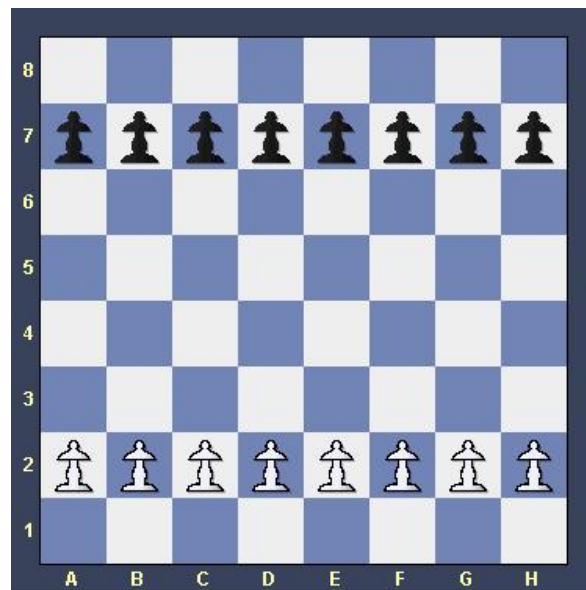


Pawn Battle Rules and Strategies

By Michael Goeller

“Pawn Battle” is a simplified chess game that’s easy to play. It’s also a fun way to practice using pawns while learning some strategies that are important in chess. Here are the basic rules:

- Set up the pawns as they are in the opening position in chess (along the 2nd and 7th ranks, as shown in the diagram below), and take turns moving one pawn at a time according to the rules governing pawns in chess (see below). White moves first as in regular chess.
- The first player to get to the other side of the board (to make a Queen) or to capture *all* of his opponent’s pawns wins. You can also win if your opponent “resigns” (or surrenders).
- It is a draw (or tie result) if *either* side has pawns but no legal move (because all of the remaining pawns are blocked). We call this “stalemate.”
- You move one pawn at each turn. You cannot “pass” your move or move twice.



The Set-up for Pawn Battle

Rules for How Pawns Move

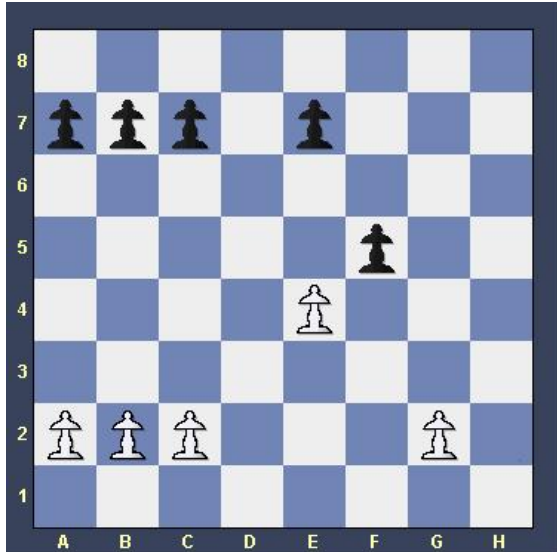
The basic rules for how pawns move in “Pawn Battle” are the same as they are in regular chess:

- Pawns can only move forward, never backward or sideways. If another pawn obstructs their progress, then they are blocked and can no longer advance.
- Pawns capture diagonally one square in front of them of the same color, displacing the enemy piece. For example, a pawn on the e4 square could capture a pawn on d5 or f5.
- Pawns generally move forward only one square at a time, except on their first move (from the 2nd or 7th rank) when they have the choice of either moving one square or two.
- Don’t forget the *en passant* rule! If a pawn *moves forward two squares* on its first move (from either the 2nd or 7th rank) and passes an opposing pawn (on either the 4th or 5th rank) that could capture the pawn *if it were to move only one square*, then the opposing pawn can capture the passing pawn *en passant* (French for “in passing”). The *en passant* capture must be exercised immediately or not at all.
- When a pawn reaches the other side of the board, it becomes a Queen (or any piece).

