



C H E S S

V A R I A N T L I B R A R Y

Every chess variant, one engine

153 VARIANTS	2-6 PLAYERS	10+ AGE
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VARIANT LIBRARY

Moddable Chess includes 153 playable variants spanning classic rules, asymmetric battles, hidden information, expanded boards, and alternative win conditions. Each variant has its own complete rules page.

STANDARD BOARD (8X8)

- ♦ [Standard Chess](#) – Classic FIDE rules
- ♦ [Absorption Chess](#) – Capturing piece gains the victim's movement permanently
- ♦ [Andernach Chess](#) – Capturing piece changes colour
- ♦ [Anti-King Chess II](#) – Each player adds a royal Anti-King that is in check when NOT attacked
- ♦ [Atomic](#) – Captures explode adjacent pieces
- ♦ [Avalanche Chess](#) – After each move, push one of the opponent's pawns one square forward
- ♦ [Benedict Chess](#) – Attacked enemies convert colour
- ♦ [Berserk Chess](#) – Check grants a bonus move
- ♦ [Checkless Chess](#) – No check unless it is checkmate
- ♦ [Crazyhouse](#) – Captured pieces switch sides and drop back onto the board
- ♦ [Cylinder Chess](#) – Files wrap, a-file connects to h-file
- ♦ [Dark Chess](#) – Only see squares your pieces occupy
- ♦ [Dice Chess](#) – Die roll constrains piece type
- ♦ [Displacement Chess](#) – Swap positions with adjacent friendly pieces
- ♦ [Duck Chess](#) – Place a blocker duck after each move
- ♦ [Einstein Chess](#) – Captures promote pieces, non-captures demote them
- ♦ [Extinction Chess](#) – Lose when any piece type is eliminated
- ♦ [Fischer Random](#) – 960 randomised starting positions
- ♦ [Fog of War](#) – Only see squares your pieces attack
- ♦ [Grid Chess](#) – Moves must cross a 2x2 grid line
- ♦ [Hoppel-Poppel](#) – Knights capture like bishops, bishops capture like knights
- ♦ [Horde Chess](#) – 36 pawns vs a normal army
- ♦ [Immunization Chess](#) – Captures make adjacent enemies immune for 2 turns
- ♦ [King of the Hill](#) – King reaches centre = instant win
- ♦ [Madrasi Chess](#) – Same-type opposing pieces paralyse each other
- ♦ [Maharaja & Sepoys](#) – One super-piece vs a full army
- ♦ [Marseillais](#) – Two moves per turn
- ♦ [Medusa Chess](#) – Queen petrifies enemy pieces she attacks
- ♦ [No Castling](#) – Standard chess, castling disabled
- ♦ [No Retreat](#) – Pieces cannot move backward
- ♦ [Patrol Chess](#) – Capture only when defended by a friendly piece
- ♦ [Poison Chess](#) – Capture squares become poisoned for 3 turns
- ♦ [Racing Kings](#) – No checks allowed, race King to rank 8
- ♦ [Recruitment Chess](#) – Captured pieces defect to the captor

MULTI-MOVE VARIANTS

- ♦ [Monster Chess](#) – White gets 2 moves, Black gets 1
- ♦ [Progressive](#) – Escalating moves per turn (1, 2, 3, 4...)

ALTERNATIVE WIN CONDITIONS

- ♦ [Antichess](#) – Forced captures, lose all pieces to win
- ♦ [Chak](#) – 9x9 Mesoamerican chess; move your Warrior Ajaw to the opponent's temple and survive
- ♦ [Chennis](#) – 7x7; advance a Pawn to the opponent's back rank to win (no checkmate)
- ♦ [Codrus](#) – Lose your King to win, no check concept
- ♦ [Five-Check](#) – Five checks to win
- ♦ [Giveaway](#) – Forced captures, lose all pieces to win (stalemate = loss)
- ♦ [Omnicide](#) – Lose all pieces to win, captures NOT forced
- ♦ [Single-Check](#) – One check wins instantly
- ♦ [Stalemate Wins](#) – Stalemating your opponent wins
- ♦ [Suicide Chess](#) – Forced captures, lose all pieces to win (stalemate = draw)
- ♦ [Three-Check](#) – Deliver three checks to win
- ♦ [Ultima](#) – Seven unique capture methods; win by capturing the opponent's King

ASYMMETRIC ARMIES

- ♦ [Empire Chess](#) – FIDE Kingdom vs Empire; Empire pieces all move as Queen but capture piece-specifically; faceoff rule
- ♦ [Khan's Chess](#) – FIDE Kingdom vs Mongol Horde with Scout and Khatun; divergent pieces; campmate and stalemate-loss
- ♦ [Orda Chess](#) – FIDE vs divergent Horde army; all Horde pieces move as Knight
- ♦ [Shinobi Chess](#) – FIDE vs Shinobi Clan; hand drops; automatic zone promotion
- ♦ [Shinobi+](#) – Rebalanced Shinobi with Fox piece; Clan moves first; perpetual check is a loss
- ♦ [Spartan Chess](#) – FIDE vs Spartan army with two Kings; dual-check rule
- ♦ [Synochess](#) – FIDE Kingdom vs Xiangqi-derived Eastern dynasty; Cannon, Chariot, Horse; faceoff rule

GATING & DROP MECHANICS

- ♦ [Dragon Chess](#) – Two Archbishops held in reserve; gate onto any empty first-rank square instead of moving
- ♦ [Hostage Chess](#) – Captured pieces become hostages; rescue yours by releasing one of theirs
- ♦ [Mansindam](#) – 9×9 board; compound pieces (Cardinal, Marshal, Angel); Shogi-style drops + mandatory promotion; campmate; no draws
- ♦ [Pocket Knight Chess](#) – One extra Knight in reserve; drop it onto any empty square once per game
- ♦ [S-Chess](#) – Hawk and Elephant held in hand; gate onto vacated home squares when back-rank pieces move
- ♦ [Shogun Chess](#) – Shogi-style drops; captured pieces switch sides; promotion on ranks 6–8
- ♦ [Xiang Fu](#) – Xiangqi/chess hybrid; dual royal Champions, Crossbow piece, drops within first two ranks

PIECE REPLACEMENT & MOVEMENT VARIANTS

- ♦ [Alice Chess](#) – Two boards; pieces transfer between boards after each move
- ♦ [Almost Chess](#) – One queen replaced by Chancellor (R+N)
- ♦ [Amazon Chess](#) – Queens replaced by Amazons (Q+N)
- ♦ [Berolina Chess](#) – Pawns move diagonally and capture straight (inverted)
- ♦ [Chigorin](#) – White has 4 knights instead of bishops
- ♦ [Fanorona Chess](#) – Captures by approach and withdrawal on a 5×9 Alquerque board
- ♦ [Grasshopper Chess](#) – Hoppers replace Queens; must jump over a hurdle to land
- ♦ [Knightmate](#) – Knight is royal, King moves like a knight
- ♦ [Nightrider Chess](#) – Knights replaced by Nightriders; repeat Knight-moves in one direction
- ♦ [Orda Mirror](#) – Both sides Horde army; all pieces move as Knight, capture as FIDE counterpart
- ♦ [Wildebeest Chess](#) – Camel and Wildebeest (N+Camel) added to a 10×11 board

STARTING POSITION VARIANTS

- ♦ [Endgame Chess](#) – Only pawns and Kings from the start
- ♦ [Legan Chess](#) – Berolina pawns, King and Queen swap starting squares
- ♦ [Pawns Only](#) – Only pawns, first promotion wins
- ♦ [Peasants' Revolt](#) – King + pawns vs King + knights
- ♦ [Placement Chess](#) – Back-rank pieces placed during a setup phase before play begins
- ♦ [Upside-Down](#) – Pieces start on opponent's rank

REGIONAL & HISTORICAL VARIANTS

- ♦ [ASEAN Chess](#) – Standardised Makruk; pawns on rank 2, streamlined counting rules
- ♦ [Chaturanga](#) – Indian ancestor of chess, c. 600 CE. Weak counsellor and leaping elephant.
- ♦ [Makpong](#) – Thai variant, King cannot move out of check
- ♦ [Makruk](#) – Thai chess, pawns promote on rank 6 to Met
- ♦ [Ouk Chaktrang](#) – Cambodian chess; Koul leaps 1-2 diagonally; King may jump as Knight on first move
- ♦ [Senterej](#) – Ethiopian Shatranj; simultaneous mobilization phase before the first capture
- ♦ [Shatar](#) – Mongolian chess, win by baring the opponent's King
- ♦ [Shatranj](#) – Medieval Islamic chess, ancestor of modern chess
- ♦ [Sittuyin](#) – Burmese chess, placement opening phase
- ♦ [Tamerlane Chess](#) – 11x10 board with citadels; 12 piece types; complex pawn promotion system

EXPANDED BOARDS

- ♦ [Archchess](#) – 10x10 variant (1683); adds Centurion and Decurion pieces
- ♦ [Bird's Chess](#) – 10x8 board (1874); adds Guard (R+N) and Equerry (B+N)
- ♦ [Capablanca Chess](#) – 10x8 with Archbishop + Chancellor
- ♦ [Carrera's Chess](#) – 10x8 board (1617); adds Champion (R+N) and Centaur (B+N)
- ♦ [Chancellor Chess](#) – 9x9 board (1889); adds one Chancellor (R+N) per side
- ♦ [Courier Chess](#) – 12x8, medieval variant from 1202
- ♦ [Grand Chess](#) – 10x10, same new pieces, bigger stage
- ♦ [Gustav III's Chess](#) – 8x8 + 4 corner squares; adds 2 Amazons (Q+N) per side
- ♦ [Gygax Chess](#) – Three stacked 12x8 boards; 42 pieces per side across 15 piece types
- ♦ [Janus Chess](#) – 10x8 with two Januses (Archbishop: B+N) per side
- ♦ [Omega Chess](#) – 10x10 + 4 wizard squares; adds Champion and Wizard
- ♦ [Shako](#) – 10x10; adds Cannon (platform capture) and Elephant (2-diagonal leap)

SMALL BOARDS

- ♦ [Breakthrough](#) – 7x7, pawns only, first to far rank wins
- ♦ [Congo](#) – 7x7 with river; six animal piece types; capture the Lion to win
- ♦ [Crazy 38's](#) – 38-square loop board; Shogi-style drops; checkmate or reach opponent's Home Square
- ♦ [Diana Chess](#) – 6x6, no queens or knights
- ♦ [Flip Chess](#) – 38-square board; bare King loses immediately
- ♦ [Half Chess](#) – 8x4, armies start adjacent
- ♦ [Hexapawn](#) – 3x3 pawn-only game (Gardner, 1962); solved: Black wins with perfect play
- ♦ [Hole Chess](#) – 44-square board with permanent holes that suck in enemy pieces
- ♦ [Los Alamos](#) – 6x6, no bishops, first computer chess (1956)
- ♦ [Minichess](#) – 5x5, full piece types on tiny board
- ♦ [Petty Chess](#) – 5x6, all piece types, single copies
- ♦ [Rollerball](#) – 40-square ring board; clockwise-dominant movement; King race wins

HEXAGONAL BOARD

- ♦ [Brusky's Hexagonal Chess](#) – 84-hex irregular board, 10 files
- ♦ [De Vasa's Hexagonal Chess](#) – 81-hex rhombus (9x9), pawns start on rank 3
- ♦ [Gliński's Hexagonal Chess](#) – 91-hex board, the most widely played hex chess variant
- ♦ [McCooley's Hexagonal Chess](#) – 91-hex board, bishops start on same colour
- ♦ [Mini Hexchess](#) – Compact 37-hex board, one of each piece type
- ♦ [Shafran's Hexagonal Chess](#) – 70-hex board, 9 files (a-i)

TOPOLOGY VARIANTS

- ♦ [Byzantine Chess](#) – Circular 4-ring board (64 squares); Shatranj-era pieces; stalemate wins
- ♦ [Circular Chess](#) – 4 rings x 16 files; pawns promote after 6 squares; no null moves
- ♦ [Cylindrical Chess](#) – Files wrap (a connects to h); bishops and queens gain power
- ♦ [Klein Bottle Chess](#) – Non-orientable surface; ranks wrap with a half-twist mirroring files
- ♦ [Möbius Strip Chess](#) – Non-orientable strip; rank seam twists; bishops change colour at seam
- ♦ [Spherical Chess](#) – Ranks wrap horizontally; files meet at polar singularities
- ♦ [Toroidal Byzantine Chess](#) – 4-ring circular board with radial wrap forming a torus

LARGE HISTORICAL

- ♦ [Balbo's Chess](#) – Diamond-shaped 70-square board (1974); location-dependent promotion
- ♦ [Centennial Chess](#) – 10x10 with 4 new pieces; two moves per turn until first capture
- ♦ [Citadel Chess](#) – 10x10 + 4 citadels; Shatranj al-Husun; King in citadel forces a draw
- ♦ [Grande Acedrex](#) – 12x12 medieval Spanish variant (Alfonso X, 1283); six unique piece types
- ♦ [Metamachy](#) – 12x12 with 12 piece types; variable starting position for royals
- ♦ [Oblong Chess](#) – 4x16 historical Shatranj variant; extreme board shifts piece values
- ♦ [Romanchenko's Chess](#) – Modified 8x8 with broken columns; pedagogical tool against memorization
- ♦ [Shatranj Kamil](#) – 10x10 'Complete Chess'; adds War Machines immune to check
- ♦ [Turkish Great Chess II](#) – 10x10; Prince (R+B+N), Kotwal (B+N), and Urdabegini pieces
- ♦ [Turkish Great Chess III](#) – 12x12; expanded Shatranj with Chariot and Dahja pieces
- ♦ [Turkish Great Chess IV](#) – 14x14; mixed Indian-Persian origin; weak Queen may be left en prise

3D CHESS

- ♦ [Raumschach](#) – 5x5x5 three-dimensional chess; adds Unicorn (triagonal slider)

MULTIPLAYER (3-4 PLAYERS)

- ♦ [Djambi](#) – 9x9 four-player; corpses block movement; Maze centre grants power
- ♦ [Four-Handed Chess \(Chaturaji\)](#) – 8x8 four-player dice chess; points-based scoring, no checkmate
- ♦ [Los Alamos Vierschach](#) – 84-square cross board; 4-player Los Alamos format with allied teams
- ♦ [San-kwo-k'i](#) – Three-player Chinese chess representing the Three Kingdoms (220-280 CE)
- ♦ [Tandem Chess](#) – Two boards, 4 players; captured pieces passed to partner for drops
- ♦ [Vierschach](#) – German 4-player chess (Lutze); 160-square cross board; allied teams
- ♦ [Yalta Chess](#) – 3-player on a circular Y-trisection board; captured armies absorbed

HIDDEN INFORMATION

- ♦ [Blind Chess \(Banqi\)](#) – Chinese hidden-piece game on 4x8 board; all pieces start face-down
- ♦ [Kriegspiel](#) – Fog-of-war chess; referee announces partial information about moves

BUGHOUSE & TEAM

- ♦ [Delirious Bughouse](#) – Bughouse with dice, worst-move mechanic, and fairy pieces
 - ♦ [Stupidhouse](#) – Bughouse where dropped pieces land on random squares
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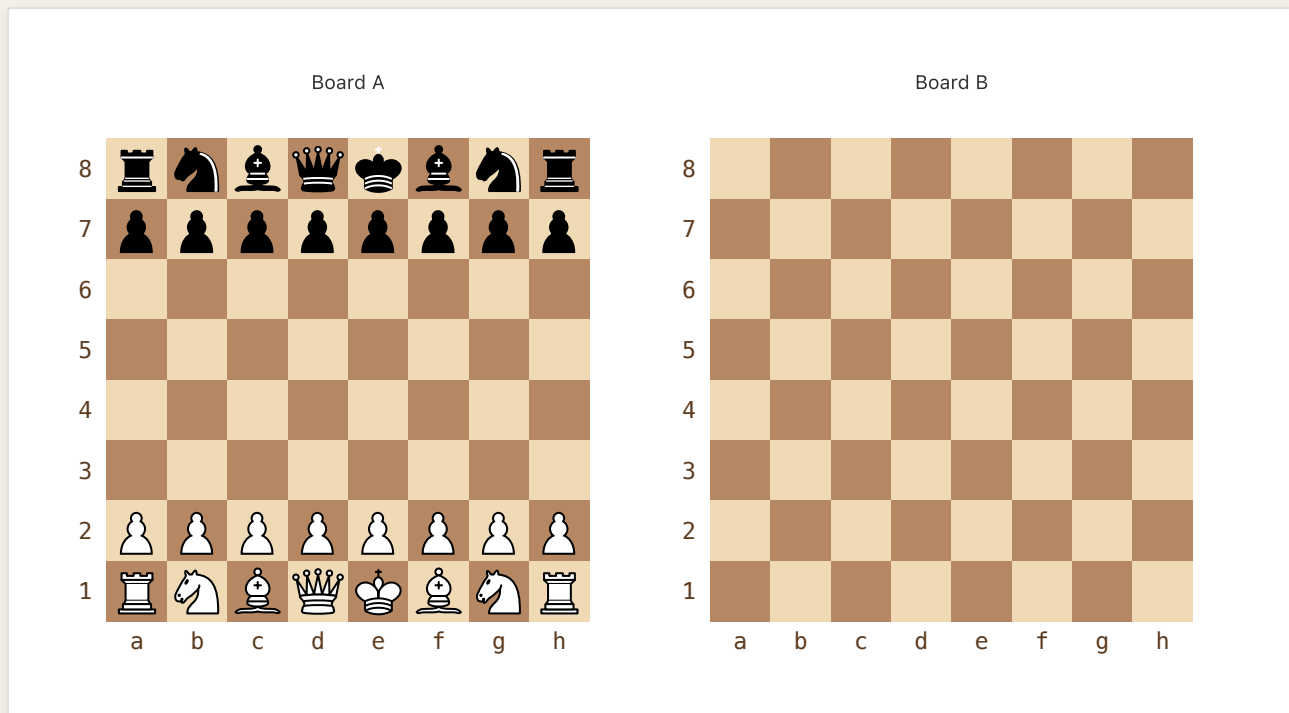
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CHESS · VARIANT 1 OF 153

Alice Chess

Two 8×8 boards (Board A and Board B) BOARD	2 PLAYERS
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ALICE CHESS



Alice Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=alice>

Invented by V. R. Parton in 1953. Named after Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* – pieces step through the mirror and emerge on the other side. Alice Chess uses two standard 8×8 chessboards played simultaneously.

THE TWO BOARDS

Board A begins with the standard chess starting position. **Board B** begins empty.

Boards share the same square coordinates. A piece on Board A at e4 and a piece on Board B at e4 occupy the same coordinate but are on different boards and do not interact directly.

THE TRANSFER RULE

After every move (including captures), the piece that moved transfers to the **corresponding square on the other board**.

- ♦ A piece on Board A at e4 transfers to Board B e4 after moving.
- ♦ A piece on Board B at f6 transfers to Board A f6 after moving.

A move is legal only if the transfer square is vacant. If the transfer square is occupied (by any piece of either colour), the move is illegal and cannot be made. This applies to all moves, including captures: capturing an opponent's piece does not free the transfer square if that square is occupied.

A piece cannot move at all if every otherwise-legal destination would place it on a square whose mirror is occupied.

SETUP

Board A: standard chess starting position. Board B: empty.

All White and Black pieces begin on Board A.

PHYSICAL REPRESENTATION

Alice Chess is commonly played on a single physical board with a distinguishing marker — traditionally a checker piece placed underneath — to indicate which squares are Board B. An unmarked piece occupies Board A; a piece with a checker underneath occupies Board B.

This one-board representation is fully equivalent to the two-board game and does not require a second physical set.

PIECE MOVEMENT

All pieces move exactly as in standard chess **on their current board**. The movement rules for each piece are unchanged; only the legality check (is the transfer square empty?) is added.

PIECE	MOVES AS IN STANDARD CHESS
King	One step in any direction
Queen	Any distance, any direction
Rook	Any distance, orthogonally
Bishop	Any distance, diagonally
Knight	(2,1) jump, unblockable
Pawn	Forward one (or two from start); captures diagonally

CHECK AND CHECKMATE

A King is in **check** when it is on a square that would be attacked by an opponent's piece **after that piece completes its transfer**. In other words: a piece threatens the King's square on the board the piece will land on after moving through the looking-glass.

Consequences:

A King on Board A can only be in check from pieces that, after moving and transferring, land on Board B —

- specifically, a piece currently on Board B whose move would place it on the King's Board-A square (since it would then transfer to Board A).
-
- A piece that cannot transfer after moving cannot deliver check with that move.

You may not make any move that leaves your King in check after the full move (including transfer) resolves.

Checkmate: the King is in check and no legal move (including transfer) can remove it.

CASTLING

Castling is permitted under the standard chess conditions, with the transfer rule applied to both pieces:

- ♦ The King castles on its current board, then transfers to the other board.
- ♦ The Rook also moves on its current board, then transfers to the other board.
- ♦ All transfer squares (for both King and Rook) must be vacant on the other board.
- ♦ No square the King passes through or lands on may be under attack (on the board where the King would be after transfer).
- ♦ Neither King nor Rook may have previously moved.

EN PASSANT

En passant is not legal in Alice Chess. The complexities introduced by transfer make the en passant capture undefined in Parton's original rules.

PAWN PROMOTION

A pawn promotes upon reaching the opponent's back rank **on whichever board it is currently on**. Standard promotion rules apply (Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight). The promoted piece transfers to the other board on the promotion move.

NOTATION

Standard algebraic notation with a suffix indicating the destination board after transfer:

- ♦ /A – piece transfers to Board A after moving
- ♦ /B – piece transfers to Board B after moving

Example: 1. e4/B – pawn moves to e4 on Board A and transfers to Board B e4.

The /A or /B suffix is determined by which board the piece **lands on** after transfer (i.e., the opposite of the board it started on).

STRATEGY NOTES

- The transfer rule creates a constantly shifting layer of blocked squares. Squares that appear open may be unreachable because their mirror is occupied.
- Pieces on Board B are often harder to coordinate in the opening, when Board A is crowded and most mirror squares are occupied.
- The King's safety must be evaluated across both boards: threats exist from pieces on either board whose transfer would land them on the King's square.
- Knights are particularly powerful because their (2,1) jump ignores blocking pieces; whether the knight can transfer is the only additional check needed.

ATTRIBUTION

Alice Chess, invented by V. R. Parton, 1953. Published in *Alices Abenteuer im Schachland* and referenced in Hooper & Whyld, *The Oxford Companion to Chess* (1987, p. 10) and Pritchard, *Encyclopedia of Chess Variants* (1994, pp. 3–5). Public domain. Fairy-Stockfish implements Alice Chess under the same rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 1 OF 153

Gygax Chess

12×8 (three levels)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

GYGAX CHESS

Designed by Gary Gygax and published in *Dragon Magazine* No. 100 (TSR Inc., August 1985). Two players command 42 pieces across three stacked 12×8 boards. Gold moves first.

THE THREE BOARDS

The boards are stacked vertically and share the same 12 files (a through l) and 8 ranks. Gold occupies ranks 1 and 2 on each board; Scarlet occupies ranks 7 and 8.

LEVEL	NAME	THEME	PIECE TYPES
3	Air	Blue and white	Sylph, Griffon, Dragon
2	Land	Green and amber	Warrior, Oliphant, Unicorn, Hero, Thief, Cleric, Mage, King, Paladin
1	Subterranean	Red and brown	Dwarf, Basilisk, Elemental

NOTATION

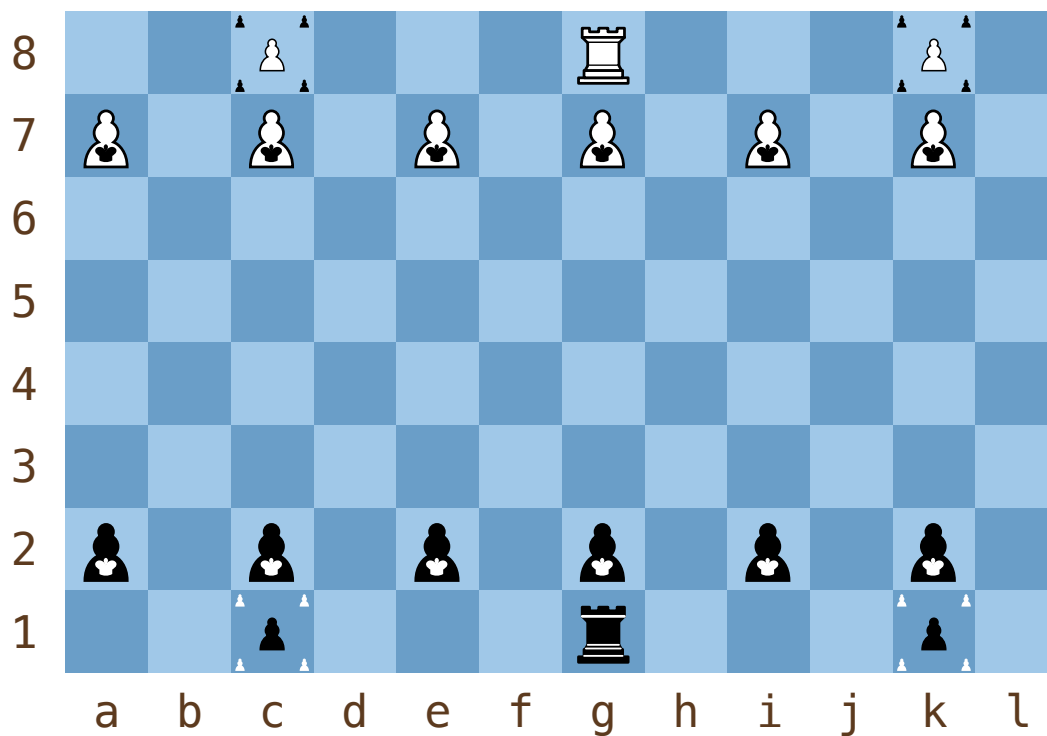
Each square is identified by its level number, file letter, and rank number. Level 3 is the Air board (upper), Level 2 is Land (middle), Level 1 is Subterranean (lower).

Examples: **3g1** is Gold's Dragon starting square on the Air board. **2g1** is Gold's King start. **1g1** is Gold's Elemental start. **2g8** is Scarlet's King start.

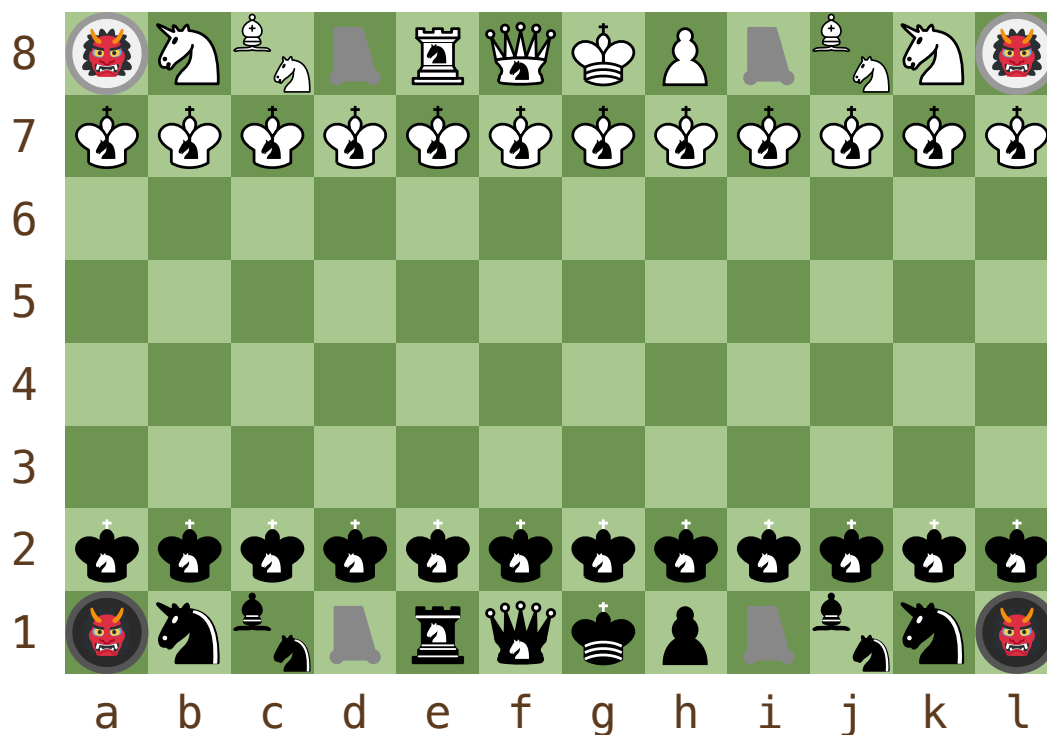
Piece codes used in FEN notation below: G=Griffon, R=Dragon (not Rook), S=Sylph on Level 3. O=Oliphant, U=Unicorn, H=Hero, T=Thief, C=Cleric, M=Mage, K=King, P=Paladin, W=Warrior on Level 2. B=Basilisk, E=Elemental, D=Dwarf on Level 1. Uppercase = Gold, lowercase = Scarlet.

STARTING POSITIONS

Level 3 – Air



Land



Air

2G3R3G1/S1S1S1S1S1S1/12/12/12/12/s1s1s1s1s1/2g3r3g1

Gold rank 1: Griffons at 3c1 and 3k1; Dragon at 3g1. Gold rank 2: Sylphs at 3a2, 3c2, 3e2, 3g2, 3i2, 3k2.

Level 2 – Land

0UHTCMKPTHU0/WWWWWWWWWW/12/12/12/12/wwwwwwwwww/ouhtcmkpthuo

Gold rank 1 from file a: Oliphant, Unicorn, Hero, Thief, Cleric, Mage, King, Paladin, Thief, Hero, Unicorn, Oliphant. Gold rank 2: twelve Warriors.

Level 1 – Subterranean

2B3E3B1/1D1D1D1D1D1D/12/12/12/12/1d1d1d1d1d/2b3e3b1

Gold rank 1: Basilisks at 1c1 and 1k1; Elemental at 1g1. Gold rank 2: Dwarves at 1b2, 1d2, 1f2, 1h2, 1j2, 1l2.

OBJECTIVE AND TURN STRUCTURE

Win by checkmating the opponent's King. No castling. A player who cannot make any legal move loses.

Each turn consists of exactly one move on any of the three boards, including cross-level moves where a piece transitions between boards.

PIECE VALUES

Relative values from Gygax's original notes, useful for evaluating exchanges.

PIECE	VALUE	PIECE	VALUE
Mage	11	Hero	4.5
Paladin	10	Thief	4
Cleric	9	Elemental	4
Dragon	8	Basilisk	3
Griffon	5	Unicorn	2.5
Oliphant	5	Dwarf	2
		Sylph	1
		Warrior	1

LEVEL 3 PIECES – AIR

SYLPH (S)

The Sylph is the Air board's pawn and uses Berolina movement: it moves diagonally forward without capturing, and captures one square straight forward (the inverse of a standard pawn). No double initial step.

A Sylph may also capture an enemy piece on the Level 2 square directly below it, moving down one level. Once on Level 2, a Sylph may return to Level 3 only by moving to one of its six starting squares (3a2, 3c2, 3e2, 3g2, 3i2, or 3k2). This return move is not a capture. The Sylph has no promotion.

GRIFFON (G)

On Level 3, the Griffon makes an unblockable (3,2) leap: three squares in one orthogonal direction and two squares perpendicularly, or two squares in one direction and three perpendicularly. The Griffon may also move or capture via a space diagonal: one step diagonally on Level 3 and then one step down to the same file-and-rank position on Level 2.

On Level 2, the Griffon may only move or capture one square diagonally, or return to Level 3 via a space diagonal.

DRAGON ®

The Dragon never leaves Level 3. On its own board it moves and captures as a dragon horse: any number of squares diagonally (like a bishop), or exactly one square orthogonally.

Remote capture: without moving, the Dragon may capture any enemy piece on the Level 2 square directly below it, or on any of the four orthogonally adjacent Level 2 squares. A remote capture constitutes the Dragon's full move.

LEVEL 2 PIECES – LAND

Level 2 is the primary battleground. The King begins here and is most commonly found here. Pieces with no cross-level move listed below are restricted to Level 2.

WARRIOR (W)

Standard pawn on Level 2. Moves one square straight forward without capturing; captures one square diagonally forward. No double initial step, no en passant. Promotes to Hero on reaching the furthest rank.

OLIPHANT (O)

Moves and captures as a chess Rook: any number of squares orthogonally. Restricted to Level 2.

UNICORN (U)

Moves and captures as a chess Knight: an unblockable (1,2) leap. Restricted to Level 2.

HERO (H)

On Level 2, the Hero moves or captures one or two squares diagonally, leaping over any intervening piece (unblockable). It may also cross to Level 1 or Level 3 via a space diagonal: one diagonal step on Level 2 followed by one level up or down.

On Level 1 or Level 3, the Hero may only move or capture back to Level 2 via a space diagonal from its current square.

THIEF (T)

Moves and captures as a chess Bishop: any number of squares diagonally. Restricted to Level 2.

CLERIC @

Moves and captures exactly one square in any direction (orthogonally or diagonally) on whichever board it occupies. It may also move or capture to the square directly above or below it on the adjacent level.

MAGE (M)

On Level 2, the Mage moves and captures as a chess Queen: any number of squares orthogonally or diagonally. It may also step directly to the square above it (Level 3) or below it (Level 1).

On Level 1 or Level 3, the Mage may only move or capture one square orthogonally on that board. It may also move or capture one or two levels straight up or down from its position. When moving two levels (Level 1 to Level 3 or vice versa in a single move), the Level 2 square between them must be empty; the Mage cannot leap over an occupied middle-board square.

KING (K)

On Level 2, the King moves and captures one square in any direction and may also step to the square directly above it (Level 3) or directly below it (Level 1). The King is in check whenever it could be captured.

On Level 1 or Level 3, the King's only legal action is to move or capture back to Level 2, returning to the square directly above or below. The King remains vulnerable to check on outer boards. No castling.

PALADIN (P)

On Level 2, the Paladin moves and captures as a chess King (one step in any direction) or a chess Knight (an unblockable (1,2) leap).

On Level 1 or Level 3, the Paladin moves and captures as a chess King only.

From any level, the Paladin may make an unblockable three-dimensional knight move: two squares in any direction followed by one square perpendicularly (or one then two), crossing one or two levels. This cross-level move may be either a move or a capture.

LEVEL 1 PIECES – SUBTERRANEAN

DWARF (D)

On Level 1 or Level 2, the Dwarf moves without capturing one square straight forward or one square sideways. It captures one square diagonally forward. It cannot move backward.

Cross-level: the Dwarf captures upward from Level 1 to Level 2 by moving one square straight up. It moves downward from Level 2 to Level 1 without capturing. It has no promotion.

BASILISK (B)

Restricted to Level 1. The Basilisk moves or captures one square diagonally forward or one square straight forward. It may move (but not capture) one square straight backward.

Freeze: any enemy piece occupying the Level 2 square directly above a Basilisk is automatically immobilised and cannot move for as long as the Basilisk remains on that square. The freeze takes effect immediately when a piece moves onto the square above an existing Basilisk, and lifts the moment the Basilisk moves or is captured.

ELEMENTAL (E)

On Level 1, the Elemental moves or captures one or two squares orthogonally. It cannot leap over an occupied square when moving two squares. It may also move one square diagonally without capturing.

Cross-level capture from Level 1 to Level 2: the Elemental moves one square orthogonally on Level 1 and then one square straight up to Level 2. The Level 1 square it passes through must be empty.

On Level 2, the Elemental may only return to Level 1: it moves one square straight down and then one square orthogonally on Level 1. The Level 1 square directly below must be empty. This return may be a capture if an enemy piece occupies the final destination.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Gary Gygax. Published in *Dragon Magazine* No. 100 (TSR Inc., August 1985), pages 34–40. Game rules are not subject to copyright.

Authoritative secondary source: Edward Jackman with Hans Bodlaender, *Dragonchess*, chessvariants.com (1995–1996), which addresses ambiguities in Gygax's original description. This rulebook follows chessvariants.com where it conflicts with later re-descriptions, including a naming correction for Hero, Thief, Cleric, and Paladin relative to the Wikipedia article on Dragonchess.

CHESS · VARIANT 1 OF 153

Standard Chess

8×8

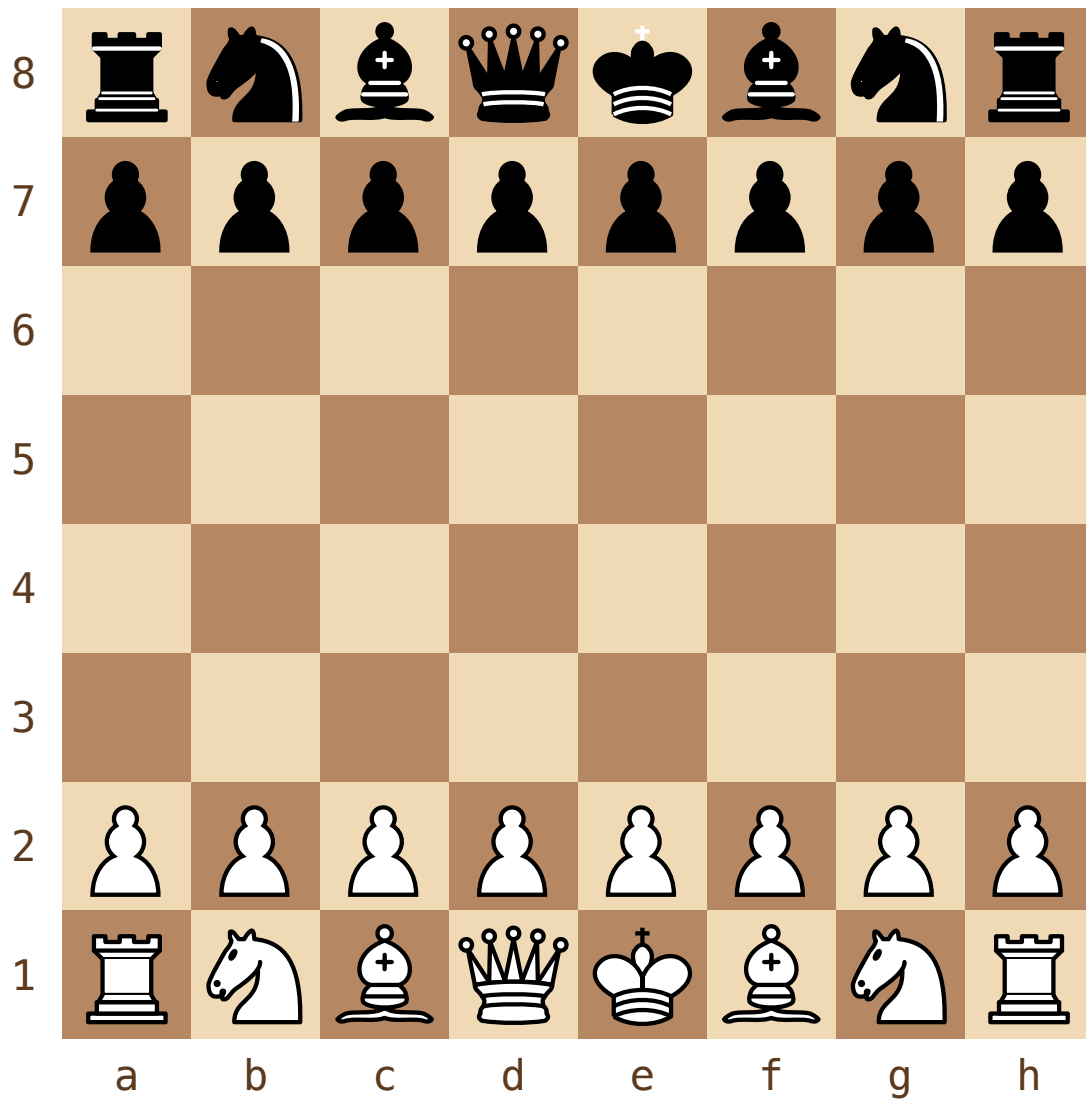
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

STANDARD CHESS

Classic FIDE rules. The foundation from which all variants diverge.



Standard Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=standard>

SETUP

Board: 8×8, 64 squares alternating light and dark. The board is oriented so each player has a light square in their near-right corner.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

PIECES

Pieces (per side): 1 King, 1 Queen, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 8 Pawns.

Starting position (from a-file): Rook, Knight, Bishop, Queen, King, Bishop, Knight, Rook on the back rank. Eight Pawns fill the second rank. White occupies ranks 1–2, Black occupies ranks 7–8. The Queen starts on her own colour (White Queen on d1, Black Queen on d8).

RULES

Turns: White moves first. Players alternate one move per turn.

Piece movement:

- ♦ **King** — moves one square in any direction (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally). Cannot move into a square attacked by an opponent's piece.
- ♦ **Queen** — moves any number of squares in any straight line (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal). Cannot jump over pieces.
- ♦ **Rook** — moves any number of squares horizontally or vertically. Cannot jump over pieces.
- ♦ **Bishop** — moves any number of squares diagonally. Cannot jump over pieces. Each Bishop is confined to one square colour for the entire game.
- ♦ **Knight** — moves in an L-shape: two squares in one direction plus one square perpendicular (or vice versa). The only piece that can jump over other pieces.
- ♦ **Pawn** — moves one square forward (toward the opponent's back rank). On its first move, a Pawn may advance two squares forward. Pawns capture one square diagonally forward. Pawns cannot move backward.

Captures: A piece is captured by moving your piece to the square it occupies. The captured piece is removed from the board. All pieces capture the same way they move, except Pawns (which move forward but capture diagonally).

Check: When a King is under direct attack by an opponent's piece, it is in check. A player in check must immediately resolve it by: moving the King to a safe square, capturing the attacking piece, or blocking the attack by interposing a piece. A player may never make a move that leaves their own King in check.

Special moves:

- ♦ **Castling** — the King moves two squares toward a Rook, and that Rook jumps to the square the King crossed. Requirements: neither the King nor that Rook has previously moved; no pieces between them; the King is not in check; the King does not pass through or land on an attacked square. Each player may castle kingside (short) or queenside (long) once per game.
- ♦ **En passant** — if a Pawn advances two squares from its starting rank and lands beside an opponent's Pawn, the opponent may capture it as if it had only moved one square. This capture must be made immediately on the very next move or the right is lost.
- ♦ **Pawn promotion** — when a Pawn reaches the opponent's back rank (rank 8 for White, rank 1 for Black), it must immediately be promoted to a Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight of the same colour. The player chooses the piece. There is no limit to the number of promoted pieces.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate: The game is won when a player's King is in check and there is no legal move to escape. The player delivering checkmate wins.

Other ways a game ends:

- ♦ **Resignation** — a player concedes defeat.
- ♦ **Stalemate** — the player to move has no legal moves and is NOT in check. The game is a draw.
- ♦ **Threefold repetition** — the same board position occurs three times (with the same player to move and same castling/en passant rights). Either player may claim a draw.
- ♦ **Fifty-move rule** — if 50 consecutive moves pass with no Pawn move and no capture, either player may claim a draw.
- ♦ **Insufficient material** — if neither side has enough pieces to deliver checkmate (e.g. King vs King, King+Bishop vs King), the game is a draw.
- ♦ **Agreement** — both players agree to a draw.

STRATEGY

Control the centre, develop pieces early, castle for King safety, and coordinate piece activity. The opening, middlegame, and endgame each demand different skills — billions of games have been played and the game remains unsolved.

ATTRIBUTION

Origins in 6th-century India (Chaturanga). Modern rules standardised by FIDE. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 1 OF 153

Standard Grasshopper Chess

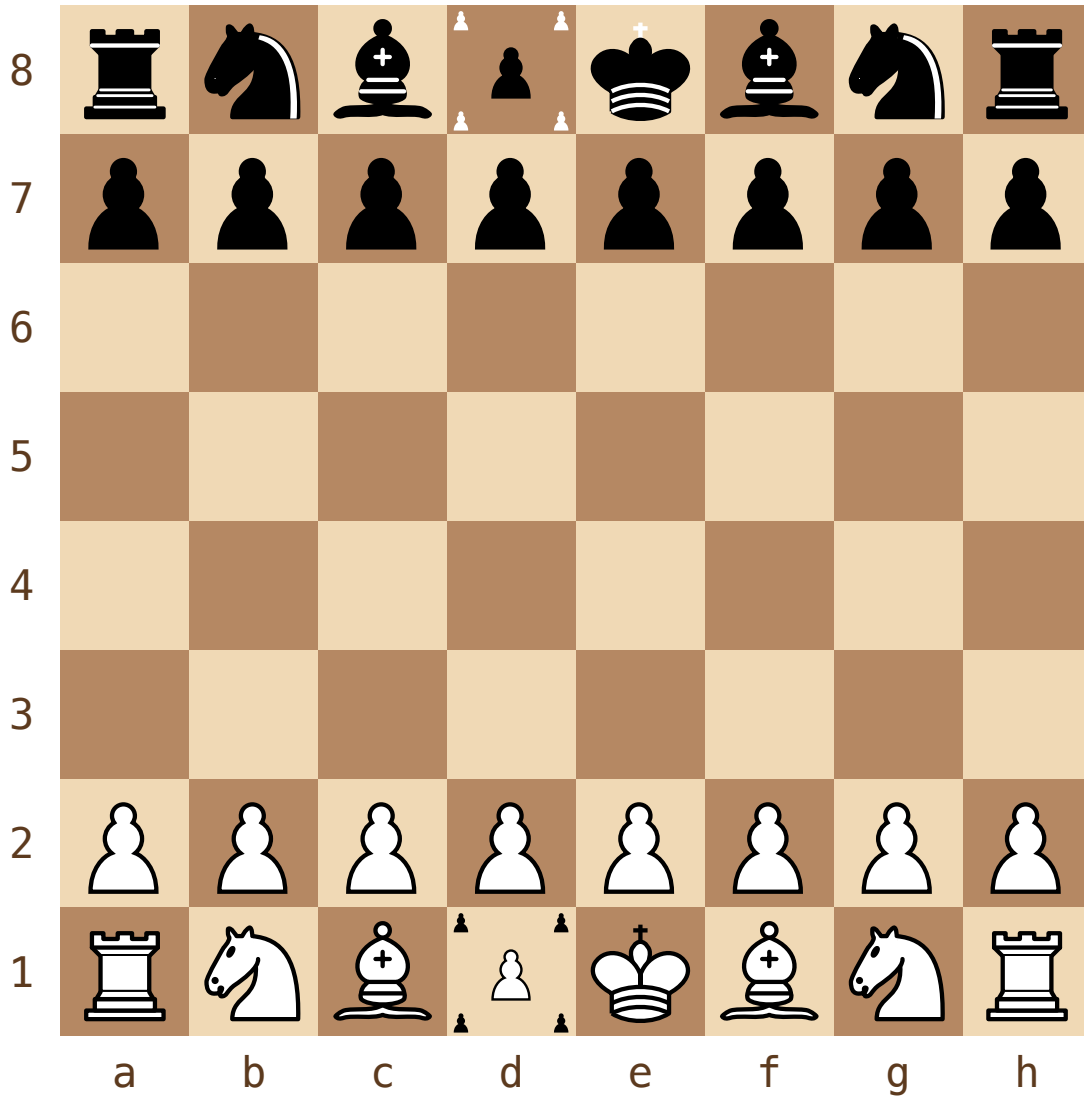
8x8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

STANDARD GRASSHOPPER CHESS



Standard Grasshopper Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=grasshopper>

Played on an 8×8 board with all standard chess rules, except: **both queens are replaced by Grasshoppers**. All other pieces and rules are unchanged.

STARTING POSITION

rnbgkbnr
pppppppp
.....
.....
.....
.....
PPPPPPPP
RNBGKBNR

Where G/g = Grasshopper (d1/d8).

THE GRASSHOPPER

PROPERTY	RULE
Move lines	Queen lines (rank, file, diagonal)
Requirement	Must hop over exactly one piece (the hurdle)
Hurdle	Any piece of either colour
Landing	Immediately beyond the hurdle (one square past it)
Capture	Landing on an enemy piece captures it
Blocked landing	If the square beyond the hurdle is occupied by a friendly piece, the move is illegal
No hurdle	If no piece exists in a direction, the Grasshopper cannot move that way
Range	Always lands exactly one square past the hurdle — no choice of range

Tactical implications: the Grasshopper grows weaker as pieces are captured (fewer hurdles), and stronger in crowded positions. It can be its own hurdle — a Grasshopper cannot hop over itself.

PROMOTION

Pawns promote to: Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight, or **Grasshopper**.

ALL OTHER RULES

Castling, en passant, stalemate, and draw rules apply without modification.

ATTRIBUTION

Grasshopper invented by T. R. Dawson, *Fairy Chess Review* (1913, problem no. 1). Public domain. Implemented in Fairy-Stockfish and Zillions of Games.

CHESS · VARIANT 1 OF 153

Standard Nightrider Chess

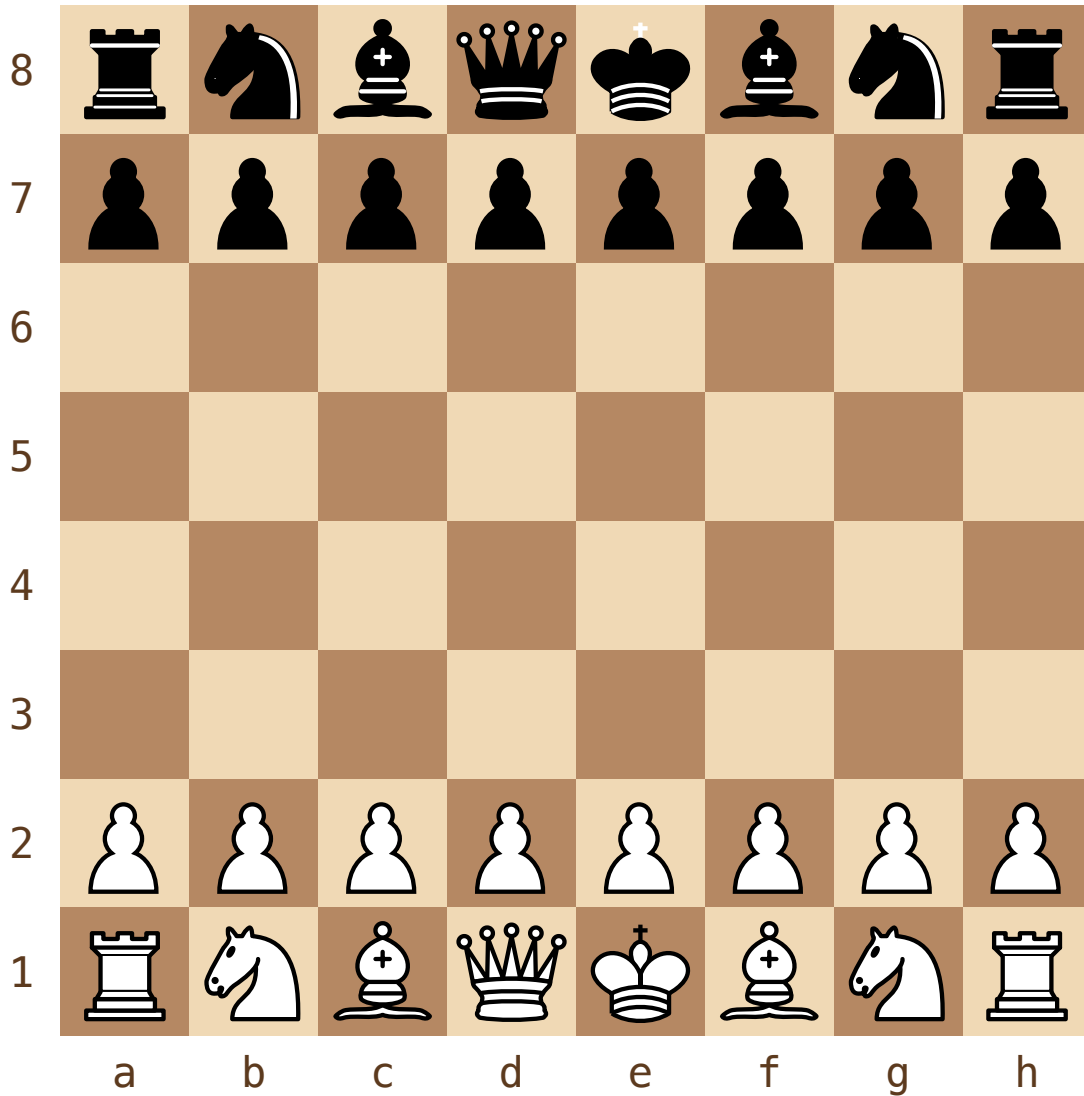
8x8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

STANDARD NIGHTRIDER CHESS



Standard Nightrider Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=nightrider>

Played on a standard 8×8 board with all standard chess rules, except: **both knights on each side are replaced by Nightriders**. All other pieces and rules are unchanged.

STARTING POSITION

Identical to standard chess:

rnbqkbnr

pppppppp

.....

.....

.....

.....

PPPPPPPP

RNBQKBNR

Where N/n = Nightrider.

THE NIGHTRIDER

PROPERTY	RULE
Move pattern	Repeated knight-steps (1,2) in a fixed direction
Directions	8 directions (all knight-step vectors: $\pm 1/\pm 2$, $\pm 2/\pm 1$)
Range	Unlimited (up to board edge)
Blocking	Blocked by any piece on an intermediate square
Capture	Lands on occupied enemy square (cannot jump over to continue)
Check/mate	Nightriders can deliver check and checkmate along their ride lines

Nightrider directions (from origin): (1,2), (2,1), (2,-1), (1,-2), (-1,-2), (-2,-1), (-2,1), (-1,2). Each is a distinct ride line.

PROMOTION

Pawns may promote to: Queen, Rook, Bishop, or **Nightrider**. Promotion to Nightrider is legal and encouraged — it is generally stronger than a rook in open positions.

ALL OTHER RULES

Castling, en passant, stalemate, and the fifty-move rule all apply without modification.

ENGINE NOTES

The Nightrider is implemented in Fairy-Stockfish (`-piece nightrider`), GNU Chess fairy extensions, and Green Chess. FEN notation: **N**/**n** throughout (same glyph as standard knight — disambiguate via variant flag).

ATTRIBUTION

Nightrider piece invented by T. R. Dawson, 1925. Public domain. Rules in the public domain. Implemented in Fairy-Stockfish, Green Chess, and Zillions of Games.

CHESS · VARIANT 1 OF 153

Standard Wildebeest Chess

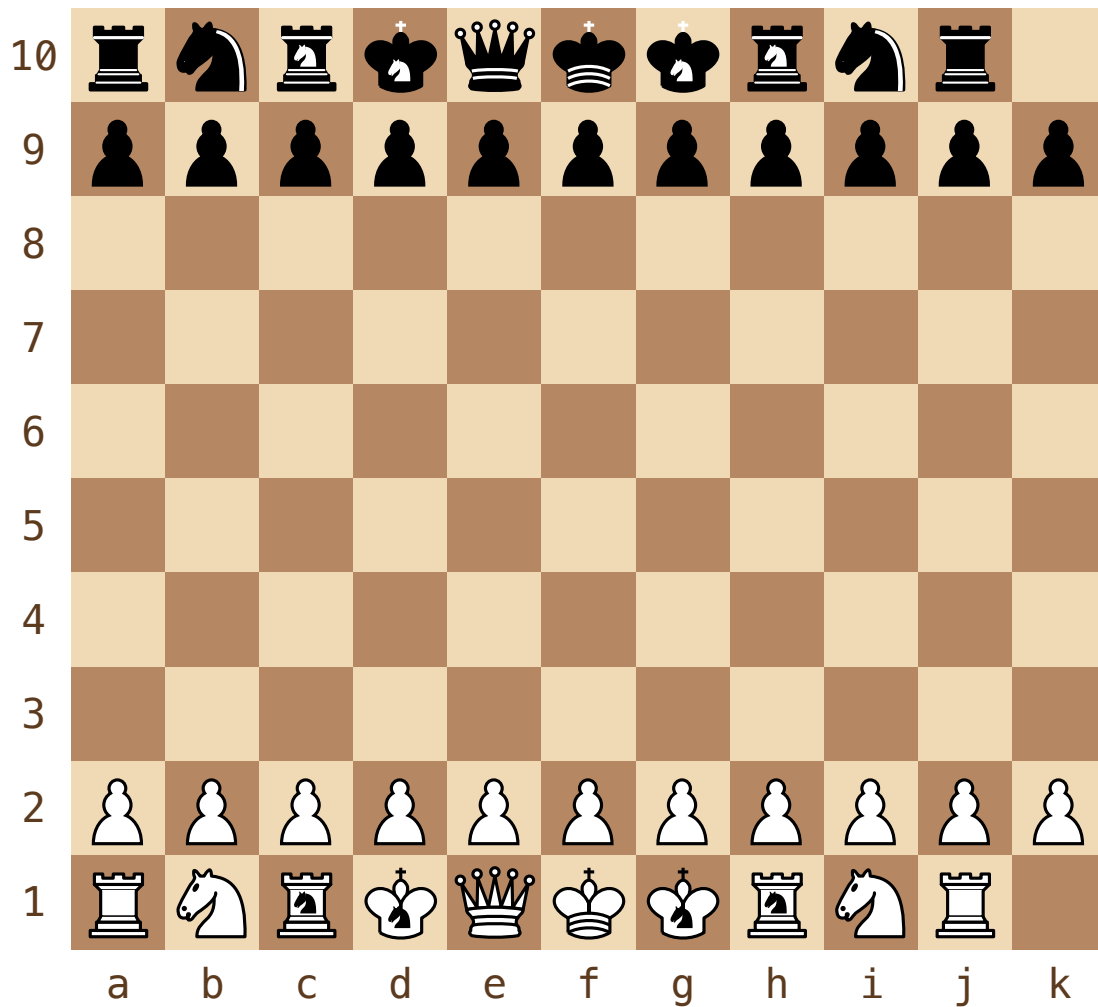
11x10

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

STANDARD WILDEBEEST CHESS



Standard Wildebeest Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=wildebeest>

Played on an **11×10 board** (files a–k, ranks 1–10). Each side has 11 pawns and an expanded back rank including two new fairy pieces.

STARTING POSITION

r n c w q k w c n r (rank 10 – Black)

p p p p p p p p p p (rank 9)

. (ranks 8–3)

.

.

.

.

.

P P P P P P P P P P (rank 2)

R N C W Q K W C N R (rank 1 – White)

Back rank (a–k): Rook, Knight, Camel, Wildebeest, Queen, King, Wildebeest, Camel, Knight, Rook (11 squares, no bishop slot – Camels fill that role).

PIECES

CAMEL @

PROPERTY	RULE
Leap	(3,1) – 3 squares in one direction, 1 perpendicular
Jumping	Yes – cannot be blocked
Colour-binding	Yes – always lands on same colour
Capture	Lands on target square

The Camel is the (3,1) analogue of the Knight (2,1). With two Camels per side (one on each colour binding), both colours of Camel square are covered.

WILDEBEEST (W)

PROPERTY	RULE
Move	Any Knight leap (2,1) OR any Camel leap (3,1)
Jumping	Yes – leaps
Colour-binding	No – alternates colours on knight moves, maintains colour on camel moves
Capture	Lands on target square

The Wildebeest is roughly equivalent in value to a rook.

STANDARD PIECES

Rooks, Knights, Queen, and King move and capture as in standard chess.

PAWNS

- ♦ **11 pawns per side** (one per file, a–k)
- ♦ May advance one or two squares from starting position (rank 2 / rank 9)
- ♦ Capture diagonally forward
- ♦ **En passant** applies
- ♦ **Promotion** on ranks 10 (Black) / 1 (White) to: Queen, Rook, Camel, Knight, or Wildebeest

CASTLING

Castling is **not available** in the standard Wildebeest Chess setup (the King is not adjacent to a corner Rook in the same way; no castling rule has been defined by Schmittberger for this layout).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King. Stalemate = draw.

ENGINE NOTES

Implemented in: Jocly (open source, JavaScript), zrflib (Zillions of Games), chess-programming wiki examples. FEN: standard coordinate system extended to 11 files (a–k). The board is 11 × 10; rank and file notation follows the same conventions as standard chess.

ATTRIBUTION

Wildebeest Chess designed by R. Wayne Schmittberger. Published in *New Rules for Classic Games* (Wiley, 1992). Rules described as public domain by multiple open-source implementations (Jocly, zrflib). Primary sources: Wikipedia (*Wildebeest chess*); Jocly source (`wildebeest.js`).

CHESS · VARIANT 7 OF 153

Absorption Chess

8×8

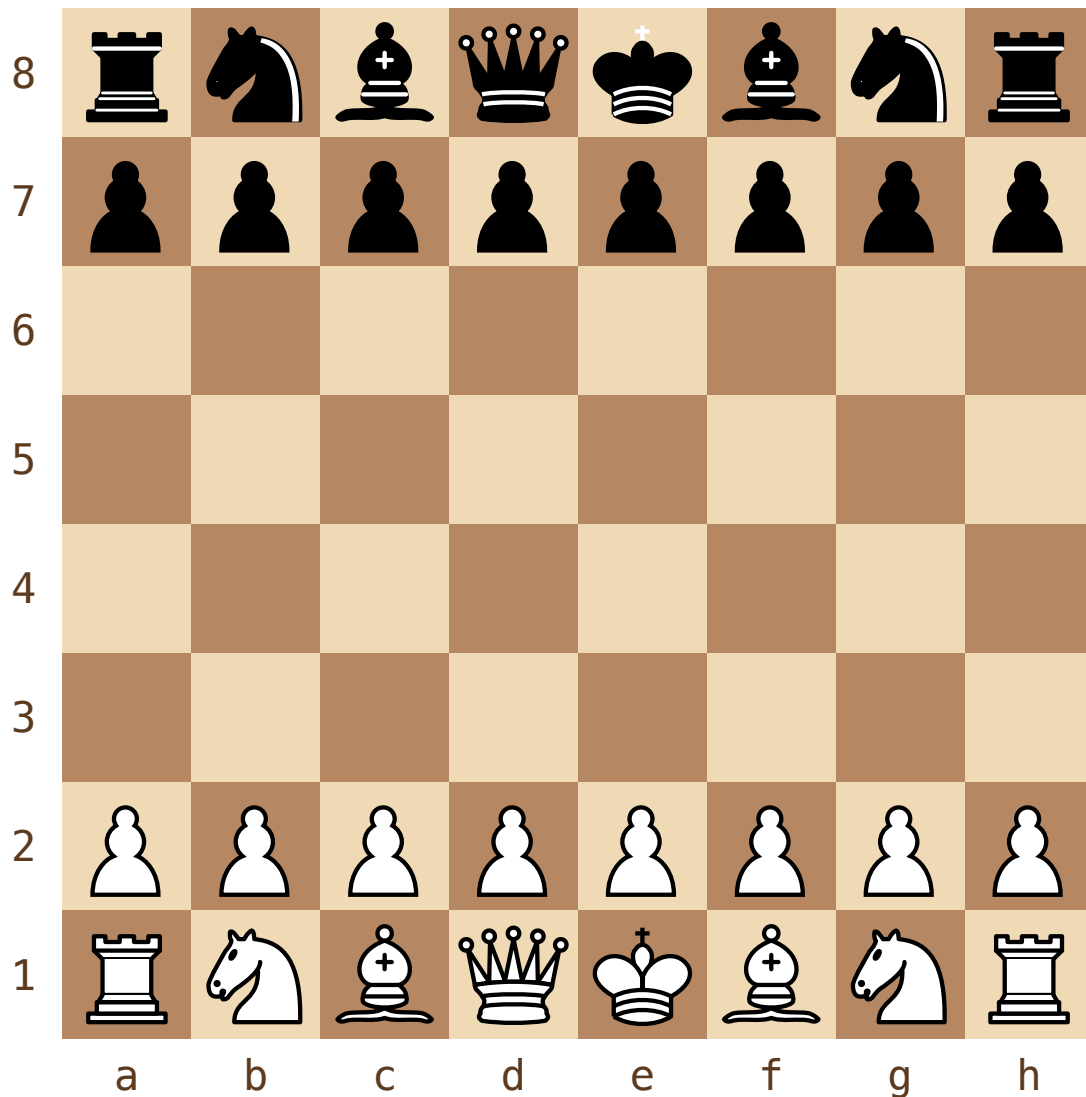
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ABSORPTION CHESS

When a piece captures, it permanently gains the victim's movement abilities in addition to its own. Multiple absorptions stack, creating increasingly powerful compound pieces as the game progresses.



Absorption Chess – starting position (standard setup)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=absorption>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Pieces: Standard chess starting position.

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, with the following additions:

- When a piece captures an enemy piece, the capturing piece permanently gains the movement abilities of the captured piece.
- Absorbed abilities are additive. A rook that captures a bishop can move as both a rook and a bishop (effectively a queen). If that piece later captures a knight, it gains knight movement too.
- Absorptions are permanent and stack without limit.
- The King can absorb. A king that captures gains the victim's movement, making it increasingly mobile and harder to checkmate. However, the king cannot move through or to attacked squares regardless of absorbed abilities.
- A king with absorbed abilities does give check using those abilities.
- Pawns can absorb. A pawn that absorbs rook movement can still only move as a pawn on non-capture turns, but gains the absorbed movement for captures and general movement in subsequent turns.
- A piece with absorbed pawn movement can only promote when making a pawn-type move to the last rank. Reaching the last rank via other absorbed movement does not trigger promotion.
- Promotion does not remove absorbed abilities. A promoted piece retains all previously absorbed movement.
- Castling follows standard rules. Only unmoved original rooks may castle regardless of absorbed abilities.
- En passant follows standard rules. A piece with absorbed pawn movement cannot perform en passant (only original pawns can).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King. Because the king gains abilities through captures, checkmate becomes progressively harder to achieve as the game develops. Early aggression against the king is generally unwise since each piece it captures makes it stronger.

STRATEGY

Material trades require careful calculation. Capturing a piece grants you its power, but your opponent loses a piece. The net effect depends on what abilities each side accumulates. Queens are dangerous to capture early because they grant combined rook and bishop movement. Sacrificing minor pieces to the opponent's king can backfire since the king becomes harder to trap. Endgames tend to feature powerful compound pieces with multiple movement types.

ATTRIBUTION

Described in *The Encyclopedia of Chess Variants* by David Pritchard (1994). Also known as Cannibal Chess (though that name more properly refers to the replacement variant where capturing substitutes movement rather than adding it). Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 8 OF 153

Almost Chess

8×8

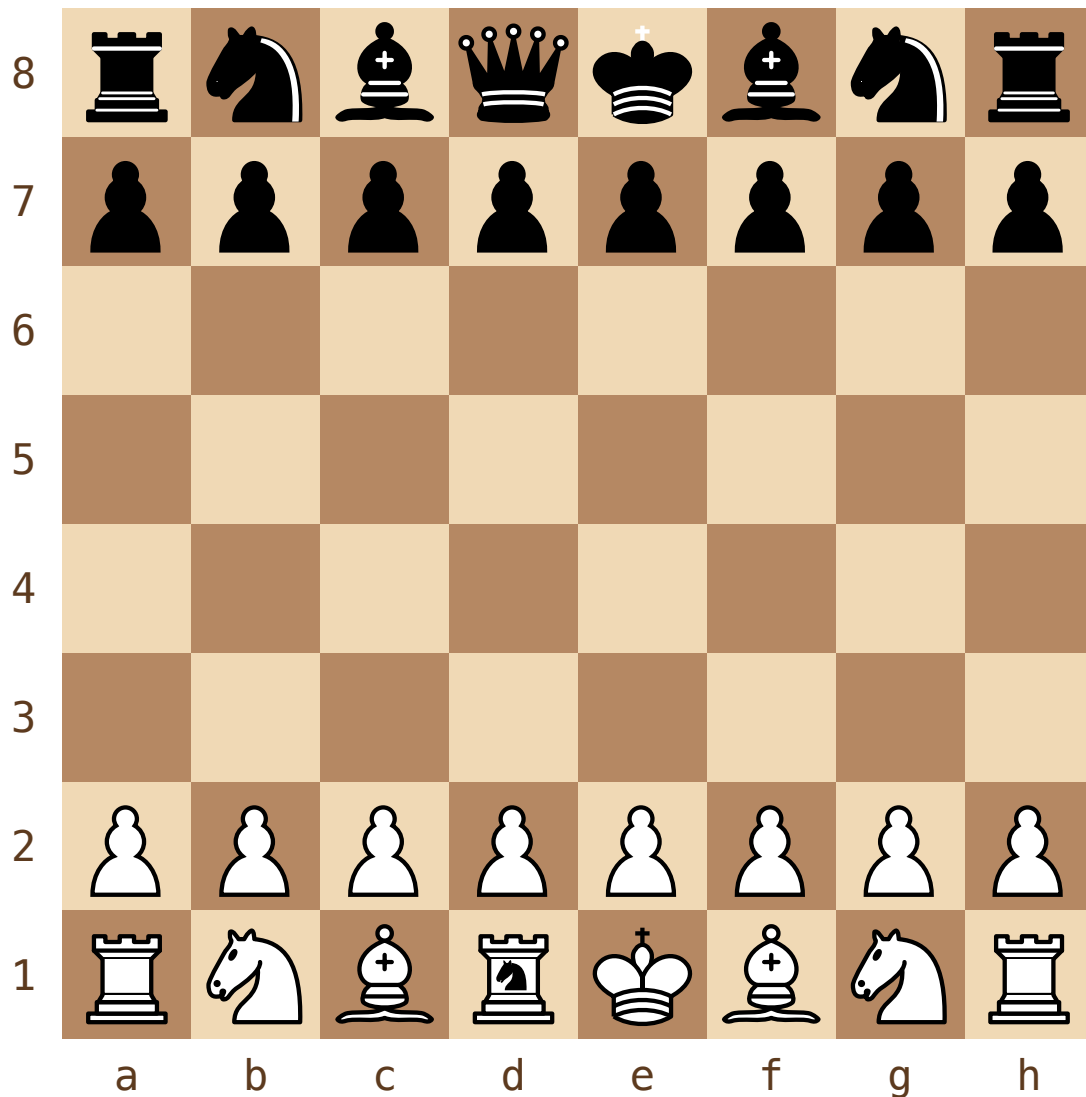
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ALMOST CHESS

One Queen is replaced by a Chancellor (Rook + Knight compound). "Almost" standard chess – one piece different, but the implications ripple through the entire game.



Almost Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=almost-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBCKBNR

White: Rook, Knight, Bishop, Chancellor, King, Bishop, Knight, Rook (+ 8 pawns). Black: Standard setup (with Queen).

PIECES

Pieces:

- ♦ **Chancellor** ♖ — combines Rook and Knight movement. Can slide along ranks/files like a Rook OR jump in L-shapes like a Knight. Placed on d1 (where White's Queen normally sits).

RULES

All standard chess rules apply. The Chancellor replaces White's Queen only. Black retains their standard Queen.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, same as standard chess.

STRATEGY

The Chancellor is slightly weaker than a Queen (no diagonal sliding) but has the Knight's forking ability combined with Rook-length reach. White lacks diagonal firepower from d1 and must rely more on Bishops. The Chancellor excels at forks — combining Rook pins with Knight threats. Black's Queen gives them an advantage on open diagonals.

ATTRIBUTION

Ralph Betza, 1977. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 9 OF 153

Amazon Chess

8×8

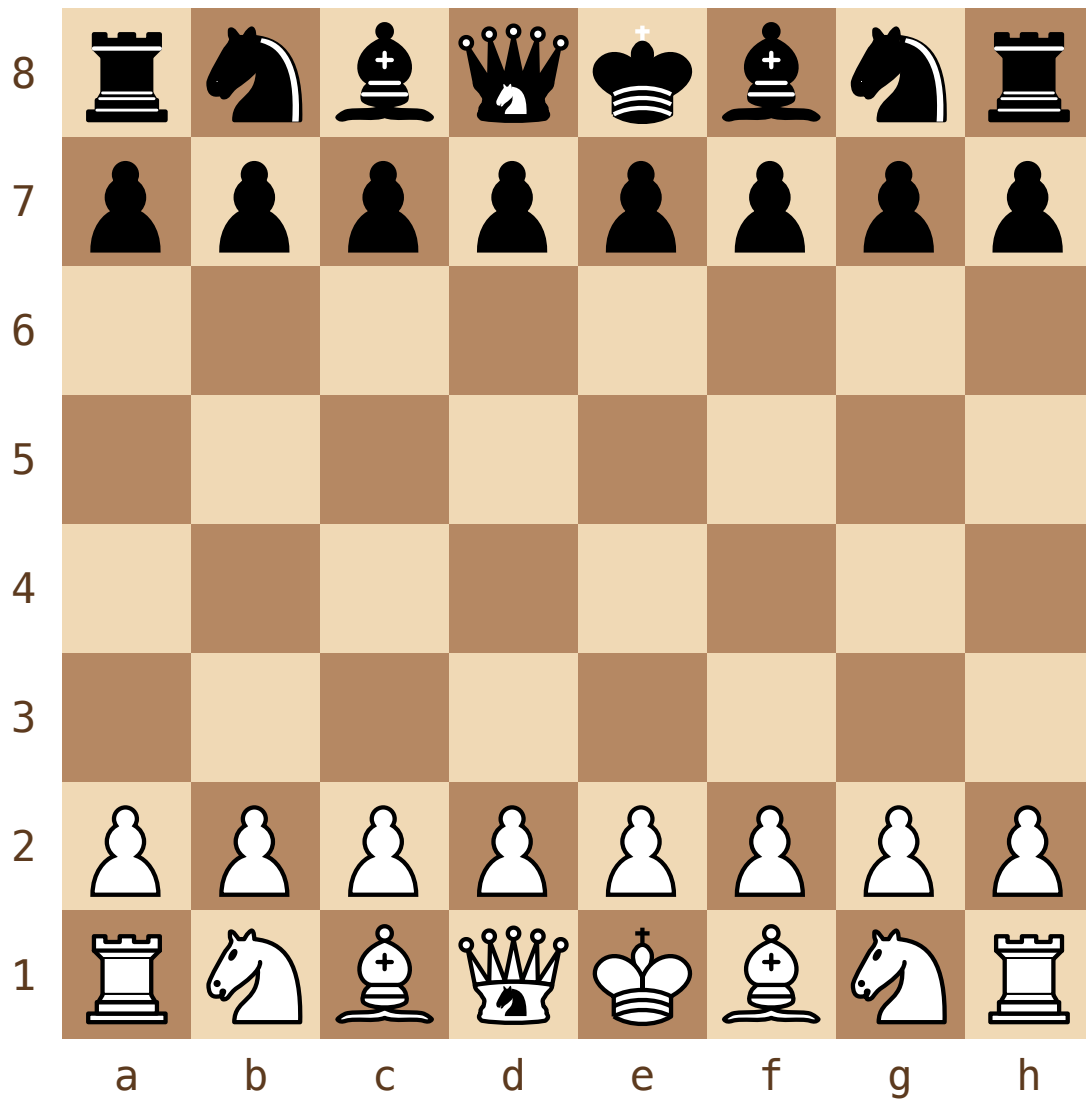
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

AMAZON CHESS

Both Queens are replaced by Amazons – the most powerful piece possible, combining Queen and Knight movement.



Amazon Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=amazon-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): rnbmkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBMKBNR

Both sides: Rook, Knight, Bishop, Amazon, King, Bishop, Knight, Rook (+ 8 pawns).

PIECES

Pieces:

- ♦ **Amazon (M)** – combines Queen and Knight movement. Can slide along ranks, files, and diagonals (like a Queen) OR jump in L-shapes (like a Knight). The most powerful piece in any chess variant.

RULES

All standard chess rules apply. Amazons replace Queens for both sides symmetrically.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, same as standard chess.

STRATEGY

The Amazon is devastatingly powerful – it controls more squares than any other piece and cannot be blocked by interposing. Games tend to be shorter and more tactical because the Amazon's range makes defence extremely difficult. Trading Amazons early simplifies into a near-standard endgame. Keeping your Amazon active while restricting the opponent's is the key strategic tension.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional fairy chess piece. Variant is public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 10 OF 153

Andernach Chess

8×8

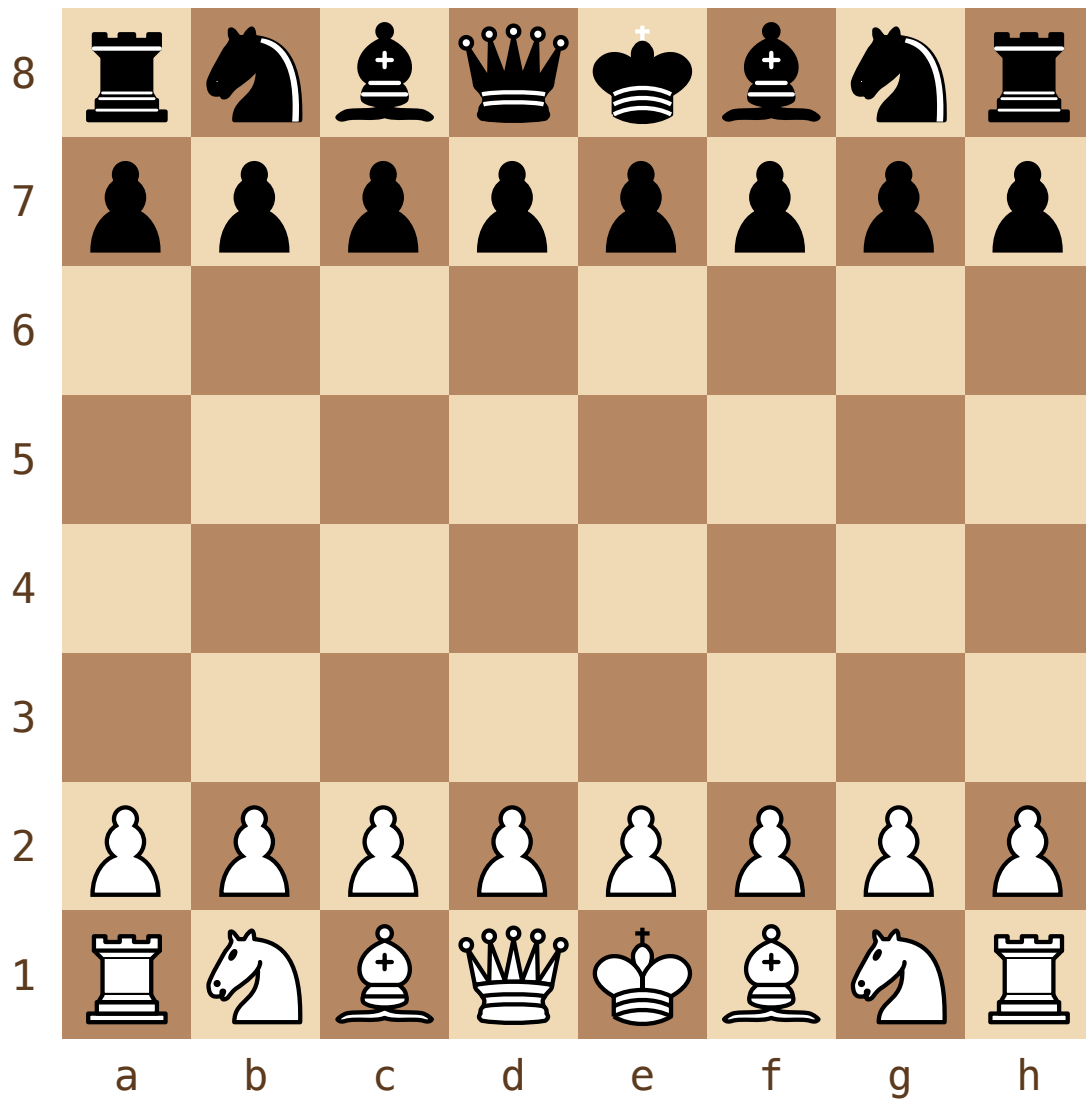
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ANDERNACH CHESS

When a piece captures, it switches sides — the capturing piece becomes the opponent's piece on the captured square. Kings are exempt from colour change.



Andernach Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=andernach>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ All pieces move as in standard chess.
- ♦ When a piece captures an enemy piece, the captured piece is removed and the capturing piece changes colour (becomes the opponent's piece).
- ♦ Kings are exempt – a King that captures does NOT change colour.
- ♦ The converted piece belongs to the opponent starting from their next turn.
- ♦ Check and checkmate work normally.
- ♦ Castling and en passant follow standard rules.
- ♦ Pawns that capture on the promotion rank change colour first, then promote as the new owner's piece.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (standard).

STRATEGY

Every capture is double-edged – you remove an enemy piece but hand them the capturer. Material advantages are nearly impossible to build through captures alone. Non-capturing moves (pawn advances, positional manoeuvres) become relatively more valuable. Forks and pins have radically different implications because winning material by capture gifts the capturing piece to the opponent.

ATTRIBUTION

Created for a chess composition event in Andernach, Germany, 1993. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 11 OF 153

Anti-King Chess II

8×8

BOARD

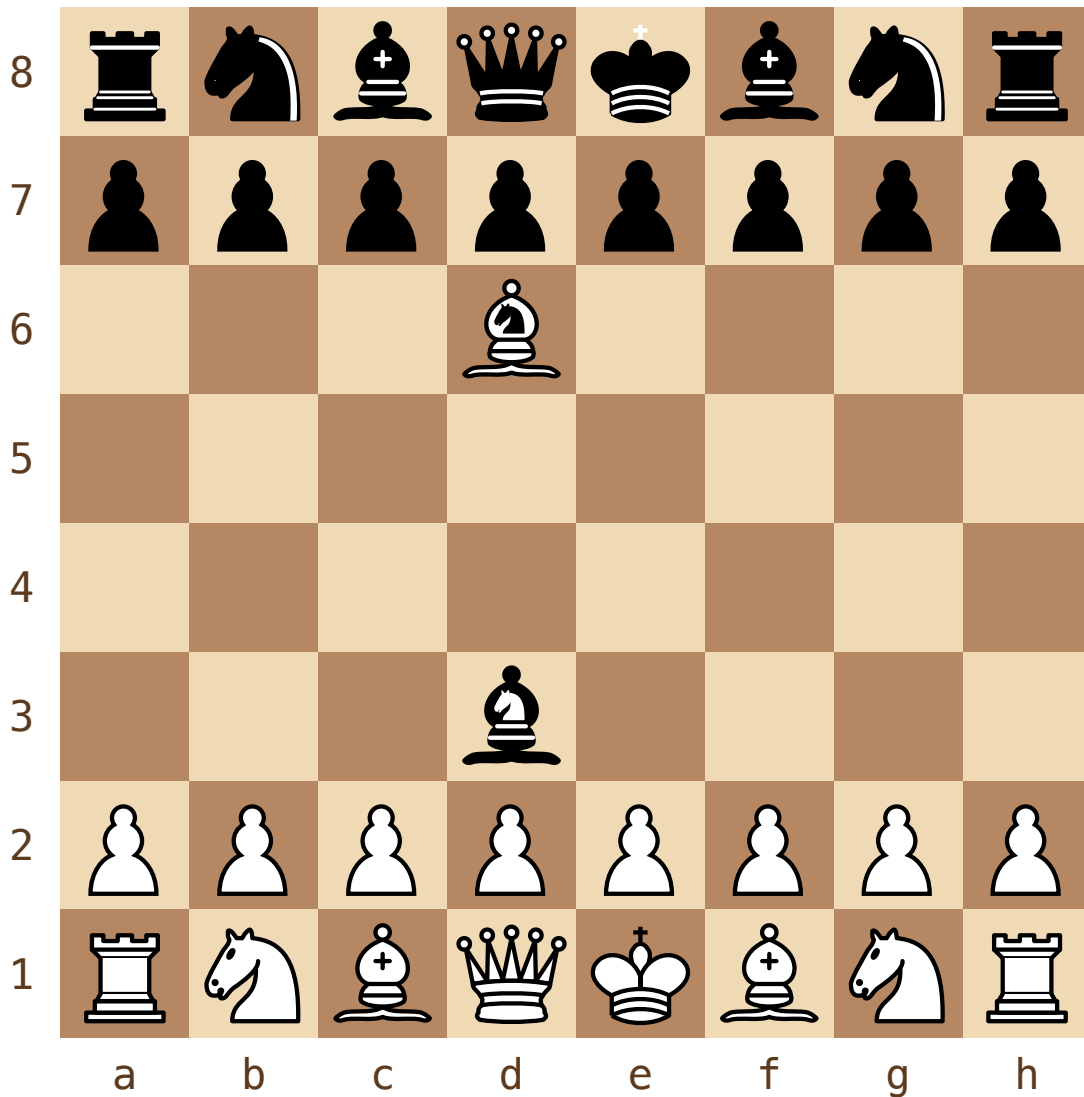
2

PLAYERS

Anti-King Chess II

Invented by Peter Aronson, 2002.

OVERVIEW



Anti-King Chess II – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=anti-king-chess-2>

Anti-King Chess II adds an Anti-King to each side's standard FIDE army. The Anti-King is a royal piece with inverted check: it is in check when it is *not* attacked by any enemy piece. A player who ends their turn with their Anti-King unattacked is checkmated and loses. Win by checkmating either the opponent's King or the opponent's Anti-King.

SETUP

Standard 8×8 board. Each side begins with the normal FIDE complement plus an Anti-King placed in the center files.

FEN: `rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/3A4/8/8/3a4/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1`

- ♦ **White:** King e1, Anti-King d6, Queen d1, Rooks a1/h1, Bishops c1/f1, Knights b1/g1, Pawns a2–h2
- ♦ **Black:** King e8, Anti-King d3, Queen d8, Rooks a8/h8, Bishops c8/f8, Knights b8/g8, Pawns a7–h7

FEN notation: A = White Anti-King, a = Black Anti-King.

PIECES

All FIDE pieces move and capture as normal. The Anti-King is a special royal piece:

ANTI-KING

- ♦ Moves one square in any direction (like a King).
- ♦ **Is in check when it is NOT attacked by any enemy piece.**
- ♦ Cannot capture enemy pieces; may only capture friendly pieces.
- ♦ Cannot be captured — it can only be mated.
- ♦ Does not give check to the friendly King.
- ♦ A hostile King adjacent to the Anti-King does not count as attacking it (Kings do not attack Anti-Kings).

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply with these modifications:

Check and checkmate apply to both royal pieces. A player is in check if their King is attacked by an enemy piece, or if their Anti-King is not attacked by any enemy piece. A player must escape check on their turn; if they cannot, they are checkmated and lose.

Winning: Checkmate the opponent's King (King attacked and unable to escape) or checkmate the opponent's Anti-King (Anti-King unattacked and unable to reach an attacked square).

Pawns follow standard FIDE rules: double push from the starting rank, en passant, and promotion to Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight.

Castling is permitted under standard conditions.

Stalemate: a player with no legal moves but not in check is stalemated (drawn, as in standard chess).

NOTES

The Anti-Kings start on d6 and d3 – directly in the path of development – so they tend to be well-covered early by natural piece deployment. This makes the opening phase more conservative than Anti-King Chess I (which uses Berolina Pawns and a scattered setup). Players must maintain coverage of their Anti-King while simultaneously pressing for mate on either of the opponent's royal pieces.

