

Magnetic Sumo Kings

By Michael Goeller

“Magnetic Sumo Kings” is a fun game for students just learning how to play chess. It’s very easy to learn but teaches some very important principles about how Kings move and interact with each other in endgame situations.

How the King Moves

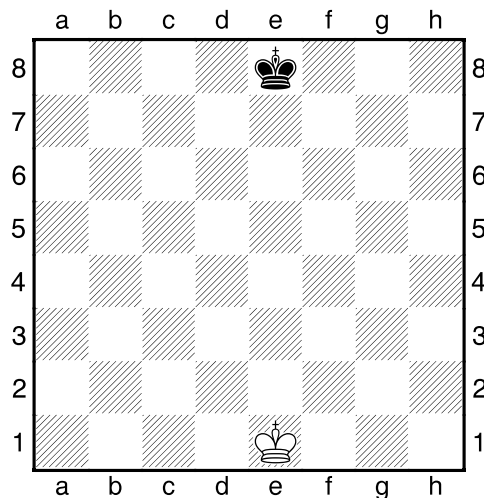
All you have to know to play “Magnetic Sumo Kings” is the basic rules about how Kings move:

- Kings move one square at a time in any direction (forward, sideways, or diagonally).
- Kings capture the same way they move, displacing the opposing piece.
- Kings can never be captured, so they can never move onto a square controlled by another King, piece or pawn. To do so would be an illegal move.

Rules of “Magnetic Sumo Kings”

In “Magnetic Sumo Kings,” the rules are simple:

- The Kings are placed opposite each other on the e-file, just like in regular chess. (Later, try setting up the Kings in different ways at the start and see how it affects the result).
- The point of the game is to try to force your way to the other side of the board. Whoever gets to the other side of the board wins.
- White moves first, just like in regular chess.
- If your opponent can prevent you from getting to the other side and can also make no progress, then it is a draw or tie result.

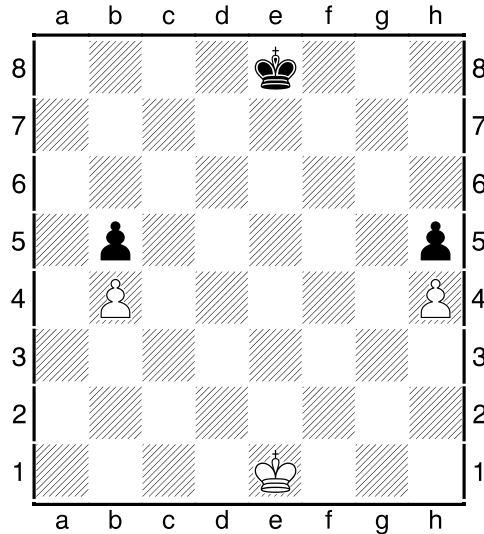


Basic Set-up for Sumo Kings

Why “magnetic”? Basically, because Kings can never move next to each other, it is like they have same-charged magnetic fields around them. You might say they repel each other. Unlike Sumo wrestlers, who actually come to grips with each other in the ring, the “Magnetic Sumo Kings” can only get to within one square of each other before they are repelled. The King that has the power to repel the other generally can gain a winning advantage. We call this advantage “the opposition,” since it occurs when Kings are “opposite” each other.

The Opposition in Practice

The following famous chess problem by former World Chess Champion Jose Raul Capablanca illustrates the value of the opposition in practice. As we learned in “Magnetic Sumo Kings,” White has the advantage of the opposition (or “distant opposition” as some call it), so he will be able to make progress to a goal. In this case, he can win a pawn and make a Queen to win the game. White has the opposition from the beginning, but he has to play carefully to keep it and win. As the Kings approach each other, the force of the opposition gets stronger!



Capablanca (1921)

1.Ke2

[Not 1.Kd2? Kd8! 2.Ke3 Ke7 3.Ke4 Ke6=]

1...Kd8

[White also wins after 1...Ke7 2.Ke3 Ke6 3.Ke4 Kd6 4.Kd4! (4.Kf5? Kd5 5.Kg5 Kc4 6.Kxh5 Kxb4 7.Kg5 Kc4 8.h5 b4 9.h6 b3 10.h7 b2 11.h8Q b1Q=) 4...Ke6 (4...Kc6 5.Ke5 Kc7 6.Kd5 Kb6 (6...Kd7 7.Kc5) 7.Kd6! Ka7 8.Kc7! Ka6 9.Kc6 Ka7 10.Kxb5) 5.Kc5 Kf5 6.Kxb5 Kg4 7.Kc6 Kxh4 8.b5 Kg4 9.b6 h4 10.b7 h3 11.b8Q+-]

2.Kf3!

[Not 2.Ke3? Ke7 3.Ke4 Ke6=]

2...Ke7 3.Ke3 Ke6

[Or 3...Kd6 4.Kd4+-]

4.Ke4 Kf6 5.Kf4!

[Not 5.Kd5? Kf5 6.Kc5 Kg4 7.Kxb5 Kxh4 8.Kc5 Kg4 (8...Kg3 9.b5 h4 10.b6 h3 11.b7 h2 12.b8Q+ Kg2 is also drawn) 9.b5 h4 10.b6 h3 11.b7 h2 12.b8Q h1Q= with a draw result]

5...Ke6

[Or 5...Kg6 6.Ke5! Kg7 7.Kf5 Kh6 (7...Kf7 8.Kg5 Kg7 9.Kxh5 Kh7 10.Kg5 Kg7 11.Kf5 Kf7 12.Ke5 Ke7 13.h5+-) 8.Kf6 Kh7 9.Kg5+-]

6.Kg5 Kd5 7.Kxh5 Kc4 8.Kg5 Kxb4 9.h5 Kc4 10.h6 b4 11.h7 b3 12.h8Q+- and White wins.