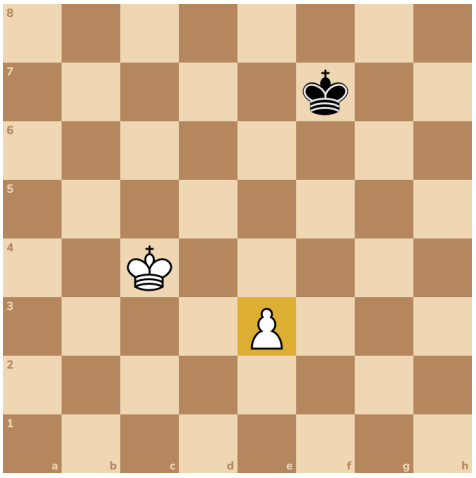
My Chess Family

Key squares in king and pawn endgames

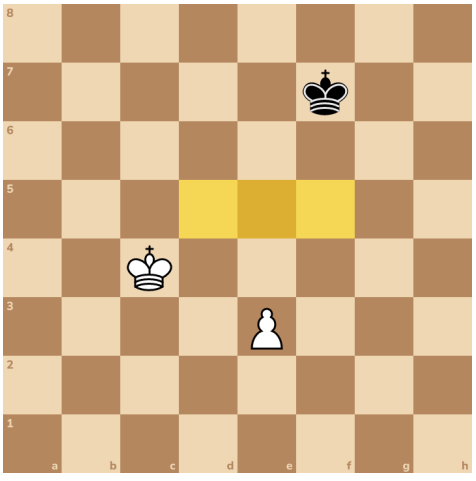
Try each question on a real board, then check the answers at the end of the sheet.

Key squares

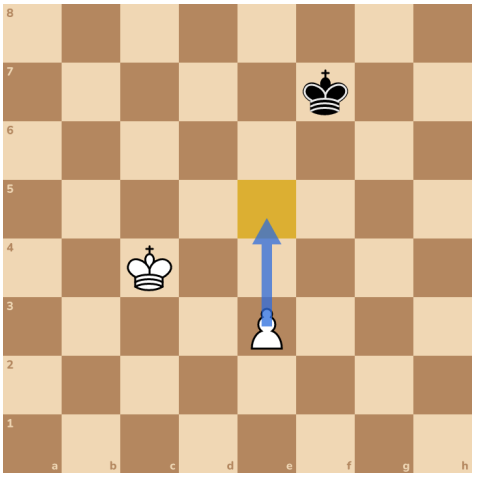
Here's a new idea, and one position to learn it with. You have a pawn on e3. His king is on f7.



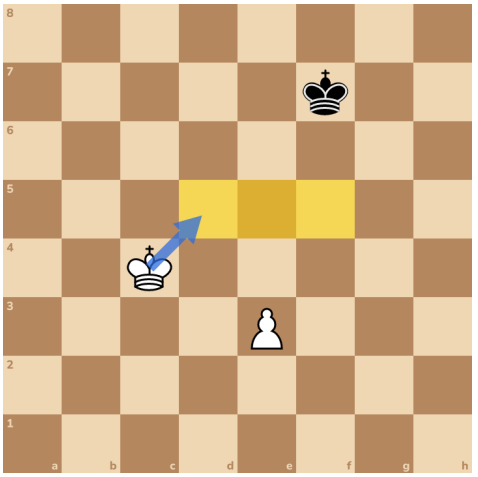
Now take the squares on each side of e5, too. d5, e5 and f5 are called key squares.



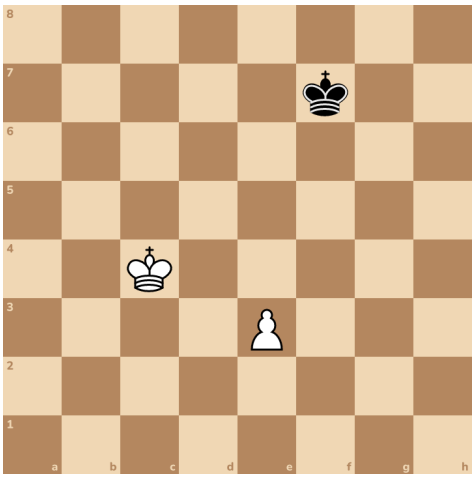
Count two rows up from your pawn. That's e5.



