

Playing The Game

Playing The Game

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Playing The Game

Overview

Chess, unlike many other games, does not involve direct chance such as the roll of a dice or which card is drawn. The outcome completely depends on the decisions of the players. However, because of its vast complexity, the far-reaching consequences of some decisions are practically unforeseeable.

One player ("White") has the white pieces while the other ("Black") has the black pieces. Sometimes the colors are not black and white (for instance, light and dark, or yellow and blue), but they generally contrast each other. In friendly games the choice of colors can be made by any method, such as flipping a coin. If there is no coin at hand, another typical way of deciding would be to conceal a black piece in one hand and a white piece in the other and ask one's opponent to select a hand. The colored piece selected will be the opponent's color. In competitive games the players are assigned their colors.

Order of play

Once all the pieces have been arranged, White (or the lighter color) makes the first move. White *always* makes the first move; this is important for notation, and any chess player will insist upon it. After White has made the move, Black will then make a move. The gameplay will continue in alternating fashion, White making a move, followed by Black.

General movement rules

- A move consists of moving a single piece, in accordance with its rules of movement, to a square that is unoccupied or occupied by an enemy piece. A player may never move a piece onto a square already occupied by another of his or her own pieces.
 - *Exception:* There is a special move called "castling" where two pieces, a rook and the king, are moved; see below.

- If a piece is moved onto a square occupied by an enemy piece, the latter piece is removed from play and the first piece replaces it. The removed piece is said to have been *captured* or *taken*.
 - *Exception:* In *en passant* capture, a pawn moves to an unoccupied square but still captures another pawn "in passing"; see below.
- Most pieces move and capture opponent pieces in the same way.
 - *Exception:* The pawn has separate rules for moving and capturing opponent pieces.
- Most pieces may only make a move to a non-adjacent square if all the intervening squares are vacant (pieces may not 'jump over' other pieces).
 - *Exception:* The knight can move to any suitable final square regardless of occupants of other squares.
 - *Exception:* In castling, a king and a rook jump over each other.
- No player may make a move that leaves their king "in check" (see below).
- The player must *always* make a move when it is his or her turn. In other words, he or she cannot choose not to make a move. If no legal move is possible the game ends in a draw (see below), except when the king is in check - this is called *checkmate*, and is usually how the opposing player wins.

Also, when a pawn moves to a square at the opposite end of the board, it becomes a different piece (pawn promotion); all of these exceptions are covered below in more detail.

The board

Traditionally, the game is played on a board of 64 alternating black and white squares turned with a white square to each player's near right-hand corner. "White on right" is a helpful saying to remember this convention. The light and dark squares on the chessboard and the light and dark chess pieces are traditionally referred to as "white" and "black" respectively, although in modern chess sets almost any colors may be used (as long as they are not the *same* colors.) The horizontal rows of squares are called **ranks** and are numbered 1-8; the vertical columns of squares are called **files** and given the letters a-h. This way any single square can be easily identified by its rank and file, making it possible to record games by writing down the starting and ending position of the piece that moves every turn.

a b c d e f g h

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8									8
7									7
6									6
5									5
4									4
3									3
2									2
1									1
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	

The pieces

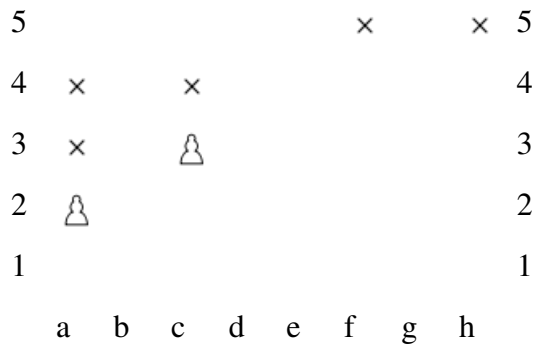
The movement of the individual pieces is described below. In all the board diagrams shown, the squares to which the piece in question can move are indicated with x's.

Pawn



Pawns can move one square straight forward, or optionally and on their first move only, two squares straight forward.