Basic Concepts in Pawn Battle

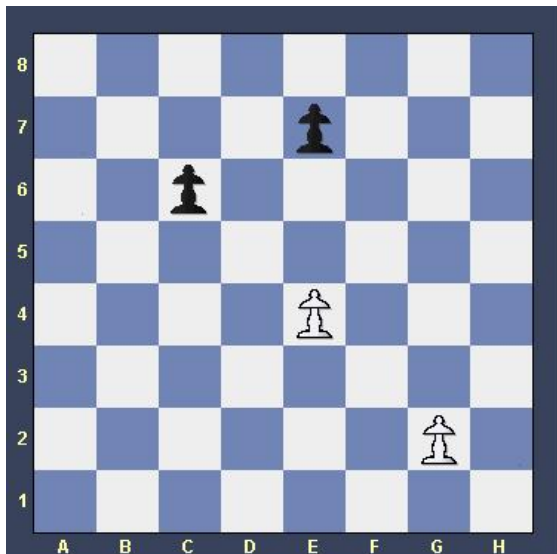
Beginner's games in Pawn Battle are often decided by basic mistakes. Remember, if you accidentally lose even one pawn you will likely lose the game—unless you can get a draw by stalemate!

1. Pawn *En Prise*



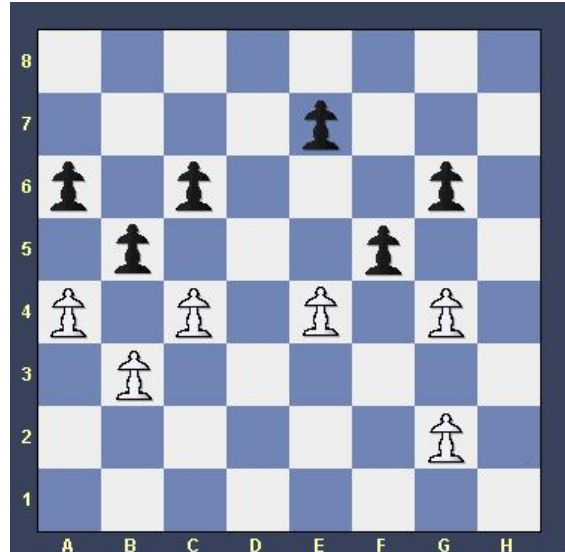
The most common way for beginners to lose at Pawn Battle is by giving their pawns away, leaving them *en prise* (“available for capture,” in French). In Diagram #1 above, it is White to play and win a pawn that Black has left *en prise*.

3. Passed Pawn = Touchdown!



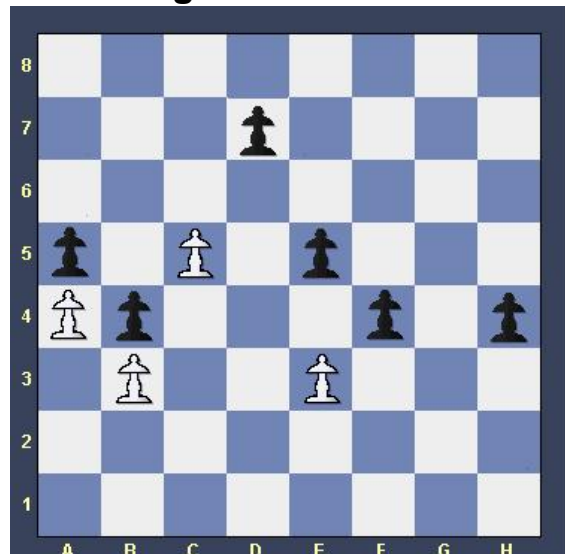
Pawn Battle sometimes comes down to a race between “passed pawns” (that is, pawns with no obstructions). Who will get to the finish line and make a Queen? The winner is the one who gets there first! White to play – who wins?

2. Counting Captures



Whenever you advance a pawn so that it can be captured by enemy pawns, be sure that you have as many defenders as there are attackers. In the diagram above, Black has failed to count the captures correctly. White to play and win.

4. Zero Legal Moves = Stalemate!

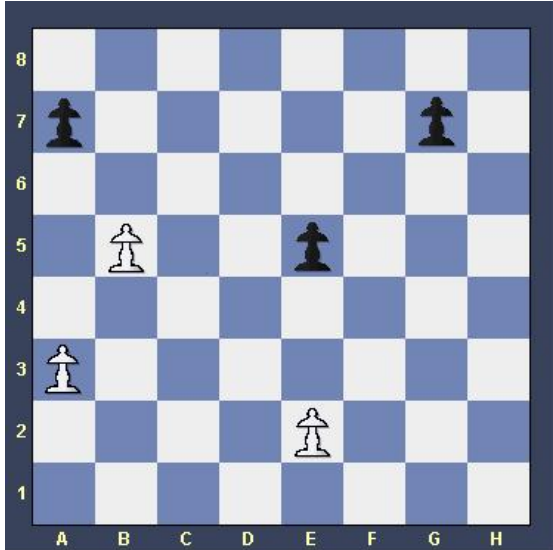


Even when you are behind in the pawn count and all hope seems lost, you can still play for a draw (a tie) by setting up a position where you have no legal moves. We call that “stalemate.” In Diagram #4, White to play and force a draw.