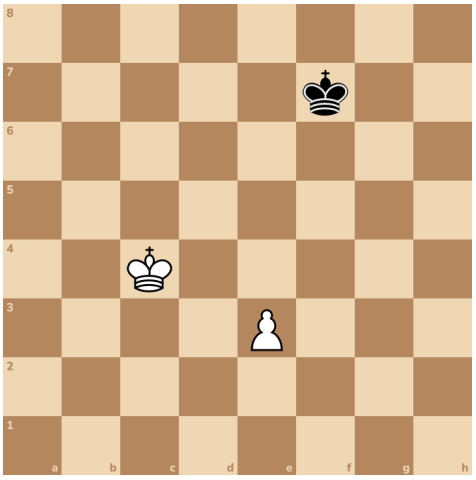
Get your king onto a key square, with your pawn safe, and the pawn makes a queen. It works whoever's turn it is.



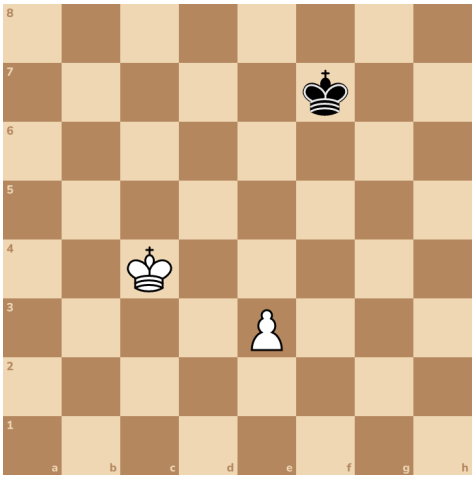
It works for every pawn but an a-pawn or an h-pawn. They're different, and you'll meet them later.



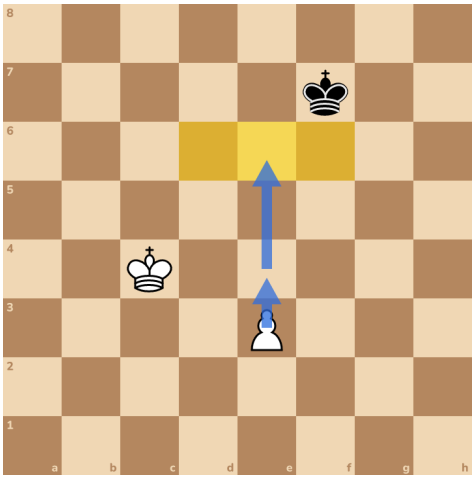
Try it 1. Your pawn is on e3. Point to its three key squares.



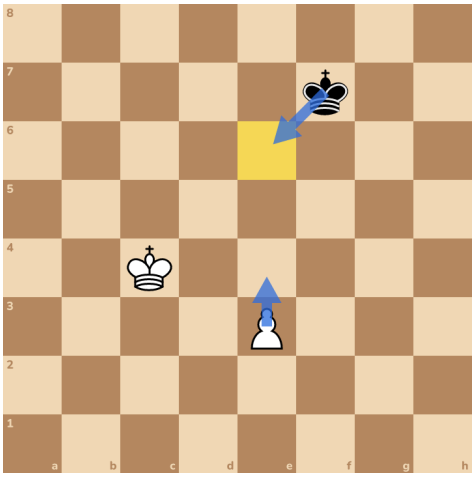
Try it 2. King first! Which key square can your king reach in one step?



