 ♔b1 5. ♕b3+

With a little cooperation from both sides, we have very soon reached the critical position. Now the king shouldn't move in front of the pawn, because then the white king would move closer. But in fact he can play

5... ♔a1!

and the same circumstance occurs as with the rook pawn: if the queen captures the pawn, it will be stalemate.

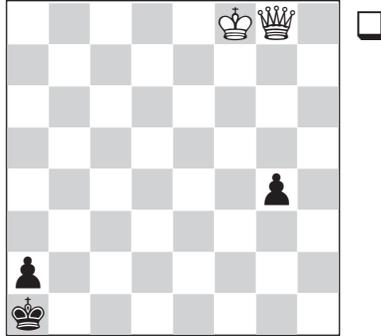
6. ♕a3+ ♔b1

And again the pawn is threatening to queen, so no progress is possible and it's a draw.

ENDING 58 Presence of a pawn disrupts stalemate with a rook's pawn

Let's look at another special circumstance: since a draw with the rook's pawn on the seventh rank depends on stalemate, the presence of another pawn (of the same side) can disrupt that circumstance.

Position 58.1



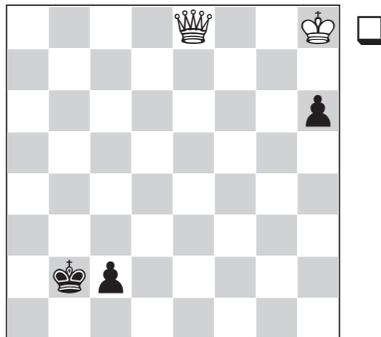
In this case we present a very easy example.

1. ♖b3! g3 2. ♖c2 g2 3. ♖c1#

Presence of a pawn disrupts stalemate with a bishop's pawn

With the bishop's pawn, the presence of the second pawn also disrupts the stalemate, but the execution usually requires much more effort than with the rook's pawn.

Position 58.2



Let's look at a typical case.

1. ♖b5+ ♔a2 2. ♖c4+ ♔b2 3. ♖b4+ ♔a2 4. ♖c3 ♔b1 5. ♖b3+

And now we've reached the critical moment. Now the king can't move into the corner.

- 5... ♔c1 6. ♔g7

The white king approaches and the manoeuvre can be repeated as many times as necessary. So all that remains is to see what will happen if Black advances his h-pawn, intending to lose it, in order to re-establish the possibility of stalemate.

6...h5 7.♔f6 h4 8.♚e5 h3 9.♔d4!

Naturally it would be a mistake to capture the pawn: 9.♚xh3? ♚b2! and the king emerges on the right side and we would return to the position with the possibility of stalemate, which is still a draw, because the attacker's king is not close enough to force mate.

9...h2 10.♔d3

Mate with 11.♚xc2 follows.

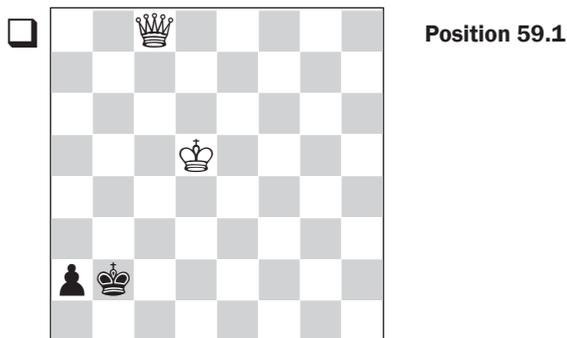
White has won by a single tempo. This means that with the second pawn further advanced, Black would have achieved a draw.

We can conclude that this exception based on a second pawn works best for the side with the queen when the defender's pawn is a rook's pawn.

ENDING 59 King assists in mate vs rook's pawn; b3 as support square

Another circumstance that can prevent a draw with the rook's or bishop's pawns on the seventh rank is the arrival of the attacker's king in time to checkmate. To achieve this, it must be close enough. We have already seen some examples in Chapter 2, with queen vs queen. Now we will focus on the type of circumstances required, without analysing all the possible positions.

Since it's difficult to remember, in the long term, all the squares from which the king can arrive in time, I think it's much better just to know that this option exists and to see how it can be applied each time.



As we can easily see, the white king is one square closer than in **Ending 56**.

This case can be summarized as:

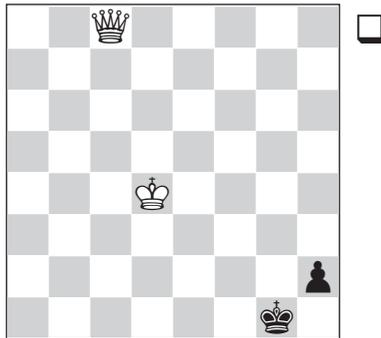
White wins because his king is two steps away from b3.

1. ♖b7+ ♔c2 2. ♜c6+ ♔b2 3. ♞b5+ ♔c2 4. ♜e2+ ♔b1 5. ♔c4 a1 ♞ 6. ♔b3,
followed by mate.

King assists in mate vs rook's pawn; e3 as support square

The other way to mate is with the queen on f2 (or c2). The process is simple, and we will illustrate it with a single example.

