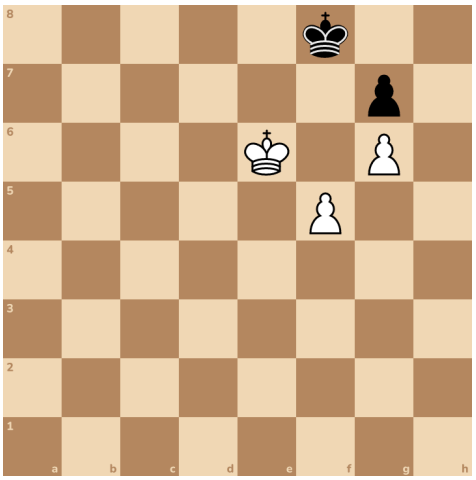
My Chess Family

What is a passed pawn, and how to make one

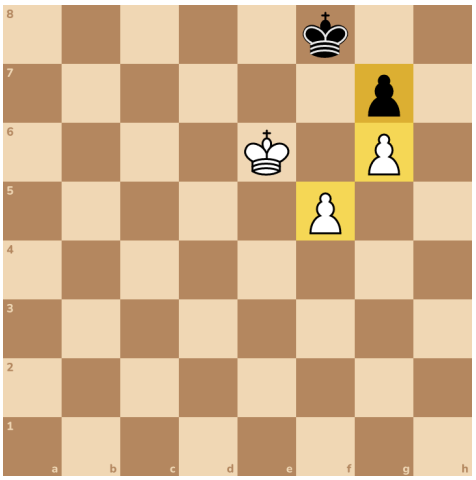
Try each question on a real board, then check the answers at the end of the sheet.

Two pawns against one

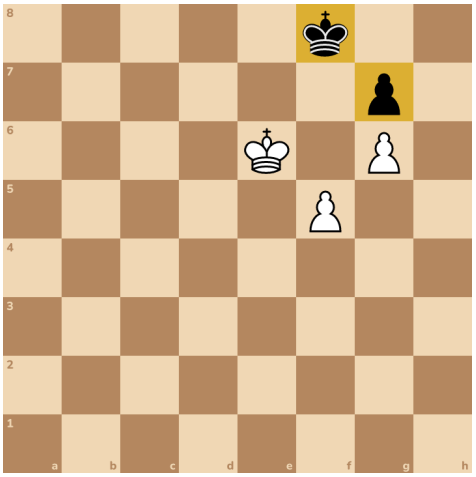
Here, only the kings and some pawns are left. An extra pawn often wins, but only if you play it the right way.



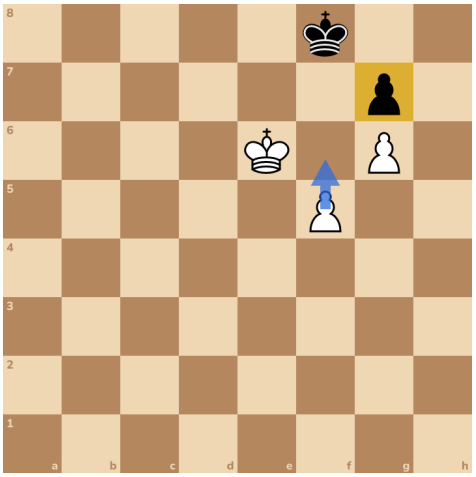
This position is from the world champion Capablanca. You have two pawns, on f5 and g6. Black has one, on g7.



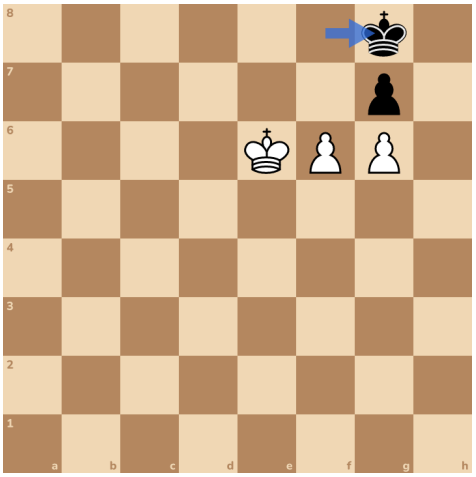
You want to make a queen. But his king on f8 and his pawn on g7 are in the way.



