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Rook Endgames

Rooks and Minor Pieces

**Queen Endgames**

And Finally...

14 Triangulation and More Opposition

*The triangle can work wonders as three is not an even number*

Here we look at further positions with king and two pawns vs king and one pawn. If the extra pawn is a passed pawn but not a *protected* passed pawn, the attacker also usually wins easily. The passed pawn deflects the defending king and the attacking king can win the defender's pawn and then win with the remaining pawn. But there are difficult cases, especially when blocked rook's pawns are involved. With an additional bishop's pawn, the win using *triangulation* is worth knowing. For the case that the passed pawn is further away, see Lesson 15.

The final four diagrams show how the kings fight for vital squares when there are no passed pawns.
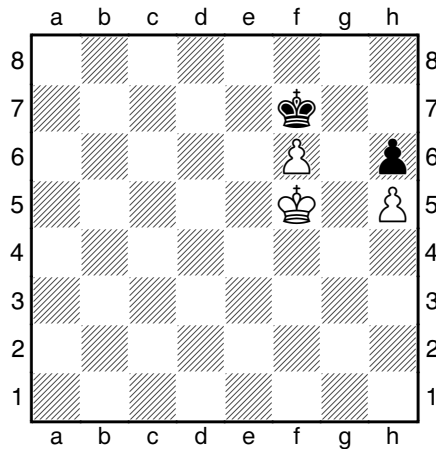
1) White to move
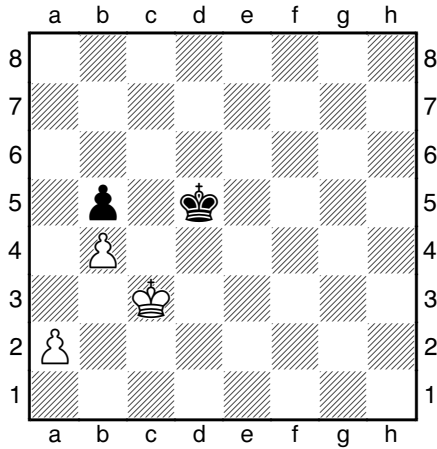
White wins by transferring the move to Black: 1 ♔e5 ♔f8 (Black can't mirror the manoeuvre because e7 is covered by the f6-pawn) 2 ♔f4 ♔e8 3 ♔e4 *(2)*. This triangle manoeuvre puts Black in a fatal zugzwang.
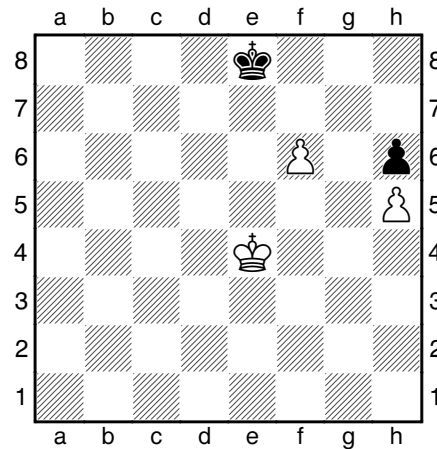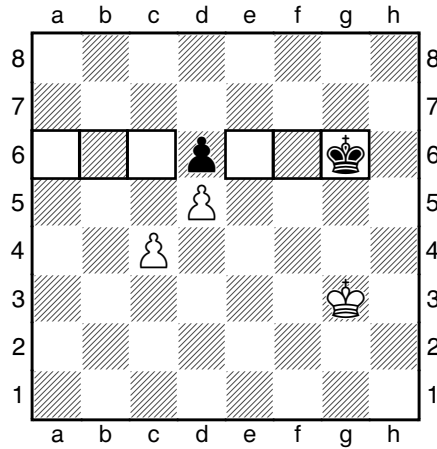
2) Black to move

White wins since ...♔g8 is illegal, and 3...♔f7 loses directly to 4 ♔f5 ♔f8 5 ♔g6. That leaves 3...♔f8 4 ♔e5 ♔e8 5 ♔e6 ♔f8 6 f7 ♔g7 7 ♔e7 ♔h7 8 ♔f6, when White wins.
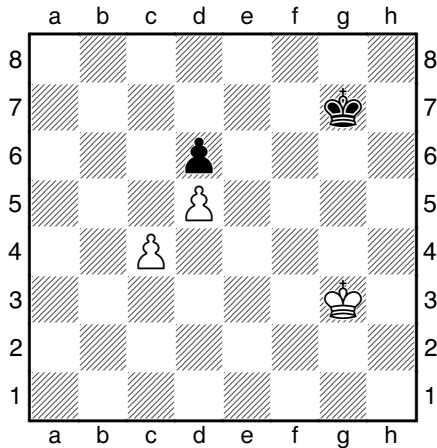
3) White to move