Source: chessvariants.com/diffobjective.dir/anti-king-chess.html

CHESS · VARIANT 12 OF 153

Antichess

8×8

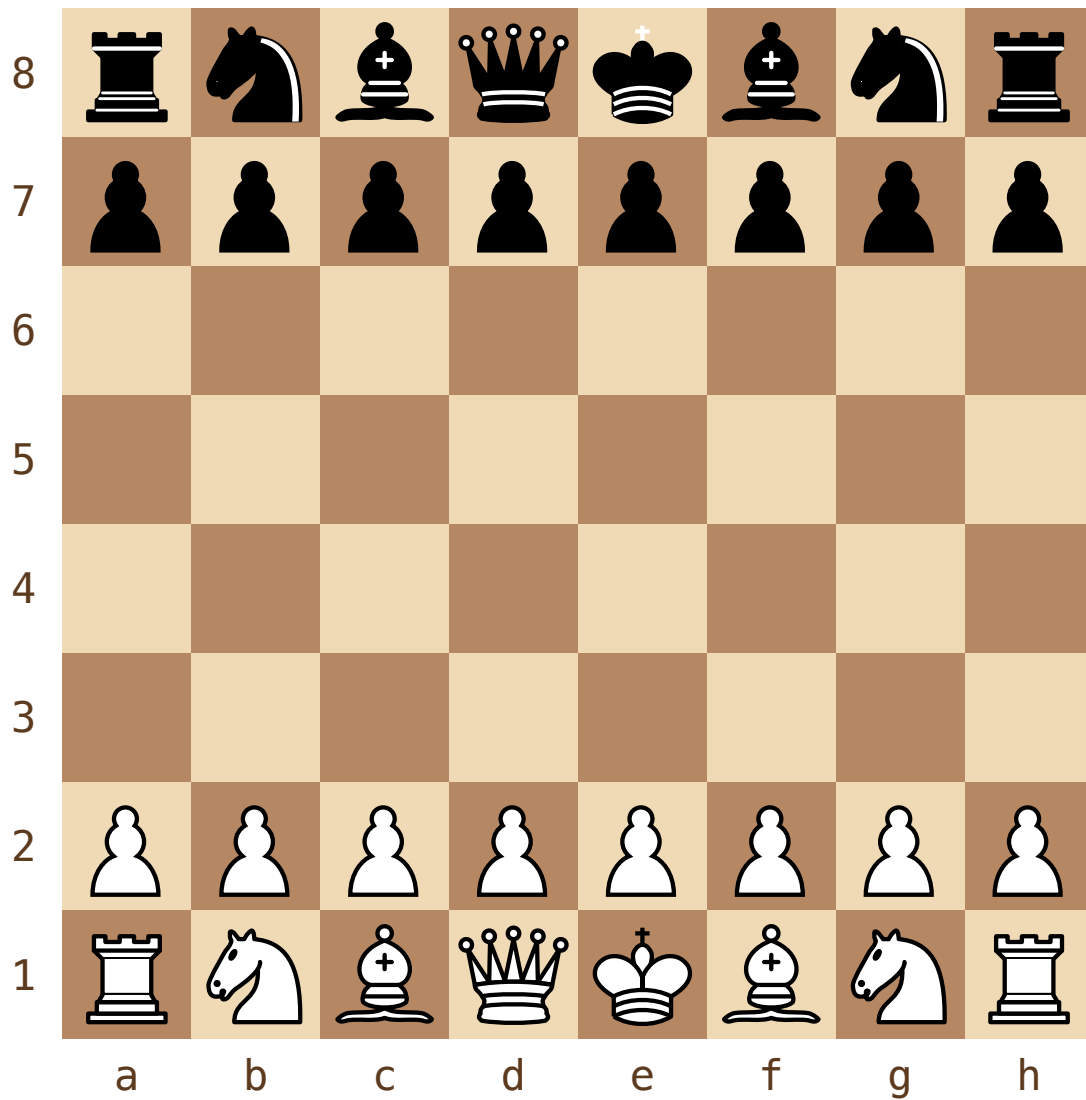
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ANTICHESS

Captures are mandatory. Lose all your pieces to win. Inverts the entire logic of chess.



Antichess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=antichess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ If a capture is available, you **MUST** capture. If multiple captures are available, you may choose which one.
- ♦ The King has no royal status – it can be captured like any other piece and there is no check or checkmate.
- ♦ No castling.
- ♦ Pawns may promote to King (in addition to the usual pieces).
- ♦ Stalemate (no legal moves) is a **WIN** for the stalemated player.

WIN CONDITION

Lose all your pieces, or be stalemated.

STRATEGY

You want to force your opponent to capture your pieces while avoiding being forced to keep yours. Opening theory is highly developed – certain openings force wins within a few moves.

ATTRIBUTION

Also known as “Losing Chess,” “Giveaway Chess,” or “Suicide Chess.” Traditional variant, 19th century. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 13 OF 153

Archchess

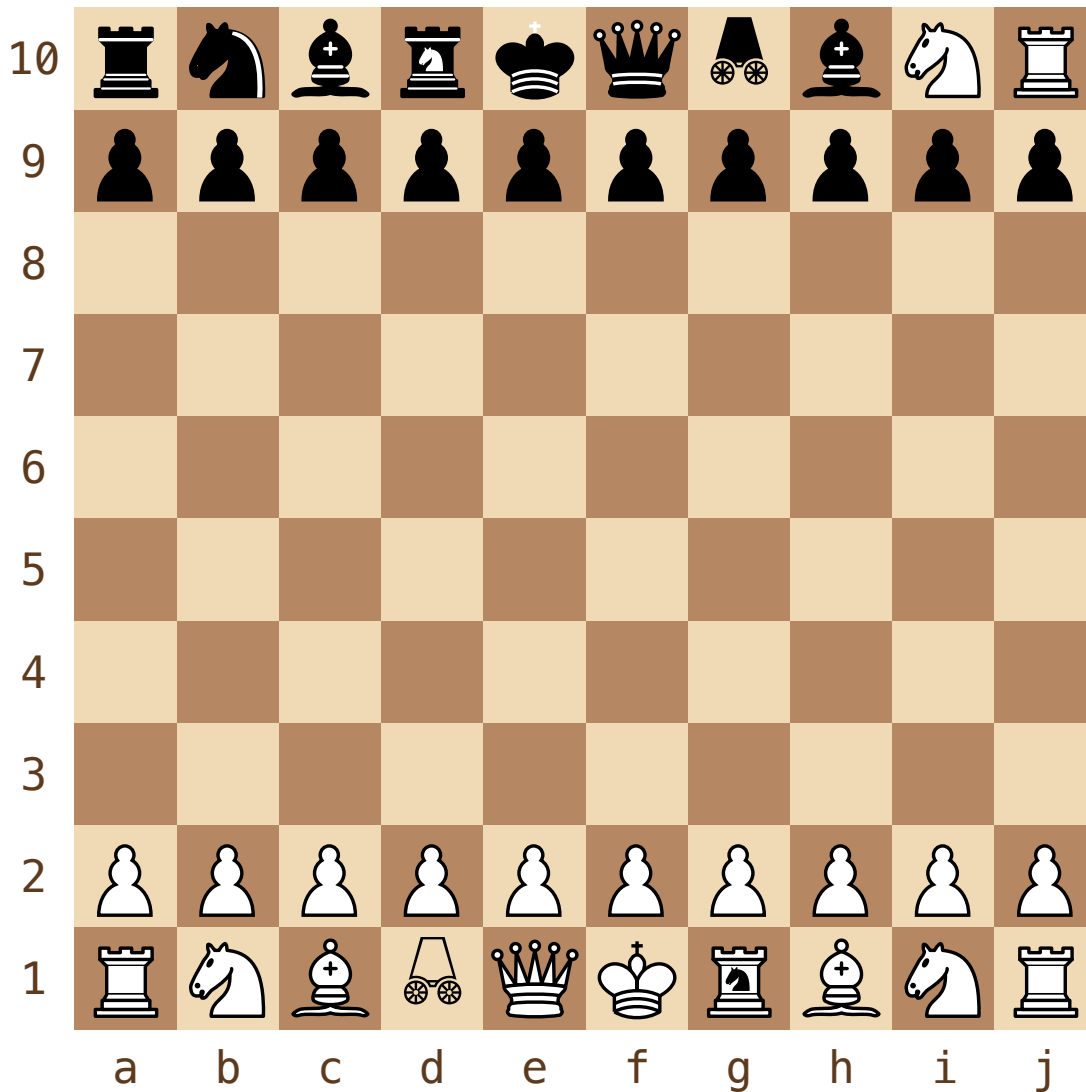
10×10

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ARCHCHESS



Archchess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=archchess>

Archchess (Italian: *Arcisacchiere*) was invented by Dr. Francesco Piacenza and described in his book *I camoeggamenti deglie Scacchi*, published in Turin in 1683. It is played on a 10×10 board and adds two new piece types – the Centurion and the Decurion – plus two extra Pawns per side, to an otherwise standard chess army.

The rules described here are based on materials written by John Gollon (draft chapters of an unpublished second chess variant book), transmitted to Hans Bodlaender via Eric Greenwood in 1997.

THE BOARD

10 files (a-j) × 10 ranks = 100 squares. Left corners at each player's side are dark colored.

STARTING POSITION

White (rank 1): Rook a1 · Knight b1 · Bishop c1 · Centurion d1 · King e1 · Queen f1 · Decurion g1 · Bishop h1 · Knight i1 · Rook j1

White pawns (rank 2): a2-j2 (10 pawns)

Black (rank 10): Rook a10 · Knight b10 · Bishop c10 · Centurion d10 · King e10 · Queen f10 · Decurion g10 · Bishop h10 · Knight i10 · Rook j10

Black pawns (rank 9): a9-j9 (10 pawns)

PIECES

PIECE	MOVEMENT
King	One square in any direction
Queen	Slides any distance orthogonally or diagonally
Rook	Slides any distance orthogonally
Bishop	Slides any distance diagonally
Knight	L-shaped leap
Pawn	One square forward; captures diagonally; double first step permitted (see en passant exception)
Centurion	Leaps exactly 2 squares horizontally, vertically, or diagonally (Dabbaba + Alfil), or leaps as a Knight. May jump over intervening pieces in all cases.
Decurion	Moves one square diagonally (= Fers)

PROMOTION

Pawns reaching the last rank **always promote to Queen**. No other promotion choice is available.

CASTLING AND THE KING'S LEAP

Castling in Archchess is flexible: the Rook moves one or more squares toward the King's original square, and the King moves one or more squares toward the Rook's original square. As an alternative to castling, the King may make a **King's Leap**: a jump of two squares straight forward or horizontally.

Conditions for either option: the King must not have moved previously; the castling Rook must not have moved; no square the King crosses is attacked by an opponent's piece; the King does not land in check. Whether being in check prevents castling or the King's Leap is not specified in the source.

EN PASSANT EXCEPTION

Pawns may make a double first step, **except** when both of the following are simultaneously true: the pawn could be captured en passant by the standard rules, and the double step would block a check on the King. In that specific case, the double step is not permitted.

SPECIAL RULES

- ♦ **Stalemate** is a **draw**.
- ♦ **Win** by checkmate only.
- ♦ **No bare King rule**.

ATTRIBUTION

Archchess (*Arcisacchiere*) by Francesco Piacenza, 1683. Rules documented at chessvariants.com/historic.dir/arch.html (Hans Bodlaender, from Gollon via Greenwood, 1997).

CHESS · VARIANT 14 OF 153

ASEAN Chess

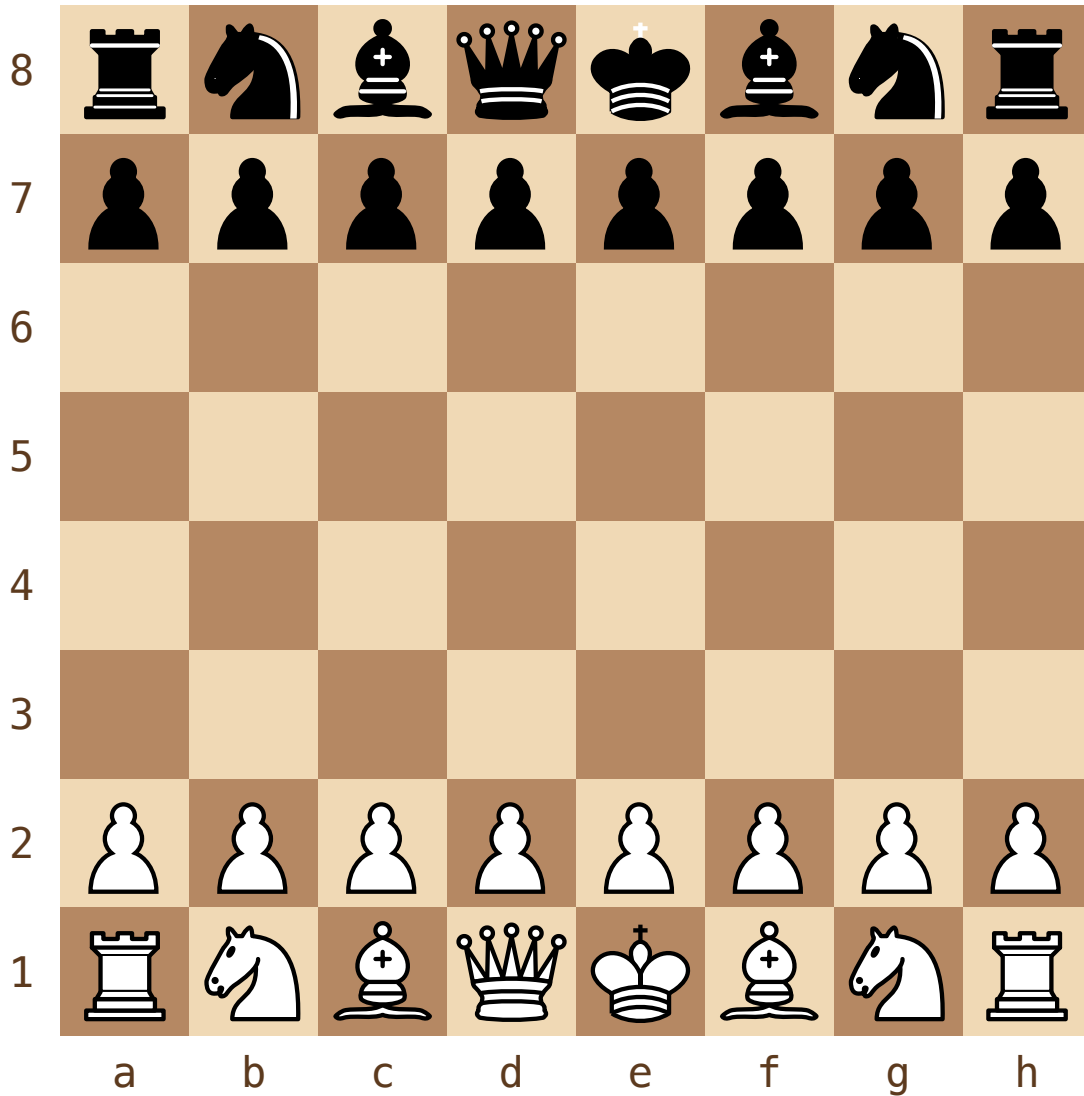
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ASEAN CHESS



ASEAN Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=asean>

ASEAN Chess was codified by the ASEAN Chess Federation as a standardized form of traditional Southeast Asian chess intended to serve as a regional competitive standard and a bridge between FIDE chess and local traditions such as Makruk (Thai Chess) and Sittuyin (Burmese Chess). It uses the same piece roster as Makruk but with two key adjustments: Pawns start on rank 2 (as in FIDE chess, not rank 3 as in Makruk) and the counting rules are streamlined.

PIECES

ENGLISH NAME	LOCAL NAME	MOVEMENT
King	Khun	1 square in any direction.
Ferz (Queen)	Met	1 square diagonally in any direction. (Not the unlimited-range FIDE Queen.)
Bishop	Khon	1 square diagonally in any direction. (Identical movement to the Ferz.)
Knight	Ma	Standard (2+1) L-shape jump; leaps over intervening pieces.
Rook	Ruea	Slides any distance orthogonally.
Pawn	Bia	1 square straight forward; captures 1 square diagonally forward. No double first move.

STARTING POSITION

Pawns start on rank 2 (White) and rank 7 (Black) – unlike Makruk, where Pawns begin on ranks 3 and 6.

```

8 ♚ ♜ ♞ ♟ ♠ ♡ ♛ ♞
7 ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟
6 . . . . . . . .
5 . . . . . . . .
4 . . . . . . . .
3 . . . . . . . .
2 ♠ ♠ ♠ ♠ ♠ ♠ ♠ ♠
1 ♜ ♞ ♞ ♠ ♡ ♡ ♞ ♜
  a b c d e f g h

```

Note: The Ferz (met) is placed at d1 for White and e8 for Black, beside the King. The Bishop occupies f1/c8 (and c1/f8), flanking the Ferz and Knight.

PAWN PROMOTION

A Pawn that reaches rank 6 (for White) or rank 3 (for Black) promotes immediately and automatically to a Ferz. There is no other promotion option. A promoted Ferz moves 1 square diagonally, like all Ferz pieces.

Note: Promotion occurs at rank 6/3, not at the final rank. Once promoted, the Ferz can advance further into the opponent's territory.

FERZ AND BISHOP MOVEMENT

Both the Ferz and the Bishop move exactly 1 square diagonally. They differ only in role and number:

- ♦ Each player has 1 Ferz (starting next to the King).
- ♦ Each player has 2 Bishops.
- ♦ All three pieces have identical movement.

This means each player effectively has three pieces of the same movement type, giving the Ferz its value through the central position it starts from and through promotion.

CHECK AND CHECKMATE

Standard rules. The King is in check when attacked by any opponent piece; the owner must resolve it. Checkmate (check with no legal escape) ends the game; the checkmated player loses.

STALEMATE

Stalemate (a player has no legal move but is not in check) is a draw in ASEAN Chess – unlike in Makruk, where stalemate is a loss for the stalemated player.

COUNTING RULES (DRAW MECHANISM)

When one side has no more Pawns, the opposing side must deliver checkmate before a move count is reached or the game is drawn. The count begins from the moment the last Pawn is captured.

REMAINING ATTACKER FORCE	MOVES TO MATE
Rook(s) only	16 moves
Bishops and/or Knights	44 moves
Ferz only	64 moves

If the count expires without checkmate, the game is declared a draw. The count resets if any piece is captured during the count.

DIFFERENCES FROM MAKRUK

FEATURE	MAKRUK (THAI)	ASEAN CHESS
Pawn starting rank	Rank 3/6	Rank 2/7
Stalemate	Loss for stalemated player	Draw
Counting rules	Makruk counting system	Streamlined table above
Koul/Bishop move	1-step diagonal only	1-step diagonal only (same)

ATTRIBUTION

Codified by the ASEAN Chess Federation for regional competitive play. Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 15 OF 153

Atomic Chess

8×8

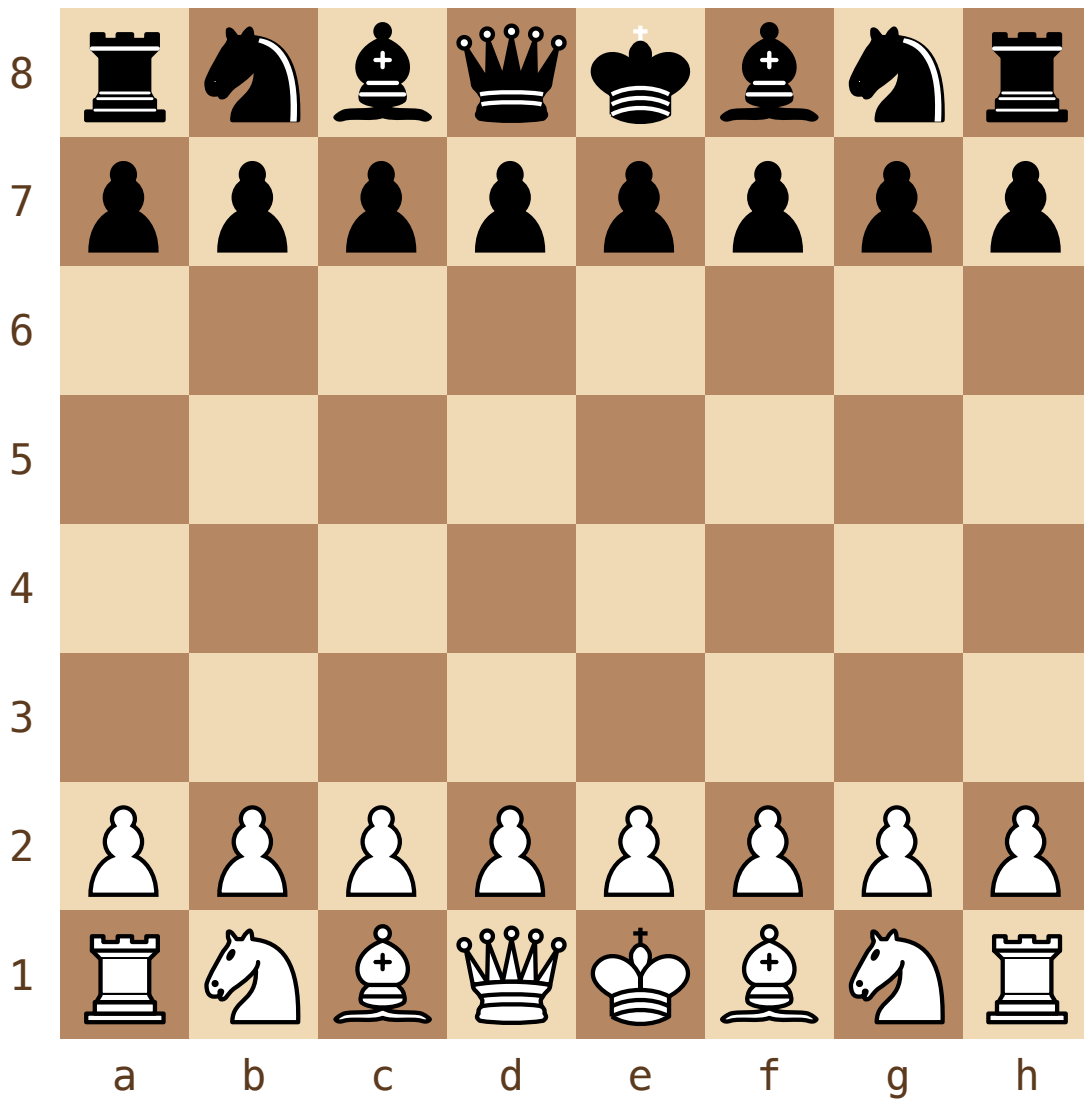
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ATOMIC CHESS

Captures explode, destroying all non-pawn pieces in a one-square radius around the capture square. Including the capturing piece.



Atomic Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=atomic>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ When a piece captures, an “explosion” occurs on the capture square.
- ♦ The explosion destroys: the capturing piece, the captured piece, and ALL non-pawn pieces on squares adjacent (horizontally, vertically, and diagonally) to the capture square.
- ♦ Pawns survive explosions (they are not destroyed by adjacent captures, only by direct capture).
- ♦ A King CAN be destroyed by an adjacent explosion – this counts as a win.
- ♦ You may NOT make a capture that would explode your own King.
- ♦ Because Kings can be destroyed by explosions, Kings can stand adjacent to each other (since capturing the enemy King would explode your own).
- ♦ No castling if the King or Rook has been exploded.

WIN CONDITION

Destroy the opponent’s King (by exploding it or, rarely, checkmate).

STRATEGY

Material sacrifices that trigger chain explosions near the enemy King are the primary tactic. Early Queen sacrifices are common if they explode near the King. Pawn structure matters because pawns are explosion-proof shields.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Popularised on Lichess and Chess.com. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 16 OF 153

Avalanche Chess

8×8

BOARD

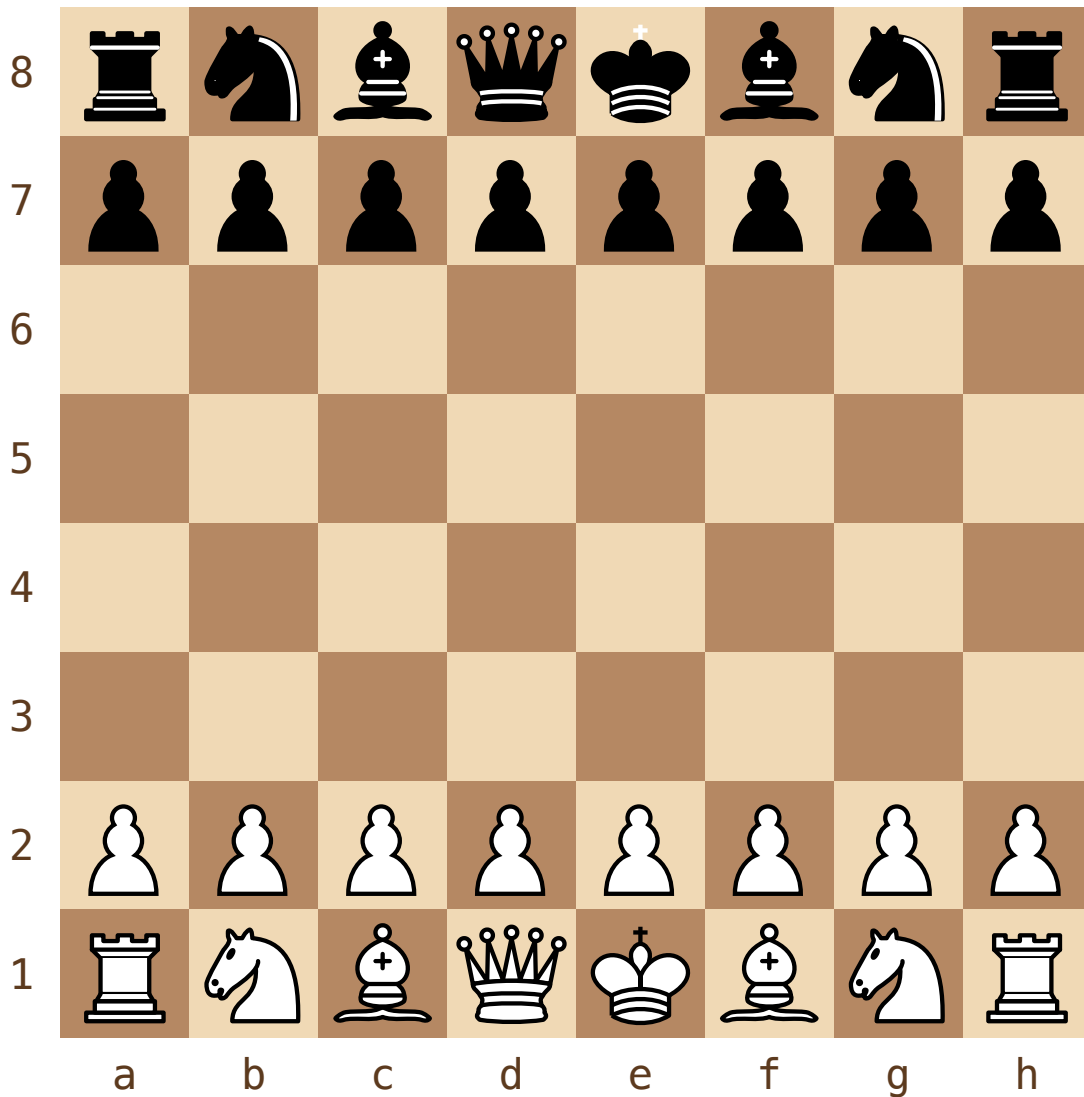
2

PLAYERS

Avalanche Chess

Invented by Ralph Betza, 1977. One of the most popular postal Chess variants, described in Pritchard's *Encyclopedia of Chess Variants* and *Popular Chess Variants*, and in Schmittberger's *New Rules for Classic Games*.

OVERVIEW



Avalanche Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=avalanche>

Avalanche Chess adds a compulsory obligation to every move: after making a normal chess move, you must push one of your opponent's pawns one square toward you. This "pawn push" creates an avalanche of pressure as the opponent's pawns steadily advance.

SETUP

Standard FIDE starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply, with the following modifications:

THE TWO-PART TURN

Each turn consists of **two parts, both of which must be completed**:

- 1 Move:** Make any legal chess move (normal move, capture, castling, etc.).
- 2 Push:** Advance one of the opponent's pawns one square forward (toward yourself). The push is a single square only and is never a capture.

CONSTRAINTS ON THE PUSH

- The push is **obligatory** unless the opponent has no pawn that can legally be advanced (all pawns blocked).
- The pawn being pushed must have a clear square immediately in front of it (no piece in the way).

A player's first part of the turn (the move) must be legal according to standard rules. A player **cannot** leave their King

- in check after part 1, planning to escape check in part 2 – the two parts do not interact: check must be resolved in part 1.

LOSING BY PUSH

If pushing an opponent's pawn causes the pushing player's own King to be in check (i.e., the moved pawn reveals or

- creates a check against the pusher), that player **loses immediately**, even if they checked or mated the opponent in part 1 of the same turn.

PROMOTION BY PUSH

- If a pushed pawn reaches the last rank (promotion rank), the **pawn's owner** chooses what piece it promotes to.
- If the promotion results in a check against the player who did the pushing, that player **loses immediately**.

NO EN PASSANT

En passant captures are not used in Avalanche Chess.

BALANCED AVALANCHE CHESS

White has a substantial first-move advantage in standard Avalanche Chess. To compensate, **Balanced Avalanche Chess** (Alessandro Castelli) removes White's pawn push on the very first move: White's first turn consists of the move only; from White's second turn onward, both parts are required.

STRATEGY NOTES

The pawn push dramatically changes strategy. A player must think not only about their own position but also which of their pawns are most dangerous when advanced. Passed pawns become double-edged: your opponent can race them to promotion. Check threats must be calculated with great care since a push that exposes your own King loses the game instantly.

Source: chessvariants.com/mvopponent.dir/avalanche.html

CHESS · VARIANT 17 OF 153

Balbo's Chess

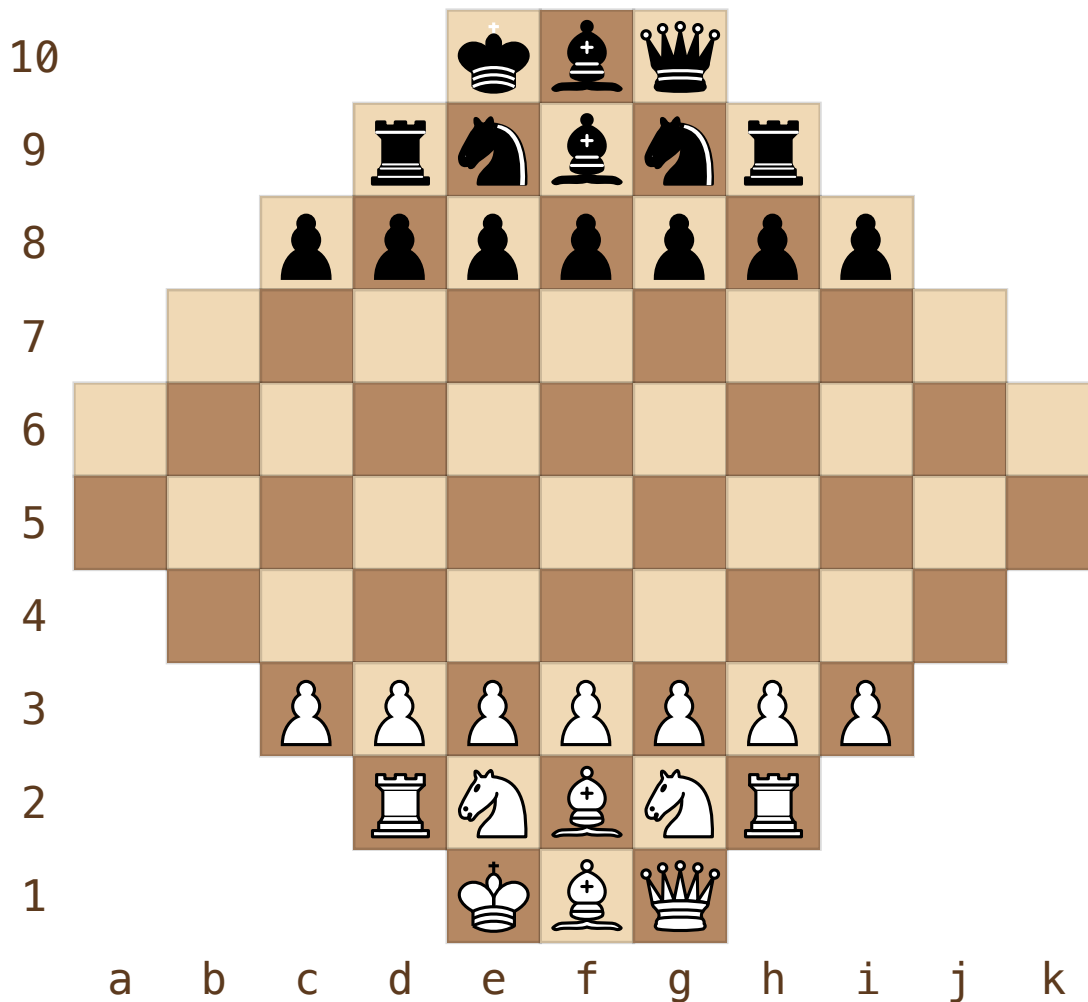
Diamond-shaped, 70 squares (ranks 3-5-7-9-11-11-9-7-5-3, centred on file f)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

BALBO'S CHESS



Balbo's Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=balbos-chess>

Balbo's Chess was invented by M.G. Balbo in 1974 and is mentioned in Pritchard's *Encyclopedia of Chess Variants*. It is played on an unusual **diamond-shaped board** with ten ranks of increasing then decreasing width, all centred on file f. All standard chess rules apply, but the board shape creates unusual opening dynamics and position-dependent promotion rules.

THE BOARD

The board has 10 ranks, each centred on file f. The number of squares per rank (and the files present) is:

RANK	WIDTH	FILES PRESENT
1	3	e, f, g
2	5	d, e, f, g, h
3	7	c, d, e, f, g, h, i
4	9	b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j
5	11	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k
6	11	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k
7	9	b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j
8	7	c, d, e, f, g, h, i
9	5	d, e, f, g, h
10	3	e, f, g

Total: $3+5+7+9+11+11+9+7+5+3 = 70$ squares. Files a–k (11 files at widest), ranks 1–10.

STARTING POSITION

White:

- ♦ King e1 · Queen g1
- ♦ Bishop f1 · Bishop f2
- ♦ Rook d2 · Rook h2
- ♦ Knight e2 · Knight g2
- ♦ Pawns c3–i3 (7 pawns)

Black (mirror on ranks 8–10):

- ♦ King e10 · Queen g10
- ♦ Bishop f10 · Bishop f9
- ♦ Rook d9 · Rook h9
- ♦ Knight e9 · Knight g9
- ♦ Pawns c8–i8 (7 pawns)

Warning: Pritchard notes that both sides have an immediate $N \times f3/f8$ mate in three moves available from the starting position. Players should be aware of this.

PROMOTION

Promotion rules depend on which square the Pawn reaches:

- ♦ **Rank 10 (e10, f10, g10), d9, or h9** (the furthest reachable squares on files d and h, which disappear before rank 10): Pawn promotes to any piece – Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight.
- ♦ **c8 or i8** (the furthest reachable squares on files c and i): Pawn may only promote to a **minor piece** (Knight or Bishop).

Note: Files c, d, h, and i do not reach rank 10 – they end at ranks 8 or 9 as the diamond narrows. Squares on those files at the edge of the board are the promotion squares for pawns on those files.

RULES

All standard chess rules apply (checkmate wins, stalemate is a draw, en passant, castling if reachable). The unusual board shape means there is no central pawn battle in the traditional sense – the two armies meet obliquely as the board narrows toward the centre of each side.

ATTRIBUTION

Balbo's Chess by M.G. Balbo, 1974. Documented at chessvariants.com/shape.dir/balbo.html (Hans Bodlaender and Fergus Duniho, from Pritchard's *Encyclopedia of Chess Variants*).

CHESS · VARIANT 18 OF 153

Benedict Chess

8×8

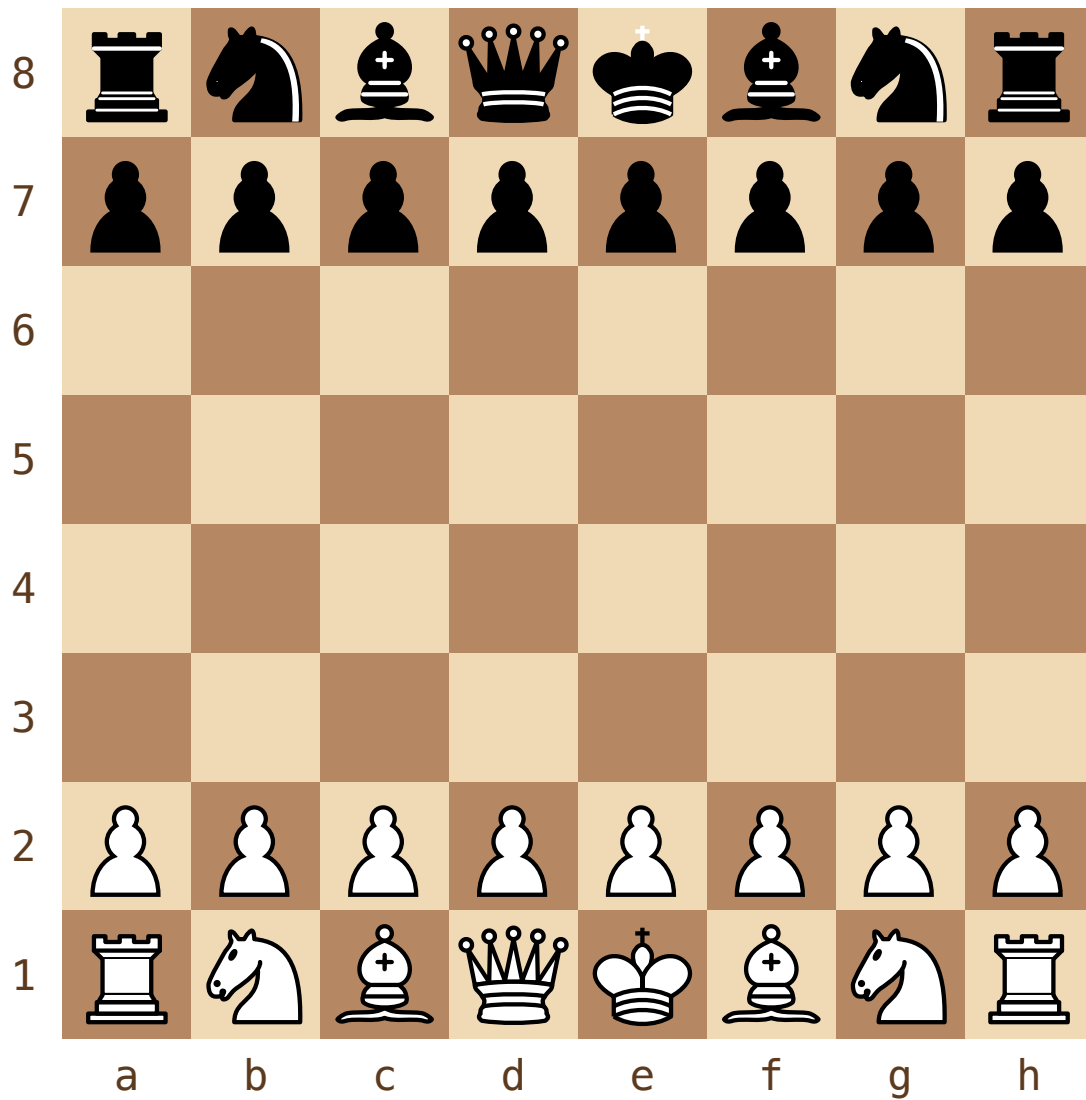
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

BENEDICT CHESS

There are no captures. When a piece moves to a square from which it attacks enemy pieces, those pieces convert to the mover's colour. Win by converting the opponent's King.



Benedict Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=benedict>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Pieces move as in standard chess but there are NO captures.
- ♦ When a piece moves to a new square, every enemy piece it now attacks (could move to, if it were a capture) immediately converts to the moving player's colour.
- ♦ Multiple enemy pieces can convert from a single move.
- ♦ Pawns convert enemies on the diagonals they attack, not the square in front.
- ♦ The King can be converted – this ends the game immediately.
- ♦ Since there are no captures, the total number of pieces on the board never decreases.
- ♦ No castling (the King is too vulnerable to conversion near the centre).
- ♦ No en passant (there are no captures).

WIN CONDITION

Convert the opponent's King to your colour (by moving a piece that attacks the King's square).

STRATEGY

Long-range pieces (Queen, Bishops, Rooks) are enormously powerful because they can convert many pieces at once. The game snowballs – converting pieces gives you more attackers. Protecting your King from being in ANY attack line is critical. Early moves are decisive; one careless move can trigger chain conversions.

ATTRIBUTION

C. S. Elliott, 1971. Named after Benedict Arnold. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 19 OF 153

Berolina Chess

8×8

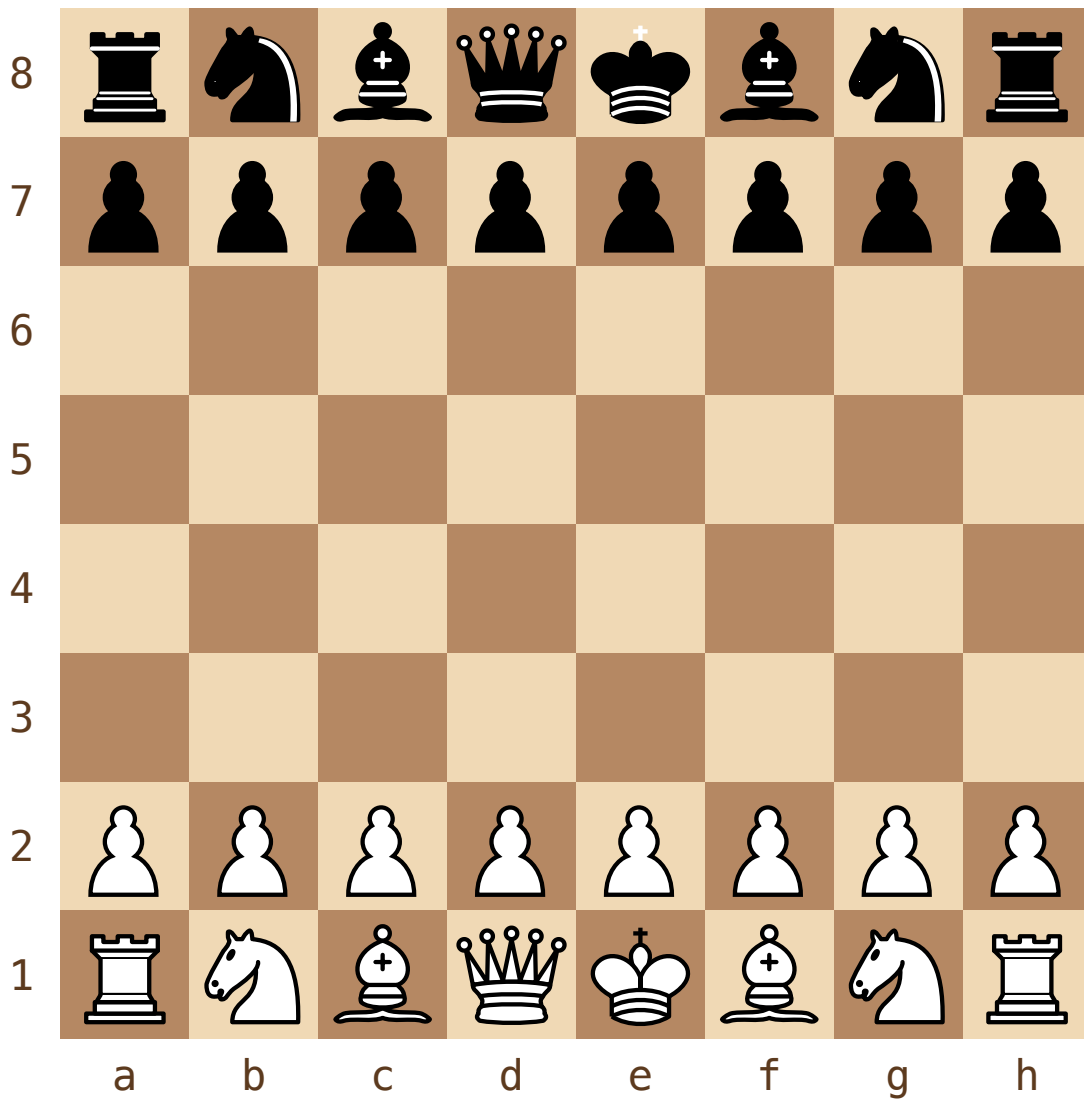
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

BEROLINA CHESS

Pawns are inverted: they advance diagonally and capture straight ahead. Named after Berlin, where it was invented in 1926.



Berolina Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=berolina-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup (pawns use Berolina movement rules).

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Pawns move one or two squares diagonally forward (instead of straight forward).
- ♦ Pawns capture one square straight forward (instead of diagonally).
- ♦ En passant applies to Berolina pawn double-moves.
- ♦ Promotion occurs on the 8th rank as normal.
- ♦ All other pieces move and capture as standard chess.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Berolina pawns control different squares than normal pawns. A pawn on e2 can advance to d3 or f3 (and double-move to c4 or g4), but captures on e3. This makes pawn chains behave very differently — adjacent pawns no longer protect each other. Bishops become relatively weaker since pawns compete for diagonal space.

ATTRIBUTION

Invented by Edmund Hebermann in Berlin, 1926. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 20 OF 153

Berserk Chess

8×8

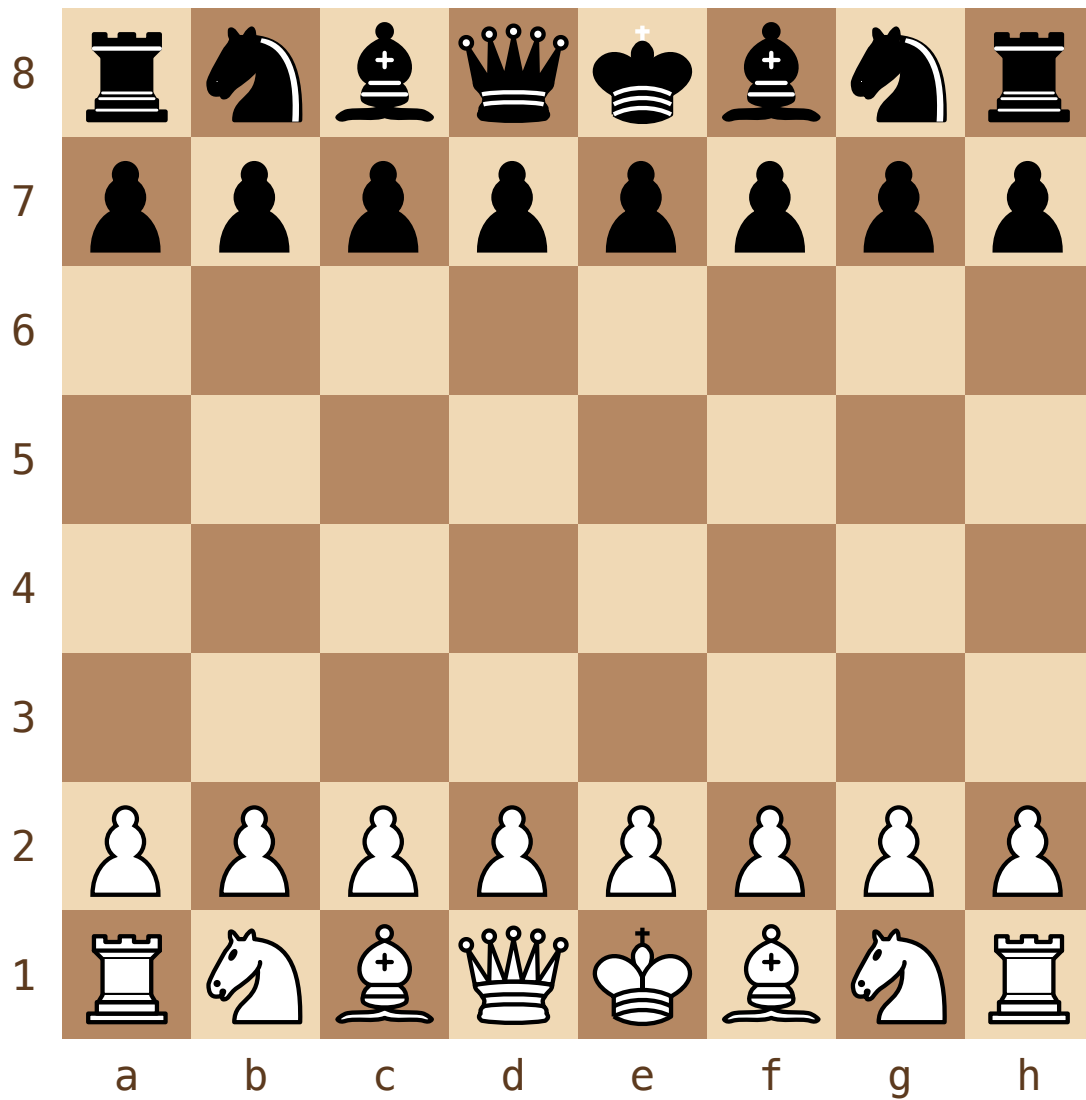
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

BERSERK CHESS

When you deliver check, you immediately get a bonus move with a different piece. Aggressive play is rewarded with extra tempo.



Berserk Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=berserk>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement applies.
- ♦ When a player delivers check, they immediately get one bonus move.
- ♦ The bonus move must be made by a DIFFERENT piece than the one that gave check.
- ♦ The bonus move may NOT give check (no cascading bonus moves).
- ♦ If the bonus move would deliver check, it is illegal – choose a different bonus move.
- ♦ If no legal non-checking bonus move exists, the bonus is forfeited.
- ♦ Castling, en passant, and promotion follow standard rules.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (standard).

STRATEGY

Discovered checks are extremely powerful – the discovering piece delivers check, and the bonus move can develop or reposition another piece. Queen and Bishop batteries that create check threats dominate. Piece development should prioritise creating check potential. Being passive is very dangerous since the opponent gains extra tempo from every check.

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant, popularised on online chess platforms (2000s). Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 21 OF 153

Bird's Chess

10×8

BOARD

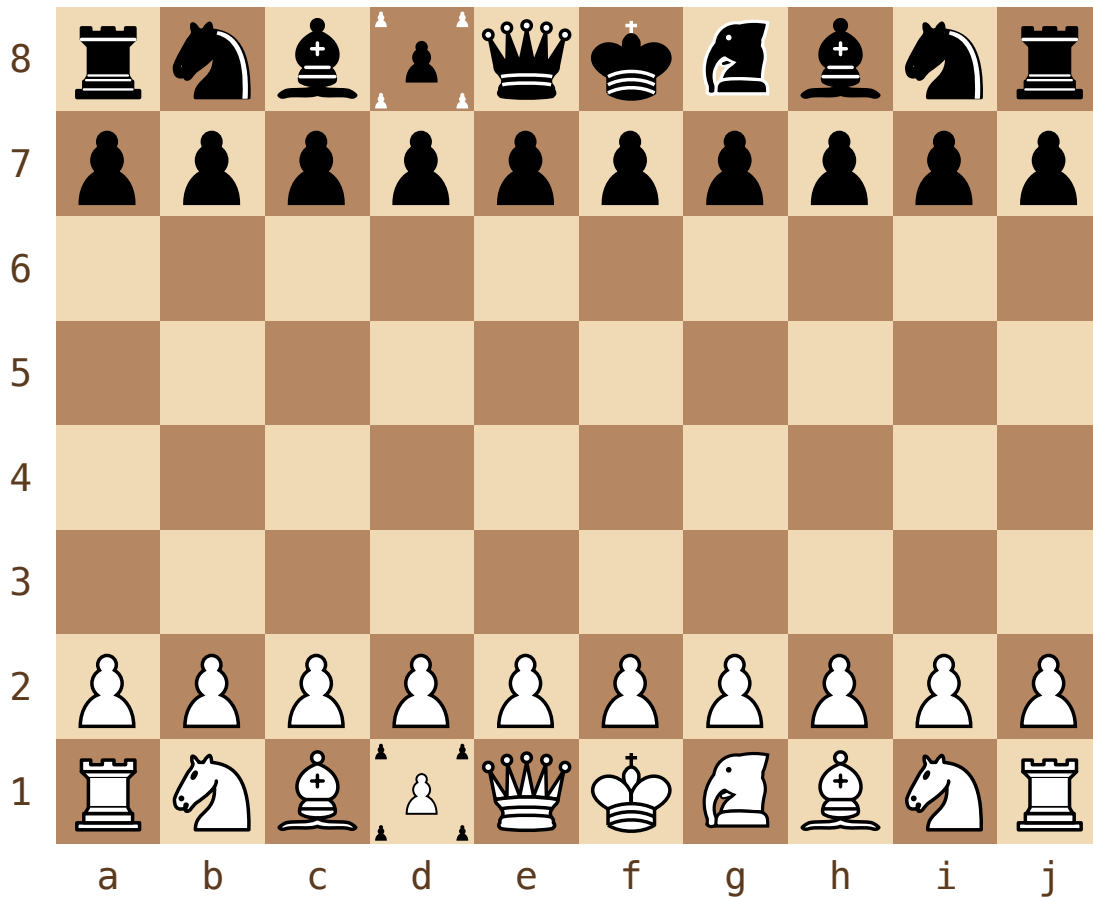
2

PLAYERS

Bird's Chess

Invented by Henry Bird, 1874. Published in the City of London Chess Magazine. A predecessor to Capablanca's Chess.

OVERVIEW



Bird's Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=birds-chess>

Bird's Chess extends standard chess to a 10x8 board by adding two compound pieces per side: the Guard (Rook + Knight) and the Equerry (Bishop + Knight). Capablanca likely drew inspiration from this game when designing Capablanca's Chess.

SETUP

10-file board (files a-j), 8 ranks.

FEN: rnbqgkebnr/pppppppppp/10/10/10/10/PPPPPPPPPP/RNBGQKEBNR w - - 0 1
(G/g = Guard, E/e = Equerry)

White (rank 1, a-j): Rook(a1), Knight(b1), Bishop(c1), Guard(d1), Queen(e1), King(f1), Equerry(g1), Bishop(h1), Knight(i1), Rook(j1) **White Pawns (rank 2):** a2-j2

Black (rank 8, a-j): Rook(a8), Knight(b8), Bishop(c8), Guard(d8), Queen(e8), King(f8), Equerry(g8), Bishop(h8), Knight(i8), Rook(j8) **Black Pawns (rank 7):** a7-j7

Alternative: Black's back rank may mirror White's (with Black's Queen on the same file as White's Queen). Either setup is playable.

PIECES

All standard FIDE pieces move as usual. Two additional pieces:

GUARD

Moves as a **Rook** (slides orthogonally any distance) **or** a **Knight** (L-shape leap). Equivalent to the Chancellor.

EQUERRY

Moves as a **Bishop** (slides diagonally any distance) **or** a **Knight** (L-shape leap). Equivalent to the Archbishop. Not colour-bound.

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply with the following modifications:

CASTLING

Castling uses a modified rule. The King moves **three squares** toward the Rook; the Rook then jumps over the King to land on the square immediately adjacent to the King on the side toward center:

- ♦ **Queenside castling** (toward a1): King moves f1→c1 (three squares left); Rook moves a1→d1.
- ♦ **Kingside castling** (toward j1): King moves f1→i1 (three squares right); Rook moves j1→h1.

The same applies symmetrically for Black. Standard castling conditions apply: neither King nor Rook may have moved previously; no pieces between them; King not in check; King does not pass through check.

PAWN PROMOTION

Pawns reaching the far rank may promote to: Queen, Guard, Equerry, Bishop, Rook, or Knight.

ALL OTHER RULES

En passant, stalemate (draw), and all other FIDE rules apply normally.

Source: chessvariants.com/large.dir/bird.html; based on Gollon manuscript sent to Greenwood, 1976

CHESS · VARIANT 22 OF 153

Blind Chess (Banqi)

4×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

8

7

6

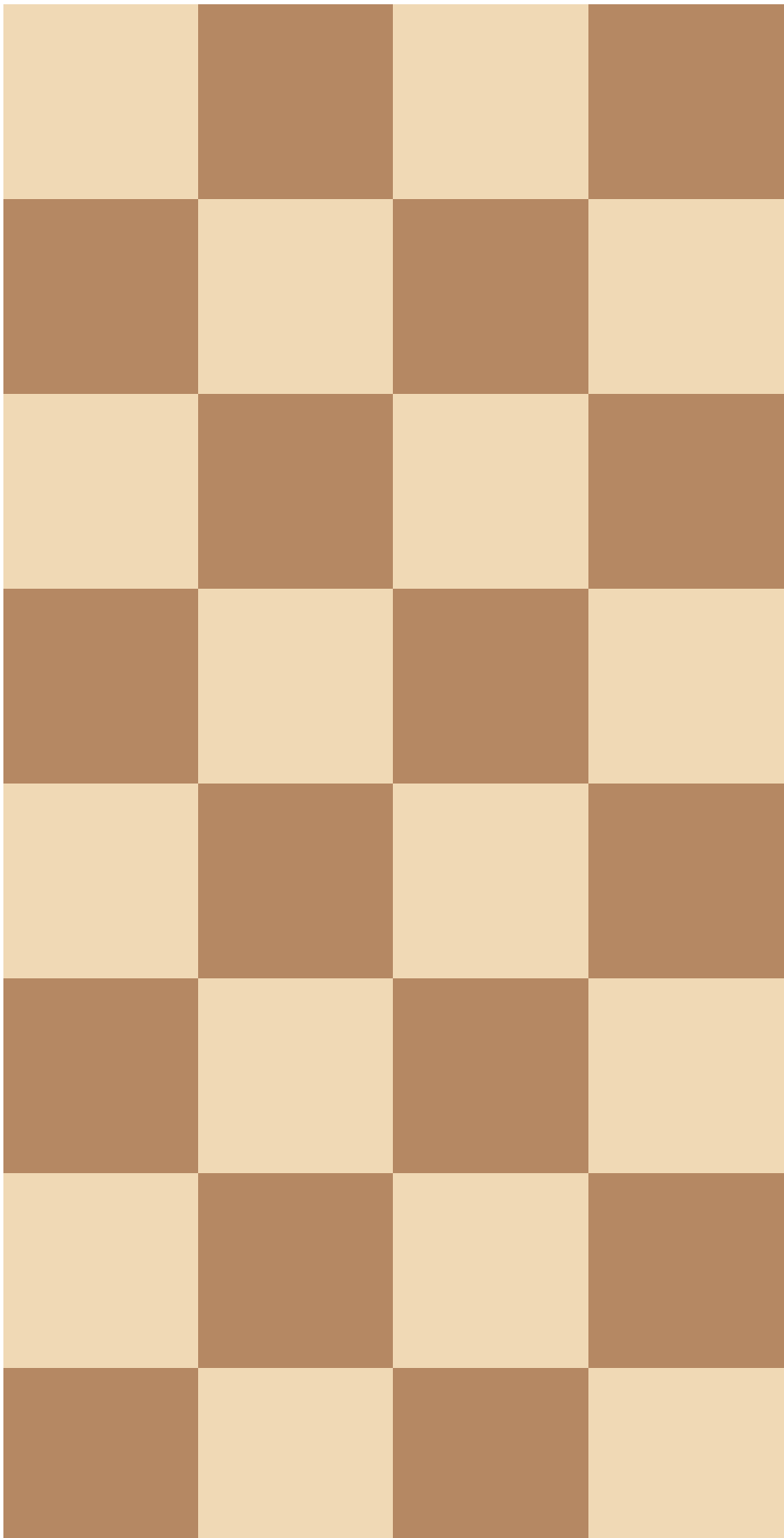
5

4

3

2

1



Banqi (半棋, bànqí, “Half Chess”), also known as Dark Chess (暗棋) or Blind Chess, is a two-player Chinese board game played on a 4×8 grid — one half of the Xiangqi board. All 32 pieces are placed face-down at the start; players reveal pieces one at a time and the identity of unrevealed pieces is unknown. The rules documented here follow the Taiwanese version, which is widely played.

THE BOARD

4 files × 8 ranks = 32 squares. Pieces occupy the squares (not intersections). The board is played as half of a Xiangqi board, using only one side of the river.

SETUP

All 32 pieces are shuffled and placed face-down one per square in a random arrangement. Neither player knows what piece is on which square.

Piece set (16 Red + 16 Black = 32 total):

PIECE	COUNT PER SIDE
General (将 / 帅)	1
Advisor (士 / 仕)	2
Elephant (象 / 相)	2
Chariot (车 / 俥)	2
Horse (马 / 騊)	2
Cannon (炮 / 砲)	2
Soldier (兵 / 卒)	5
Total	16

The first player to flip a piece establishes their colour for the game (Red or Black, depending on the colour of the piece revealed).

TURNS

On each turn a player does exactly one of:

- 1 **Flip** a face-down piece, revealing it. The piece belongs to whichever colour it shows, regardless of who flipped it.
- 2 **Move** one of their own face-up pieces one square orthogonally (up, down, left, or right) to an empty adjacent square.
- 3 **Capture** an opponent’s face-up piece, subject to the capture rules below.

Face-down pieces cannot be captured.

MOVEMENT

All pieces move identically: one square up, down, left, or right. There is no piece-specific movement in Banqi – the General, Soldier, and every piece in between all move the same way. The Cannon's capture is the only exception.

CAPTURE HIERARCHY (TAIWANESE RULES)

Pieces are ranked. A piece may only capture an opponent's piece of **equal or lower rank**, with two exceptions:

Hierarchy (high to low): General → Advisor → Elephant → Chariot → Horse → Soldier

Exception 1 – Soldier captures General: Despite being the lowest rank, the Soldier can capture the General (and only the General with this rule). The General cannot capture Soldiers.

Exception 2 – Cannon: The Cannon is not part of the hierarchy. It captures any piece of any rank, but **must jump over exactly one intervening piece** (the "screen") to do so. The screen piece may be friendly, enemy, or face-down. A Cannon cannot capture an adjacent piece (it must jump). The Cannon is vulnerable to capture by any piece except the Soldier.

WIN CONDITION

The game ends when a player has no legal moves. This most commonly occurs because all of that player's pieces have been captured. The player with no legal moves **loses**.

STALEMATE

If one player repeatedly attacks an enemy piece it cannot capture, forcing an endless cycle (stalemate), rules vary by convention. Under Chinese Chess rules the instigating player must stop; under many casual rules, a stalemate results in a draw or the surrender of one piece to break it.

ATTRIBUTION

Banqi is a traditional Chinese game. Rules from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banqi.

CHESS · VARIANT 23 OF 153

Breakthrough

7×7

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

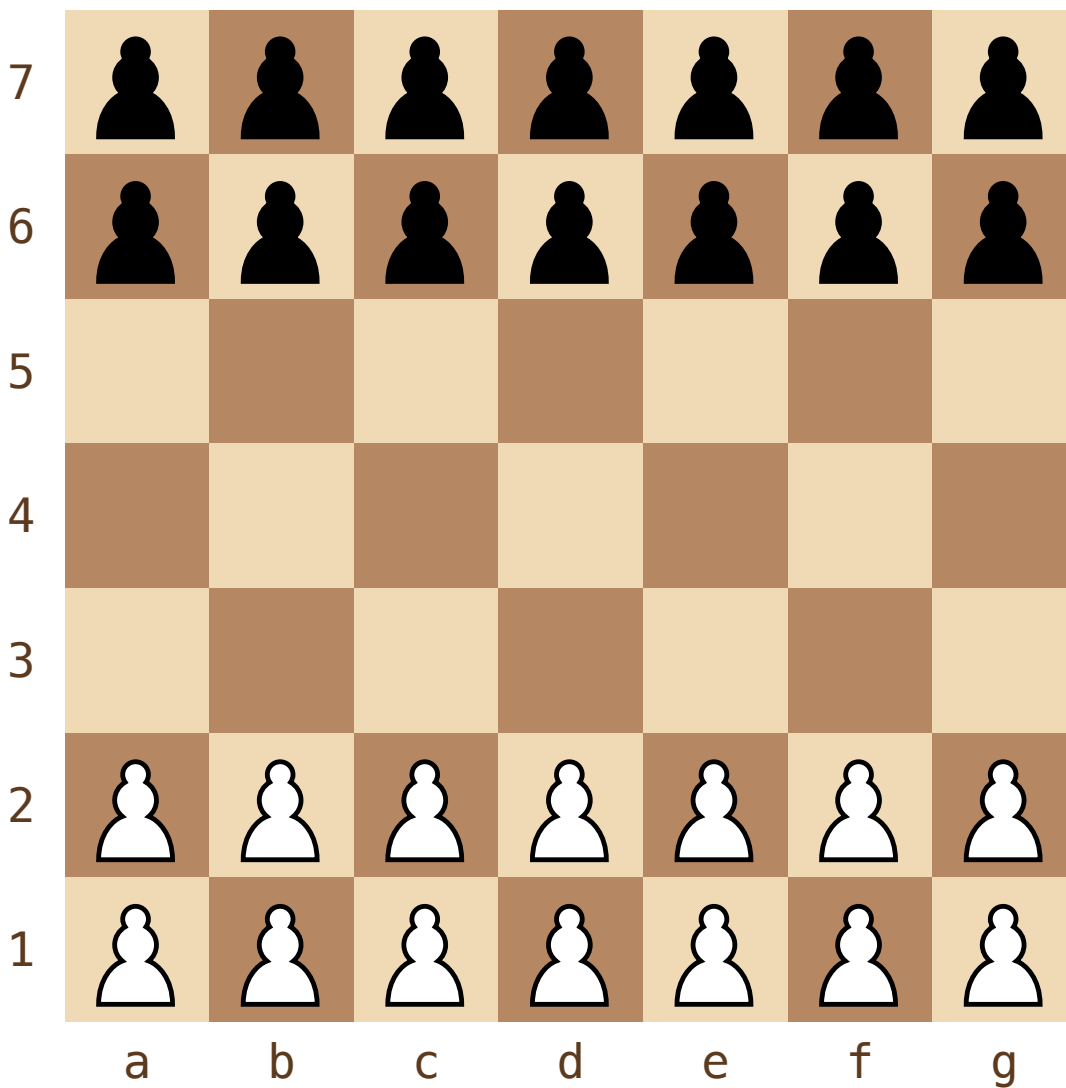
BREAKTHROUGH

Pawns only. First to reach the far rank wins. A minimalist abstract strategy game.

SETUP

Board: 7×7 grid (49 squares).

FEN: ppppppp/ppppppp/7/7/7/PPPPPPP/PPPPPPP w - - 0 1



Breakthrough – starting position (7×7)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=breakthrough>

PIECES

Pieces: Each player starts with 14 pawns filling their first two ranks.

MOVEMENT

- ♦ Pawns move one square forward (straight ahead).
- ♦ Pawns capture one square diagonally forward (same as standard chess pawns).
- ♦ Pawns may also MOVE (not just capture) one square diagonally forward. This is the key difference from chess pawns.
- ♦ No double-step. No en passant. No promotion mechanics.

WIN CONDITION

First player to reach the opponent's back rank (rank 7 for White, rank 1 for Black) wins. If a player has no legal moves, they lose.

STRATEGY

Breakthrough is deceptively deep despite its simple rules. Connected groups of pawns protect each other as they advance. Sacrificing pawns to create breakthroughs (gaps in the enemy line) is the primary tactic. The game has been solved for small boards but remains strategically rich at 7×7 and above.

ATTRIBUTION

Dan Troyka, 2000. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 24 OF 153

Brusky's Hexagonal Chess

84 hexes (horizontal, 10 files)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

BRUSKY'S HEXAGONAL CHESS

Invented by Yakov Brusky. Played on an 84-hex horizontal board with 10 files and 10 pawns per side. Introduces an expanded pawn capture option for unmoved pawns.

SETUP

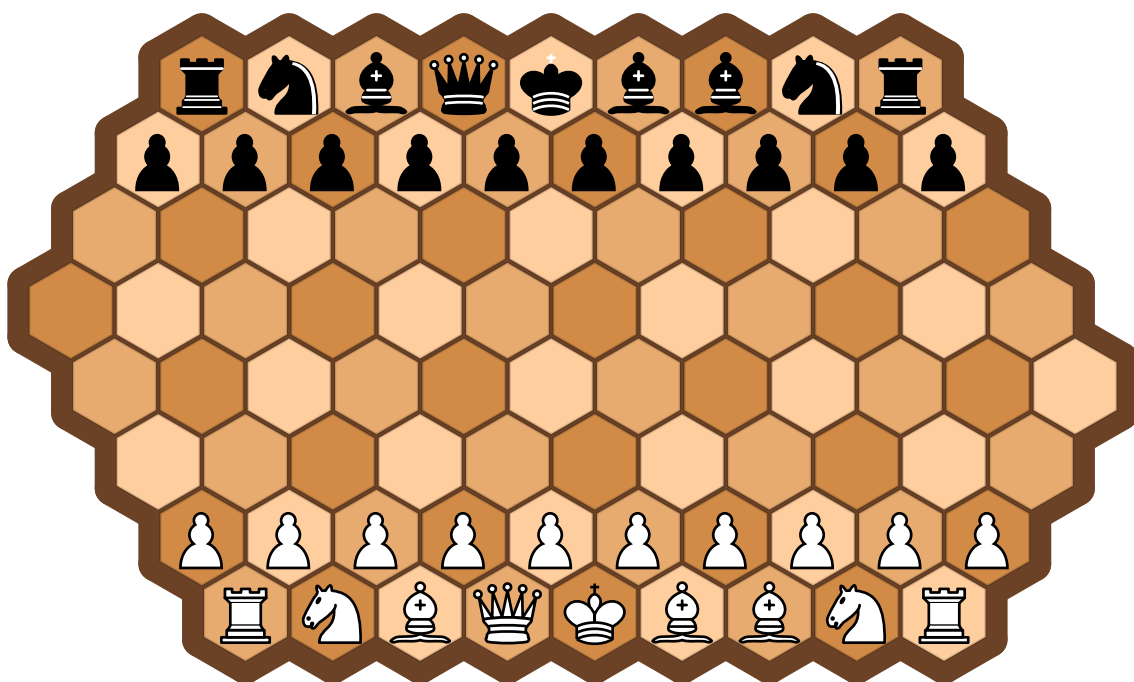
Board: 84-hex irregular hexagonal grid, horizontally oriented. 8 ranks with widths 9, 10, 11, 12, 12, 11, 10, 9 (bottom to top). Files a-i on the back ranks, expanding to a-l in the middle ranks.

White pieces (rank 1, bottom):

- ♦ King on f1
- ♦ Queen on d1
- ♦ Bishops on c1, e1, g1 (one per colour)
- ♦ Knights on b1, h1
- ♦ Rooks on a1, i1
- ♦ Pawns on a2, b2, c2, d2, e2, f2, g2, h2, i2, j2 (10 pawns on rank 2)

Black pieces (rank 8, top – mirrored):

- ♦ King on d8
- ♦ Queen on f8
- ♦ Bishops on c8, e8, g8 (one per colour)
- ♦ Knights on b8, h8
- ♦ Rooks on a8, i8
- ♦ Pawns on a7, b7, c7, d7, e7, f7, g7, h7, i7, j7 (10 pawns on rank 7)



Brusky's Hexagonal Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=brusky>

CASTLING

Castling is permitted. The King slides two cells toward the Rook (short) or three cells (long).

PAWNS

Pawns move one cell straight forward. They capture one cell diagonally forward.

An unmoved pawn has a third option: it may capture one cell **straight forward** (the direction of its non-capturing move). This gives unmoved pawns three distinct capture directions.

Blockage rule: a pawn blocked by an enemy piece in one of its forward directions is considered blocked in both forward directions. The blocked pawn cannot move straight forward even if the other forward path is clear.

A pawn on its starting rank may make an initial double step. En passant applies. Draws score 1/2 to each player.

RULES

Identical to standard chess adapted for the hex grid except as noted.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

ATTRIBUTION

Yakov Brusky. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 25 OF 153

Byzantine Chess

Circular (4 rings × 16 files)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

Byzantine Chess

Historical variant, approximately 10th century CE. Also called Round Chess.

OVERVIEW

Byzantine Chess is a Shatranj variant popular in 10th-century Byzantium (present-day Istanbul). It is played on a circular board of four concentric rings, each containing 16 squares, for 64 squares in total. The circular topology means file 16 (p) connects directly back to file 1 (a) around the ring.

BOARD

The board consists of 4 rings (ranks) and 16 files (columns) arranged in a circle:

- ♦ **Rank 1:** innermost ring
- ♦ **Rank 4:** outermost ring
- ♦ **Files a–p:** 16 columns around the circumference; file p is adjacent to file a

SETUP

White occupies one side of the circle (files a and p), Black occupies the opposite side (files h and i). Each side has 10 pieces and 8 pawns.

White

- ♦ King: a4
- ♦ Queen: p4
- ♦ Rooks: a1, p1
- ♦ Bishops: a3, p3
- ♦ Knights: a2, p2
- ♦ Pawns (right-moving): b1, b2, b3, b4
- ♦ Pawns (left-moving): o1, o2, o3, o4

Black

- ♦ King: i4
- ♦ Queen: h4
- ♦ Rooks: h1, i1
- ♦ Bishops: h3, i3
- ♦ Knights: h2, i2
- ♦ Pawns (right-moving): g1, g2, g3, g4
- ♦ Pawns (left-moving): j1, j2, j3, j4

White pawns march toward Black's position; each player's pawns advance in one of two directions around the ring.

The engine . setup FEN encodes this ring-by-ring, highest ring (4, outermost) first down to ring 1 (innermost) – the same convention used by Toroidal Byzantine Chess's FEN in this hub.

PIECES

Pieces move as in Shatranj, not FIDE chess:

King: moves one square in any direction, as in standard chess.

Rook: slides any number of squares orthogonally, as in standard chess.

Knight: jumps in an L-shape (2+1 squares), as in standard chess.

Bishop (Elephant): jumps exactly two squares diagonally (the Alfil leap). Does not slide; leaps over intervening pieces. Colour-bound.

Queen (General/Firzan): moves exactly one square diagonally. Much weaker than the FIDE Queen.

Pawn: advances one square forward along the ring (no double push from the starting position). Captures one square diagonally forward. **Pawns cannot promote.**

SPECIAL PAWN RULE

On a circular board, the two sets of pawns march in opposite directions. If two friendly pawns moving in opposite directions end up on mutually opposing squares such that both are blocked, the **opponent** may remove both of those pawns as a single action (this does not count as a move and requires no capture).

RULES

Check and checkmate apply as in standard chess: a player in check must escape; if they cannot, they lose.

Stalemate is a win: a player who stalemates the opponent wins the game.

Bare King (bareing): a player who captures all of the opponent's non-King pieces wins. However, if the opponent can bare the other King on their very next move, the game is drawn instead.

Source: chessvariants.com/historic.dir/byzantine.html

CHESS · VARIANT 26 OF 153

Capablanca Chess

10×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

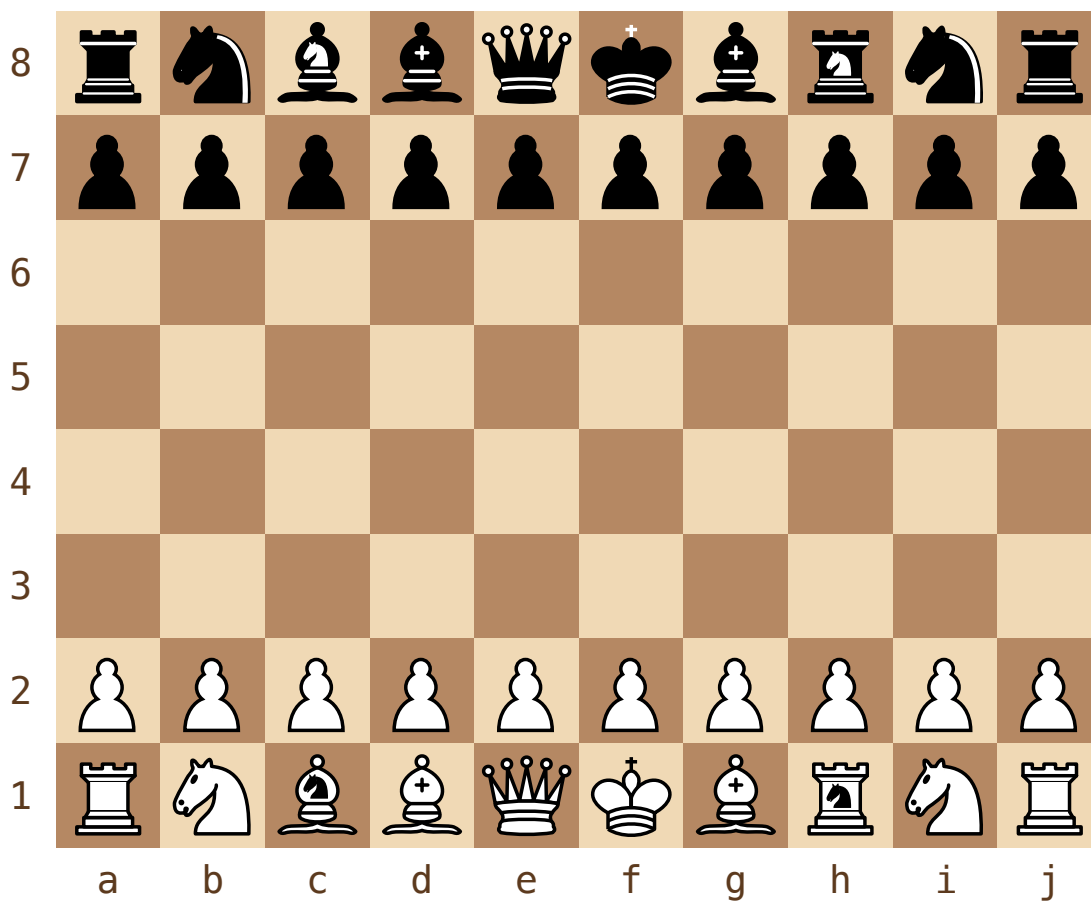
CAPABLANCA CHESS

Invented by World Champion José Raúl Capablanca in the 1920s to address what he saw as the “draw death” of standard chess. A larger board with two new compound pieces creates richer tactical possibilities.

SETUP

Board: 10×8 (ten files, eight ranks).

FEN: rnabqkbcnr/pppppppppp/10/10/10/10/PPPPPPPPPP/RNABQKBCNR w KQkq - 0 1



Capablanca Chess – starting position (10×8)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=capablanca>

PIECES

Pieces (per side): Standard 16 pieces plus:

- ♦ **Archbishop** (♫+♞) — combines Bishop and Knight movement. Placed between the Queen's Knight and Queen's Bishop.
- ♦ **Chancellor** (♖+♞) — combines Rook and Knight movement. Placed between the King's Knight and King's Bishop.

Setup (from a-file): Rook, Knight, Archbishop, Bishop, Queen, King, Bishop, Chancellor, Knight, Rook. Pawns on the second rank (10 pawns per side).

RULES

Identical to standard chess with these additions:

- ♦ Castling moves the King three squares toward the Rook (to accommodate the wider board).
- ♦ Pawns may promote to Archbishop or Chancellor in addition to standard pieces.
- ♦ No en passant differences — same rules apply.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, same as standard chess.

STRATEGY

The wider board and compound pieces create more open positions. The Archbishop dominates closed diagonals while the Chancellor controls open files with knight-fork threats. Pawn structure is more flexible with 10 files — flank play becomes viable alongside central control.

ATTRIBUTION

José Raúl Capablanca, c. 1920. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 27 OF 153

Carrera's Chess

10×8

BOARD

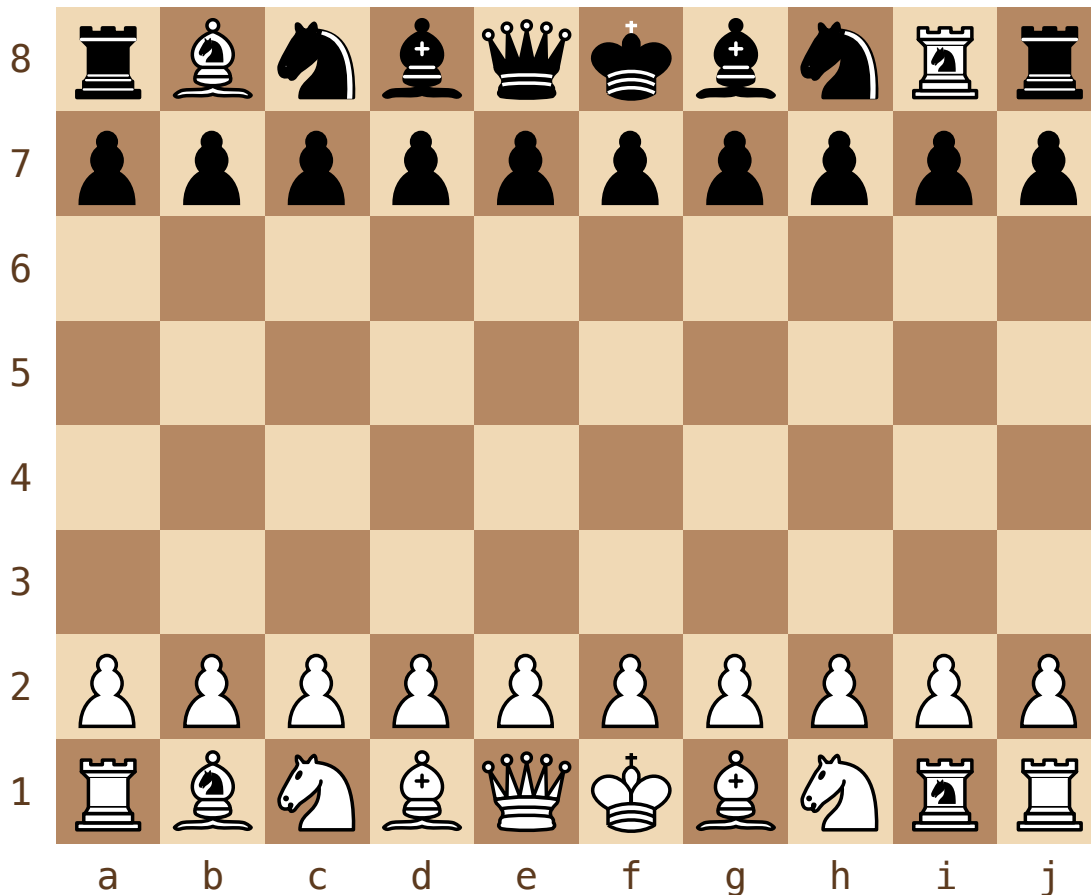
2

PLAYERS

Carrera's Chess

Invented by Pietro Carrera, 1617. Described in *Il Gioco de gli Scacchi*. One of the earliest large-board chess variants with compound pieces.

OVERVIEW



Carrera's Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=carrera>

Carrera's Chess extends standard chess to a 10x8 board by adding two compound pieces per side: the Champion (Rook + Knight) and the Centaur (Bishop + Knight). It predates Capablanca's Chess by three centuries and uses the same general concept.

SETUP

10-file board (files a–j), 8 ranks. The right corner on each player's side is light-coloured. The Centaur is placed between the Rook and Knight on the Queen-side; the Champion is placed between the Knight and Rook on the King-side.

FEN: rAnbqkbnCr/pppppppppp/10/10/10/10/PPPPPPPPP/RANBQKBNCR w - - 0 1
(A/a = Centaur, C/c = Champion)

White (rank 1, a–j): Rook(a1), Centaur(b1), Knight(c1), Bishop(d1), Queen(e1), King(f1), Bishop(g1), Knight(h1), Champion(i1), Rook(j1) **White Pawns (rank 2):** a2–j2

Black (rank 8, a–j): Rook(a8), Centaur(b8), Knight(c8), Bishop(d8), Queen(e8), King(f8), Bishop(g8), Knight(h8), Champion(i8), Rook(j8) **Black Pawns (rank 7):** a7–j7

PIECES

All standard FIDE pieces move as usual. Two additional pieces:

CHAMPION (CAMPIONE)

Moves as a **Rook** (slides orthogonally any distance) **or** a **Knight** (L-shape leap). Also known as Chancellor.

CENTAUR (CENTAURO)

Moves as a **Bishop** (slides diagonally any distance) **or** a **Knight** (L-shape leap). Also known as Archbishop. Not colour-bound due to the Knight component.

RULES

NO CASTLING

Castling is not used in Carrera's Chess. Murray confirms Carrera followed Sicilian rules in which the King had no power to leap.

NO EN PASSANT

En passant captures are not used. Italian Chess of Carrera's era did not permit en passant.

RESTRICTED PAWN DOUBLE MOVE

Pawns may make an initial double-step move from their starting rank, with one restriction: **a double move is forbidden if it would simultaneously block a check against the player's own King AND would land on a square where an enemy Pawn in an adjacent file could capture it.** In that specific situation only, the double move is not permitted.

PAWN PROMOTION

A Pawn reaching the far rank promotes to a Queen. Whether promotion to Champion or Centaur is permitted is historically uncertain; playing promotion to Queen, Champion, or Centaur is recommended.

DRAW CONDITIONS

Stalemate (draw), insufficient mating material, perpetual check, threefold repetition, and the 50-move rule all apply as in modern chess.

MODERN VARIANT

Modern Carrera's Chess uses the same setup but applies Capablanca's Chess rules: castling is permitted (King moves 3 squares toward the Rook), and promotion may include Champion and Centaur.

Source: chessvariants.com/historic.dir/carrera.html

CHESS · VARIANT 28 OF 153

Centennial Chess

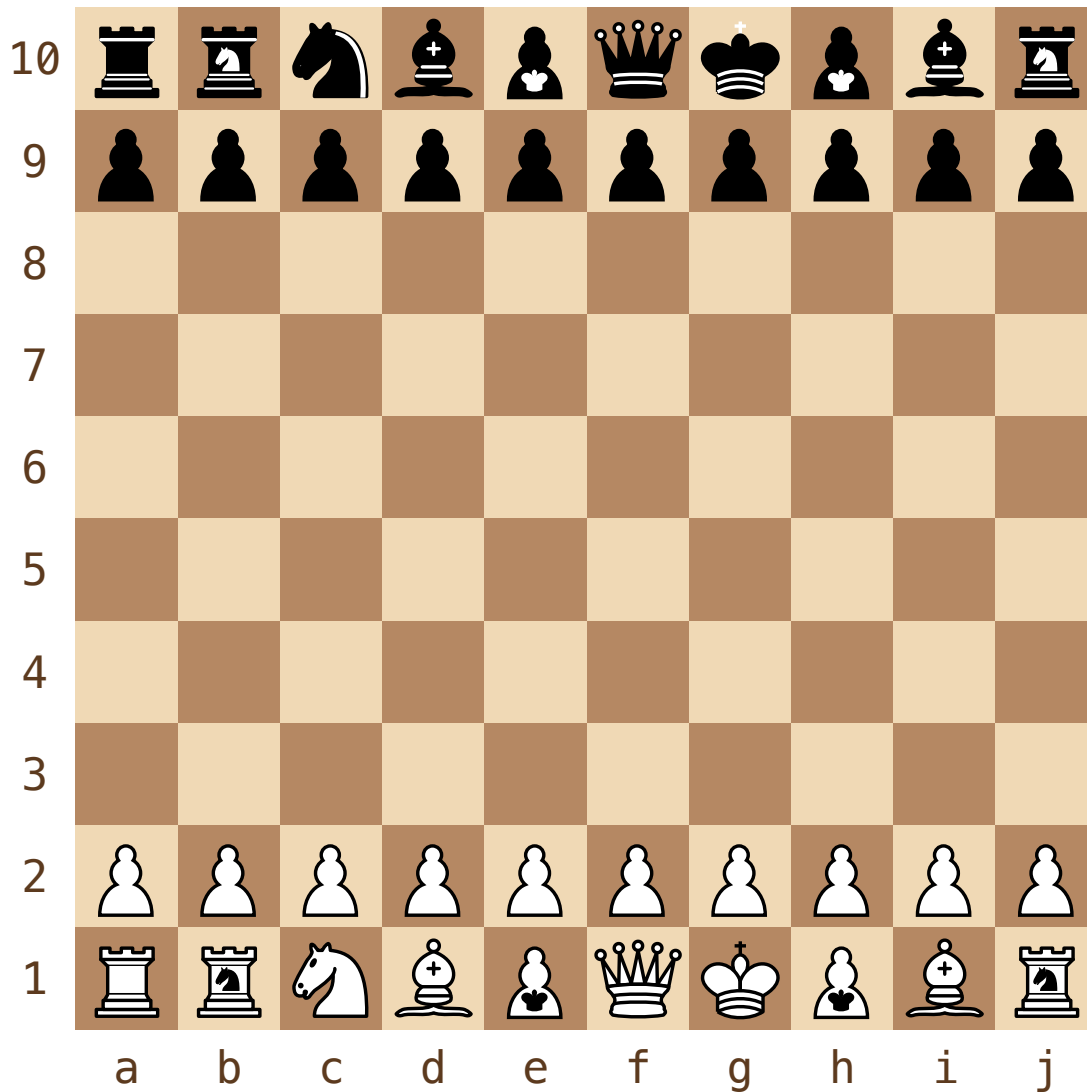
10×10

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CENTENNIAL CHESS



Centennial Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=centennial-chess>

Centennial Chess is a 10×10 chess variant with 100 squares — one for each year of the 20th century. Created by John William Brown in 1999 as an entry in the Large Variant Contest, it adds four new pieces to the FIDE set and modifies several rules, including a two-move privilege that is lost upon the first capture.