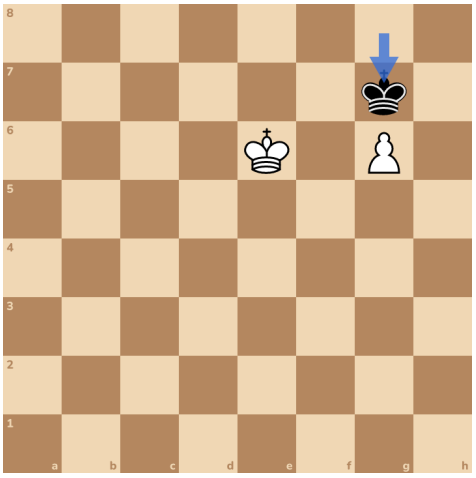
The move that looks best is f6, attacking his pawn. Let's see why it doesn't work.



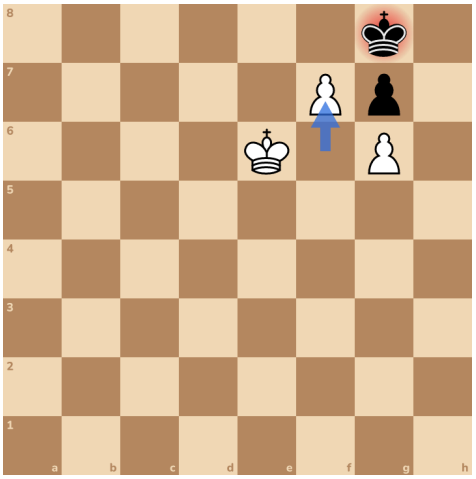
You push f6. He steps his king to g8.



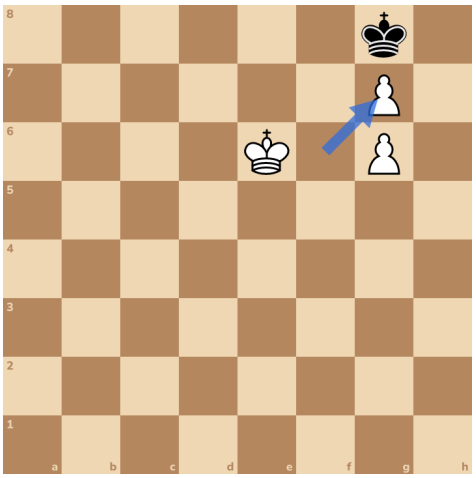
His king takes your pawn back.



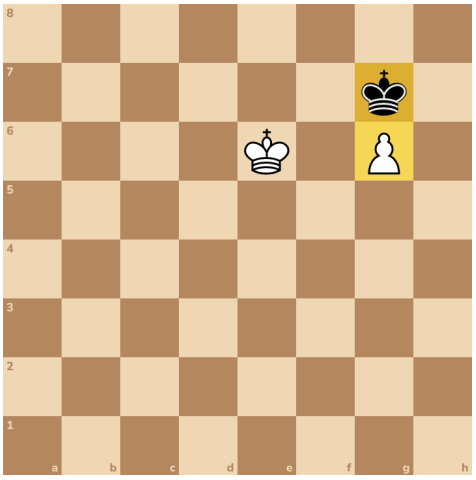
Here's the second try. Go back to where he stepped to g8. This time you push f7, with check.



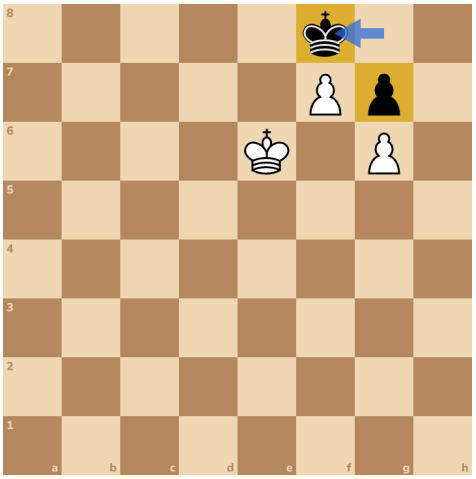
Now you have two tries, fxg7 and f7. Both only draw. Here's the first. Your f-pawn takes his pawn on g7.