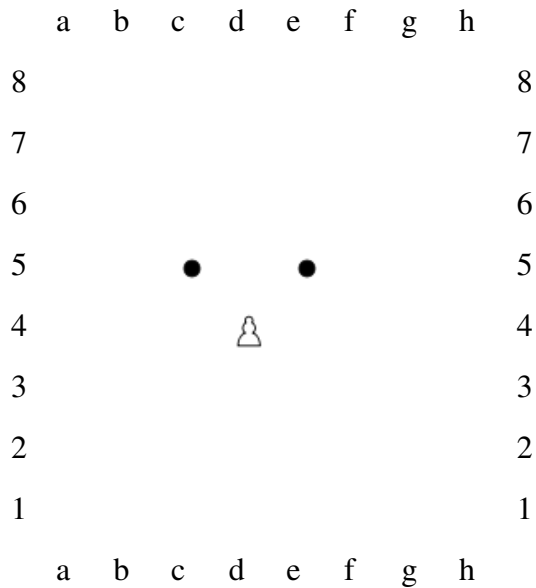
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	
8									8
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6								x	6



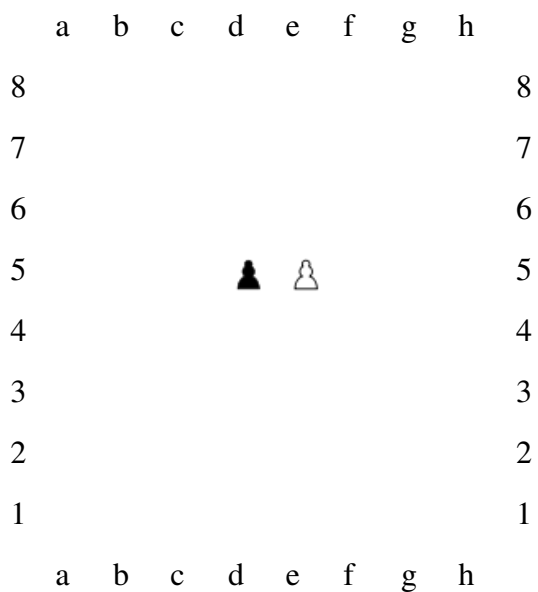
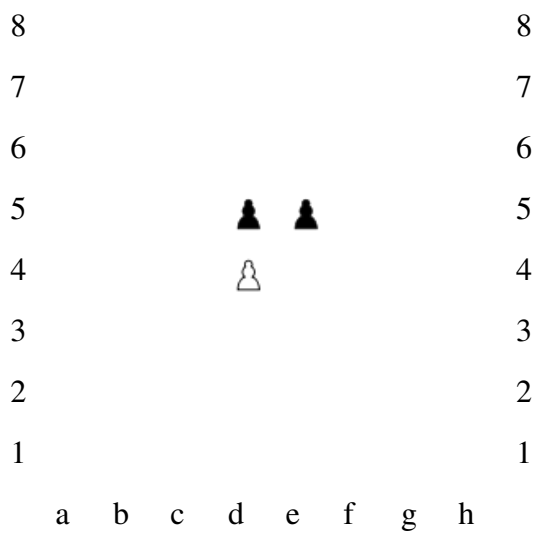
Capturing Pieces

The pawn can move one square diagonally forward to capture a piece, but cannot capture a piece by moving straight forward. For this reason, two opposing pawns on a file may become blocked by each other. In the first diagram below, legal captures for the White pawn are indicated with black circles.

In the second diagram below the White pawn is prevented from moving forwards by the Black pawn immediately in front of it (d-file) which it cannot capture, but it can capture the adjacent Black pawn by moving diagonally forward as seen in the diagram below.