NEW PIECES

Steward: A *quadra-pawn* — moves as a Pawn in all four orthogonal directions (forward, backward, left, right). Can also move two squares in any direction on its first move. Two Stewards in mutual coverage form a strong barrier.

Camel: Leaps two squares orthogonally then one square diagonally (a 2+1 oblique leaper, never blocked by intervening pieces). Longer stride than a Knight but colorbound — always remains on the same board-colour.

Murray Lion: Leaps to any square in the 5×5 area centered on itself (i.e. up to 2 squares orthogonally or diagonally), or moves one square in any direction only to capture. Named for chess historian H.J.R. Murray, who erred in describing the Chu Shogi Lion in his 1931 book.

Rotating Spearman: Slides any number of squares forward (when upright) or along the forward diagonal it faces (when rotated). At the end of its move, it may rotate to any of three headings — forward-upright, left-diagonal, or right-diagonal. It may also rotate in place without moving. It cannot rotate before moving. Captures only on the advance direction, not on retreat.

STARTING POSITION

Files a–j (10 files); ranks 1–10.

RANK	WHITE	BLACK
1	R C B L K Q L B C R	(same, mirrored as rank 10)
2	– Sp N – S S – N Sp –	(same, mirrored as rank 9)
3	P P P P P P P P	(same, mirrored as rank 8)

Key: R=Rook, C=Camel, B=Bishop, L=Murray Lion, K=King, Q=Queen, N=Knight, S=Steward, Sp=Rotating Spearman (facing centre), P=Pawn.

Black occupies ranks 8–10 (mirror).

SPECIAL RULES

Two-move privilege: Each player may make two consecutive moves per turn — until they make a capture. Upon capturing for the first time, the player permanently loses the two-move privilege; thereafter that player makes only one move per turn. A capture must be made on the first and only move of a turn (cannot capture on the first of two moves).

Pawns and Stewards: Both may advance 1 or 2 squares on their first individual move.

En passant: Disabled.

Castling: King moves to the vacated Bishop's square; Rook moves to the vacated Lion's square. Both kingside and queenside castling are available.

Pawn promotion: On reaching rank 10, a Pawn may promote to any piece.

PIECE VALUES (10×10 ADJUSTED)

PIECE	VALUE
Pawn	0.6
Steward	0.9
Camel	2.5
Rotating Spearman	2.5
Knight	2.6
Bishop	3.1
Murray Lion	4.4
Rook	5.0
Queen	9.1

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

ATTRIBUTION

Centennial Chess was created by John William Brown. Entry in the 1999 Large Variant Contest. Source: chessvariants.com/large.dir/contest/cenchess.html

CHESS · VARIANT 29 OF 153

Chak

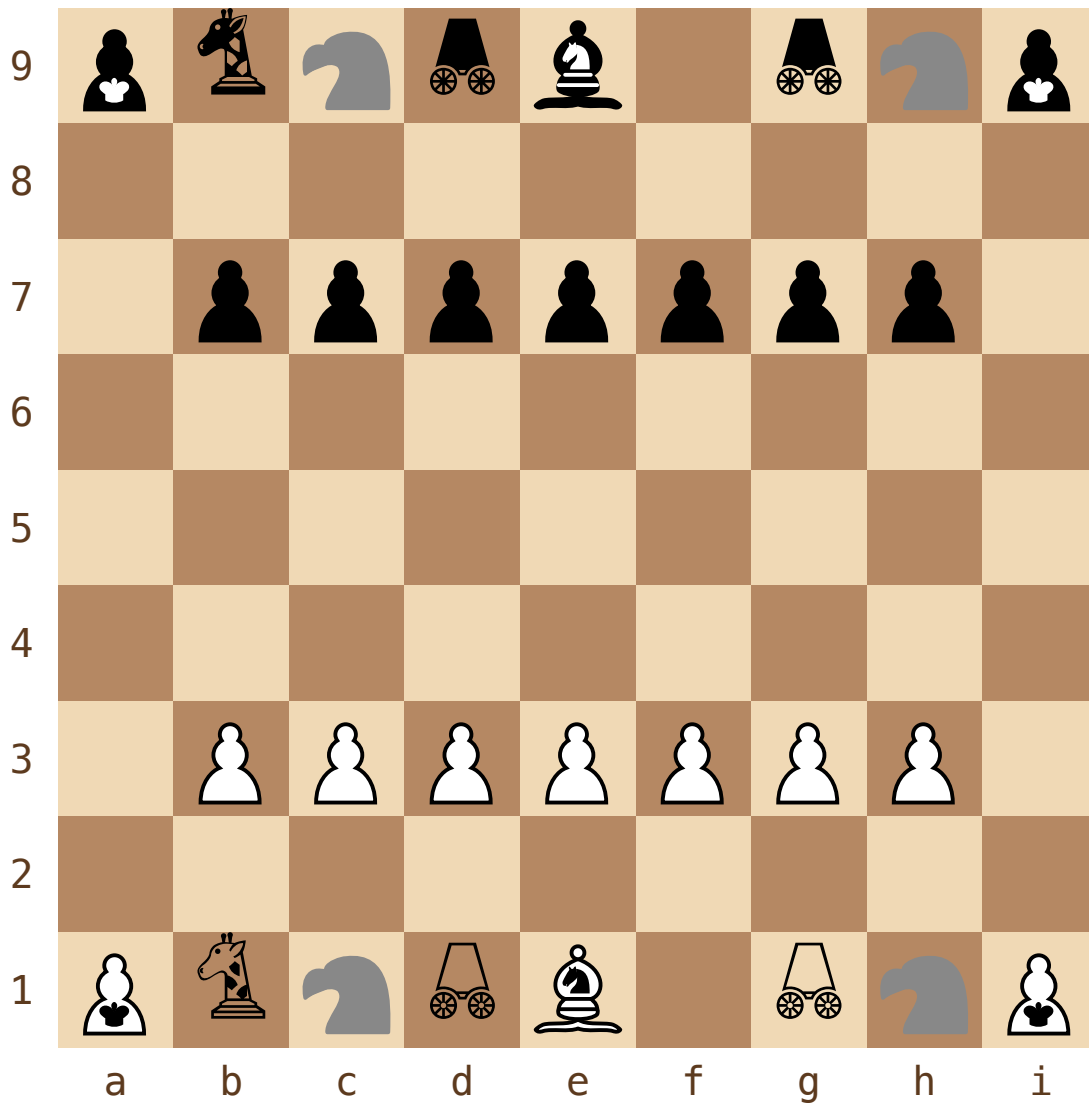
9×9

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CHAK



Chak – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=chak>

Designed by Corey Clark (2020). Chak is played on a 9×9 board with a Mesoamerican theme inspired by the Maya. The river divides the board at rank 5; pieces gain power by crossing it. Victory is achieved by either mating the opponent's Ajaw or landing your own promoted Ajaw on the opponent's sacred temple square and holding it for one full round.

BOARD LAYOUT

The board is 9×9 (files a–i, ranks 1–9). The river runs between ranks 5 and 6, dividing the board into two halves. Each player's temple is the center square of their back rank: e1 (White's temple) and e9 (Black's temple).

PIECES

PIECE	COUNT	MOVEMENT	PROMOTION
Ajaw (Royal)	1	1 step in any direction (King-move).	Becomes Warrior Ajaw on crossing the river.
Warrior Ajaw	—	Promoted form: 1 step any direction OR 1 step diagonally (same as Ajaw, but also wins by temple).	Already promoted.
Shaman	2	1 step diagonally, OR 1 step straight forward. After crossing the river: promotes to Shaman+, adding the ability to also move 1 step straight backward.	Shaman+
Vulture	2	Slides any number of squares diagonally (Bishop). After crossing the river: promotes to Vulture+, also adding 1-step orthogonal moves.	Vulture+
Serpent	2	Slides any number of squares orthogonally (Rook). After crossing the river: promotes to Serpent+, also adding 1-step diagonal moves.	Serpent+
Jaguar	2	Slides orthogonally any distance OR moves 1 step diagonally. After crossing the river: promotes to Jaguar+, adding unlimited diagonal slides.	Jaguar+
Pawn	7	1 square forward; captures 1 square diagonally forward. No double first move. Promotes on reaching the last rank to any non-royal piece.	Choice of piece

THE RIVER

The river is the boundary between ranks 5 and 6. When a piece crosses the river (moves from rank 5 to rank 6, or rank 6 to rank 5 for Black), it immediately promotes to its “+” form. Promotion is automatic and permanent — crossing the river never allows a choice. Captured promoted pieces revert to their base form.

The Ajaw becomes the Warrior Ajaw upon crossing the river.

TEMPLE VICTORY

A player's Warrior Ajaw (promoted Ajaw) may land on the opponent's temple square (e9 for White, e1 for Black) to trigger a temple victory, subject to these conditions:

- 1 The Warrior Ajaw must land on the temple square.
- 2 The opponent must then take their turn.
- 3 If, after the opponent's turn, the Warrior Ajaw is still on the temple square (i.e., the opponent could not or did not capture it), the player with the Warrior Ajaw on the temple wins.

If the opponent captures the Warrior Ajaw on the temple square, no temple victory occurs and play continues.

CHECKMATE VICTORY

A player also wins by checkmating the opponent's Ajaw (whether base or Warrior form). The Ajaw is in check when attacked; the owner must resolve it. Checkmate (check with no legal escape) wins immediately.

STALEMATE

If a player has no legal move but is not in check, the game is a draw.

STARTING POSITION

White (ranks 1-2):

2 Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa

1 Se Vu Sh Aj Sh Vu Se

Rank 1 from a to i: Serpent(a), Jaguar(b), Vulture©, Shaman(d), Ajaw(e), Shaman(f), Vulture(g), Jaguar(h), Serpent(i). Rank 2: 7 Pawns on b2-h2; a2 and i2 are empty.

Black mirrors on ranks 8-9.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Corey Clark. Published via Shogun of Games. Official rules at shogunofgames.com. Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 30 OF 153

Chancellor Chess

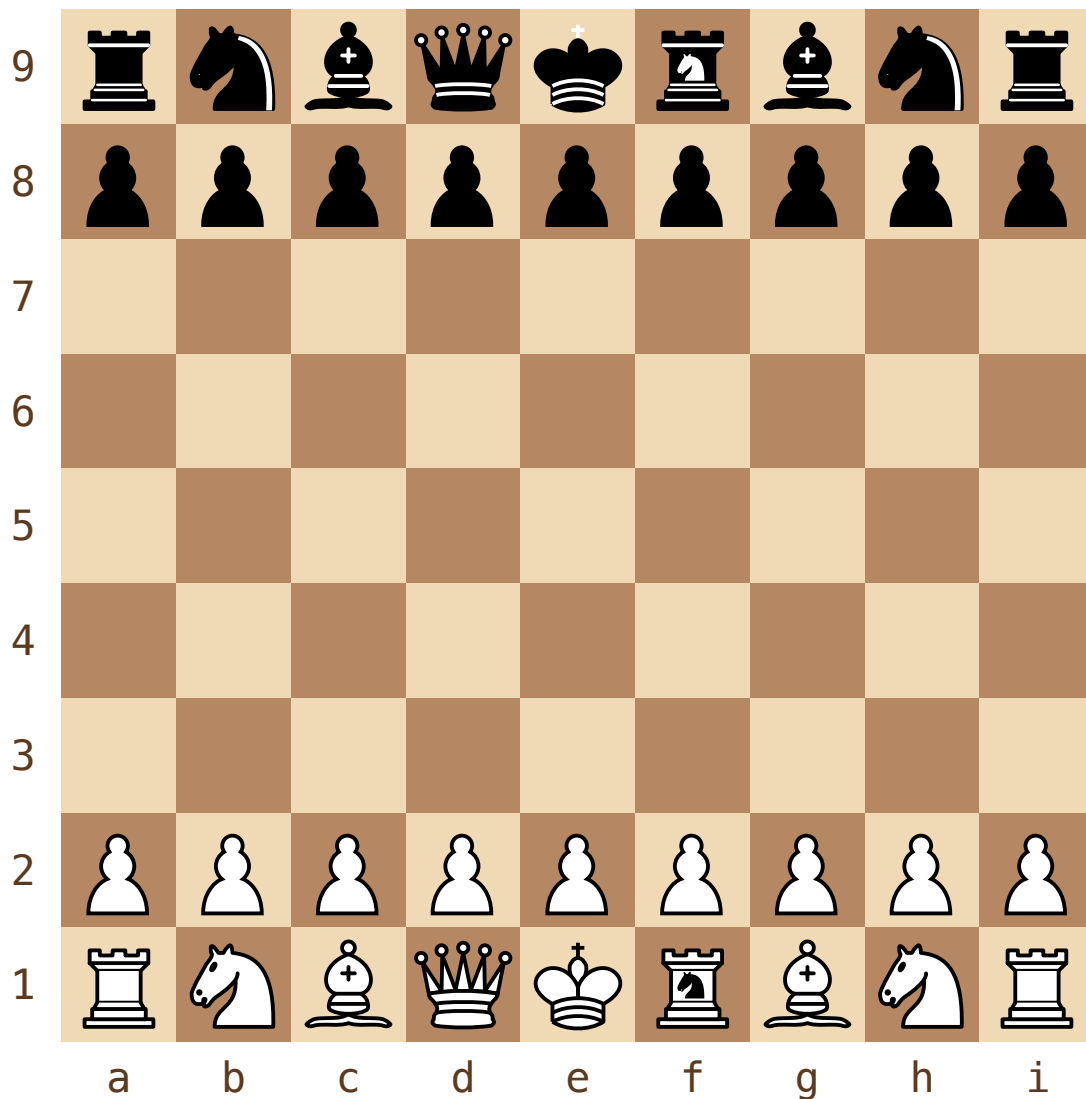
9×9

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CHANCELLOR CHESS



Chancellor Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=chancellor-chess>

Chancellor Chess was published by the American Ben Foster in his 1889 book of the same name. It is played on a 9×9 board (81 squares) with black squares in the corners, and adds one **Chancellor** (a Rook+Knight compound) per side to an otherwise standard FIDE chess army, plus one extra Pawn per side. The Chancellor piece had appeared earlier in European chess literature (Pietro Carrero, 1617, called it the Centaur), and Foster's book provided historical context for it.

THE BOARD

9 files (a–i) × 9 ranks = 81 squares. Black squares occupy the corners.

STARTING POSITION

White (rank 1): Rook a1 · Knight b1 · Bishop c1 · Queen d1 · King e1 · Chancellor f1 · Bishop g1 · Knight h1 · Rook i1

White pawns (rank 2): a2–i2 (9 pawns)

Black (rank 9): Rook a9 · Knight b9 · Bishop c9 · Queen d9 · King e9 · Chancellor f9 · Bishop g9 · Knight h9 · Rook i9

Black pawns (rank 8): a8–i8 (9 pawns)

THE CHANCELLOR

The **Chancellor** combines the moves of a Rook and a Knight: it slides any number of squares horizontally or vertically, or leaps in an L-shape as a Knight. It is approximately equal in value to the Queen. Pawns may promote to Chancellor.

CASTLING

Castling occurs under the same conditions as in orthodox chess (King not in check, neither piece has moved, no attacked squares in the King's path). When castling, the **King moves two squares** toward the Rook, and the **Rook moves three squares** in the opposite direction. This applies to both kingside and queenside castling. The Chancellor does not participate in castling.

PROMOTION

Pawns reaching the last rank may promote to **Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight, or Chancellor**.

SPECIAL RULES

All standard FIDE chess rules apply on the 9×9 board except where noted above. En passant applies as in standard chess.

ATTRIBUTION

Chancellor Chess by Ben Foster, published 1889. Rules from chessvariants.com/large.dir/chancellor.html (Hans Bodlaender, 1997).

CHESS · VARIANT 31 OF 153

Chaturanga

8×8

BOARD

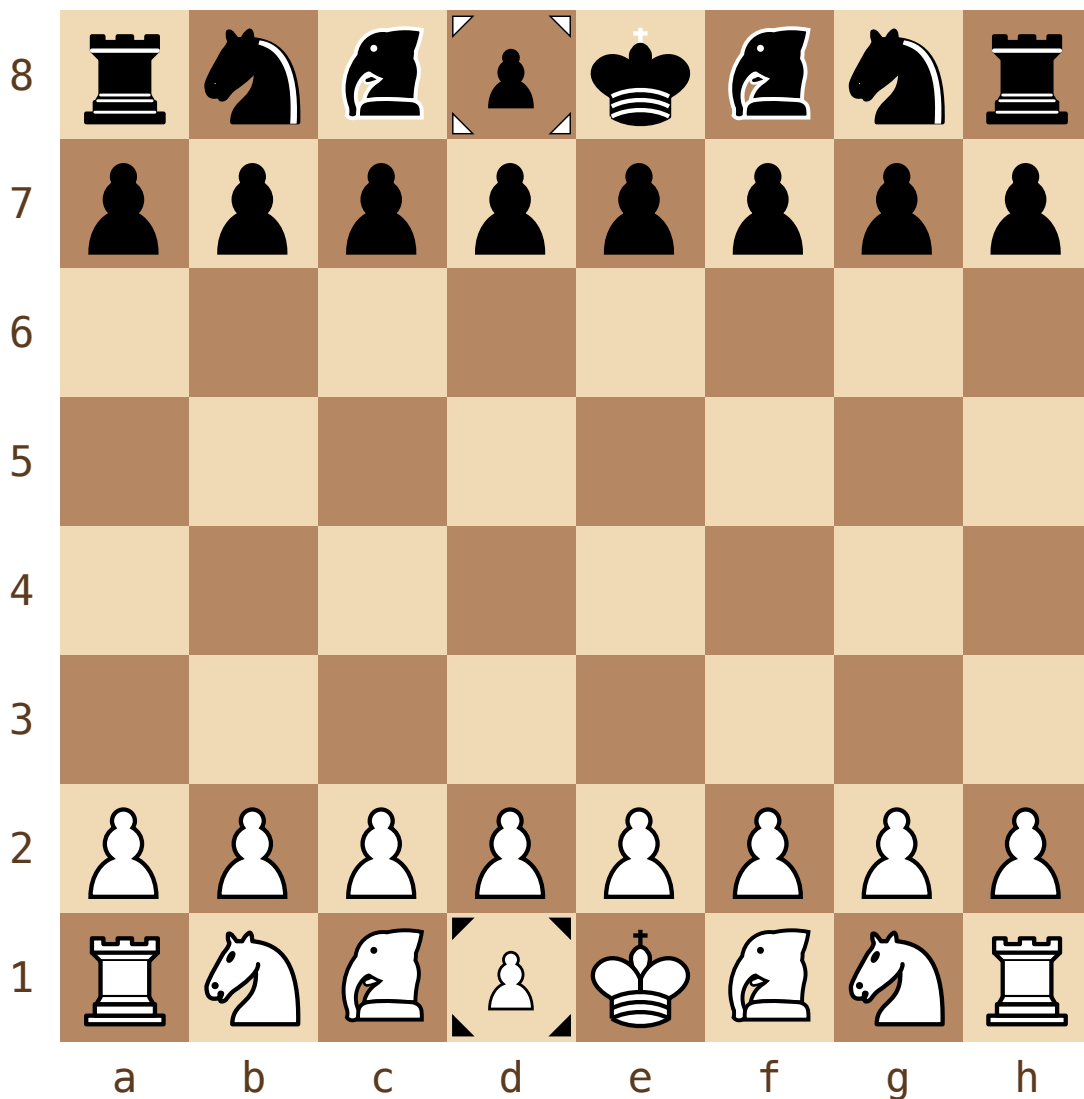
2

PLAYERS

CHATURANGA

Chaturanga (Sanskrit: चतुरङ्ग, “four divisions”) is the ancient Indian predecessor of chess, Shogi, Xiangqi, and all related replacement-capture games. First attested in Sanskrit texts c. 600 CE, it is named for the four arms of the Indian army: infantry (pawns), cavalry (horses), elephants, and chariots, who protect the counsellor and the king. It is the direct ancestor of Shatranj, which became modern Western chess.

This entry documents the 2-player, no-dice form: the standard scholarly reconstruction. The older 4-player form (sometimes called Chaturaji) used a die to determine which piece type to move each turn and is a distinct game not covered here.



Chaturanga: starting position (Manasollasa)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=chaturanga>

Piece note: Gaja (Elephant) uses the E letter in FEN; Mantri (Counsellor) uses F (Fers). These reflect their actual movement rather than modern chess equivalents.

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8. The original ashtapada board was plain and uncheckered; the alternating square colouring shown here is a modern convention.

Starting position (Manasollasa, Bock-Raming 1996): Back rank left to right: Ratha–Ashva–Gaja–Mantri–Raja–Gaja–Ashva–Ratha. Eight Padati fill the second rank.

- White: Ratha a1, Ashva b1, Gaja c1, Mantri d1, Raja e1, Gaja f1, Ashva g1, Ratha h1; Padati a2–h2.
- Black: Ratha a8, Ashva b8, Gaja c8, Mantri d8, Raja e8, Gaja f8, Ashva g8, Ratha h8; Padati a7–h7.

FEN: rnefkenr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNEFKENR w – – 0 1 (R/r = Ratha, N/n = Ashva, E/e = Gaja, F/f = Mantri, K/k = Raja, P/p = Padati)

Alternative starting position (al-Adli, Murray 1913): Back rank left to right: Gaja–Ratha–Ashva–Mantri–Raja–Ashva–Ratha–Gaja. This places the Gaja on the corner files.

PIECES

SANSKRIT NAME	ENGLISH	PER SIDE	MOVEMENT
Raja	King	1	One step in any direction (orthogonal or diagonal). No castling.
Mantri	Counsellor	1	One step diagonally only. Identical to the Ferz in Shatranj.
Gaja	Elephant	2	Leaps exactly two squares diagonally, jumping over any intervening piece. Colour-bound: reaches only 8 of the 64 squares.
Ashva	Horse	2	L-shape leap. Identical to the modern Knight.
Ratha	Chariot	2	Slides any number of squares orthogonally. Identical to the modern Rook.
Padati	Foot soldier	8	One step forward; captures one step diagonally forward. No initial double move. Promotes to Mantri on reaching the far rank.

Note on Gaja movement: Three interpretations appear in ancient sources. The diagonal leap recorded here is the most widely attested and the form that became the Alfil in Shatranj and the Bishop in modern chess. An orthogonal leap (two squares along a rank or file) also appears in the Ludii Manasollasa ruleset (Bock-Raming 1996). A third interpretation, one step forward or diagonally, appears in sources related to Shogi's Silver General.

RULES

White moves first. Players alternate one move per turn. A piece may move to an empty square or capture an opponent's piece by occupying its square, removing it from the board. A piece may not move to a square occupied by a friendly piece.

There is no castling, no en passant, and no initial double pawn advance.

When the Raja can be captured on the next turn, it is in check. A player must not end their turn with the Raja in check.

WIN CONDITIONS

Checkmate: The Raja is in check with no legal escape. The opponent wins.

Bare king: Capturing all of the opponent's pieces except the Raja wins the game. Exception: if the opponent can bare your own Raja on the very next move in response, the result is a draw.

Stalemate: A Raja with no legal moves but not in check is stalemated; the stalemated player wins. This is the reverse of modern chess.

These win conditions follow the al-Adli reconstruction (Murray 1913), the fully specified form used as standard for modern play.

The Manasollasa text (Bock-Raming 1996) describes a simpler condition: play continues until one player's king cannot move without being captured, with no explicit distinction between check, checkmate, and stalemate. The al-Adli form is recommended for practical implementation.

DIFFERENCES FROM MODERN CHESS

- ♦ No castling
- ♦ No en passant
- ♦ No double pawn advance on the first move
- ♦ Pawns promote to Mantri only
- ♦ Stalemate is a win for the stalemated player, not a draw
- ♦ Bare king wins: reducing the opponent to only a Raja wins the game
- ♦ Mantri (Counsellor) is weak: one step diagonally only, not the modern Queen's full range
- ♦ Gaja (Elephant) is colour-bound: leaps exactly two squares diagonally, reaching only 8 of 64 squares

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Chaturanga was transmitted from India to Persia around the 7th century CE, where it became Shatranj. Key changes during this transition: the dice were abandoned entirely, and explicit check and checkmate rules were formalised. European chess inherited Shatranj through the Islamic world around the 10th century. In 15th-century Europe, the Mantri became the modern Queen (gaining full diagonal and orthogonal range) and the Alfil became the diagonal Bishop.

ATTRIBUTION

Rules transcribed from two sources via the Ludii Game Corpus, Maastricht University:

- ♦ Manasollasa ruleset, citing Bock-Raming 1996 (Sanskrit scholarship on the 12th-century Manasollasa text)
- ♦ al-Adli ruleset, citing H.J.R. Murray, *A History of Chess* (Oxford University Press, 1913, public domain)

Both underlying texts are public domain. Chaturanga as a game system dates to c. 600 CE and is not subject to copyright.

CHESS · VARIANT 32 OF 153

Checkless Chess

8×8

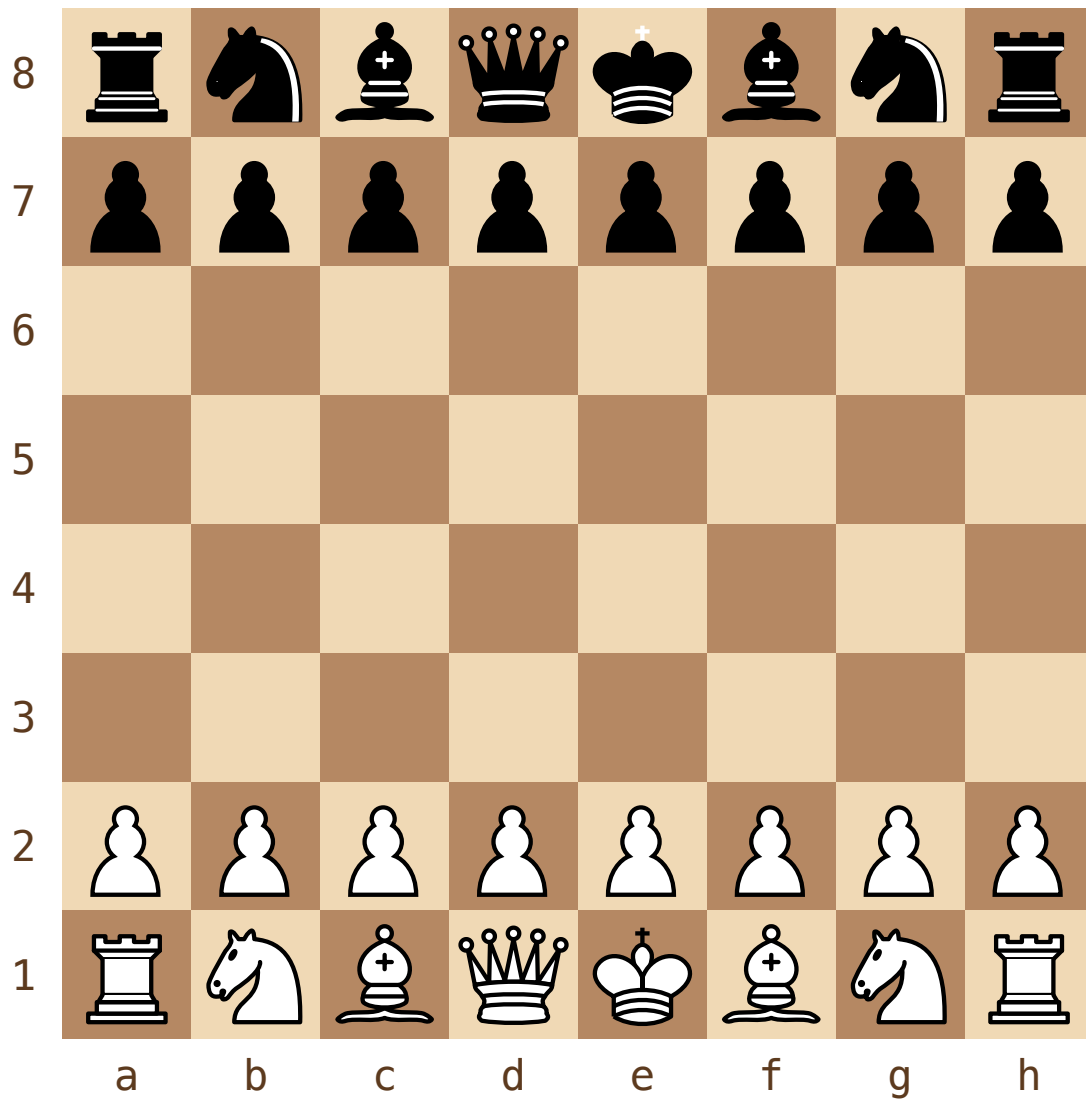
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CHECKLESS CHESS

You may not give check unless that check is also checkmate. The King becomes a bold attacker since it cannot be casually harassed.



Checkless Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=checkless>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement applies.
- ♦ A player may NOT give check unless that check is simultaneously checkmate.
- ♦ Any move that would deliver check (but not checkmate) is illegal.
- ♦ The King can advance aggressively since it cannot be threatened by non-mating moves.
- ♦ If a player has no legal move that avoids giving non-mate check, the position is stalemate (draw).
- ♦ Castling, en passant, and promotion follow standard rules.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate – the only legal form of check.

STRATEGY

The King becomes a powerful attacking piece – use it actively in the middlegame since it cannot be harassed. Focus on restricting the opponent's King mobility so that when you finally deliver check, it IS mate. Piece coordination for simultaneous multi-square coverage is essential. Long build-ups to a single decisive blow define this variant.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Earliest documented reference in Max Lange, 1857. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 33 OF 153

Chennis

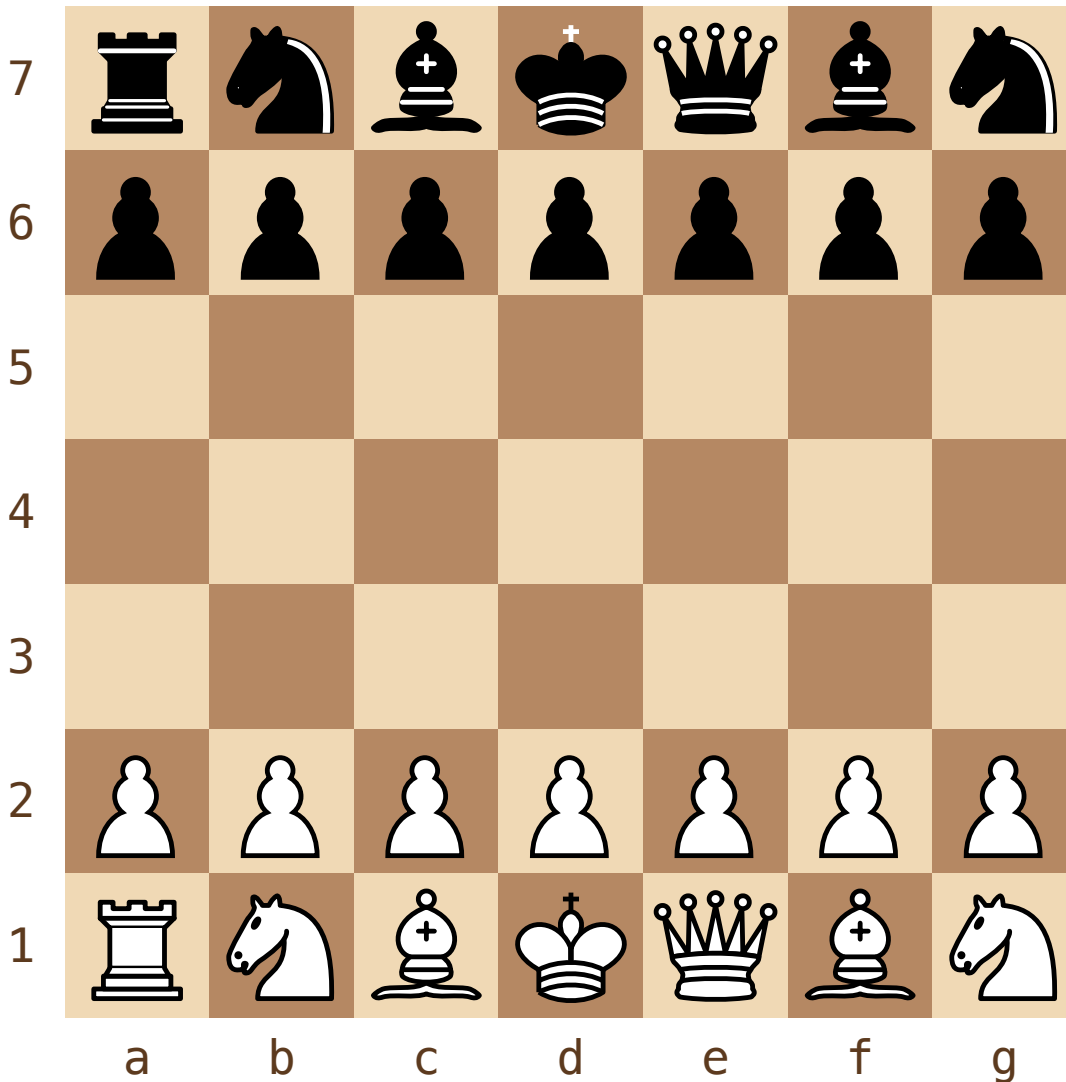
7×7

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CHENNIS



Chennis – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=chennis>

Designed by Corey Clark. Chennis adapts chess to a tennis-themed format on a 7×7 board. The net divides the board between ranks 4 and 5. Victory is achieved by getting a Pawn to the opponent's back rank, not by checkmate – though check and piece capture remain mechanically active.

BOARD LAYOUT

The board is 7×7 (files a–g, ranks 1–7). A net runs across the middle of the board, forming a barrier between ranks 4 and 5. This net restricts most pieces to their own half unless they can jump (Knights) or the rules explicitly permit crossing.

WIN CONDITION

The game is won by advancing any Pawn to the opponent's back rank:

- ♦ White wins by placing a Pawn on rank 7.
- ♦ Black wins by placing a Pawn on rank 1.

Checkmate is NOT a win condition in Chennis. However, check and piece capture are legal actions – they affect material balance and legal moves.

PIECES

PIECE	COUNT	MOVEMENT	NET RULE
King	1	1 step any direction	Cannot cross the net.
Queen	1	Any distance, any direction	Cannot cross the net.
Rook	2	Orthogonal slide, unlimited	Cannot cross the net.
Bishop	2	Diagonal slide, unlimited	Cannot cross the net.
Knight	2	(2+1) jump; leaps over pieces	May cross the net freely. A Knight can land on either side of the net at will.
Pawn	7	1 square forward; captures 1 diagonal forward	Must cross the net to win. Pawns cross the net by advancing from rank 4 to rank 5, or rank 5 to rank 4 (for Black).

THE NET RULE

All pieces except the Knight and Pawn are confined to their half of the board and may not slide, step, or capture across the net boundary:

- ♦ White's pieces (except Knight and Pawn) are confined to ranks 1–4.
- ♦ Black's pieces (except Knight and Pawn) are confined to ranks 4–7.
- ♦ A piece at rank 4 cannot slide to rank 5, and vice versa, except for Knights (which jump) and Pawns (which advance).
- ♦ A piece cannot capture across the net unless it is a Knight.

Note: rank 4 is accessible to both sides. The net prevents crossing rank 4 → rank 5 (or 5 → 4 for sliding pieces).

CHECK AND THE KING

The King may be placed in check by opponent pieces, including Knights that have crossed the net. The owner must resolve any check on their turn, even though checkmate is not the win condition. If the King cannot escape check and has no legal moves, it is checkmated – this does NOT end the game in the standard sense. The game ends only when a Pawn reaches the opponent's back rank.

(If a player is checkmated and cannot resolve it, they have no legal move; the convention is that the game continues with the checkmated state as a loss for that player in most implementations, but the primary win condition remains the Pawn race.)

PAWN RULES

- ♦ No double first move.
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ A Pawn reaching rank 7 (White) or rank 1 (Black) wins the game immediately – it does not promote.
- ♦ A Pawn at rank 4 may advance to rank 5 on its normal forward move; this constitutes crossing the net.

STARTING POSITION

White (ranks 1-2):

2 Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa
1 R N B K Q B N R

Rank 1 from a to g: Rook, Knight, Bishop, King, Queen, Bishop, Knight, Rook. Rank 2: 7 Pawns.

Black mirrors on ranks 6-7.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Corey Clark. Published via Shogun of Games. Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 34 OF 153

Chigorin

8×8

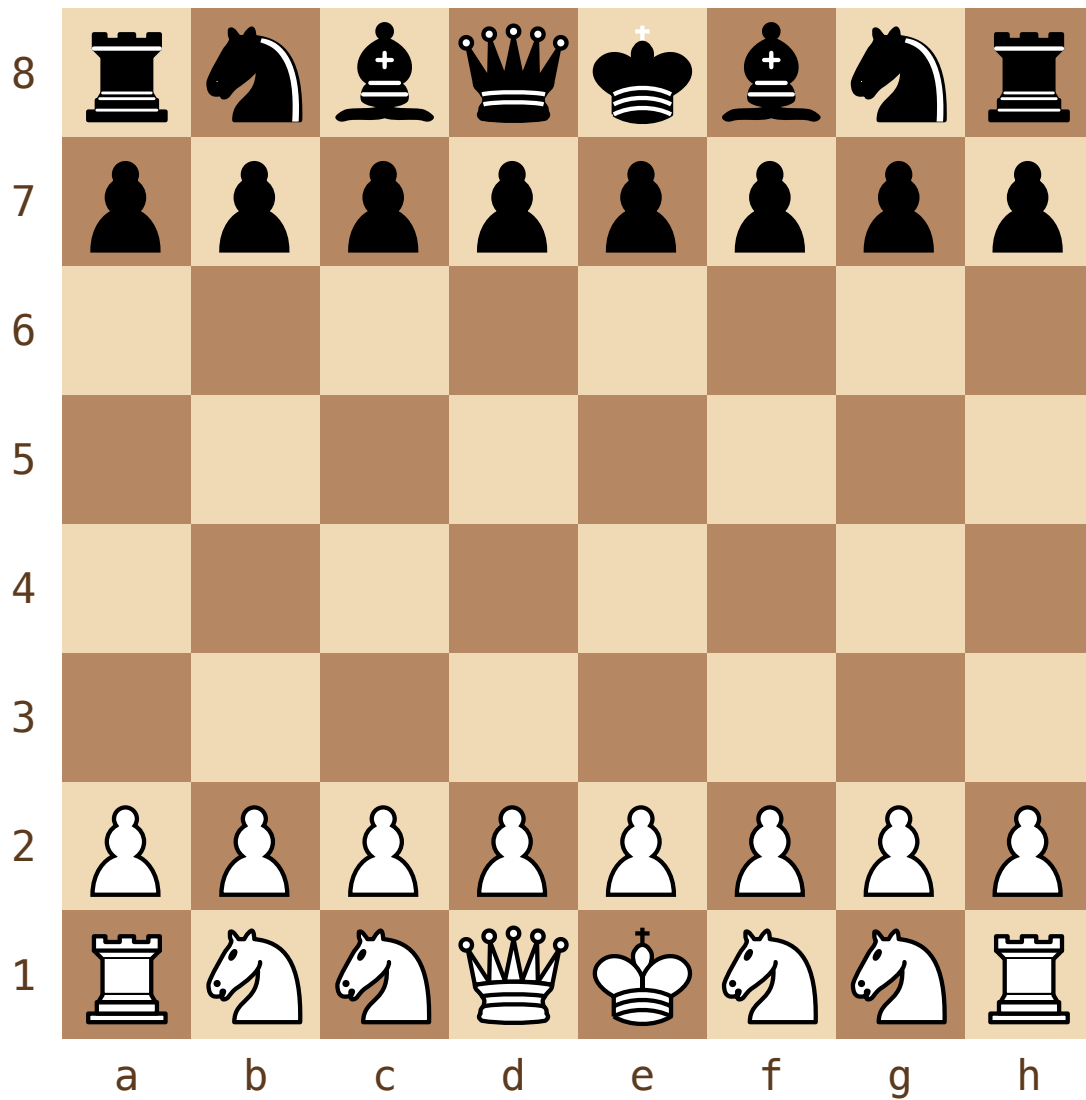
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CHIGORIN

White replaces both Bishops with Knights. Four Knights vs two Knights and two Bishops — a fundamental asymmetry that changes positional evaluation.



Chigorin Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=chigorin>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNNQKNNR

White: Rook, Knight, Knight, Queen, King, Knight, Knight, Rook (+ 8 pawns). Black: Standard setup.

RULES

All standard chess rules apply. Castling is available for both sides.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, same as standard chess.

STRATEGY

White has four Knights – superb in closed positions with lots of outposts, but weak on open boards where Bishops dominate. White should keep the position closed and create pawn chains that give Knights stable squares. Black should open the position and trade pawns to give their Bishops long diagonals. White's pawn promotion choices become interesting since they already have plenty of Knights.

ATTRIBUTION

Named after Mikhail Chigorin. Variant design is traditional. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 35 OF 153

Circular Chess

Circular (4 rings × 16 files)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

Circular Chess

Invented by David Reynolds (Lincoln, England), 1983. Circular Chess Society founded 1996.

OVERVIEW

Circular Chess is a modern variant inspired by the ancient Byzantine (round) chess boards depicted in historical sources. It is played on a circular board of 4 concentric rings, each containing 16 squares (64 squares total). The topology is equivalent to a cylinder: the 16 files wrap around, so file 16 is adjacent to file 1. White and Black set up on opposite sides of the circle.

The Circular Chess Society has held an annual World Championship since 1996.

BOARD

The board has:

- ♦ **4 rings** (ranks): ring 1 = innermost, ring 4 = outermost
- ♦ **16 files**: numbered 1–16 going around the circumference; file 16 is adjacent to file 1
- ♦ No corners, no edges — every ring is a full loop

SETUP

The starting position is derived from orthodox chess by “folding” the FIDE board into a circle. White and Black occupy opposite sides of the ring. Each player’s pieces are arranged by ring:

RING	WHITE	BLACK
1 (innermost)	Queen, King	Queen, King
2	Bishop, Bishop	Bishop, Bishop
3	Knight, Knight	Knight, Knight
4 (outermost)	Rook, Rook	Rook, Rook

The Queen begins on a square of the same colour as the King (as in FIDE chess). Each player’s 8 Pawns are placed in the files immediately in front of their back pieces, between the two sides.

Transcribed from the source diagram directly: within each ring, the back piece and its pawn occupy the same file-column across all four rings (King/Bishop/Knight/Rook all radially stacked on one side of each player’s seam; Queen/Bishop/Knight/Rook stacked on the other), with the pawn one file further from the seam than the piece. The engine. `setup` FEN encodes this with row 0 = ring 4 (outermost, Rook) down to row 3 = ring 1 (innermost, King/Queen), matching the convention used elsewhere in this hub.

PIECES

All pieces move as in standard FIDE chess, with adaptations for the circular board:

Queen and Rook may slide any number of squares along a ring or between rings, but may not make a “null move” — they cannot travel all the way around a ring to end up on the starting square.

Bishop slides diagonally as normal, tracing paths that change both ring and file with each step.

Knight leaps in the standard L-shape (2+1 squares).

King moves one square in any direction.

Pawn advances one square per move around the circumference toward the opponent’s side. Pawns have no double-step move and there is no en passant. A Pawn promotes upon reaching the 6th square from its starting position (the file immediately before the opponent’s back-rank pieces).

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply with the following changes:

No castling.

No en passant.

Null moves are illegal. A Rook or Queen cannot move all the way around a ring and return to its starting square.

Announcing check is not obligatory. If a player moves their King into check, or fails to move out of check, the opponent may immediately **snaffle** — capture the King on their next move to win the game instantly. This has decided World Championship games.

Stalemate is a draw, as in standard chess.

STRATEGY NOTES

On the circular board, the Rook and Queen have significantly enhanced range (they can sweep an entire ring), while Bishops and Knights are weaker than in FIDE chess (each can reach fewer squares). Basic checkmates that rely on cornering the opponent (King + two Bishops; King + Bishop + Knight) are impossible because there are no corners. The most reliable basic mates are King + Queen and King + Rook + minor piece.

Pawns cannot be stalemated in King-and-Pawn endings since there is no board edge to trap against; King-and-Pawn vs. King is almost always a win for the stronger side.

Opening theory is essentially nonexistent — unlike standard chess, players are largely improvising from move one.

Sources: chessvariants.com/shape.dir/circular.html; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circular_chess

CHESS · VARIANT 36 OF 153

Citadel Chess

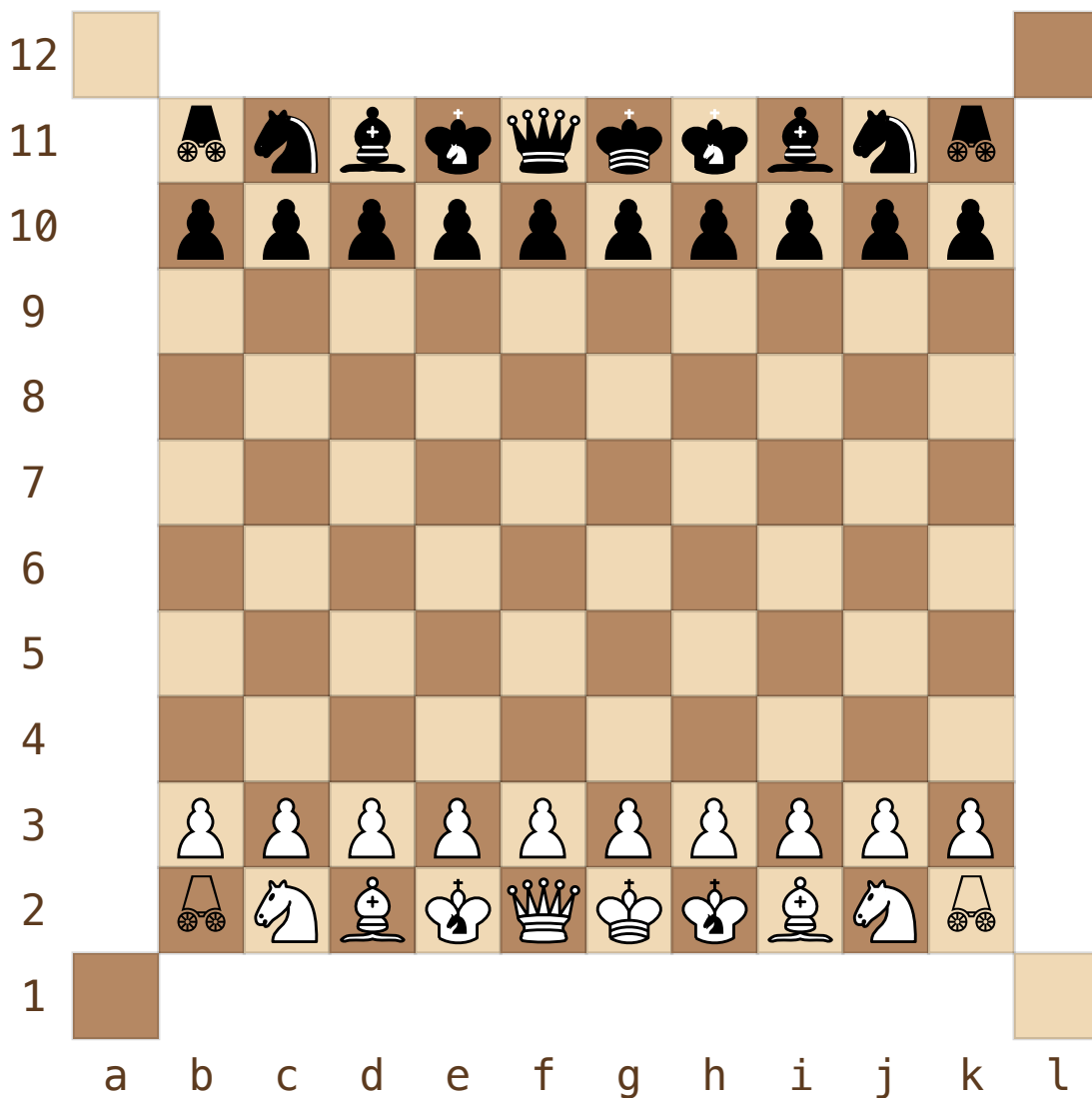
10×10 + 4 citadel squares

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CITADEL CHESS



Citadel Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=citadel-chess>

Citadel Chess (Shatranj al-Husun, "Chess of the Fortresses") is a historical Shatranj variant described by Gollon (based on Murray and Pritchard). It is played on a 10x10 board augmented with four corner citadel squares. A King that reaches the opponent's citadel and cannot be captured on the very next move secures a draw.

THE BOARD

The main playing area is a 10×10 grid (files b–k, ranks 2–11). Four additional citadel squares are positioned diagonally off each corner of the main grid:

- ♦ **a1** and **l1** — White's citadels (adjacent to White's back rank)
- ♦ **a12** and **l12** — Black's citadels (adjacent to Black's back rank)

Ranks 1 and 12 contain only the citadel squares (a1, l1, a12, l12); squares b1–k1 and b12–k12 do not exist. Files a and l have no squares other than the citadels. Total board size: 104 squares.

STARTING POSITION

White back rank (rank 2): Rook b2 · Knight c2 · War Machine d2 · Elephant e2 · King f2 · General g2 · War Machine h2 · Elephant i2 · Knight j2 · Rook k2

White pawns (rank 3): b3–k3 (10 pawns)

Black back rank (rank 11): Rook b11 · Knight c11 · War Machine d11 · Elephant e11 · King f11 · General g11 · War Machine h11 · Elephant i11 · Knight j11 · Rook k11

Black pawns (rank 10): b10–k10 (10 pawns)

Source note: The chessvariants.com source lists "Elephant c2, i2" but c2 is also given as the Knight square. By symmetry (Rook–Knight–War Machine–Elephant–King–General–War Machine–Elephant–Knight–Rook), the Elephants occupy e2 and i2.

PIECES

PIECE	MOVEMENT
King (Shah)	One square in any direction
General (Firzan)	One square diagonally
Elephant (Fil)	Leaps exactly 2 squares diagonally; can jump the intervening square
Knight (Faras)	L-shaped leap (as in standard chess)
Rook (Rukh)	Slides any distance orthogonally
Pawn	One square forward; captures one square diagonally; no double first step; promotes to General on reaching the last rank
War Machine (Dabbabah)	Slides any distance diagonally (as a modern Bishop)

CITADEL RULES

- ♦ A King may move into a citadel square on the **opponent's side** of the board (a12 or l12 for White; a1 or l1 for Black).
- ♦ If the King enters the opponent's citadel and **cannot be captured on the very next move**, the game is a **draw**.
- ♦ A player's own citadels (on their own side) grant no special benefit.

SPECIAL RULES

- ♦ **Stalemate** is a **win** for the stalemating player.
- ♦ **No bare King rule** – the game continues normally when a player has only the King.
- ♦ **No castling, no en passant.**
- ♦ **Promotion:** Pawns promote to Generals upon reaching the last rank.

ATTRIBUTION

Citadel Chess documented at chessvariants.com/historic.dir/citadel.html (Hans Bodlaender, from Gollon/Murray/Pritchard).

CHESS · VARIANT 37 OF 153

Codrus

8×8

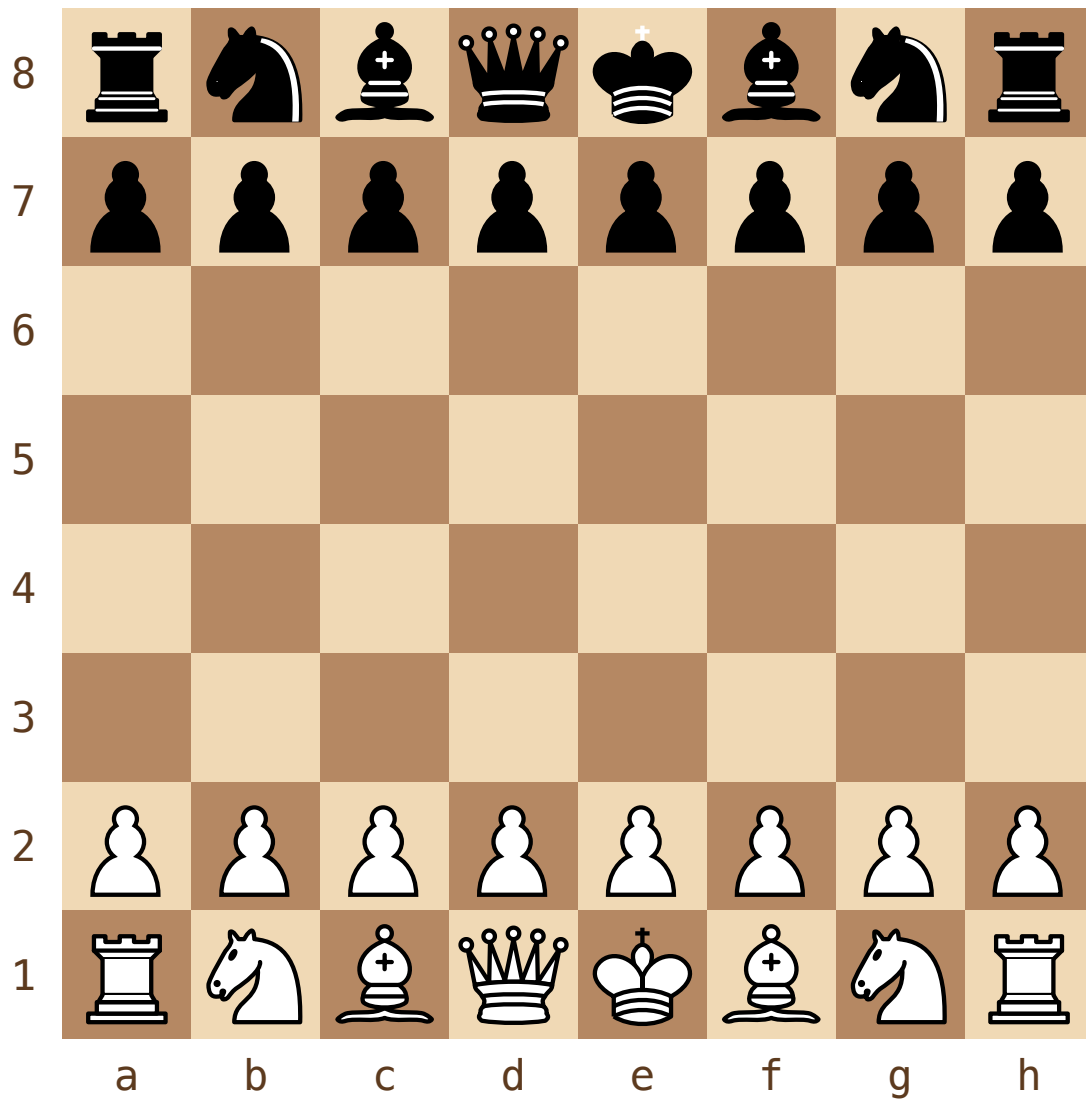
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CODRUS

Sacrifice your King to win. There is no concept of check – the King can walk into danger and must be deliberately captured. Named after King Codrus of Athens, who sacrificed himself to save his city.



Codrus – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=codrus>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ There is NO check, NO checkmate. The King is not protected by check rules.
- ♦ The King can move into attacked squares freely.
- ♦ The King can be captured like any other piece.
- ♦ Forced captures do NOT apply – capturing is optional (unlike Antichess/Giveaway).
- ♦ Castling is available (King and Rook haven't moved, squares between are empty).
- ♦ All other standard movement rules apply.

WIN CONDITION

Lose your King (have it captured by the opponent). You WANT your King captured.

STRATEGY

A mind-bending inversion. You want to get your King captured, but your opponent doesn't want to capture it. The game becomes about forcing your King into positions where your opponent has no choice but to take it – or where refusing the capture leads to a worse position. Blocking your own King's "escape routes" toward the enemy is key. Your opponent will try to avoid your King while attacking your other pieces.

ATTRIBUTION

Named after King Codrus of Athens. Traditional variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 38 OF 153

Congo

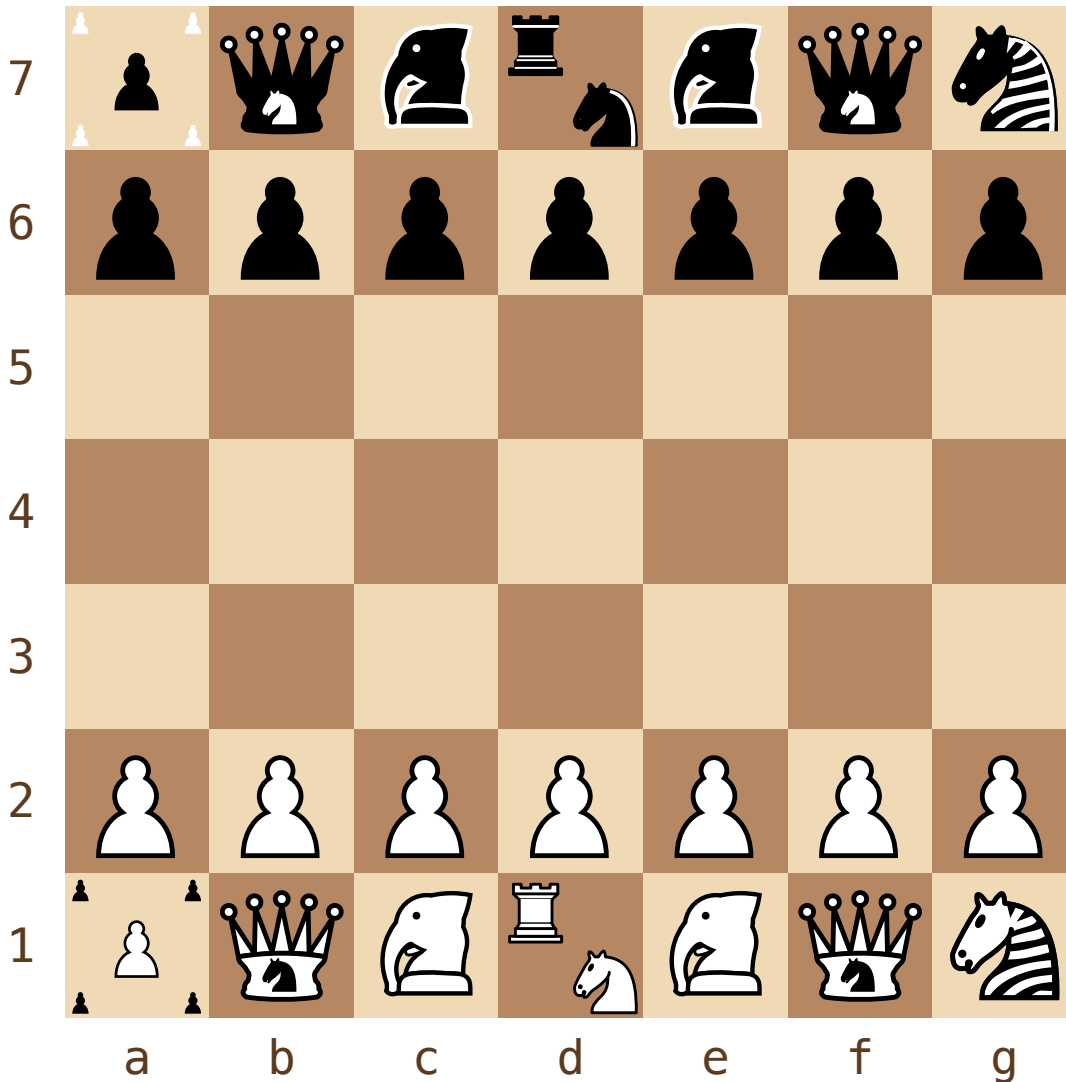
7×7

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CONGO



Congo – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=congo>

Congo is a chess variant invented by Demian Freeling at age seven in the Christmas holidays of 1982–83. His father Christian Freeling (designer of Grand Chess) set the constraints – a 7×7 board, seven pawns, a king in the middle, and six pieces to the left and right – and Demian designed everything else in about an hour. The game went on to become the second most popular chess variant at the games club Fanatic at Twente University.

Congo features no check or checkmate. You win by capturing the opponent's Lion.

THE BOARD

7 files (a–g) × 7 ranks = 49 squares.

The **river** occupies rank 4 (the middle rank). Each side has a **castle**: a 3×3 area at their end of the board.

- ♦ White's castle: c1–e3
- ♦ Black's castle: c5–e7

STARTING POSITION

White (rank 1): Giraffe a1 · Monkey b1 · Elephant c1 · Lion d1 · Elephant e1 · Crocodile f1 · Zebra g1

White pawns (rank 2): a2–g2 (7 pawns)

Black (rank 7): Giraffe a7 · Monkey b7 · Elephant c7 · Lion d7 · Elephant e7 · Crocodile f7 · Zebra g7

Black pawns (rank 6): a6–g6 (7 pawns)

PIECES

LION

Moves one square in any direction (as a chess king), but may **not leave its castle**. Exception: if the two Lions are aligned along a file or diagonal with no pieces in between, the Lion may jump to the other Lion and capture it (the “facing Lions” rule). The game ends immediately when a Lion is captured.

ZEBRA

Leaps in an L-shape, exactly as a standard chess Knight.

GIRAFFE

Jumps to the second square in any direction (orthogonal or diagonal) — a 2-step leap that cannot be blocked by intervening pieces. Also has a non-capturing King move (one square in any direction without capturing).

ELEPHANT

Moves to the first or second square in any straight (orthogonal) direction. The second-square move is a jump and cannot be blocked.

CROCODILE

Moves one square in any direction (king move). In addition:

- ♦ **Outside the river:** can also slide along any file **toward** the river (including the river square itself) as a rook.
- ♦ **Inside the river:** can also slide to other squares in the same river rank as a rook.
- ♦ A Crocodile cannot drown (see terrain rules).

MONKEY

Moves (without capturing) one square in any direction. **Captures** by jumping over an adjacent piece (orthogonal or diagonal) to the vacant square immediately beyond — exactly as in draughts. Multiple consecutive captures are allowed in a single turn, switching between orthogonal and diagonal jumps freely. All captured pieces are removed simultaneously after the move. The Monkey may visit the same square twice in a multiple capture but may not capture the same piece twice. If the Lion is captured during a multiple capture, the game ends immediately.

PAWN

Moves and captures **straight forward or diagonally forward** (unlike standard chess pawns). **Across the river:** may also retreat one or two squares straight backward (no capture or jump on the retreat). Promotes to **Superpawn** on reaching the last rank.

Superpawn: gains the additional ability to move and capture sideways (one square), and to retreat one or two squares diagonally backward (no capture). The right to retreat applies anywhere on the board.

TERRAIN RULES

The river (rank 4): Non-Crocodile pieces that move into the river survive one turn there. If the piece is not moved out of the river on the owner's very next turn, it **drowns** and is removed from play. A piece moved into the river and immediately moved out on the next turn does not drown.

The castles: The Lion may not move outside its own castle under any circumstances, except to execute the facing-Lions capture.

WIN CONDITION

Capture the opponent's Lion. There is no check or checkmate. Stalemate does not exist (if a player has no legal moves, they have lost their Lion, which is impossible, or the position is otherwise terminal).

ATTRIBUTION

Congo was invented by Demian Freeling in 1982. Rules copyright Mindsports, used with permission. Documented at chessvariants.com/ms.dir/congo.html (by Christian Freeling and Hans Bodlaender).

CHESS · VARIANT 39 OF 153

Courier Chess

12×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

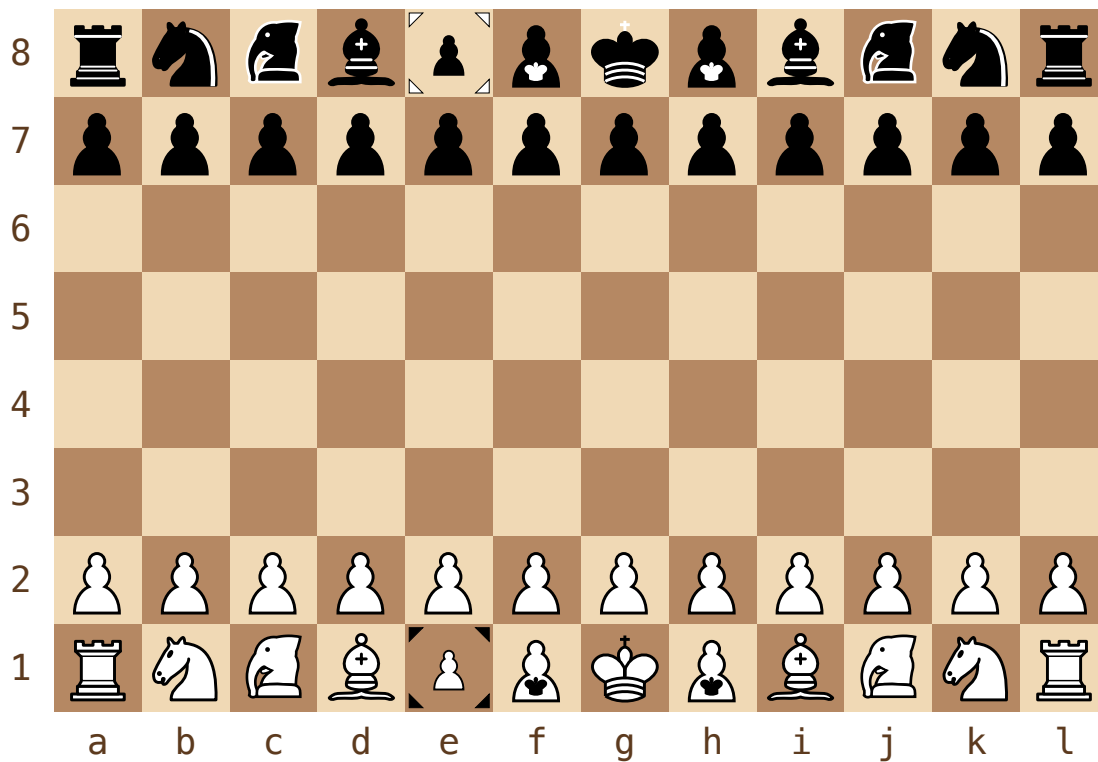
COURIER CHESS

A medieval large-board variant documented since 1202, predating the modern Queen and Bishop moves. One of the oldest recorded chess variants in Europe.

SETUP

Board: 12×8 (96 squares).

FEN: rnebfksbenr/pppppppppppp/12/12/12/12/PPPPPPPPPPPP/RNEBFSKSBENR w - - 0 1



Courier Chess – starting position (12×8)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=courier>

Pieces (per side, from a-file): Rook, Knight, Elephant, Courier, General, Sage, King, Sage, Courier, Elephant, Knight, Rook. 12 Pawns on the second rank.

PIECE	MOVEMENT
King	One step any direction (as standard)
General	One step diagonally only (precursor to Queen – very weak)
Courier	Slides diagonally any distance (modern Bishop)
Sage (Schleich)	One step in any direction (same as King, but not royal)
Elephant (Alfil)	Exactly two steps diagonally, jumping over the intermediate square
Rook	Slides orthogonally (as standard)
Knight	L-shape jump (as standard)
Pawn	One step forward, captures diagonally. No double-step. Promotes to General only.

RULES

Standard chess movement applies per the table above. No castling. No pawn double-step. No en passant. Stalemate counts as a win (medieval rules).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate or stalemate (stalemate = win for the side delivering it in medieval rules).

Historical note: The Courier was the first piece to move like a modern Bishop – this game introduced unlimited diagonal sliding to European chess centuries before it was adopted into the standard game.

STRATEGY

The General (proto-Queen) is extremely weak – one diagonal step. The Couriers (modern Bishops) are the strongest attacking pieces. The wide board makes Knight development slow. Alfils (Elephants) can leap but are limited to every-other-square diagonals, creating gaps in coverage. Rooks dominate open files as in standard chess.

ATTRIBUTION

First documented 1202 (Wirnt von Gravenberg). Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 40 OF 153

Crazy 38's

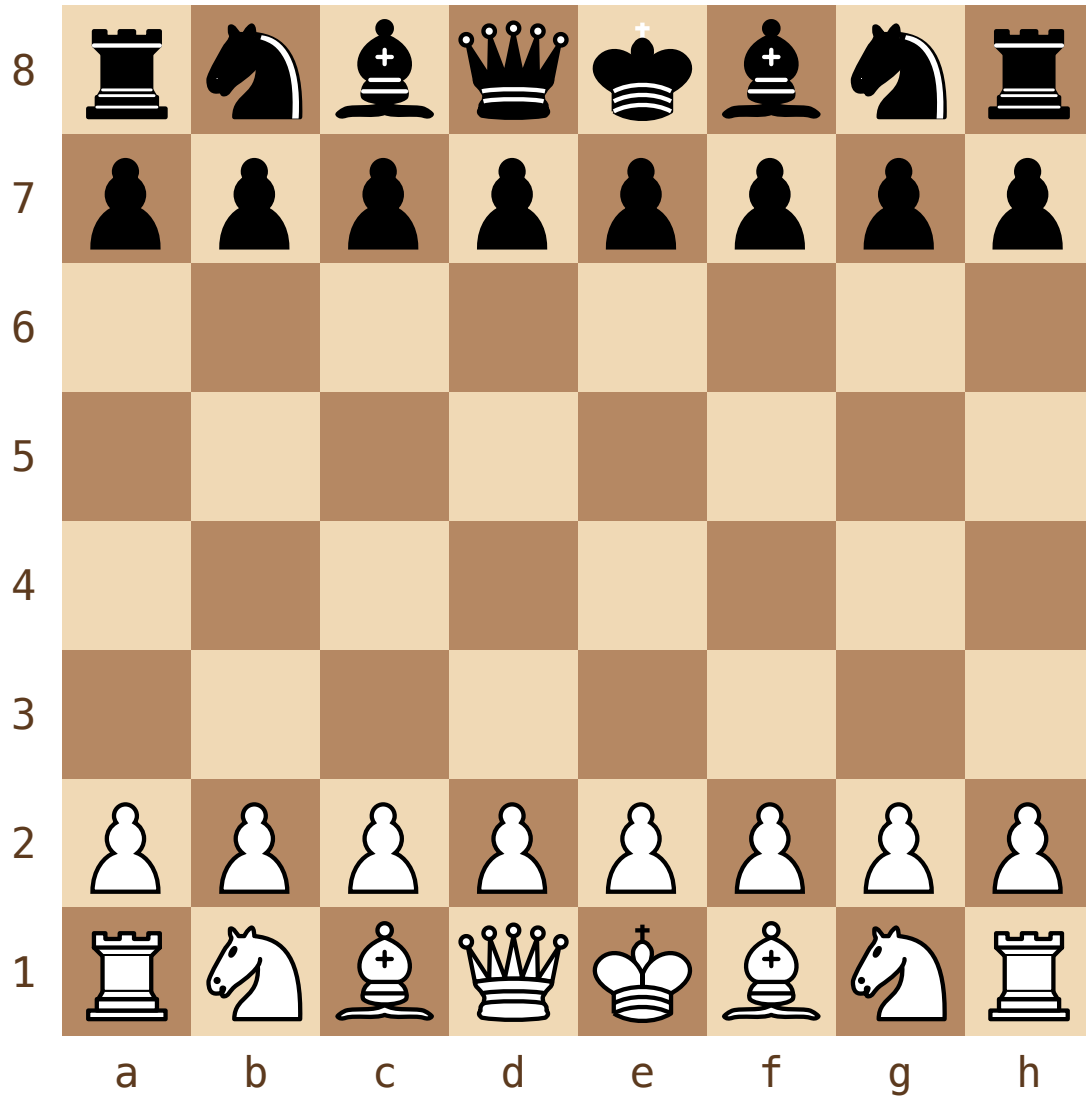
38-square loop board

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CRAZY 38'S



Crazy 38's – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=crazy-38s>

Crazy 38's is a chess variant by Ben Good, invented as an entry for Hans Bodlaender's 38 Squares Contest (submission deadline January 31, 1998). It plays on a 38-square board with a built-in loop connection and uses Shogi-style drops.

THE BOARD

A 38-square checkered board. Notation uses letters a–h for rows (running down one side) and numbers 1–8 for columns (running up the other side); not every letter–number combination corresponds to an existing square. The board has a **loop-effect**: one edge of the board connects to another, enabling pieces (especially the Rook) to travel continuously around the loop.

Home Square: The square a King occupies at the start of the game is that player's **Home Square**. Home Squares are permanent reference points for pawn promotion and the alternative win condition.

STARTING POSITION

Each player begins with the following pieces:

PIECE	QUANTITY
King	1
Rook	1
Bishop	1
Knight	1
Silver General	1
Gold General	1
Pawn	4

PIECE MOVEMENTS

King — moves to any adjacent square (orthogonal or diagonal).

Rook — slides any number of squares orthogonally as long as the path is unblocked. Can exploit the board's loop connection to travel around the board.

Bishop — slides any number of squares diagonally as long as the path is unblocked. Additionally, may step one square orthogonally, provided: (a) the Bishop is adjacent to a friendly piece, and (b) the orthogonal step would not capture an enemy piece.

Knight — moves to any square reached by first stepping one square diagonally, then one square orthogonally outward from the starting square. The move is unblockable (leaps over intervening pieces).

Silver General — moves to any adjacent square **except** the squares diagonally ahead (forward diagonals) and diagonally behind (backward diagonals). Effectively moves to the four orthogonal squares plus the two lateral diagonal squares.

Gold General — moves to any adjacent square **except** the squares diagonally to either side. Note: Gold and Silver Generals have movements distinct from their Shogi counterparts.

Pawn — moves exactly one square in any orthogonal direction **away from the player's own side** of the board (forward and/or lateral, but not backward toward the player's own starting edge). A Pawn promotes to **Queen** only when it moves to the **opponent's Home Square** specifically. The Queen has the combined movement of Rook and Bishop. A Queen that is captured is demoted back to a Pawn before being added to the capturing player's hand for future drops.

DROPS

Crazy 38's uses Shogi-style drops: instead of making a normal move, a player may drop any piece from their hand onto any vacant square, with the following restrictions:

- ♦ A Pawn may not be dropped onto the opponent's Home Square.
- ♦ A Pawn may not be dropped in a position that immediately checkmates the opponent's King.

WIN CONDITION

A player wins by either:

- 1 **Checkmating** the opponent's King, **or**
- 2 **Moving their own King** onto the opponent's Home Square.

ATTRIBUTION

Crazy 38's was designed by Ben Good. Entry submitted to the 38 Squares Contest, January 1998. Source: chessvariants.com/38.dir/crazy/crazy38s.html

CHESS · VARIANT 41 OF 153

Crazyhouse

8×8

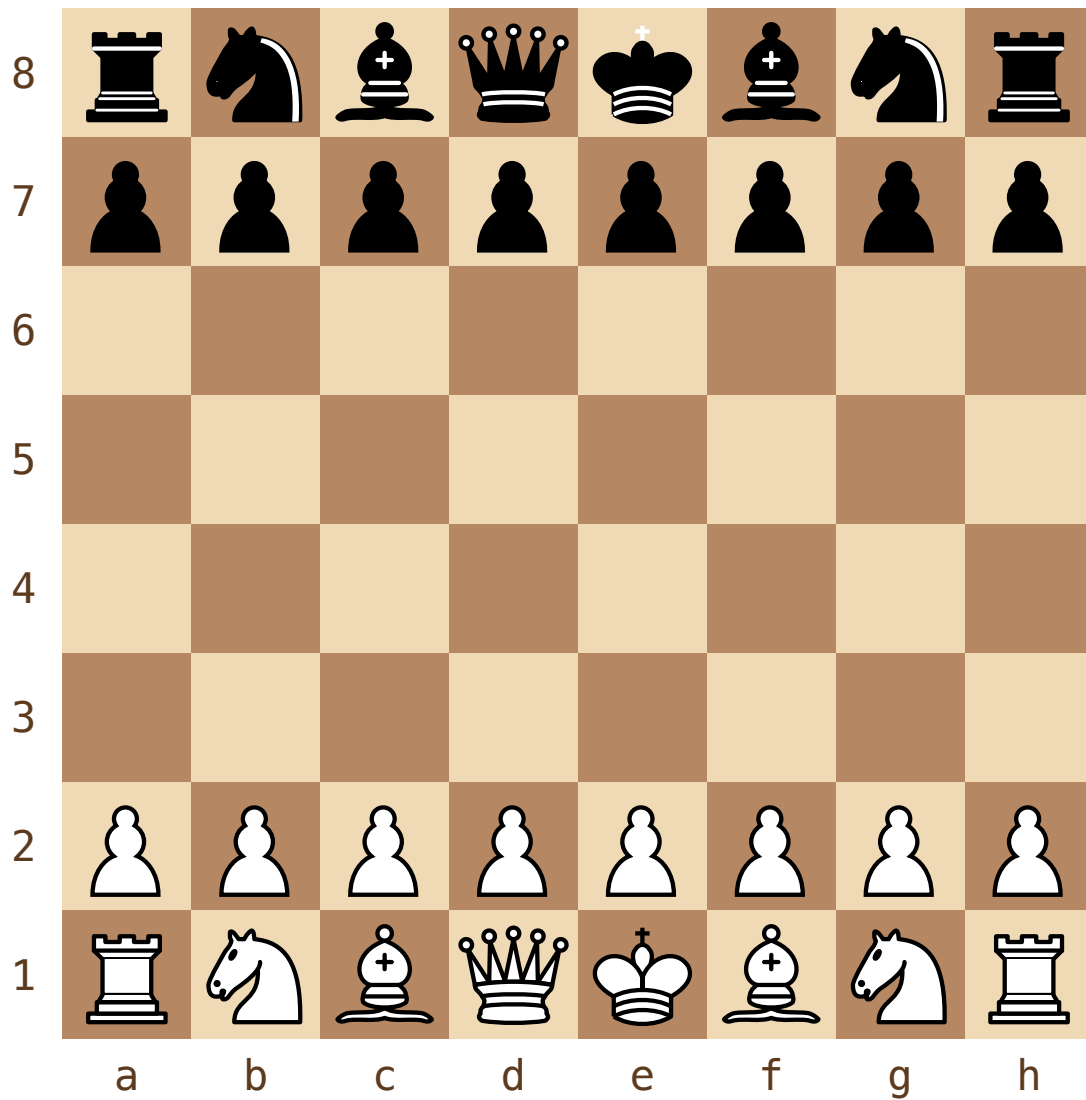
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CRAZYHOUSE

Captured pieces join the captor's reserve. Instead of moving, you may drop a piece from your hand onto any empty square. The most popular chess variant online.



Crazyhouse – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=crazyhouse>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup. Each player begins with an empty hand (reserve).

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- When you capture an opponent's piece, it switches colour and enters your hand (reserve).
- Instead of making a normal move, you may drop a piece from your hand onto any empty square.
- Pawns cannot be dropped on the first or eighth rank (no drop-promotions).
- Promoted pieces revert to pawns when captured.
- Dropped pieces have full movement on the following turn.
- All other standard chess rules apply (check, castling, en passant).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Piece drops create explosive tactical possibilities — no piece is ever truly lost. Material advantage matters less than board control and king safety. Early attacks are common because captured pieces immediately reinforce the attack. Pawn structure is less important since pawns can appear anywhere.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Derives from Shogi's drop mechanic applied to Western chess. Popularised on Lichess and FICS. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 42 OF 153

Cylinder Chess

8×8

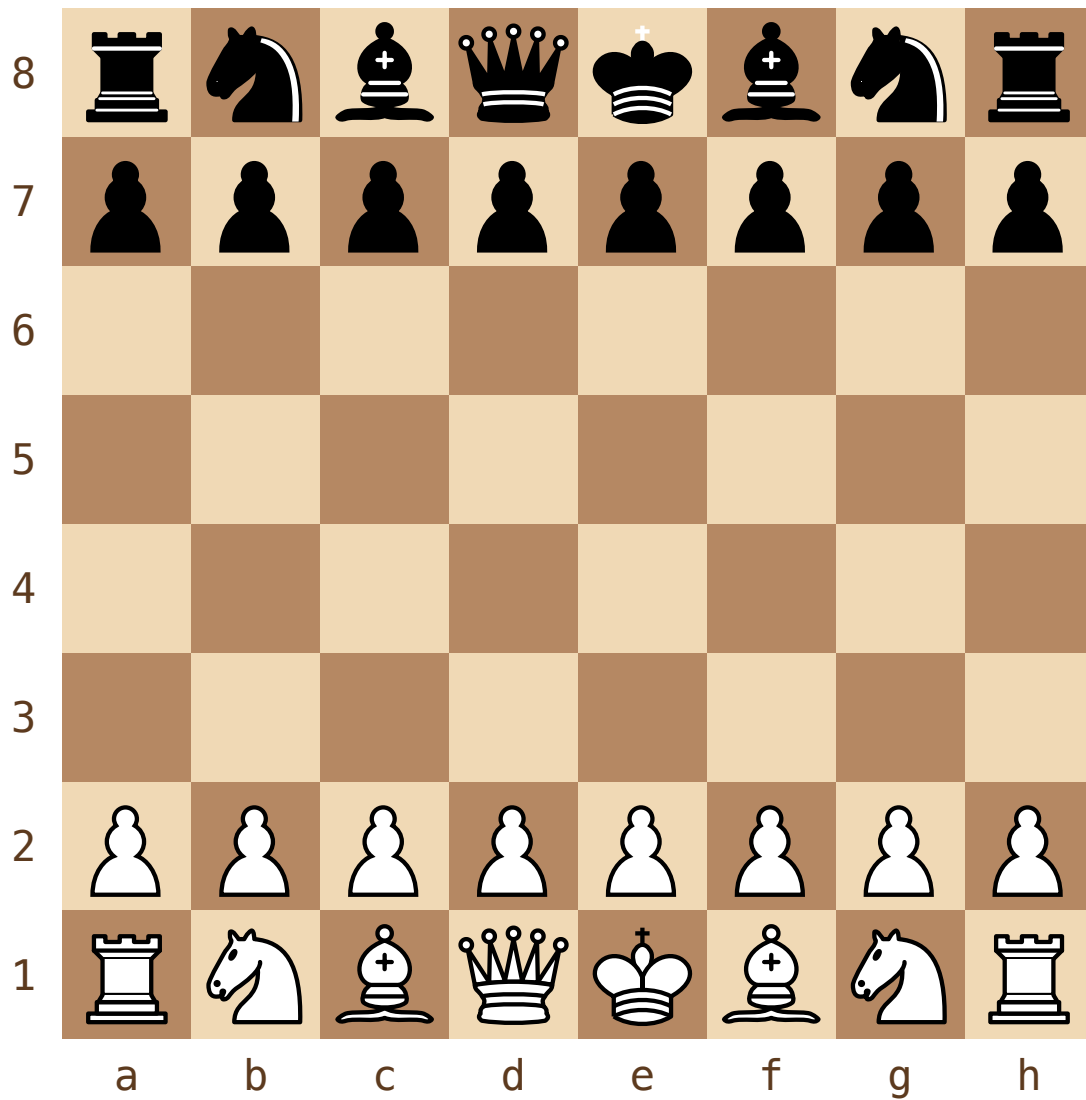
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

CYLINDER CHESS

The board wraps horizontally, forming a cylinder. The a-file is adjacent to the h-file.



Cylinder Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=cylinder-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8 (files wrap).

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ The a-file connects to the h-file. Moving left from a1 reaches h1; moving right from h1 reaches a1.
- ♦ Rooks can slide across the wrap (e.g. Ra1 can move to h1 via the wrap, or slide all the way around).
- ♦ Bishops slide diagonally and can wrap around the board, reaching squares that would be inaccessible on a flat board.
- ♦ Queens combine rook and bishop wrapping movement.
- ♦ Pawns can capture diagonally across the wrap (e.g. a pawn on a5 can capture on h6).
- ♦ Knights jump normally – the wrap does not affect knight movement beyond providing connectivity between a/h files.
- ♦ Castling follows standard rules (no wrapping castling).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Bishops become much more powerful on a cylinder – they can reach every square of their colour. Rook files are no longer safe flanks since attacks can come from behind via the wrap. Flank pawns gain additional capture options. The lack of board edges eliminates many standard endgame techniques.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant with roots in 19th-century chess composition. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 43 OF 153

Cylindrical Chess

8×8 (cylindrical)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

Cylindrical Chess

OVERVIEW

Cylindrical Chess is played on a standard 8×8 board, but the board is treated as a cylinder: the left and right edges are connected. File a is adjacent to file h. A piece that moves off one edge of the board reappears from the other side.

SETUP

Standard FIDE starting position.

FEN: `rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1`

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply with the following modifications for the cylindrical board:

CYLINDRICAL MOVEMENT

All pieces may move and attack across the board edge. File a and file h are adjacent:

- A **Rook** on a3 may slide left (away from the board edge) to h3, g3, f3, etc. — provided those squares are not blocked.
- A **Bishop** on c1 may move diagonally through a3 and continue to h4 (wrapping around the edge).
- A **Knight** on h2 may jump to squares on the a-file side of the board.
- A **Queen** combines Rook and Bishop cylindrical movement.

EN PASSANT

En passant works normally across the cylinder. For example: if White has a pawn on a5 and Black plays h7–h5, White may capture en passant with a5×h6.

CASTLING

Castling is permitted under standard FIDE conditions. The Rook does not cross the board edge during castling — only standard castling (not over the edge) is allowed.

NULL MOVES

A piece may not make a null move — it cannot travel all the way around the board to return to its starting square. (Such moves are only allowed in some problem contexts.)

STALEMATE

Stalemate is a draw, as in standard chess.

STRATEGY NOTES

Piece values are significantly different from standard chess:

PIECE	APPROX. VALUE
Pawn	1
Knight	3.25
Bishop	4
Rook	5
Queen	11

Bishops are considerably stronger than in standard chess because they can reach more squares via the wrap. Queens gain even more. Knights and Rooks benefit only modestly.