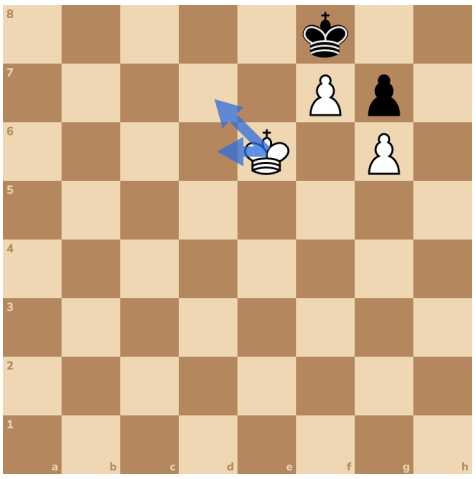
Now his king stands right in front of your last pawn, and your king can't push it away. It's a draw.



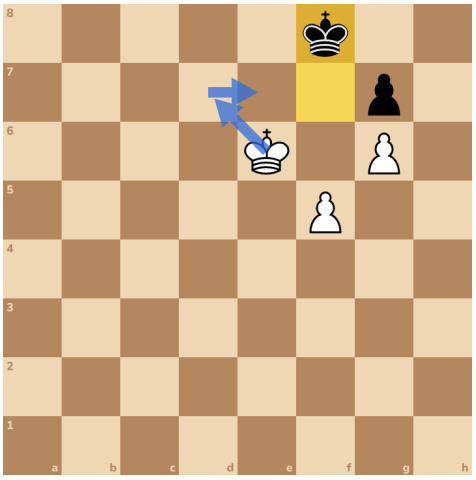
His king steps back to f8. Your pawns are stuck. Your f-pawn can't move with his king on f8, and his pawn blocks your g-pawn.



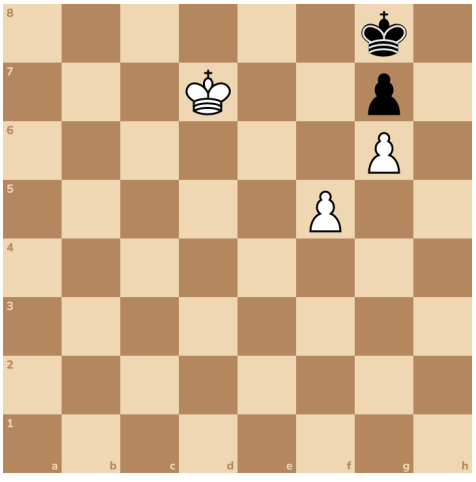
Now it's your move, and your king has to step away. Kd6 or Kd7 is stalemate. His king and his pawn can't move.



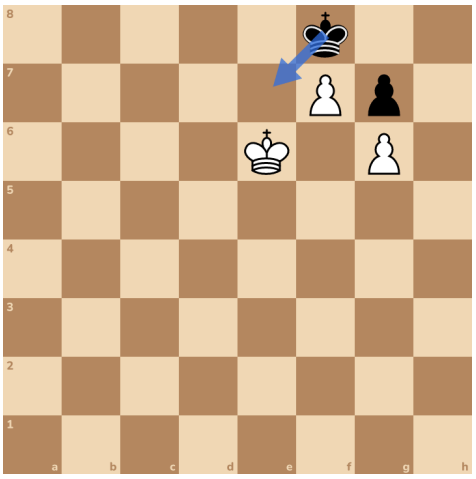
Here's the start again. This time, king first! Walk your king round to e7, where it guards f7 and f8.



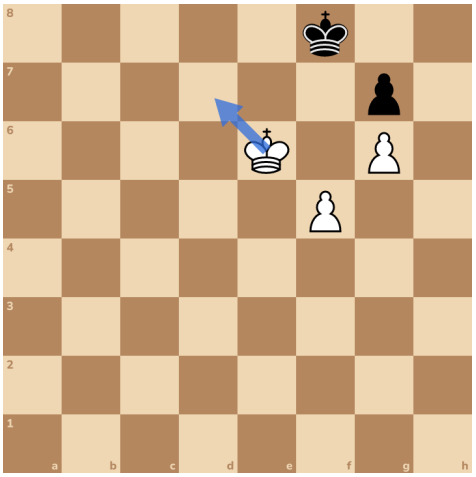
Try it 2. Now step to e7.