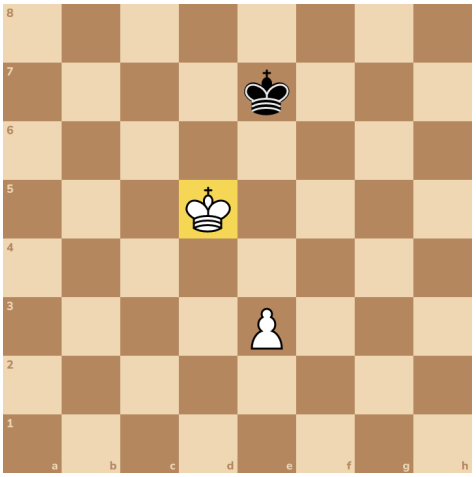
When the pawn moves up, its key squares move up too. With the pawn on e4, they would be d6, e6 and f6. But stay with e3 for now.



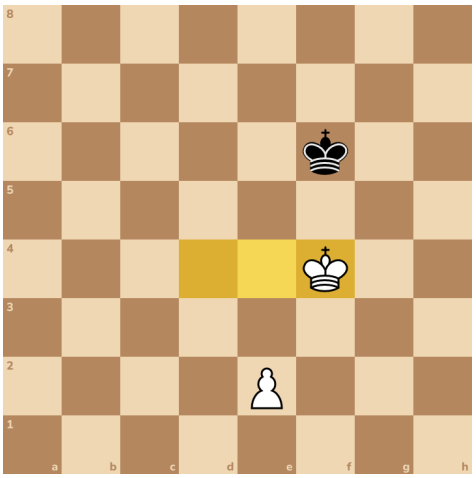
Careful! Pushing e4 first looks good, but it only draws. His king gets to e6, right in front of your pawn.



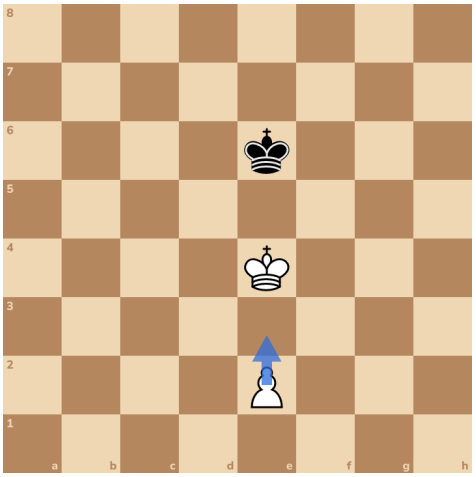
You're on a key square, with your pawn safe. Now you win. Next, see it all the way to a queen.



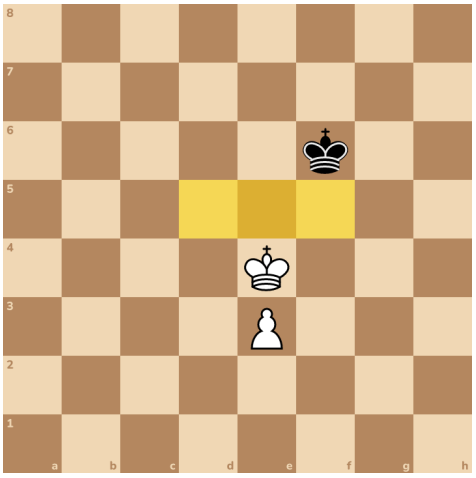
Here's a new position, from the world champion Capablanca, long ago. Your pawn is on e2.



Now his king faces yours, and it's your move. Push your pawn one square. Then it's his move, so he has to give way.

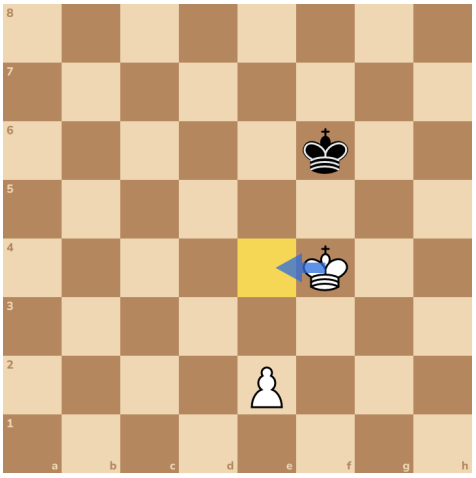


He gave way. Now the pawn is on e3, so the key squares are d5, e5 and f5.