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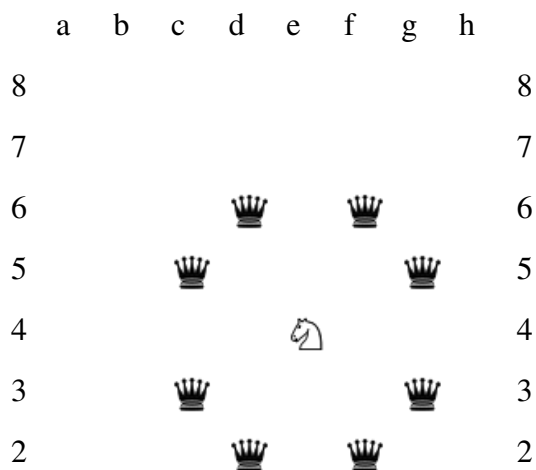
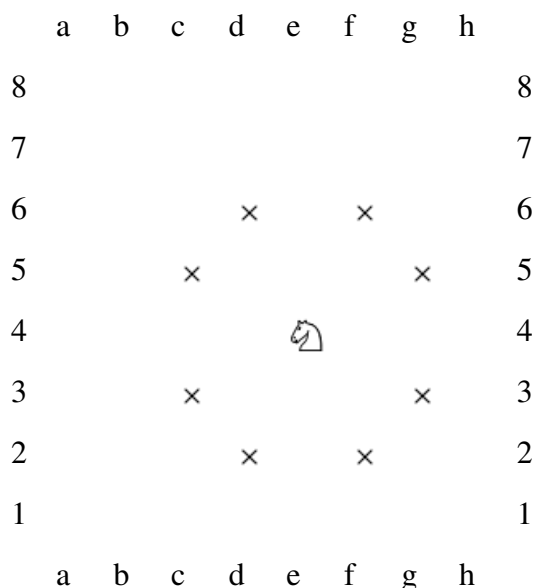


Knight

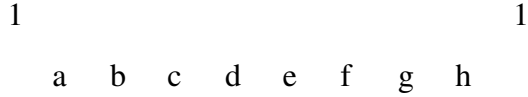


The knight is the only piece that may always jump over or "move between" other pieces. The knight has a unique set of possible moves: one square in one direction either horizontally or vertically, and one square in another direction perpendicular to that. Other ways to look at it are

1. that the knight moves to the closest square to it not on the same rank, file, or diagonal, or
2. that the knight moves to the opposite corner of a 2x3 square rectangle one corner of which the knight is already on, or
3. that the possible knight moves form a "Y" (up, right, down, and left), once like a rook **and** once like a bishop position.



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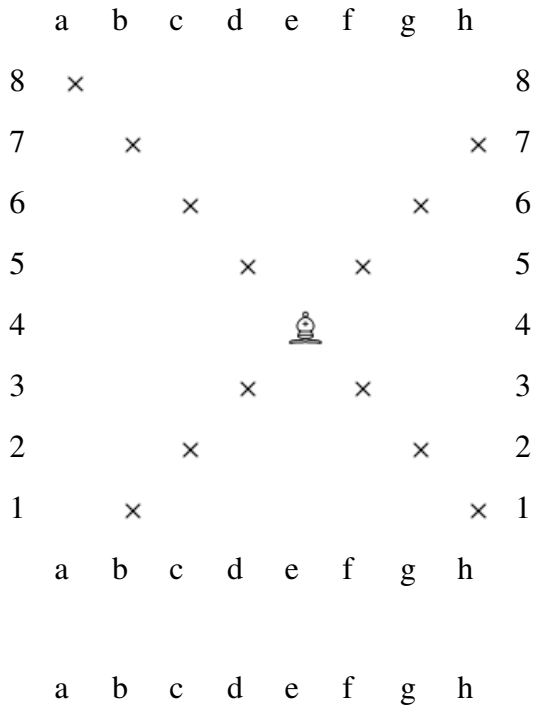
Capturing Pieces

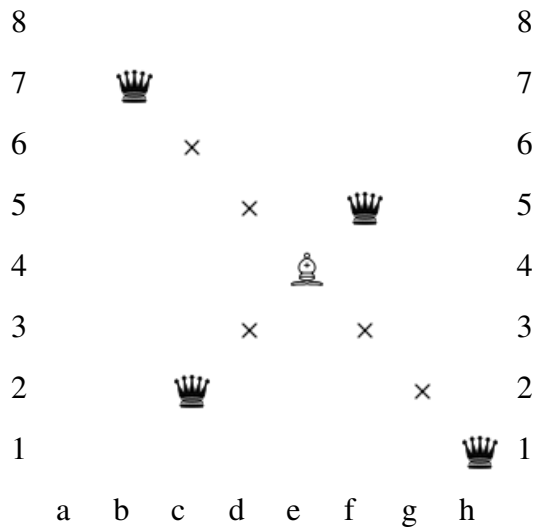
The knight captures any opponent's piece that it lands on at the end of its L (or Y) shaped move. In the diagram above, the knight can capture any of the black queens.