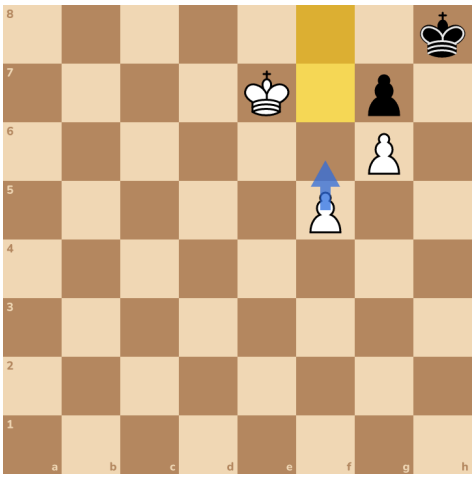
Any other king move lets his king step to e7 and back to f8, again and again. Nobody can win, so it's a draw.



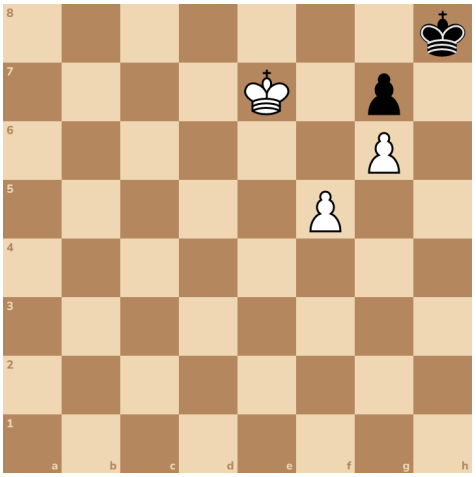
Try it 1. Start with d7.



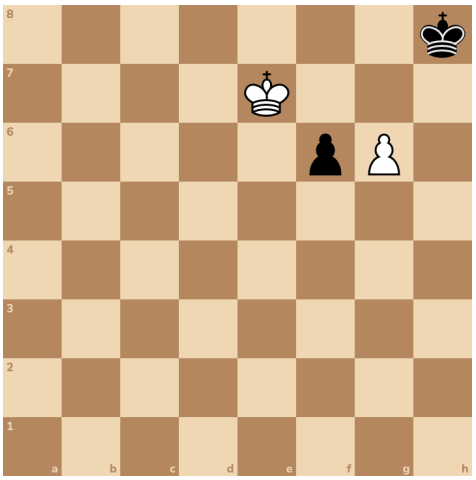
Your king guards f7 and f8. Now push f6. If the g-pawn takes, your g-pawn has a free road.



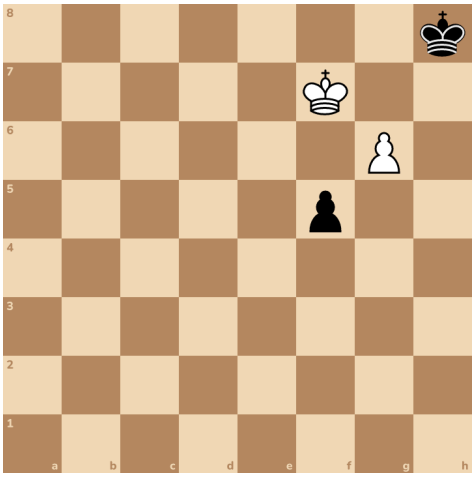
Try it 3. Push your f-pawn.



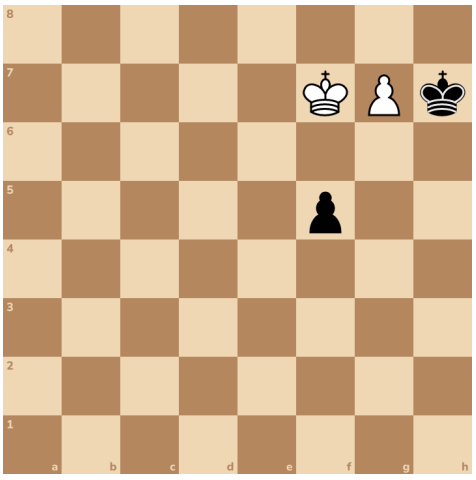
Try it 4. He took. Step to f7, next to your g-pawn. His king can't move then, but he still has a pawn, so it isn't stalemate.