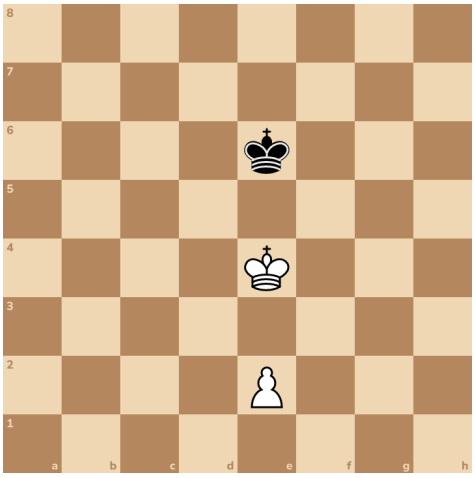


Its key squares are d4, e4 and f4. Your king is already on f4, so you can win. Keep your king on the key squares as the pawn moves up.

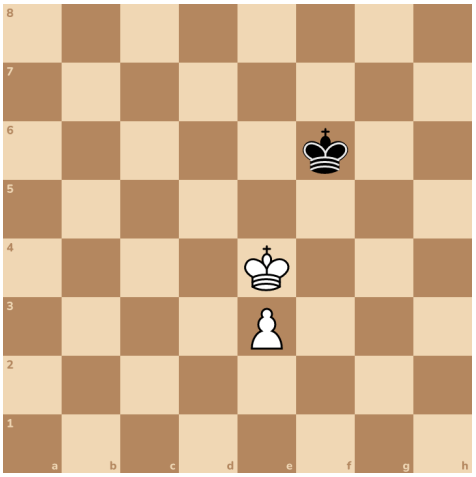
Try it 3. Move your king to e4.



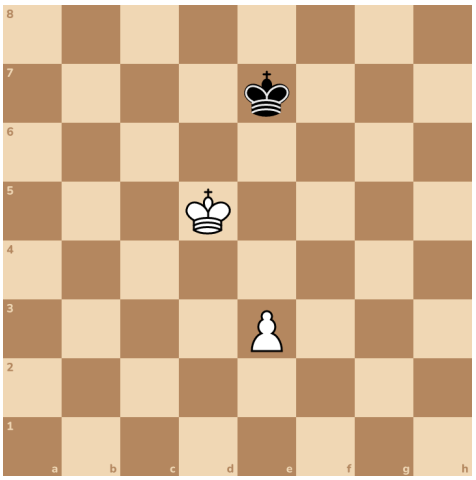
Try it 4. Push your pawn one square.



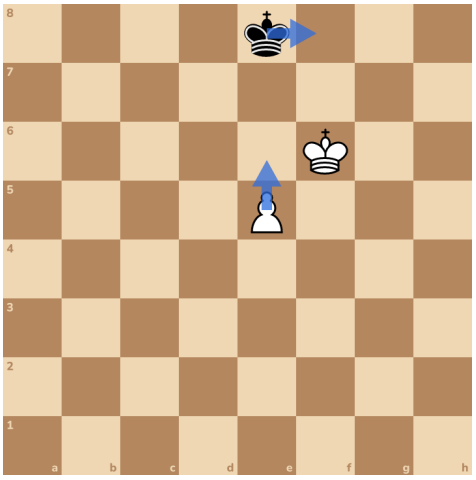
Try it 5. Step onto a key square!



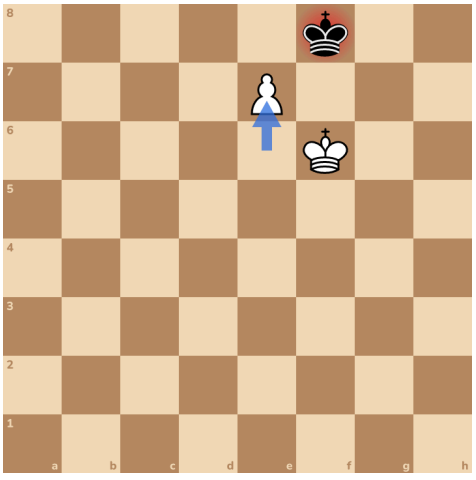
Try it 6. His king blocks your way. Face him on the same column, and take the opposition.