Bishop



The bishop can move any number of squares diagonally. Each side starts the game with one light-squared bishop and one dark-squared bishop. Note that the bishop is restricted to the color of squares on which it began. Each player starts out with a bishop that moves on the light colored squares, and another that moves on the dark colored squares. In the diagram below, the bishop stands on e4 and can only move to other light squares. The bishop may not jump over any piece of either color.





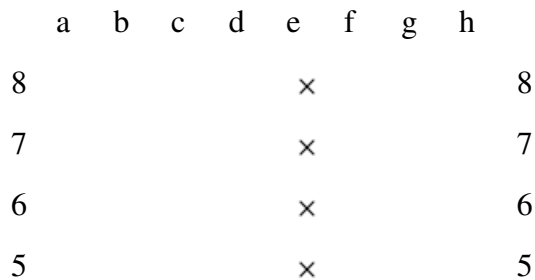
Capturing Pieces

The bishop captures any opponent's piece that it encounters during the movement described above, and then occupies that piece's square. In the diagram above the bishop may take any of the black queens. Notice that bishop may not move behind or capture pieces hiding behind the queens.

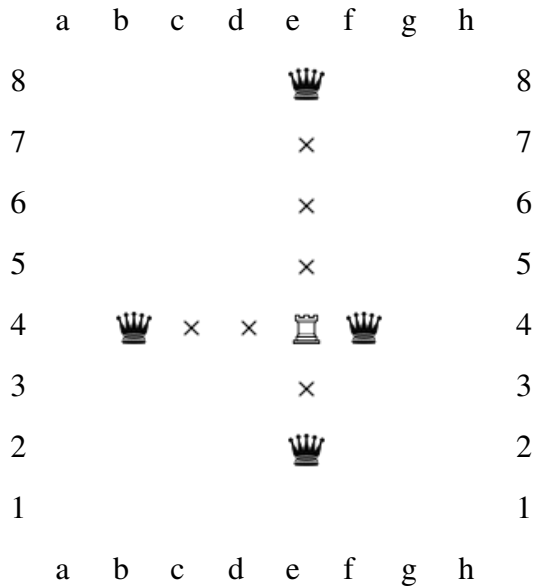
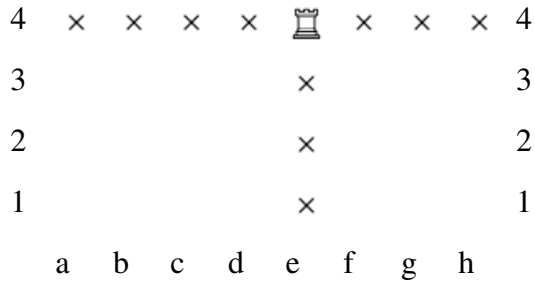
Rook



The rook can be moved any number of squares horizontally or vertically, but not diagonally. Note that like the bishop it can jump over any pieces, except for "castling".



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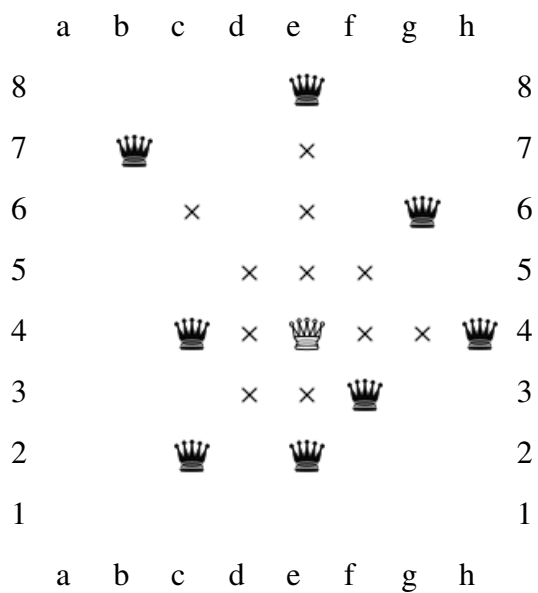
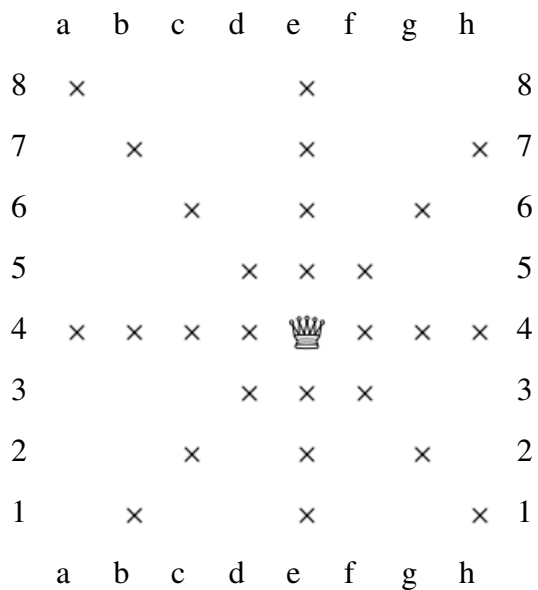
Capturing Pieces