The triangle also helps here: 1 ♔b3 ♚c6 2 ♔b2 ♚d6 3 ♔c2 (the triangle is completed) 3...♚d5 4 ♔c3 ♚c6 5 ♔d4 ♚d6 6 a3 (a vital 'tempo move' to put Black in zugzwang) 6...♚c6 7 ♔e5 and White wins.

4) Black to move

In general the attacker can't use triangulation in such situations (Black can also 'triangulate' in reply) and opposition is the main fighting method for the key squares: 1...♚g7! *(5)* (for 1...♚g5?, see diagram 6).

5) White to move

Black has taken the distant opposition, and draws: 2 ♔f3 ♚f7! 3 ♔f4 ♚f6 4 ♔e3 ♚e7 5 ♔d4 ♚d7 6 ♔c3 ♚c7 7 ♔b4 ♚b6.
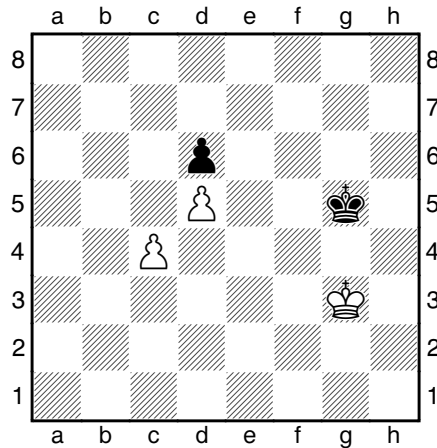
6) White to move

White wins with 2 ♔f3 ♚f5 3 ♔e3 ♚e5 4 ♔d3 ♚f6 (Black can't get to the queenside in time) 5 ♔c3 ♚e7 6 ♔b4 ♚d7 7 ♔b5 ♚c7 8 ♔a6.

Bähr's Rule

Draw those diagonals to draw the conclusion

Now we consider a pair of blocked pawns with an extra pawn for the attacker several files away. If the attacking king can support the passed pawn, he usually wins (see also Lesson 14). But there is an important exception, if the blocked pawns are on a rook's file. Let's assume they are on the a-file. If the extra pawn is on the d-, e-, f-, g- or h-file then Bähr's Rule can help us assess the position.

This rule has two parts. Both kings must be in position near the pawn as in the first diagram below. If the attacker's rook's pawn has crossed the middle of the board, the attacker wins. If not then draw a diagonal from the *defender's* pawn towards the eighth rank and from the point of intersection with the c-file back towards the first rank. (This sounds complex but the diagrams should make it clearer.) If the attacking passed pawn has *not* crossed this diagonal, then the attacker wins.
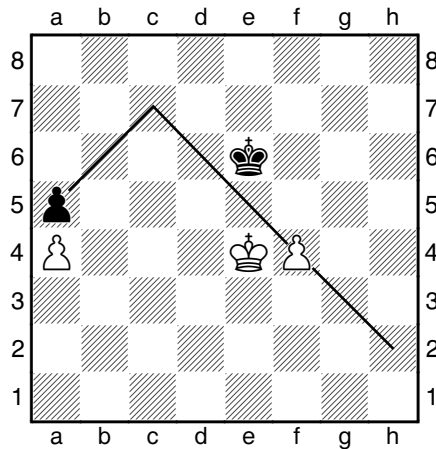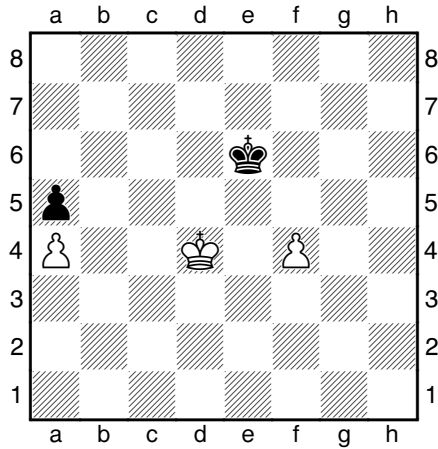