Center control is less important — advancing a central pawn exposes the position to diagonal attacks via the edges.

Endgame: King and Rook alone cannot force checkmate against a lone King (the defending King can always escape around the cylinder). Two Rooks can deliver a ladder mate along the ranks (but not along the files).

Sources: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinder_chess; Pritchard, The Encyclopedia of Chess Variants, p. 79

CHESS · VARIANT 44 OF 153

Dark Chess

8×8

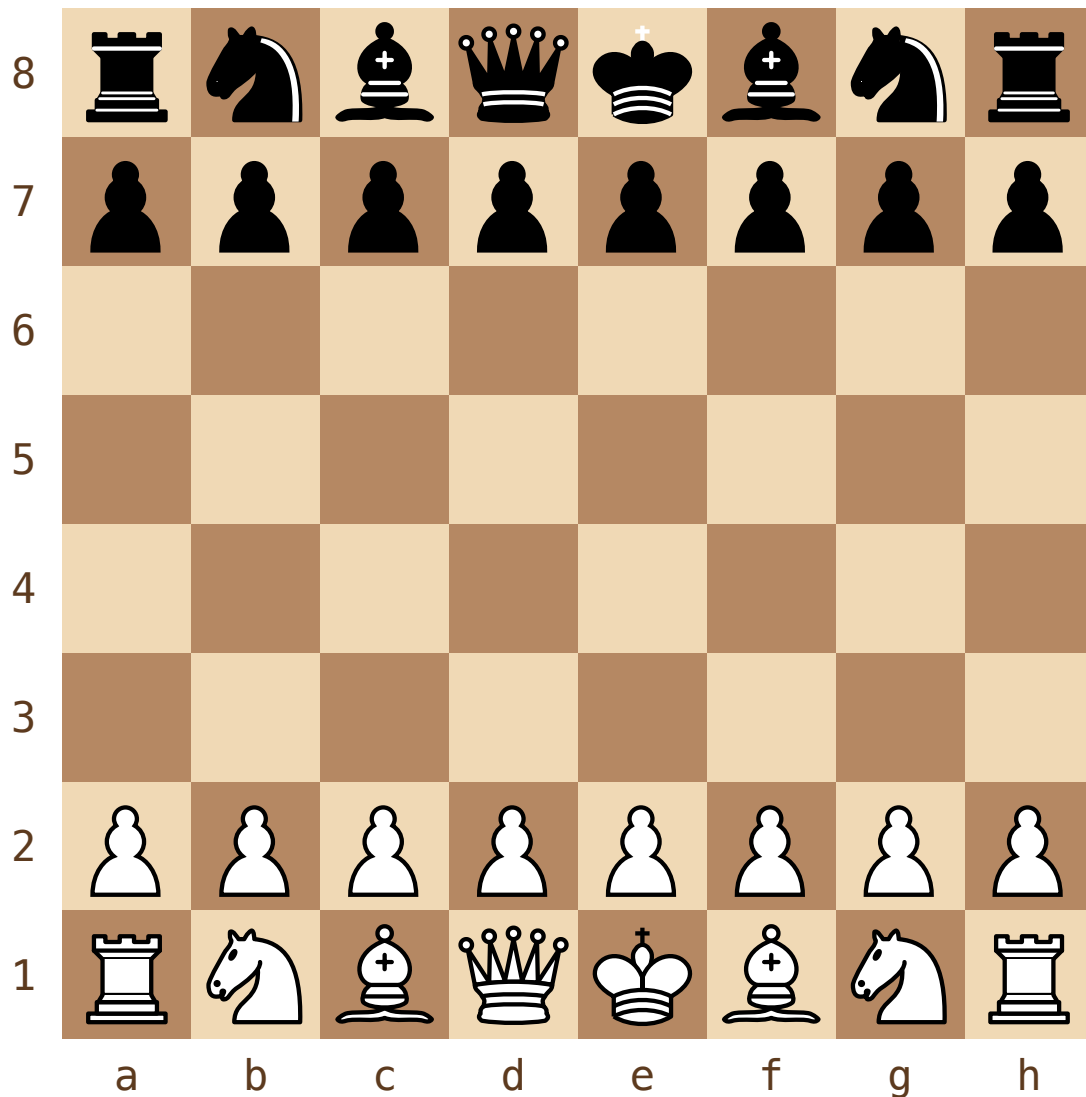
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

DARK CHESS

The most restrictive fog variant. Each player can ONLY see squares occupied by their own pieces – not squares they attack. Chess becomes a game of memory, deduction, and blind aggression.



Dark Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=dark-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8, but each player's view is severely limited.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

Visibility:

- ♦ You can ONLY see squares occupied by your own pieces.
- ♦ All other squares are invisible — you cannot see enemy pieces or empty squares.
- ♦ When you move a piece, you discover what is on the destination square only upon arrival.

Key differences from Fog of War:

- ♦ In Fog of War, you see all squares your pieces can legally move to. In Dark Chess, you see ONLY the squares your pieces physically occupy.
- ♦ No check announcements. You are never told your King is in danger.
- ♦ King capture wins the game — there is no checkmate.
- ♦ Moving into check is “legal” since you cannot know you’re in check.
- ♦ If you attempt a move to an occupied square you cannot see, the move either captures (if enemy) or is revealed as illegal (if friendly).

WIN CONDITION

Capture the opponent’s King.

STRATEGY

Information is almost nonexistent. You must remember where enemy pieces were last seen (when you occupied adjacent squares). Spreading pieces out provides more visibility but weakens coordination. Knights are excellent scouts since they land on squares far from their origin. Advancing pawns reveals enemy positions through collision. The centre is fought over blindly.

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant. Distinguished from Fog of War by its stricter visibility rules. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 45 OF 153

De Vasa's Hexagonal Chess

81 hexes (rhombus, horizontal)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

DE VASA'S HEXAGONAL CHESS

Invented by Helge E. de Vasa. Played on an 81-hex rhombus board oriented horizontally, which changes the shape and feel of the game compared to the standard upright hexagonal boards.

SETUP

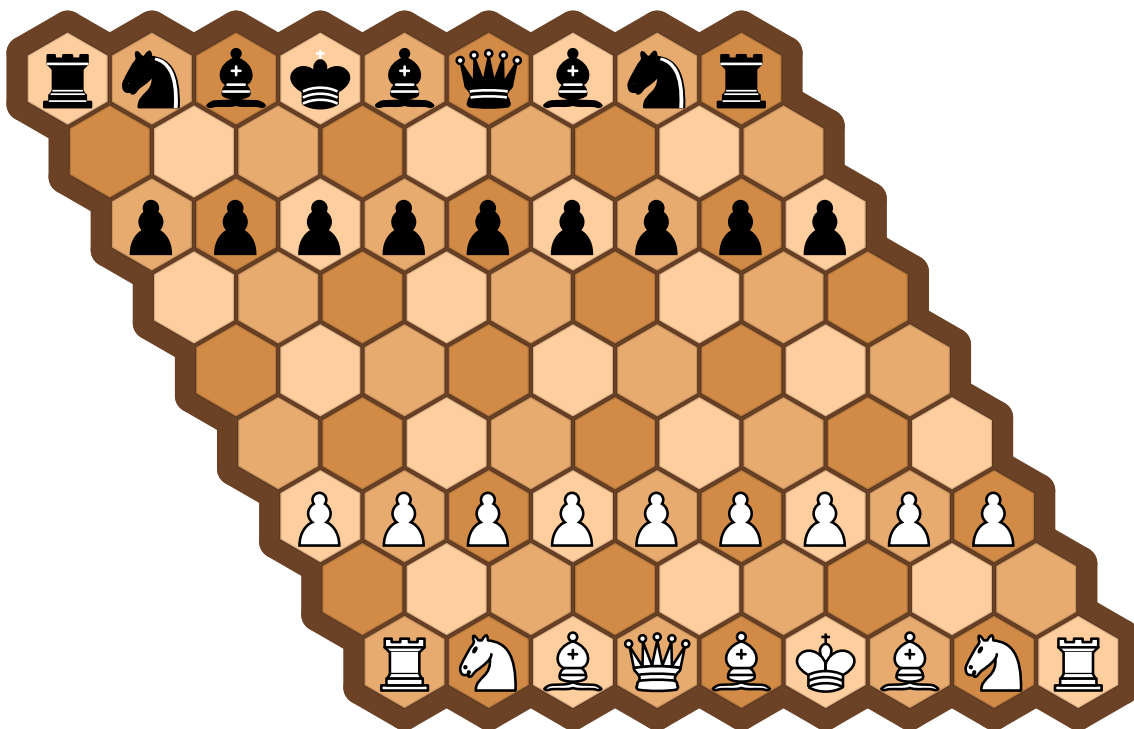
Board: 81-hex rhombus grid (9×9), horizontally oriented. Files a–i, ranks 1–9. Every file has 9 cells.

White pieces (rank 1, bottom):

- ♦ King on f1
- ♦ Queen on d1
- ♦ Bishops on c1, e1, g1 (one per colour)
- ♦ Knights on b1, h1
- ♦ Rooks on a1, i1
- ♦ Pawns on a3, b3, c3, d3, e3, f3, g3, h3, i3 (9 pawns on rank 3)

Black pieces (rank 9, top – mirrored):

- ♦ King on d9
- ♦ Queen on f9
- ♦ Bishops on c9, e9, g9 (one per colour)
- ♦ Knights on b9, h9
- ♦ Rooks on a9, i9
- ♦ Pawns on a7, b7, c7, d7, e7, f7, g7, h7, i7 (9 pawns on rank 7)



De Vasa's Hexagonal Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=de-vasa>

PAWNS

Pawns move straight forward. They capture diagonally forward to a cell of the same colour.

Pawns begin on the 3rd rank and may make an initial double step from their starting position.

CASTLING

Castling is permitted. The King slides two cells toward the Rook (short castling) or three cells (long castling).

RULES

Identical to standard chess adapted for the hex grid except as noted. Stalemate is a draw.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

ATTRIBUTION

Helge E. de Vasa. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 46 OF 153

Delirious Bughouse

8×8 (two boards)

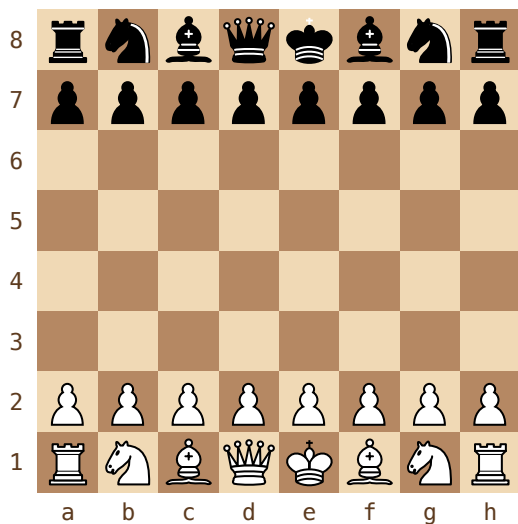
BOARD

4 (2 teams of 2)

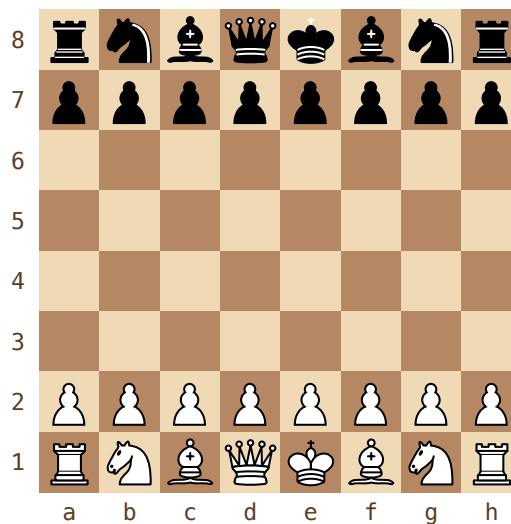
PLAYERS

DELIRIOUS BUGHOUSE

Board 1



Board 2



Delirious Bughouse – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=delirious-bughouse>

Delirious Bughouse is a complex Bughouse chess variant developed by Alberto Vieira Ferreira Monteiro and Carlos Eugenio Lossio Seiblitiz Filho around 1984. It evolves through several layers from standard Bughouse, adding dice, worst-move mechanics, and eventually a full set of fairy pieces, structures, events, and magic items.

TEAMS AND BOARDS

Two standard 8x8 boards. Four players in two allied teams: White1 and Black4 are allies; Black2 and White3 are allies. White1 plays against Black2 on one board; White3 plays against Black4 on the other. Play proceeds simultaneously on both boards.

BASE BUGHOUSE RULES

Standard Bughouse (Tandem Chess) with two modifications:

- Pawn drop restriction:** Pawns received from a partner may only be dropped on ranks 2-6. They may not be dropped on rank 7 (unlike standard Bughouse).

- Promoted Pawn capture:** When a promoted Pawn is captured, it does not revert to a Pawn – the capturing player keeps the promoted piece. However, the player who originally promoted the Pawn recovers the original Pawn for future use. This means piece count on the board grows over time: promotion permanently adds one piece to the total.

All other standard Bughouse rules apply: players play simultaneously; captured pieces pass to the partner; a player may spend their turn dropping a received piece onto any legal square; pawns may not be dropped to checkmate.

DICE CHESS LAYER

Before each move, the player rolls one die to determine which type of piece must be moved:

- ♦ 1 = Pawn
- ♦ 2 = Knight
- ♦ 3 = Bishop
- ♦ 4 = Rook
- ♦ 5 = Queen
- ♦ 6 = Any piece

If no legal move exists with the rolled piece type, the player may choose any legal move.

WORST MOVE LAYER

Two dice are rolled each turn instead of one. The second die determines whether the player plays the best or worst possible move:

- ♦ If “best”: the player chooses their move freely (within the piece-type constraint)
- ♦ If “worst”: the **opponent** chooses which move the player makes, subject to the piece-type constraint – selecting the worst possible option

BUGHOUSE WORST MOVE

Combining all three elements: two boards with Bughouse relay and pawn rules, plus the two-dice Dice Chess + Worst Move system applied each turn.

FAIRY PIECES

When a King is captured, the capturing player is rewarded with one or more fairy pieces from an agreed set, which may subsequently be dropped. Core fairy piece set:

PIECE	MOVEMENT
Camel	Extended Knight: leaps [3,1]
Giraffe	Leaps [4,1]
Zebra	Leaps [3,2]
Taxi	Modified Pawn: moves backwards; from rank 2 can leap to rank 5; capturable en passant in two ways
Pyramid	Drops onto any square; once placed, blocks all entry to that square permanently
Atomic Bomb	Drops onto any square; destroys all pieces in a 3×3 area; Kings are immune
Cylindrical Rook (Rc)	Rook that views the board as a cylinder – the a-file and h-file are adjacent
Cylindrical Knight (Nc)	Knight with cylindrical wrap
Cylindrical Bishop (Bc)	Bishop with cylindrical wrap
Cylindrical Queen (Qc)	Queen with cylindrical wrap

Intelligent pieces (marked “i”): Never play the worst move – if the opponent selects “worst” for an intelligent piece, the owning player chooses the move instead.

STRUCTURES, EVENTS, AND MAGIC ITEMS (FULL DELIRIOUS BUGHOUSE)

The extended form adds:

- ♦ **Structures:** Board modifications that may occur mid-game (e.g. the board becomes cylindrical; an extra row is added)
- ♦ **Events:** Random occurrences affecting the board state (e.g. empty squares filled by bacteria that evolve like Conway’s Life; the board rotates 90 degrees)
- ♦ **Magic Items:** Attachable to pieces (e.g. ring of invisibility – opponent does not know where the piece moved until it captures or checks; cloak of double strength – piece requires a double attack to be captured)

WIN CONDITION

Victory = capturing an opposing King. Teams: if either ally’s King is captured, both team members lose.

SCORING (MATCH PLAY)

When scoring matches:

- ♦ +1 for each victory
- ♦ +1 if the final check was given by a moving (not dropped) piece
- ♦ +1 if the checkmate uses a non-FIDE piece
- ♦ +1 if the checkmating move uses a non-attacking piece (e.g. Atomic Bomb drop)

ATTRIBUTION

Delirious Bughouse was developed by Alberto Vieira Ferreira Monteiro and Carlos Eugenio Lossio Seiblitiz Filho, with earlier assistance from Oscar Luiz Vieira Ferreira and Carlos Vieira Ferreira. Final form achieved around 1984. Source: chessvariants.com/multiplayer.dir/delbug.html

CHESS · VARIANT 47 OF 153

Diana Chess

6×6

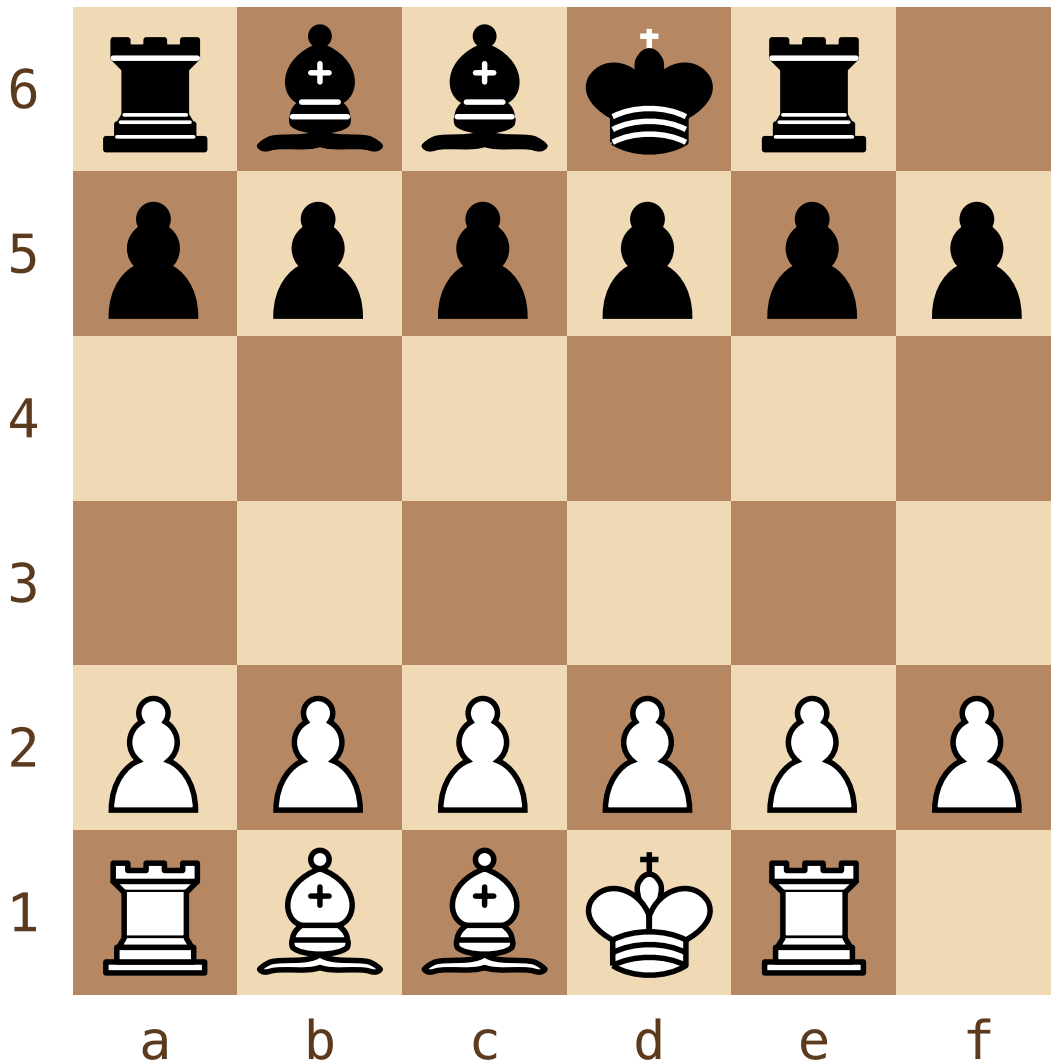
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

DIANA CHESS

A 6×6 variant with no Queens and no Knights. Only Rooks, Bishops, King, and Pawns. Clean, positional play on a compact board.



Diana Chess – starting position (6×6)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=diana>

SETUP

Board: 6×6 (six files, six ranks).

Setup (FEN): rbbkr1/pppppp/6/6/PPPPPP/RBBKR1

Black (rank 6): Rook, Bishop, Bishop, King, Rook, empty. White (rank 1): Rook, Bishop, Bishop, King, Rook, empty.

Each side has: 1 King, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 5 Pawns (files a–e occupied; f-file back rank empty).

RULES

- ♦ Rooks, Bishops, King, and Pawns move as in standard chess.
- ♦ No Queens and no Knights exist in this variant.
- ♦ Pawns move one square forward only (no double-step).
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ No castling.
- ♦ Pawns promote on the far rank to Rook or Bishop only.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

STRATEGY

Without Queens, the game is slower and more positional. Bishops are limited to one colour each, making the pair complementary – losing one cripples your coverage of half the squares. Rooks need open files, which are created slowly with only single-step pawns. The King is relatively safer but the small board means it's never far from danger.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant, 19th century. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 48 OF 153

Dice Chess

8×8

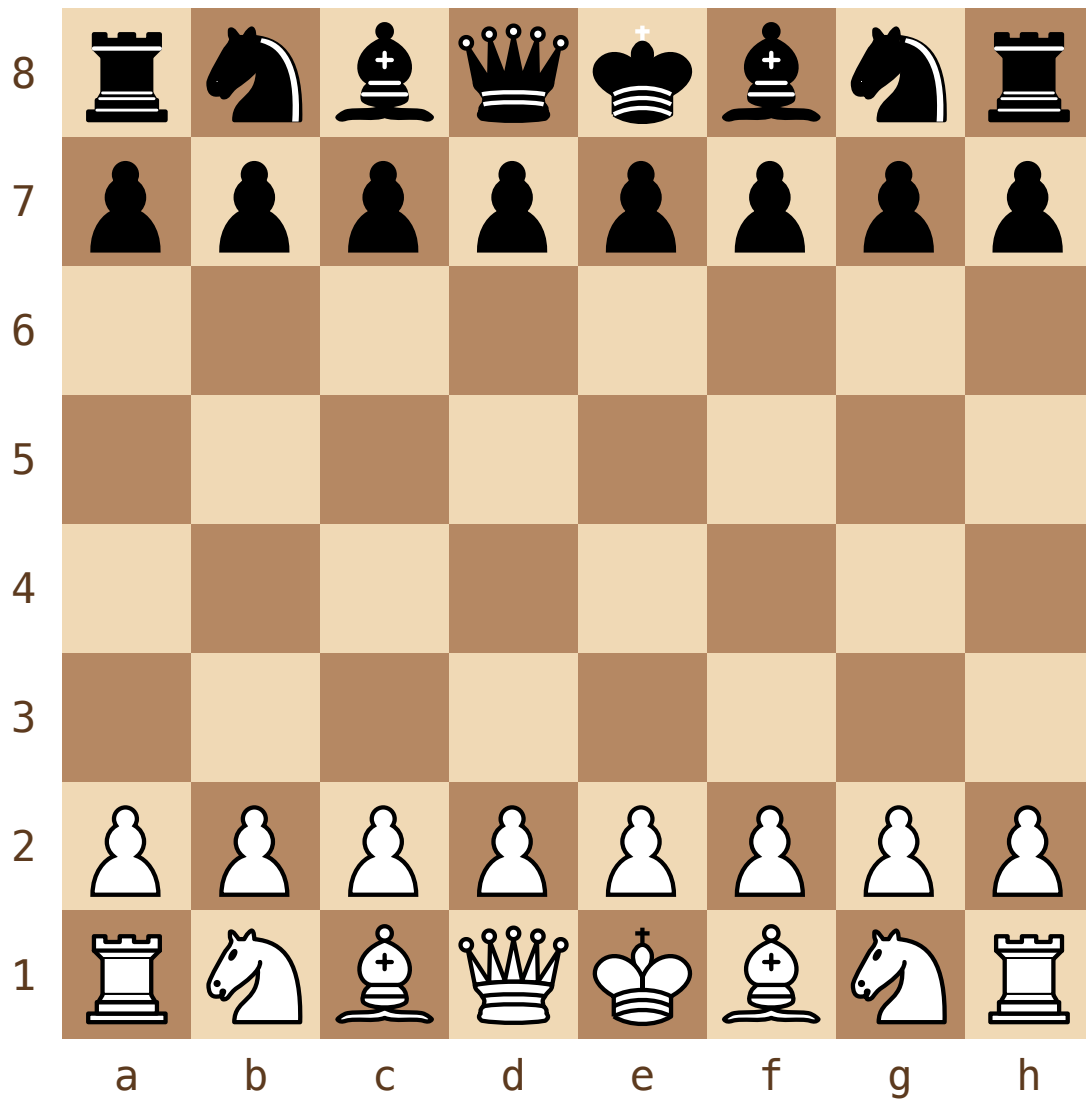
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

DICE CHESS

Before each move, roll two dice. The numbers determine which piece types you may move. Randomness meets strategy.



Dice Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=dice-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position. Two standard dice required.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- Before each move, the player rolls two dice. Numbers correspond to piece types: 1 = Pawn, 2 = Knight, 3 = Bishop, 4 = Rook, 5 = Queen, 6 = King.
- The player may move either piece type indicated by the two dice.
- Rolling doubles (same number on both dice) grants a free choice — move any piece.
- Castling is only allowed on a roll of 4 (Rook), 6 (King), or doubles.
- En passant is only possible on a roll of 1 (Pawn) or doubles.
- If a player cannot make a legal move with either rolled piece type, the turn is lost (passed).
- When in check, the player must still roll — if neither rolled piece type can resolve the check, the turn is lost. If check persists and the King is captured, the game ends.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, or capture of the opponent's King (if check cannot be answered due to dice).

STRATEGY

Develop all piece types early so you have legal moves regardless of the roll. Knights (2) and Bishops (3) cover the most frequent useful results. Keep your King safe — the random element means surprise attacks are harder to repel. Pawn-only positions are fragile because you may roll high numbers with no legal move.

ATTRIBUTION

Ancient origins (11th–14th century Europe, earlier roots in India/Burma). Modern codification by Anne Sunnucks, *The Encyclopaedia of Chess*, 1970. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 49 OF 153

Displacement Chess

8×8

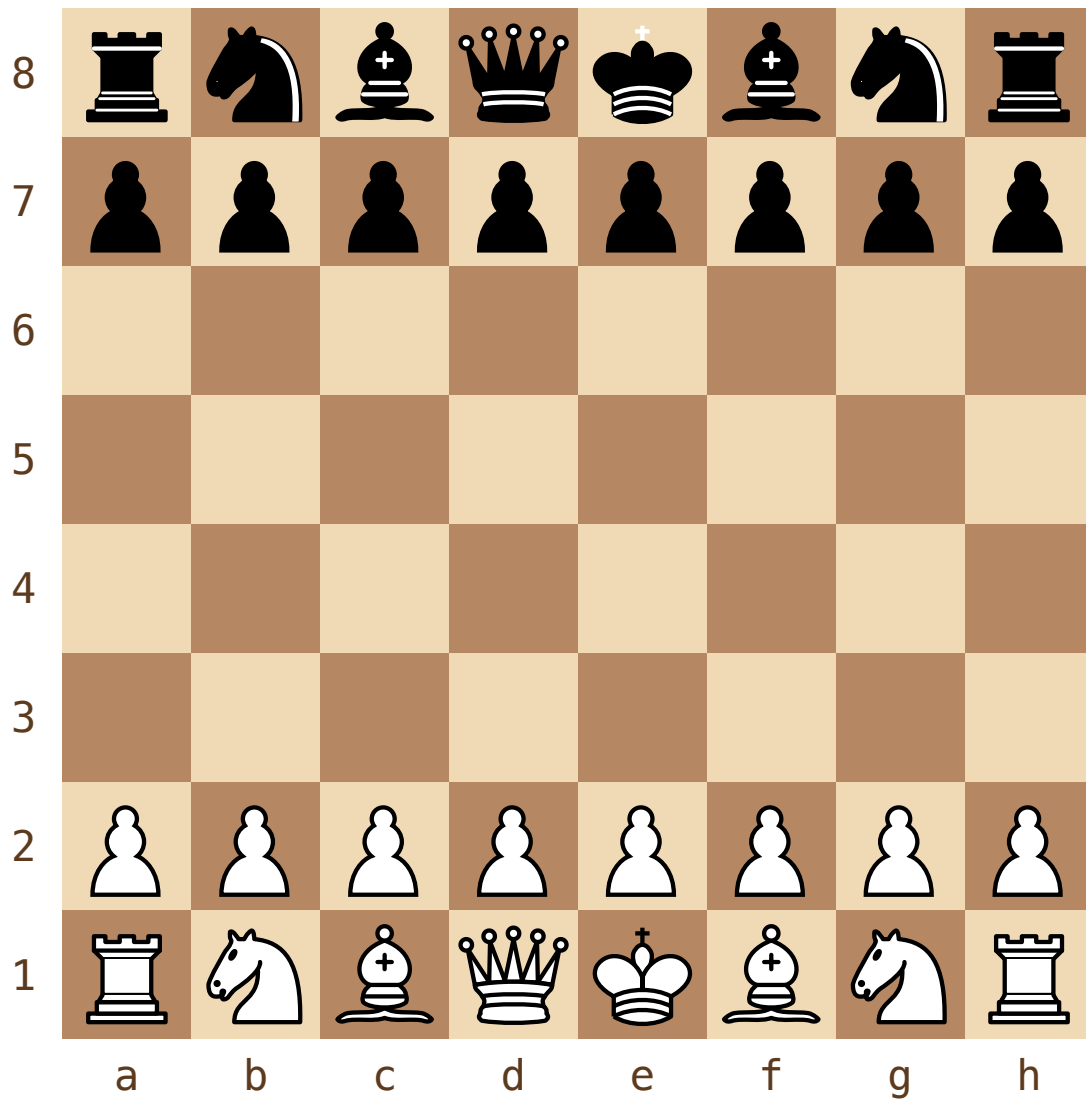
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

DISPLACEMENT CHESS

Any piece can swap positions with an adjacent friendly piece instead of making a normal move.



Displacement Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=displacement-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ On your turn, instead of a normal move, you may swap any of your pieces with an adjacent friendly piece (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally adjacent).
- ♦ The King may not swap into a square where it would be in check.
- ♦ A swap counts as your entire move for that turn.
- ♦ Normal moves, captures, castling, en passant, and promotion all work as standard chess.
- ♦ Swaps are never captures – both pieces must be friendly.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Swaps enable rapid piece coordination – a trapped rook can swap with an adjacent pawn to escape. The King can dodge threats by swapping with a defender. Development becomes faster since pieces can be repositioned without spending multiple tempi. Watch for swap-based discovered attacks.

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 50 OF 153

Djambi

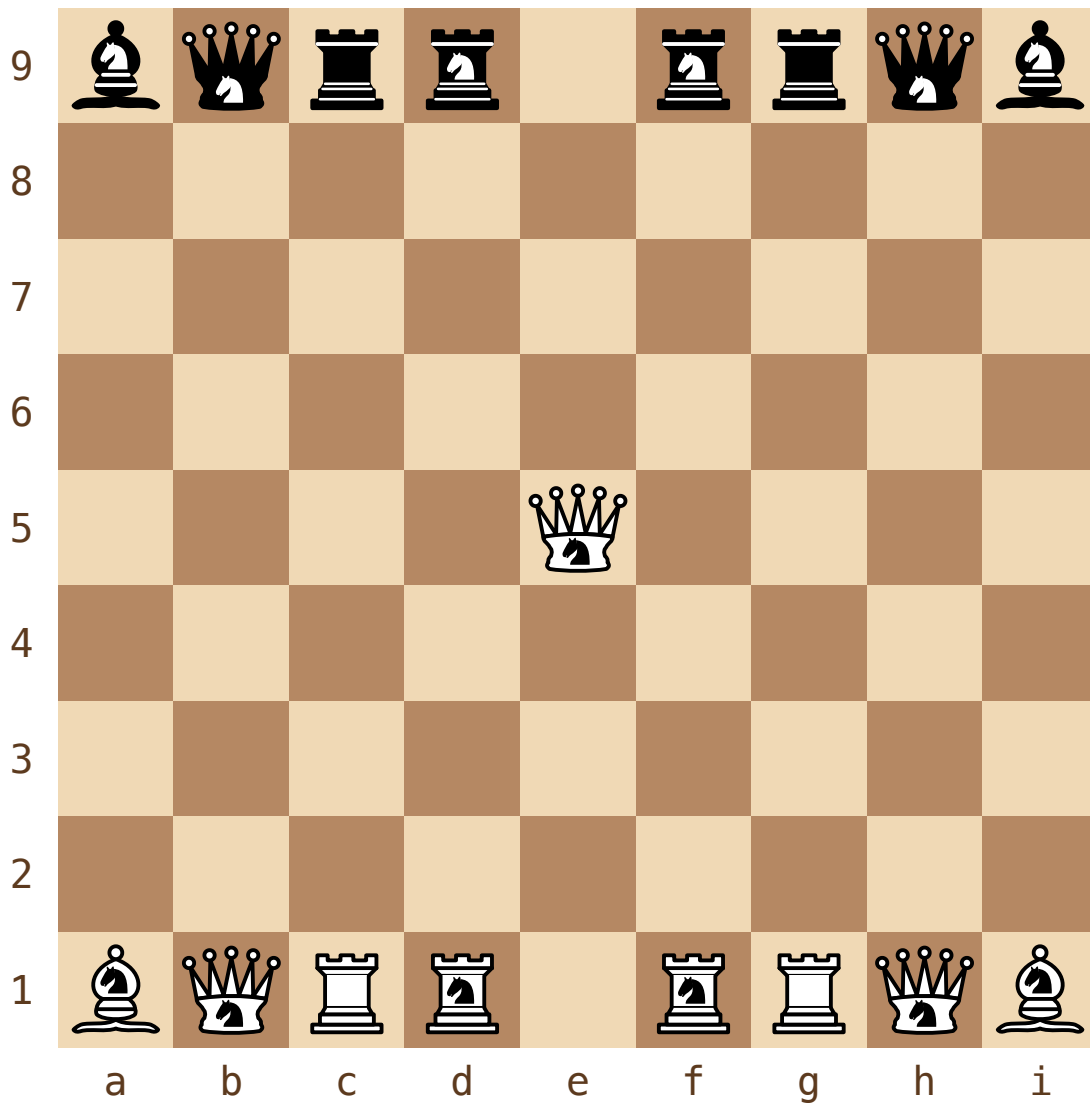
9×9

BOARD

4

PLAYERS

OVERVIEW



Djambi – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=djambi>

Djambi (also called Blocus) is a 4-player abstract strategy game designed by Jean Anesto and published in France in 1975. It is a chess-adjacent game: each player has a royal piece (the Chief), pieces with defined movement types, and a grid board. Its defining mechanic is that **killed pieces remain on the board as corpses** – immovable blocks that obstruct movement and become strategic terrain.

A second distinctive element is the **Maze** (the center square), which grants special powers to the player whose Chief occupies it.

BOARD AND SETUP

Played on a 9×9 grid. The center square (e5) is the Maze. Each player begins with 9 pieces arranged in one corner.

The four players occupy the four corners. Each army's pieces fill a roughly L-shaped zone in the corner:

PIECE	COUNT
Chief ☹	1
Assassin (A)	1
Reporter ®	1
Troublemaker (T)	1
Necromobile (N)	1
Militant (M)	4
Total	9

MOVEMENT

- ♦ **Chief, Assassin, Reporter, Troublemaker, Necromobile** — move like a Queen: any number of squares orthogonally or diagonally.
- ♦ **Militants** — move like a Queen but at most 2 squares per move.

No piece may enter or jump over a square containing a dead piece (corpse/block).

CAPTURE AND CORPSES

When a piece is killed, it becomes a **corpse** — it remains on the board as an impassable block. No piece may enter or jump over a corpse. The capturing player chooses where to place the corpse (on any free square), except where noted by piece type.

Chief — moves to the target's square (queen-style). The dead piece is then moved by the capturing player to any empty square on the board as a corpse.

Militant — same as Chief but limited to ≤2 squares. The dead piece is moved to any empty square as a corpse.

Reporter — does not capture by moving to the target. Instead, when the Reporter lands on a destination square, it kills **all live enemy pieces on squares orthogonally adjacent** to that destination. Each killed piece becomes a corpse and remains on the square where it was standing (it is not moved).

Assassin — moves to the target's square (queen-style). The dead piece is placed as a corpse on the square the Assassin started from (not the square of the kill).

Troublemaker — does not kill. When the Troublemaker moves to a square containing any live piece (friend or enemy), it moves that piece to any other free square on the board. The displaced piece remains alive.

Necromobile — does not kill. When the Necromobile moves to a square containing a corpse (block), it moves that block to any other free square on the board.

ELIMINATING A PLAYER

When a player's Chief is captured, that player is eliminated. The player who captured the Chief **immediately takes control of all surviving pieces** of the eliminated player, adding them to their own army.

A player is also eliminated if their Chief is surrounded on all sides by corpses and they have no Necromobile — **unless** the Chief is in the Maze (see below).

THE MAZE

The Maze is the center square (e5). Rules:

- ♦ All pieces may **pass through** the Maze during a move, provided it is unoccupied at that moment.
- ♦ Only the **Chief may stop** in the Maze.

A Chief resting in the Maze is **in power**, gaining:

- ♦ **Extra turns:** The in-power player takes one additional turn after each other player's turn.
- ♦ **Militant immunity:** The Chief in the Maze cannot be captured by a Militant (but can be captured by other piece types).
- ♦ **Control of blocked chiefs:** Any player eliminated by block-surrounding (while the Maze is occupied) has their surviving pieces taken by the in-power player.
- ♦ **Blocking immunity:** The in-power Chief cannot be eliminated by being surrounded by blocks.

Leaving the Maze: An Assassin or Troublemaker that moves the Chief out of the Maze must immediately make a second move to leave the Maze themselves. A Necromobile that enters the Maze to move a block must also immediately leave the Maze.

THREE-PLAYER VARIANT

With three players, the standard four-player starting setup is used. The fourth army has no controlling player. Its pieces can be moved and captured by any of the three active players following standard rules. Any player may take control of that army's surviving pieces as they would in a standard elimination.

WIN CONDITION

The last player with a Chief on the board wins.

ATTRIBUTION

Djambi was designed by Jean Anesto (1975). Rules documented from chessvariants.com/multiplayer.dir/djambi.html (Hans Bodlaender, January 11, 2012).

CHESS · VARIANT 51 OF 153

Dragon Chess

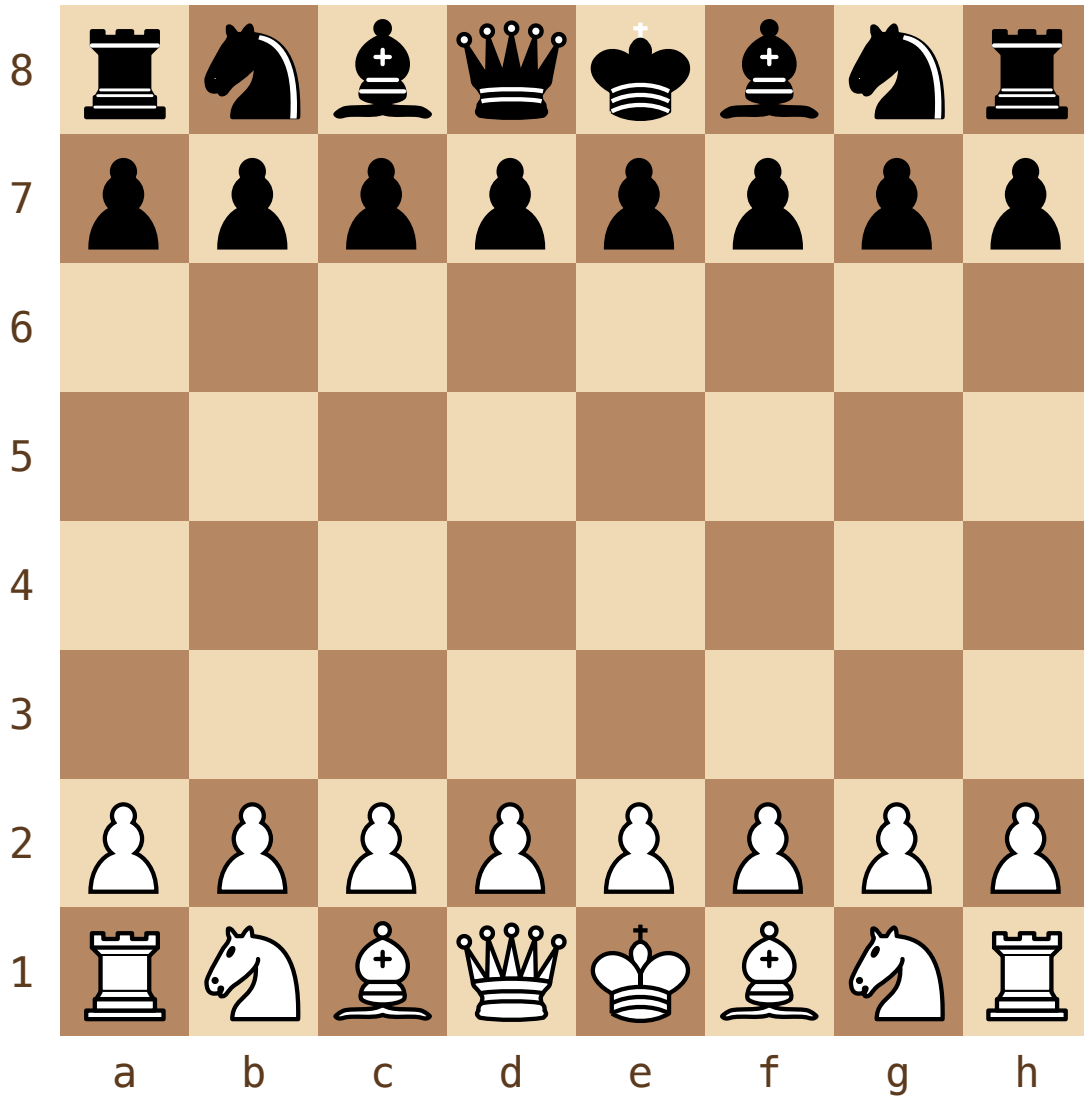
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

DRAGON CHESS



Dragon Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=dragon-chess>

Dragon Chess is a chess variant created by Grandmaster Miguel Illescas. The game begins in the standard chess starting position. Each player holds **two Dragon pieces in reserve** and may gate one onto any empty square on their own first rank at any point during the game instead of making a normal move.

THE DRAGON

The **Dragon (D)** moves as a **Bishop combined with a Knight** – it can slide diagonally any number of squares and also jump to any of the 8 Knight destination squares. This piece is known in fairy chess as the **Archbishop** or **Cardinal**. The Dragon is not colourbound (its Knight moves can reach squares of either colour). It is stronger than a Rook but slightly weaker than a Queen in most positions.

SETUP

Standard 8×8 chess starting position. Each player begins with **2 Dragons in reserve** (off the board).

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR[DDdd] w KQkq – 0 1

(D/d = Dragon. [DDdd] = White has 2 Dragons in hand, Black has 2 Dragons in hand.)

RULES

- On any turn, instead of moving a piece on the board, a player may **gate** one of their reserve Dragons onto any **empty square on their own first rank** (rank 1 for White, rank 8 for Black).
- A Dragon cannot be gated onto an occupied square.
- Once gated, a Dragon moves and captures as any other piece on subsequent turns.
- A player may gate their Dragons on any turn – there is no obligation to gate early or late.
- Each player has exactly 2 Dragons for the entire game; once both are on the board, no more gating is possible.
- If a Dragon on the board is captured, it is gone permanently (no return to hand).
- All standard chess rules apply: castling, en passant, promotion (Pawns may promote to Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight, or Dragon), stalemate is a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Dragon Chess was created by Grandmaster Miguel Illescas. Rules documented from pychess.org/variants/dragon.

CHESS · VARIANT 52 OF 153

Duck Chess

8×8

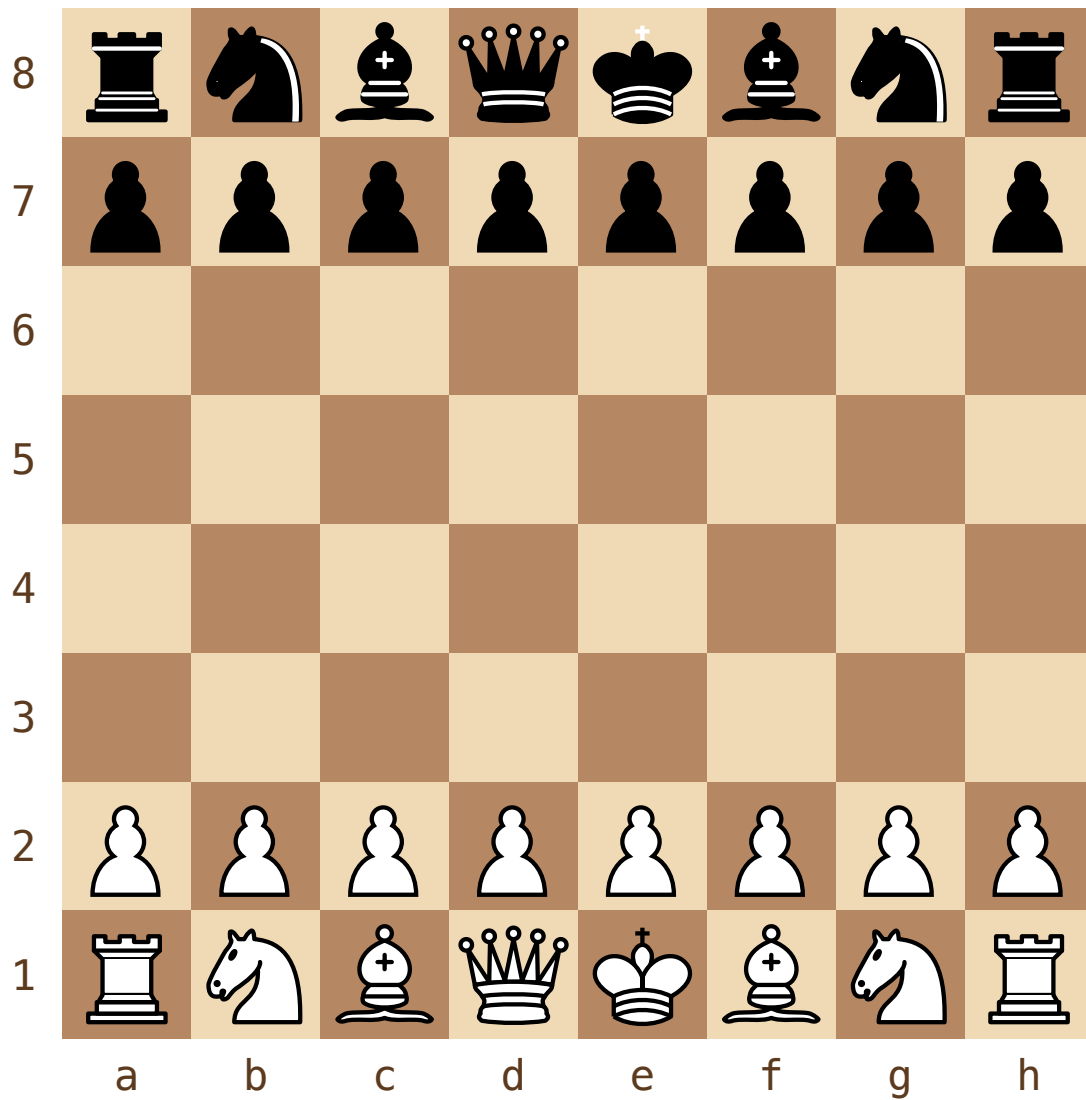
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

DUCK CHESS

After each move, place a shared rubber duck on any empty square. The duck blocks all pieces. Capture the King to win (no check/checkmate).



Duck Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=duck-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8x8 plus one shared “duck” piece (a blocker).

Setup: Standard chess setup. No duck on the board initially.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Each turn has two parts: (1) make a normal chess move, then (2) place the duck on any empty square.
- ♦ The duck blocks all movement – no piece can move through or onto the duck's square.
- ♦ There is no check or checkmate. Kings can move into "attacked" squares freely.
- ♦ The game ends when a King is captured.
- ♦ The duck must be placed every turn – you cannot skip the duck placement.
- ♦ On the first move of the game, the duck is placed after White's first move.

WIN CONDITION

Capture the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

The duck adds a blocking/defensive dimension to every turn. You can use your duck placement to block enemy attacks on your King, or to cut off the enemy King's escape routes before threatening capture. Planning must account for where the duck will be placed.

ATTRIBUTION

Dr Tim Paulden, 2016. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 53 OF 153

Einstein Chess

8×8

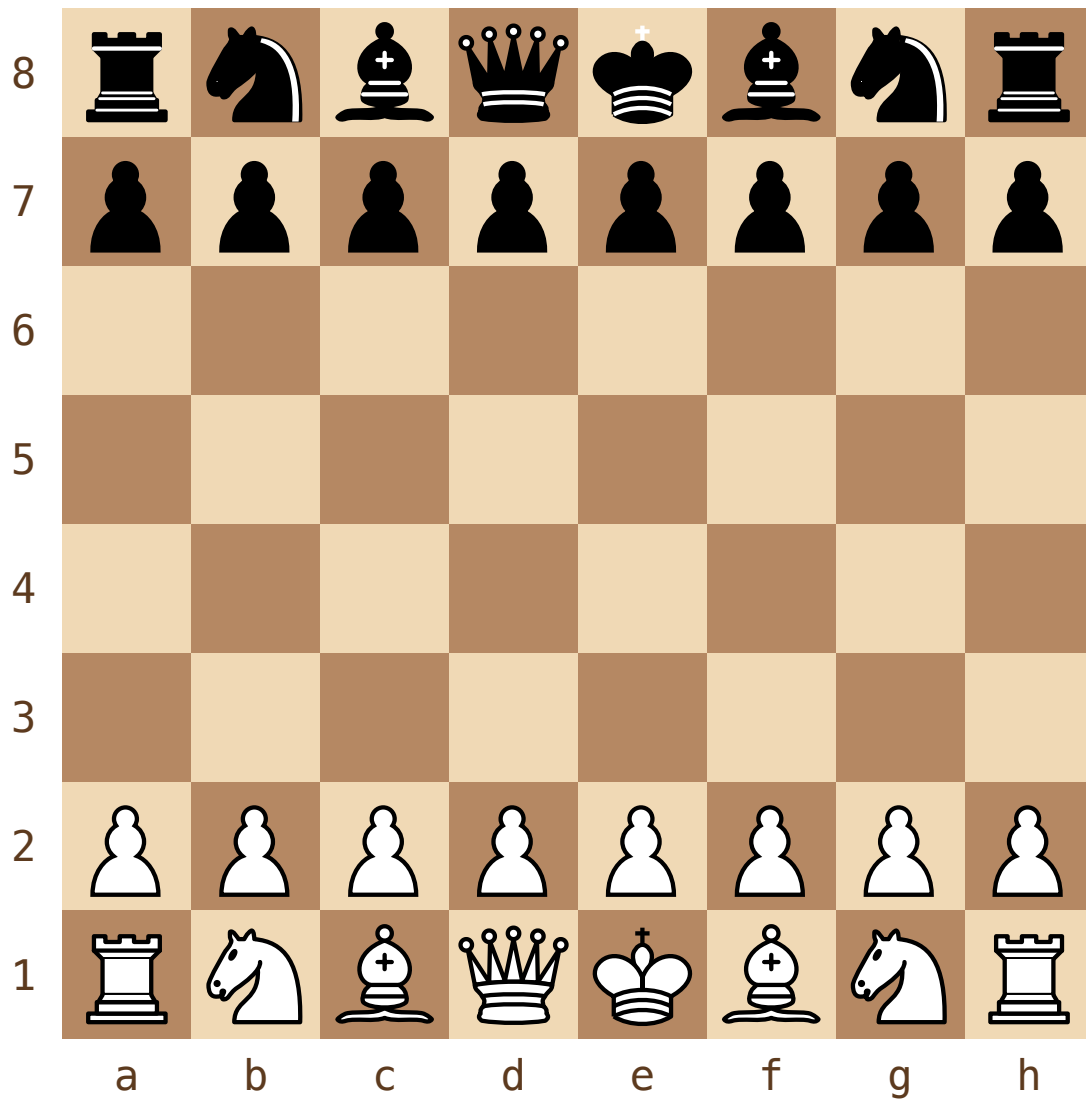
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

EINSTEIN CHESS

Pieces transform after every move. Captures promote, non-captures demote – cycling through the piece hierarchy.



Einstein Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=einstein-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ After a piece makes a non-capturing move, it demotes one step: $Q \rightarrow R \rightarrow B \rightarrow N \rightarrow P$.
- ♦ After a piece makes a capture, it promotes one step: $P \rightarrow N \rightarrow B \rightarrow R \rightarrow Q$.
- ♦ Kings are exempt — they never transform.
- ♦ Pawns that demote have nowhere to go (they remain pawns).
- ♦ Queens that promote have nowhere to go (they remain queens).
- ♦ Transformation happens immediately after the move resolves.
- ♦ Standard promotion on the 8th rank still applies to pawns.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Every move changes your piece composition. Aggressive play (captures) builds stronger pieces, but quiet manoeuvring weakens them. Knights and Bishops are unstable — one capture turns them into Rooks, but one quiet move turns them into Pawns. Queens are fragile: one quiet move demotes to Rook. Material calculation is inverted.

ATTRIBUTION

Invented by B. Iqbal, 2005. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 54 OF 153

Empire Chess

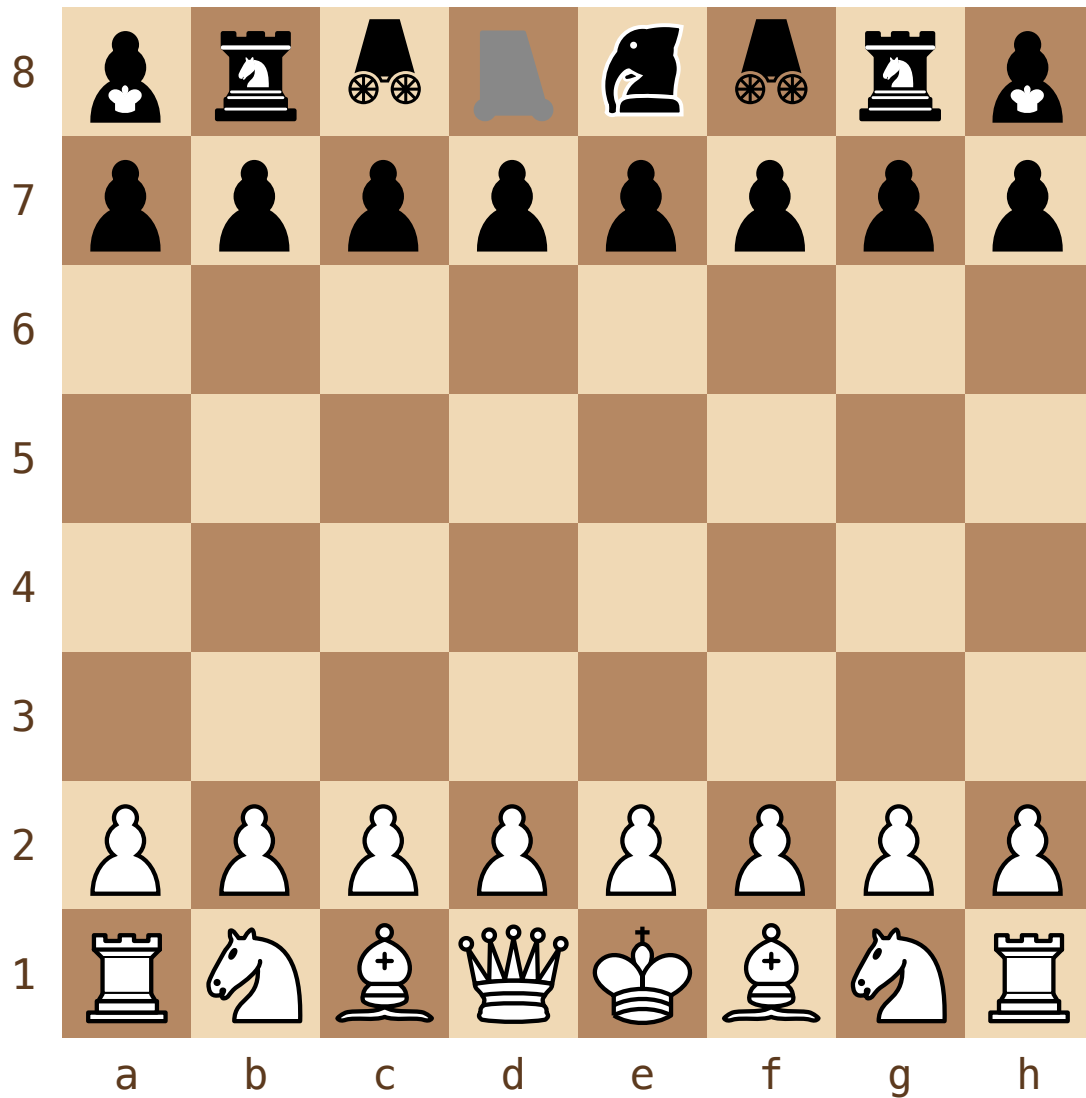
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

EMPIRE CHESS



Empire Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=empire>

Designed by Corey Clark (2019). Empire Chess is an asymmetric variant in which White commands a standard FIDE Kingdom and Black commands the Empire – an army where every piece moves like a Queen but captures in ways unique to its role. The Faceoff rule adds a strategic constraint: if the two royal pieces face each other on an open file, the player who created that confrontation loses.

THE TWO ARMIES

Kingdom (White): Standard FIDE. King, Queen, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 8 Pawns.

Empire (Black): Emperor plus four piece types that each combine Queen-range movement with restricted captures.

EMPIRE PIECES

All Empire pieces except the Emperor and Soldier **move** like the Queen (any direction, unlimited distance). Their **capture** methods are piece-specific and limited.

PIECE	COUNT	MOVE	CAPTURE
Emperor	1	1 step in any direction	1 step in any direction (standard King)
Tower	2	Queen slide	Captures only by sliding orthogonally (Rook-style). Cannot capture diagonally.
Duke	2	Queen slide	Captures only by sliding diagonally (Bishop-style). Cannot capture orthogonally.
Cardinal	2	Queen slide	Captures only by jumping as a Knight (2+1 leap). Cannot capture by sliding.
Siege Tower	1	Queen slide	Captures only by sliding to an orthogonally adjacent square (1 step ortho). Functionally: moves anywhere, but can only take pieces exactly 1 step away orthogonally.
Soldier	8	1 square forward, 2 from start	Captures 1 square diagonally forward (standard Pawn capture). Promotes on rank 1.

STARTING POSITION

Kingdom (White):

2 ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖ ♖
1 ♔ ♙ ♚ ♗ ♕ ♛ ♞ ♞

Empire (Black):

8 Tw Ca Du Si Em Si Du Ca Tw
7 So So So So So So So So

Rank 8 from a to h: Tower, Cardinal, Duke, Siege Tower, Emperor, Siege Tower, Duke, Cardinal, Tower.

Wait — with 2 Towers, 2 Cardinals, 2 Dukes, 1 Siege Tower, 1 Emperor that is 9 pieces on 8 squares. Correction: Empire has 1 Tower on d8, 1 Siege Tower on each of a8 and h8, 2 Dukes on c8 and f8, 2 Cardinals on b8 and g8, 1 Emperor on e8.

Rank 8 from a to h: Siege Tower(a), Cardinal(b), Duke(c), Tower(d), Emperor(e), Duke(f), Cardinal(g), Siege Tower(h).

THE FACEOFF RULE

If the Kingdom King and the Empire Emperor are on the same file with no pieces between them, the player who created that open confrontation — i.e., the player who just moved to bring it about — loses immediately.

Neither player may make a move that results in a Faceoff; it is not a threat to be defended, it is an immediate loss condition. Both players must actively avoid creating an open file between the two royal pieces.

WIN CONDITIONS

- ♦ **Checkmate** the opponent's royal piece (Kingdom King or Empire Emperor).
- ♦ **Faceoff:** creating an open-file confrontation between the two royal pieces immediately loses for the player who caused it.

EMPIRE-SPECIFIC RULES

- ♦ **Soldiers promote on rank 1** (reaching White's back rank). Promotion options: Tower, Duke, Cardinal, or Siege Tower (not Emperor).
- ♦ **No castling** for the Empire.
- ♦ The Kingdom may castle, en passant, and promotes Pawns on rank 8 normally.
- ♦ A move that puts the moving player's own royal piece into check (Kingdom) or leaves Emperor under attack is illegal regardless of the capture mechanic used.

STRATEGIC CHARACTER

The Empire's strength lies in the Queen-slide movement: every piece can reach any square in one move. Its weakness is restricted captures — a Tower sitting in the center can slide to threaten anything, but can only execute the capture with an orthogonal landing. Cardinals are particularly unusual: they can reposition freely but only take pieces via Knight-jump, creating long-range positional threats. The Faceoff rule strongly influences file strategy for both sides throughout the game.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Corey Clark. Published 2019. Rules available via Shogun of Games and Lichess. Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 55 OF 153

Endgame Chess

8×8

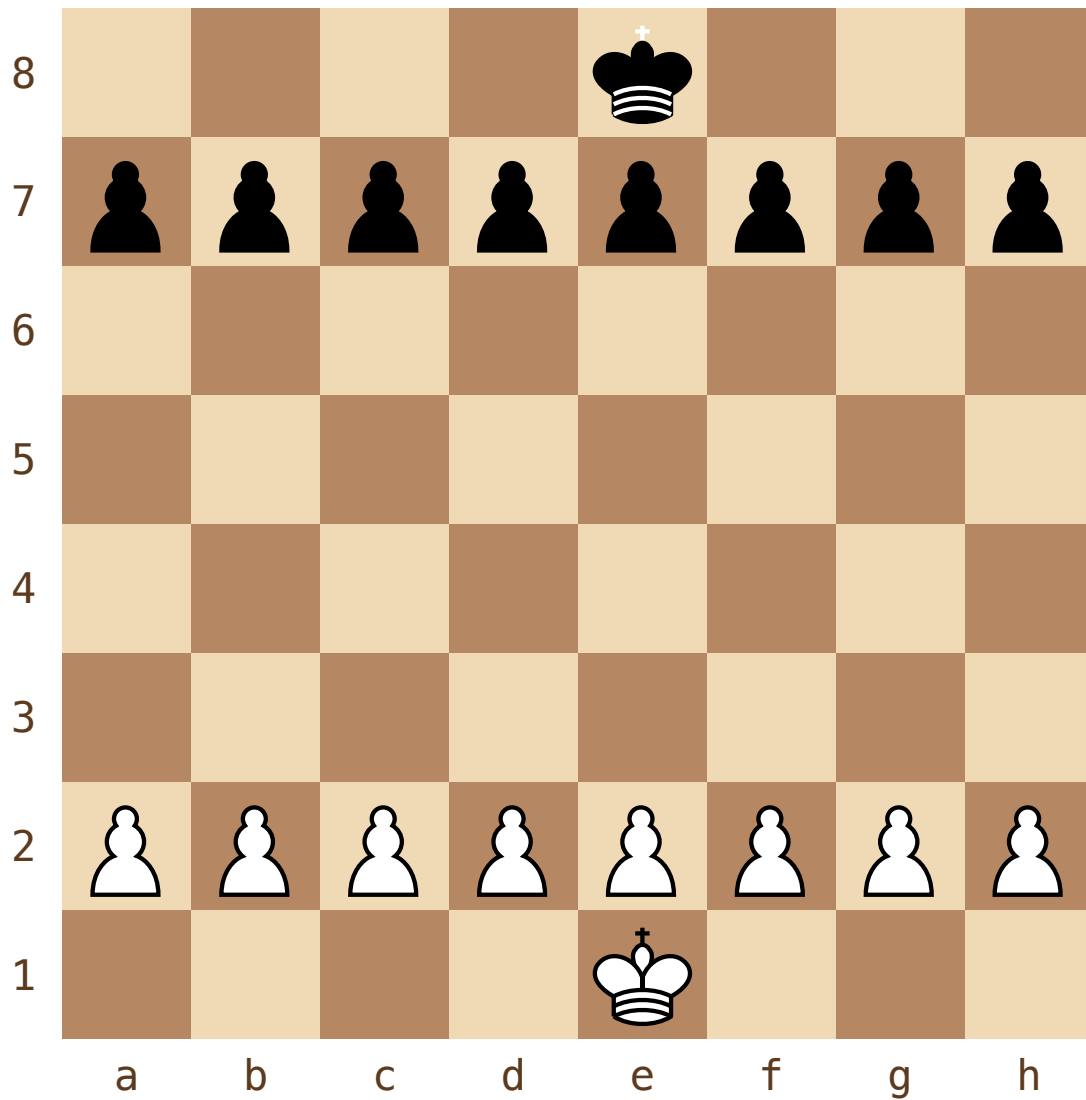
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ENDGAME CHESS

Only pawns and Kings. No back-rank pieces at all. Pure endgame technique from move one — pawn structure, King activity, and promotion races.



Endgame Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=endgame-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): 4k3/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/4K3

Each side: King (on e-file) + 8 pawns on second/seventh rank. No Rooks, Knights, Bishops, or Queens.

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, including:

- ♦ Pawns can double-step from their starting rank.
- ♦ En passant is available.
- ♦ Pawns promote normally (to Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight).
- ♦ No castling (no Rooks exist).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (typically achieved after promoting a pawn to Queen).

STRATEGY

This is pure King and Pawn endgame theory from the first move. Key concepts: opposition (Kings facing each other across odd squares), passed pawns, pawn breakthroughs, and the race to promote. The King must be active — advancing toward the centre to support pawn pushes. Creating a passed pawn (one with no opposing pawns in its path) is usually the path to victory. Tempo and triangulation matter enormously.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 56 OF 153

Extinction Chess

8×8

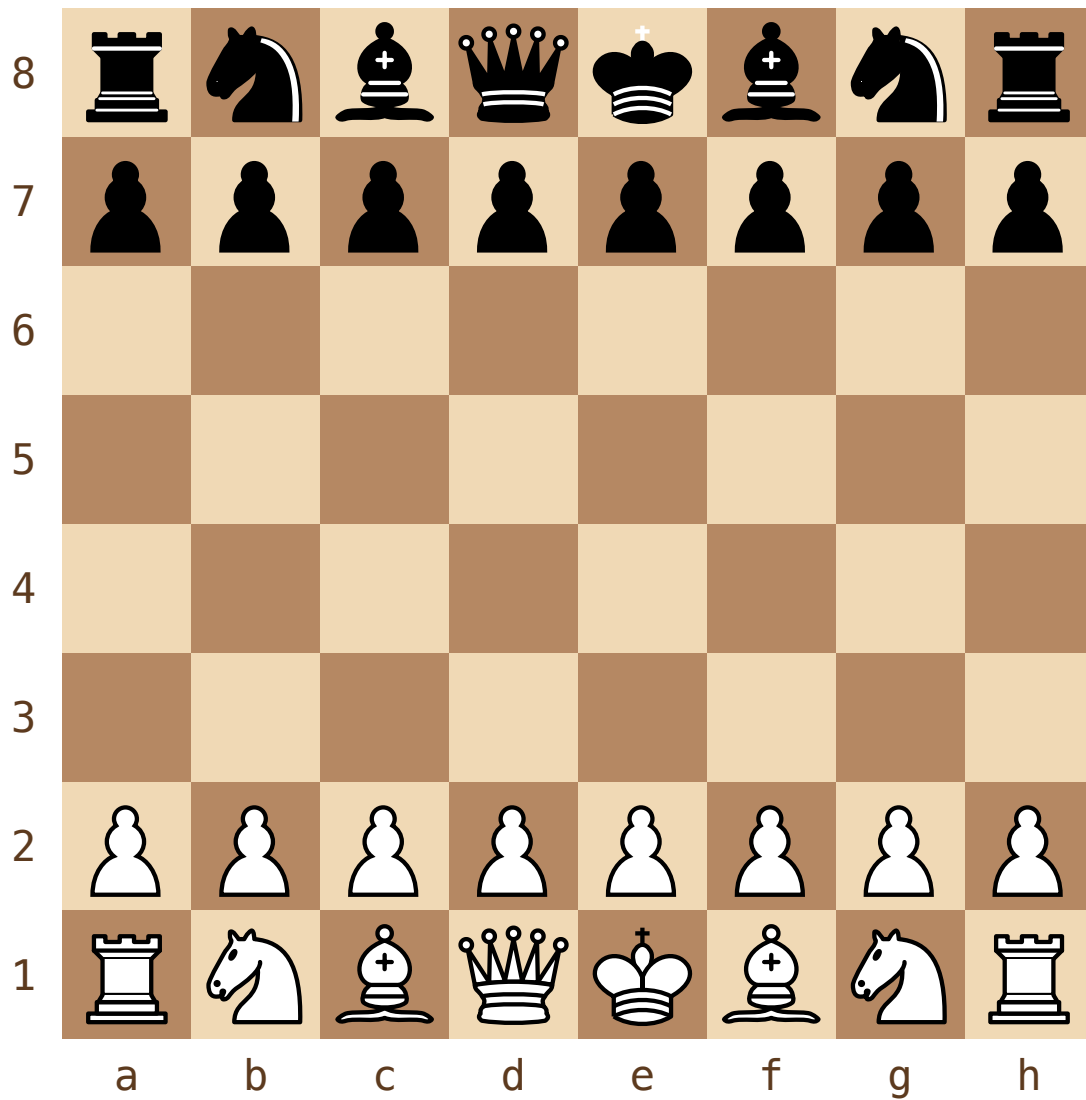
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

EXTINCTION CHESS

Lose when any piece type is fully eliminated. Every piece type becomes a critical resource.



Extinction Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=extinction>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

Standard chess rules apply with one additional loss condition:

- ♦ If all pieces of any ONE type are eliminated, that player loses immediately.
- ♦ Piece types tracked: Kings (1), Queens (1), Rooks (2), Bishops (2), Knights (2), Pawns (8).
- ♦ Promotion can “rescue” an extinct piece type by promoting a pawn to that piece.
- ♦ The King is just another tracked type – losing your King loses the game (same as standard chess), but so does losing both Bishops, both Knights, both Rooks, your Queen, or all eight Pawns.

WIN CONDITION

Eliminate any one type of your opponent's pieces entirely.

STRATEGY

Pieces with only one copy (King, Queen) are high-value targets – losing either one ends the game. Trading your last Knight for their last Knight is fine, but trading your last Bishop for their Knight when they still have both Bishops is dangerous. Promotion becomes a defensive tool to recover extinct types.

ATTRIBUTION

R. Wayne Schmittberger, 1985. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 57 OF 153

Fanorona Chess

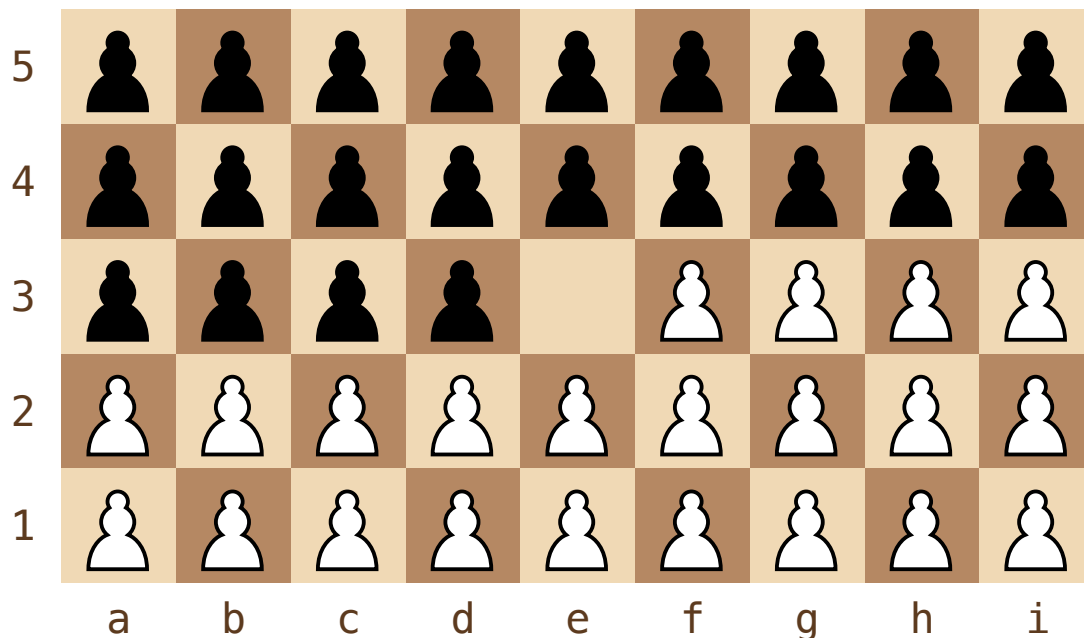
5×9 double Alquerque

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

FANORONA CHESS



Fanorona Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=fanorona-chess>

Fanorona Chess is a chess variant by Peter Aronson (2004) played on the double Alquerque board used for **Fanorona** – the traditional strategy game of Madagascar. The key innovation: captures follow Fanorona’s **approach and withdrawal** mechanics instead of chess’s normal replacement capture.

THE BOARD

A 5×9 double Alquerque board (45 points total). Only **every other point** has diagonal connectivity – points alternate between those that are connected diagonally (have 8 neighbours including diagonals) and those that are connected orthogonally only (have 4 neighbours, no diagonals). Pieces may only move along existing connecting lines.

Effectively: think of the board as a grid where the diagonal moves are selectively available, creating a rich tactical texture where the type of square your piece occupies matters.

STARTING POSITION

Yellow (standard setup):

- ♦ Rank 1: Knight, Rook, King, Rook, Knight (a1–e1)
- ♦ Rank 2: [empty], Bishop, Queen, Bishop, [empty] (b2, c2, d2)
- ♦ Rank 3: 5 Pawns (a3–e3)

Red: Ranks 9, 8, 7 (mirror).

Alternate setup: Bishop, Rook, King, Rook, Bishop (rank 1); Knight, [empty], Queen, [empty], Knight (rank 2). Allows all pieces to move on the first turn but was found inferior in testing.

MOVEMENT

All pieces move along the connecting lines of the board (ortho + diagonal where available). Pieces cannot enter a point not connected by a line.

- ♦ **King:** 1 step in any connected direction. May make a non-capturing Knight's move as its **first move** if not in check
- ♦ **Queen, Rook, Bishop:** slide along connected lines (stops at captures or blockers)
- ♦ **Knight:** traces a path (not a leap) – 1 step diag then 1 step ortho outward, OR 1 step ortho then 1 step diag outward; first square may be occupied
- ♦ **Pawn:** 1 step forward or forward-diagonally (where lines exist); no double step; no en passant

CAPTURE: APPROACH AND WITHDRAWAL

This is the core mechanic. **Replacement capture does not exist** – pieces cannot move onto occupied squares.

- ♦ **Approach capture:** when a piece moves toward an adjacent enemy piece (in the same direction of movement), that enemy piece is captured
- ♦ **Withdrawal capture:** when a piece moves away from an adjacent enemy piece (directly opposite its direction of movement), that enemy piece is captured
- ♦ Only **one type** of capture may be chosen per move – approach OR withdrawal, not both
- ♦ Only the **first piece** in the line is captured (not the entire line, as in traditional Fanorona)

Capture is mandatory if any capture is possible with the piece being moved. A player is not required to choose a move that enables a capture, but if the piece they move could capture, they must do so.

RULES

- ♦ **No castling**
- ♦ **No en passant**
- ♦ **No double Pawn first step**
- ♦ **Pawn promotion:** upon reaching the far rank, the Pawn promotes to any piece previously captured by the opponent. If no such pieces exist, the Pawn cannot enter the last rank
- ♦ **Stalemate:** a stalemated player **loses** (not a draw)
- ♦ Win: Checkmate the opponent's King

DOUBLE FANORONA CHESS

A larger variant by Peter Aronson using a 9×9 quadruple Alquerque board. Adds the **Chancellor** (moves as Rook or Knight) and allows initial double Pawn steps (non-capturing only).

Setup: Rook, Knight, Bishop, Queen, King, Chancellor, Bishop, Knight, Rook on rank 1; Pawns on rank 2.

ATTRIBUTION

Fanorona Chess was created by Peter Aronson, 2004. Source: chessvariants.com/other.dir/fanorona-chess.html

CHESS · VARIANT 58 OF 153

Fischer Random (Chess960)

8×8

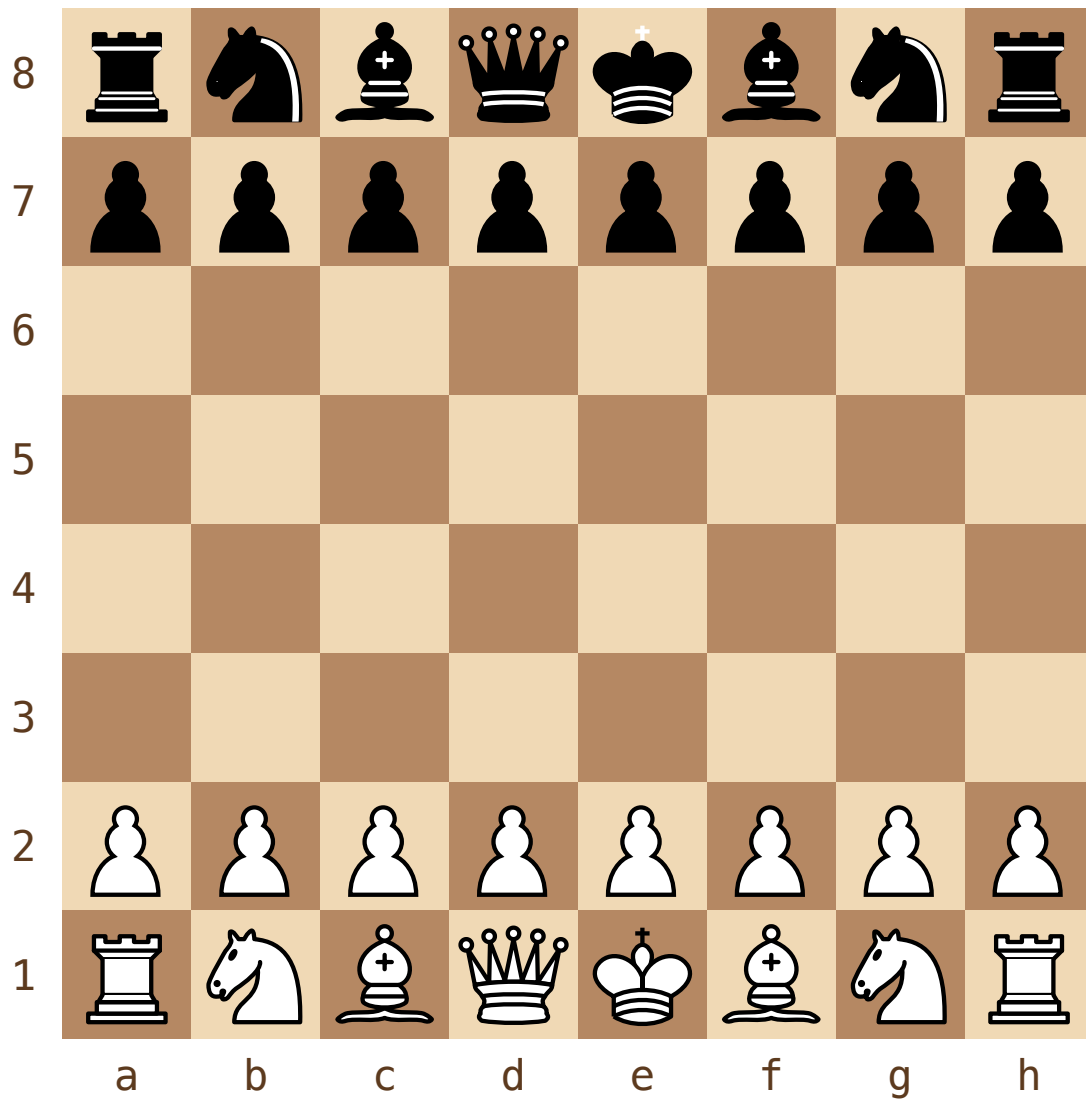
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

FISCHER RANDOM (CHESS960)

960 possible starting positions. The back-rank pieces are shuffled randomly with one constraint: the King must be between the two Rooks.



Fischer Random – one possible starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=fischer-random>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Back-rank pieces are shuffled randomly for each game, with three constraints:

- ¹ The King must be somewhere between the two Rooks (to preserve castling rights).
- ² Bishops must be on opposite-coloured squares.
- ³ Both players mirror the same random position (White's arrangement = Black's arrangement).

Pawns are placed normally on the second rank.

FEN: Randomised each game. One of 960 possible positions. Example:

`rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1` (this happens to be the standard position – one of the 960).

RULES

Identical to standard chess, including castling. Castling follows a generalised rule: the King and Rook end up on the same squares they would in standard castling (King on c1/g1, Rook on d1/f1), regardless of where they started.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (identical to standard chess).

STRATEGY

Opening book knowledge is neutralised. Every game requires original thinking from move one. Piece development principles (control the centre, develop knights before bishops, castle early) still apply but the specific moves change every game.

ATTRIBUTION

Bobby Fischer, 1996. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 59 OF 153

Five-Check

8×8

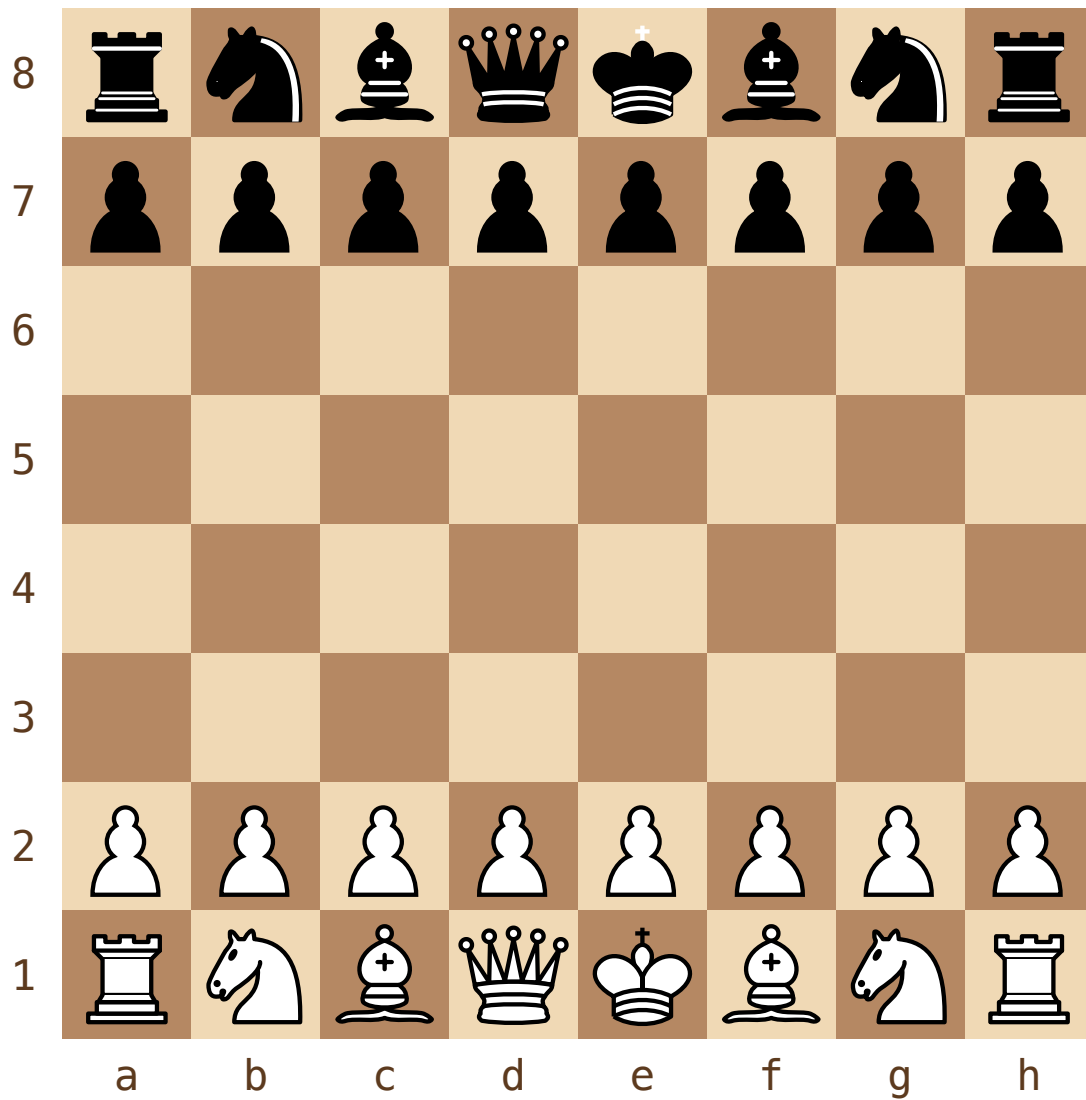
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

FIVE-CHECK

An extended version of Three-Check. Deliver five checks to win. More room for strategic play while still rewarding aggressive checking sequences.



Five-Check – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=five-check>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, plus:

- ♦ Each player's checks are counted (regardless of how the opponent responds – block, evade, or capture the checking piece).
- ♦ Reaching five checks wins the game immediately.
- ♦ Checkmate also wins (as normal).
- ♦ Stalemate is a draw.

WIN CONDITION

Deliver checkmate OR deliver five checks total.