If the rook attempts to occupy a space already occupied by an opponent's piece, it captures the piece. In the diagram, the rook may take any of the black queens.

Queen



The queen is the most powerful piece, being able to move any number of squares in any lateral or diagonal direction. It moves as the combination of a rook's and bishop's movement capabilities.



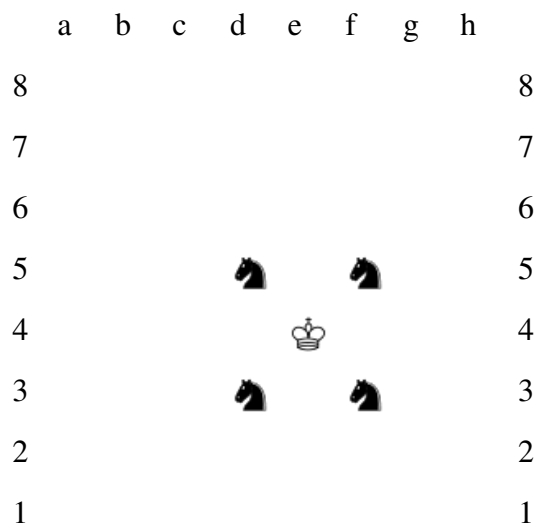
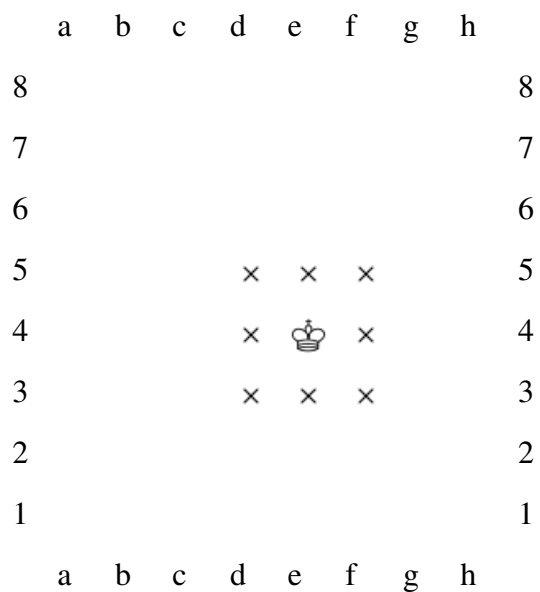
Capturing Pieces

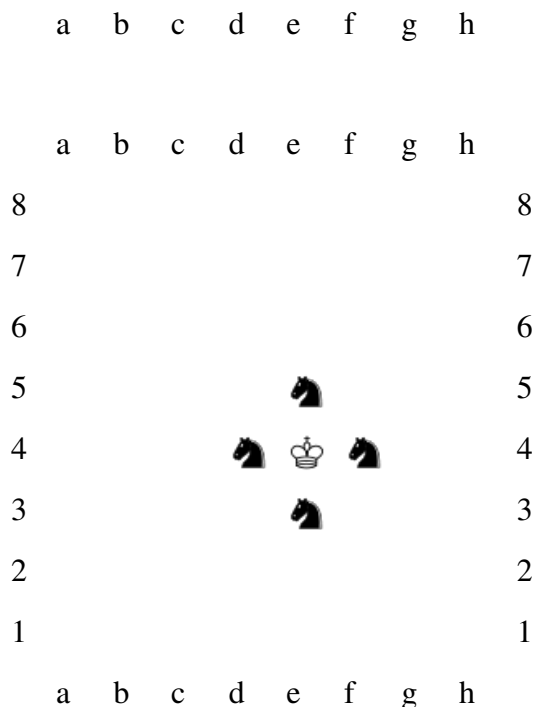
The queen captures any opponent's piece that it encounters during the movement described above, and then occupies that piece's square. In the diagram above the queen may take any of the black queens.