Pawn Battle Strategy

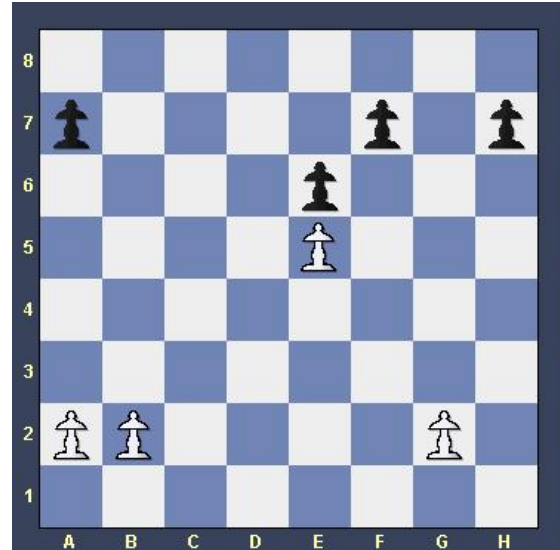
There is more to pawn strategy than waiting for your opponent to make a mistake and lose a pawn or allow stalemate. The principles below are valuable for understanding how pawns work in chess.

5. Majorities and Passed Pawns



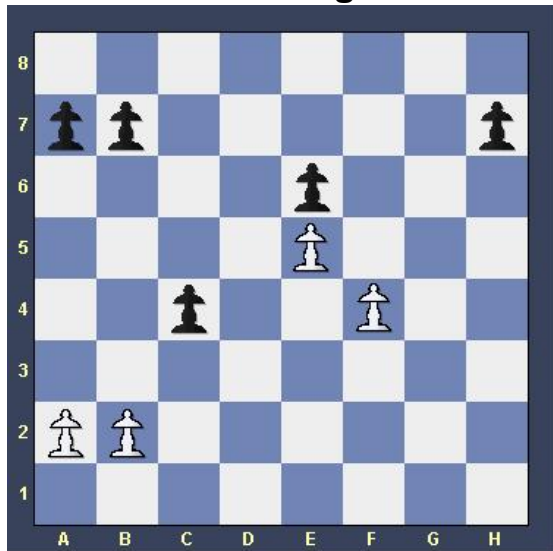
Passed pawns can score a touchdown to win the game. But how can you get a passed pawn? You can create a passed pawn by making even exchanges where you have a majority of pawns (more than your opponent). In Diagram #5 above, White to play and win.

6. The Disabled Majority



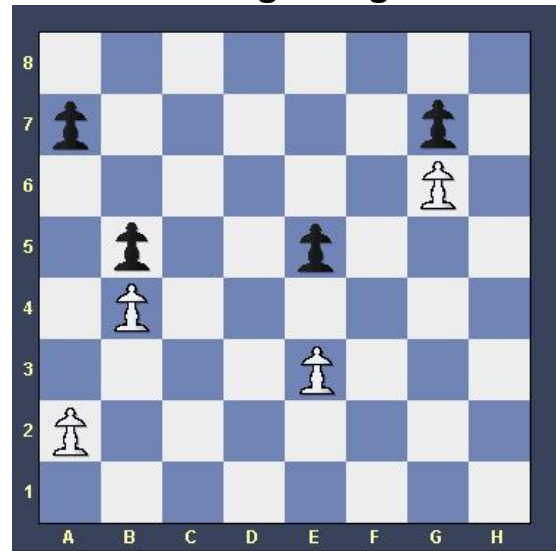
We say that a majority is “disabled” when it is not possible to use it to create a passed pawn. In Diagram #6 above, how has White disabled Black’s majority? How will White win because Black’s majority is disabled?

7. The Breakthrough Sacrifice



We saw that majorities create passed pawns, but you can also create a passed pawn by removing the guard with a “breakthrough sacrifice.” In Diagram #7, White to play and win.