STRATEGY

Similar to Three-Check but with more breathing room. The higher threshold means you can't win by brute-force sacrificing into checks – you need sustained pressure. Pieces that deliver repeated checks (especially Queen and Rooks on open files) are strong. Trading your opponent's checking pieces while preserving your own is a key strategic layer beyond normal chess.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant (extension of Three-Check). Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 60 OF 153

Flip Chess

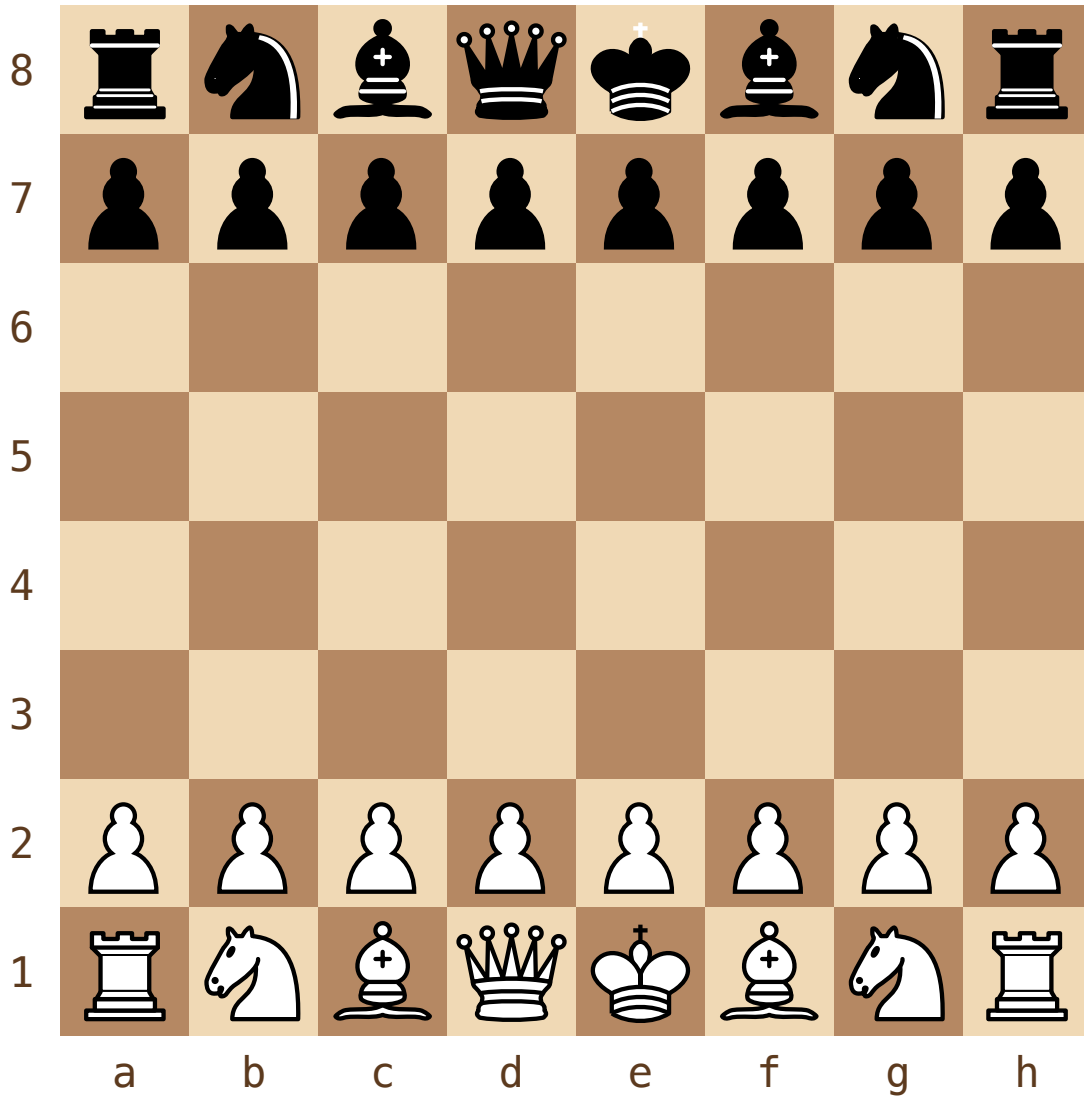
38 squares (unusual shape)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

FLIP CHESS



Flip Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=flip-chess>

Flip Chess is a chess variant played on a **38-square board** with an unusual shape. Created by John William Brown in 1999, it is a companion game to **Crazy 38's** – both are 38-square chess variants in the tradition of exploring compact, non-standard board geometries. A Java applet implementation by Ed Friedlander is available on chessvariants.com.

THE BOARD

A 38-square board with an unusual non-rectangular shape. The board has 38 squares — 6 fewer than a standard 8×8 chess board. The compact geometry brings all pieces into conflict earlier in the game and reduces the positional depth of standard chess openings.

THE BARE KING RULE

Flip Chess does **not** use standard checkmate as its win condition. Instead:

A player whose King is the only piece remaining on the board loses immediately.

This applies regardless of whether the King is in check. Once all other pieces have been captured, the lone King loses. This shifts strategy significantly: rather than manoeuvring toward checkmate, players focus on eliminating all enemy pieces, and Kings become active fighting pieces since their loss is a forfeit condition once they are the last piece.

SPECIAL RULES

- ♦ **No initial double Pawn move.** Pawns may advance only one square on their first move, as in Shatranj. There is consequently no en passant.
- ♦ **Win condition:** Bare King (reduce opponent to King only); standard checkmate does not apply
- ♦ All other standard chess movement rules apply unless modified above

PIECE SET

Standard FIDE piece set (King, Queen, Rooks, Bishops, Knights, Pawns).

ATTRIBUTION

Flip Chess was created by John William Brown, 1999. Described as an 'acclaimed 38 square variant.' Java applet implementation by Ed Friedlander. Source: chessvariants.com/play/erf/FlipChss.html

CHESS · VARIANT 61 OF 153

Fog of War Chess

8×8

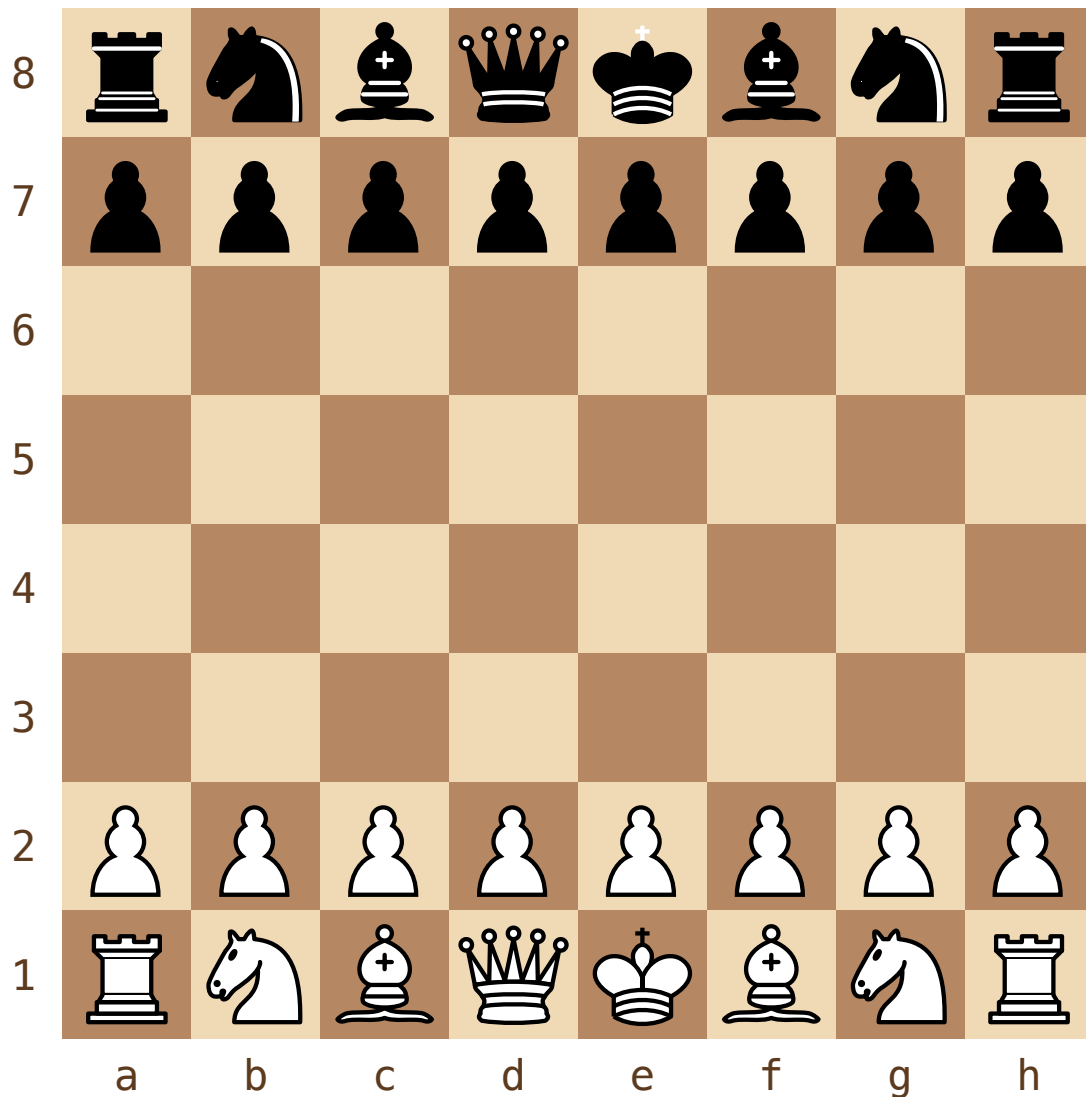
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

FOG OF WAR CHESS

A hidden-information variant where each player can only see squares that their pieces can legally move to or attack. Transforms chess from a perfect-information game into one of reconnaissance and deduction.



Fog of War – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=fog-of-war>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8, but each player's view is limited.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

Visibility:

- ♦ You can see any square that at least one of your pieces could legally move to or capture on.
- ♦ You can always see squares occupied by your own pieces.
- ♦ Enemy pieces on squares you cannot see are invisible to you.
- ♦ Empty squares you cannot see appear as fog (undifferentiated).

Key differences from standard chess:

- ♦ **No check announcements.** You are not told when your King is in check.
- ♦ **King capture wins.** The game ends immediately when a King is captured – there is no checkmate, only capture.
- ♦ **Illegal moves into check are legal** – since you may not know you're in check. You simply lose if the opponent captures your King.
- ♦ **Castling and en passant** follow normal rules but are only possible when you have visibility of the relevant squares.

WIN CONDITION

Capture the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Scouts (Knights, Bishops) become critical for revealing enemy positions. The centre is more important for maintaining broad visibility. Gambits to sacrifice material for information are viable. Endgames play very differently when you can't see the opponent's King position.

ATTRIBUTION

Jens Bæk Nielsen and Torben Osted, 1989. Popularised on Chess.com. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 62 OF 153

Four-Handed Chess (Chaturaji)

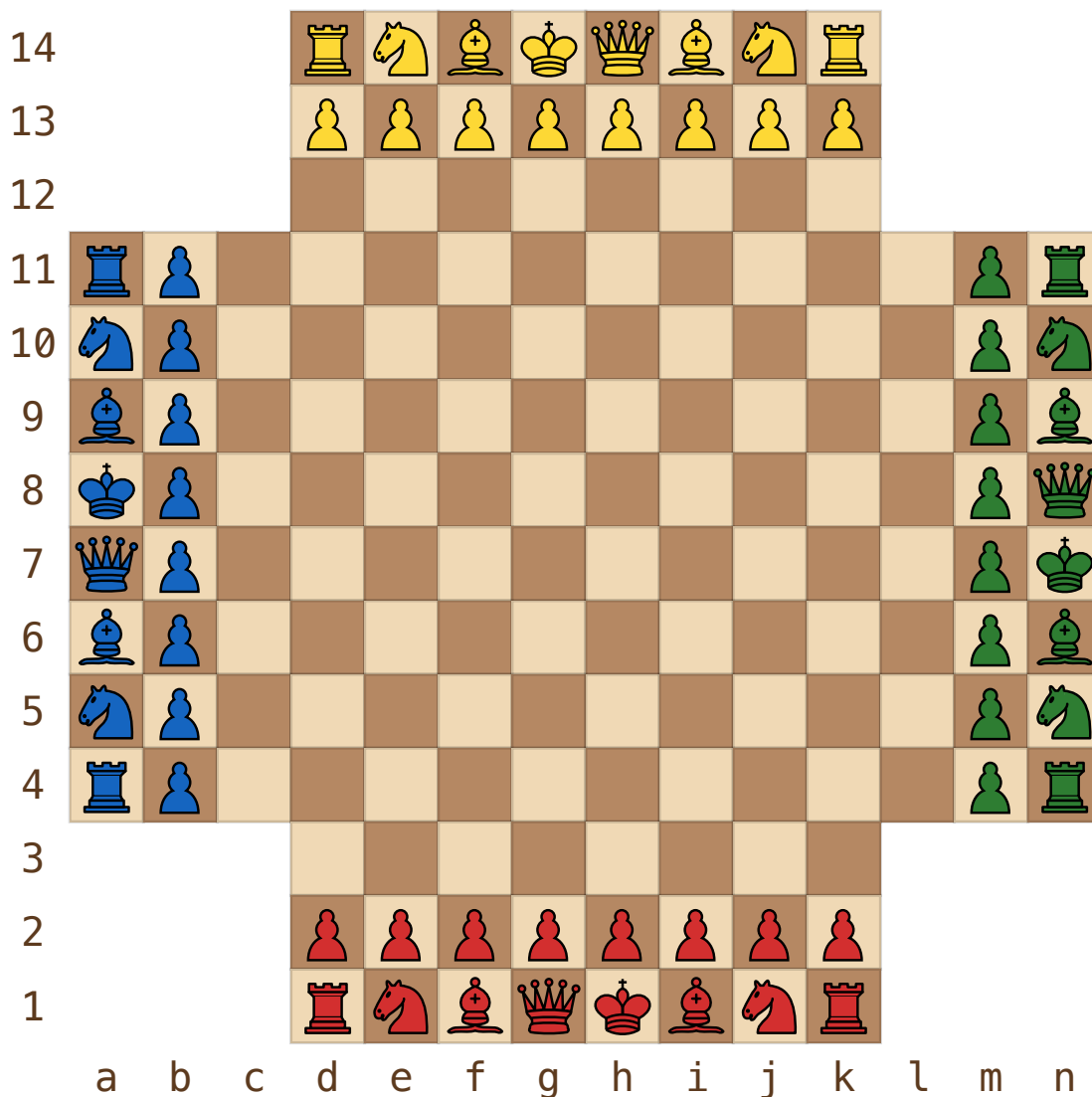
8×8

BOARD

4

PLAYERS

OVERVIEW



Four-Handed Chess (Chaturaji) – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=four-handed-chess>

Chaturaji (Sanskrit: चतुरजी, “four kings”) is a four-player chess-like game first described in detail by Al-Biruni around 1030 CE in his book *India*. It is one of the oldest documented multiplayer board games. Originally a dice game, a diceless form was still played in India at the close of the 19th century.

Chaturaji is distinct from the two-player game Chaturanga despite the similar name. Historians debate whether Chaturaji preceded or followed Chaturanga; the Cox-Forbes theory (18th–19th century) that Chaturaji was the ancestor of modern chess was rejected by H.J.R. Murray in 1913 and is not accepted by modern scholars.

BOARD AND SETUP

Played on a standard 8×8 board. Four players each occupy one corner with a small army of 8 pieces. Player positions and army colours:

- ♦ **Red** — South (bottom)
- ♦ **Yellow** — West (left)
- ♦ **Green** — North (top)
- ♦ **Black** — East (right)

Each player's army occupies 2 ranks × 4 files in their corner. The back rank (2 squares wide by 4 squares, reading from the corner toward the center) holds 4 pieces; the next rank holds 4 Pawns.

Back rank piece order (corner to center): **King — Elephant — Horse — Boat**

Pawns occupy the rank directly in front of the back rank, on the same 4 files.

PIECES

King — moves one square in any direction. The King can be captured like any other piece; there is no check or checkmate rule.

Elephant — moves any number of squares orthogonally (like a FIDE Rook). Despite the name, this piece functions as a Rook.

Horse — moves in an L-shape: two squares in one direction, one square perpendicular. Leaping — cannot be blocked.

Boat — jumps exactly two squares diagonally in any direction, jumping over the intervening square (the Alfil move). Permanently color-bound.

Pawn — advances one square forward (toward the opposing side). Captures one square diagonally forward. No initial double-step. Each player's Pawns advance in the direction toward the opposite player: Red's Pawns advance northward (toward Green), Yellow's advance eastward (toward Black), etc. Promotion: upon reaching the far rank, a Pawn promotes to the piece type that originally started on the same file — but only if that piece has already been captured. If the required piece has not been captured, promotion cannot occur.

DICE RULES

On each turn, the active player rolls two dice and makes one move for each die result. The same piece may be moved twice, two different pieces may be moved, or one or both moves may be skipped.

DIE VALUE	PIECE MOVED
1 or 5	Pawn or King
2	Boat
3	Horse
4 or 6	Elephant

Historical sources disagree on whether six-sided or four-sided (stick) dice were used; H.J.R. Murray believed cubical dice were a substitute for oblong dice.

SCORING

There is no check or checkmate. The King can be captured like any other piece. The winner is the player with the most points at the end of the game:

PIECE CAPTURED	POINTS
Pawn	1
Boat	2
Horse	3
Elephant	4
King	5

Perfect score: A player who captures all three opponents' Kings while keeping their own King on the board scores 54 points — the sum of all pieces in three complete armies. This is the game's highest achievement.

SPECIAL RULES

Boat Triumph (Vrihannauka): When a Boat moves such that a 2×2 square is formed consisting entirely of Boats (one from each player), the player who completed the formation captures all three other players' Boats.

Sinhasana (Throne): If a King moves onto the original starting square of another player's King, it claims the Sinhasana. If the throne entered belongs to the allied player (the player across the board), the claiming player takes command of both armies.

TURN ORDER

Players take turns clockwise: Red → Yellow → Green → Black → Red...

ATTRIBUTION

Rules documented from Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaturaji), citing H.J.R. Murray, *A History of Chess* (1913); Al-Biruni, *India* (c. 1030 CE); D.B. Pritchard, *The Encyclopedia of Chess Variants* (1994).

CHESS · VARIANT 63 OF 153

Gadsden's Toroidal Chess

8×8 torus

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

GADSDEN'S TOROIDAL CHESS

Gadsden's Toroidal Chess is chess played on an 8×8 torus — a surface where all four edges connect to the opposite edge. Moving off the right edge (past the h-file) reappears at the a-file on the same rank; moving off rank 8 reappears at rank 1 on the same file. Diagonal moves wrap in both dimensions simultaneously. The game was invented around 1990 by Richard Gadsden and Phil Roberts as a natural extension of Cylindrical Chess, and played by the inventors at school.

The topology is equivalent to wrapping an 8×8 chessboard around itself in both directions, like a donut. Every square is equivalent: there are no edge squares and no corner squares. Every piece on every square has access to its full normal move range (modulo the board wrapping).

Gadsden, describing the game himself: "It's a bit like cylindrical chess, but even worse." And: "We played several games, and it's fun, but I've regularly put someone into check and not realised. This is a problem."

EQUIPMENT

A standard 8×8 board plus an extra set of 16 pawns (32 pawns total, 16 per side). Note this is a genuinely larger army than standard chess — not a cosmetic difference from the frontmatter's board dimensions.

STARTING POSITION

Each side occupies three ranks at their end of the board:

RANK	WHITE	BLACK
1 / 8	Pawns (a1-h1)	Pawns (a8-h8)
2 / 7	Rook a2, Knight b2, Bishop c2, Queen d2, King e2, Bishop f2, Knight g2, Rook h2	Rook a7, Knight b7, Bishop c7, Queen d7, King e7, Bishop f7, Knight g7, Rook h7
3 / 6	Pawns (a3-h3)	Pawns (a6-h6)

The `engine.setup` FEN above encodes this rank-by-rank: rank 8 pawns, rank 7 pieces, rank 6 pawns, ranks 5–4 empty, rank 3 pawns, rank 2 pieces, rank 1 pawns. Confirmed directly against the source's interactive setup diagram, 2026-07.

PAWN RULES

- ♦ **Front-rank pawns** (rank 1 for White, rank 8 for Black): may advance only one square on their first move (not two)
- ♦ **Rear-rank pawns** (rank 3 for White, rank 6 for Black): may advance two or three squares on their first move
- ♦ Pawns move forward only; they treat the board as a cylinder since they have no backward movement

WRAPPING

All pieces — including sliders — wrap in all directions:

- ♦ A Rook on a4 moving left exits the a-file and reappears on h4, then g4, etc.
- ♦ A Rook on e8 moving forward exits rank 8 and reappears on e1, then e2, etc.
- ♦ A Bishop on h1 moving diagonally exits the corner and reappears on a2 (wrapping both dimensions simultaneously)
- ♦ Knights wrap normally; a Knight on b1 can leap to a square on rank 8 via the vertical wrap

OTHER RULES

All standard FIDE chess rules apply except as modified by the wrapping edges. Castling and en passant apply on standard conditions.

The game plays significantly differently from standard chess: long-range pieces can attack from seemingly unrelated directions, discovered checks can come from unexpected angles, and the king can never retreat to a 'safe corner' since there are no corners. Players regularly put each other in check without realising it due to the unfamiliar attack vectors — a problem the inventor himself noted.

ATTRIBUTION

Gadsden's Toroidal Chess was invented around 1990 by Richard Gadsden and Phil Roberts. Source: chessvariants.com/other.dir/torus.html, including the inventor's own description and interactive setup diagram.

CHESS · VARIANT 64 OF 153

Giveaway

8×8

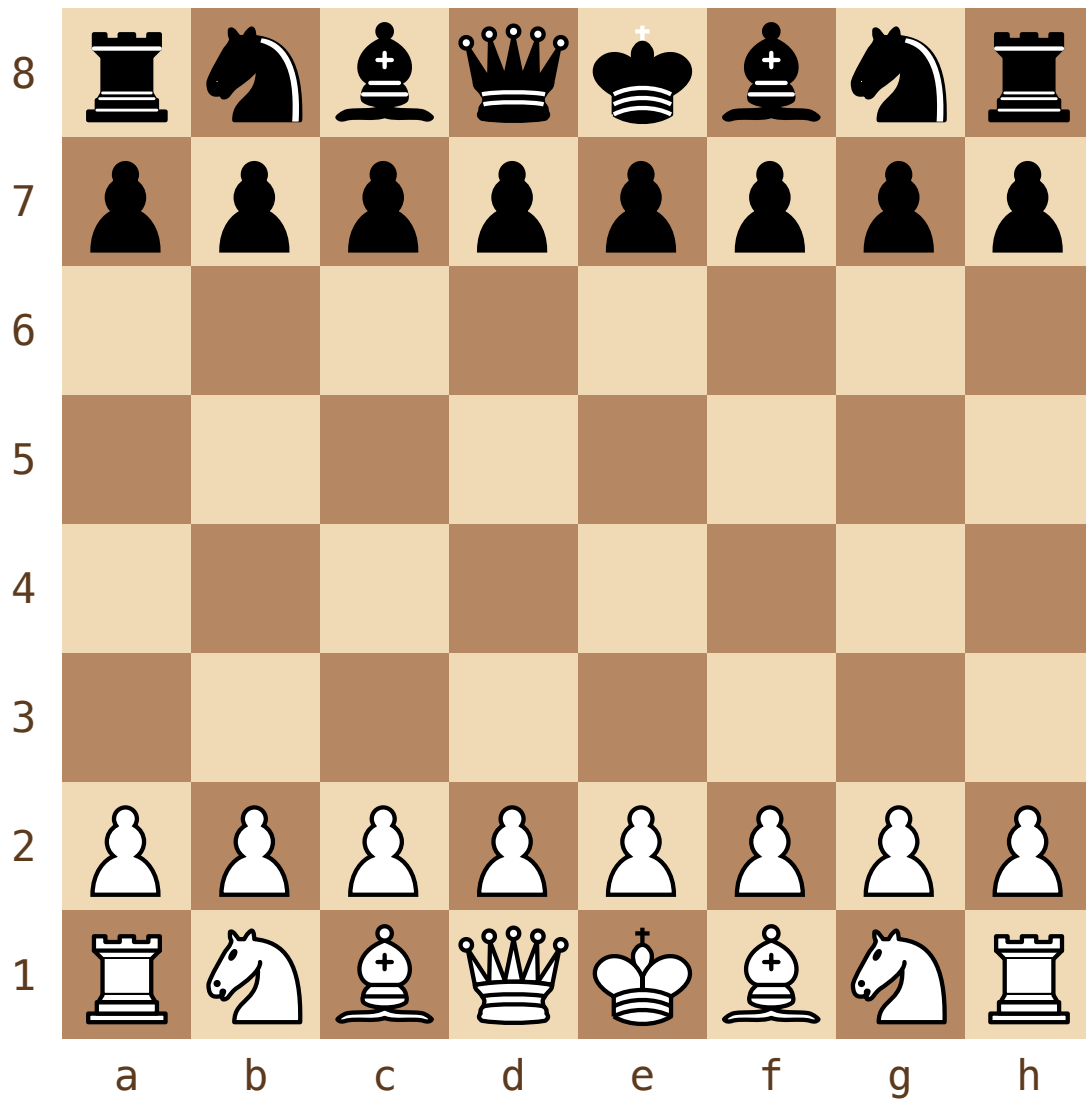
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

GIVEAWAY

Forced captures. Lose all your pieces to win. Stalemate counts as a loss for the stalemated player. The ultimate inversion of chess logic.



Giveaway – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=giveaway>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ If you can capture, you MUST capture. If multiple captures are available, you choose which one.
- ♦ The King is not royal – there is no check or checkmate. The King can be captured like any other piece.
- ♦ No castling (the King has no special status).
- ♦ Pawns promote normally (Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight).
- ♦ Stalemate = loss for the stalemated player (the player who cannot move loses).

WIN CONDITION

Lose all of your pieces (including the King).

STRATEGY

You want to GIVE pieces away, not protect them. However, forced captures means your opponent can force you to capture their pieces too – creating bizarre tactical lines. The ideal position has your pieces offering themselves while your opponent's pieces have no captures available. Pawns are hard to lose (they only capture diagonally) and become liabilities in the endgame. Underpromotion to Bishop is sometimes correct to limit your own capture options.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Also known as "Giveaway Chess." Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 65 OF 153

Glinski's Hexagonal Chess

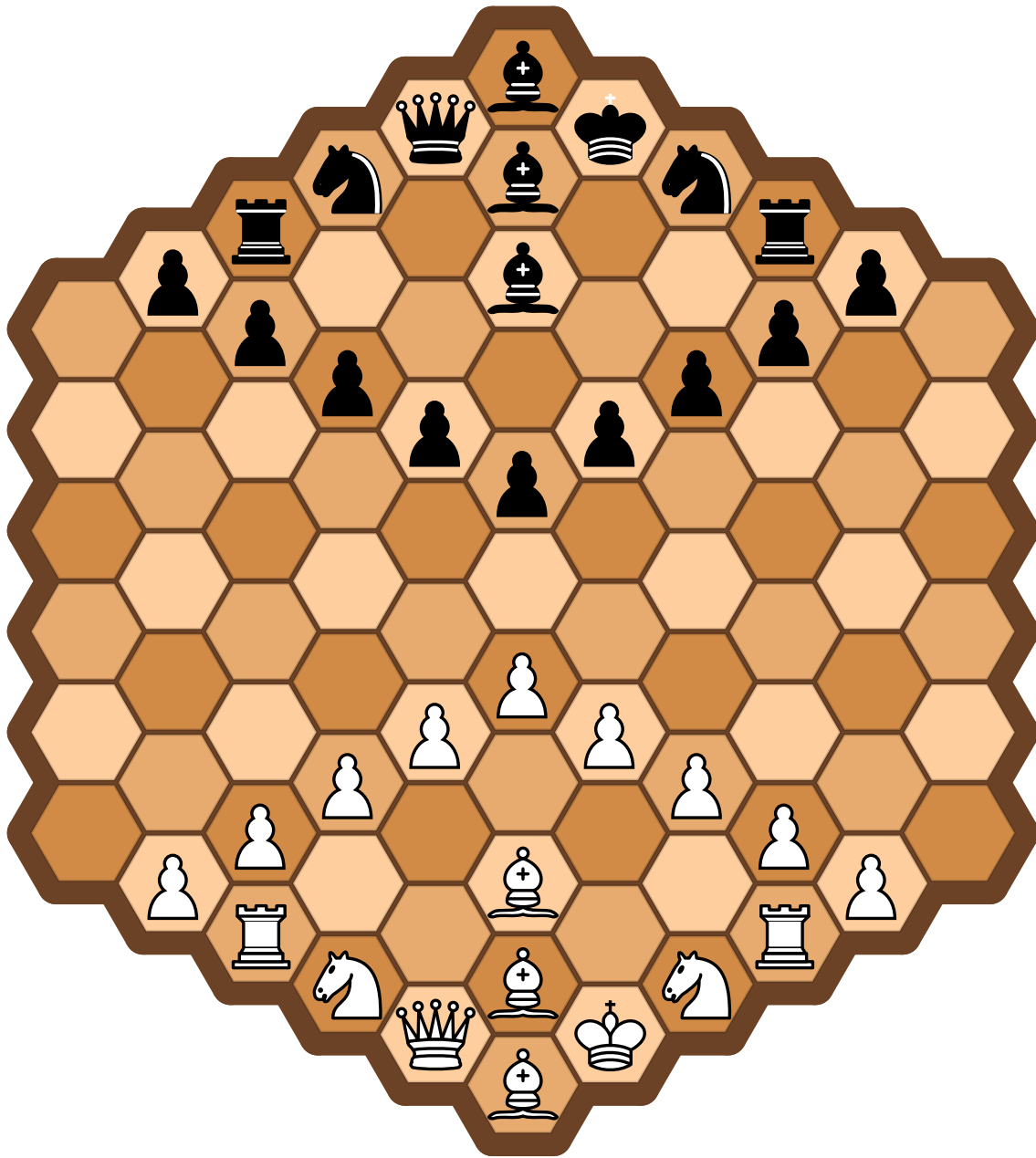
hex radius 5

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

GLINSKI'S HEXAGONAL CHESS



Glinski's Hexagonal Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=glinski>

Created by Wladyslaw Glinski in 1936, this is the most popular hexagonal chess variant. Played on a 91-cell hexagonal board (radius 5 in axial coordinates), it adapts all standard chess pieces to hex geometry.

BOARD

A regular hexagon composed of 91 hexagonal cells arranged in concentric rings. Cells come in three colours (light, medium, dark) following the hex-alternation pattern — each bishop is bound to one colour.

SETUP

White pieces (starting from the bottom):

- ♦ King on f1
- ♦ Queen on e1
- ♦ Bishops on d1, f2, g2 (one per colour)
- ♦ Knights on c1, g1
- ♦ Rooks on b1, h1
- ♦ Pawns on b2, c2, d2, e2, f3, g3, h3, i2, j2 (9 pawns)

Black pieces (mirrored at the top):

- ♦ King on f11
- ♦ Queen on g11
- ♦ Bishops on h11, f10, e10 (one per colour)
- ♦ Knights on i11, e11
- ♦ Rooks on j11, d11
- ♦ Pawns on j10, i10, h10, g10, f9, e9, d9, c10, b10 (9 pawns)

PIECES

Rook — slides along any of 6 orthogonal hex edges (the 6 directions adjacent cells touch). Equivalent to a rook on a square board but with 6 directions instead of 4.

Bishop — slides along any of 6 diagonal hex directions (vertex-to-vertex, skipping the adjacent cell). Colour-bound — never leaves its starting cell colour.

Queen — combines rook and bishop movement (all 12 hex directions).

King — moves one step in any of the 12 directions (6 edges + 6 vertices).

Knight — leaps to any cell exactly 2 orthogonal steps and 1 turn away. From a centre cell, a knight threatens 12 cells (compared to 8 on a square board). Offsets in axial coordinates: (2,-1), (1,-2), (-1,-1), (-2,1), (-1,2), (1,1) and their reflections.

Pawn — advances toward the opponent's edge of the board. Can move one hex forward (toward far edge) or capture one hex diagonally-forward. No double-step and no en passant in Glinski's original rules. Promotion occurs when a pawn reaches any cell on the far edge of the board.

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess rules apply for check, checkmate, and stalemate
- ♦ No castling (king starts centrally, no rook-corner relationship)
- ♦ No en passant (no double pawn step)
- ♦ Pawns promote on the far edge (the opposite rim of the hexagon from their starting position)
- ♦ Three bishops per side — one for each hex cell colour
- ♦ Stalemate is a draw

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM SQUARE CHESS

CONCEPT	SQUARE BOARD	HEX BOARD
Rook directions	4 (orthogonal)	6 (hex edges)
Bishop directions	4 (diagonal)	6 (hex vertices)
Knight targets	8	12
Bishop colours	2	3
Pawns per side	8	9
Board cells	64	91

CHESS · VARIANT 66 OF 153

Grand Chess

10×10

BOARD

2

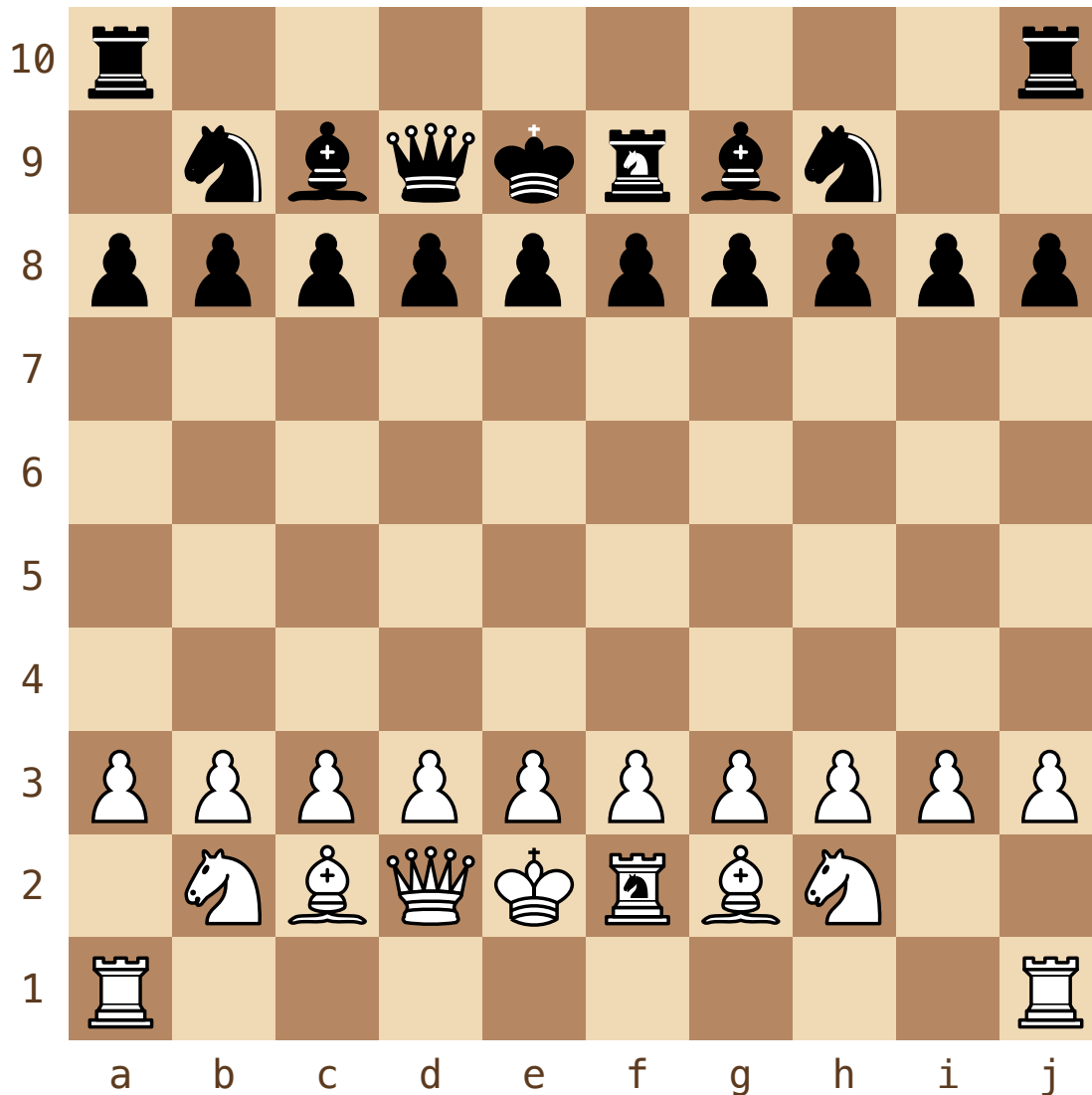
PLAYERS

GRAND CHESS

A 10×10 variant that adds the Archbishop and Chancellor without changing any existing piece rules. Considered one of the cleanest large-board variants — no special rules, just a bigger stage.

SETUP

Board: 10×10 (100 squares).



Grand Chess – starting position (10×10)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=grand>

PIECES

Pieces (per side): 1 King, 1 Queen, 1 Archbishop, 1 Chancellor, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 10 Pawns.

- ♦ **Archbishop** (♐+♞) — Bishop + Knight compound.
- ♦ **Chancellor** (♖+♞) — Rook + Knight compound.

Setup: Pawns on rank 3. Back two ranks arranged: empty corners, pieces spread across ranks 1–2 with King and Queen central.

FEN: r8r/1nbqkcbn1/pppppppppp/10/10/10/10/PPPPPPPPPP/1NBQKCBN1/R8R w - - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ **No castling.** The wider board makes it unnecessary.
- ♦ **Pawn promotion:** Pawns reaching rank 8 or 9 MAY promote. Pawns reaching rank 10 MUST promote. Promotion to any captured piece only — you cannot promote if all pieces of that type are on the board.
- ♦ **En passant** works normally.
- ♦ All other standard chess rules apply.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

STRATEGY

With no castling, King safety comes from piece coordination rather than a pawn shelter. The Archbishop excels in closed positions, the Chancellor on open files. The promotion restriction (captured pieces only) means trading pieces has promotion implications — don't trade your last Knight if you might need one back via promotion.

ATTRIBUTION

Christian Freeling, 1984. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 67 OF 153

Grande Acedrex

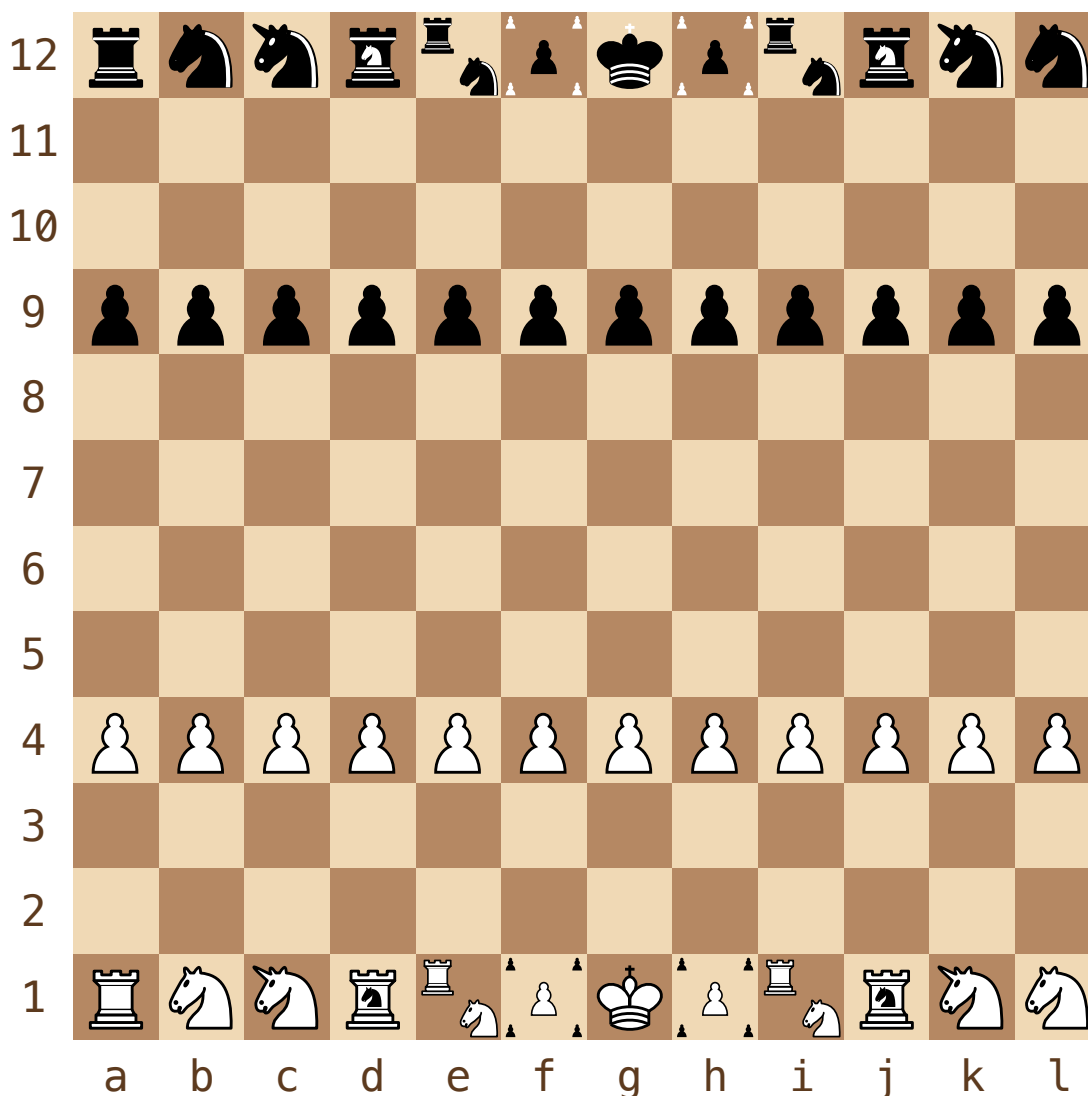
12×12

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

GRANDE ACEDREX



Grande Acedrex – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=grande-acedrex>

Grande Acedrex (Spanish: "Great Chess") is a large medieval chess variant documented in the *Libro de los Juegos* (Book of Games) commissioned by King Alfonso X of Castile, c. 1283. It is played on a 12×12 board with six exotic piece types drawn from mythology and natural history as understood in 13th-century Spain. Rules are reconstructed from the Alfonso X manuscript as described by Murray, Gollon, and Pritchard.

THE BOARD

12 files (a–l) × 12 ranks = 144 squares.

STARTING POSITION

Each player has 12 pieces on their back rank and 12 pawns on rank 4. Ranks 2–3 (White) and ranks 10–11 (Black) are empty at the start.

White (rank 1): Rook a1 · Lion b1 · Unicorn c1 · Giraffe d1 · Crocodile e1 · King f1 · Griffion g1 · Crocodile h1 · Giraffe i1 · Unicorn j1 · Lion k1 · Rook l1

White pawns (rank 4): a4–l4

Black (rank 12): Rook a12 · Lion b12 · Unicorn c12 · Giraffe d12 · Crocodile e12 · King f12 · Griffion g12 · Crocodile h12 · Giraffe i12 · Unicorn j12 · Lion k12 · Rook l12

Black pawns (rank 9): a9–l9

PIECES

PIECE	MOVEMENT
King	One square in any direction. On its first move only, may leap two squares horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.
Rook	Slides any distance horizontally or vertically.
Griffion	Steps one square diagonally, then slides any number of squares horizontally or vertically. Cannot jump. The diagonal step must come first; the piece may also stop after just the single diagonal step.
Unicorn	First move: leaps as a Knight (cannot capture on this move). All subsequent moves: slides any distance diagonally (as a modern Bishop).
Lion	Jumps exactly 3 squares horizontally or vertically. Jumps over intervening pieces.
Giraffe	Leaps: one diagonal step then three squares horizontally or vertically — a (1,4) displacement from the starting square. Jumps over intervening pieces.
Crocodile	Slides any distance diagonally (as a modern Bishop).
Pawn	Moves one square forward. Captures one square diagonally forward. No double first step.

PROMOTION

A pawn reaching the last rank promotes to the piece type that occupied that file in the opening setup — except on file f (the King's file), where it promotes to a Griffion. Promotion chart for White reaching rank 12:

- ♦ a12 or l12 → Rook
- ♦ b12 or k12 → Lion
- ♦ c12 or j12 → Unicorn
- ♦ d12 or i12 → Giraffe
- ♦ e12 or h12 → Crocodile
- ♦ f12 or g12 → Griffion

SPECIAL RULES

- ♦ **No castling.**
- ♦ **No double pawn step.**
- ♦ **Stalemate:** A player who stalemates the opponent wins.
- ♦ **Bare King:** Capturing all of the opponent's pieces except the King is a win. Exception: if the opponent can also bare the other King on the very next move, the result is a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Grande Acedrex is documented in the *Libro de los Juegos* by Alfonso X of Castile, c. 1283. Rules from chessvariants.com/historic.dir/acedrex.html (Hans Bodlaender, from Murray, Gollon, and Pritchard).

CHESS · VARIANT 68 OF 153

Grid Chess

8×8

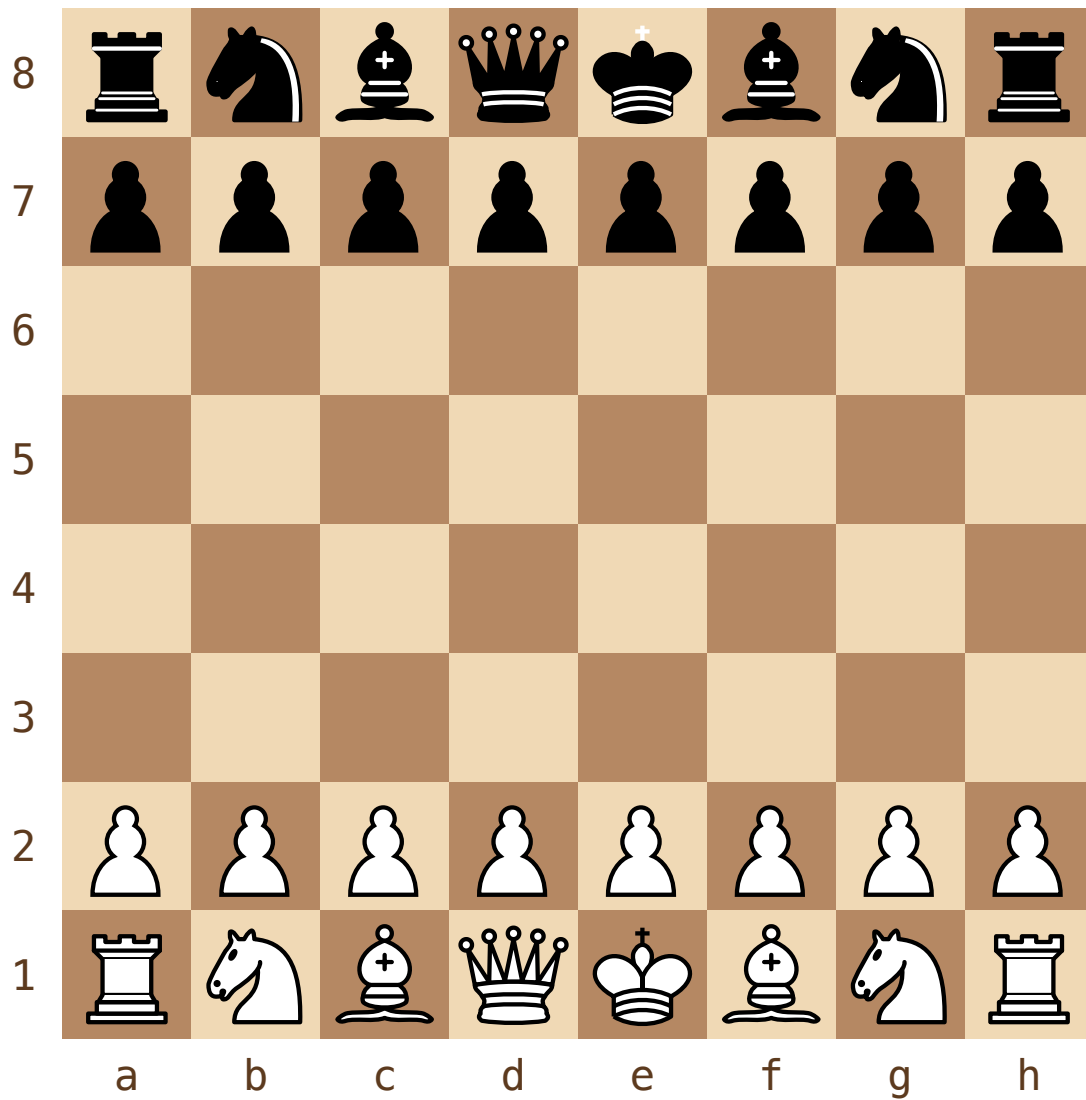
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

GRID CHESS

The board is overlaid with a grid dividing it into sixteen 2×2 sections. A move is only legal if the piece crosses at least one grid line.



Grid Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=grid-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8, overlaid with grid lines between files b–c, d–e, f–g and between ranks 2–3, 4–5, 6–7. This creates 16 sections of 2×2 squares each.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement applies, with one restriction:
 - ♦ A move is only legal if the piece crosses at least one grid line (moves from one 2×2 section to a different one, or crosses a grid line within its path).
- ♦ A piece cannot move to another square within the same 2×2 section unless its path crosses a grid line and returns.
 - ♦ This means some normally legal moves are illegal (e.g., a King on e1 cannot move to d1 since both are in the same 2×2 box).
- ♦ Kings can stand adjacent without giving check if they share the same 2×2 section (since neither can cross a grid line to capture the other).
- ♦ Check only exists if the checking piece's attack crosses a grid line.
- ♦ Castling, en passant, and promotion follow standard rules (subject to grid-crossing).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (only moves crossing grid lines count as attacks).

STRATEGY

Mobility is dramatically reduced. Knights are relatively stronger – they always cross at least one grid line regardless of position. Pieces on the edge of a 2×2 section have more options than those in the centre of a section. The opening is very slow; develop with grid-crossing in mind. Rooks and Bishops can be surprisingly limited when grid lines bisect their diagonals or files.

ATTRIBUTION

Walter Stead, 1953. Published in fairy chess circles. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 69 OF 153

Gustav III's Chess

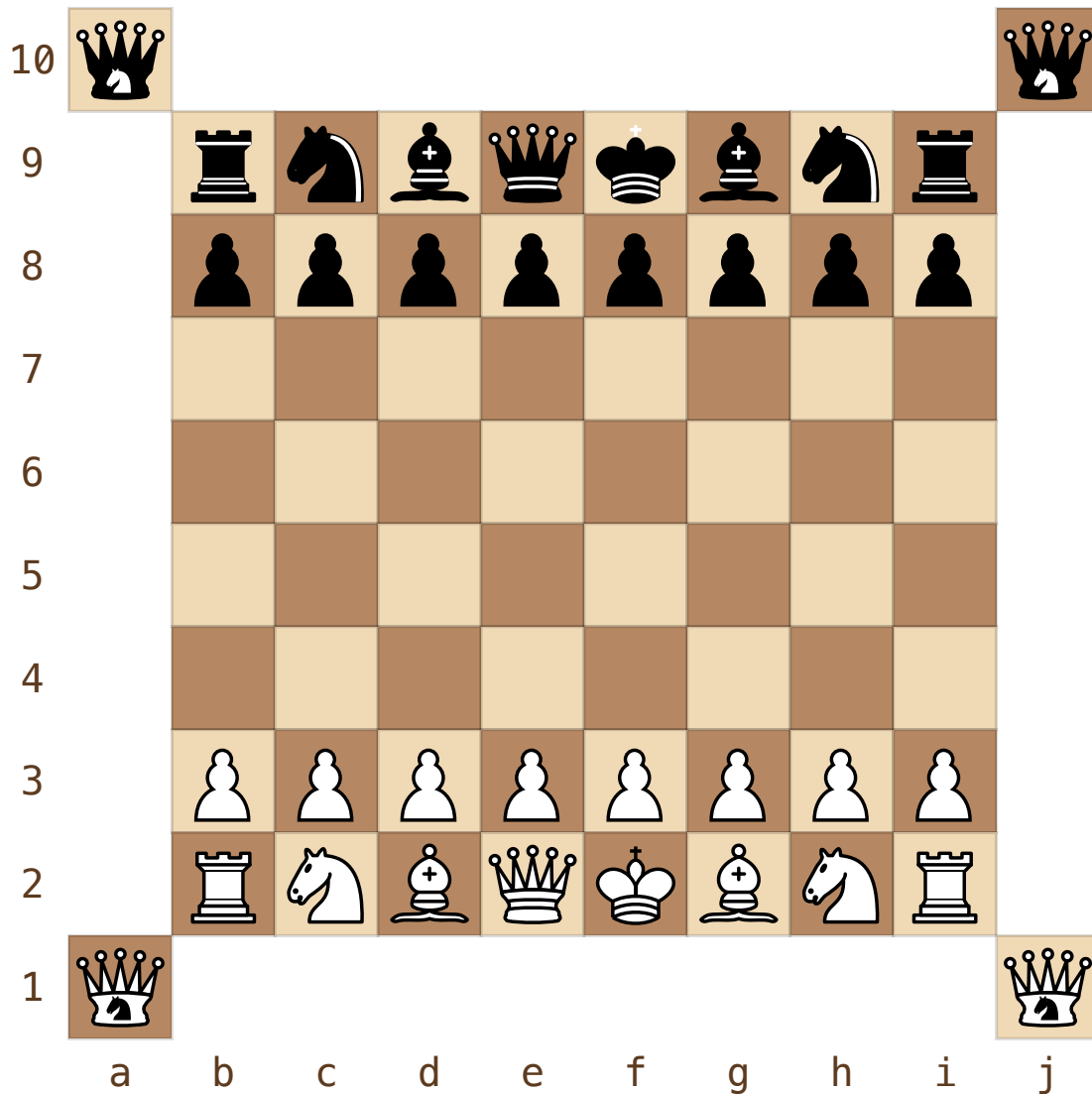
8×8 + 4 corner extensions (68 squares)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

GUSTAV III'S CHESS



Gustav III's Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=gustav-iii-chess>

Gustav III's Chess (also called *Shakspel*) is a historical Swedish chess variant attributed to Gustav Johan Billberg (1839). It adds four extra squares at the corners of the standard 8x8 board, each housing an Amazon – a piece that combines the moves of Queen and Knight. Each player controls two Amazons in addition to the standard FIDE army.

Despite the royal attribution in its common name, the game was designed by Billberg, not by King Gustav III himself.

THE BOARD

A standard 8×8 board (64 squares) with four additional squares at the corners, each directly adjacent to the corner square of the main board. Total: 68 squares.

The four corner extensions are designated squares where each player's Amazons begin the game.

THE AMAZON

The **Amazon** moves and captures like a **Queen or a Knight** – combining both movement types in one piece. It is the most powerful piece in the game.

STARTING POSITION

SIDE	PIECES
White	Standard FIDE army (8 Pawns, 2 Rooks, 2 Knights, 2 Bishops, 1 Queen, 1 King) + 2 Amazons on White's two corner extensions
Black	Standard FIDE army + 2 Amazons on Black's two corner extensions

The standard FIDE setup occupies ranks 1-2 for White and ranks 7-8 for Black, as in standard chess.

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply:

- ♦ Castling: yes (standard conditions)
- ♦ En passant: yes
- ♦ Pawn double-move on first move: yes
- ♦ Pawn promotion: yes, on reaching the opponent's back rank

The Amazons start on the four corner extensions outside the main 8×8 grid. They move freely once the game begins.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

ATTRIBUTION

Created by Gustav Johan Billberg, 1839. Jocly implementation developed by Michel Gutierrez and Jean-Louis Cazaux.
Source: chessvariants.com/play/jocly/gustav3-chess

CHESS · VARIANT 70 OF 153

Half Chess

8×4

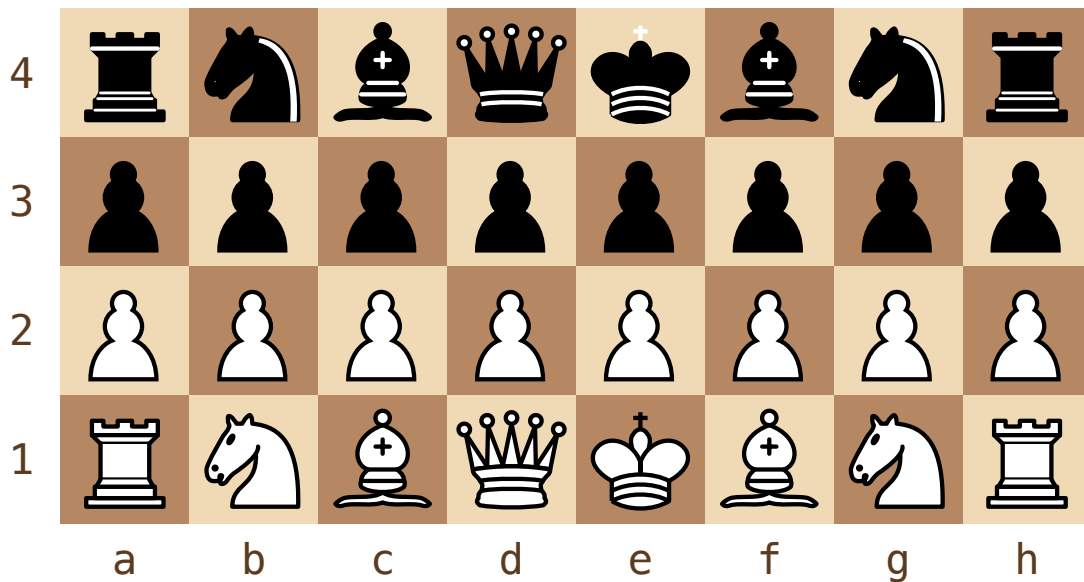
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

HALF CHESS

Standard pieces on a 4-rank board. Armies start adjacent with no gap – contact is immediate and violent.



Half Chess – starting position (8×4)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=half-chess>

SETUP

Board: 8 files × 4 ranks.

Setup (FEN): rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR

- ♦ Rank 4 (Black back rank): r n b q k b n r
- ♦ Rank 3 (Black pawns): p p p p p p p p
- ♦ Rank 2 (White pawns): P P P P P P P P
- ♦ Rank 1 (White back rank): R N B Q K B N R

RULES

- ♦ Standard piece movement applies, constrained by the 4-rank board.
- ♦ Pawns move one square forward only (no double-step – there is no room).
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ Castling is allowed (King and Rook are in standard positions).
- ♦ Pawns promote on the far rank (rank 4 for White, rank 1 for Black).
- ♦ Since armies start adjacent, nearly every piece can capture or be captured on move 1.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

STRATEGY

There is no development phase – the game is tactical from move 1. Every pawn trade immediately opens lines to the back rank. The King is extremely vulnerable with only 4 ranks of space. Knights are limited by the board's depth (few useful squares to jump to). Rooks dominate once files open. Games resolve quickly.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional mini-chess variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 71 OF 153

Hexapawn

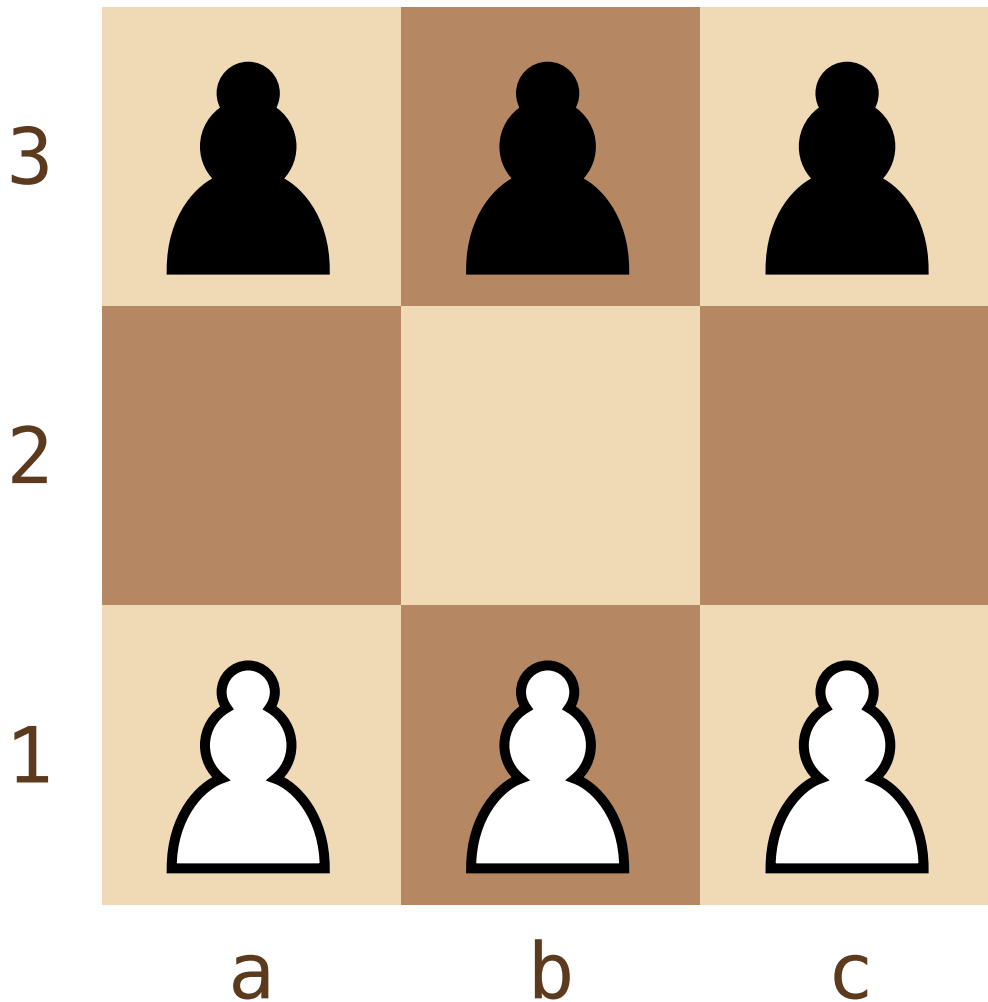
3×3

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

HEXAPAWN



Hexapawn – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=hexapawn>

Hexapawn is a minimal chess variant invented by Martin Gardner and published in his *Mathematical Games* column in *Scientific American*, March 1962. It is played on a 3×3 board using only Pawns — three per side. Gardner designed it as an educational tool: the game tree is small enough that a child (or an assembly of matchboxes, each representing one board position) can learn to play perfectly through reinforcement.

THE BOARD

3 files (a–c) × 3 ranks = 9 squares.

STARTING POSITION

White: Pawns on a1, b1, c1 (rank 1)

Black: Pawns on a3, b3, c3 (rank 3)

PIECES

Only Pawns. Pawns move as in standard chess:

- ♦ One square forward (toward the opponent's back rank).
- ♦ Capture one square diagonally forward.
- ♦ **No double first step** (the board is too small for it to matter).
- ♦ **No promotion** (reaching the far rank is already a win condition).

WIN CONDITIONS

A player wins by:

- 1 Advancing one Pawn to the opponent's back rank (rank 3 for White, rank 1 for Black).
- 2 Leaving the opponent with no legal moves on their turn.

A player with no legal moves on their turn loses.

GAME THEORY

Hexapawn is a solved game. With perfect play, **Black always wins**. The total game tree is small enough to analyze completely by hand. Gardner famously used it to demonstrate machine learning: a set of matchboxes (one per board position) filled with beads (one per legal move) could "learn" to play perfectly by removing beads from losing positions after each defeat.

The perfect strategy for Black: if White advances a side Pawn, Black captures; if White advances the centre Pawn, Black captures with either adjacent Pawn and can force a stalemate or promotion.

Variants on larger boards (3×4, 4×4, and up to 8×8) have been analyzed. On a 3×4 board, Black still wins; on a 4×4 board, White wins. See chessvariants.com/small.dir/hexapawn.html for a complete table of winners by board size and pawn type.

ATTRIBUTION

Hexapawn was invented by Martin Gardner, published in *Scientific American*, March 1962 (reprinted in *The Unexpected Hanging and Other Mathematical Diversions*). Chessvariants.com page written by Robert Price.

CHESS · VARIANT 72 OF 153

Hole Chess

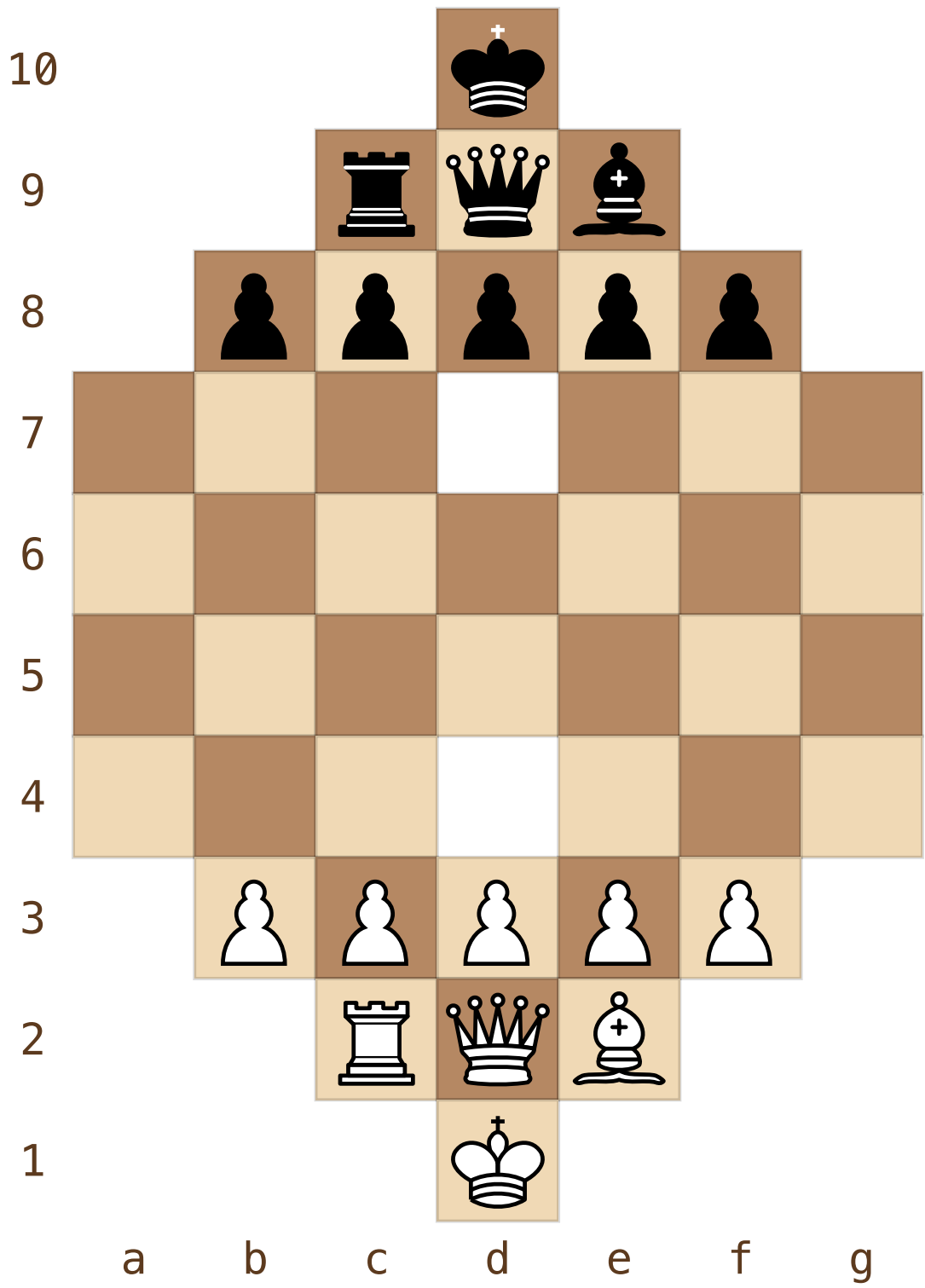
44 squares (custom board with 2 holes)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

HOLE CHESS



Hole Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=hole-chess>

Hole Chess is a chess variant created by Gary K. Gifford in December 2003 for the Chess Variants 44-Square Contest. The game is played on a custom 44-square board that includes two permanent holes – squares that pieces cannot occupy, but through which pieces can be captured by being pulled in. The defining mechanic is the Two-Action Rule: three piece types (Queen, Rook, and PS-Bishop) may both move and pull an enemy piece into a hole on the same turn.

THE BOARD

A custom 44-square board with two holes. The two holes are located centrally – the central pawn on each side is blocked by a hole directly in front of it. A physical board can be made by cutting holes in an actual board and placing it over an open box, so pieces sucked into holes fall through.

PIECES

Each player begins with:

- ♦ 1 **King**
- ♦ 1 **Queen**
- ♦ 1 **Rook**
- ♦ 1 **PS-Bishop** (Promoted Shogi Bishop = Dragon Horse: moves as a King or a Bishop)
- ♦ 5 **Pawns**

STARTING POSITION

Yellow (light):

- ♦ King: d1
- ♦ Queen: d2
- ♦ Rook: c2
- ♦ PS-Bishop: e2
- ♦ Pawns: b3, c3, d3, e3, f3

Red (dark):

- ♦ King: d10
- ♦ Queen: d9
- ♦ Rook: e9
- ♦ PS-Bishop: c9
- ♦ Pawns: b8, c8, d8, e8, f8

Holes are located at d4 and d7. The central pawns (d3 and d8) cannot advance because a hole is directly in front of them; they can only move by capturing diagonally.

THE TWO-ACTION RULE

The **Queen, Rook, and PS-Bishop** each have two actions available on a turn when they are the moved piece. Either or both actions may be used; but at least one must be used.

Action 1 (movement): The piece moves and possibly captures as in standard chess (PS-Bishop moves as King or Bishop).

Action 2 (hole pull): The piece targets an enemy piece in its direct line of fire. If exactly one hole exists between the attacker and the target piece (along a straight line), the target is pulled toward the attacker along that line until it falls through the hole — eliminating it. Action 2 cannot be used if two or more holes exist between attacker and target, or if no hole is in line.

Result: A piece using Action 2 after Action 1 can eliminate two pieces in one turn — one by standard capture, one by pulling into a hole.

A piece may also remain stationary and use only Action 2 (no movement on that turn).

PAWNS

Pawns move and capture as in standard chess. On their first move they may advance two squares — except the central pawns (d3/d8) which cannot advance at all (holes block them). En passant applies.

Promotion: if a Pawn reaches the opponent's third rank (the furthest reachable rank), it must promote to a Queen, Rook, or PS-Bishop.

KINGS

Kings move as in standard chess. Unlike standard chess, **Kings can be captured** (not just checkmated). If a King would have to move into or be exposed to the enemy line of fire (a potential stalemate), it must do so — there is no stalemate. A King may move adjacent to the enemy King, but the enemy King then captures it, ending the game.

HOLES

Holes are permanent features of the board. Pieces cannot move onto holes voluntarily. A piece that is pulled into a hole via Action 2 is eliminated. It is **illegal** to move onto a hole under normal movement; a piece can only enter a hole by being pulled.

WIN CONDITION

Capture the opponent's King, checkmate the opponent's King, or force resignation.

ATTRIBUTION

Hole Chess was created by Gary K. Gifford, December 2003. Entry in the Chess Variants 44-Square Contest. Source: chessvariants.com/44.dir/hole-chess.html

CHESS · VARIANT 73 OF 153

Hoppel-Poppel

8×8

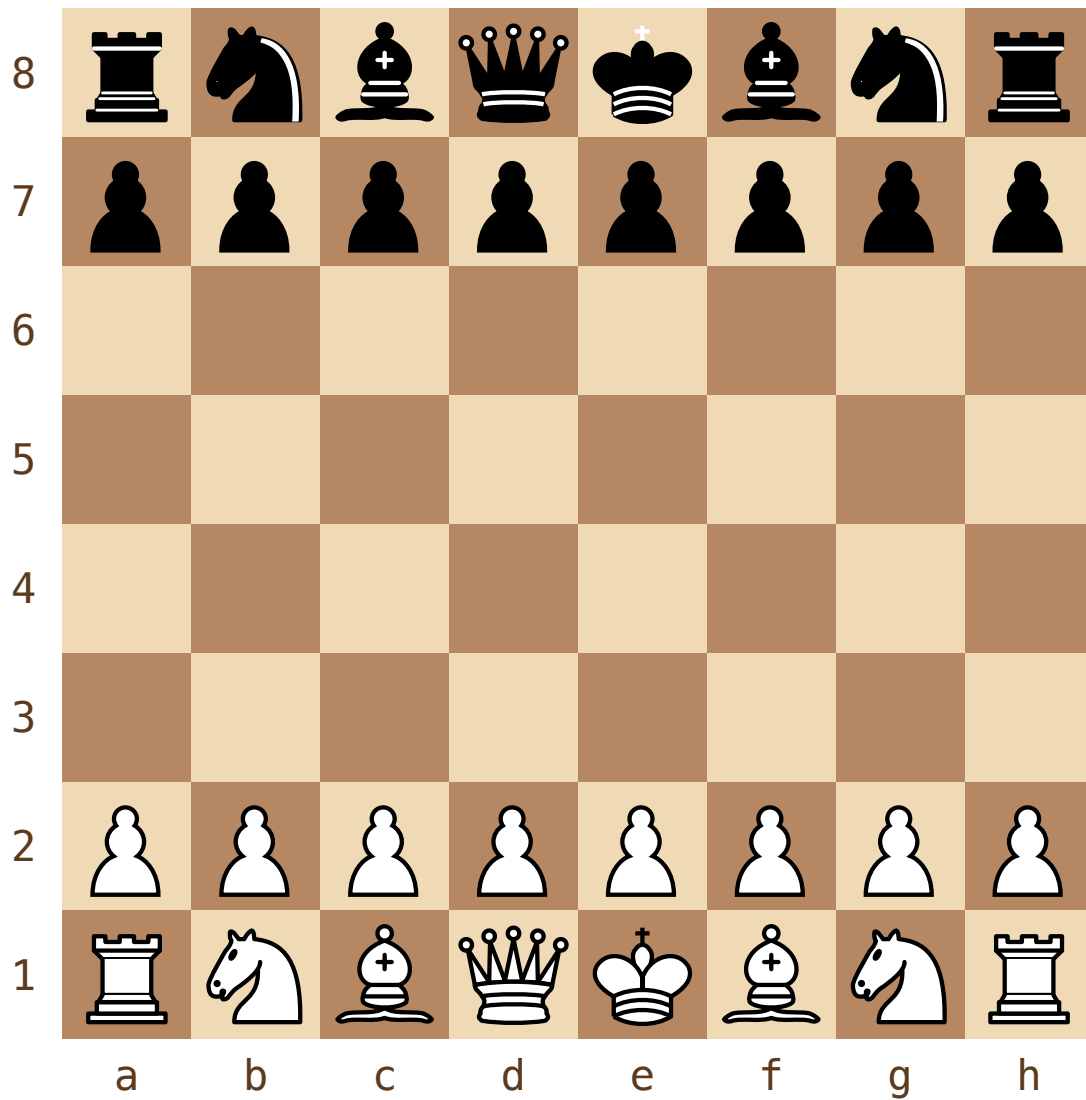
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

HOPPEL-POPPEL

Knights and Bishops swap their capture methods while retaining their normal movement.



Hoppel-Poppel – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=hoppel-poppel>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Knights move in their standard L-shape but capture by sliding diagonally (like a bishop).
- ♦ Bishops slide diagonally as normal but capture by jumping in an L-shape (like a knight).
- ♦ Only captures are swapped – non-capturing moves remain standard.
- ♦ Rooks, Queens, Kings, and Pawns are unaffected.
- ♦ Castling, en passant, and promotion work as normal.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Knights become long-range capture threats (they can capture anything on their diagonal) but remain short-range for positioning. Bishops gain the ability to capture past blocking pieces (jumping like knights) but lose their sliding capture lanes. This creates asymmetric tactical patterns where pieces threaten different squares depending on whether they're capturing or moving.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional German variant. The name means "Hippety-Hop" in German. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 74 OF 153

Horde Chess

8×8

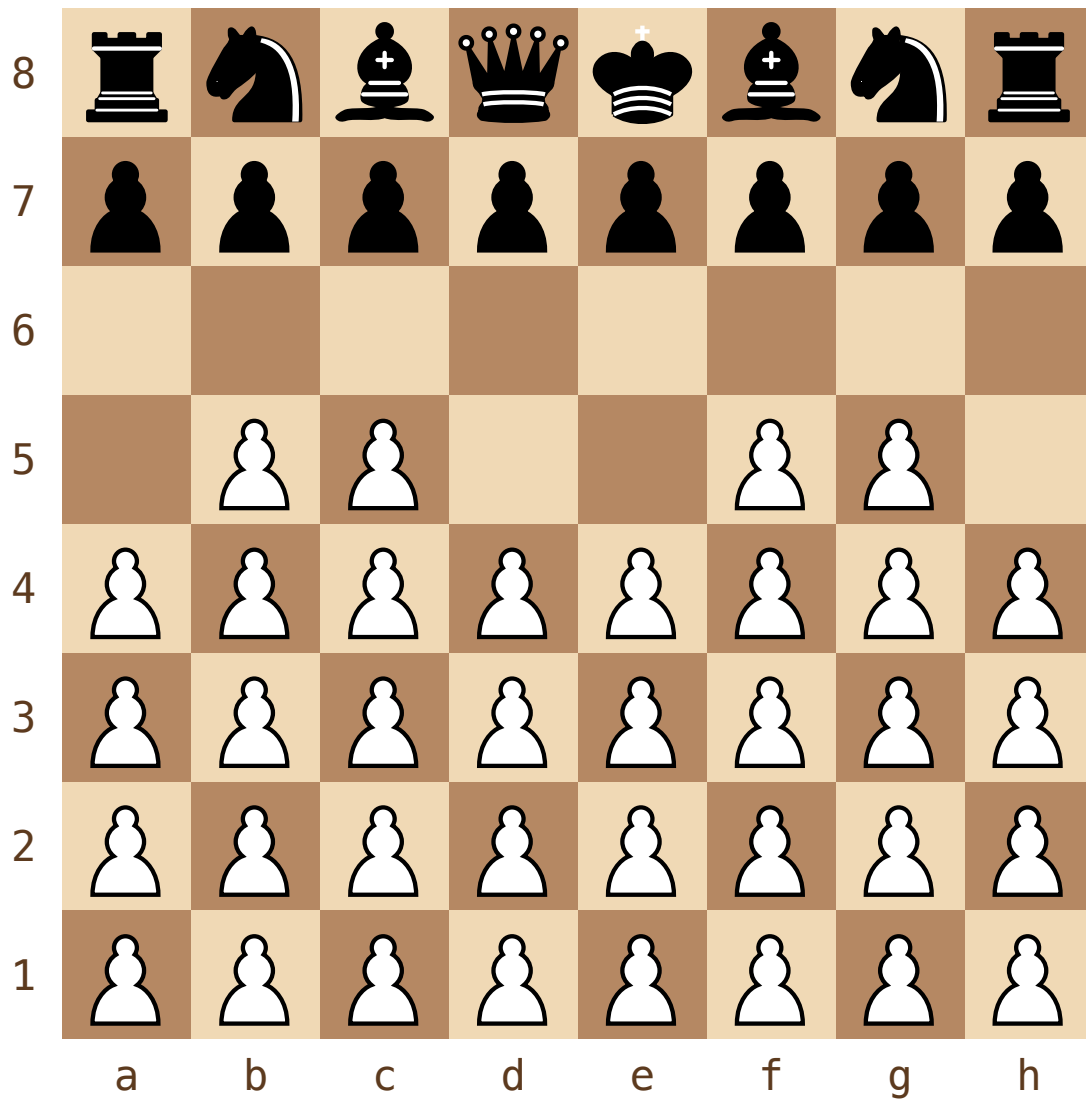
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

HORDE CHESS

36 pawns versus a normal army. A radically asymmetric battle of overwhelming numbers against organised forces.



Horde Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=horde>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup:

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/1PP2PP1/PPPPPPPP/PPPPPPPP/PPPPPPPP/PPPPPPPP w kq - 0 1

- ♦ **Black:** Standard chess setup (full army on ranks 7–8).
- ♦ **White (Horde):** 36 pawns filling ranks 1–4 completely, plus 4 additional pawns on b5, c5, f5, g5. No King, no officers.

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess rules apply to both sides with these exceptions:
- ♦ The Horde has no King – it cannot be checkmated.
- ♦ Horde pawns on rank 1 may double-step (as if on rank 2).
- ♦ Horde pawns promote normally on rank 8.
- ♦ Black wins by capturing ALL Horde pieces.
- ♦ The Horde wins by checkmating Black's King.

WIN CONDITION

- ♦ **Horde wins:** Checkmate Black's King (promoted pieces are usually required).
- ♦ **Black wins:** Capture every single Horde piece.

STRATEGY

Black must efficiently destroy pawns without allowing promotion. The Horde must protect key pawns and push toward promotion. Bishops and Knights are most effective for Black (cutting through pawn masses), while the Horde tries to create unstoppable pawn chains.

ATTRIBUTION

Popularised on Lichess. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 75 OF 153

Hostage Chess

8×8

BOARD

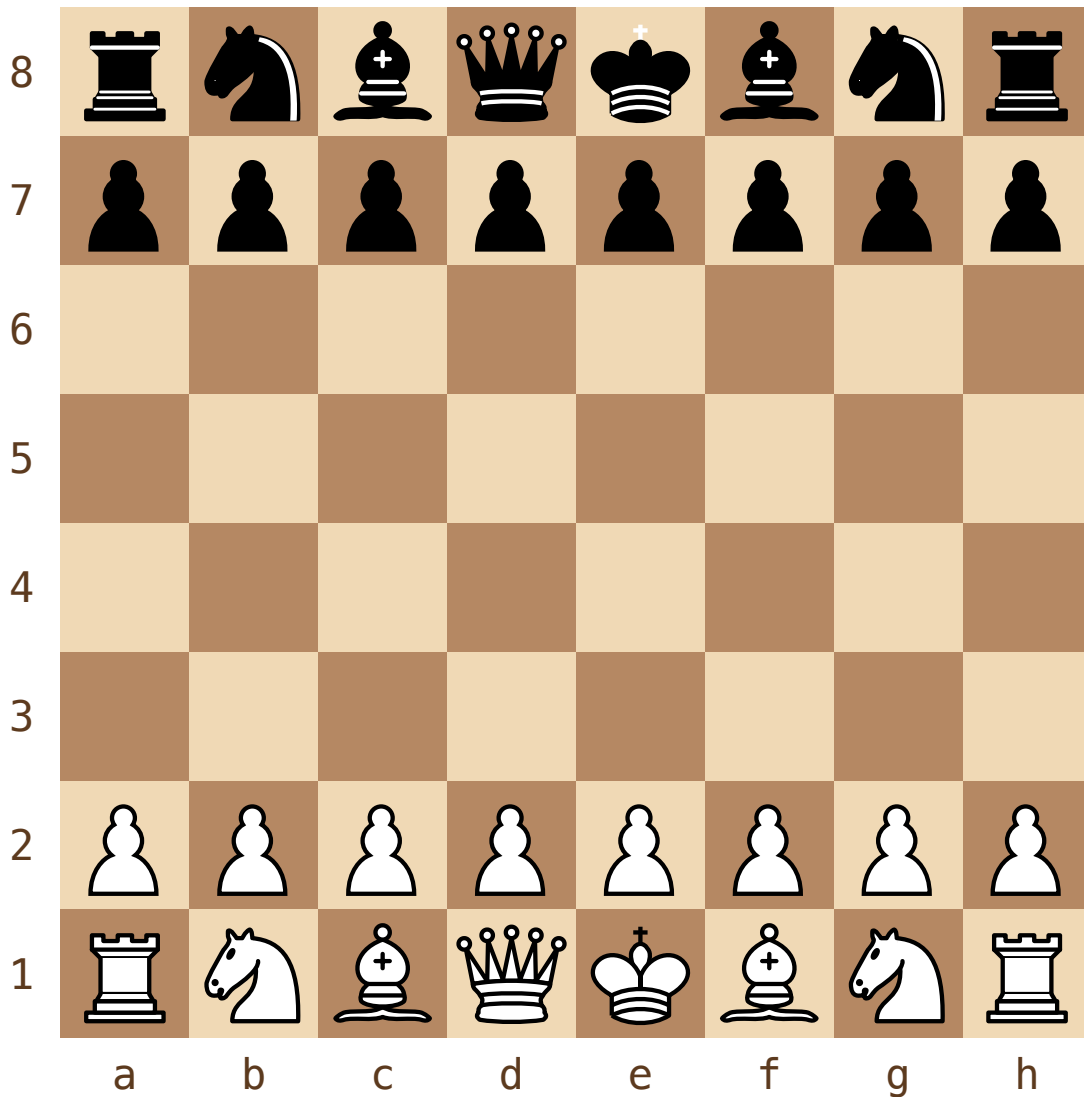
2

PLAYERS

Hostage Chess

Invented by John Leslie. Named "chess variant of the decade" by David Pritchard in Variant Chess, Summer 1999.

OVERVIEW



Hostage Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=hostage-chess>

Hostage Chess introduces Shogi-style dropping using a single standard chess set. Captured pieces do not change sides (unlike Chessgi/Bughouse); instead they are held as **hostages** in the captor's prison. An exchange mechanism lets players rescue their hostages by releasing enemy hostages in return, then immediately deploy the rescued piece.

SETUP

Standard FIDE starting position. Each player also has two off-board areas:

- ♦ **Prison** (player's right): holds captured enemy pieces as hostages
- ♦ **Airfield** (player's left): holds rescued pieces waiting to be dropped

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1
(Prisons and airfields start empty)

PIECE VALUES (FOR EXCHANGES)

In ascending order: **Pawn < Knight = Bishop < Rook < Queen**

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply with the following additions:

HOSTAGE EXCHANGE

At the **start of your turn** (before making any move), you may choose to rescue one of your pieces from your opponent's prison. To do so:

- 1 Choose which of your pieces to rescue from the opponent's prison.
- 2 Select a piece from your own prison of **equal or greater value** to release in exchange.
- 3 Place your released piece in the **opponent's airfield** (they may drop it later).
- 4 **Immediately drop** your rescued piece onto any legal vacant square.
- 5 This drop ends your turn. You make no other move.

Your opponent cannot prevent the exchange.

If you do not perform an exchange, your turn proceeds with a normal move or a drop from your airfield.

DROPPING (PARACHUTING)

Instead of making a regular move, you may **drop** one piece from your **airfield** onto any vacant square. Restrictions:

- ♦ A Pawn may **not** be dropped on rank 1 or rank 8.
- ♦ No other restrictions on drop squares (e.g., two Bishops may end up on the same colour).
- ♦ Dropped pieces are subject to normal castling and en-passant rules as if they had always been part of the game.

PAWN PROMOTION

Promotion works differently:

- ♦ A seventh-rank pawn **may only advance** to rank 8 if the **opponent's prison contains at least one Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight**.
- ♦ When it does: the pawn leaves the board and enters **your own prison**. You immediately fill the promotion square with one piece of your choice from the opponent's prison.
- ♦ **If no promotable pieces are in the opponent's prison:** the pawn is blocked and cannot advance to rank 8. It also cannot capture diagonally forward (since it cannot land there), so a king on a diagonally adjacent rank-8 square is not in check from such a pawn.

CASTLING AND EN PASSANT

Both are permitted under normal conditions and apply to dropped pieces as if they were part of the original setup.