King



The king can move one square at a time in any direction, as long as doing so does not place himself in check (see b



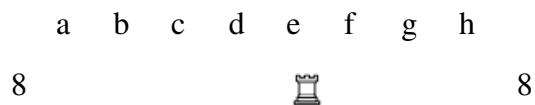


Capturing Pieces

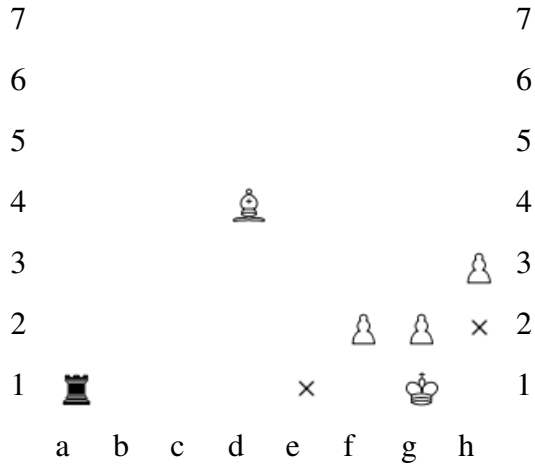
The king may capture any opponent's piece adjacent to it, as long as doing so does not place himself in check (see below). In the position above the king may take any of the black knights.

Check

The king is the most important piece belonging to each player, though not the most powerful. If a player move threatens to capture his opponent's king in the next move, that king is said to be in *check*. If a player's king is in check, he must immediately remove the check by moving the king, blocking the check with another piece, or capturing the checking piece. In the position below black's rook has checked the white king. White may avoid the check by moving the king one step sideways or by putting the rook between the attacking black rook and the white king, or capture the black rook using the white king. Other legal moves, like moving one of the pawns, are illegal in this position since they will not remove the check.

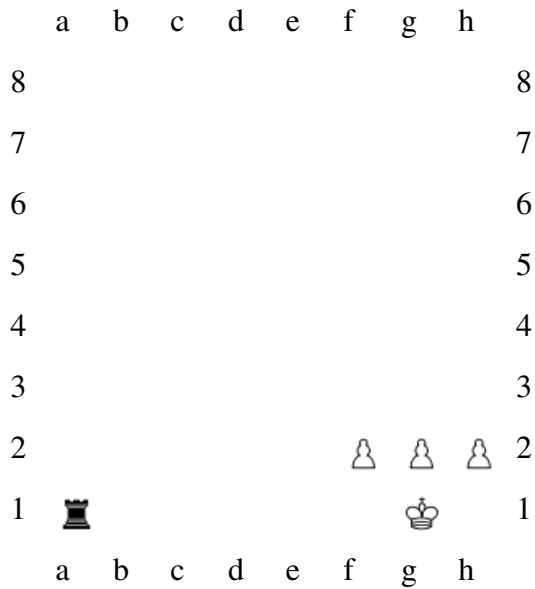


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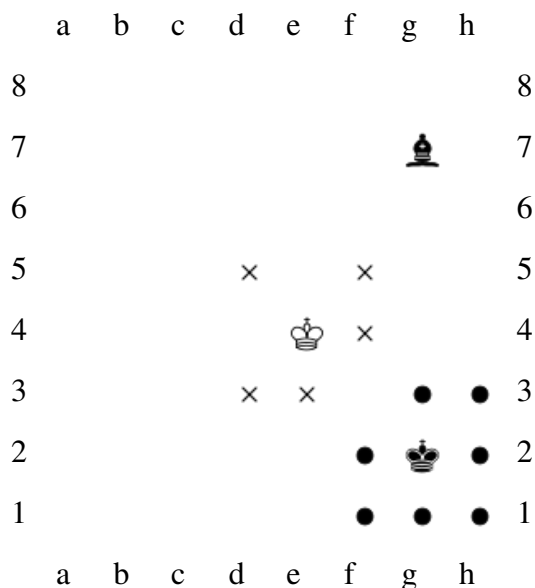
Checkmate

If the king is placed in check and cannot escape, it is said to have been *checkmated* (or "*mated*" for short). The first player to checkmate the opponent's king wins the game. Note that the king is never actually captured, since it is obliged to move out of check if possible (and the game ends when it is impossible). In the diagram below white has no options to escape the check and he is therefore checkmated.