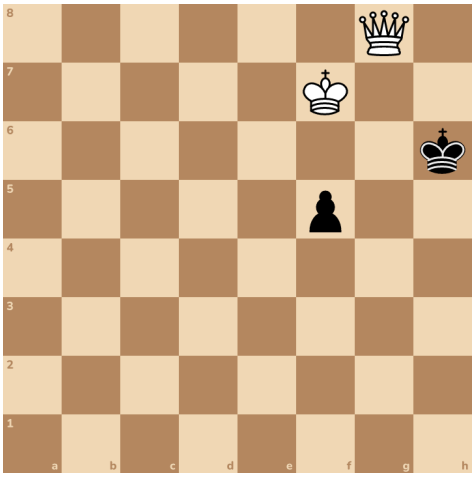
Try it 5. He had to push his pawn to f5. Now push your g-pawn, with check!



Try it 6. Make a queen, with check!



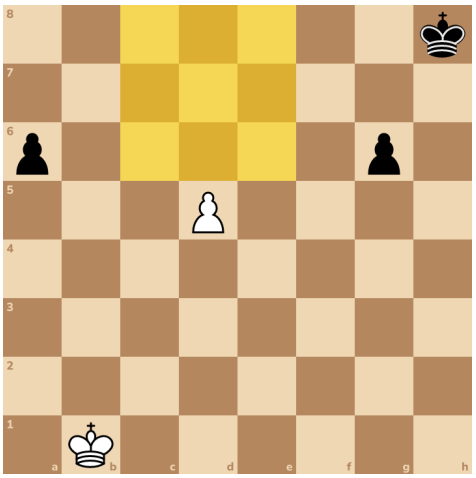
Try it 7. Checkmate in one!



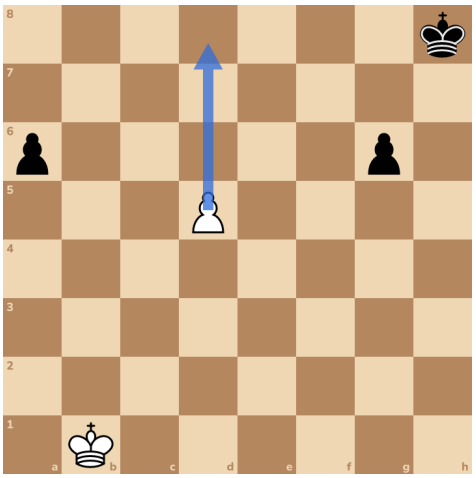
King first, then the pawns. That's how two pawns beat one!

Make a passed pawn

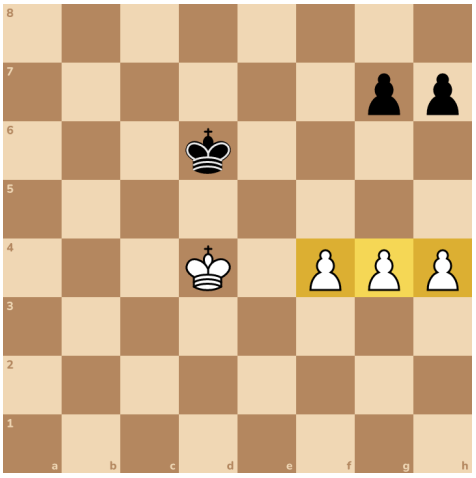
Here's a new idea. No black pawn stands in front of your d-pawn, or on the columns next to it. That's called a passed pawn.



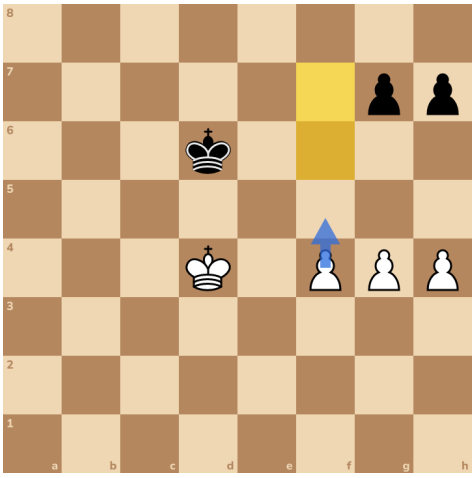
No pawn can stop a passed pawn. Only a king or a piece can. So a passed pawn is very strong.