8. Zugzwang!

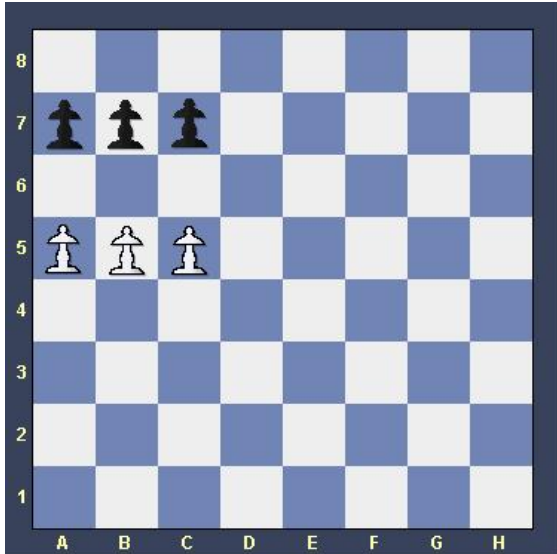


In Pawn Battle, you can’t pass your turn even when moving any pawn will lose. We call this situation “*zugzwang*” (German for “the compulsion to move”). White to play and win!

Pawn Battle Themes and Tactics

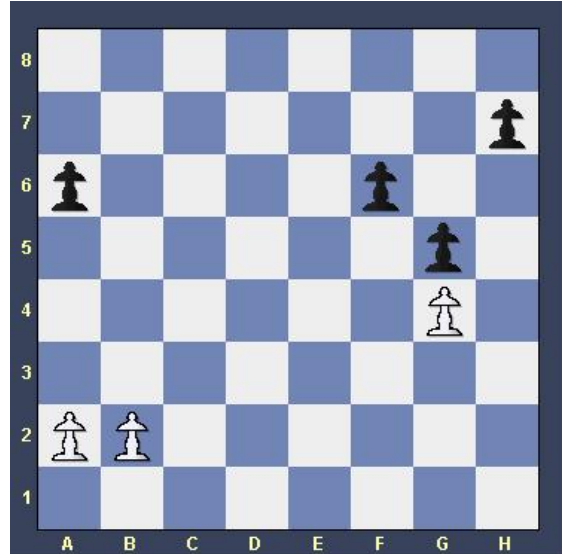
The following positions illustrate more strategic themes and tactics that will help you win at Pawn Battle while deepening your understanding of pawn strategies in regular chess.

9. Breakthrough Combination



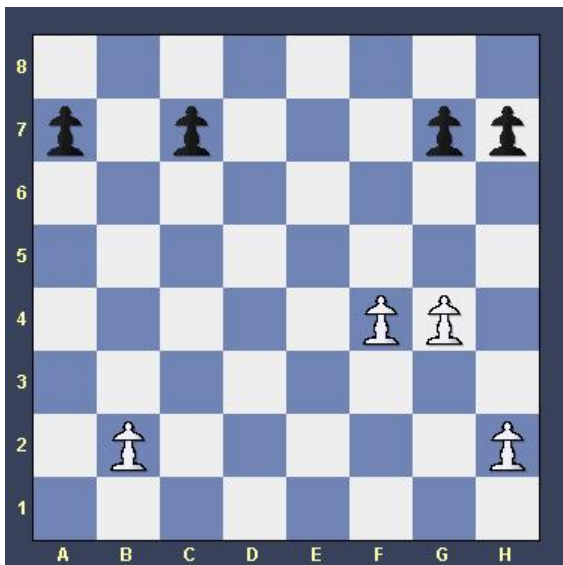
We call a series of moves leading by force to an advantageous result a “combination.” Often, but not always, combinations involve a sacrifice of material for some other gain—such as forcing a pawn through to become a Queen! White to play and win by a “breakthrough combination.”

10. Backward Pawns



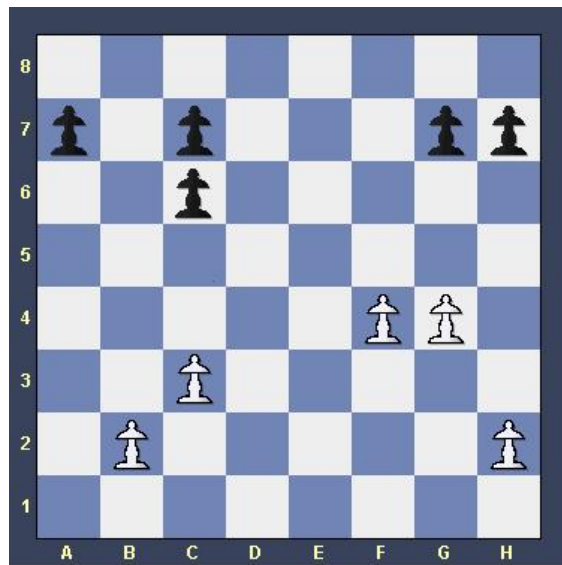
Pawns that have no friendly pawns for “back-up” to support their advance are called “backward.” Backward pawns are subject to being blockaded, rendering them ineffective. In the diagram above, who has more pawns? Who has backward pawns? Who will win and why?