Special Restrictions — Avoiding "Self-check"

Players may not make any move which allows their king to be captured in the next move, i.e. places their own king in check. Two kings may never occupy adjacent squares, since they would have put themselves in check by moving there. "opposition" and is indispensable when, for instance, you are using a queen or rook to checkmate a king. The White king in the following diagram cannot move upwards or to the left since it would be in check from the Black king. Moving downwards which would leave it adjacent to the Black king would also put it in check. Similarly, the Black king cannot move diagonally upwards as that would put it next to the White king.



Special Moves

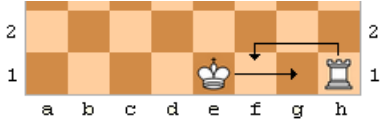
Pawn Promotion

If a pawn makes it to one of the eight squares along the far edge of the board from their initial position, the pawn reaching the far rank the player announces the piece that the pawn is promoted to, either a queen, a rook, a bishop or knight. The player's move ends when the new piece occupies the promoted square. The new piece need not be a previously unacquired piece. A player can acquire two or more queens, rooks, bishops or knights. (In theory it is possible to get up to nine queens since there are eight pawns to promote).

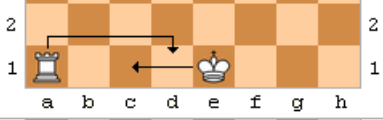
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	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	
8					×				8	8					♔			8
7					♙				7	7								7
6									6	6								6
5									5	5								5
4									4	4								4
3									3	3								3
2									2	2								2
1									1	1								1
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	

Castling



Kingside castling: O-O



Queenside castling: O-O-O

Castling is a move involving the king and either of the rooks. Castling performed with the king's rook is kingside castling and with the queen's rook it is queenside castling.

Subject to restrictions detailed below, a player may move his king two squares towards the rook, and subsequently move the rook adjacent to but on the opposite side of the king, (onto the square over which the king has just passed). Note that the king must be the first piece moved; not the rook. If the rook is moved first, then the king must subsequently move. This rule mainly applies in "strict rules of chess" where if a piece is touched, it must be moved. Moving and letting go of the rook is a legal move, while moving the king two squares is not a legal move by itself.

The restrictions specific to castling are:

1. Neither the king nor the participating rook may have moved previously
2. The king must not be in check at the start of the move, though it may have been in check previously in the game
3. The square over which the king passes must not be under attack ('in check') from an enemy piece. (This would be equivalent to a "check" in passing). The rook(s) may be under attack, or the queens' rooks may pass through an attacked square.
4. The squares between the king and rook must be vacant

En passant capture

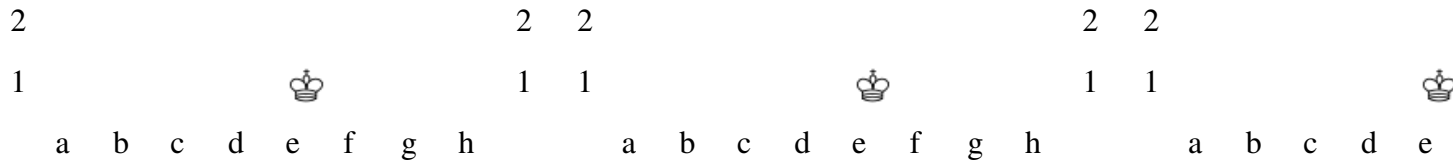
This is French for "in passing"; basically, you capture an enemy pawn as it is passing you.

When a pawn advances two squares onto the same rank as an opposing pawn on an adjacent file, this opposing player's next move only, capture the advancing pawn as though it had only moved one square (provided the moving player's pawn is on the same rank as the square the pawn has advanced to). The pawn's ability to move two squares on their first move was a relatively late addition to the game of chess. En passant was introduced to prevent abuses of the new rule.