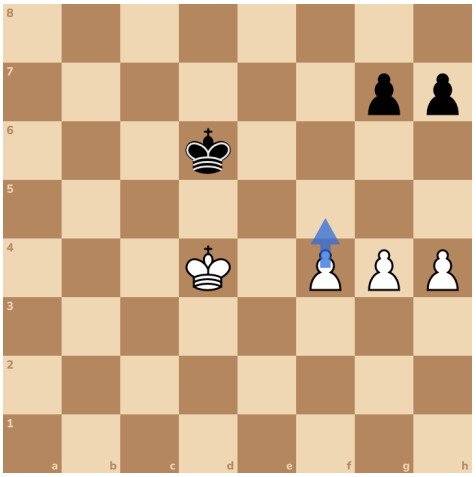
Here's a new position, from Capablanca. You have three pawns against two. None of yours is passed yet. How do you make one?



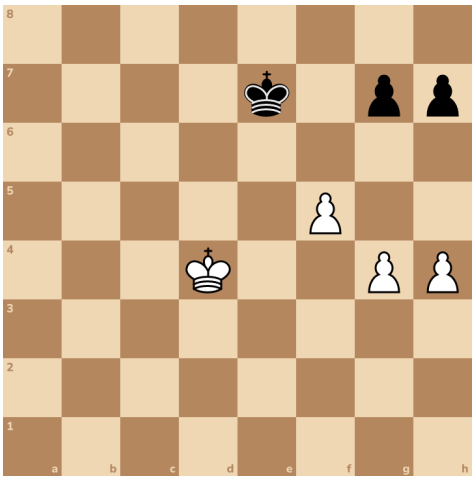
Push the pawn with no black pawn in front of it first. That's your f-pawn. It's the one that can become passed.



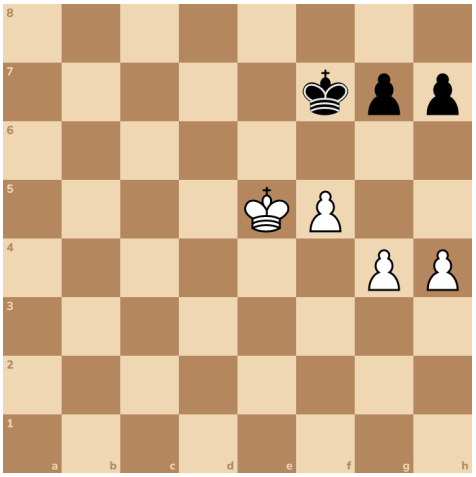
Try it 8. Push your f-pawn.



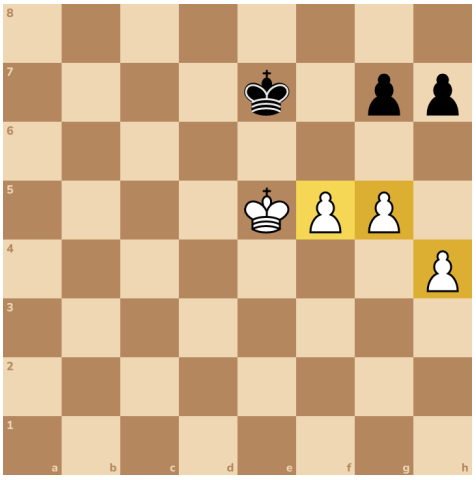
Try it 9. Black steps his king to e7. Now bring your king up to e5, next to your pawns.



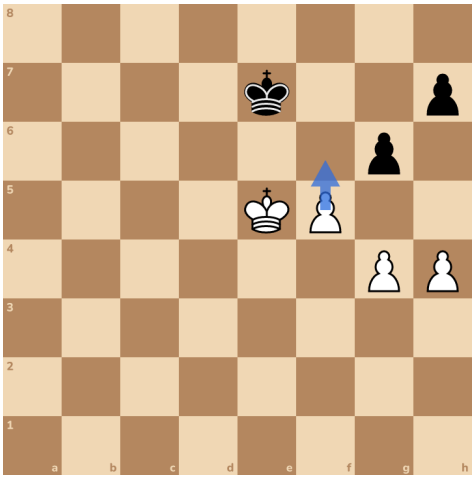
Try it 10. Now push your g-pawn, next to your f-pawn.