Position 59.2
Kazakouski-Nguyen
Riga 2024



First: the queen moves to the second rank, gaining time with checks.

1. ♜c1+ ♔g2 2. ♜c2+ ♔g1

And second: the king moves towards the key square for the checkmate.

3. ♔e3 h1 ♞ 4. ♜f2#

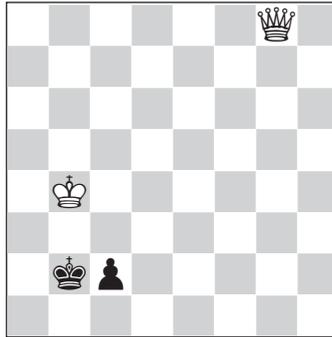
It's interesting to note that this is the other square that is a knight's leap away from the queening square.

It's easy to deduce the following rule, which helps to remember the distance needed by the king in order to win:

The attacker will win if his king is two steps from any of the two squares a knight's jump from the queening square.

ENDING 60 King assists in mate vs bishop's pawn

With the bishop's pawn, the circumstances are more varied, and it's difficult to remember all the rules or all the positions. It's better to try to understand the manoeuvres. The results are quite different, depending on whether the defender's king is on the 'right' or 'wrong' side of the pawn. The king on the 'right' side requires the opponent's king to move closer to win.



Position 60.1

The defender's king is on the right side. But White wins because his king is just one step away from the key b3-square.

1. ♔g2 ♚b1

Going to a1 is the same.

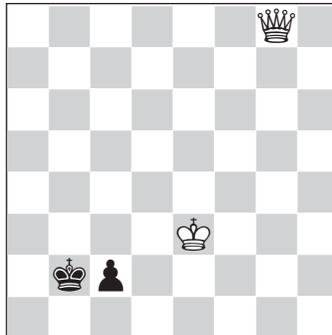
2. ♚b3 c1 ♕

Promoting to a knight holds out a bit longer but not much. 2...c1♞+ 3. ♚a3 ♞d3 4. ♕d2 and mate next move.

3. ♕a2#

The king arrives in time to prevent queening

With the bishop's pawn, there is a chance of preventing the pawn promotion.



Position 60.2

For this, the attacker's king must be (as here) one step away from d2. The variations are obvious.

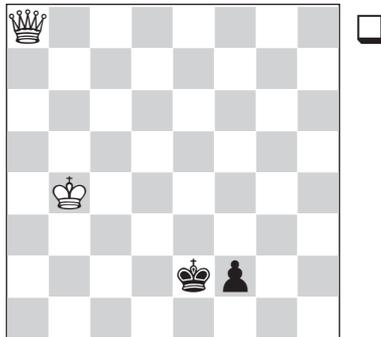
1. ♕b8+ ♚c3 2. ♕c7+ ♚b2 3. ♚d2

And White wins.

Defender's king on the wrong side

With the king on the wrong side of the pawn, the possibility of mate is again the main exception.

Position 60.3
Medunova-Mohr
Bled Women 1994



In this case, the key square is d2 (again a knight's jump from the queening square).

The winning plan has two stages. The queen takes control of d2 by gaining tempi and then the king approaches the checkmate square.

1. ♕e4+ ♖f1 2. ♕h1+ ♜e2 3. ♕g2 ♜e1 4. ♜c3 ♜e2

This prolongs the game for a couple of moves with no real hope. The logical variation would be 56...c1♕ 57.♕d2#.

5. ♜d4 1-0

Statistics

In the Mega Database we find 49,068 games featuring the struggle of queen against pawn (on any rank) and only 4% of these are drawn. The interesting battle is against a pawn on the seventh rank.

We find 10,345 games with a queen against a pawn on the seventh rank, but these also include games in which the side with the pawn has another pawn, that is, almost 1 in 1,000 of the total. Of these, a reasonable percentage end in a draw, which should really be separated into those in which there is a single extra pawn and those in which there is more than one extra pawn.

With one pawn, the percentage ending in draws is 22.5%. With more pawns, it drops to 15.7%. This is consistent with the fact that the second (or third) pawn is detrimental, especially when the seventh-rank pawn is a rook's or bishop's pawn.

Let's make a small table of the positions of queen vs one pawn on the seventh rank based on the pawn's file:

Rook's pawn (a- or h-)	1,949 games	draws 36%
Knight's pawn (b- or g-)	2,588 games	draws 3%
Bishop's pawn (c- or f-)	1,181 games	draws 41%
Centre pawn (d- or e-)	589 games	draws 4%

The large difference in percentages should not be surprising, since it matches the theoretical conclusions.

With the e- and d- pawns there are far fewer games, which confirms that it's rarer for the centre pawns to last until the end of the game.

Summary

- 1) A queen almost always wins against a pawn.
- 2) When the pawn has reached the seventh rank, the queen wins if it can move in front of it.
- 3) When the queen is unable to move in front of the pawn, the queen has a winning manoeuvre if it can start checking.
- 4) The winning manoeuvre can fail against the rook or bishop pawns due to stalemate.
- 5) If there is a second pawn, the stalemate defence can fail.
- 6) If the attacker's king is nearby, it can ensure mate, even after the defender's pawn promotes.
- 7) If the queen can neither check nor pin the pawn in the initial position, the pawn will advance one square.