NOTATION

- ♦ **N*c7**: a Knight from the airfield drops onto c7
- ♦ **(B-N)N*c7**: a Bishop is released from prison, a Knight is rescued, the Knight drops onto c7
- ♦ **(R-P)*c7**: a Rook is released, a Pawn is rescued, the Pawn drops onto c7

Source: chessvariants.com/difftaking.dir/hostage.html

CHESS · VARIANT 76 OF 153

Immunization Chess

8×8

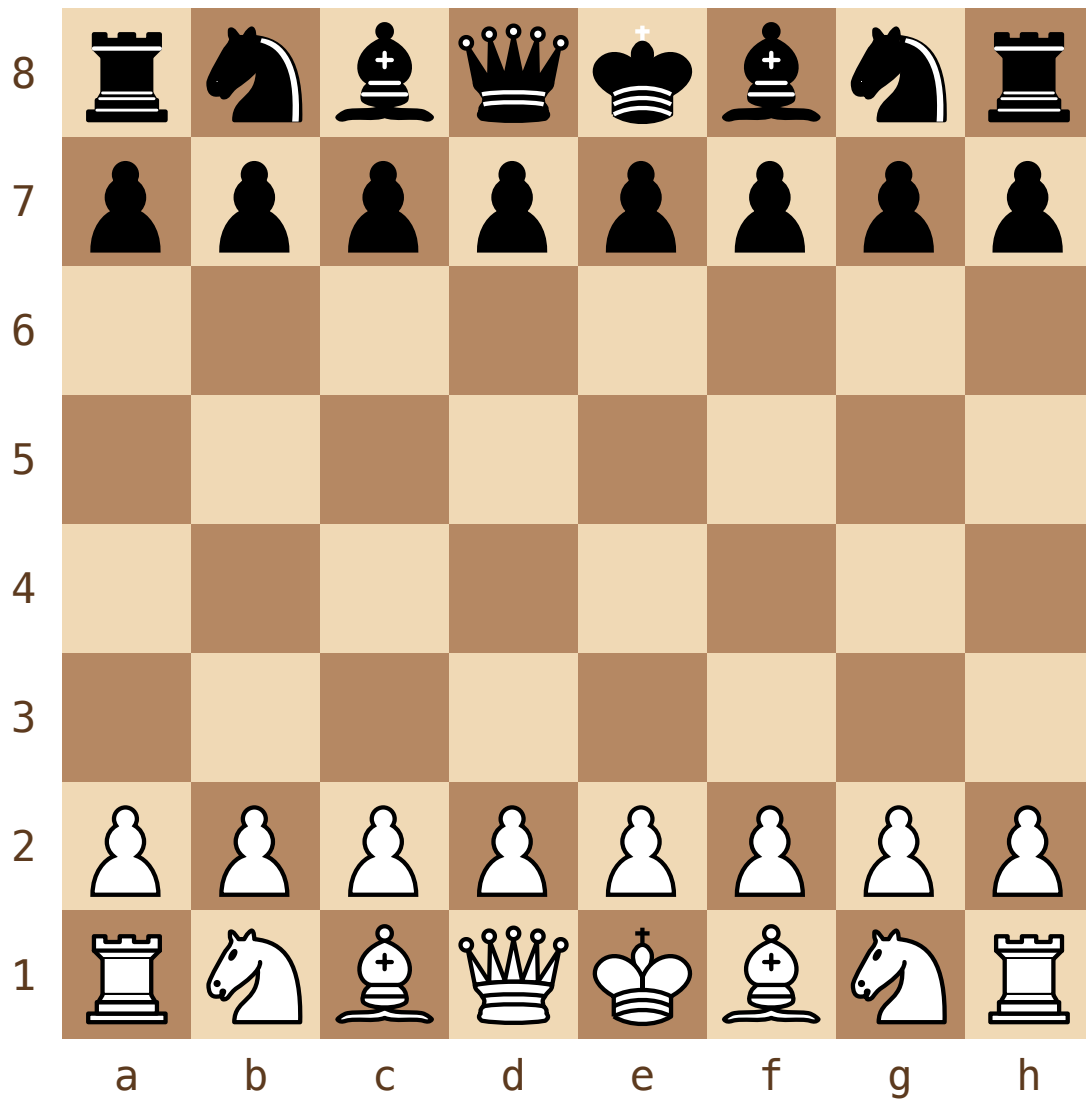
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

IMMUNIZATION CHESS

Captures trigger an immune response in nearby pieces. When a piece is captured, all enemy pieces adjacent to the capture square become immune to capture for 2 turns.



Immunization Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=immunization-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ When a capture occurs, all enemy (defender's) pieces on squares adjacent to the capture square become immune for 2 turns.
- ♦ Immune pieces cannot be captured but can still be blocked, checked, and moved normally.
- ♦ Kings cannot become immune.
- ♦ Immunity wears off after 2 full turns.
- ♦ Immune pieces still deliver check and control squares normally.
- ♦ You cannot capture an immune piece – the move is illegal.
- ♦ All other standard chess rules apply.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Captures create a defensive shield around the victim's neighbours – making exchanges near clustered pieces dangerous. Isolated pieces are more vulnerable since they have fewer neighbours to immunize. Plan captures carefully: taking a piece that immunizes a more valuable neighbour is often a mistake.

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 77 OF 153

Janus Chess

10×8

BOARD

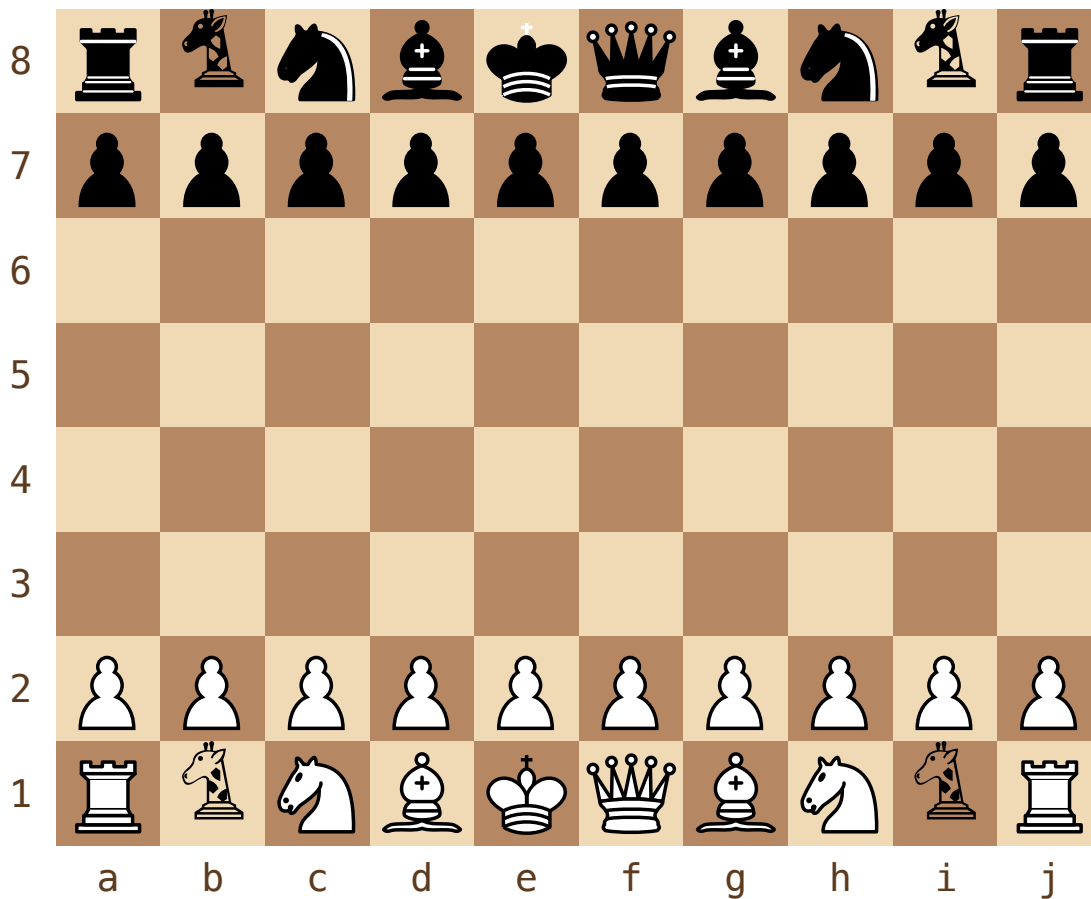
2

PLAYERS

Janus Chess

Variant Chess, issues 18 and 20. Played by several chess grandmasters, including Viktor Korchnoi.

OVERVIEW



Janus Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=janus>

Janus Chess extends standard chess to a 10x8 board by adding two Januses per side. The Janus combines the powers of a Bishop and a Knight. The game closely resembles Capablanca's Chess in concept but has a distinct starting arrangement.

SETUP

10-file board (files a-j), 8 ranks.

FEN: rjnbkqbnjr/pppppppppp/10/10/10/10/PPPPPPPPP/RJNBKQBNJR w - - 0 1
(J/j = Janus)

White (rank 1): Rook(a1), Janus(b1), Knight(c1), Bishop(d1), King(e1), Queen(f1), Bishop(g1), Knight(h1), Janus(i1), Rook(j1)

White Pawns (rank 2): a2-j2

Black (rank 8): Rook(a8), Janus(b8), Knight(c8), Bishop(d8), King(e8), Queen(f8), Bishop(g8), Knight(h8), Janus(i8), Rook(j8) **Black Pawns (rank 7):** a7-j7

PIECES

All standard FIDE pieces move as normal. The Janus is an additional piece:

JANUS (ARCHBISHOP)

Moves as a **Bishop** (slides diagonally any distance) **or** a **Knight** (leaps in an L-shape). It combines both powers in a single piece. The Janus cannot be blocked on its Knight move (it leaps). It is not colour-bound because of its Knight component.

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply with the following modifications:

CASTLING

Castling works as in standard chess (King and Rook have not moved, no pieces between them, King not in check, King does not cross check), but the King travels further:

- ♦ **Short castling** (queenside, toward a1): King moves from e1 to **b1** (three squares). Rook moves from a1 to c1.
- ♦ **Long castling** (kingside, toward j1): King moves from e1 to **i1** (four squares). Rook moves from j1 to h1.

The same applies symmetrically for Black.

The squares the King passes through and lands on must not be attacked by an enemy piece.

ALL OTHER RULES

En passant, promotion, stalemate (draw), and all other FIDE rules apply normally. Pawns promote on rank 8 (White) or rank 1 (Black) to any piece including Janus.

STRATEGY NOTES

The Janus is a powerful compound piece — roughly comparable in value to a Queen in the endgame — and its early development is often a key strategic concern. Because the Januses start adjacent to the Rooks rather than in the center, opening development patterns differ from Capablanca's Chess. The wider board slightly reduces the early influence of Rooks and Queens while enhancing the Knights and Bishops.

Source: chessvariants.com/large.dir/janus.html

CHESS · VARIANT 78 OF 153

Khan's Chess

8×8

BOARD

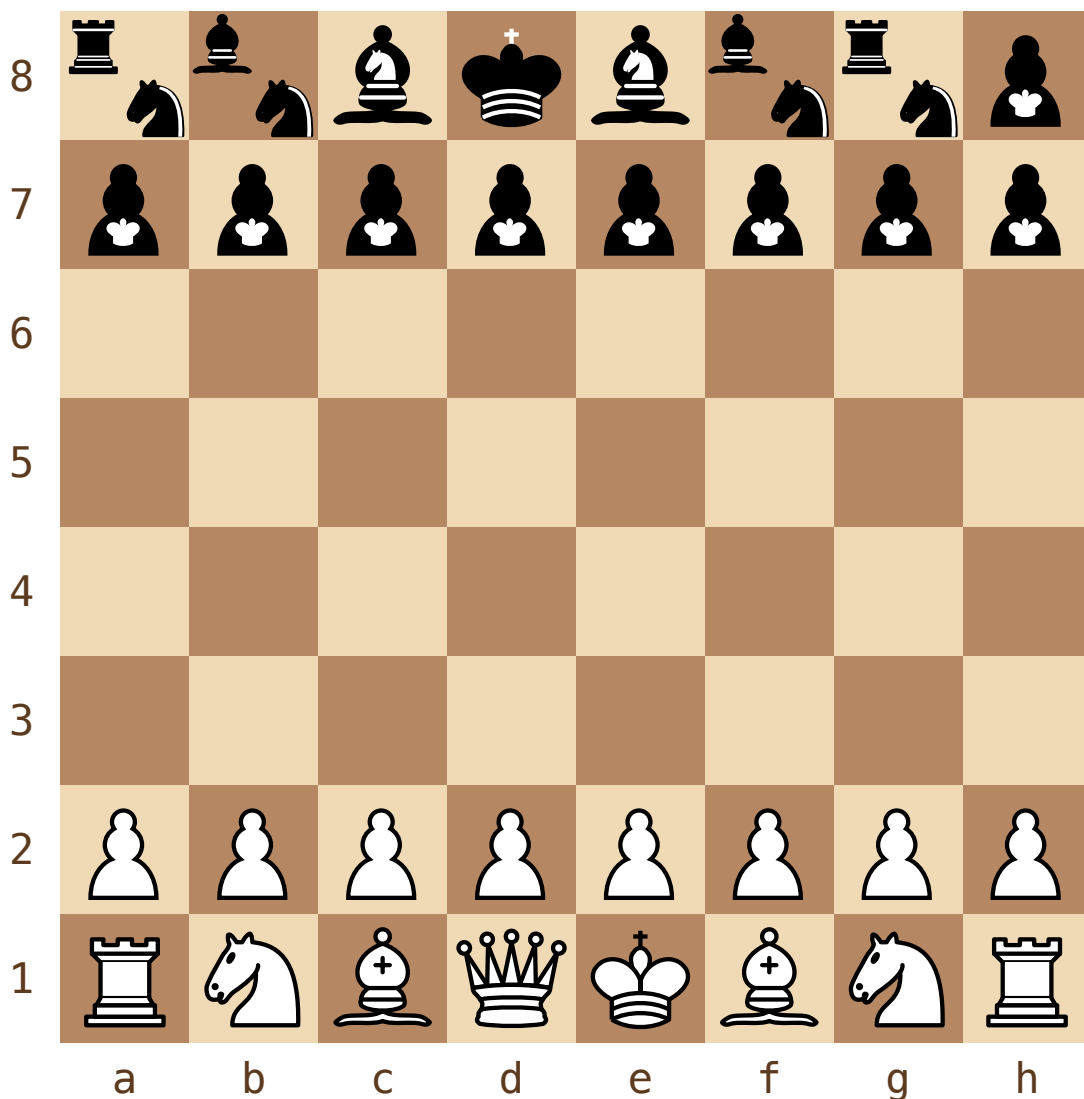
2

PLAYERS

Khan's Chess

Khan's Chess is an asymmetric chess variant designed in 2023–24 by Couch Tomato. It is a refined successor to Orda Chess, pitting the standard Kingdom army against a Mongol-themed Horde cavalry force. Like Orda Chess, all Horde pieces (except the Khan and Kheshig) use divergent movement—they move differently from how they capture. Unlike Orda Chess, the Horde's pawns are replaced by Scouts, faster-moving forward-only cavalry units, and the Yurt is replaced by the Khatun.

HISTORY



Khan's Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=khans-chess>

Couch Tomato created Khan's Chess to address two shortcomings identified in Orda Chess through high-level NNUE (neural network) analysis under Fairy-Stockfish: the original game proved less balanced than intended at high levels of play, and the standard pawn poorly represented the Mongols' historically cavalry-dominated armies. Taking advantage of expanded Fairy-Stockfish piece-definition capabilities, the designer replaced the pawn and yurt with two new pieces –the Scout and the Khatun—and moved Scouts to the second rank, giving the Horde a faster, more thematically coherent force. Thorough NNUE testing confirmed improved balance in the final design.

THE TWO ARMIES

Khan's Chess is played on a standard 8×8 board. White controls the **Kingdom** (standard FIDE pieces). Gold controls the **Horde** (Khan's cavalry army).

KINGDOM (WHITE) STARTING POSITION

Rank 1: Rook, Knight, Bishop, Queen, King, Bishop, Knight, Rook Rank 2: eight Pawns

HORDE (GOLD) STARTING POSITION

Rank 8: Lancer, Kheshig, Horse Archer, Khatun, Khan, Horse Archer, Kheshig, Lancer Rank 7: eight Scouts

The Horde back rank mirrors the Kingdom's layout: Lancers occupy the Rook squares, Kheshigs occupy the Knight squares, Horse Archers occupy the Bishop squares, Khatun occupies the Queen square, and the Khan occupies the King square.

FEN: lhatkahl/ssssssss/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQ - 0 1

(Piece letters – Gold: l=Lancer, h=Kheshig, a=Horse Archer, t=Khatun, k=Khan, s=Scout)

GENERAL RULES

- 1 White (Kingdom) moves first.**
- 2 The Horde cannot castle.** The Khan has no castling right.
- 3 Stalemate is a loss** for the player who cannot move (not a draw as in standard chess).
- 4 Campmate:** a player wins by moving their King to the opponent's back rank without moving into check.
- 5 Kingdom Pawns promote normally** (Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight). **Scouts promote only to Khatun.**
- 6 All other rules** (en passant, repetition, check and checkmate) follow standard chess.

HORDE PIECES

All Horde pieces except the Khan and Kheshig are **divergent**: their movement squares differ from their capture squares. The Horde is a cavalry force, so the Lancer, Horse Archer, and Khatun all *move* like a Knight but *capture* differently.

PIECE	KINGDOM COUNTERPART	MOVES AS	CAPTURES AS	NOTES
Khan	King	King	King	Royal; cannot castle
Kheshig	Knight	Knight + King	Knight + King	Strongest Horde piece; not royal
Khatun	Queen	Knight	King	Not royal; promotes Scouts
Horse Archer	Bishop	Knight	Bishop	Not colour-bound
Lancer	Rook	Knight	Rook	Weaker than Rook in endgame
Scout	Pawn	Knight (forward only—four squares)	One square forward	Promotes to Khatun only

KHAN

The Khan is the Horde’s royal piece. It moves and captures exactly as a King in standard chess. The Khan cannot castle. Checkmate of the Khan ends the game. The piece is visually distinct but functionally identical to the Kingdom’s King.

KHESHIG (H)

The Kheshig moves and captures as a **Knight + King** combined (also called a centaur or mann+knight). It is the strongest piece in the Horde army and is non-royal. The Kheshig is placed on the Knight squares at the start of the game but far exceeds a Knight in value. It is extremely difficult for the Kingdom to force checkmate without eliminating at least one Kheshig. The Kheshigs represent the elite imperial guard of Mongol royalty.

KHATUN (T)

The Khatun **moves as a Knight** but **captures as a King** (one step in any direction). It is non-royal. Despite its modest capture range, the Khatun is a useful defensive piece and is the piece that Scouts promote to. Thematically, the Khatun is the Khan’s consort—an analogue to the Kingdom’s Queen, but considerably less powerful.

HORSE ARCHER (A)

The Horse Archer **moves as a Knight** but **captures as a Bishop** (diagonally, any number of squares). Because it moves as a Knight rather than sliding diagonally, it is not colour-bound, making it more valuable than a standard Bishop. Horse Archers represent the Mongol light cavalry, renowned for hit-and-run archery tactics. Their ability to quickly reposition for forks and skewers makes them a persistent tactical threat.

LANCER (L)

The Lancer **moves as a Knight** but **captures as a Rook** (orthogonally, any number of squares). Its value is generally below that of a Rook because it cannot slide across the board in a single move. However, Lancers enter play quickly compared to Rooks and can threaten long-range captures from an early stage. Lancers represent the Mongol heavy cavalry.

SCOUT (S)

The Scout replaces the pawn in the Horde army. It **moves as a forward-only Knight**—specifically, the four Knight-jump destinations that move the piece toward the opponent's side of the board (two squares forward + one to the side, or one square forward + two to the side, in either lateral direction). It does **not** jump to the two backward Knight squares.

The Scout **captures one square directly forward**, like a pawn's standard attack but without the diagonal component.

Key properties:

- ♦ Scouts cannot capture sideways or diagonally; their attack is a single forward step.
- ♦ Because of their limited attack, Scouts create weaker defensive structures than Pawns.
- ♦ Because of their Knight-based movement, Scouts reach the promotion rank far faster than Pawns.
- ♦ Scouts promote on the last rank (**rank 1 for Gold**) and can **only promote to a Khatun**.
- ♦ Scouts do not have an initial two-square advance, and en passant does not apply to them.

STRATEGY NOTES

For the Horde: Develop Kheshigs carefully—their value in the endgame is enormous and losing one makes mating the Kingdom King much harder. Use the Scouts' speed to threaten early promotion; even the threat of creating a new Khatun forces Kingdom defensive resources. Horse Archers and Lancers can open threats from the flanks much earlier than Bishops and Rooks in standard chess, due to their Knight movement.

For the Kingdom: The Horde lacks the Queen's long-range sliding power and cannot castle, making early central pressure effective. Target Kheshigs as priority pieces—once both are eliminated, the Kingdom's mating chances improve dramatically. Be alert to campmate: the Khan's ability to march to rank 8 for a positional win is a real endgame threat.

COMPARISON WITH ORDA CHESS

Khan's Chess replaces two pieces from Orda Chess:

- The **pawn** (standard chess pawn used by both sides in Orda) is replaced by the **Scout** for the Horde, themed around Mongol cavalry.
- The **Yurt** (which moved and captured as a Queen but only one or two squares) is replaced by the **Khatun** (Knight movement, King capture).

All other Horde pieces—Lancer, Horse Archer, Kheshig—carry over from Orda Chess with the same movement and capture rules.

ATTRIBUTION

Khan's Chess was designed by Couch Tomato (2023–24). Rules documented from the PyChess variant guide at pychess.org/variants/khans.

CHESS · VARIANT 79 OF 153

King of the Hill

8×8

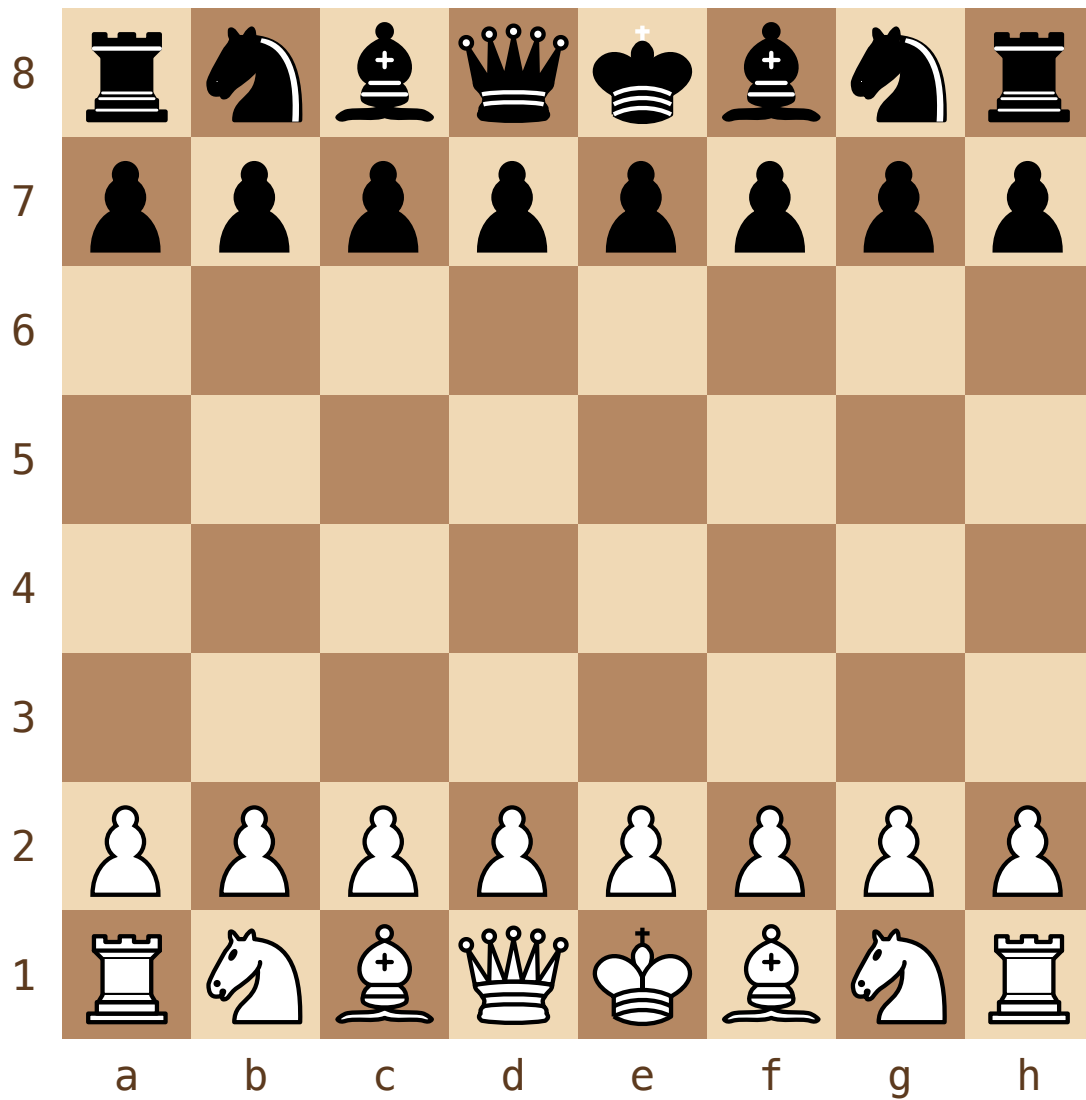
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

KING OF THE HILL

Move your King to the centre four squares for an instant win. Transforms the King from a liability into an offensive weapon.



King of the Hill – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=king-of-the-hill>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard chess rules apply. No modifications to piece movement, captures, or special moves.

WIN CONDITION

- ♦ Checkmate (as normal), OR
- ♦ Move your King to any of the four centre squares (d4, e4, d5, e5).

STRATEGY

The King becomes an attacking piece. You must balance aggression (advancing the King) with safety (not exposing it to check). Games are shorter and more tactical – passive play is punished because the opponent can simply march their King to the centre.

ATTRIBUTION

Popularised on Lichess and Chess.com. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 80 OF 153

Klein Bottle Chess

8×14 Klein bottle

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

KLEIN BOTTLE CHESS

Klein Bottle Chess is chess played on a **Klein bottle** — a non-orientable surface that cannot be embedded in three-dimensional space without self-intersection. It is built in two steps from Cylindrical Chess: first extend the board to double height (8 files × 14 ranks) and twist-join the two new long edges to make Möbius Strip Chess, then join the a-file and h-file as well. Invented by Alberto Monteiro, documented at chessvariants.com (mirrored at oocities.org/albmont/x_klein.htm).

WHY 8×14, NOT 8×8

Klein Bottle Chess is not a small twist on a normal 8×8 board — it is built from the taller **Cylindrical 8×14 variant** used as the base for this whole family (Cylindrical, Möbius, Klein Bottle, Torus all share it). Ranks are numbered 1–14, with rank 15 identified with rank 1 (rank 14 is also called rank 0, rank 9 is also called rank -5, and so on around the strip).

THE BOARD AND STARTING POSITION

Black									
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	
14	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	0
13									-1
12									-2
=====									
11									-3
10									-4
9	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	-5
8	r	n	b	q	k	b	n	r	8
7	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	7
6									6
5									5
4									4
3									3
2	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	2
1	R	N	B	Q	K	B	N	R	1
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	
White									

<- White's "far" pawns, move backward (14->0)

<- twisted seam: a12 joins h11, b12 joins a11

<- Black's "far" pawns, move forward (9->10)

<- Black back rank

<- Black's "near" pawns, move backward (7->6)

<- White's "near" pawns, move forward (2->3)

<- White back rank

The `engine.setup` FEN in the frontmatter is identical to Möbius Strip Chess's — joining the a/h files does not change the starting position, only movement wrapping. It encodes the diagram above rank 14 down to rank 1: rank 14 pawns, ranks 13–10 empty, rank 9 pawns, rank 8 pieces, rank 7 pawns, ranks 6–3 empty, rank 2 pawns, rank 1 pieces.

Each side has **16 pawns** (two ranks' worth) rather than 8: White's rank-2 pawns advance normally toward the centre, while White's rank-14 pawns (rank 14 = rank 0, adjacent to Black's rank-13/rank 1 side going the other way) advance backward around the strip toward the twisted seam. Black's rank-7 and rank-9 pawns are the mirror image. This gives 32 pawns total on the board, plus the two full sets of pieces (16), for 48 units total — a much larger game than standard chess.

Files a and h are joined, exactly as in Cylindrical Chess: a piece sliding off the h-file reappears on the a-file at the same rank, and vice versa.

Ranks 11 and 12 are joined with a half-twist (the seam marked === above): file a on rank 12 connects to file h on rank 11, file b on rank 12 connects to file g on rank 11, and so on — the file position mirrors across the seam rather than lining up directly. This twisted junction is what makes the surface a Klein bottle rather than a simple torus once combined with the a/h file join.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE TOPOLOGY

Kings face Queens, not Kings. Because of the doubled board and the seam arrangement, along the “long way round” (ranks 8 through 15/1), each King ends up facing the opponent’s Queen rather than the opponent’s King, unlike almost every other chess variant.

Bishops are not colour-bound, but are restricted. The non-orientable twist means a Bishop is not confined to squares of one colour the way it is in standard chess — a Bishop starting on a nominally “light” square (e.g. f1) can reach nominally “dark” squares by crossing the twisted seam. However, this does not mean the Bishop can reach everywhere: tracing the actual diagonal from f1, a Bishop can reach only **3 out of 8 possible diagonal rays** from its own square in one move — the topology restricts reachability rather than simply removing the colour-binding constraint.

File equivalence classes are uneven. Because of how the a/h join and the twisted rank seam interact, the a-file and h-file become topologically equivalent to the d-file and e-file (all four link up through the twist), while the b/g files form one equivalence pair and c/f files form another. This is a direct consequence of the join geometry, not an arbitrary rule.

Subvariants: removing the twist at the rank-11/12 seam (so it joins normally instead) produces Torus Chess (Gadsden’s Toroidal Chess, already documented separately in this hub); separating the a and h files again (removing only that join) produces Möbius Strip Chess (also documented separately).

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply (castling, en passant, promotion) except where the topology changes movement, as described above.

Win: Checkmate the opponent’s King.

ATTRIBUTION

Klein Bottle Chess invented by Alberto Monteiro. Source: chessvariants.com/shape.dir/x_klein.html (mirrored at oocities.org/albmont/x_klein.htm, which includes the fuller technical description used for this rewrite). Related to Möbius Strip Chess and Gadsden’s Toroidal Chess (Torus Chess) by the same author/family of variants, all built on the underlying Cylindrical 8×14 board.

CHESS · VARIANT 81 OF 153

Knightmate

8×8

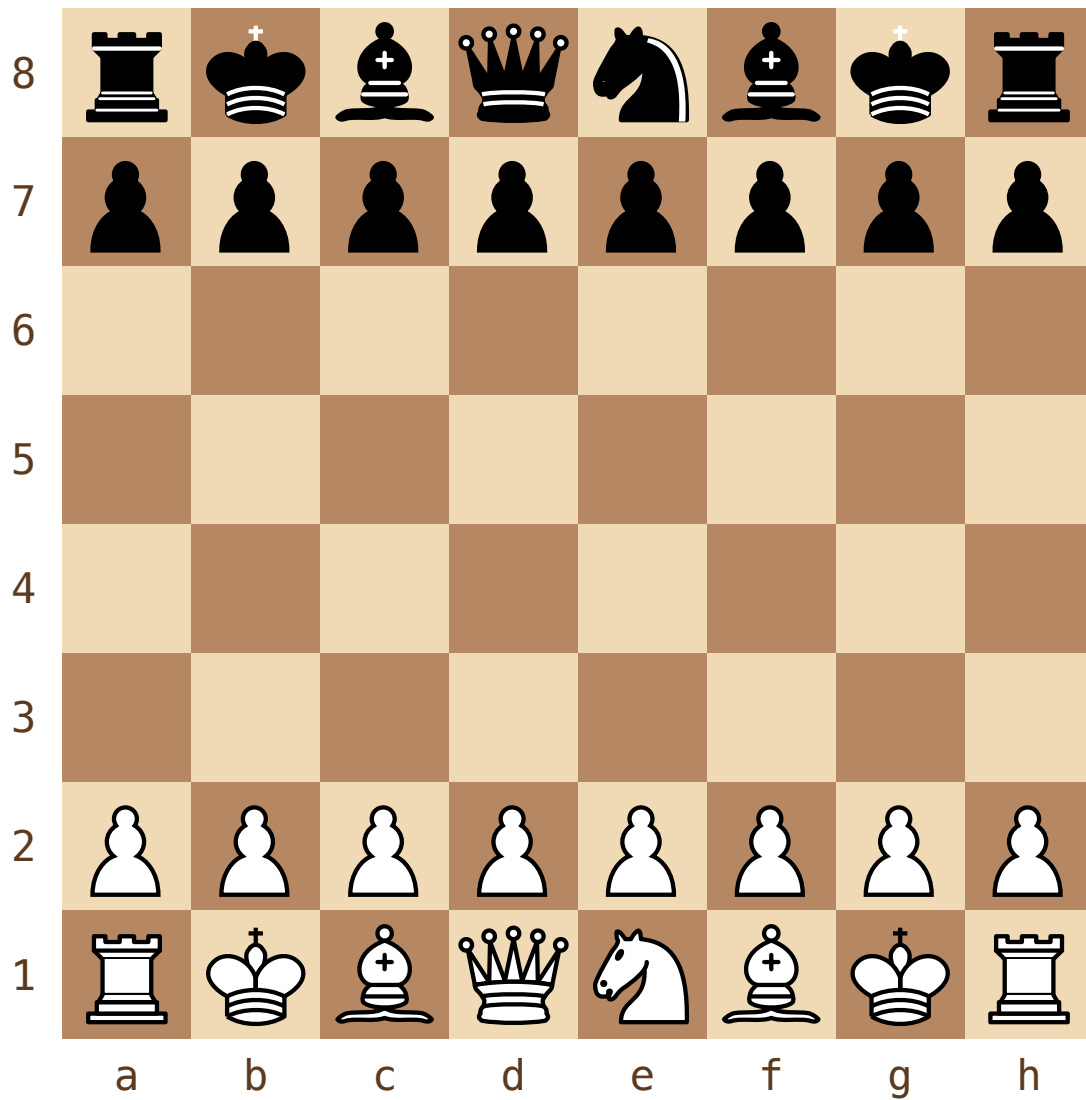
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

KNIGHTMATE

The Knight becomes the royal piece. The King becomes a commoner that moves like a knight. A complete role reversal that transforms strategy.



Knightmate – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=knightmate>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): rkbqnbkr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RKBQNBKR

PIECES

Pieces: Standard chess pieces, but with swapped roles:

- ♦ **Knight** — the royal piece. Must be protected from checkmate. Sits on e1/e8 (where the King normally starts).
- ♦ **King** — moves like a knight (L-shape). Not royal — can be captured freely. Starts on b1/g1 and b8/g8.

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, except:

- ♦ The Knight is subject to check and checkmate (it is royal).
- ♦ The King is an ordinary piece that moves in knight-jumps.
- ♦ Castling works with the royal Knight and the Rooks.
- ♦ Pawns may promote to King (the non-royal piece) but not to Knight (the royal piece).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's royal Knight.

STRATEGY

The royal Knight is far more mobile than a standard King, which makes it harder to trap but also means it can overextend. Kings (moving as knights) are powerful attacking pieces. Queen + King combinations create devastating fork threats.

ATTRIBUTION

Bruce Zimov, 1972. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 82 OF 153

Kriegspiel

8×8

BOARD

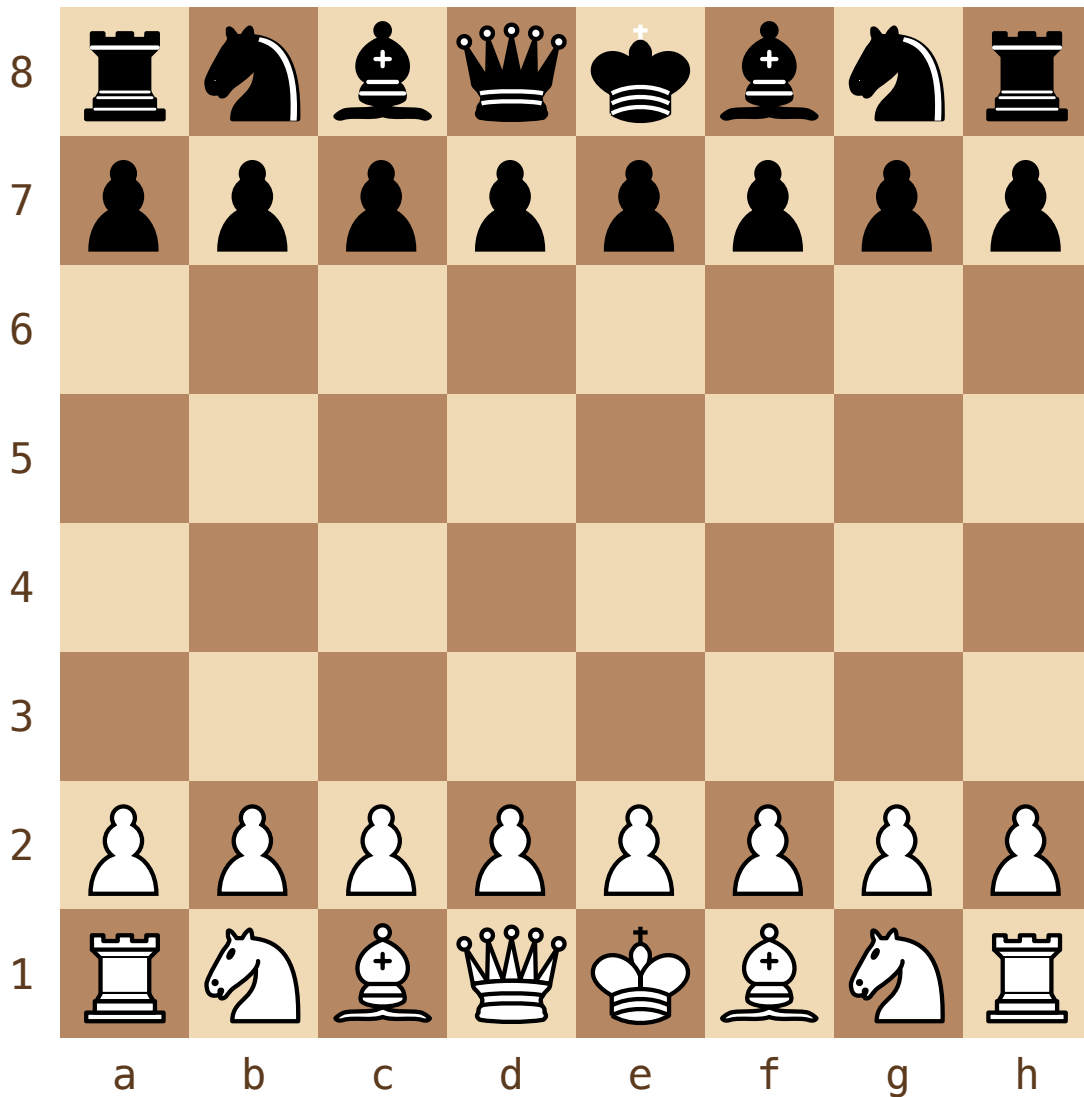
2 + referee

PLAYERS

Kriegspiel

Invented by Henry Michael Temple, 1899, South Africa. Played by several famous players including Emanuel Lasker.

OVERVIEW



Kriegspiel – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=kriegspiel>

Kriegspiel is chess with incomplete information. Each player can see only their own pieces – not the opponent's position or moves. A referee maintains a third "master" board with all pieces visible and arbitrates all play. Players must deduce the opponent's position from the referee's announcements.

EQUIPMENT

Three chess boards are needed:

- ♦ One board for White (only White pieces visible)
- ♦ One board for Black (only Black pieces visible)
- ♦ One master board for the referee (all pieces visible)

SETUP

Standard FIDE starting position on all three boards.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply to the actual position (as tracked by the referee). The difference is in what players can perceive:

TURN SEQUENCE

On their turn, a player **attempts a move**:

- ♦ If the move is **legal**, the referee announces that the player has moved, and the turn passes to the opponent.
- ♦ If the move is **illegal**, the referee announces an illegal attempt. The player must keep trying until a legal move is made.

All referee announcements are heard by both players.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Check: When a move gives check, the referee announces check and specifies the **direction**:

- ♦ Along a rank (row)
- ♦ Along a file (column)
- ♦ Along the "small diagonal" (a1-h8 direction)
- ♦ Along the "large diagonal" (h1-a8 direction)
- ♦ By a Knight

The exact location of the checking piece is not revealed.

Capture: When a piece is captured, the referee announces the **square where the capture occurred** (e.g., "White has captured on d3"). The type of piece doing the capturing and the type of piece captured are not revealed.

En passant: En passant captures are specifically announced as such (e.g., “Black has taken en passant on f3”).

PAWN CAPTURE QUERY

Before attempting a move, a player may ask: **“Any?”** (“Are there any pawn captures?”).

- ♦ The referee answers **“No”** if the player has no available pawn captures.

The referee answers **“Try!”** if at least one pawn capture is available.

- ♦ After a “Try!”, the player must attempt at least one pawn capture before being allowed to try other moves. If the capture attempt is illegal (wrong square), they may try further captures or any other legal move.

ETIQUETTE

If a player deliberately attempts a move they know to be illegal (e.g., asking “Any?” with no pawns, or trying moves purely to confuse the opponent), the referee says **“Impossible”** so the opponent is not misled. This is considered bad manners.

STRATEGY NOTES

Kriegspiel rewards probabilistic reasoning and deduction. Each referee announcement narrows the possible enemy positions. Players must balance information-gathering moves (probing pawn captures, checking to reveal enemy positions) against normal strategic play. The game involves less luck and more deductive skill than the rules might initially suggest.

Source: chessvariants.com/incinf.dir/kriegspiel.html; based on Gollon and Pritchard

CHESS · VARIANT 83 OF 153

Legan Chess

8×8

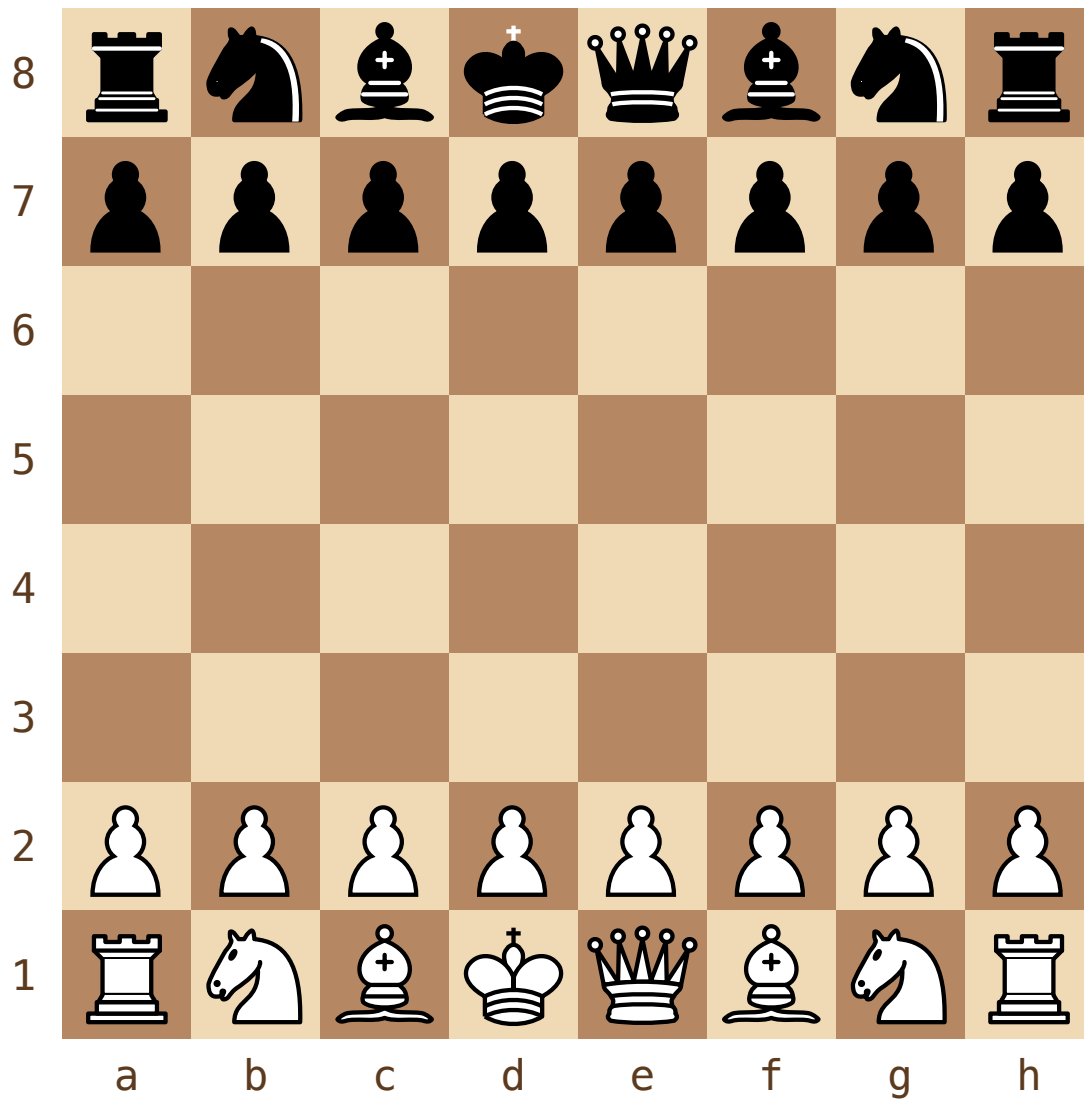
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

LEGAN CHESS

Combines Berolina pawn movement with swapped King/Queen positions. No castling or en passant.



Legan Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=legan-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Like standard chess but the King starts on d1/d8 and the Queen on e1/e8 (swapped positions).

FEN: rnbkqbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBKQBNR w - - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Pawns move diagonally forward (one or two squares from their starting rank) and capture straight forward – Berolina movement.
- ♦ No castling.
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ All other pieces move and capture as standard chess.
- ♦ Promotion on the 8th rank works as normal.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

The King on d-file is more exposed than in standard chess since the Queen is no longer shielding it. Berolina pawns create unusual pawn structures – they cannot protect each other the way normal pawns can. Central control requires different thinking since pawns threaten diagonal squares for movement but straight squares for capture.

ATTRIBUTION

Named after Vladimír Legan. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 84 OF 153

Los Alamos

6×6

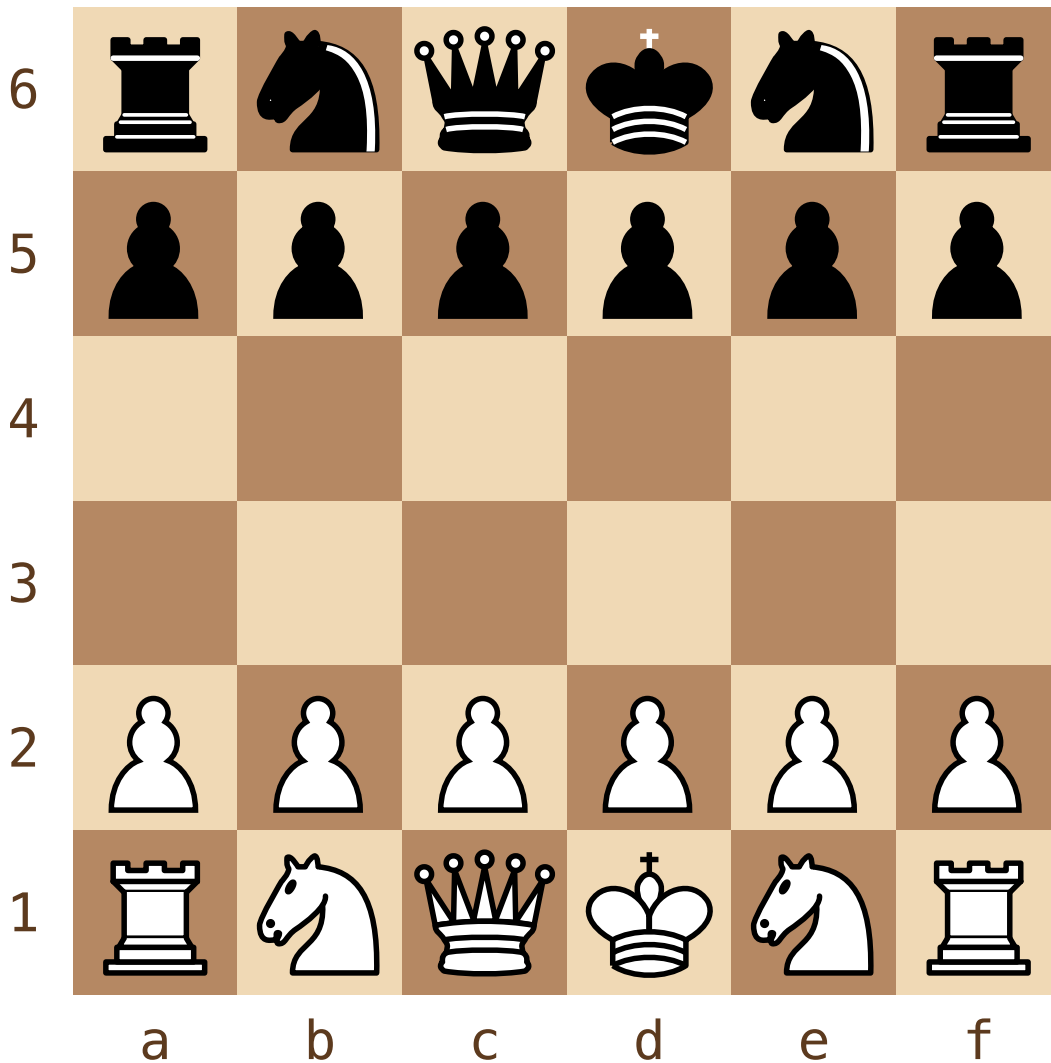
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

LOS ALAMOS

The first chess variant ever played by a computer (1956, MANIAC I at Los Alamos National Laboratory). A 6×6 board with no Bishops and no castling.



Los Alamos Chess – starting position (6×6)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=los-alamos>

SETUP

Board: 6×6 (six files, six ranks).

Setup (FEN): rnqknr/pppppp/6/6/PPPPPP/RNQKNR

Each side: Rook, Knight, Queen, King, Knight, Rook (+ 6 pawns). No Bishops.

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement for all pieces (Rooks, Knights, Queen, King, Pawns).
- ♦ No Bishops exist in this variant.
- ♦ No castling.
- ♦ Pawns move one square forward only (no double-step from starting rank).
- ♦ No en passant (since there's no double-step).
- ♦ Pawns promote on the far rank to Queen, Rook, or Knight (no Bishop promotion since Bishops don't exist).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate or stalemate the opponent (stalemate is a loss in Los Alamos rules).

STRATEGY

Without Bishops, there are no long-range diagonal attackers. Knights become relatively more powerful since the board is smaller (fewer moves to cross). The Queen is overwhelmingly strong on a 6×6 board — trade it only for the opposing Queen. Games are short and tactical. The smaller board means Kings have fewer escape squares, making endgame mating patterns easier.

ATTRIBUTION

Paul Stein and Mark Wells, Los Alamos National Laboratory, 1956. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 85 OF 153

Los Alamos Vierschach

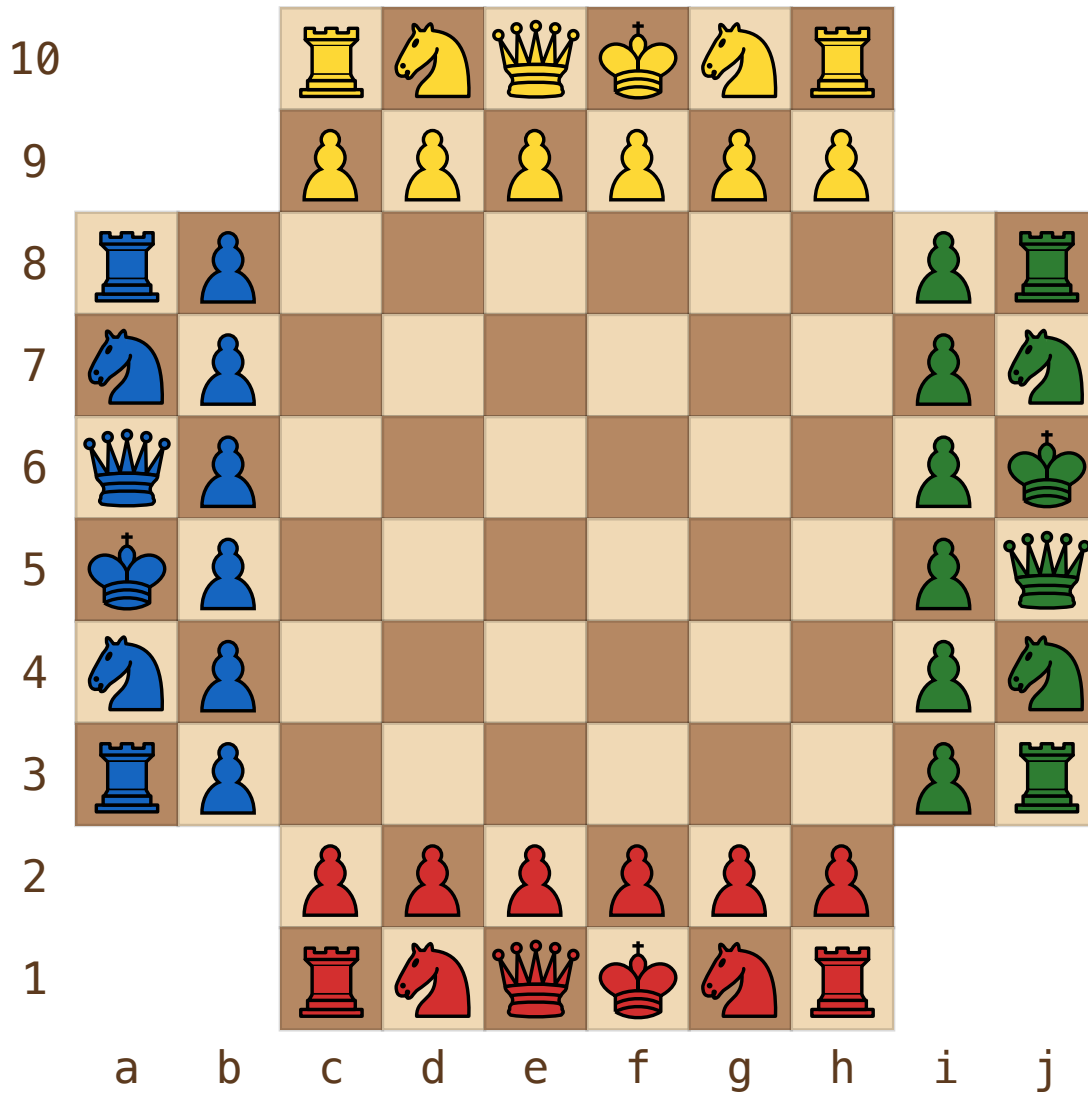
**84-square cross (6×6 core + 2×6
extensions)**

BOARD

**4 (2 teams
of 2)**

PLAYERS

LOS ALAMOS VIERSCHACH



Los Alamos Vierschach – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=los-alamos-vierschach>

Los Alamos Vierschach is a 4-player chess variant by Jörg Knappen combining **Los Alamos Chess** (the famous 6×6 variant developed at Los Alamos National Laboratory in the 1950s) with the **Vierschach** 4-player format. It was submitted as a non-competing entry to the 84 Squares Contest.

THE BOARD

The board consists of a 6×6 checkered grid extended by 2×6 squares on each of the four sides. This gives:

- ♦ Central 6×6 area: 36 squares
- ♦ Four 2×6 arms (one per side): $4 \times 12 = 48$ squares
- ♦ Total: 84 squares

This board is identical to the one used in Quintessential Chess. The lower-left corner is a dark square.

TEAMS AND ARMIES

Four armies, two allied teams — arranged as in Vierschach: allies play from adjacent sides (not opposite sides). Each player commands a Los Alamos Chess army.

Los Alamos Chess piece set (per player):

- ♦ 1 King
- ♦ 1 Queen
- ♦ 2 Rooks
- ♦ 2 Knights
- ♦ 6 Pawns
- ♦ No Bishops (Los Alamos Chess omits Bishops)

Players are notionally: North, East, South, West. Adjacent pairs are allied per Vierschach convention.

STARTING POSITION

Each player's army is set up in their arm of the cross-shaped board, as in Vierschach:

- ♦ Back rank (innermost row of the arm): Rook, Knight, Queen, King, Knight, Rook
- ♦ Front rank: 6 Pawns

Pawns advance toward the centre of the board.

RULES

All Vierschach rules apply, combined with Los Alamos Chess rules:

From Los Alamos Chess:

- ♦ No Bishops
- ♦ No castling
- ♦ Standard FIDE movement for all other pieces

From Vierschach:

- ♦ 4 players take turns in sequence
- ♦ Allied teams: checkmating one of the two opposing Kings does not immediately end the game – both opposing Kings must be checkmated for a team to win
- ♦ A player whose King is checkmated is eliminated

Modified for the extended board:

- ♦ **Pawns have an initial double-step move** (the path to promotion is longer than in 2-player Los Alamos Chess, so the double-step is added to compensate)
- ♦ **En passant** is possible

WIN CONDITION

A team wins by checkmating **both** opposing Kings.

NOTES

The combination is natural: Los Alamos Chess provides a compact, fast-playing piece set well suited to the extended 84-square cross board; Vierschach provides the 4-player relay format. The cross-shaped board accommodates 4 armies without requiring an unusually large grid.

ATTRIBUTION

Los Alamos Vierschach was designed by Jörg Knappen as a non-competing entry to the 84 Squares Contest. HTML by Hans Bodlaender. Source: chessvariants.com/large.dir/contest84/losalamos4.html

CHESS · VARIANT 86 OF 153

Madras Chess

8×8

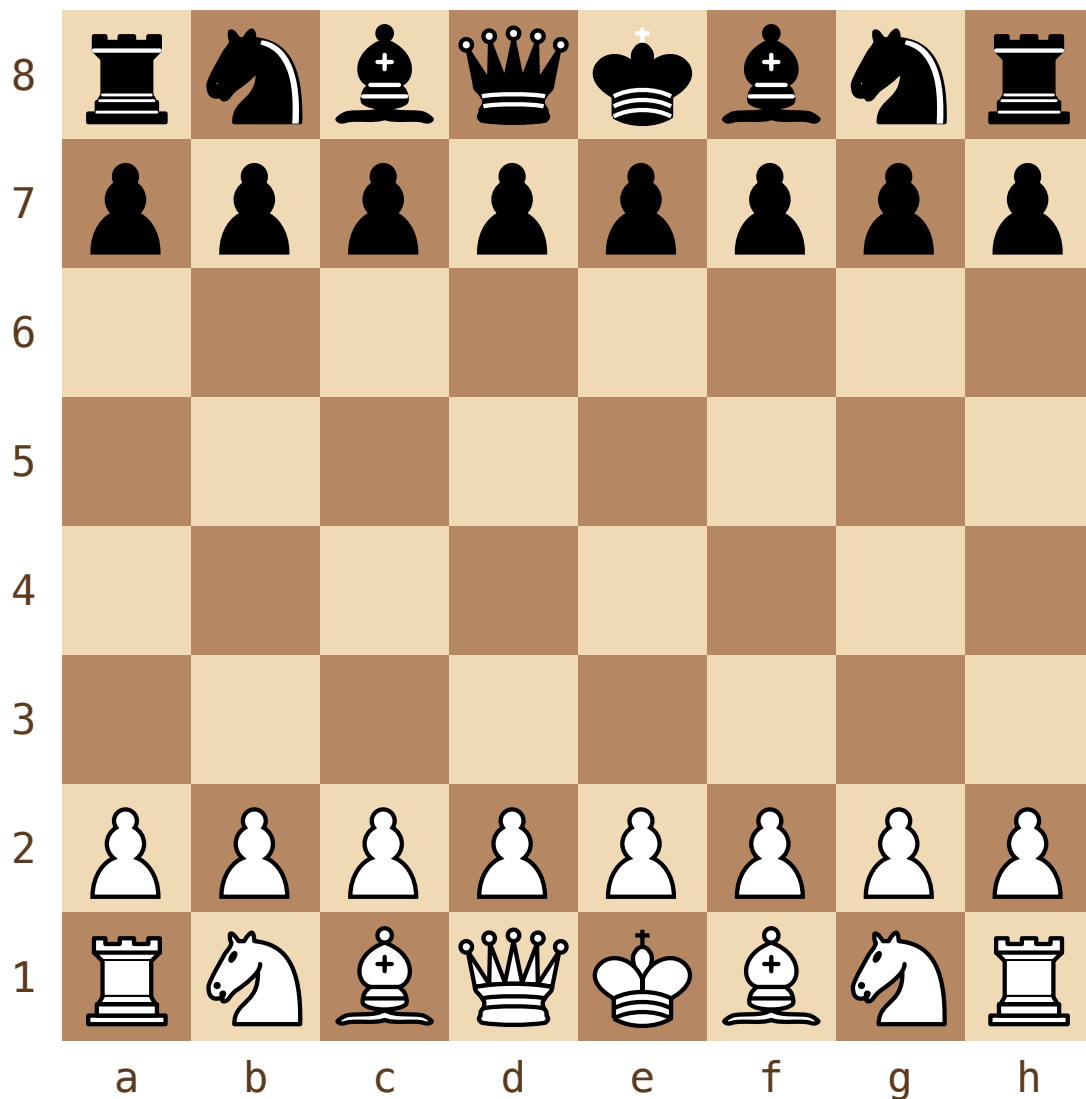
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MADRASI CHESS

When a piece is attacked by an opposing piece of the same type, both pieces are paralysed – they cannot move, capture, or give check until the paralysis is broken.



Madrasi Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=madrasi>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement applies, with the following addition:
 - ♦ When a piece is attacked by an opposing piece of the same type (e.g., White Knight attacked by Black Knight), BOTH pieces are paralysed.
- ♦ Paralysed pieces cannot move, capture, or give check.
- ♦ Paralysis requires mutual attack – both pieces must be able to reach each other's square.
- ♦ Kings are NOT subject to paralysis (standard Madrasi rules).
- ♦ Paralysis is lifted when: (a) a non-paralysed piece captures one of the paralysed pair, or (b) a third piece interposes on the line of mutual attack (for line pieces like Rooks, Bishops, Queens).
- ♦ A paralysed piece still occupies its square and blocks movement through it.
- ♦ Castling, en passant, and promotion follow standard rules (subject to paralysis).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (paralysed pieces cannot contribute to check or defence).

STRATEGY

Use paralysis offensively – freeze your opponent's key pieces by opposing them with your same-type pieces. A single Bishop can neutralise the opponent's Bishop while your other pieces attack freely. Avoid getting YOUR strong pieces paralysed. Knights are especially vulnerable since their paralysis cannot be broken by interposition. Trading one piece type to free another is a key tactical motif.

ATTRIBUTION

Abdul Jabbar Karwatkar, 1979. Named after his home city of Madras (now Chennai), India. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 87 OF 153

Maharaja & Sepoys

8×8

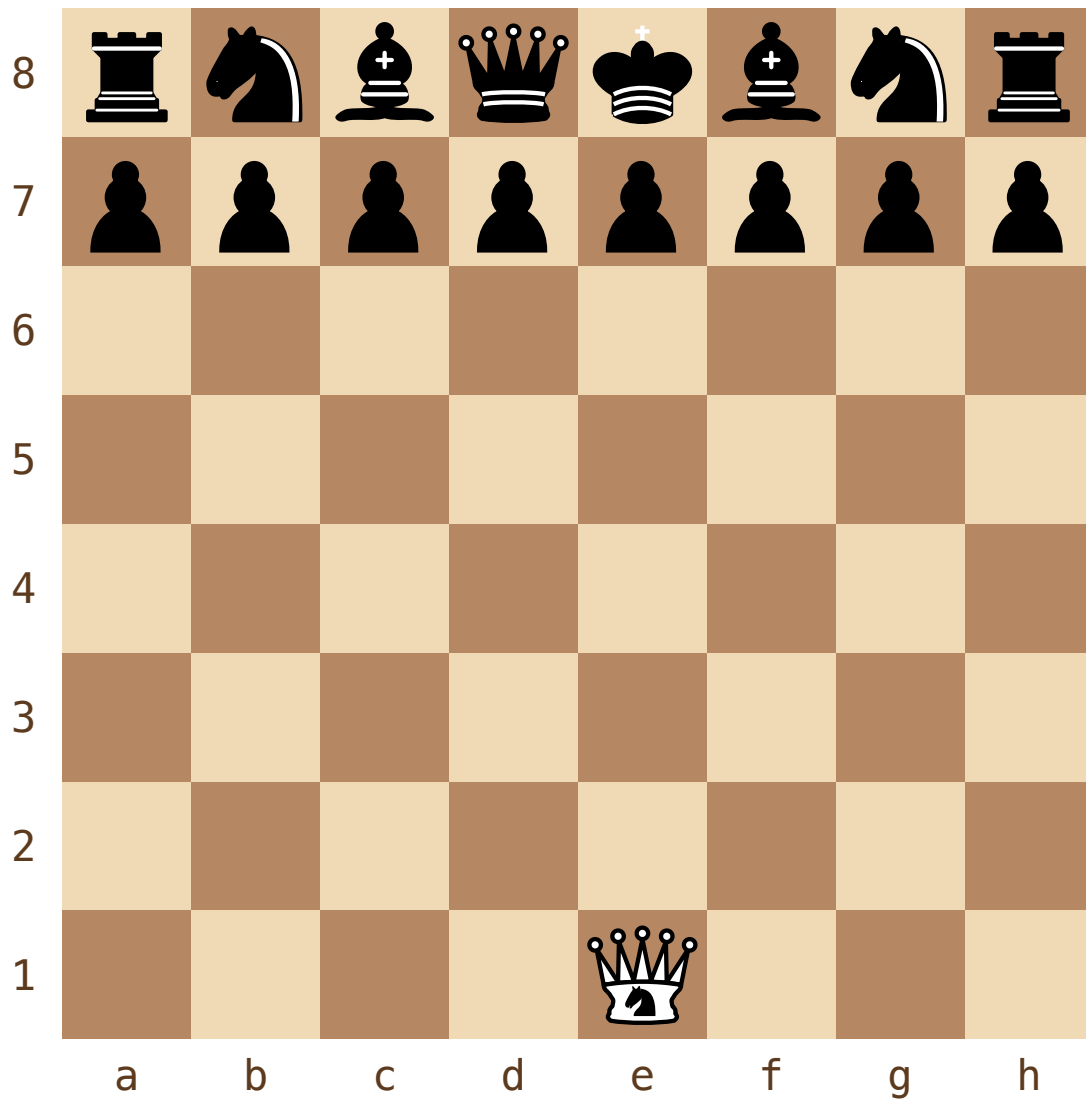
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MAHARAJA & SEPOYS

One Queen+Knight super-piece (the Maharaja) vs a full standard army. The ultimate asymmetric challenge.



Maharaja & Sepoys – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=maharaja>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup:

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/4M3 w kq - 0 1

- ♦ **Black (Sepoys):** Full standard chess army on ranks 7-8. Pawns on rank 7.
- ♦ **White (Maharaja):** A single piece – the Maharaja – placed on any square of rank 1. No other pieces.

The Maharaja:

- ♦ Moves like a Queen AND a Knight combined (can slide any distance orthogonally/diagonally, or jump in an L-shape).
- ♦ It is the only piece White has. It is royal – if captured or checkmated, White loses.

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess rules apply to Black's army (including castling and pawn promotion).
- ♦ White has only the Maharaja – every turn, White moves it.
- ♦ The Maharaja cannot castle.
- ♦ If the Maharaja is checkmated (surrounded with no legal escape), Black wins.

WIN CONDITION

- ♦ **Black wins:** Checkmate or capture the Maharaja.
- ♦ **White wins:** Checkmate Black's King using the Maharaja alone.

STRATEGY

The Maharaja is incredibly powerful but alone. Black must coordinate pieces to trap it in a net. White must pick off Black's pieces one by one while avoiding getting cornered. In practice, a well-played Black army wins – but careless play lets the Maharaja dominate.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional Indian variant ("Maharaja and the Sepoys"), 19th century. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 88 OF 153

Makpong

8×8

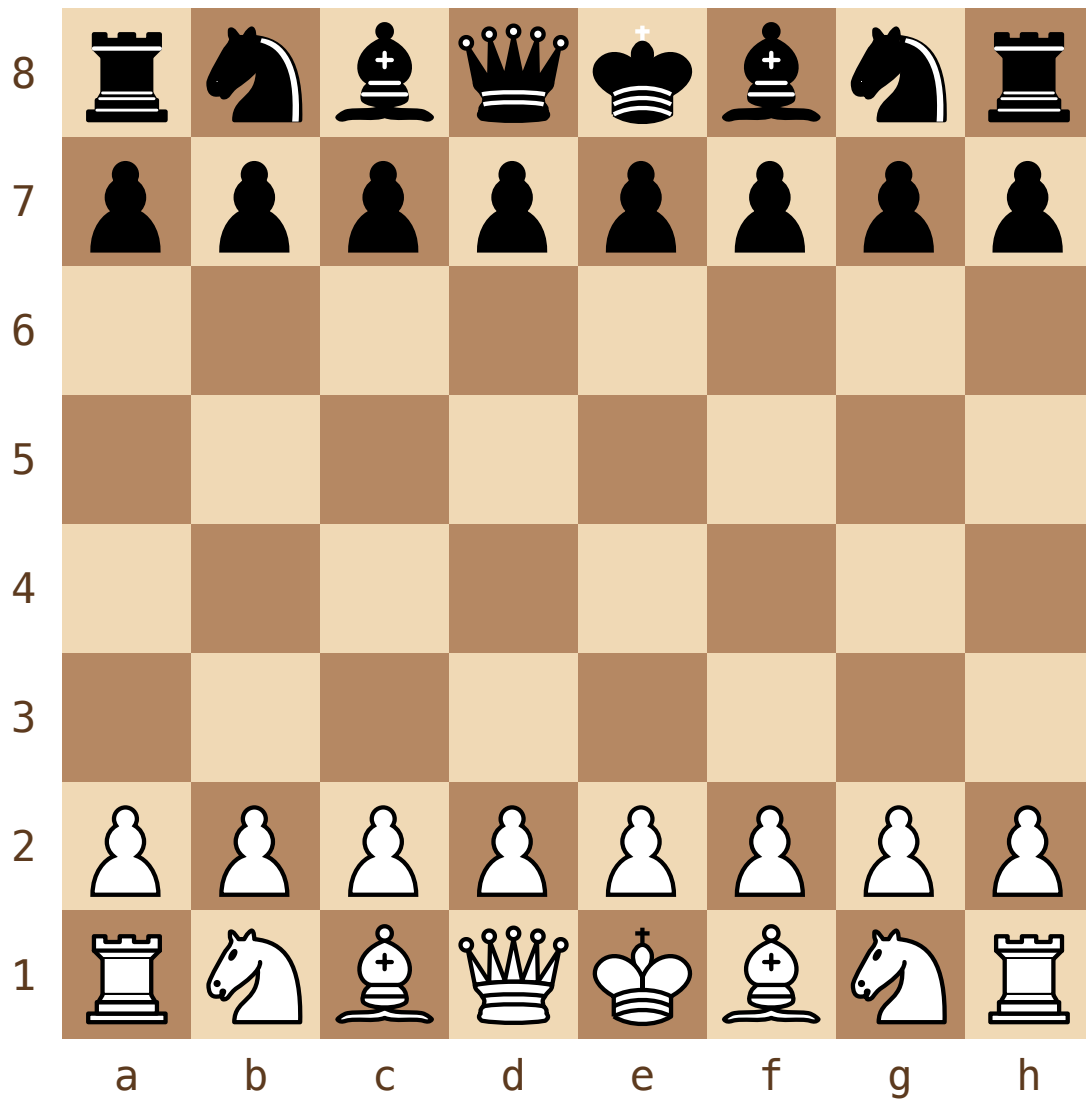
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MAKPONG

A Thai chess (Makruk) variant where the King cannot move out of check. When in check, you must block or capture the checking piece – the King stays put.



Makpong – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=makpong>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, except:

When in check, the King CANNOT move. You must resolve the check by:

- ♦ Capturing the checking piece (with any piece other than the King), OR
 - ♦ Blocking the check (interposing a piece between the King and the attacker).
-
- ♦ If neither blocking nor capturing is possible, it is checkmate.
-
- ♦ When NOT in check, the King moves normally.
-
- ♦ Double checks are always checkmate (since you can't capture or block two attackers simultaneously without moving the King).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (which is much easier to achieve due to the King's inability to flee).

STRATEGY

Double check is instantly lethal – any discovered check where the moving piece also gives check is mate. This makes batteries (aligned pieces that can deliver discovered check) extremely dangerous. Knights giving check are nearly unstoppable since they can't be blocked. Positional play revolves around creating situations where the King has no blockers or capturers available. Keeping pieces near your King for defensive blocking is critical.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional Thai variant of Makruk. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 89 OF 153

Makruk

8×8

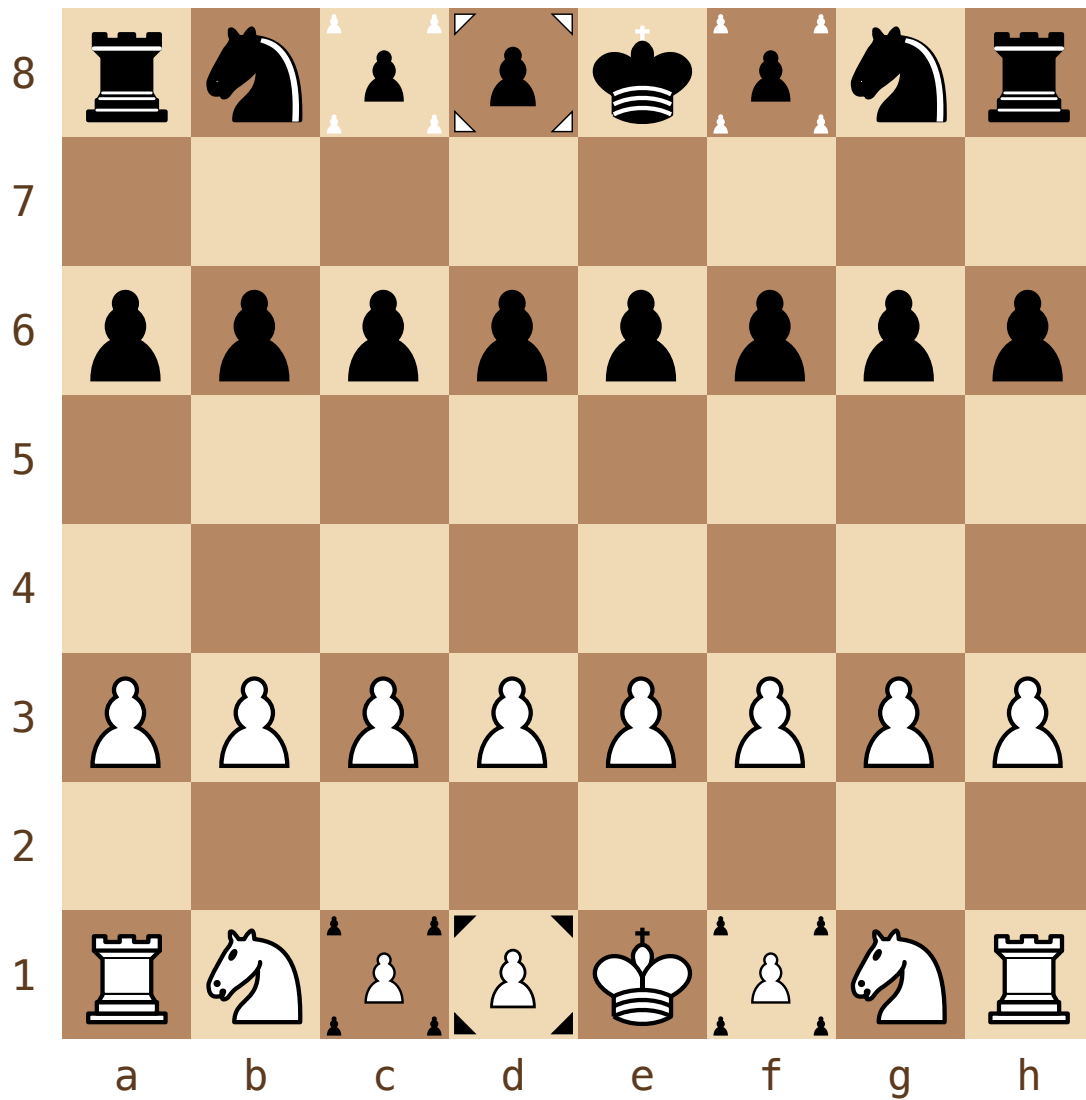
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MAKRUK (THAI CHESS)

The traditional chess of Thailand, played since the 16th century. Features a weaker promoted piece and no castling.



Makruk – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=makruk>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Pawns start on the 3rd rank (not 2nd). Back rank: Rook, Knight, Silver General (Met), King, Queen (Met equivalent), Silver General, Knight, Rook.

FEN: rngfkgnr/8/pppppppp/8/8/PPPPPPPP/8/RNGFKGNR w - - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ The Met (Silver General) moves one square diagonally in any direction. It cannot move orthogonally.
- ♦ The Queen equivalent also moves as a Met (one step diagonal) — it is a weak piece.
- ♦ Pawns promote on the 6th rank (not the 8th) and always promote to Met.
- ♦ No castling.
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ Pawns do not have a two-square initial move.
- ♦ Rooks, Knights, and Kings move as in standard chess.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

With no Queen and only weak diagonal movers (Met), Makruk is a slower, more positional game than standard chess. Rooks are by far the most powerful pieces. Pawn promotion comes earlier (rank 6) but the promoted piece is weak. Endgames are critical — counting rules force resolution within a limited number of moves when material is low.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional Thai chess. Played for over 500 years in Thailand. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 90 OF 153

Mansindam (Pantheon Tale)

9×9

BOARD

2

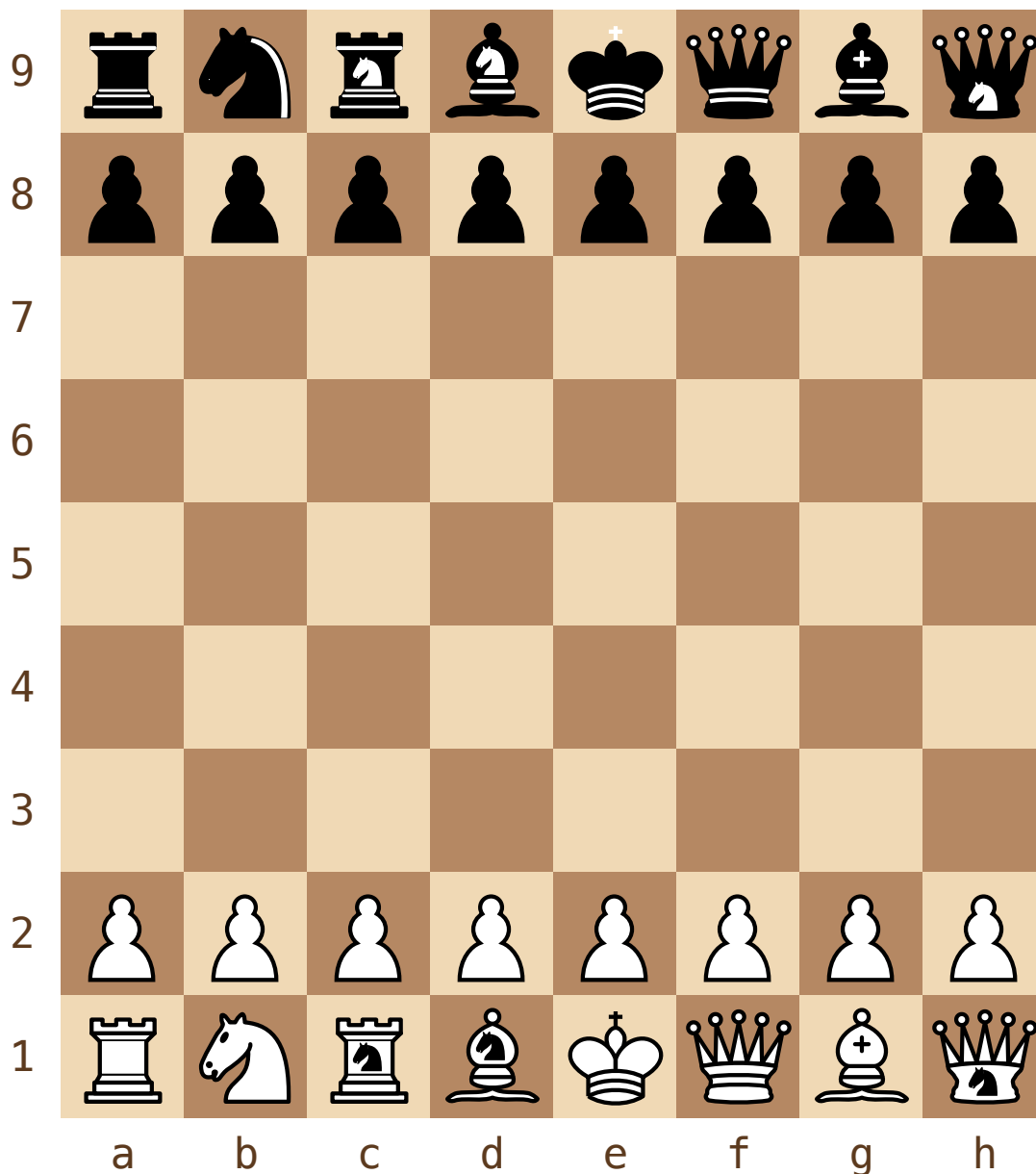
PLAYERS

Mansindam (Pantheon Tale)

A variant that combines Shogi's drop rule with strong compound pieces, and has no draws.

Mansindam is a chess variant designed by Couch Tomato. It takes two of Shogi's most distinctive mechanics – dropping captured pieces back onto the board, and mandatory promotion on entering the enemy camp – and combines them with a set of powerful compound pieces drawn from the fairy chess tradition. The result is a game with dramatically more tactical complexity than standard chess, no drawing mechanisms, and two additional win conditions beyond checkmate.

THE BOARD



Mansindam (Pantheon Tale) – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=mansindam>

STARTING POSITION

White (Yang):

- ♦ Rank 1: Marshal(a), Knight(b), Cardinal©, Queen(d), King(e), Angel(f), Bishop(g), Knight(h), Rook(i)
- ♦ Rank 2: empty
- ♦ Rank 3: 9 Pawns (a3-i3)

Black (Eum):

- ♦ Rank 7: 9 Pawns (a7-i7)
- ♦ Rank 8: empty
- ♦ Rank 9: Rook(a), Knight(b), Bishop©, Angel(d), King(e), Queen(f), Cardinal(g), Knight(h), Marshal(i)

Each side has exactly one of each major piece type in the back rank. White (Yang) moves first.

FEN: rnbakqcnm/9/ppppppppp/9/9/9/PPPPPPPPP/9/MNCQKABNR[] w - - 0 1

PROMOTION ZONE

Ranks 7, 8, and 9 are the **enemy camp** for White. Ranks 1, 2, and 3 are the enemy camp for Black.

A piece promotes when it **moves to, moves from, or moves within** the enemy camp. **Promotion is mandatory** – a piece that can be promoted must be promoted. On a physical board this is accomplished by flipping the piece upside-down, as in Shogi.

Promoted pieces revert to their pre-promotion state if captured by the opponent. Pieces are always **dropped in their pre-promotion state**.

The following pieces **do not promote**: Queen, Angel, King.

PIECES

Every promoted piece gains the additional ability to move as a non-royal King (one square in any direction) on top of its base movement.

PAWN (P) / BO - PROMOTES TO GUARD

Moves one square **orthogonally forward** only. No two-square advance. No en passant.

Promoted form – Guard (G) / Cho: Moves one square orthogonally or diagonally (same as a standard King, but not royal).

KNIGHT (N) / GI - PROMOTES TO CENTAUR

Moves as a standard chess Knight (leaps to nearest squares not on the same file, rank, or diagonal). Can jump over intervening pieces.

Promoted form – Centaur (E) / Wi: Moves as Knight + King (Knight leap or one step in any direction).

BISHOP (B) / GAK - PROMOTES TO ARCHER

Moves any number of squares diagonally. Cannot jump over pieces.

Promoted form – Archer (H) / Ma: Moves as Bishop or King (diagonals any distance, or one step orthogonally or diagonally).

ROOK ® / BANG - PROMOTES TO TIGER

Moves any number of squares orthogonally. Cannot jump over pieces.

Promoted form – Tiger (T) / Yong: Moves as Rook or King (orthogonals any distance, or one step in any direction).

CARDINAL @ / YE - PROMOTES TO RHINO

Moves as a Bishop or Knight. Cannot jump over pieces for the Bishop component; can jump for the Knight component.

Promoted form – Rhino (I) / Seong: Moves as Cardinal (Bishop + Knight) plus one step orthogonally (adds the King's orthogonal reach).

MARSHAL (M) / SU - PROMOTES TO SHIP

Moves as a Rook or Knight. Cannot jump over pieces for the Rook component; can jump for the Knight component.

Promoted form – Ship (S) / Myeong: Moves as Marshal (Rook + Knight) plus one step diagonally (adds the King's diagonal reach).

QUEEN (Q) / BUN - DOES NOT PROMOTE

Moves any number of squares orthogonally or diagonally. Cannot jump over pieces. Equivalent to a standard chess Queen.

ANGEL (A) / CHEON - DOES NOT PROMOTE

Moves as a Queen or Knight (orthogonals any distance, diagonals any distance, or Knight leap). The most powerful piece in the game.

KING (K) / OK

Moves one square orthogonally or diagonally. Royal piece – if checkmated, the game is lost. White's King is called Yang; Black's King is called Eum. In notation both are written as K.

PIECE SUMMARY TABLE

ENGLISH	KOREAN	SYMBOL	MOVES AS	PROMOTES TO
Pawn	Bo	P	One step forward (ortho)	Guard
Guard	Cho	G	King (non-royal)	– promoted form
Knight	Gi	N	Knight leap	Centaur
Centaur	Wi	E	Knight + King	– promoted form
Bishop	Gak	B	Bishop (diagonals)	Archer
Archer	Ma	H	Bishop + King	– promoted form
Rook	Bang	R	Rook (orthogonals)	Tiger
Tiger	Yong	T	Rook + King	– promoted form
Cardinal	Ye	C	Bishop + Knight	Rhino
Rhino	Seong	I	Bishop + Knight + ortho-step	– promoted form
Marshal	Su	M	Rook + Knight	Ship
Ship	Myeong	S	Rook + Knight + diag-step	– promoted form
Queen	Bun	Q	Rook + Bishop	does not promote
Angel	Cheon	A	Rook + Bishop + Knight	does not promote
King	Ok	K	King (royal)	does not promote

RULES

BASIC MOVEMENT

- ♦ A piece cannot move to a square occupied by a friendly piece.
- ♦ A piece that moves to a square occupied by an enemy piece captures that enemy piece.
- ♦ All pieces except the Knight cannot jump over intervening pieces on their path.
- ♦ There is no castling.
- ♦ There is no passing a turn.
- ♦ There is no 50-move rule.

THE KING AND CHECK

The state in which the King is attacked by an opponent's piece is **check**. A player in check must resolve it immediately. The King may never move to or remain on a square attacked by an opponent's piece. A player who cannot escape check loses by **checkmate**.

DROPS

Any piece a player captures is a **hand piece**, held in reserve. On any turn, instead of moving a piece on the board, a player may **drop** a hand piece onto any empty square.

Drop rules:

- ♦ Only one piece may be dropped per turn.
- ♦ Pieces are always dropped in their **pre-promotion state**.
- ♦ A piece dropped in the enemy camp is **not automatically promoted** – it can only promote when subsequently moved from that square.
- ♦ A player may deliver check or checkmate by dropping a piece.

PAWN DROP RESTRICTIONS

- ♦ Two or more of a player's unpromoted Pawns may not occupy the same file. (Prohibition of Two Pawns)
- ♦ Pawns cannot be dropped on the last rank (rank 9 for White; rank 1 for Black), as a Pawn dropped there could never move.
- ♦ Unlike Shogi, delivering **checkmate by dropping a Pawn is legal**.