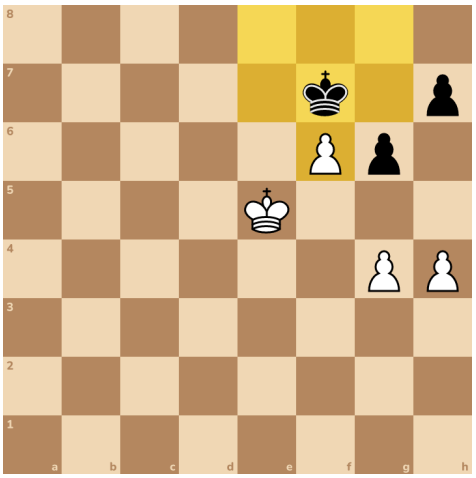
Your pawns walk up together. If a black pawn moves, one of yours can become passed. Let's see how.



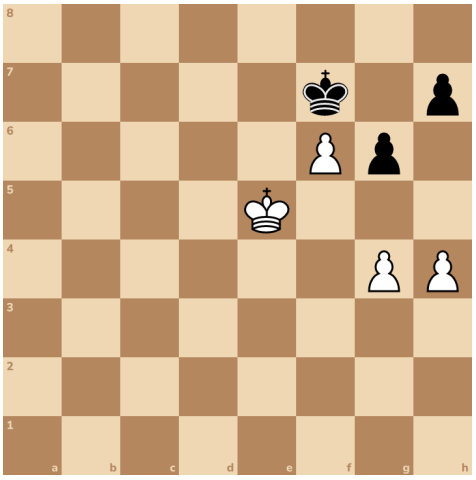
Try it 11. Here's a new position. Go back a move. What if Black had pushed g6? Push your f-pawn again, with check. Then it's a passed pawn!



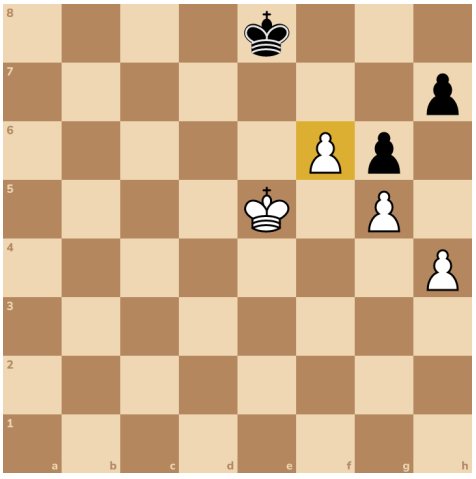
No black pawn is in front of it now, or on the columns next to it, ahead of it. Your king guards it.



Try it 12. Now guard your passed pawn with another pawn. Push your g-pawn.

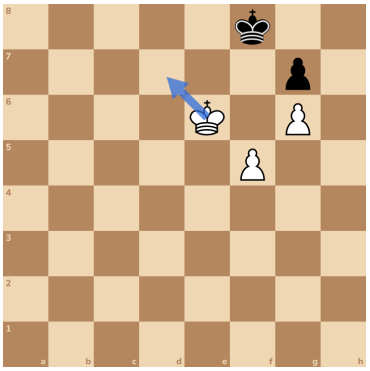


Now a pawn guards your passed pawn, so his king can't take it. A guarded passed pawn is a big help.