1) White to move

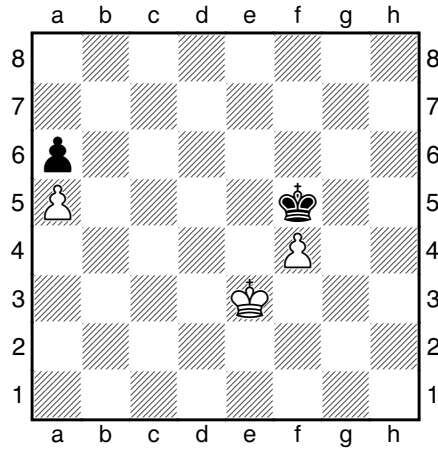For the correct 1 ♔d4!, see diagram 3. Instead, 1 f5+? is a typical mistake: 1...♔f6 2 ♔f4 ♔f7 3 ♔e5 ♔e7 *(2)*.
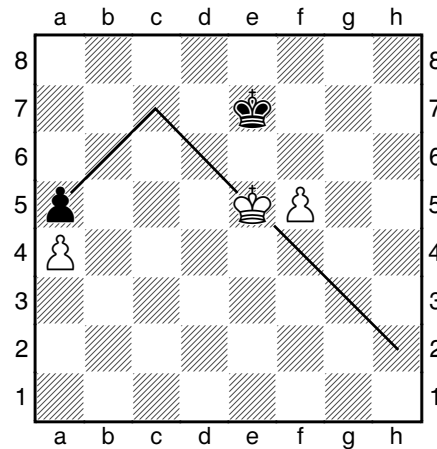
2) White to move

This is drawn, since the f-pawn has crossed the c7-h2 diagonal: 4 ♔d5 ♔f6 5 ♔c5 ♔xf5 6 ♔b5 ♔e6 7 ♔xa5 ♔d7 8 ♔b6 ♔c8 with a draw (see Lesson 9).
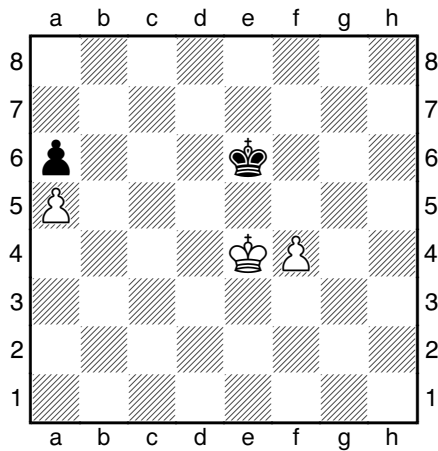
3) Black to move

White wins the race of the kings, as Bähr's Rule predicts: 1...♔f5 2 ♔c5 ♔xf4 3 ♔b5 ♔e5 4 ♔xa5 ♔d6 5 ♔b6 ♔d7 6 ♔b7, winning.
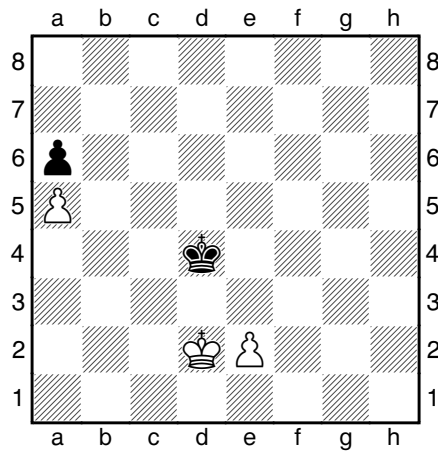
4) White to move

The a5-pawn has crossed the middle of the board, so White wins as a rule. But the direct 1 ♔d4? runs into 1...♔xf4 2 ♔c5 ♔e5 3 ♔b6 ♔d6 4 ♔xa6 ♔c7, drawing. The king must first gain space: 1 ♔f3! ♔f6 2 ♔e4 ♔e6 *(5)*.

5) White to move

Now White can head for the a-pawn: 3 ♔d4 ♔f5 4 ♔c5 ♔xf4 5 ♔b6 ♔e5 6 ♔xa6 ♔d6 7 ♔b7, winning.

6) White to move

There are exceptions if the passed pawn is far behind. Here a counterattack saves Black: 1 e3+ ♔c4 2 ♔e2 ♔b4 3 e4 ♔xa5 4 e5 ♔b6, with a draw.