STALEMATE - LOSS

A player who has no legal move and no legal drop **loses**. Stalemate is not a draw.

CAMPMATE - WIN

A player who successfully moves their **King to the opponent's last rank** without landing on a square attacked by an opponent's piece wins by **campmate**. For White: reach rank 9. For Black: reach rank 1.

PROHIBITION OF THREEFOLD REPETITION

Neither player may cause the same position (including hand pieces and side to move) to occur three times. If a position has occurred twice, the player whose move would create the third occurrence is forbidden from making that move. A player unable to block or avoid a perpetual check due to this rule also loses.

NO DRAWS

Because stalemate is a loss, the 50-move rule does not exist, and threefold repetition is prohibited rather than drawn, **Mansindam has no drawing mechanism**. Every game ends in victory for one player.

DEFEAT CONDITIONS

A player loses when:

- 1 Their King is checkmated.
- 2 The opponent's King reaches their last rank (campmate).
- 3 They cannot move or drop any piece (stalemate).
- 4 They declare resignation (by placing their King on their piece stand, on their turn).
- 5 They violate a rule of the game.
- 6 They forfeit on time.

ATTRIBUTION

Mansindam (Pantheon Tale) was designed by Couch Tomato. Rules documented from the PyChess variant guide at pychess.org/variants/mansindam. Piece names use both the English labels and Korean/Chinese character names as given in that source.

CHESS · VARIANT 91 OF 153

Marseillais Chess

8×8

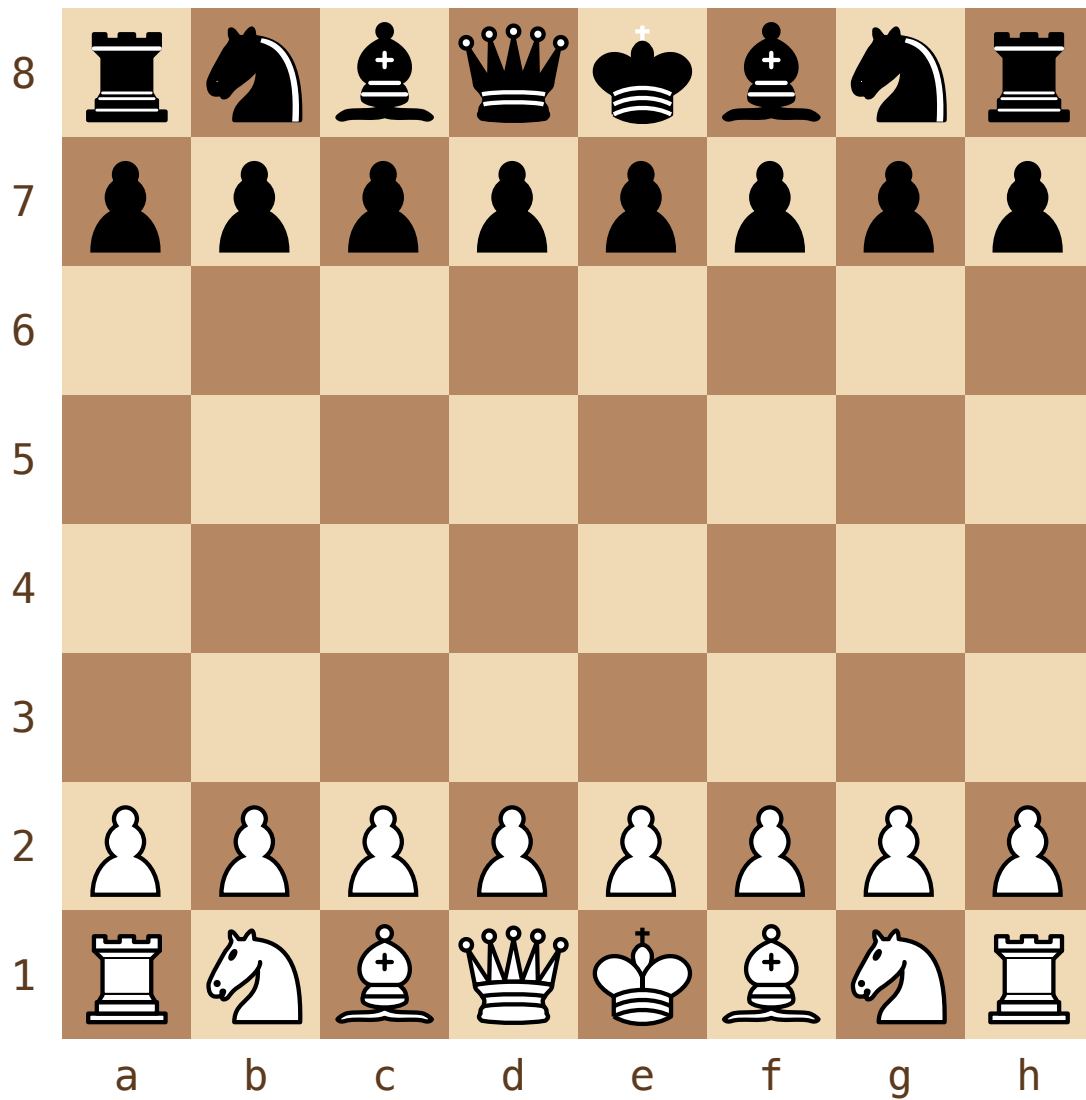
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MARSEILLAIS CHESS

Two moves per turn. If your first move gives check, your turn ends immediately.



Marseillais Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=marseillais>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Each player makes TWO moves per turn instead of one.
- ♦ If your first move delivers check, your turn ends — you do not get a second move.
- ♦ If your first move does not give check, you must make a second move (you cannot pass).
- ♦ You may move the same piece twice, or two different pieces.
- ♦ Castling counts as one move — you may castle then move another piece.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (accounting for the double-move).

STRATEGY

The double-move creates devastating tactical combinations. A Knight can reach any square in a single turn. Pins and skewers work differently because the pinned player might be able to move the pinned piece AND deal with the threat in the same turn. Initiative is even more important than in standard chess.

ATTRIBUTION

Originated in Marseille, France, early 20th century. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 92 OF 153

McCooney's Hexagonal Chess

91 hexes (11 files a-k)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

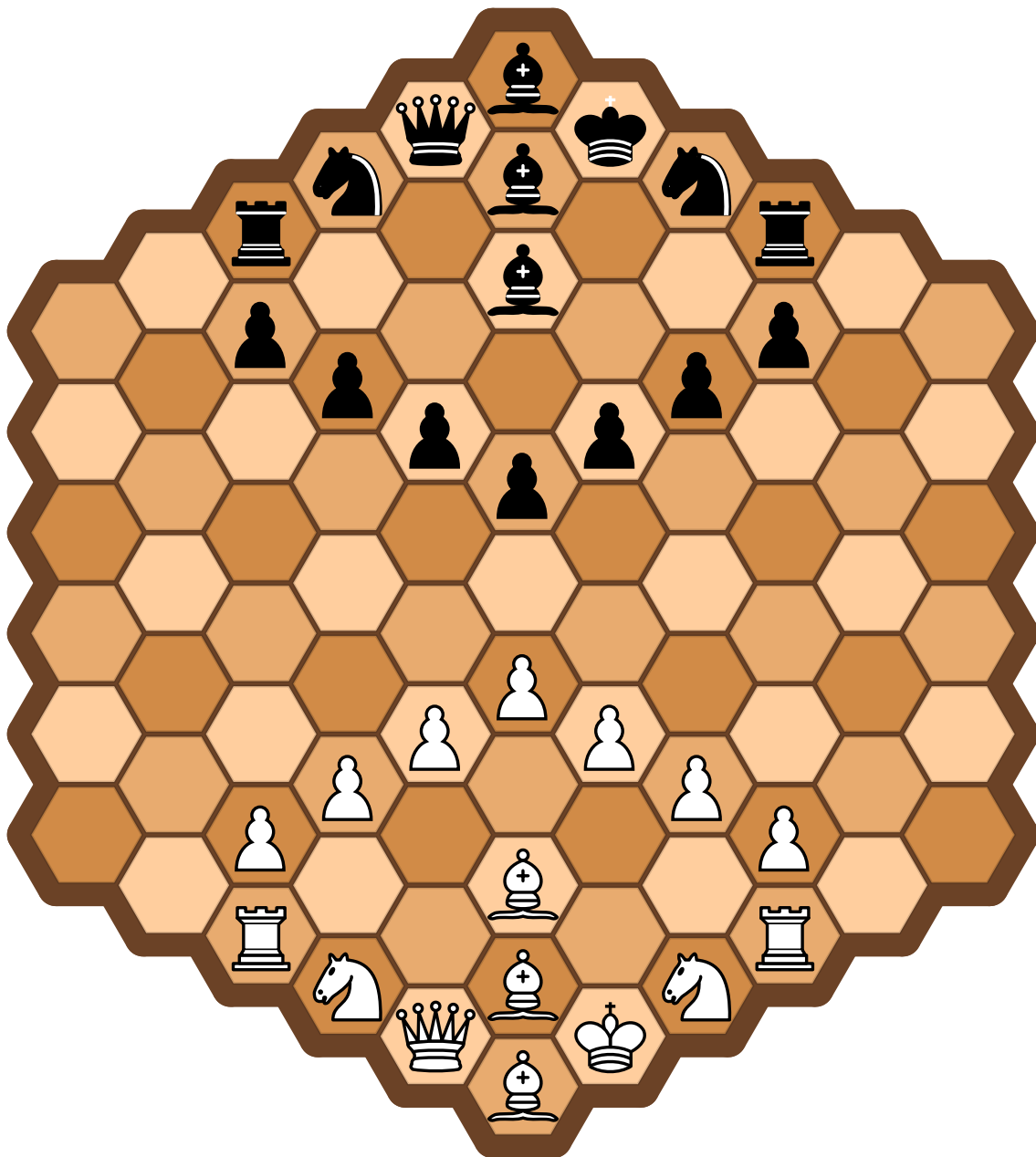
MCCOOEY'S HEXAGONAL CHESS

Invented by Dave McCooley and published on chessvariants.com. Played on the same 91-hex board as Gliński but with different pawn rules and 7 pawns per side.

SETUP

Board: 91-hex hexagonal grid, same as Gliński.

Pieces per side: King, Queen, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 7 Pawns (15 pieces total).



McCooley's Hexagonal Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=mccooley>

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM GLIŃSKI

RULE	GLIŃSKI	MCCOOEY
Pawns per side	9	7
Pawn capture direction	Orthogonal (rook, 60°)	Diagonal (bishop, 60°)
Center pawn double step	Allowed	Not allowed (f-file pawn cannot double-step)
Stalemate	3/4 to 1/4 split	Draw (1/2 each)

PAWNS

Pawns move one cell straight forward. They capture one cell **diagonally forward** (through a shared corner, bishop direction). The f-file pawn (center pawn) may not make an initial double step.

All other pawns may make an initial double step from their starting position. En passant applies.

Promotion: same as Gliński – on reaching the opponent's furthest rank in that file.

RULES

Identical to standard chess and Gliński except as noted above. Stalemate is a draw. No castling.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

ATTRIBUTION

Dave McCooey. Published on chessvariants.com. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 93 OF 153

Medusa Chess

8×8

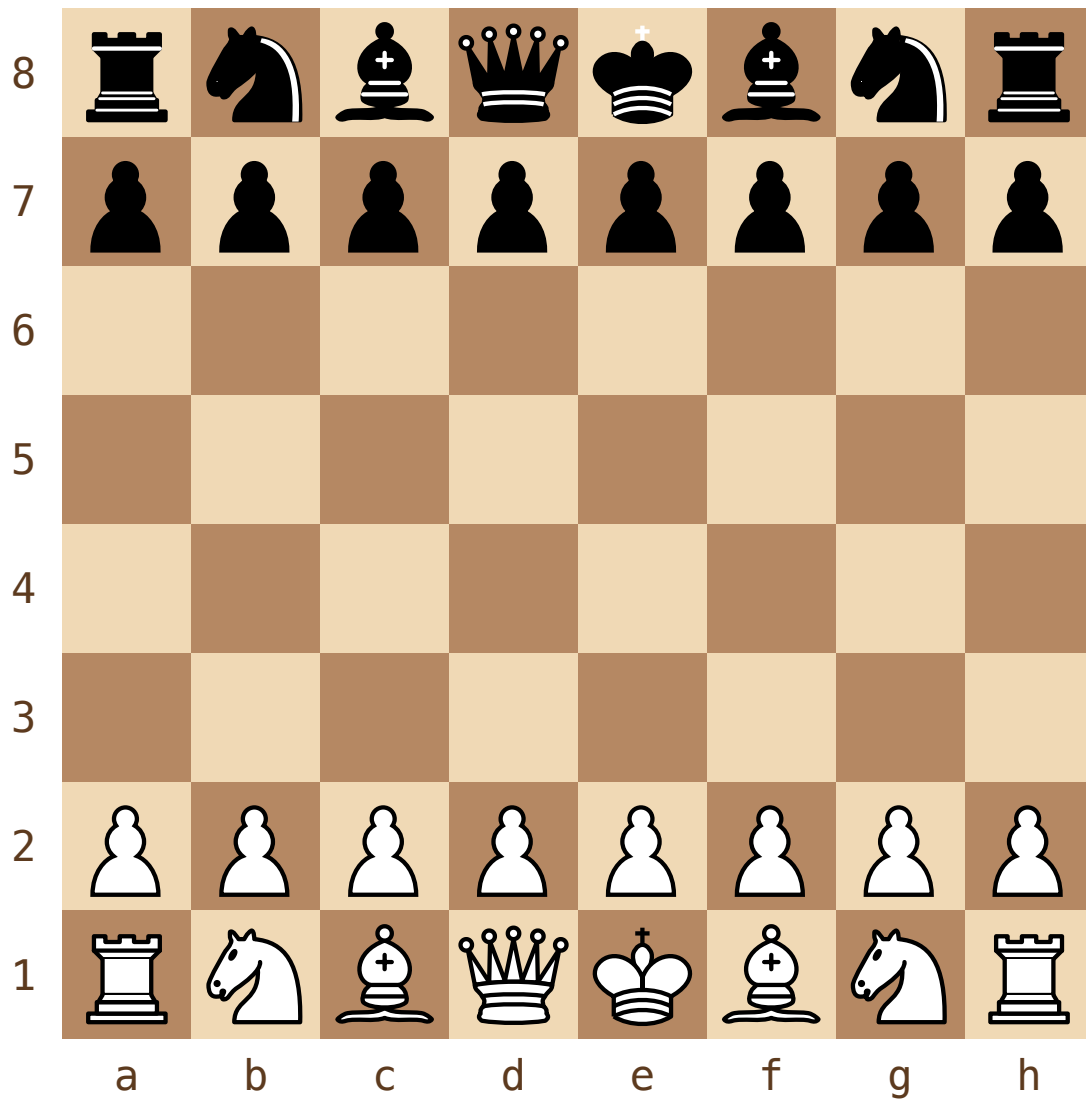
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MEDUSA CHESS

The Queen has the Medusa's gaze. After she moves, all enemy pieces she attacks (along her lines of sight) become petrified for 2 turns. Petrified pieces cannot move.



Medusa Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=medusa-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ After the Queen moves, every enemy piece she attacks becomes petrified for 2 turns.
- ♦ Petrified pieces cannot move but still block movement and deliver check normally.
- ♦ Kings cannot be petrified.
- ♦ Petrification wears off after 2 full turns.
- ♦ A piece that is already petrified does not have its timer reset by additional Queen moves.
- ♦ Petrified pieces can still be captured normally.
- ♦ All other standard chess rules apply.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King (petrified pieces count as immovable for escape purposes).

STRATEGY

Queen positioning becomes paramount – move her to lines that freeze the most enemy pieces, then exploit the frozen position. An exposed Queen, however, is still vulnerable to capture. Petrifying defenders before launching an attack is the key pattern. Trade Queens early if you're losing the petrification war.

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 94 OF 153

Metamachy

12×12

BOARD

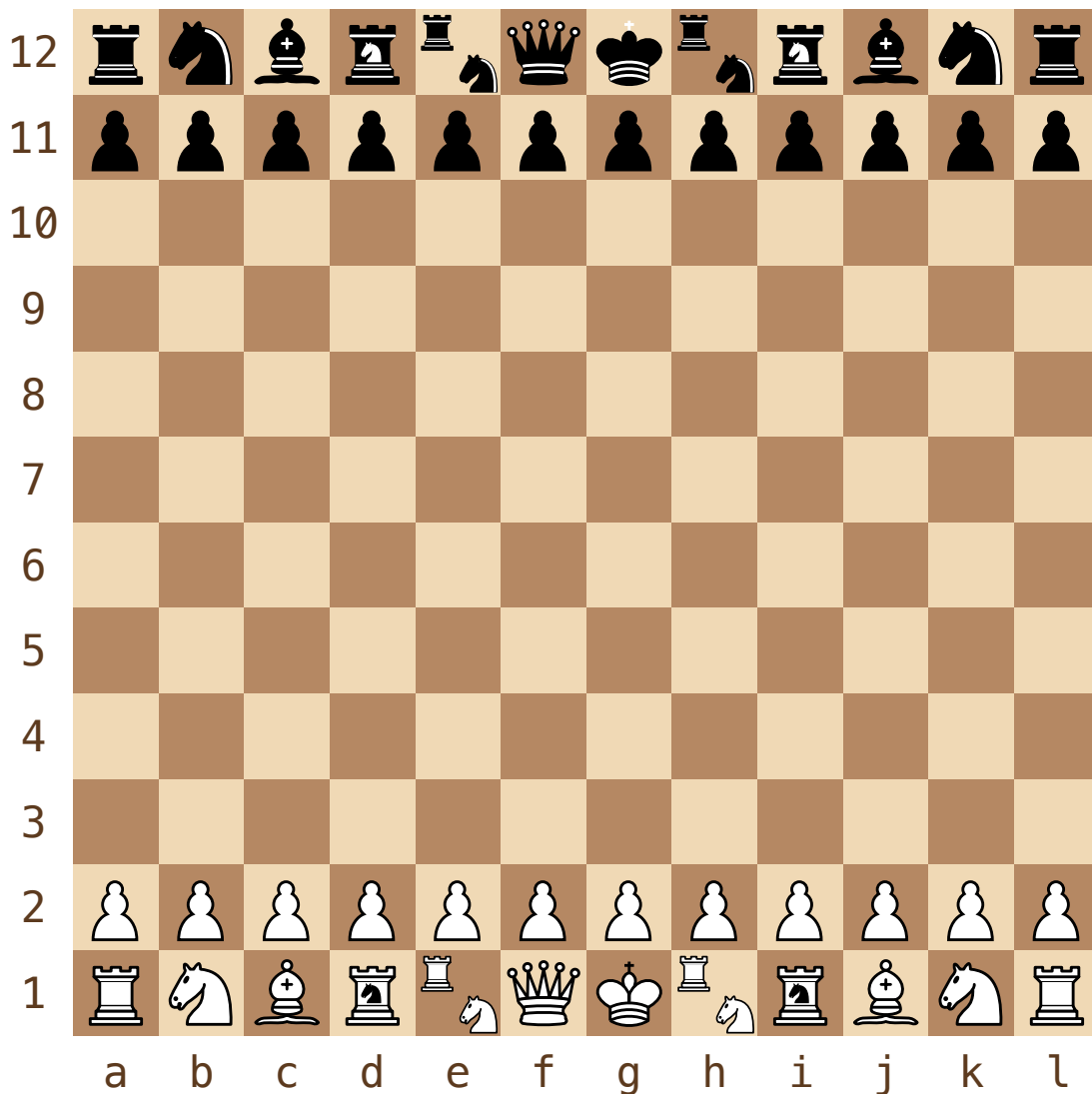
2

PLAYERS

Metamachy

Metamachy is a large chess variant designed by Jean-Louis Cazaux in 2012. It is played on a 12×12 board (files a–l, ranks 1–12) and features 12 piece types drawn from across the history of chess variants. One of Metamachy's most distinctive features is its **variable starting position**: the four most powerful pieces (King, Queen, Lion, and Eagle) may be arranged in any of twelve possible orders on their four starting squares. Black chooses first; White mirrors the arrangement.

THE BOARD



Metamachy – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=metamachy>

Standard 12×12 grid, files a–l, ranks 1–12. White occupies ranks 1–3 at the start; Black occupies ranks 10–12.

STARTING POSITION

FIXED PIECES (SAME IN ALL SETUPS)

White Rank 1 (fixed):

- ♦ a1: Cannon, b1: Camel, [c1-e1 empty], [f1-g1 variable], [h1-j1 empty], k1: Camel, l1: Cannon

White Rank 2 (fixed):

- ♦ a2: Elephant, b2: Rook, c2: Knight, d2: Bishop, e2: Prince, [f2-g2 variable], h2: Prince, i2: Bishop, j2: Knight, k2: Rook, l2: Elephant

White Rank 3: 12 Pawns (a3-l3)

VARIABLE SQUARES

The four squares **f1, g1** (rank 1) and **f2, g2** (rank 2) hold the King, Queen, Lion, and Eagle in any combination. Black decides the arrangement; White places the same four pieces mirrored symmetrically.

For example, one legal setup: Queen(f1), King(g1), Lion(f2), Eagle(g2). Any of the 12 arrangements of these four pieces across these four squares is legal, provided each side mirrors the other.

BLACK'S SETUP

Black's pieces are the mirror image of White's across the centre of the board (symmetric along ranks). Black's fixed squares:

- ♦ Rank 12 (= White's rank 1 mirrored): Cannon(a12), Camel(b12), variable at f12-g12, Camel(k12), Cannon(l12)
- ♦ Rank 11 (= White's rank 2 mirrored): Elephant(a11), Rook(b11), Knight(c11), Bishop(d11), Prince(e11), variable at f11-g11, Prince(h11), Bishop(i11), Knight(j11), Rook(k11), Elephant(l11)
- ♦ Rank 10: 12 Pawns

PIECES

PAWN

Moves as a standard chess Pawn, **except** the double push is available from any rank (not just the initial rank). Pawns capture en passant in the usual way after any double push. Pawns promote on the opponent's last rank to **Queen, Lion, or Eagle only** (not Rook, Bishop, or Knight).

PRINCE

Moves as a **King** (one step in any direction), but is not royal – losing the Prince does not end the game. The Prince also has a **non-capturing double push available from any rank**, exactly like the Pawn's extended double push. A Prince that has just made a double push may be captured en passant on the passed square. The Prince promotes to **Queen, Lion, or Eagle** on the opponent's last rank.

KNIGHT

Standard chess Knight: leaps to any square 2 steps in one direction and 1 step in another.

BISHOP

Slides any number of squares diagonally. Cannot jump over pieces.

ROOK

Slides any number of squares orthogonally. Cannot jump over pieces.

CAMEL

Leaps to any square that is **1 step in one direction and 3 steps in another** (the (1,3) analogue of a Knight). Can jump over pieces. Has 8 possible destinations from a central square.

ELEPHANT

Leaps to any **2nd diagonal square** (the Alfil jump), OR moves **1 step diagonally**. Can always jump for the long leap. This combines the historic Shatranj Alfil with a short diagonal step.

CANNON

Moves as a Rook (slides orthogonally any distance) **without capturing**. To **capture**, the Cannon must jump over exactly one piece (the “screen” or “platform”) and land on the first enemy piece beyond it. Borrowed from Xiangqi.

EAGLE

A bent slider: moves **one step diagonally**, then continues **outward orthogonally** for any number of squares. Cannot jump over pieces on the orthogonal leg. This piece is known as the Aanca in Grant Acedrex and is often called a Gryphon in chess variant literature.

LION

Leaps to any square that can be reached by **at most two King steps** in any directions – orthogonal, diagonal, or a combination. This gives a range of up to 24 squares, including the same squares a Knight can reach. Unlike the Chu Shogi Lion, the Metamachy Lion **cannot** capture one piece and continue moving (no locust capture).

QUEEN

Combines Rook and Bishop: slides any number of squares orthogonally or diagonally. Standard chess Queen.

KING

Moves one step in any direction (orthogonal or diagonal), as in standard chess. **On its very first move**, the King may instead make a single **non-capturing leap of exactly two squares** in any direction – including hippogonal (Knight-like) directions. After using this leap or after making any ordinary move, the special leap is no longer available. There is **no castling** in Metamachy.

SPECIAL RULES

- ♦ **No castling.** The King has an initial 2-square leap instead.
- ♦ **En passant** applies after any Pawn or Prince double push.
- ♦ **Stalemate is a draw.**
- ♦ **Variable starting position:** Black decides the arrangement of King, Queen, Lion, Eagle on their four squares; White mirrors it. The setup is agreed before play begins.

ATTRIBUTION

Metamachy was designed by Jean-Louis Cazaux (France, 2012). Rules sourced from The Chess Variant Pages at chessvariants.com/rules/metamachy.

CHESS · VARIANT 95 OF 153

Mini Hexchess

37 hexes (7 files a-g)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

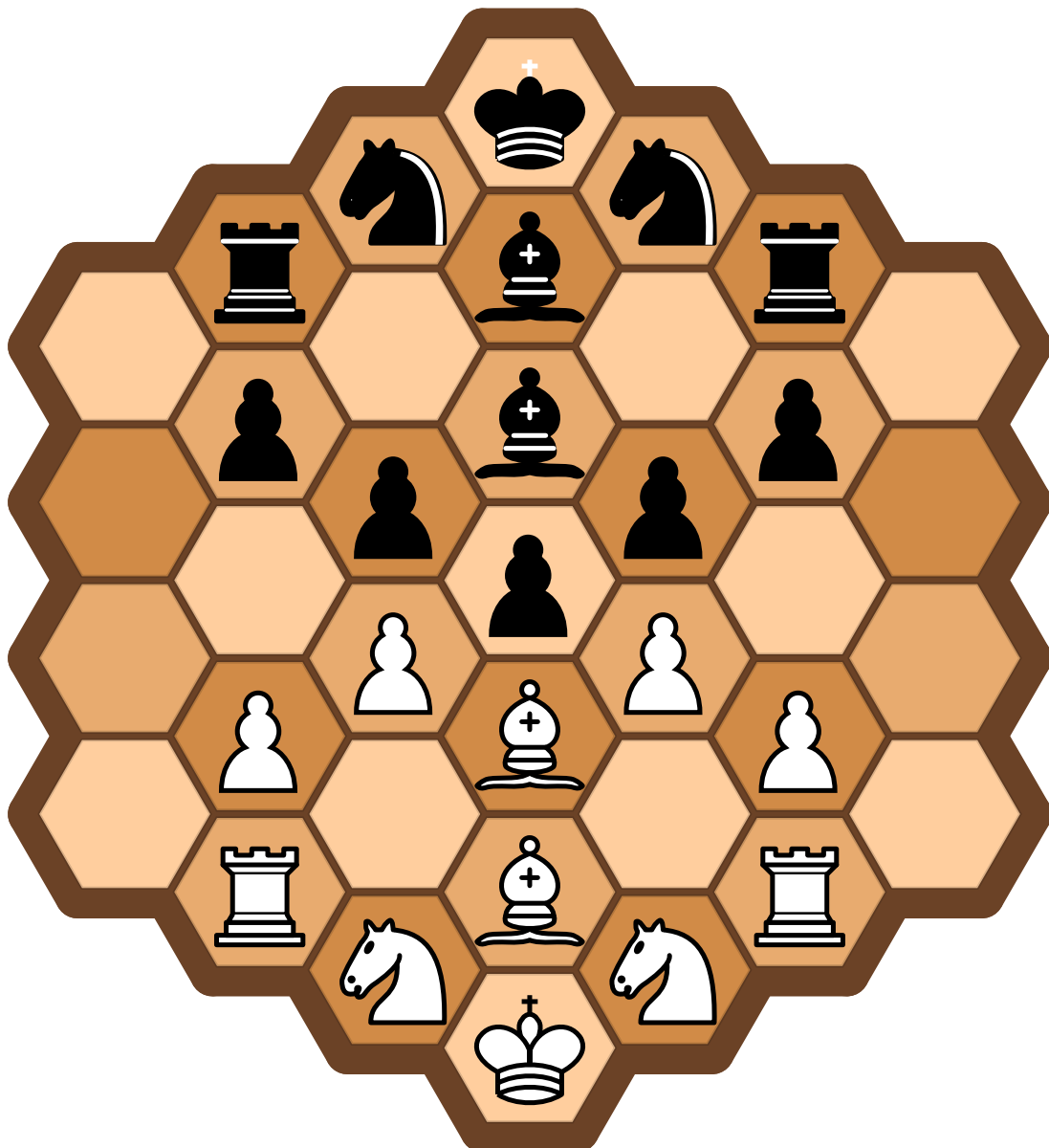
MINI HEXCHESS

Invented by Dave McCooley in 1997. A compact hexagonal chess on a 37-hex board with 7 files (a through g). The Queen is not used. Otherwise follows McCooley's hexagonal chess rules.

SETUP

Board: 37-hex grid, 7 files (a-g).

Pieces per side: King, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, and Pawns. No Queen.



Mini Hexchess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=mini-hexchess>

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM MCCOOEY

RULE	MCCOOEY	MINI HEXCHESS
Board	91 hexes	37 hexes
Files	11 (a-k)	7 (a-g)
Queen	Yes	No
Initial double step	Allowed	None
En passant	Yes	No (no double step)
Promotion targets	Q, R, B, N	R, B, N only
Promotion squares	Furthest rank per file	All 7 opponent-side hexes

PROMOTION

All 7 hexes on the opponent's side of the board are promotion squares. A pawn reaching any of these hexes promotes immediately to Rook, Bishop, or Knight. Promotion to Queen is not permitted as the Queen is not part of this variant.

RULES

All other rules follow McCooey's Hexagonal Chess. No castling. Stalemate is a draw.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

ATTRIBUTION

Dave McCooey, 1997. Published on chessvariants.com. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 96 OF 153

Minichess

5×5

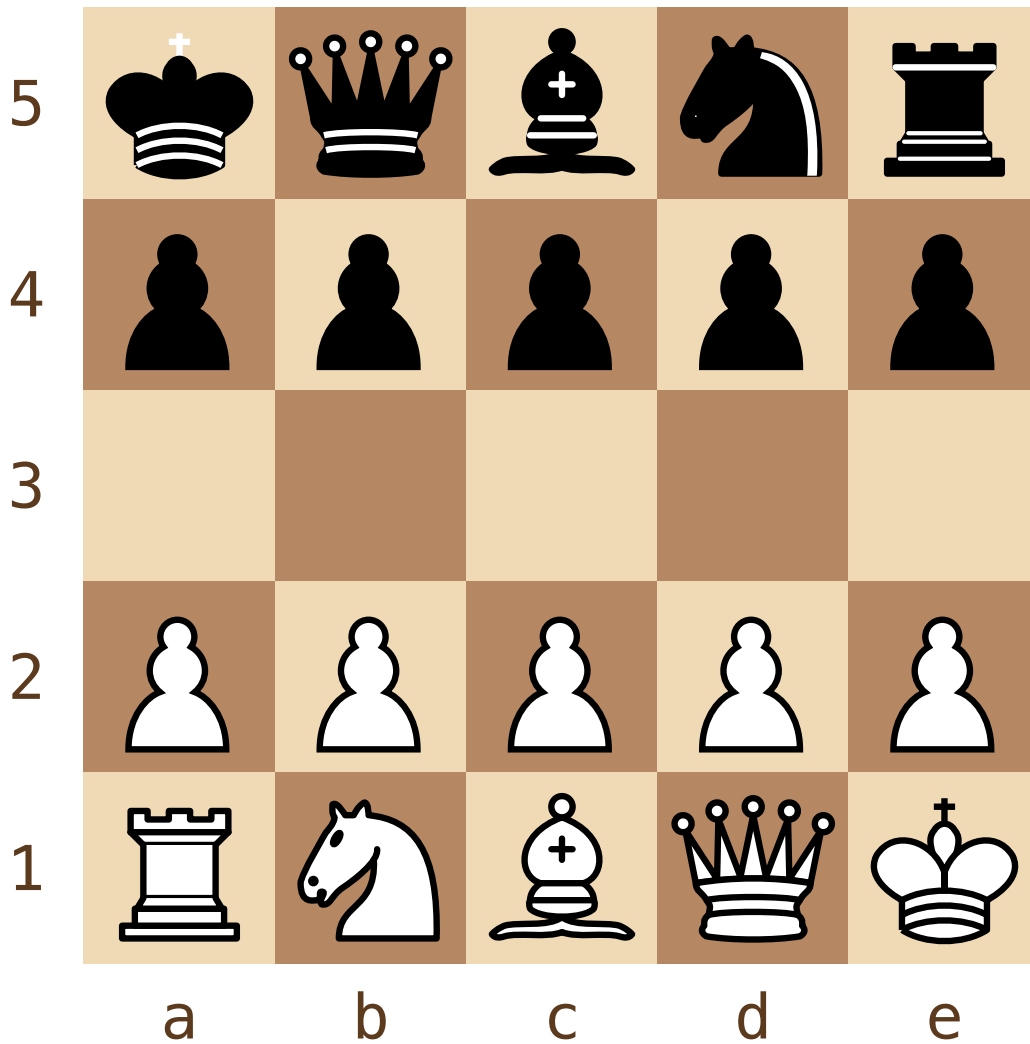
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MINICHESS

Gardner's 5×5 chess. All standard piece types on a tiny board. Fast, tactical, and surprisingly deep for its size.



Minichess – starting position (5×5)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=minichess>

SETUP

Board: 5×5 (five files, five ranks).

Setup (FEN): kqbnr/ppppp/5/PPPPP/RNBQK

Black (rank 5): King, Queen, Bishop, Knight, Rook (+ 5 pawns on rank 4). White (rank 1): Rook, Knight, Bishop, Queen, King (+ 5 pawns on rank 2).

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement for all pieces.
- ♦ Pawns move one square forward only (no double-step).
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ No castling (King and Rook are adjacent — no room to castle).
- ♦ Pawns promote on the far rank to Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, same as standard chess.

STRATEGY

The tiny board means pieces are immediately in contact. Rooks are less powerful (short files) while Knights are relatively stronger (they can reach most of the board in 1-2 moves). Games are decided quickly — material advantages of even a single pawn are usually decisive. The King is very exposed with so few squares to hide. Queen trades simplify the position enormously.

ATTRIBUTION

Martin Gardner, 1969 (Scientific American). Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 97 OF 153

Möbius Strip Chess

8×14 Möbius strip

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MöBIUS STRIP CHESS

Möbius Strip Chess is chess played on a **Möbius strip** — a surface with a single side and a single boundary edge, created by joining one pair of opposite edges of a rectangle with a half-twist. It is built from the **Cylindrical 8×14 variant**: take that taller, already-wrapping board and twist it before joining the seam. Invented by Alberto Monteiro, documented at chessvariants.com/shape.dir/x_moeb.html.

THE BOARD AND STARTING POSITION

Black									
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	
14	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	0
13									-1
12									-2
=====									
11									-3
10									-4
9	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	-5
8	r	n	b	q	k	b	n	r	8
7	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	7
6									6
5									5
4									4
3									3
2	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	2
1	R	N	B	Q	K	B	N	R	1
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	
White									

<- White's "far" pawns, move backward (14->13->12...)

<- twisted seam: a12 joins h11, b12 joins g11

<- Black's "far" pawns, move forward (9->10->11...)

<- Black back rank

<- Black's "near" pawns, move backward (7->6->5...)

<- White's "near" pawns, move forward (2->3->4...)

<- White back rank

The engine `.setup` FEN in the frontmatter encodes exactly this diagram, rank 14 down to rank 1: rank 14 pawns, ranks 13-10 empty, rank 9 pawns, rank 8 pieces, rank 7 pawns, ranks 6-3 empty, rank 2 pawns, rank 1 pieces.

Files a and h wrap normally (as in ordinary Cylindrical Chess): a piece sliding off the h-file reappears on the a-file at the same rank.

Ranks 11 and 12 join with a half-twist (marked === above): file a on rank 12 connects to file h on rank 11, file b to g, file c to f, and file d to e — mirrored, not aligned. Rank 15 is identified with rank 1, so the strip is a closed loop with exactly one twisted crossing.

Each side has **16 pawns** across two ranks rather than the usual 8: White has pawns on rank 2 (advancing forward, 2->3->4...) and rank 14 (advancing backward, 14->13->12..., toward the twisted seam). Black mirrors this with pawns on rank 7 (backward) and rank 9 (forward, toward the seam from the other side). Both colours' "far" pawn ranks are converging on the twisted seam from opposite directions.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE TOPOLOGY

Kings face Queens. Along the long way around the board (ranks 8 through 15/1), each King faces the opponent's Queen rather than the opponent's King – a direct consequence of the board's extra length and the twist.

Bishops are not colour-bound. The Möbius strip is non-orientable, so a Bishop is not confined to one colour of square for its whole game the way it is in standard chess. A Bishop starting on a nominally light square (e.g. f1) can reach nominally dark squares by travelling far enough to cross the twisted seam (for example, the diagonal f1-a6-b12 crosses the seam and changes apparent colour).

SAMPLE OPENING

The source page gives a short sample: 1. d12 e11 (White plays a King's-side pawn on the far rank; Black's response, on the far rank, is directly in front of White's move once the seam wrapping is accounted for) 2. c12 (White threatens the pawn) exc12 3. e12 g11 (Black defends). This is offered by the source as an illustration of how the far-rank pawns interact near the twisted seam, not as established opening theory.

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply (castling, en passant, promotion) except where the topology changes movement, as described above.

Win: Checkmate the opponent's King.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER VARIANTS IN THIS FAMILY

Möbius Strip Chess, Klein Bottle Chess, and Gadsden's Toroidal Chess (Torus Chess) share the same underlying 8×14 Cylindrical board:

- ♦ **No twist at the rank-11/12 seam** → Torus Chess (Gadsden's Toroidal Chess)
- ♦ **Twist at the seam, a/h files separate** → Möbius Strip Chess (this variant)
- ♦ **Twist at the seam, AND a/h files joined** → Klein Bottle Chess

ATTRIBUTION

Möbius Strip Chess invented by Alberto Monteiro. Source: chessvariants.com/shape.dir/x_moeb.html.

CHESS · VARIANT 98 OF 153

Monster Chess

8×8

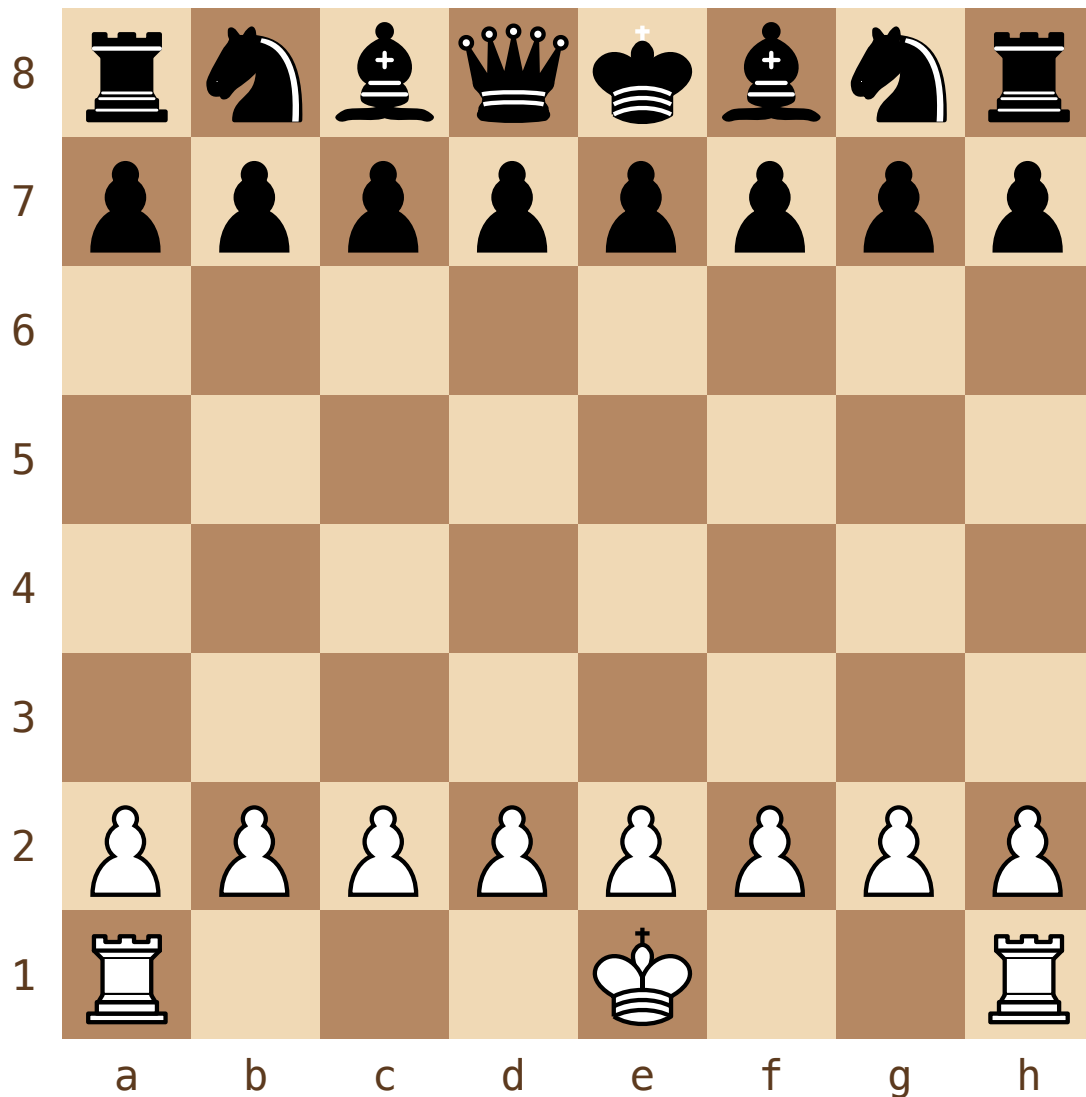
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

MONSTER CHESS

White gets two moves per turn. Black gets one. To compensate, White starts with only a King and Rooks — no minor pieces, no Queen, no pawns.



Monster Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=monster-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/R3K2R

White starts with: King (e1) + two Rooks (a1, h1) + eight Pawns. Black starts with: Full standard army.

RULES

- ♦ White makes two moves per turn. Black makes one.
- ♦ If White delivers check on the first move of their turn, the turn ends immediately (no second move).
- ♦ White can castle on either of their two moves (but only once per turn, and the King can't have moved earlier that turn).
- ♦ All other standard chess rules apply.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, same as standard chess.

STRATEGY

White's double-move creates devastating tactical threats but the material deficit is severe. White must use tempo advantage aggressively before Black's army coordinates. Black should trade pieces and simplify – every piece traded hurts White disproportionately since White has so few.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 99 OF 153

No Castling Chess

8×8

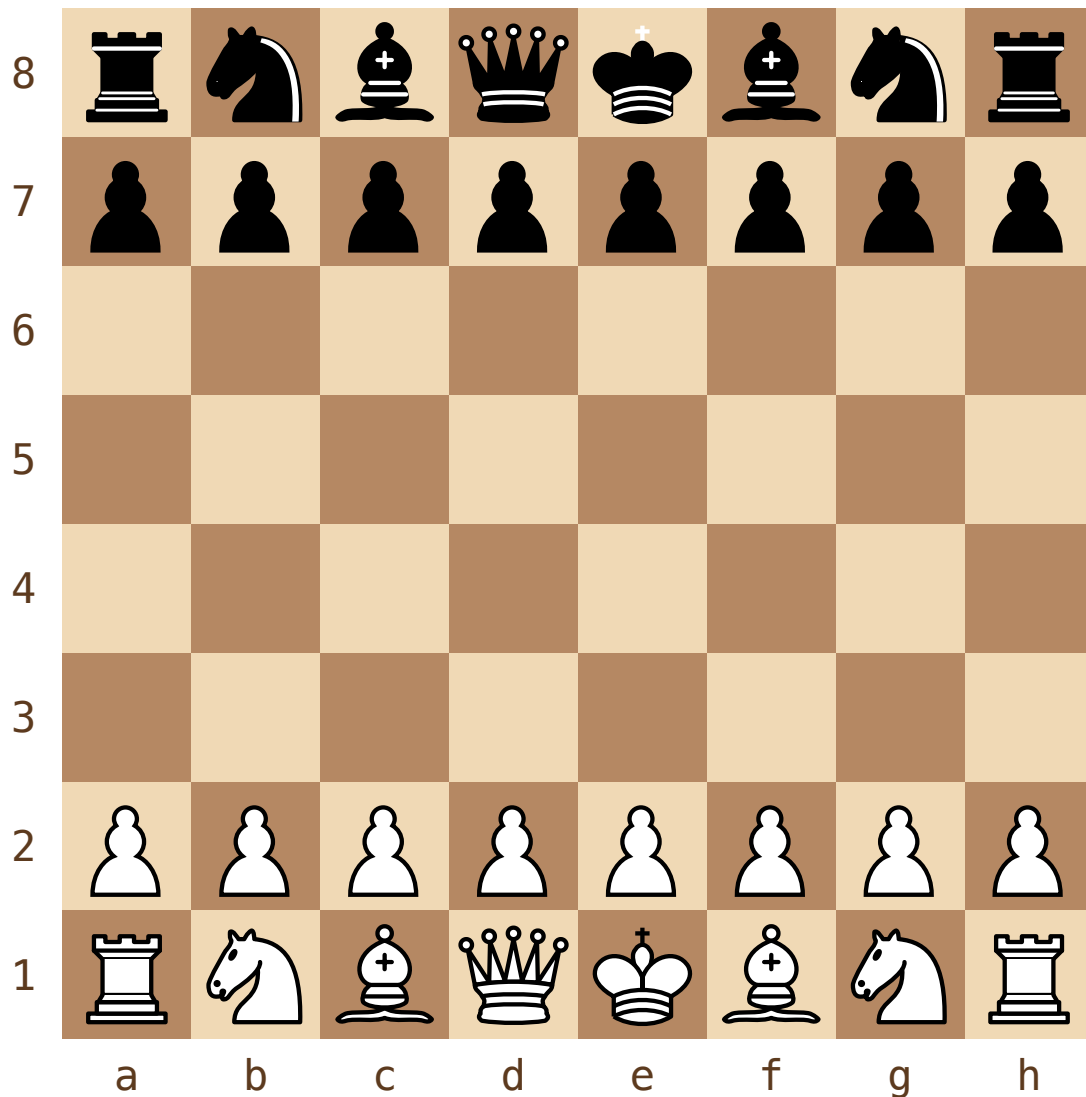
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

NO CASTLING CHESS

Standard chess with castling disabled. Endorsed by Vladimir Kramnik as a potential improvement to competitive chess, reducing the dominance of memorised opening theory.



No Castling – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=no-castling>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

Identical to standard chess except:

- ♦ Castling is not allowed for either player, ever.
- ♦ All other rules (en passant, promotion, etc.) are unchanged.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

STRATEGY

Without castling, King safety requires more creative solutions. Players must decide early whether to keep the King in the centre (risky but saves tempi) or manually walk it to safety (safe but slow). Open files toward the King are more dangerous because there's no quick escape. Rook activation is delayed since Rooks can't be connected via castling.

ATTRIBUTION

Proposed by Vladimir Kramnik, 2019. Tested at Chess.com events. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 100 OF 153

No Retreat

8×8

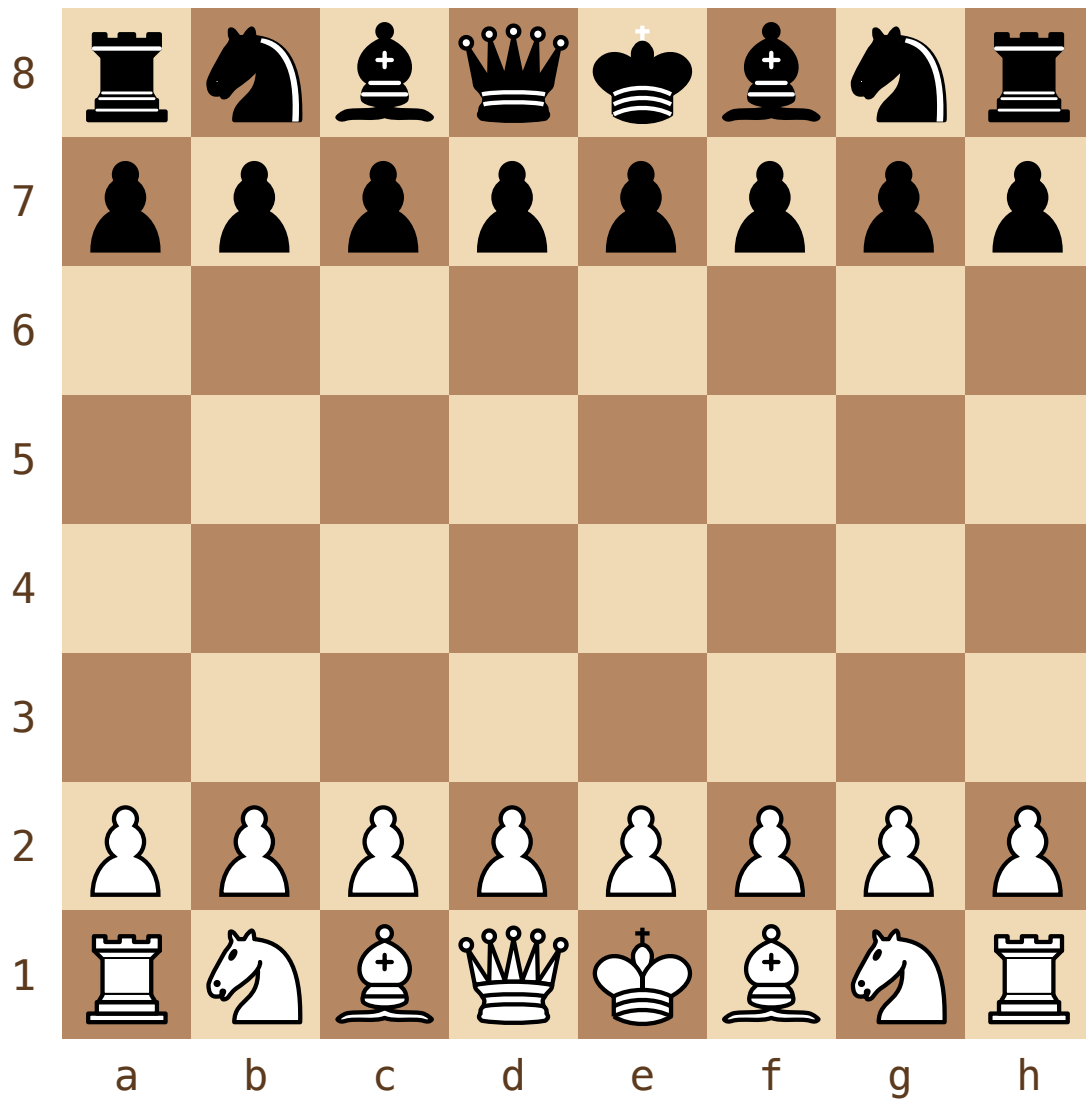
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

NO RETREAT

No piece may move backward. Every advance is permanent, every overextension punished.



No Retreat – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=no-retreat>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement applies, with one restriction:
 - ♦ No piece may move to a rank closer to its own starting position. For White, no piece may move to a lower-numbered rank than it currently occupies. For Black, no piece may move to a higher-numbered rank.
- ♦ Sideways moves (same rank) are always legal.
- ♦ Forward moves (toward opponent's back rank) are always legal.
- ♦ Backward moves (toward own back rank) are illegal.
- ♦ The King is NOT exempt – it also cannot retreat.
- ♦ Castling is legal (the King moves sideways, not backward).
- ♦ Pawns are unaffected in practice (they already cannot move backward).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

STRATEGY

Every piece advance is permanent – commit carefully. Knights lose half their mobility since they cannot retreat from advanced posts. Rooks on open files dominate since they can still move sideways freely. Avoid overextending pieces since they become trapped on advanced ranks. Endgames are especially dangerous because Kings cannot flee backward.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant, 20th century. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 101 OF 153

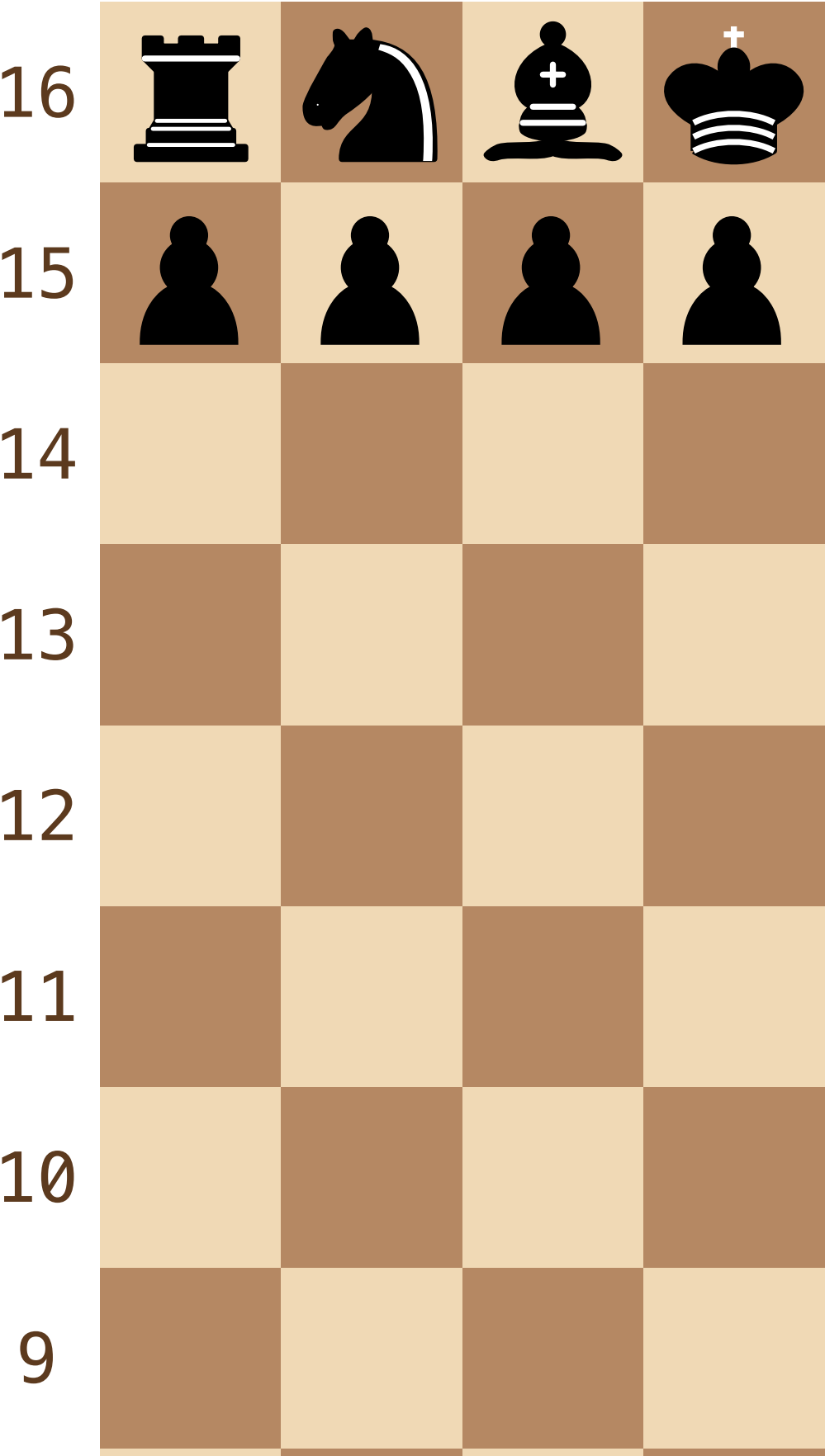
Oblong Chess

4×16

BOARD

2

PLAYERS



Oblong Chess is a historical chess variant played on a 4×16 board (four files, sixteen ranks). Approximately one thousand years old, it is a variant of **Shatranj** — the Arabic predecessor of modern chess — using the full Shatranj piece set and movement rules. Seven different starting setups are documented in historical sources. The game was often played with dice that determined which piece type the player could move on each turn.

THE BOARD

4 columns × 16 ranks (64 squares total — same as a standard chessboard, but extremely elongated). The narrow shape gives Rooks enormous value along the 16-rank axis, while Bishops (Elephants) are severely restricted by the 4-file width.

PIECES (SHATRANJ SET)

Each player commands the same forces as in Shatranj:

PIECE	SHATRANJ NAME	MOVEMENT	COUNT
King	Shah	Moves 1 square in any direction	1
General	Firzan	Moves 1 square diagonally	1
Elephant	Fil	Leaps exactly 2 squares diagonally (may jump)	2
Knight	Asp/Faras	Leaps as in modern chess	2
Rook	Rukh	Slides any distance orthogonally	2
Pawn	Baidak	Moves 1 square forward; no double first move; promotes	8

Note: The General (Firzan) and Elephant (Fil) differ significantly from their modern Queen and Bishop equivalents: the Firzan moves only 1 diagonal square, and the Fil leaps exactly 2 diagonal squares.

STARTING POSITION (FIRST SETUP)

The source documents 7 different opening setups for White. The primary setup:

RANK 1	A1	B1	C1	D1
Pieces	Elephant	General	King	Elephant

RANK 2	A2	B2	C2	D2
Pieces	Rook	Knight	Knight	Rook

Ranks 3–10: empty.

Black starts on ranks 15–16 (mirror).

Pawns occupy ranks 3 and 14 (adjacent to the piece ranks), one per file.

MOVEMENT RULES

Pieces move as in Shatranj:

- ♦ **Shah (King):** 1 square in any direction
- ♦ **Firzan (General):** 1 square diagonally
- ♦ **Fil (Elephant):** leaps exactly 2 diagonal squares; may jump over an intervening piece
- ♦ **Asp (Knight):** as in modern chess
- ♦ **Rukh (Rook):** any distance orthogonally
- ♦ **Pawn:** 1 square forward; no double first move; promotes to Firzan (General) on reaching the last rank

WIN CONDITIONS

- ♦ **Checkmate** wins
- ♦ **Stalemate** is believed to win (Shatranj convention), though the precise rule has not survived
- ♦ **Bare King:** capturing all pieces except the King also wins, unless the opponent can bare YOUR King on their next move – in that case it is a draw

DICE PLAY

Oblong Chess was often played with a six-sided die:

- ♦ Roll 6: move the Shah (King)
- ♦ Roll 5: move the Firzan (General)
- ♦ Roll 4: move an Elephant
- ♦ Roll 3: move a Knight
- ♦ Roll 2: move a Rook
- ♦ Roll 1: move a Pawn

If no legal move exists for the rolled piece type, the turn is lost. Moving is not obligatory. In the dice version, the game is won by capturing the opponent's King (not by checkmate).

ATTRIBUTION

Oblong Chess is a historical Shatranj variant approximately one thousand years old. Written by Hans Bodlaender.
Source: chessvariants.com/historic.dir/oblong.html (created November 1995).

CHESS · VARIANT 102 OF 153

Omega Chess

10×10 + 4 corner squares

BOARD

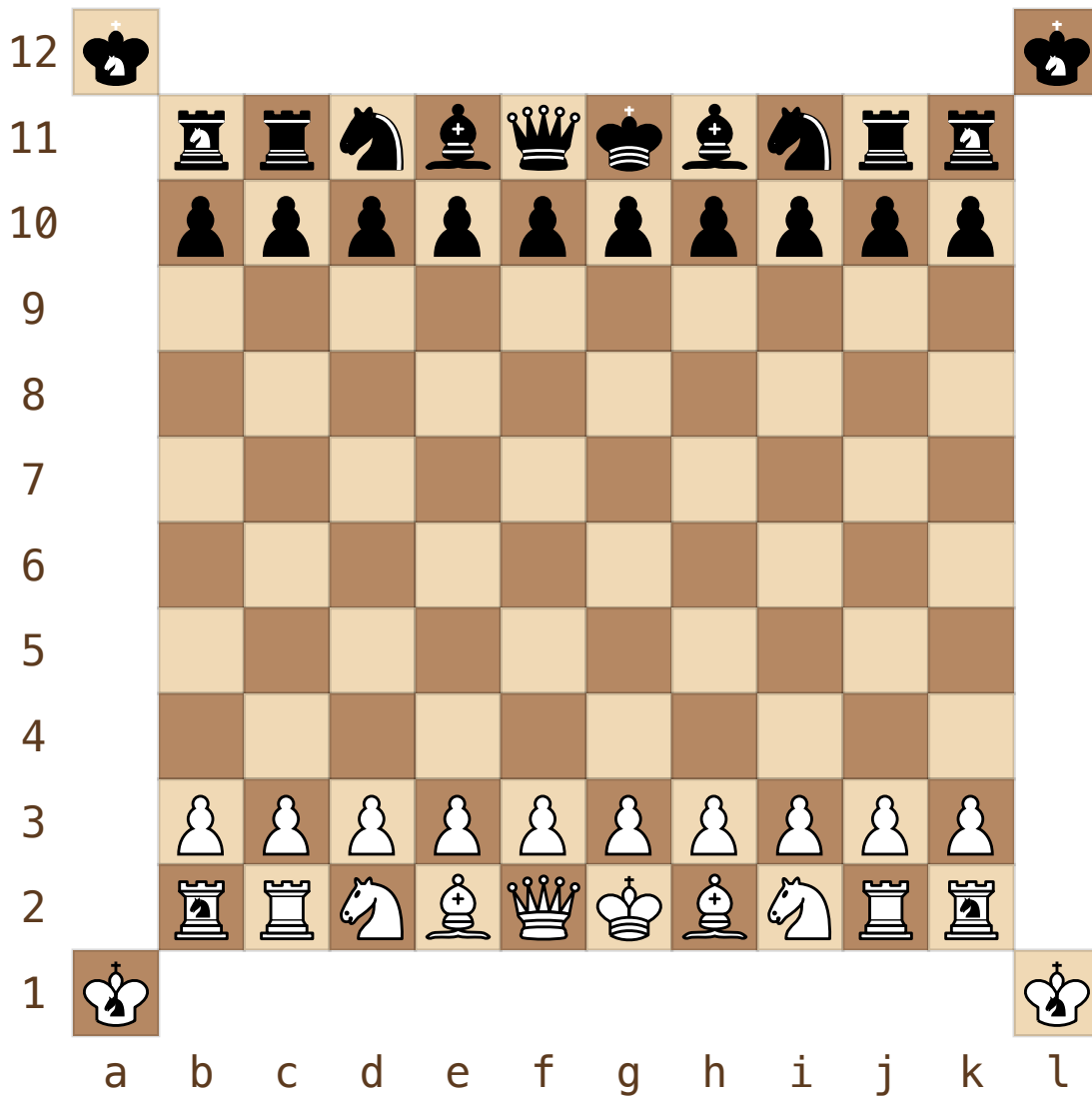
2

PLAYERS

Omega Chess

Designed by Daniel MacDonald, 1992. Endorsed by grandmasters Michael Rohde and Alex Sherzer.

OVERVIEW



Omega Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=omega-chess>

Omega Chess is played on a 10×10 board (files A–J, ranks 0–9) with four additional “wizard squares” placed diagonally beyond each corner of the main board (W1–W4), giving 104 squares total. Two new pieces per player are added: the Champion and the Wizard.

BOARD

- ♦ **Main board:** 10×10 (files A–J, ranks 0–9)
- ♦ **Wizard squares:** W1 (off corner a0), W2 (off corner j0), W3 (off corner j9), W4 (off corner a9)
- ♦ Rooks and Pawns **cannot** enter wizard squares. All other pieces can.
- ♦ Algebraic notation uses A–J for files, 0–9 for ranks. Wizard squares are W1–W4.

SETUP

White:

- ♦ Wizard squares W1, W2: White Wizards
- ♦ Rank 0: Champion(a0), Rook(b0), Knight(c0), Bishop(d0), Queen(e0), King(f0), Bishop(g0), Knight(h0), Rook(i0), Champion(j0)
- ♦ Rank 1: Pawns a1–j1

Black:

- ♦ Wizard squares W4, W3: Black Wizards
- ♦ Rank 9: Champion(a9), Rook(b9), Knight(c9), Bishop(d9), Queen(e9), King(f9), Bishop(g9), Knight(h9), Rook(i9), Champion(j9)
- ♦ Rank 8: Pawns a8–j8

NEW PIECES

CHAMPION

A leaper placed in the corners of the 10×10 board. It can:

- ♦ **Leap** exactly 2 squares orthogonally (Dabbaba move, jumps over intervening pieces)
- ♦ **Leap** exactly 2 squares diagonally (Alfil move, jumps over intervening pieces)
- ♦ **Slide** exactly 1 square orthogonally (Wazir move)

The Champion cannot slide further than 1 square orthogonally, but its 2-square leaps cannot be blocked.

WIZARD

A color-bound leaper placed in the wizard corner squares. It can:

- ♦ **Leap** (1,3) or (3,1) squares in any of the 8 knight-like directions (Camel move)
- ♦ **Slide** exactly 1 square diagonally (Ferz move)

The Wizard is color-bound (like a Bishop) due to its Camel and Ferz components.

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply with the following modifications:

PAWNS

On a pawn's **first move**, it may advance **1, 2, or 3 squares** forward. After the first move, it advances only 1 square at a time.

En passant: A pawn that advances 3 squares may be captured en passant on either of the two squares it passed through. A pawn that advances 2 squares may be captured en passant on the square it passed through, as in standard chess.

Promotion: as in standard FIDE chess, when reaching the far rank.

CASTLING

Castling follows standard FIDE rules. The King moves **2 squares** toward the Rook:

- ♦ **Kingside:** King f0→h0, Rook i0→g0
- ♦ **Queenside:** King f0→d0, Rook b0→e0

WIZARD SQUARES

Only non-Rook, non-Pawn pieces may occupy wizard squares. A piece entering a wizard square does so by moving diagonally (since wizard squares are diagonal to the board corners).

ENDGAME NOTES

The four corner wizard squares create unusual endgame possibilities. Notable differences from standard chess: a lone queen can force mate without king assistance; two knights can force mate (unlike standard chess); a king and lone rook cannot force mate against a bare king (the rook cannot drive the king to the edge without the king escaping into wizard squares).

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omega_Chess

CHESS · VARIANT 103 OF 153

Omnicide

8×8

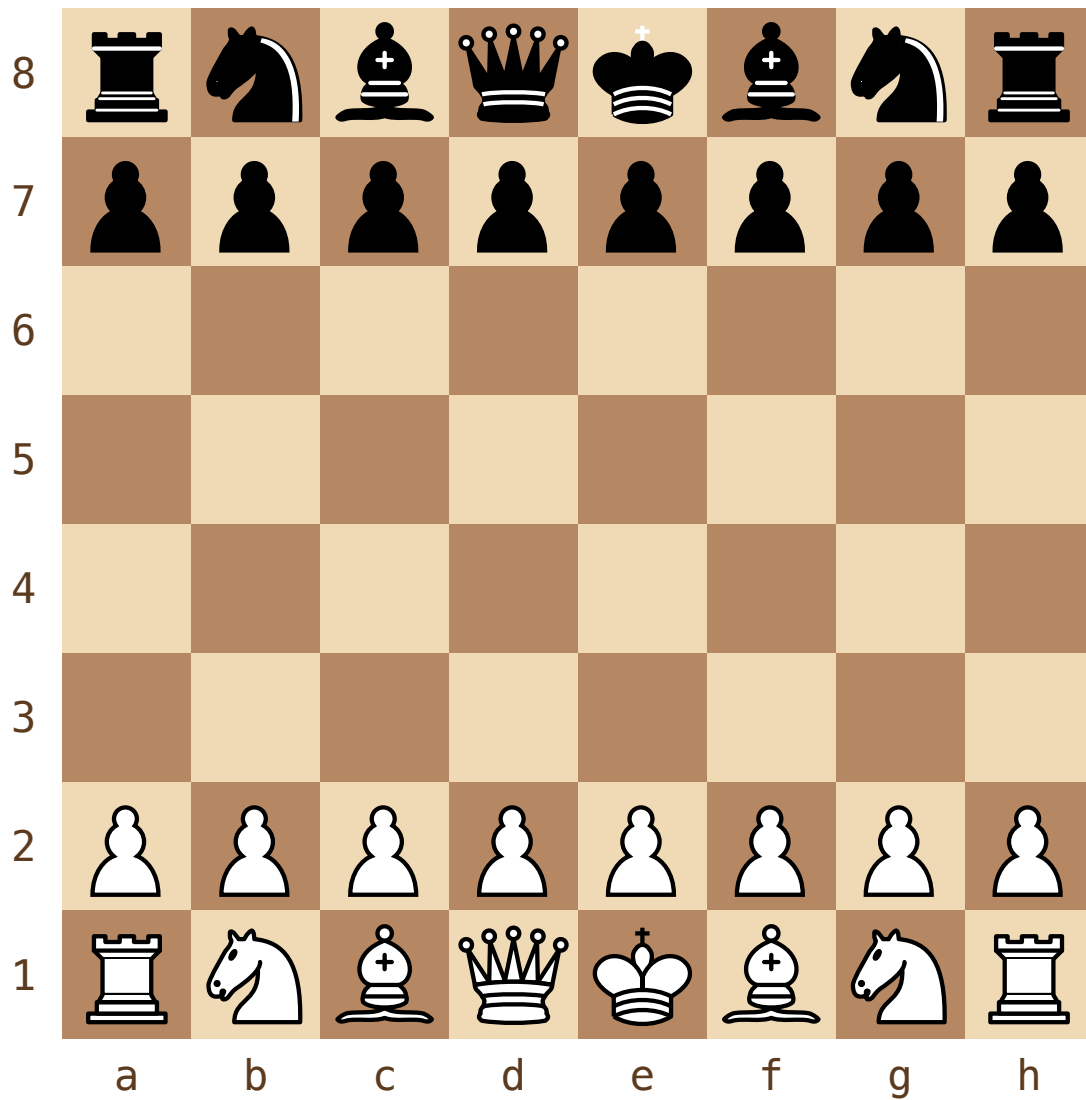
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

OMNICIDE

Lose all your pieces to win – but unlike Antichess, captures are completely optional. You must engineer positions where your opponent **WANTS** to take your pieces.



Omnicide – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=omnicide>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ All pieces move as in standard chess.
- ♦ Captures are NOT forced – this is the key difference from Antichess/Giveaway.
- ♦ The King has no royal status – it can be captured like any other piece.
- ♦ No check, no checkmate.
- ♦ No castling (King has no special status).
- ♦ Pawns promote normally.
- ♦ First player to have zero pieces on the board wins.

WIN CONDITION

Lose all your pieces (including King). First player with zero pieces remaining wins.

STRATEGY

Since captures are not forced, you cannot simply “feed” pieces to your opponent as in Antichess. You must create positions where capturing your pieces benefits the opponent (or where leaving them alive is worse). Pawns are liabilities – they are hard to get captured without cooperation. Try to create positions where your pieces are en prise AND the opponent gains something by taking them (e.g., clearing a promotion path for their own pawn while taking yours).

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant. Distinct from Antichess by the absence of forced captures. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 104 OF 153

Orda Chess

8×8

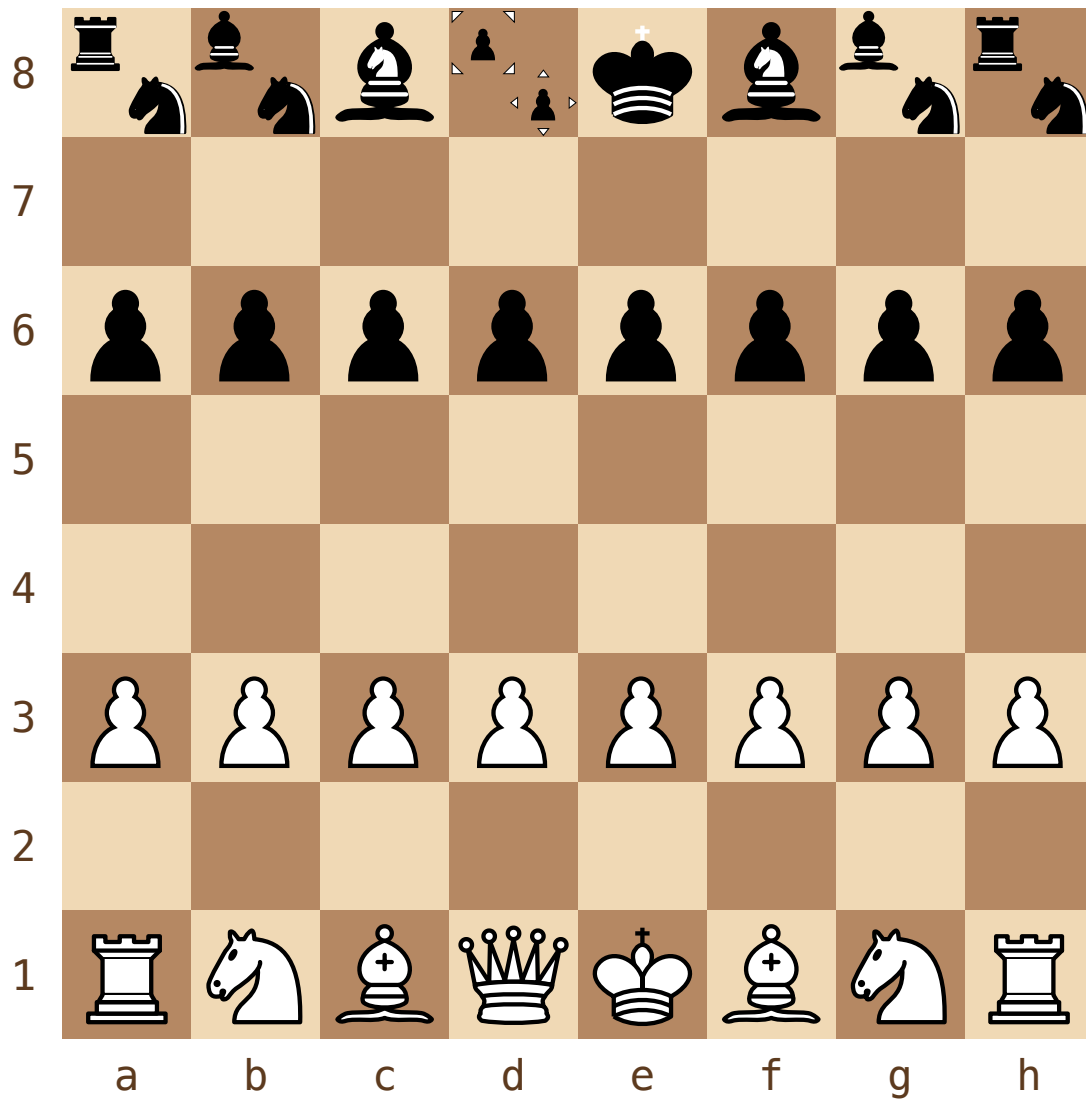
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ORDA CHESS

An asymmetric variant where White plays standard chess and Black commands the Mongol Horde — pieces that move differently from how they capture.



Orda Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=orda-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

White (standard): Standard chess setup.

Black (Horde): Pawns on rank 7. Back rank: Lancer, Archer, Kheshig, Khan, Yurt, Kheshig, Archer, Lancer.

FEN: 1haykah1/8/pppppppp/8/8/PPPPPPP/8/RNBQKBNR w KQ - 0 1

RULES

Yurt (y) – Moves one square diagonally. Captures one square orthogonally. (Replaces the Queen.)

Lancer (l) – Moves like a Rook (slides orthogonally). Captures like a Knight (L-shaped jump). Cannot slide to capture.

Archer (h) – Moves like a Bishop (slides diagonally). Captures like a Knight (L-shaped jump). Cannot slide to capture.

Khan (k) – Moves and captures as a standard King.

Kheshig – Standard Knight movement and capture.

- ♦ White can castle. Black cannot (the Khan starts on e8).
- ♦ Black's Lancers and Archers have split movement: they slide freely for non-capturing moves but must jump (like a Knight) to capture.
- ♦ Standard pawns for both sides.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King/Khan.

STRATEGY

Black's Lancers and Archers are powerful positional pieces (full rook/bishop mobility) but limited attackers (knight-range capture only). White must exploit the Horde's short capture range while avoiding their positional dominance. Black should use Lancers for long-range control and coordinate Archers for knight-distance attacks.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Couch Tomato (2020). Popularised on Pychess. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 105 OF 153

Orda Mirror

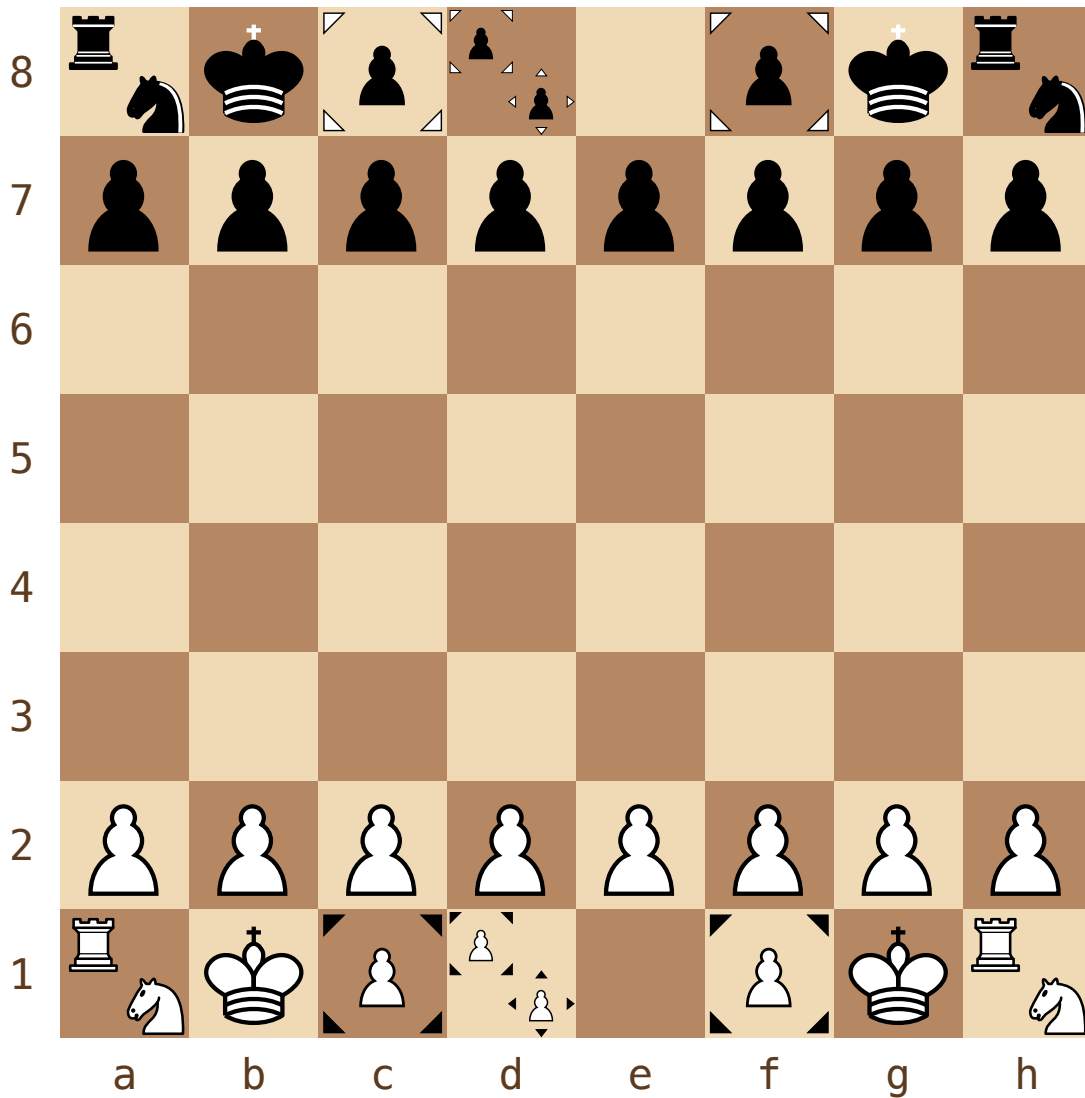
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ORDA MIRROR



Orda Mirror – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=orda-mirror>

Designed by Corey Clark (2020). Where Orda Chess pits the standard FIDE Kingdom against the Mongol Horde, Orda Mirror gives both players an identical Horde army. The defining characteristic of all Horde pieces is move-capture asymmetry: every non-royal piece **moves** as a Knight but **captures** using a different method specific to that piece type.

THE HORDE ARMY

Both players command the same pieces:

PIECE	COUNT	MOVES AS	CAPTURES AS
Khagan (royal)	1	1 step in any direction (King)	1 step in any direction (King)
Yurt	1	Knight jump (2+1 leap)	Any direction, unlimited distance (Queen)
Lancer	2	Knight jump (2+1 leap)	Orthogonal slide, unlimited distance (Rook)
Falcon	2	Knight jump (2+1 leap)	Diagonal slide, unlimited distance (Bishop)
Keshig	2	Knight jump (2+1 leap)	1 step in any direction (King)
Pawn	8	1 square forward; 2 from start	1 square diagonally forward

All non-royal pieces (Yurt, Lancer, Falcon, Keshig) make the same Knight jump to reach their destination. What distinguishes them is how they capture upon arrival: only pieces on a square reachable by the Knight jump can be captured, but the specific piece type determines the capture.

MOVE VS. CAPTURE DISTINCTION

To capture, the piece must be able to reach the target's square via a Knight jump (2+1 in any orientation). The piece then removes the target using its designated capture method as a targeting filter:

- ♦ **Lancer:** Can only capture pieces on squares reachable by a Knight jump where the line from the Lancer to the target is orthogonal — i.e., the capture must be on the same rank or file. In practice, among all squares a Knight can jump to, the Lancer only captures those on the same rank or file as the Lancer's current position.
- ♦ **Falcon:** Among Knight-reachable squares, only captures pieces on the same diagonal as the Falcon.
- ♦ **Keshig:** Among Knight-reachable squares, only captures pieces within 1 step (i.e., the standard King-move destinations). From the Knight's 8 possible destinations, the Keshig targets only those that are also adjacent to it.
- ♦ **Yurt:** Among Knight-reachable squares, captures pieces reachable in any direction without restriction — effectively can capture any piece on a Knight-jump square.

Practical result: Pieces always move like a Knight. Their capture subset restricts which of the 8 Knight-jump destinations they can actually take a piece from.

STARTING POSITION

Both players use the following arrangement (White on ranks 1-2, Black on ranks 7-8):

```
8 La Ke Fa Yu Kg Yu Fa Ke La
7 Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa
. . . . .
. . . . .
2 Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa Pa
1 La Ke Fa Yu Kg Yu Fa Ke La
  a b c d e f g h
```

Key: La=Lancer, Ke=Keshig, Fa=Falcon, Yu=Yurt, Kg=Khagan, Pa=Pawn.

Rank 1 from a to h: Lancer, Keshig, Falcon, Yurt, Khagan, Yurt, Falcon, Keshig, Lancer — wait, that is 9 pieces. Corrected:

Rank 1 from a to h (8 pieces): Lancer(a), Keshig(b), Falcon(c), Yurt(d), Khagan(e), Falcon(f), Keshig(g), Lancer(h).

The two Yurts are actually only 1 — the Yurt is singular (the most powerful piece, Queen equivalent). The correct back rank: Lancer, Keshig, Falcon, Yurt, Khagan, Falcon, Keshig, Lancer.

CHECK AND CHECKMATE

The Khagan is the royal piece. Standard check and checkmate rules apply: a player whose Khagan is under attack must resolve it; inability to do so is checkmate, and that player loses.

A Khagan may not move into a square attacked by any opponent piece. Because Horde pieces attack differently from how they move (Falcons attack diagonals, Lancers attack orthogonals), calculating attacked squares requires knowing each piece's capture method rather than its movement.

PAWN RULES

- ♦ Pawns advance 1 square (or 2 from starting rank).
- ♦ Pawns capture diagonally forward as normal.
- ♦ En passant applies.
- ♦ Pawns reaching the final rank promote to any Horde piece (Yurt, Lancer, Falcon, or Keshig).

STALEMATE

Standard: stalemate is a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Corey Clark. Published via Shogun of Games. Official rules at shogunofgames.com. Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 106 OF 153

Ouk Chaktrang (Cambodian Chess)

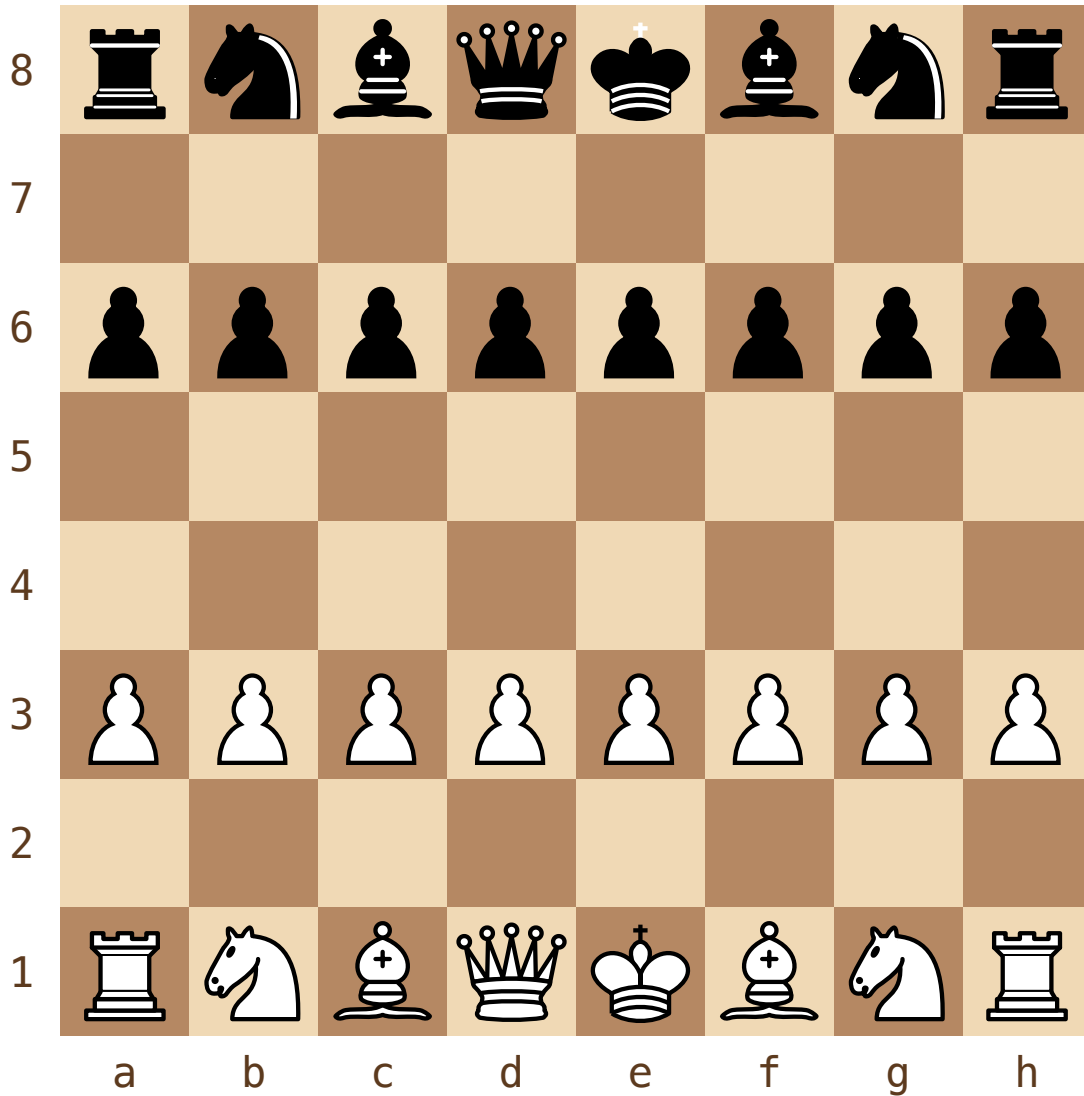
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

OUK CHAKTRANG (CAMBODIAN CHESS)



Ouk Chakrang (Cambodian Chess) – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=ouk-chakrang>

Ouk Chakrang is the traditional chess of Cambodia. It belongs to the Makruk family – the Southeast Asian branch of chess descended from Indian Chaturanga – and is the closest living relative of the medieval game that spread from India across Asia. Modern rules are codified by the Asian Chess Federation and the Cambodian Chess Federation.