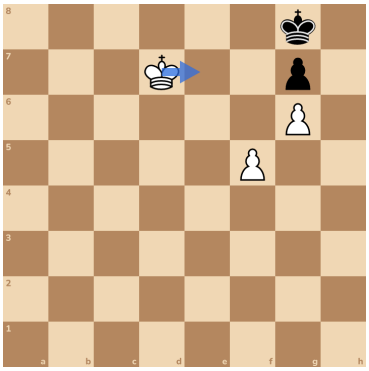


Answers

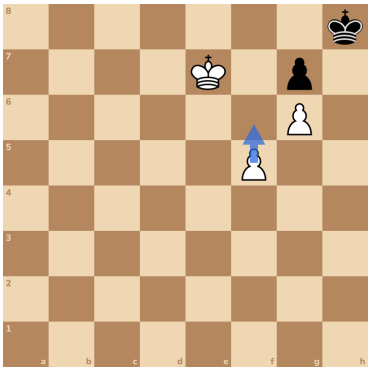
1. Kd7



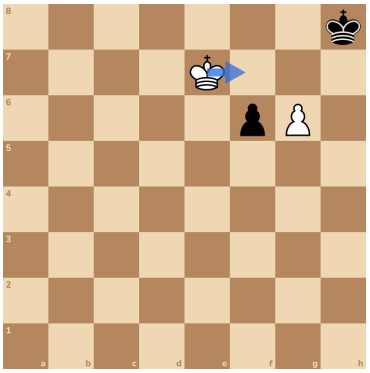
2. Ke7



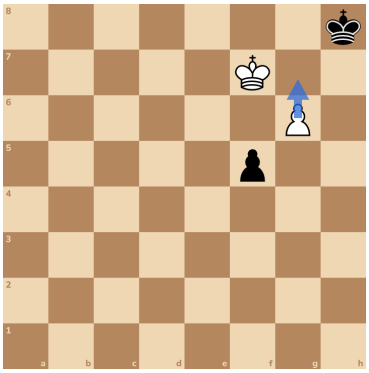
3. f6



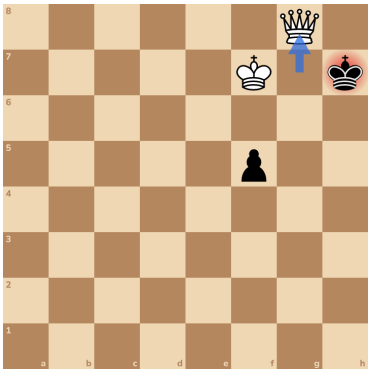
4. Kf7



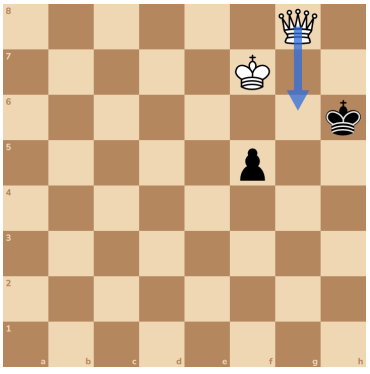
5. g7+



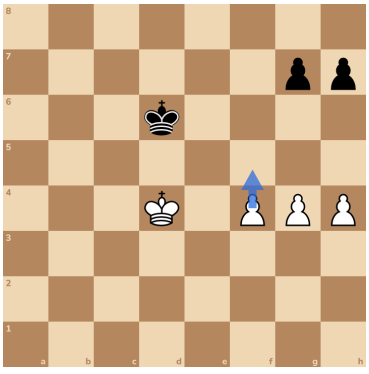
6. g8=Q+



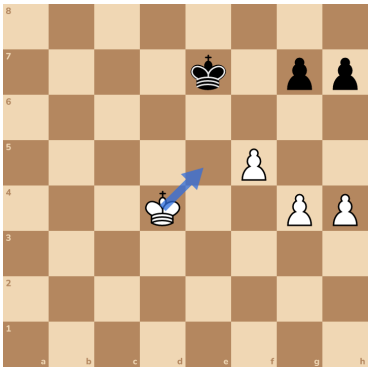
7. Qg6#



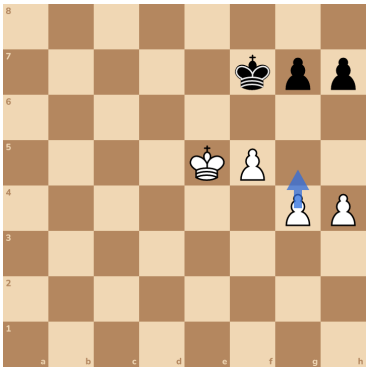
8. f5



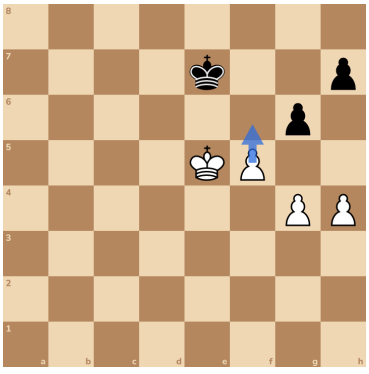
9. Ke5



10. g5



11. f6+



12. g5