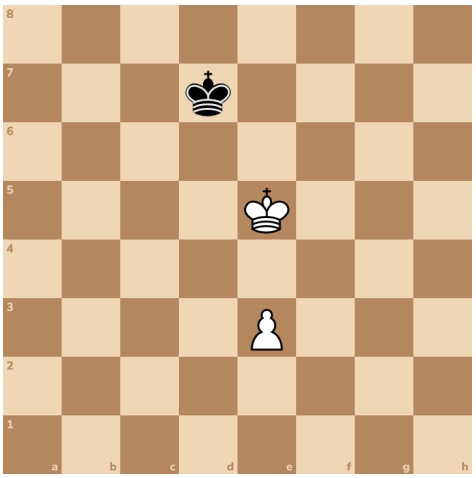
Here's a new position, from later in Capablanca's line. Careful! If you push e6, he goes to f8 and it's only a draw.



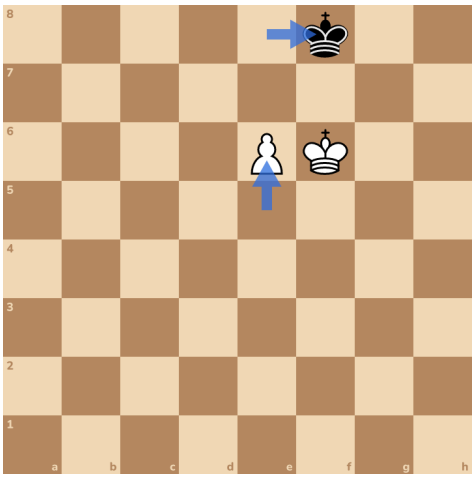
You push e7, with check.



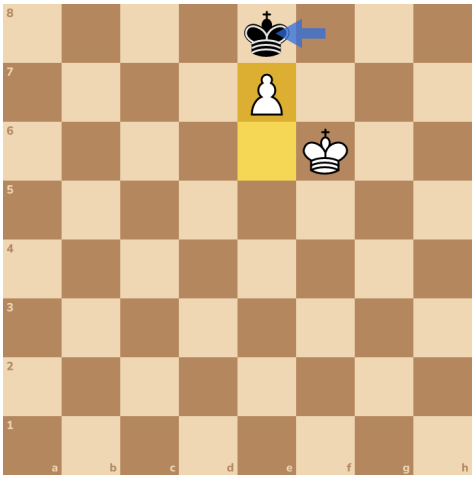
Play it out: He had to give way. Now finish it. Keep your king on the key squares, and make a queen! Try it on a board, or in the app.



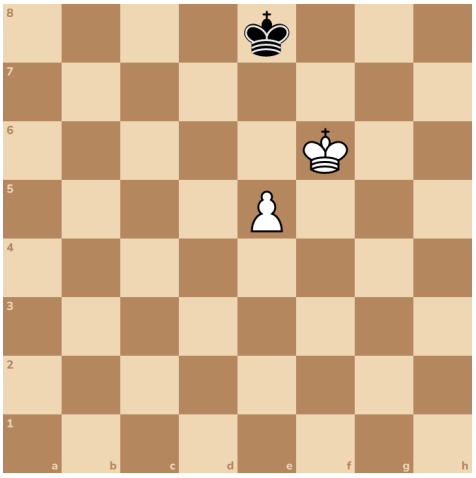
You push e6. He steps to f8.