11. Isolated Pawns



“Isolated pawns” sit alone on a file with no peers on neighboring files to support their advance. White to play – who wins and why?

12. Doubled Pawns



“Doubled pawns” occupy the same file and can get in each other’s way, making them ineffective. White to play – who wins and why?

Solutions to the Puzzle Positions

The puzzle positions that accompany each concept sometimes have more than one solution. Sometimes the solution depends on counting moves or counting captures which can happen in different orders. Other times it depends upon understanding a basic concept. If you get the concept of “a pawn majority,” for example, then you don’t even have to work out the details of how the majority will create a passed pawn and make a Queen. You should see that making a Queen is inevitable. That’s why players sometimes resign: the end is already in sight.

In order to understand the solutions to the puzzles, you need to understand the system of “algebraic chess notation.” Basically, every square on a chessboard is named according to the letter of its file (A through H) and the number of its rank (1 through 8), recorded always from White’s perspective. Thus, the white square in the lower right-hand corner of the board would be called “h1.” A grid system of naming squares is often familiar even to children from the popular game “Battleship.” The letters and numbers are indicated on every diagram above. For purposes of clarity, the solutions below are given in “long notation,” which includes the square the pawn vacated and the square it advanced to, separated by a hyphen.

1. White to play wins a pawn by 1.e4xf5 (the pawn on e4 captures the Black pawn on f5). White will now be able to use his passed g-pawn to make a Queen.
2. White wins a pawn and the game with 1.e4xf5 g6xf5 2.g4xf5 and then wins in the same way as in the first problem, by advancing his passed g-pawn.
3. White wins by 1.g2-g4! Remember: pawns can move two squares on the first move. Play might then go 1...c6-c5 2.g4-g5 c5-c4 3.g5-g6 c4-c3 4.g6-g7 c3-c2 5.g7-g8=Q and wins.
4. White forces stalemate by 1.c5-c6! d7xc6 (otherwise White Queens first!) 2.e3-e4! Draw.
5. White uses his pawn majority to create a Queen with 1.a3-a4! g7-g5 2.a4-a5 g5-g4 3.b5-b6 a7xb6 4.a5xb6 g4-g3 5.b6-b7 g3-g2 6.b7-b8=Q wins.
6. White can use his majority to make a passed pawn and get a Queen. Black’s majority is disabled because 1...f7-f5 allows White to win by 2.e5xf6 *en passant*. Play might go 1.b2-b4 h7-h5 2.b4-b5 h5-h4 3.a2-a4 h4-h3 (Black has no other useful move) 4.g2xh3 and now Black must eventually play 4...f7-f5 allowing 5.e5xf6 and White quickly gets a Queen.
7. 1.f4-f5! e6xf5 2.e5-e6 and White will make a Queen first.
8. White wins by 1.e3-e4 a7-a6 2.a2-a3 and Black must make a move that loses a pawn and allows White to quickly make a Queen: 2...a6-a5 3.b4xa5 b5-b4 4.a5-a6! etc.
9. 1.b5-b6! a7xb6 (or 1...c7xb6 2.a5-a6!) 2.c5-c6! b7xc6 3.a5-a6 etc.
10. White advances his majority on the left to make a Queen or wins by *zugzwang*, e.g.: 1.b2-b4! (note that 1.a2-a4? loses to 1...a6-a5! and *White loses by zugzwang* due to having a backward pawn) 1...h7-h6 2.a2-a4 f6-f5 (Black has no good moves) 3.b4-b5 (White can also win by 3.g4xf5 etc.) 3...f5xg4 4.b5-b6 g4-g3 5.b6-b7 g3-g2 6.b7-b8=Q and wins.
11. White wins by making a passed pawn and then a Queen using his majority on the right side of the board. He can also win by eventual *zugzwang* with 1.b4!
12. A similar solution to puzzle #11. White’s majority makes a Queen, but Black’s cannot.

If you don’t understand the solutions, set up each position on a board and play out the solution according to the directions given. If you still have questions, talk to your chess coach (or anyone who understands the principles of chess) and see if he or she can explain it to you.