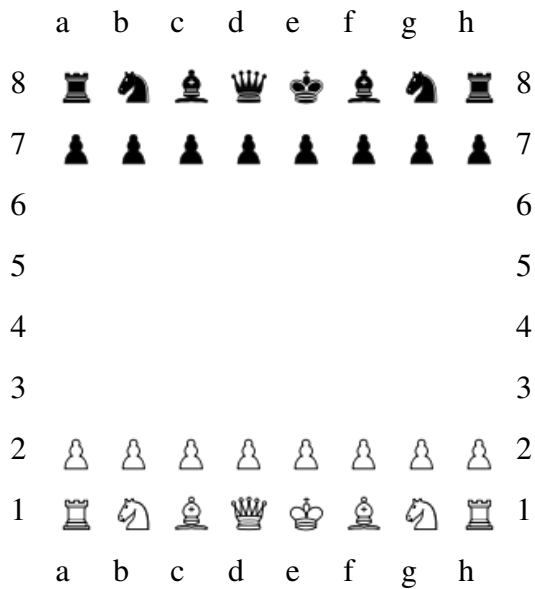
In the following example, the Black pawn advances two squares, and is captured by the White pawn which moves to the square it advanced to and to the right (as if the Black pawn had moved only one square forward and been there). This move is only available on the next move which the option is presented.

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h		a	b	c	d	
8					♔				8	8				♔				8	8				
7						♟			7	7								7	7				
6									6	6								6	6				
5					♙				5	5				♙	♟			5	5				
4									4	4								4	4				
3									3	3								3	3				

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Initial position



In the initial position each side has eight pawns, two rooks, two knights, two bishops, a queen and a king arranged diagram below. Note that the only pieces on either side which can initially move are the pawns and knights. Beginners often set up the board incorrectly; it is a complex position to remember. The following mnemonics may help you remember where the pieces go.

- **White on the Right** It is important that the bottom-right-hand square is light-colored.
- **Knights live in castles** One knight is placed next to each rook (rooks look like the towers of a castle, and are sometimes even *called* castles.)

- **Queens on their color OR The dress matches the shoes** The White Queen goes on a White Square, Black Queen on a Black Square
- **Bishops are advisers to the Royalty** Bishops surround the King and Queen.
- **White King on the Right** From the White Player's perspective, both Kings are on the right, and from the Black Player's perspective, the Kings are on the left.

Conclusion of the game

Play continues to alternate between White and Black until one of the following outcomes is reached:

- One player's king is checkmated. The game is lost by that player.
- In a competitive game, one player runs out of time. The game is lost by that player (with two important exceptions).
- One player resigns, which is equivalent to quitting the game. A player may resign on either his or his opponent's turn. Resignation is often symbolized by the resigning player tipping over his king.
- The player whose turn it is has been *stalemated*, meaning that he has no legal move and is not in check. The game is a draw.
- The players agree to draw the game. Either player may offer a draw to his opponent upon completion of his move. If accepted, the game is drawn. Draw offers cannot be rescinded. However, they can be rejected, in which case play continues.
- A player successfully claims that the game is a draw under one of the following criteria:
 - His opponent does not have sufficient pieces to checkmate him by any legal sequence of moves.
 - Both players have run out of time in a competitive game.
 - One player has run out of time in a competitive game, but his opponent does not have sufficient pieces to checkmate him by any legal sequence of moves.
 - 50 moves have been played by each player since a piece was captured or a pawn moved.
 - The current position has occurred twice before with the same player to move.

Chess Etiquette

Generally, chess games at tournaments are conducted under the following rules:

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- **Touch move** - If a player touches his own piece, he must move it, and if a player touches an opponents piece, he must capture it (unless the capture is not possible). If he releases a piece on a square, the move is completed and can't be taken back. To center a piece on its square, it is traditional to say *j'adoube* (I adjust).
- **Be silent when your opponent is on the move** - You can only adjust pieces, offer a draw, or claim a draw when it is your opponent's turn to move.

A friendly game may be played in any way that is mutually agreeable. Generally it is considerate to avoid distracting.

Glossary

- **Capture** - To move one's piece into the same square as one of one's opponent's pieces. The opponent's piece is removed from the board.
- **Check** - The king is 'in check' when it is being attacked by an enemy piece.
- **Checkmate** - The player whose turn it is can make no legal move to get his king out of check.
- **Stalemate** - The player whose turn it is can make no legal move, but the king is not in check.

[Notating The Game](#) →