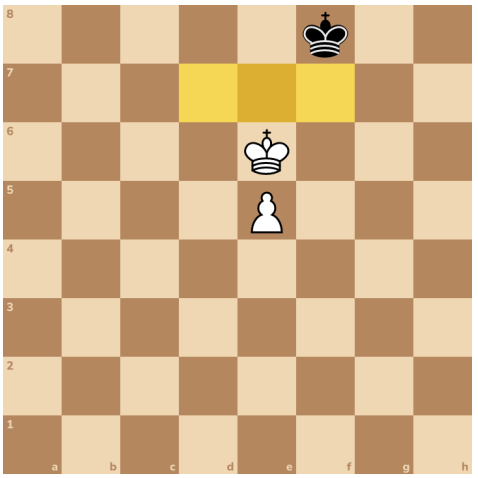
He steps back to e8. Now Ke6 guards the pawn, but it's stalemate. Any other move lets him take it. It's a draw.



Try it 7. Find the move that wins. Your king goes first!

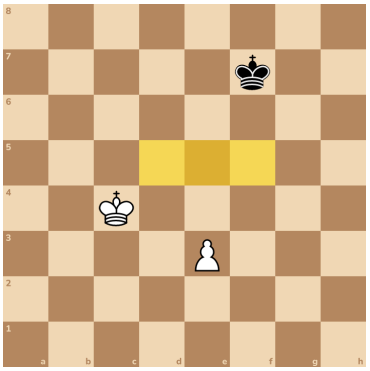


Now your king guards d7, e7 and f7. The pawn walks up with your king in front. King first wins!

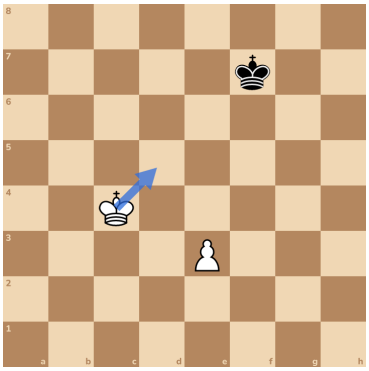


Answers

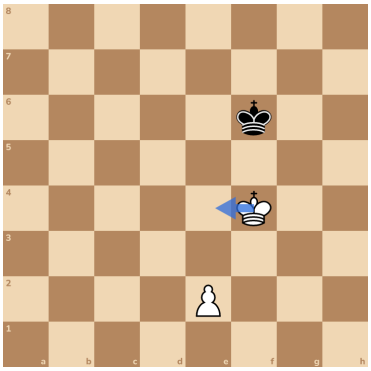
1. d5, e5, f5



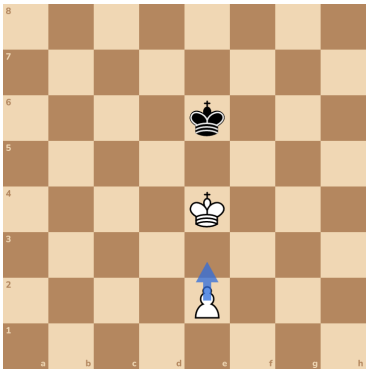
2. Kd5



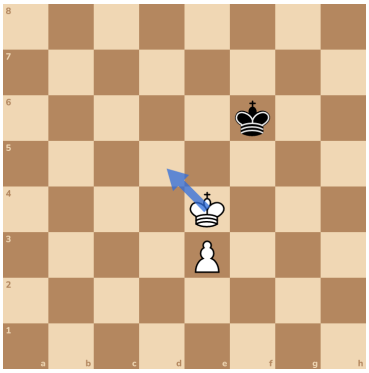
3. Ke4



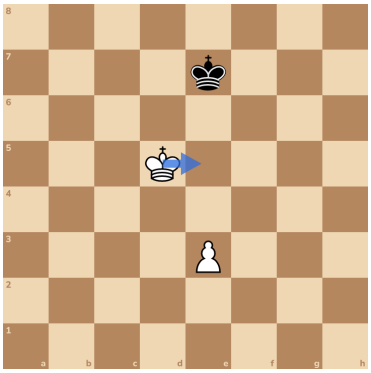
4. e3



5. Kd5



6. Ke5



7. Ke6