PIECES

KHMER NAME	PIECE	MOVEMENT
Sdech (ស៊េច)	King	1 square in any direction. Special first move: if the King has not yet moved, it may instead jump as a Knight (once only, provided the King is not in check).
Neang/Met (នាង)	Queen	1 square diagonally, OR 1 square straight forward.
Koul (គោល)	Bishop	1 square diagonally, OR leaps exactly 2 squares diagonally (can jump over an intervening piece).
Ses (សេស)	Knight	Standard L-shape: 2 squares orthogonally then 1 square perpendicularly. Jumps over intervening pieces.
Touk (ត្នែក)	Rook	Slides any number of squares orthogonally.
Trey (ត្រី)	Pawn	Moves 1 square straight forward. Captures 1 square diagonally forward. No double first move. Promotes on reaching rank 6.

STARTING POSITION

Identical to Makruk. Pawns begin on ranks 3 (White) and 6 (Black), not rank 2/7.

```

8 ♔ ♚ ♜ ♝ ♞ ♟ ♡ ♠
7 . . . . . . .
6 ♜ ♜ ♜ ♜ ♜ ♜ ♜ ♜
5 . . . . . . .
4 . . . . . . .
3 ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡
2 . . . . . . .
1 ♜ ♚ ♜ ♔ ♚ ♜ ♚ ♜
  a b c d e f g h

```

Neang (Queen) begins beside the Sdech (King): White's Neang on d1 (to King's left from White's perspective), Black's Neang on e8.

PAWN PROMOTION

A Trey reaching rank 6 (for White) or rank 3 (for Black) promotes immediately to a Neang. There is no choice – promotion to Neang is the only option.

KING'S FIRST MOVE

On the Sdech's very first move of the game, if it has not previously moved, the player may instead move the King as a Knight (the standard L-shape jump). This privilege is lost permanently after the King moves or after the King is in check.

KOUL MOVEMENT DETAIL

The Koul (Bishop) may move either:

- 1 square diagonally (standard ferz-style step), OR
- Exactly 2 squares diagonally, leaping over any piece on the intermediate square.

It cannot slide any further – it is not a long-range diagonal slider like the FIDE Bishop.

CHECK AND CHECKMATE

A player whose King is in check must resolve the check on the next move. Checkmate – where the King is in check and no legal move resolves it – ends the game; the checkmated player loses.

STALEMATE

Stalemate (player has no legal move but is not in check) is a loss for the stalemated player, not a draw.

COUNTING RULES (DRAW MECHANISM)

When one player has no remaining Pawns, the opponent must deliver checkmate within a set number of moves or the game is drawn:

OPPONENT'S DOMINANT PIECE	MOVES ALLOWED
Rooks only	8 moves
Bishops and/or Knights only	16 moves
Neang only	22 moves

The count begins the moment the last Pawn is captured. If the count expires without checkmate, the game is drawn. The count resets if a piece is captured during the countdown.

DIFFERENCES FROM MAKRUK

FEATURE	MAKRUK (THAI)	OUK CHAKTRANG (CAMBODIAN)
Koul/Bishop	1 step diagonally only	1 step or 2-square diagonal leap
King's first move	No special rule	May jump as Knight once
Counting rules	Makruk counting system	Streamlined system above

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional Cambodian game. Modern competitive rules codified by the Asian Chess Federation. Fully public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 107 OF 153

Patrol Chess

8×8

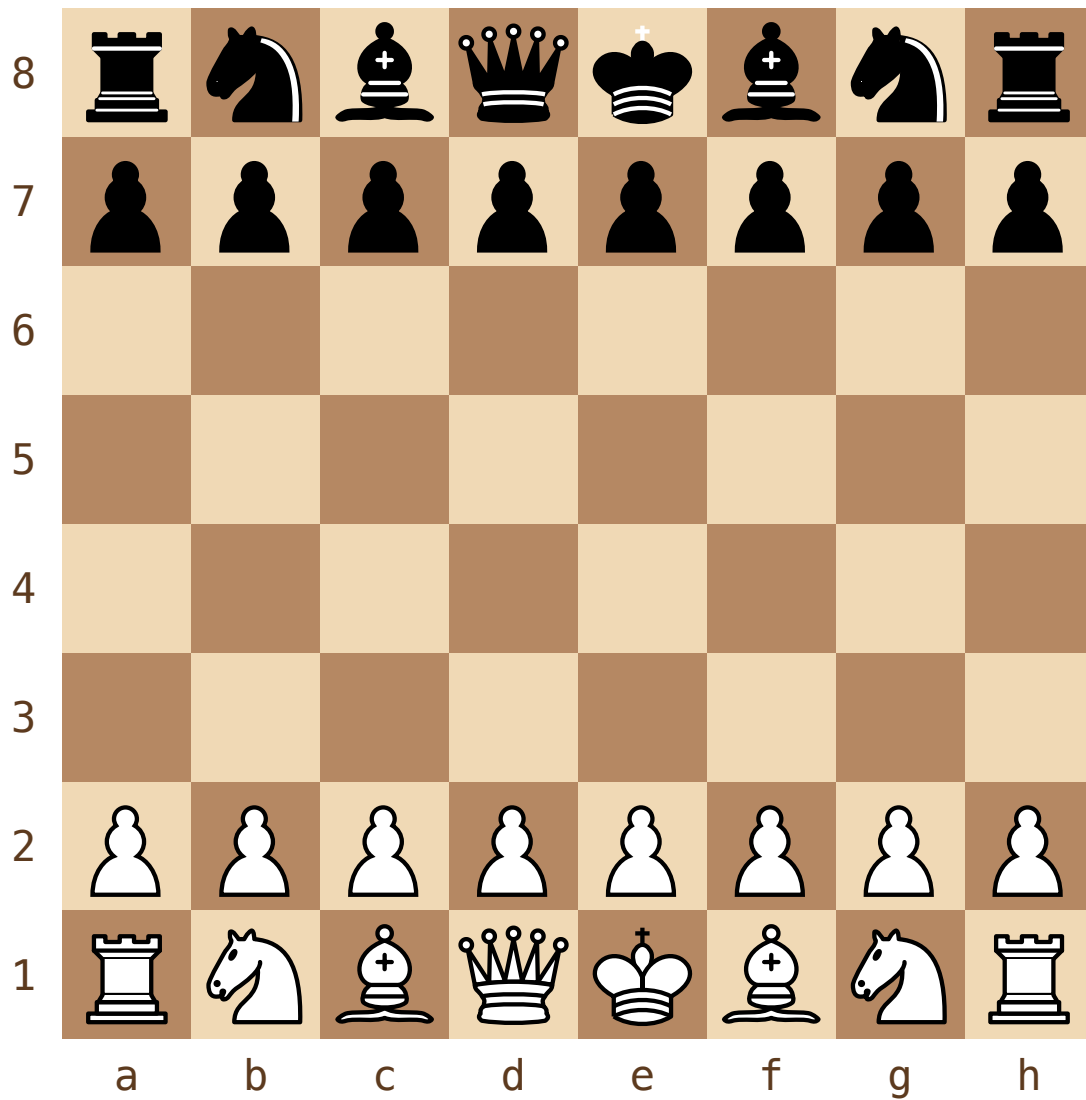
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

PATROL CHESS

A piece may only capture or give check if it is “patrolled” — defended by at least one friendly piece. Isolated pieces are toothless.



Patrol Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=patrol>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement applies, with the following additions:
- ♦ A piece may only CAPTURE if it is patrolled (defended by at least one friendly piece).
- ♦ A piece may only give CHECK if it is patrolled.
- ♦ Non-capturing, non-checking moves are played normally with no patrol requirement.
- ♦ A piece is "patrolled" when at least one other friendly piece defends the square it occupies.
- ♦ Checkmate requires the checking piece to be patrolled, AND the King has no escape to an unattacked square (where "attacked" also requires the attacker to be patrolled).
- ♦ Castling and en passant follow standard rules (subject to patrol constraints).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (the checking piece must be patrolled).

STRATEGY

Piece coordination is everything. Isolated pieces cannot capture or deliver check – they are purely positional. Keep pieces connected and defending each other. Knights near friendly pieces become deadly while isolated Knights are decorative. Development must be compact rather than spread out. A single undefended piece can safely sit in enemy territory since it cannot be captured by an unpatrolled attacker.

ATTRIBUTION

Frederik Hendrik von Meyenfeldt, 1975. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 108 OF 153

Pawns Only

8×8

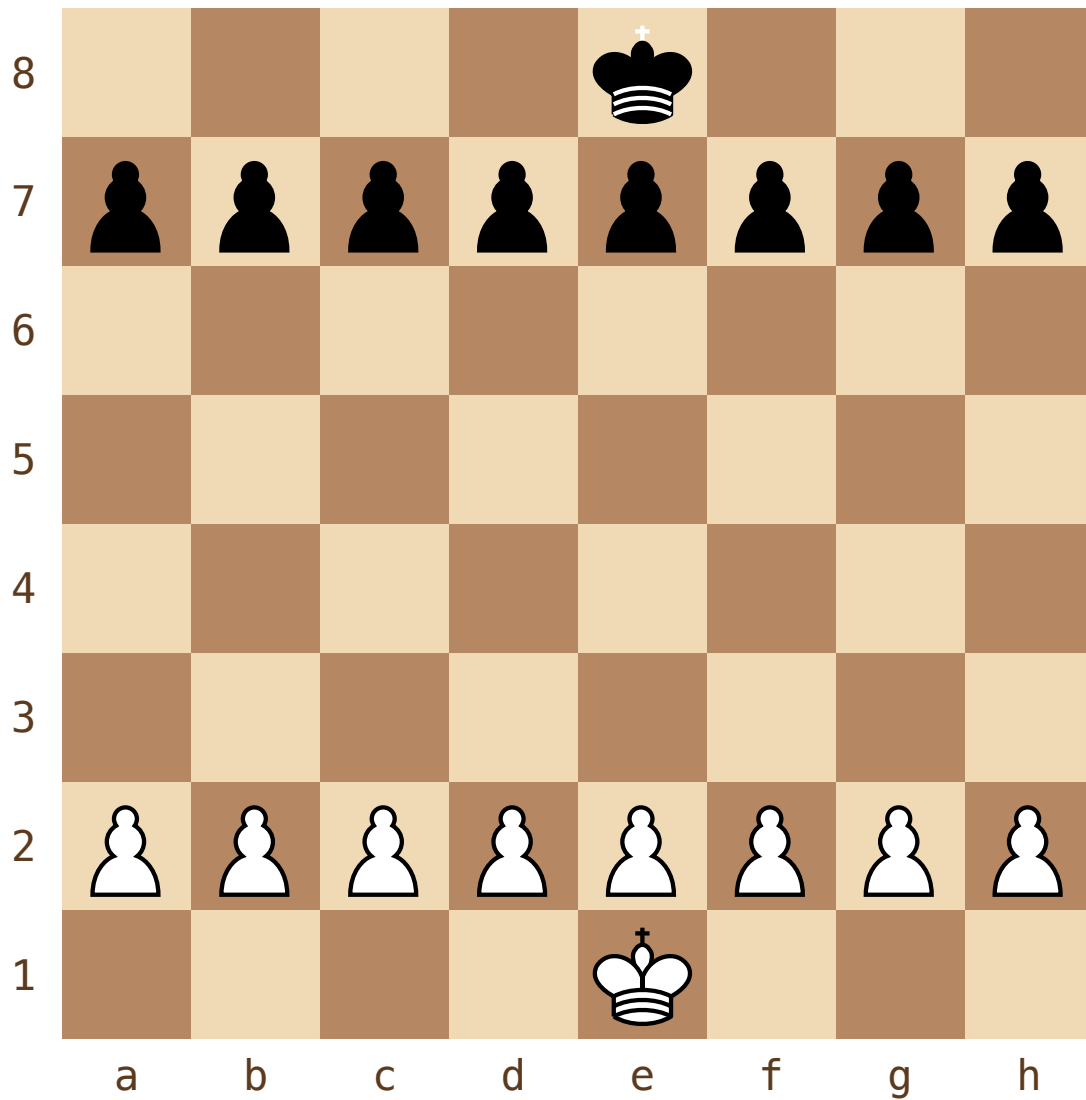
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

PAWNS ONLY

Only pawns and Kings. First to promote wins. A deceptively deep race that tests pure pawn endgame technique.



Pawns Only – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=pawns-only>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): 4k3/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/4K3

Each side: King (on e-file) + 8 pawns on second/seventh rank. Identical to Endgame Chess setup.

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, including:

- ♦ Pawns can double-step from starting rank.
- ♦ En passant is available.
- ♦ Pawns promote normally.
- ♦ No castling (no Rooks exist).

WIN CONDITION

First player to promote a pawn wins immediately. If checkmate occurs before any promotion, the checkmating player wins.

DIFFERENCE FROM ENDGAME CHESS IN ENDGAME CHESS, THE WIN CONDITION IS CHECKMATE (SO YOU PROMOTE AND THEN USE THE PROMOTED PIECE TO DELIVER MATE). IN PAWNS ONLY, PROMOTION ITSELF IS THE WIN – THE GAME ENDS THE INSTANT A PAWN REACHES THE BACK

rank.

STRATEGY

The race to promote is everything. Creating passed pawns, using the King to clear a path, and timing pawn breaks to outrun the opponent are the core skills. Blocking the opponent's most advanced pawn while pushing your own is the central tension. Sacrificing pawns to create a distraction on one wing while promoting on the other is a common winning technique.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 109 OF 153

Peasants' Revolt

8×8

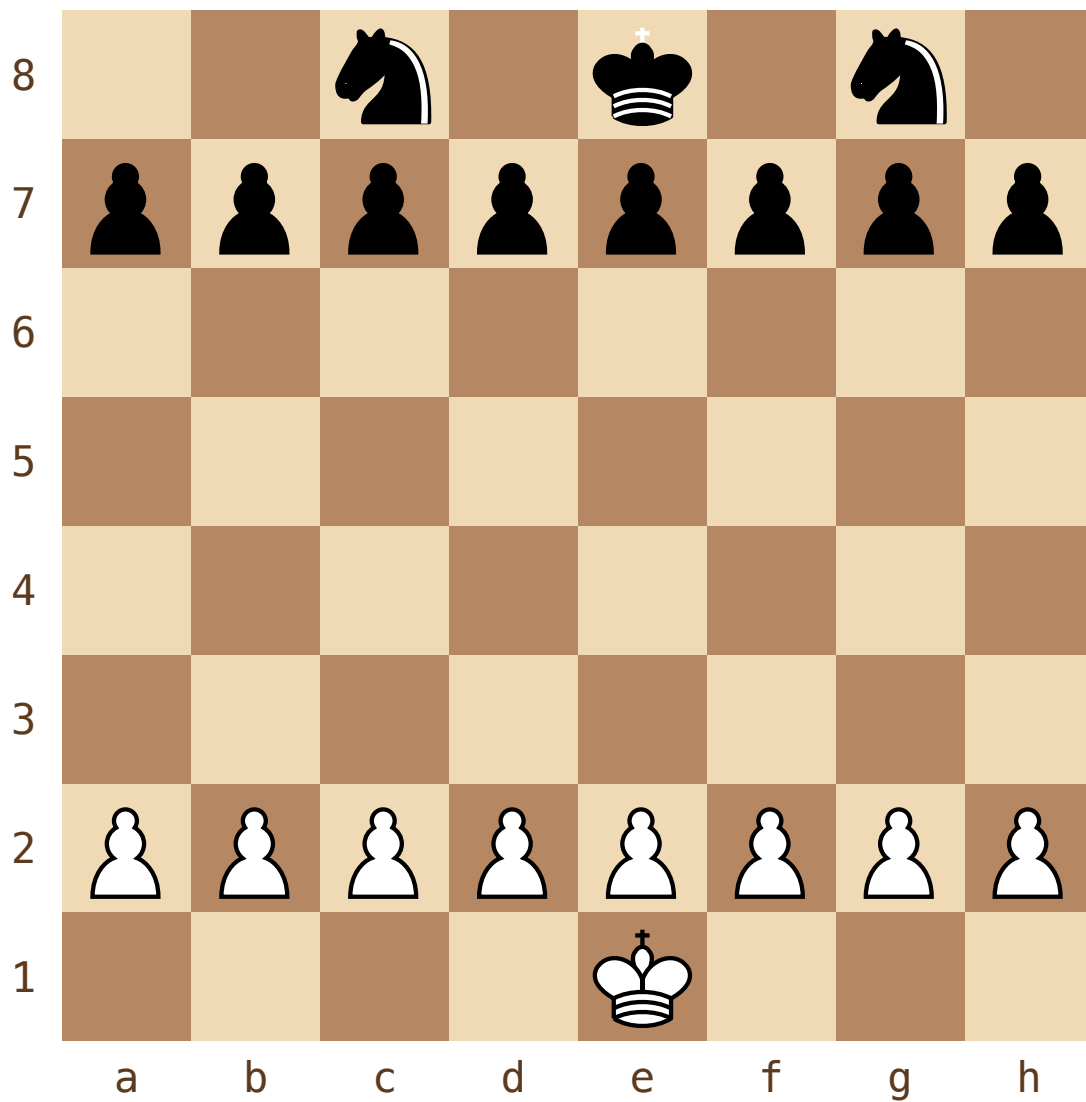
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

PEASANTS' REVOLT

An asymmetric battle: White has a King and eight pawns against Black's King and two Knights. Can the peasant army overwhelm the mounted warriors?



Peasants' Revolt – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=peasants-revolt>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): 2n1k1n1/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/4K3

White: King (e1) + 8 pawns (rank 2). Black: King (e8) + 2 Knights (c8, g8) + 8 pawns (rank 7).

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, including:

- ♦ Pawns can double-step from starting rank.
- ♦ En passant is available.
- ♦ Pawns promote normally.
- ♦ No castling for White (no Rooks). Black cannot castle either (no Rooks).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, same as standard chess.

STRATEGY

White must advance pawns toward promotion while using the King to support. Black's Knights are mobile and can blockade pawns or pick them off. Black's strategy is to use Knights to permanently block White's pawn chains and pick off isolated pawns. White should create multiple passed pawns on different wings — two Knights can't be everywhere at once. If White promotes even one pawn, the material advantage is usually decisive.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional asymmetric variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 110 OF 153

Petty Chess

5×6

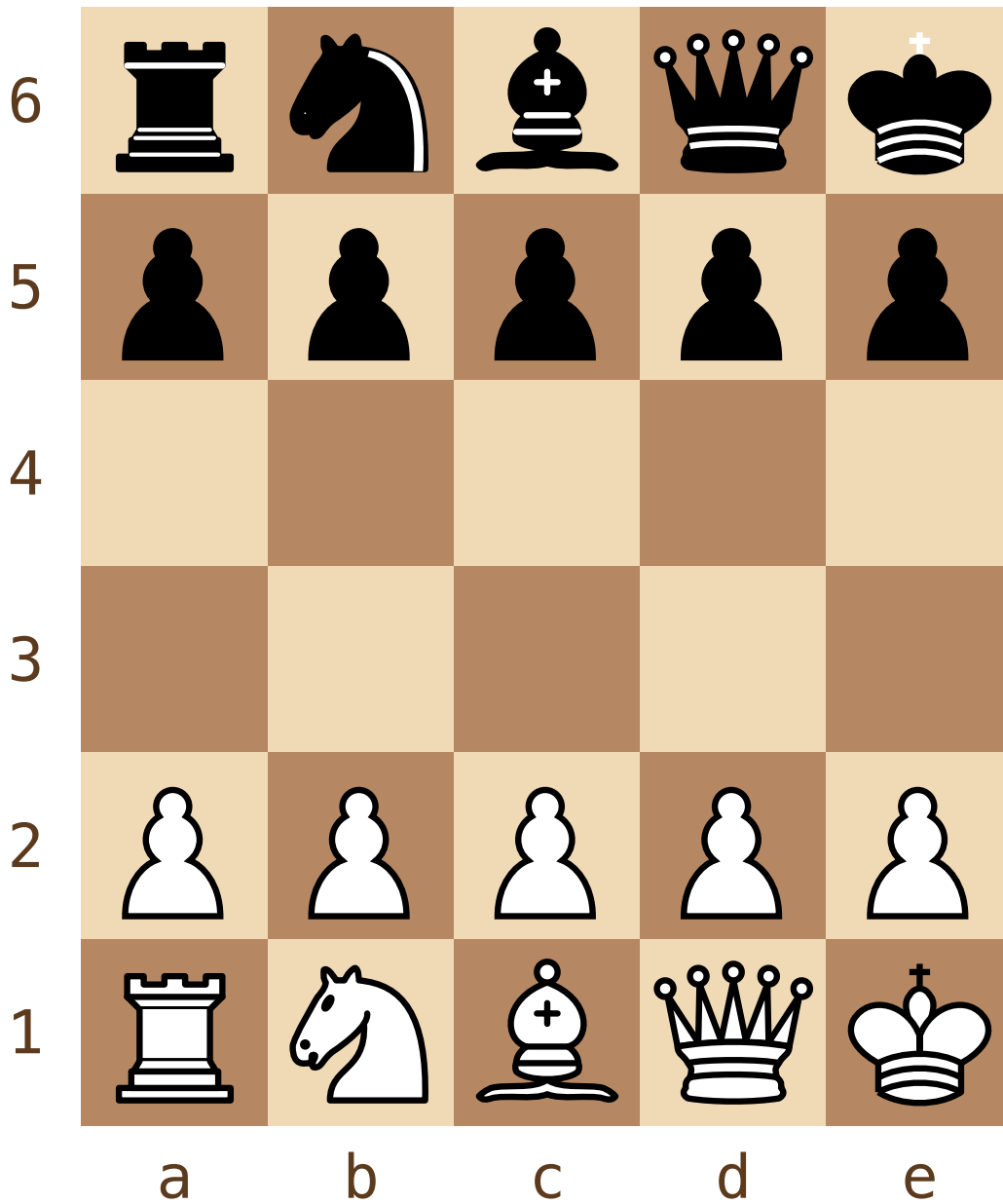
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

PETTY CHESS

All standard piece types on a 5-file, 6-rank board. Single copies of each piece make every loss devastating.



Petty Chess – starting position (5×6)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=petty>

SETUP

Board: 5 files × 6 ranks.

Setup (FEN): rnbqk/ppppp/5/5/PPPPP/RNBQK

- ♦ Rank 6 (Black): r n b q k
- ♦ Rank 5 (Black pawns): p p p p p
- ♦ Ranks 4–3: empty
- ♦ Rank 2 (White pawns): P P P P P
- ♦ Rank 1 (White): R N B Q K

Each side has: King, Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight, 5 Pawns.

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement for all pieces.
- ♦ Pawns move one square forward only (no double-step).
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ No castling (King is on the edge – no room to castle meaningfully).
- ♦ Pawns promote on the far rank to Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

STRATEGY

Every piece is a single copy – losing any piece is devastating. The Queen is overwhelmingly powerful relative to the board size. The single Bishop is colour-bound, making half the board permanently inaccessible to it. Quick tactical strikes are the norm given the compressed space. Guard the Queen jealously; losing it is almost always decisive.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional small chess variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 111 OF 153

Placement Chess

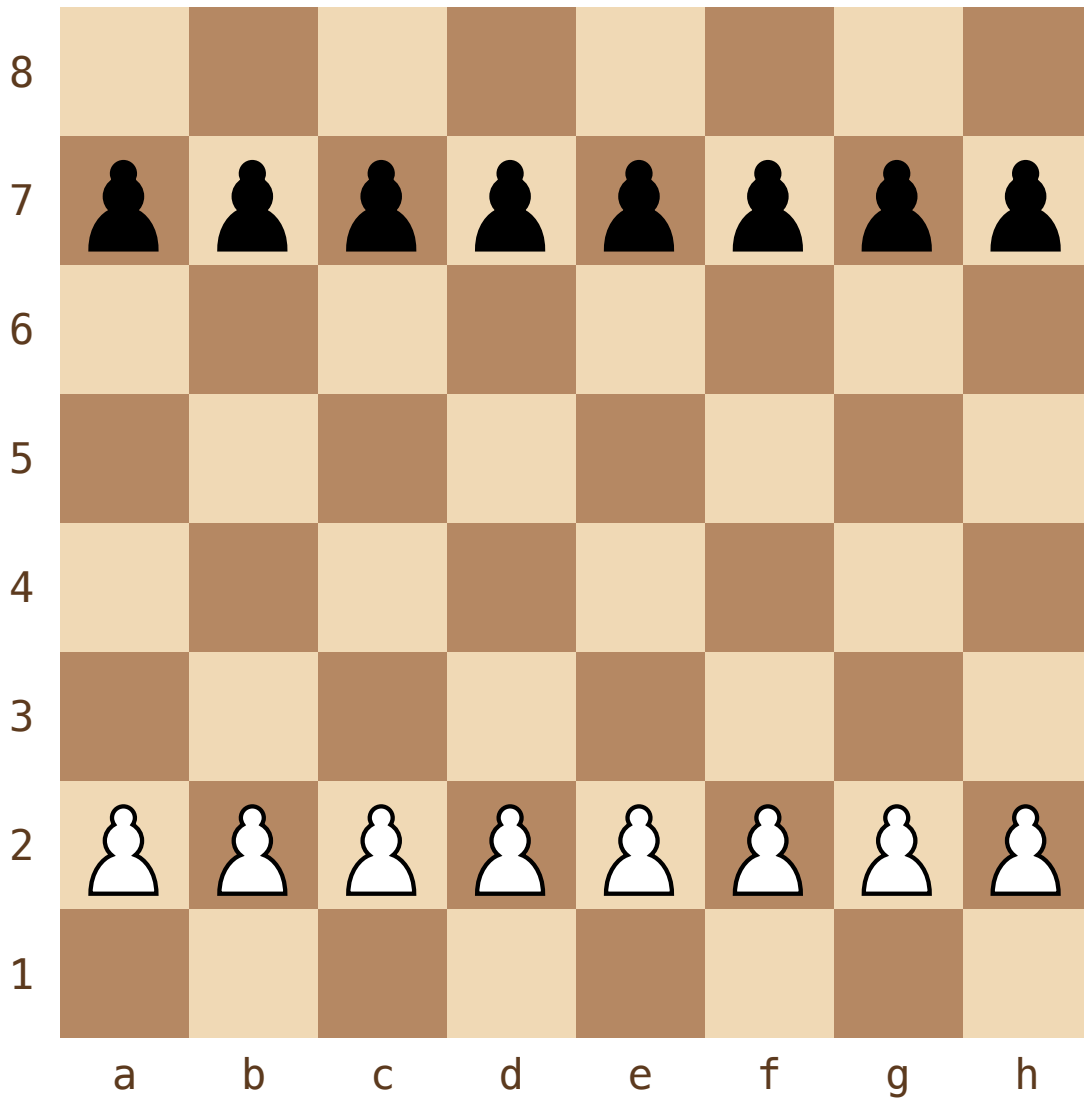
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

PLACEMENT CHESS



Placement Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=placement-chess>

Placement Chess (also called Bronstein Chess, Back Rank Randomization, or Pre-Game Placement) addresses opening theory by giving players freedom in where they arrange their own back-rank pieces. The board starts with only Pawns in place; players alternate placing one piece per turn onto their own back rank until all pieces are set, then the game begins as standard chess.

Two main versions exist: the **Bronstein version** (alternating placement, strict bishop constraint) and the **CVP version** (simultaneous self-placement, free arrangement).

BRONSTEIN VERSION

Designed by David Bronstein.

SETUP PHASE

- 1 Pawns begin on their standard starting squares (rank 2 for White, rank 7 for Black).
- 2 All eight back-rank pieces for each player are held off the board.
- 3 White places one piece on any empty square on rank 1. Then Black places one piece on any empty square on rank 8. They alternate until all 16 back-rank pieces (8 per player) are placed.
- 4 White places first on each turn.

PLACEMENT CONSTRAINTS

- ♦ **Bishops:** Each player's two Bishops must be placed on opposite-colored squares. A Bishop may not be placed such that both friendly Bishops end up on the same color. If one Bishop has already been placed on a light square, the next Bishop must go on a dark square (and vice versa).
- ♦ **King and Rooks (Castling):** Castling is legal after the game begins if and only if the King and the castling Rook are on their FIDE standard squares (e1/a1, e1/h1 for White; e8/a8, e8/h8 for Black). Players who want to preserve castling rights must place the King and Rooks in their standard positions during setup.
- ♦ **No piece may be placed on a square already occupied.**
- ♦ All pieces must be placed before any Pawn moves. Once all 16 back-rank pieces are placed, play proceeds.

GAME PHASE

Once setup is complete, the game proceeds as standard FIDE chess from the resulting position. White moves first.

- ♦ **Castling** is available if King and Rooks are on standard squares and neither has moved.
 - ♦ **Check during setup:** If a player's placement would put their own King in check, that placement is illegal. The player must place their King on a square where it is not in check.
 - ♦ Standard FIDE rules apply: en passant, promotion, stalemate (draw), checkmate (loss).
-

CVP (CHESS VARIANT PAGES) VERSION

SETUP PHASE

Both players simultaneously and secretly arrange their own 8 back-rank pieces in any order they choose on their back rank. There is no alternating; each player writes down or otherwise commits to their arrangement before revealing it.

PLACEMENT CONSTRAINTS

- ♦ **Bishops** must be on opposite-colored squares.
- ♦ **King** must be placed between the two Rooks (required for potential castling legality – if King is not between Rooks, castling is unavailable).
- ♦ No other placement restrictions.

REVEAL AND GAME

Once both players have finalized their arrangements, both back ranks are revealed simultaneously and the game begins. White moves first.

STRATEGY NOTES

The central question of Placement Chess is the trade-off between customizing the position for your preferred middlegame structure and retaining the flexibility of castling. Placing the King and Rooks in standard formation allows castling but surrenders setup creativity. Moving the King off e1 can create unusual attacking setups but eliminates castling.

Common setups concentrate piece power in the center: placing the Queen near the center, activating Bishops on open diagonals from the first move, or deploying Knights closer to the center files. Because both players choose simultaneously (CVP) or see each other's choices unfold (Bronstein), scouting and adaptation are strategic elements unique to Placement Chess.

ATTRIBUTION

Bronstein version attributed to David Bronstein, Soviet-era grandmaster and chess theorist. CVP version published on the Chess Variant Pages (chessvariants.com). Public domain rule sets.

CHESS · VARIANT 112 OF 153

Pocket Knight Chess

8×8

BOARD

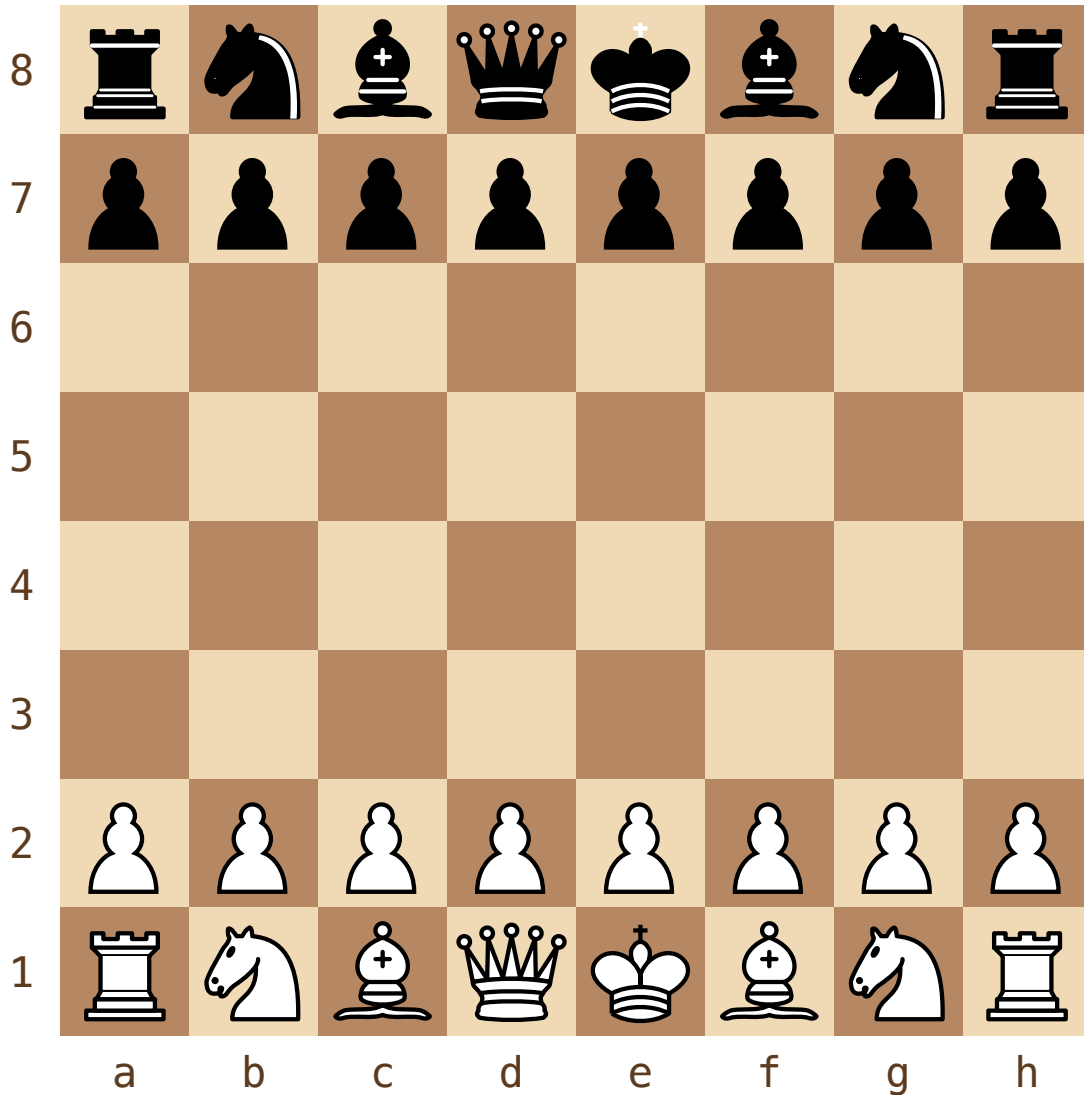
2

PLAYERS

Pocket Knight Chess

By Ed Friedlander, 2001.

OVERVIEW



Pocket Knight Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=pocket-knight>

Pocket Knight Chess is standard chess with one addition: each player begins the game holding a spare Knight in their “pocket.” Once in the game, a player may spend their move to drop this Knight onto any empty square instead of moving a piece on the board.

SETUP

Standard FIDE starting position. Each player also holds one Knight in reserve (not on the board).

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq – 0 1
(Plus one White Knight and one Black Knight in pocket)

RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply, with the following addition:

THE POCKET DROP

- Once per game, on their turn, a player may **drop their pocket Knight** onto any empty square on the board instead of making a normal move.
- The square must be empty.
- A drop counts as a full move.
- Each player may only do this **once** in the game.
- A player who drops their Knight may not do so again, even if the Knight is later captured.

ALL OTHER RULES

Castling, en passant, promotion, and all other FIDE rules apply normally.

STRATEGY NOTES

The pocket Knight provides a powerful surprise weapon: it can be dropped on any empty square, making it useful for outpost manoeuvres, sudden forks, or reinforcing a collapsing defense. Because the drop can only happen once, timing is crucial — spending it too early may waste the element of surprise; spending it too late may be too little.

Source: chessvariants.com/play/erf/PocketKt.html

CHESS · VARIANT 113 OF 153

Poison Chess

8×8

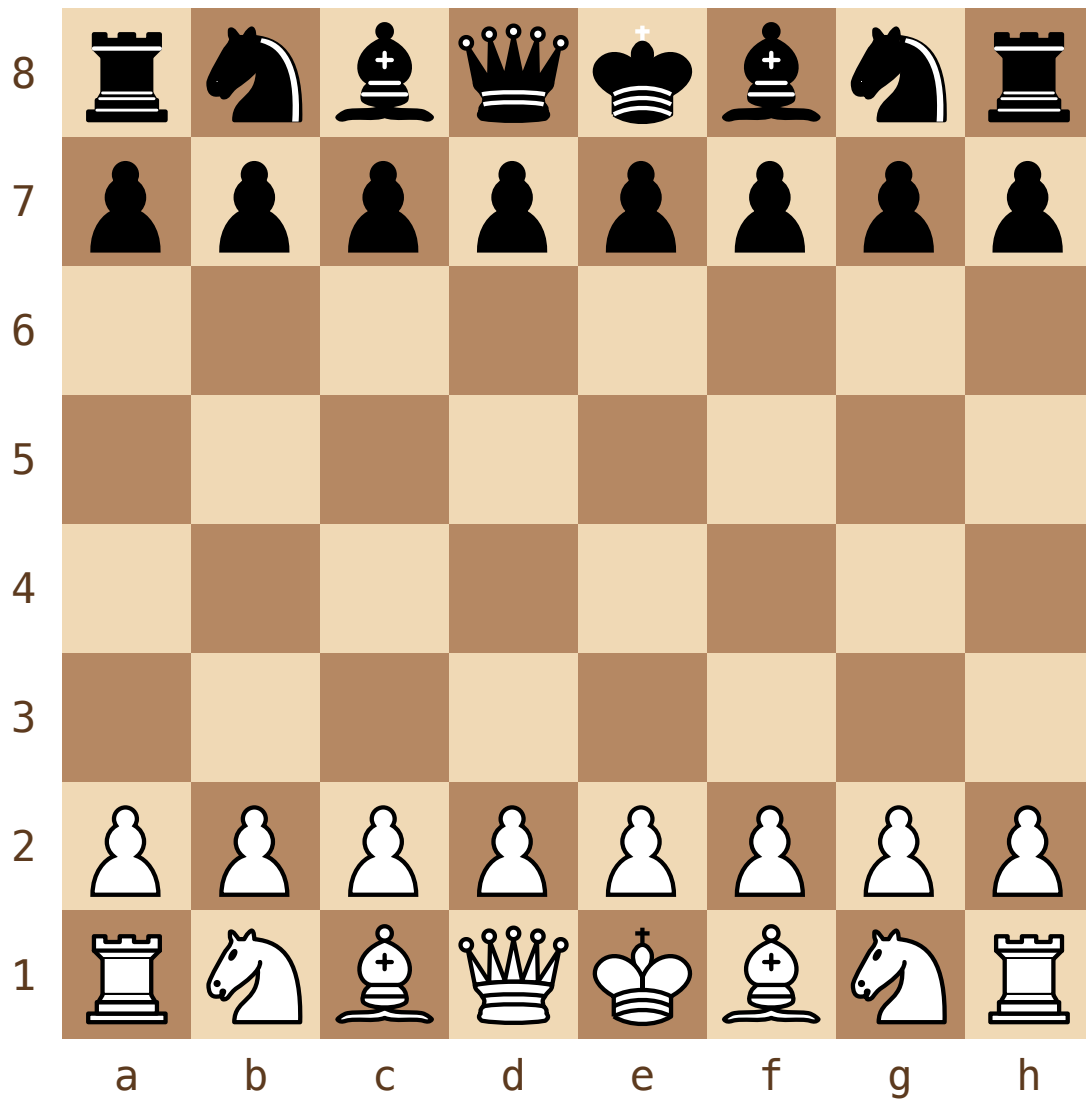
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

POISON CHESS

Captures leave toxic residue. When a piece is captured, that square becomes poisoned for 3 turns. Any non-King piece that lands on a poisoned square is destroyed.



Poison Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=poison-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- When a capture occurs, the capture square becomes poisoned for 3 turns.
- Any non-King piece that moves onto a poisoned square is immediately destroyed (removed from the board).
- The capturing piece itself is NOT destroyed by the poison it creates — only by pre-existing poison on that square.
- Kings cannot move onto poisoned squares — moving to poison is illegal for the King.
- Poison wears off after 3 full turns (both players moving counts as one tick).
- Multiple poisons can stack on the same square.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Poison creates dangerous no-go zones that restrict mobility. Exchange sequences leave clouds of poison that reshape the board. Sacrifice a minor piece to poison a critical square near the enemy King. Avoid moving valuable pieces through recently contested territory.

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 114 OF 153

Progressive

8×8

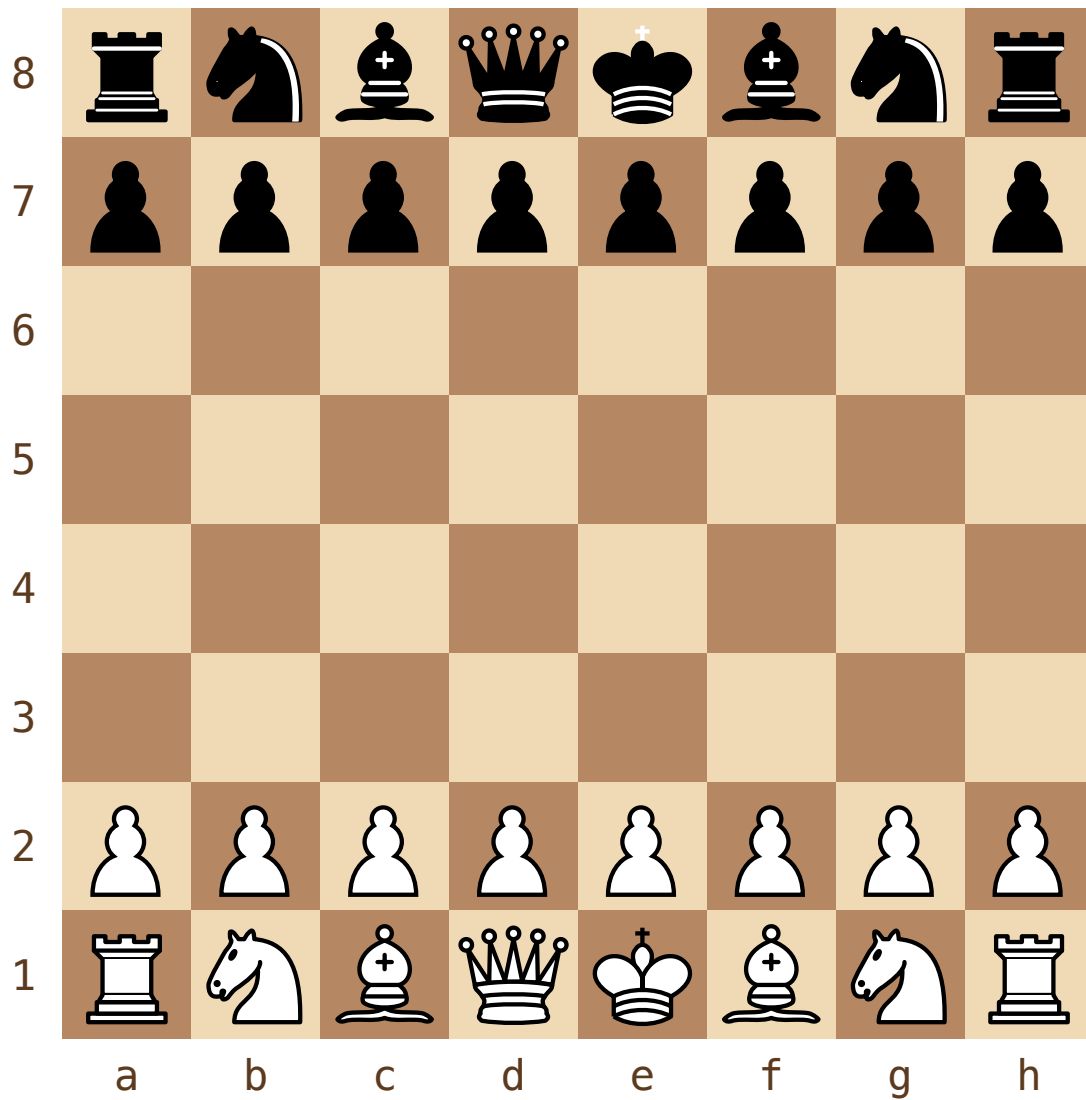
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

PROGRESSIVE

Each turn, the number of moves you make escalates: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5... Delivering check ends your turn early regardless of how many moves remain.



Progressive Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=progressive>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ White's first turn: 1 move. Black's first turn: 2 moves. White's second turn: 3 moves. This pattern continues.
- ♦ If you deliver check at any point during your turn, your turn ends immediately. You cannot continue moving after giving check.
- ♦ You may not move into or through check on any individual move.
- ♦ Captures are normal – you can capture multiple pieces in a single turn.
- ♦ Castling counts as one of your moves for that turn.
- ♦ En passant is available only if the double-step happened on the opponent's immediately preceding sequence of moves.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (delivered as part of giving check, which ends your turn).

STRATEGY

Early turns play like normal chess, but the game explodes around turn 4-5. Planning multi-move sequences that culminate in check is the core skill. Leaving pieces undefended is catastrophic because your opponent's next turn gives them enough moves to reposition AND capture. Material sacrifices that limit the opponent's useful moves become strong.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant (Italian Progressive rules). Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 115 OF 153

Racing Kings

8×8

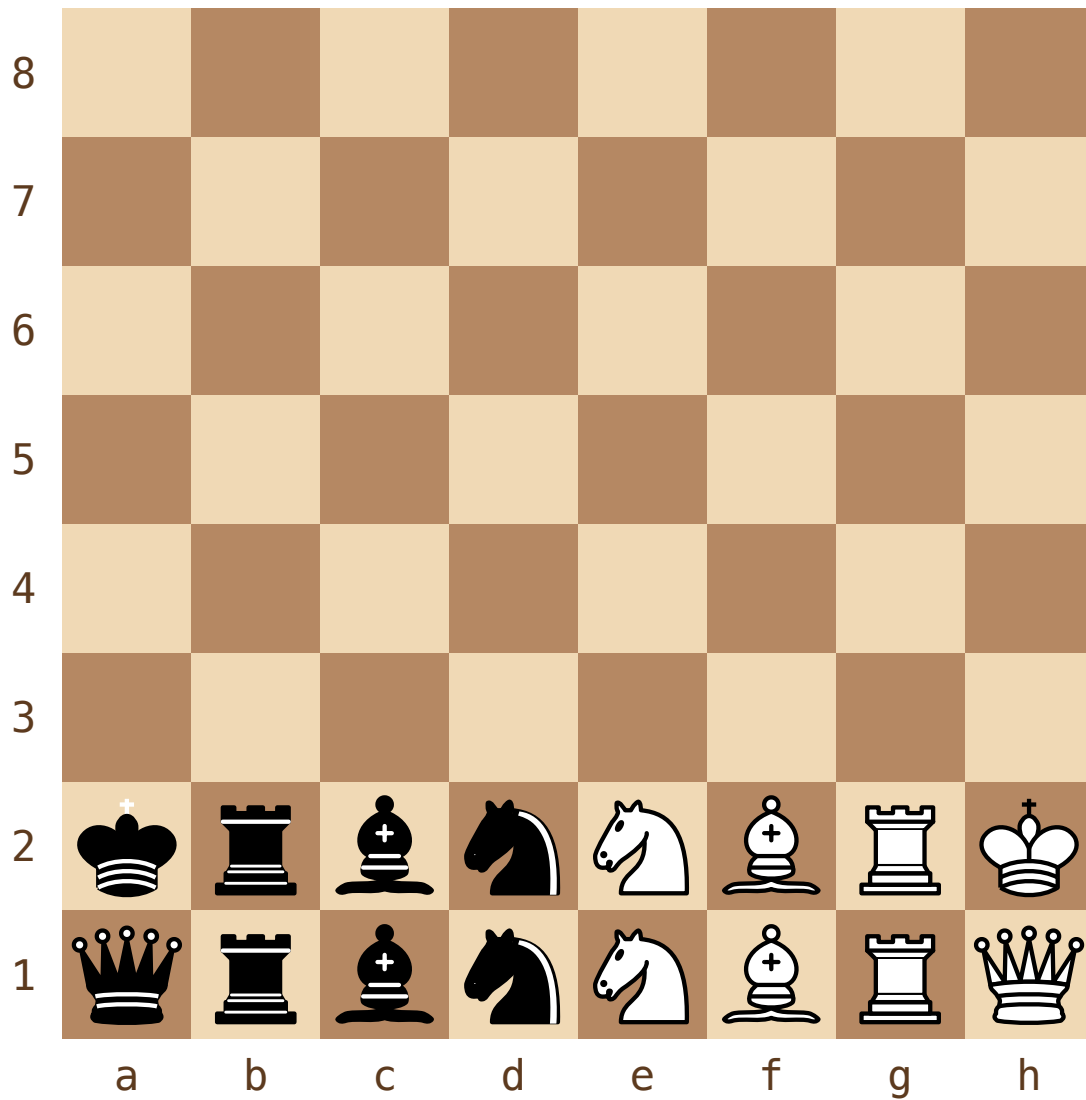
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

RACING KINGS

No checks allowed. Race your King to rank 8. A pure positional race with no violence.



Racing Kings – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=racing-kings>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: All pieces start on ranks 1–2 in a specific non-standard arrangement. No pawns.

FEN: 8/8/8/8/8/8/krbnNBRK/qrbnNBRQ w - - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ No move may give check (to either King). Any move that would place either King in check is illegal.
- ♦ No castling. No pawns. No pawn promotion.

WIN CONDITION

First player to move their King to rank 8 wins. If White reaches rank 8, Black gets one more move – if Black also reaches rank 8, the game is a draw.

STRATEGY

Block your opponent's King path while clearing your own. Rooks and Queens control files; Bishops control diagonals. The constraint against giving check makes many "obvious" blocking moves illegal.

ATTRIBUTION

Vernon R. Parton, 1961. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 116 OF 153

Raumschach

5×5×5 (3D)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

Raumschach

Raumschach ("Space Chess" in German) is a three-dimensional chess variant invented by Ferdinand Maack in 1907. It is played on five stacked 5×5 boards, each called a **level**, giving a total space of 5×5×5 = 125 squares. Raumschach adds one new piece to the standard set: the **Unicorn**, which slides along the triagonal axes of the three-dimensional board.

THE BOARD

The board consists of five levels, labelled **A** through **E** from bottom (White's side) to top (Black's side). Each level is a 5×5 grid with files **a–e** and ranks **1–5**.

Squares are written as **Level + file + rank**. For example, **Bc3** means Level B, file c, rank 3. **Aa1** is the bottom-left corner of the lowest level.

White's pieces occupy levels A and B at the start; Black's occupy levels D and E. Level C is empty.

STARTING POSITION

WHITE (RANKS 1-2 OF LEVELS A AND B)

Level A, Rank 1: Rook(a), Knight(b), King©, Knight(d), Rook(e) **Level A, Rank 2:** five Pawns (Aa2–Ae2)

Level B, Rank 1: Bishop(a), Unicorn(b), Queen©, Bishop(d), Unicorn(e) **Level B, Rank 2:** five Pawns (Ba2–Be2)

BLACK (RANKS 4-5 OF LEVELS D AND E)

Level D, Rank 5: Bishop(a), Unicorn(b), Queen©, Bishop(d), Unicorn(e) **Level D, Rank 4:** five Pawns (Da4–De4)

Level E, Rank 5: Rook(a), Knight(b), King©, Knight(d), Rook(e) **Level E, Rank 4:** five Pawns (Ea4–Ee4)

Each side begins with 20 pieces: 2 Rooks, 2 Knights, 2 Bishops, 2 Unicorns, 1 Queen, 1 King, and 10 Pawns.

The engine `.setup` array above encodes this as one FEN-style row-group per level (A through E), matching the pattern already proven for Gygax Chess's three-level board, using U for Unicorn to avoid clashing with Knight's standard N.

PIECE MOVEMENT

In three-dimensional chess, movement is defined by how many of the three axes (rank, file, level) change simultaneously:

- ♦ **Orthogonal (1 axis):** only rank, only file, or only level changes
- ♦ **Diagonal (2 axes):** any two axes change simultaneously
- ♦ **Triagonal (3 axes):** all three axes change simultaneously, one step each

ROOK

Slides any number of squares along a **single axis** (rank, file, or level). Cannot jump over pieces. In 3D space the Rook has 6 orthogonal sliding directions ($\pm$ rank, $\pm$ file, $\pm$ level).

BISHOP

Slides any number of squares along a **two-axis diagonal** (rank+file, rank+level, or file+level, in any combination of signs). Cannot jump over pieces. In 3D space the Bishop has 12 diagonal sliding directions.

UNICORN (U)

The Unicorn slides any number of squares along a **triagonal** — moving simultaneously one step in all three axes with each step. Cannot jump over pieces. In 3D space the Unicorn has 8 triagonal directions (all 8 combinations of $\pm$ rank, $\pm$ file, $\pm$ level).

The Unicorn is colour-bound within the 3D lattice: on a 5×5×5 board, triagonals partition squares into two disjoint sets. A Unicorn can never change its triagonal colour.

QUEEN

Combines the Rook and Bishop (orthogonal and two-axis diagonal slides). Does **not** include the Unicorn's triagonal move. Cannot jump over pieces.

KNIGHT

Leaps to any square exactly **2 steps in one axis and 1 step in another** (the standard chess knight jump, extended to 3D). This gives up to 24 destinations from a central square. Always jumps over intervening pieces.

KING

Moves one step in any direction — orthogonal, two-axis diagonal, or triagonal — giving up to 26 possible destinations from an interior square. Cannot move into check.

PAWN

White Pawns move toward Black's starting area (increasing rank and/or increasing level).

Non-capturing moves (White):

- ♦ **Straight-forward:** advance one rank on the same level (e.g., Aa2 → Aa3)
- ♦ **Straight-upward:** advance one level at the same file and rank (e.g., Aa2 → Ba2)

Capturing moves (White):

- ♦ **Diagonally-forward:** advance one rank while also moving one step in file (same level, e.g., Aa2 → Ab3)
- ♦ **Diagonally-forward-upward:** advance one rank and one level simultaneously (e.g., Aa2 → Bb3)

Black Pawns move in the opposite direction (decreasing rank and/or decreasing level), with equivalent capture directions.

Pawn rules:

- ♦ No initial two-square advance. All Pawn moves are one step.
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ White Pawns promote on **rank 5 of level A or B**. Black Pawns promote on **rank 1 of level D or E**. Pawns that move into levels C, D, or E without reaching rank 5 of a qualifying level do not promote there.

SPECIAL RULES

- ♦ **No castling.**
- ♦ **No en passant.**
- ♦ **No double pawn push.**
- ♦ Stalemate is a draw.

NOTATION

Squares are written as Level (A–E), file (a–e), rank (1–5). Examples:

- ♦ **Aa1** — Level A, file a, rank 1 (White's back-left corner)
- ♦ **Bc3** — Level B, file c, rank 3 (centre of level B)
- ♦ **Ec5** — Level E, file c, rank 5 (Black's back-centre)

Moves: piece letter, origin square, hyphen, destination. Example: **R Aa1–Aa4** (Rook from Aa1 to Aa4).

ATTRIBUTION

Raumschach was invented by Ferdinand Maack (Germany, 1907). Rules sourced from The Chess Variant Pages at chessvariants.com/3d.dir/3d5.html.

CHESS · VARIANT 117 OF 153

Recruitment Chess

8×8

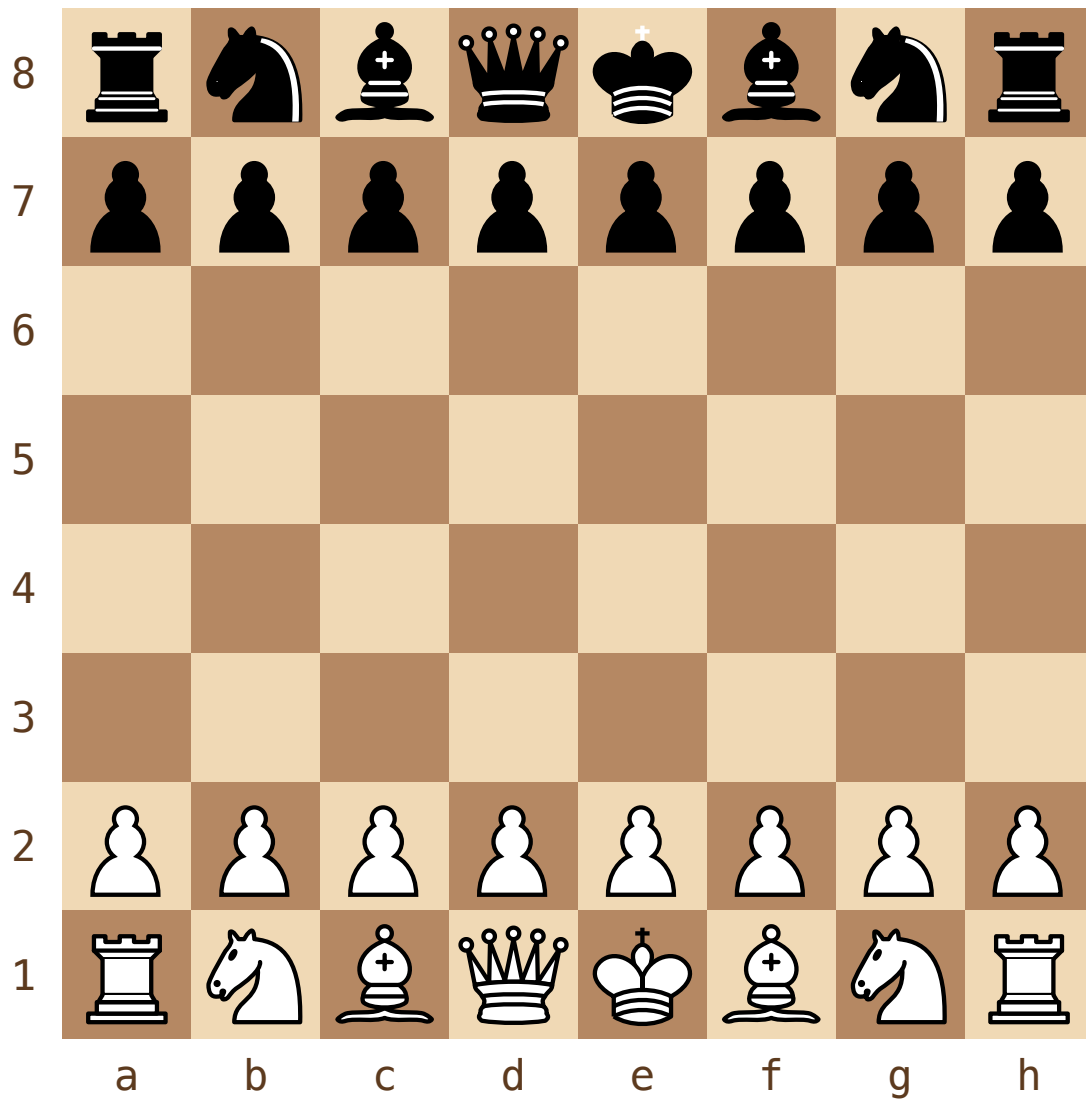
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

RECRUITMENT CHESS

Captured pieces switch sides. When you capture, the taken piece flips colour and appears on the square your capturing piece vacated. The board fills with turncoats.



Recruitment Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=recruitment-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ When a piece captures, the captured piece switches colour and is placed on the square the capturing piece moved from.
- ♦ Kings cannot be recruited (capturing the King ends the game normally).
- ♦ En passant captures also recruit – the captured pawn appears on the captor's starting square.
- ♦ Recruited pieces can move on the very next turn.
- ♦ All other standard chess rules apply.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Every capture is a double swing – you gain a piece AND the opponent gains a defector behind your lines. This makes tactical exchanges far more complex. Avoid capturing pieces that would create dangerous recruits in your back rank. Sometimes not capturing is the best move.

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 118 OF 153

Rifle Chess

8×8

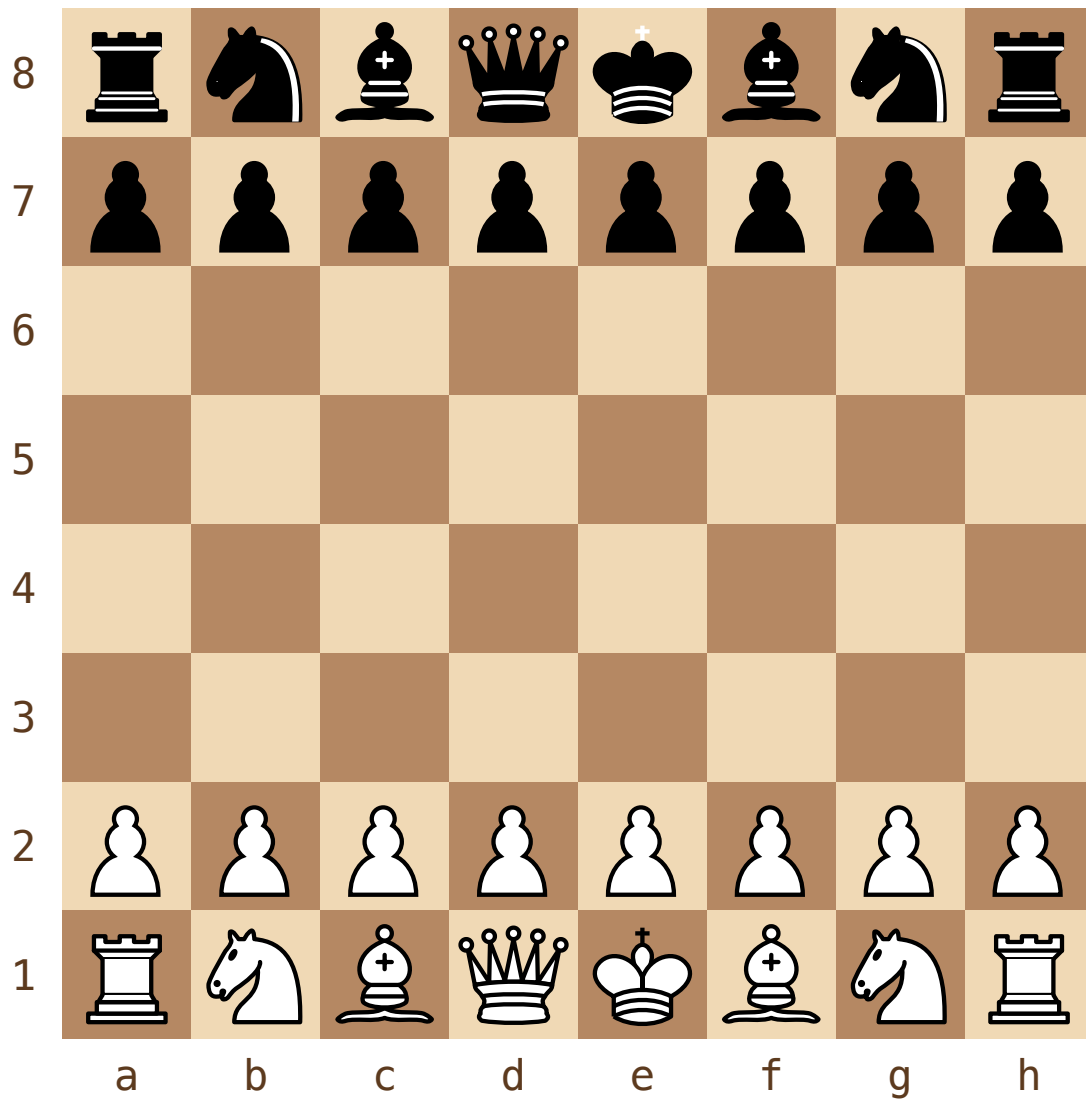
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

RIFLE CHESS

Capturing pieces stay on their original square – they “shoot” the target from a distance.



Rifle Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=rifle>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard chess rules apply except:

- When a piece captures, it does NOT move to the captured piece's square. Instead, the captured piece is removed and the capturing piece stays where it is.
- En passant: the capturing pawn stays on its current square; the enemy pawn is removed.
- Castling: unchanged (no capture involved).
- Pawn promotion: a pawn can only promote by moving to the last rank WITHOUT capturing. If it captures a piece on the last rank, it stays on its current rank (since it doesn't move to the capture square).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate (adjusted for rifle mechanics — a piece threatens the King from its current position without needing to occupy the King's square).

STRATEGY

Pieces become much harder to dislodge since capturing doesn't occupy their square. Batteries (multiple pieces lined up) are devastating because a front piece can "shoot" without opening the line. The value of centralisation increases enormously.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Also known as "Stationary Capture Chess." Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 119 OF 153

Rollerball

40-square ring (7×7 minus 3×3 centre)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ROLLERBALL

Rollerball is a chess variant invented by Jean-Louis Cazaux in 1999, entered in the Chess Variant Pages 40-squares contest. It is named after the 1975 science-fiction film about a violent ring-track sport. The game is played on a **40-square double-ring board** formed by taking a 7×7 grid and removing the 3×3 centre, leaving an outer ring and an inner ring. Each player has only 6 pieces.

THE BOARD

The board is a 7×7 grid (files a–g, ranks 1–7) with the centre 3×3 (c3–e5) removed, leaving 40 squares in two concentric rings:

- ♦ **Outer ring:** 24 squares – the perimeter of the 7×7 grid
- ♦ **Inner ring:** 16 squares – the perimeter of the 5×5 interior region surrounding the removed centre

The board has four natural zones: **South** (White’s starting side), **North** (Black’s starting side), **West**, and **East**. White plays first; play proceeds **mostly clockwise**.

STARTING POSITION

Each side starts with 6 pieces occupying two ranks at their home zone, arranged point-symmetrically (180° rotation) rather than mirrored – White’s arrangement is Black’s arrangement rotated, not reflected. Transcribed from the starting-position diagram at chessvariants.com/40.dir/rollerball/index.html:

SQUARE	PIECE
c7	Rook (Black)
d7	Bishop (Black)
e7	Pawn (Black)
c6	Rook (Black)
d6	King (Black)
e6	Pawn (Black)
c2	Pawn (White)
d2	King (White)
e2	Rook (White)
c1	Pawn (White)
d1	Bishop (White)
e1	Rook (White)

All other squares (including the full inner ring and the remainder of the outer ring) are empty at setup.

PIECES

Each side has: 1 King, 1 Bishop, 2 Rooks, 2 Pawns (6 pieces total).

KING

Moves and captures one square to any adjacent square (orthogonal or diagonal), as in standard chess. The King **may not move to a square where it can be captured**. The King is the only piece with fully symmetric movement.

ROOK

Slides any number of squares **forward** or **sideways** along its row or column. May also move **one square backward** (orthogonally only — no backward sliding). On the external ring, the Rook has **one rebound allowed on the corners** of the board. The source notes the Rook is especially powerful on b2 (and, by the board's rotational symmetry, a6, f7, g2), where it can deliver mate unassisted.

BISHOP

Slides diagonally **forward** any number of squares, with **one rebound allowed** on the external or internal ring sides. May also move **one square diagonally backward**. Does not slide diagonally backward beyond one square. The white diagonals form a secondary ring joining the mid-points of the external sides, where the Bishop is especially strong.

PAWN

Moves and captures **forward** (straight or diagonally). Promotes to Rook or Bishop upon reaching the starting square of the opponent's Pawns. Promotion to a Bishop on a dark square is not recommended (per the source).

WIN CONDITIONS

There are two ways to win:

- 1 **Checkmate** the opponent's King.
- 2 **King reaches the opponent's King starting square** — but only if it arrived there by travelling **clockwise**.

Draw: stalemate or three-fold repetition.

ATTRIBUTION

Rollerball by Jean-Louis Cazaux, invented 1999, entered in the 40-squares contest. Rules and starting-position diagram documented at chessvariants.com/40.dir/rollerball/index.html.

CHESS · VARIANT 120 OF 153

Romanchenko's Chess

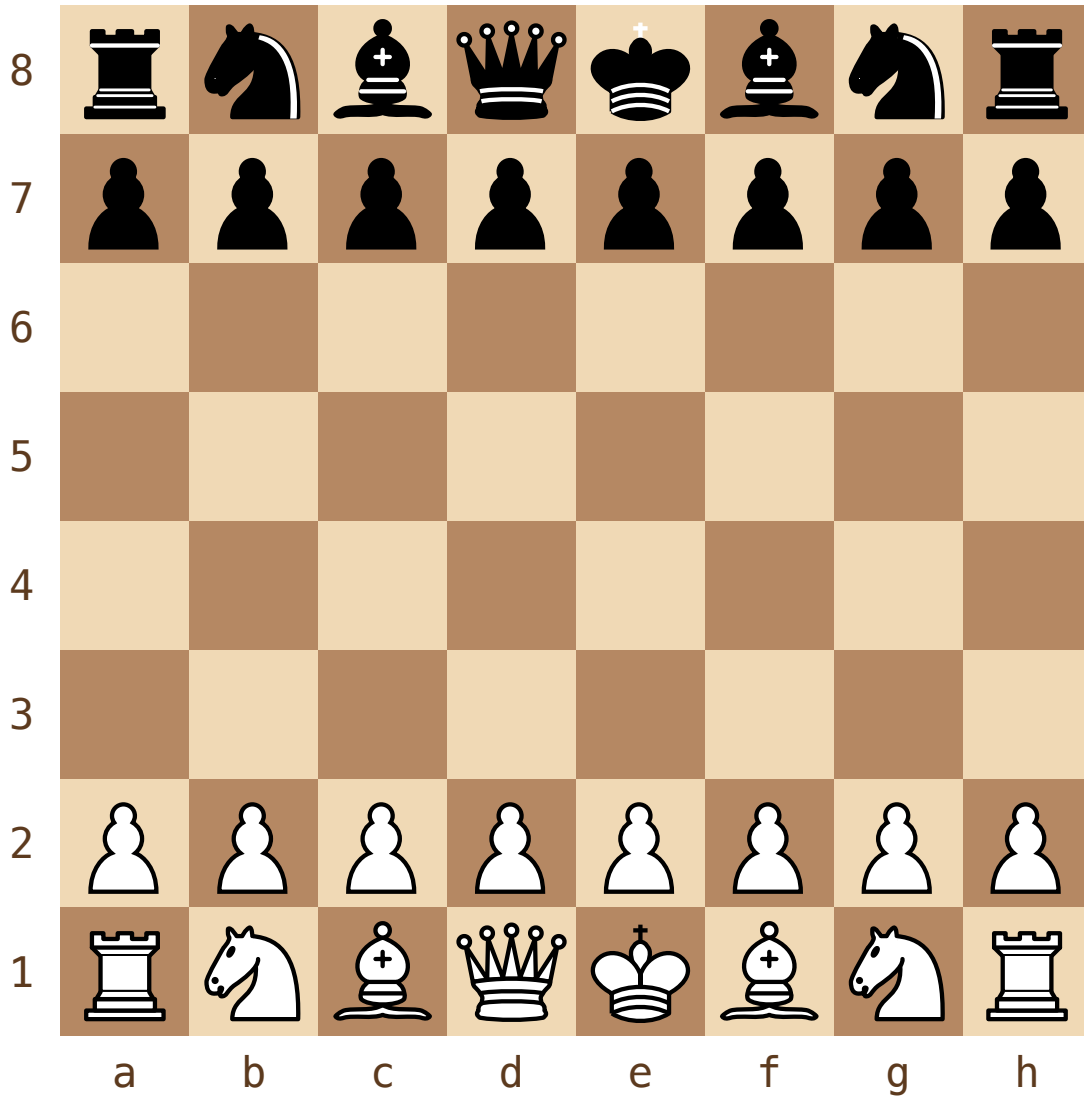
Modified 8×8 (broken columns)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ROMANCHENKO'S CHESS



Romanchenko's Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=romanchenkos-chess>

Romanchenko's Chess is a chess variant by Soviet chess trainer V. Romanchenko that uses **standard FIDE chess pieces and rules** on a board with modified geometry. The board has **broken columns** – certain file columns are displaced or interrupted at specific ranks, breaking the standard 8x8 grid alignment. The game was designed as a **pedagogical tool**: by making standard opening patterns inapplicable, it forces students to think analytically from first principles rather than relying on memorized theory.

THE BOARD

The board retains 64 squares but has a non-standard column structure – some files are offset or broken at specific ranks. This creates a board where:

- ♦ Rooks and Queens cannot travel along a continuous straight file through the whole board
- ♦ Standard opening patterns do not apply
- ♦ Players must evaluate each position on its own merits

The exact column geometry is visible in the Jocly implementation at chessvariants.com/play/jocly/romanchenko-chess.

RULES

All standard FIDE chess rules apply without modification:

- ♦ **Castling:** permitted
- ♦ **En passant:** permitted
- ♦ **Pawn double move:** permitted on first move
- ♦ **Promotion:** standard
- ♦ **Win:** Checkmate the opponent's King

Only the board geometry differs from Orthodox chess.

PEDAGOGICAL PURPOSE

Romanchenko used this setup to train his pupils to “think rather than imitate.” By breaking the standard column structure, familiar tactical motifs (pins, skewers, files) must be recalculated. The game is not designed as a standalone variant for competitive play, but as a training exercise.

ATTRIBUTION

Romanchenko's Chess was created by Soviet chess trainer V. Romanchenko. Jocly implementation by Michel Gutierrez and Jérôme Choain. Source: chessvariants.com/play/jocly/romanchenko-chess

CHESS · VARIANT 121 OF 153

S-Chess (Seirawan Chess)

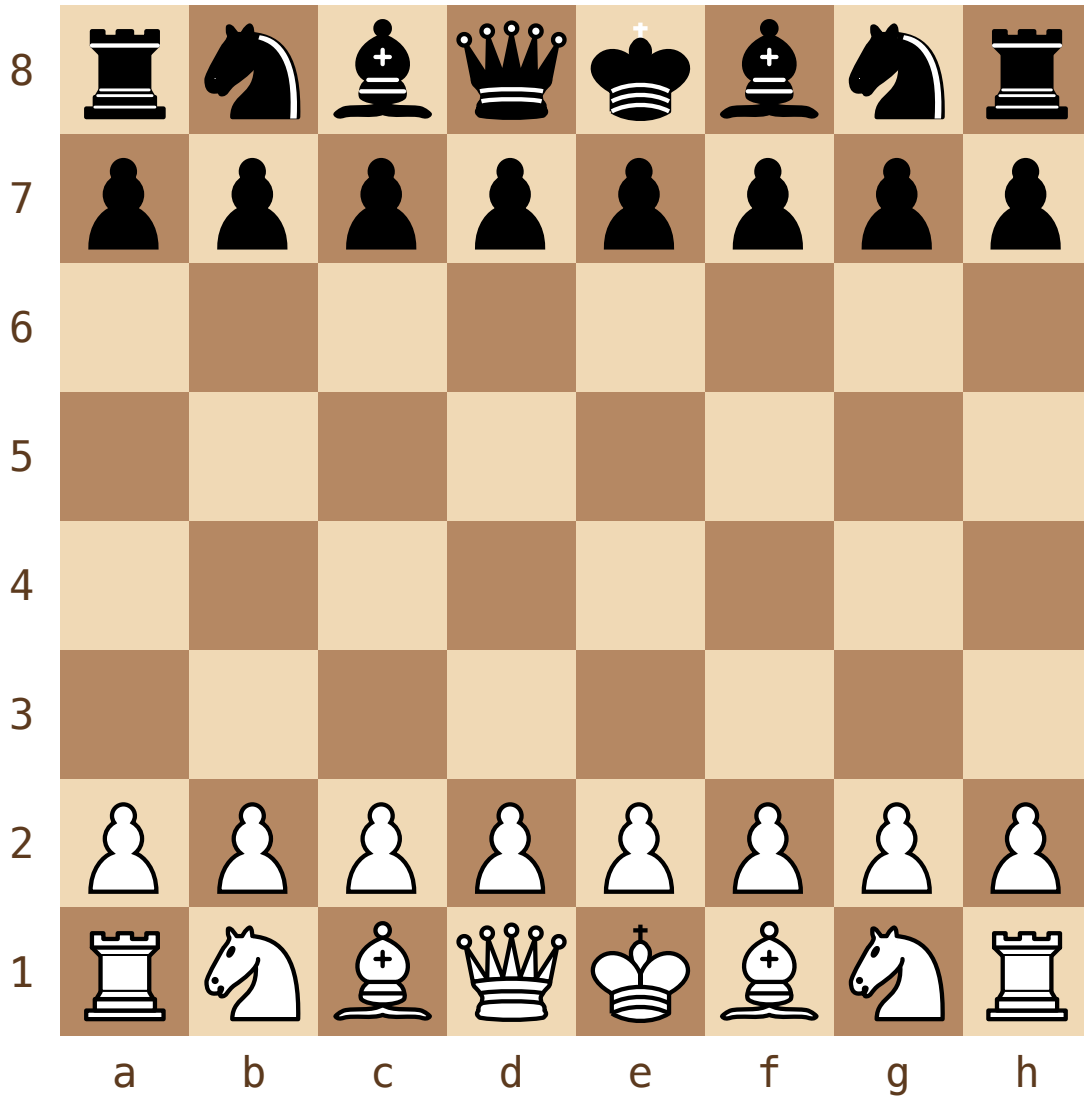
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

S-CHESS (SEIRAWAN CHESS)



S-Chess (Seirawan Chess) – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=s-chess>

Designed by Yasser Seirawan and Jonathan Tisdall (2007). S-Chess enriches orthodox chess with two powerful new fairy pieces – the Hawk and the Elephant – without changing the starting position. Instead, these pieces enter play through a gating mechanic: when any back-rank piece leaves its home square for the first time, the owner may simultaneously place one reserve piece onto the vacated square.

NEW PIECES

PIECE	SYMBOL	MOVEMENT
Hawk	H	Leaps 1 or 2 squares in any diagonal direction, AND jumps as a Knight. Combines Bishop-leap-1-or-2 with Knight.
Elephant	E	Slides orthogonally as a Rook (unlimited), AND jumps as a Knight. Combines Rook with Knight (the Chancellor compound).

Both pieces leap over intervening pieces for all their moves.

STARTING POSITION AND THE HAND

The board begins in the standard FIDE position. Each player holds one Hawk and one Elephant in reserve — they do not appear on the board at game start.

```

8 ♔ ♚ ♜ ♝ ♞ ♟ ♠ ♡
7 ♙ ♘ ♗ ♖ ♕ ♔ ♓ ♒
6 . . . . . . . .
5 . . . . . . . .
4 . . . . . . . .
3 . . . . . . . .
2 ♠ ♡ ♜ ♝ ♞ ♟ ♠ ♡
1 ♔ ♓ ♒ ♕ ♖ ♗ ♘ ♙
  a b c d e f g h

```

White hand: Hawk (H), Elephant (E)

Black hand: Hawk (H), Elephant (E)

THE GATE

Whenever a back-rank piece moves off its starting square for the first time, the moving player may optionally place one piece from their hand onto the square just vacated. This simultaneous placement is the gate.

Gate rules:

- ♦ Gating is optional. The player may choose not to gate and keep the piece in hand.
- ♦ The gated piece must go onto the square the moving piece just left — not any other square.
- ♦ Pawns cannot trigger a gate. Only pieces that began the game on rank 1 (White) or rank 8 (Black) can gate.
- ♦ On castling, the player may gate one piece: either onto the King's starting square or onto the Rook's starting square — not both.
- ♦ A player may gate even if the gated piece would give check.
- ♦ Hand pieces are never lost from the hand except by gating. They may be held indefinitely.
- ♦ Once a piece has been gated it is in normal play on the board.

PIECE MOVEMENT REFERENCE

All standard FIDE pieces move as in orthodox chess.

PIECE	MOVEMENT
King	1 square any direction; castling as in FIDE
Queen	Any distance, any direction
Rook	Any distance, orthogonally
Bishop	Any distance, diagonally
Knight	(2,1) jump; leaps over other pieces
Pawn	1 forward (2 from start); diagonal capture; en passant; promotes on rank 8
Hawk	Leap 1 or 2 diagonally in any direction, or jump as Knight
Elephant	Slide orthogonally unlimited, or jump as Knight

CHECK, CHECKMATE, AND STALEMATE

Standard FIDE rules. Gating a piece that puts the opponent's King in check is legal. A player may not gate a piece that leaves their own King in check.

NOTATION

Standard algebraic notation with a gating suffix. After the moving piece's destination square, add a slash and the gated piece symbol followed by the square gated to.

Example: 1. e4/He1 — pawn moves e2-e4, Hawk gated onto e1.

If no gate occurs: standard notation with no suffix.

STRATEGY NOTES

The Hawk and Elephant are among the most powerful pieces possible on an 8×8 board — each substantially stronger than a Rook. Their arrival through gating means the opening resembles standard chess, but mid-game character shifts sharply when they enter behind an advancing front line. Key decisions: when to gate (too early risks the piece to early attack; too late wastes development tempo), and where (which home square to vacate first determines which piece can be gated and at what tempo).

The Hawk's combined diagonal-leap-and-knight threat creates forks across long ranges. The Elephant's Rook-plus-Knight compound threatens simultaneously along ranks and files and from Knight-jump distance, making it devastatingly effective in open positions.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Yasser Seirawan and Jonathan Tisdall. Publicly released 2007. Open rules available at seirawanchess.com.
Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 122 OF 153

Senterej

8×8

BOARD

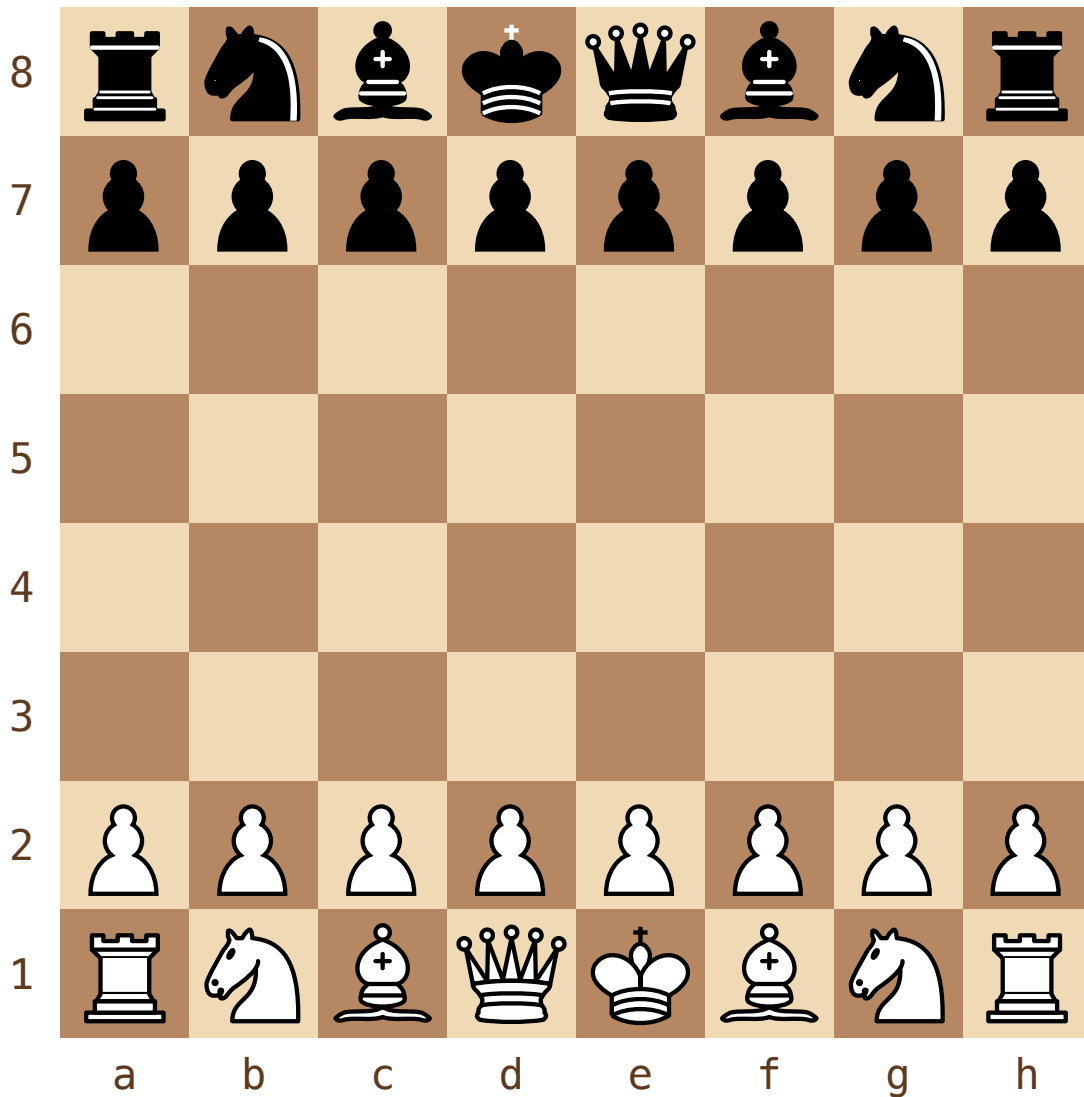
2

PLAYERS

Senterej

Senterej (Amharic: ሰንጥረዬ) – Ethiopian and Eritrean chess. The last popular survival of Shatranj; became extinct after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s.

OVERVIEW



Senterej – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=senterej>

Senterej is the traditional chess of Ethiopia and Eritrea, descended directly from Shatranj. Its most distinctive feature is the **werera** (mobilization) phase: before the first capture, both players move simultaneously and freely, watching each other and adjusting their positions. Turn-based play begins only after a piece is first captured.

SETUP

Each King stands just to the right of the centerline from its player's point of view; the Ferz stands to the King's left.

FEN: rnbkqbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w - - 0 1

(Piece legend: Q/q = Ferz, B/b = Fil, N/n = Feresenya)

White (rank 1): Rook(a1), Feresenya(b1), Fil(c1), Ferz(d1), King(e1), Fil(f1), Feresenya(g1), Rook(h1) **White (rank 2):** Pawns a2-h2

Black (rank 8): Rook(a8), Feresenya(b8), Fil(c8), King(d8), Ferz(e8), Fil(f8), Feresenya(g8), Rook(h8) **Black (rank 7):** Pawns a7-h7

Note: Black's King (d8) and Ferz (e8) are swapped compared to standard chess, as each King is to the right of its Ferz from that player's perspective.

PIECES

King (Negus): moves one step in any direction, as in standard chess.

Ferz: moves exactly one square diagonally. (Regional variation: some sources say it moves one step in any direction but can only *capture* diagonally.)

Fil / Alfil (Saba): leaps exactly two squares diagonally (the Alfil leap). Jumps over intervening pieces. Colour-bound.

Feresenya (Horseman): moves as a standard chess Knight (L-shape leap).

Der (Rook): slides any distance orthogonally, as in standard chess.

Medeq (Pawn): advances one square forward; captures one square diagonally forward. No double first move, no en passant. Promotes to Ferz upon reaching the farthest rank. (Some sources: promotes to the rank of any piece already captured.)

RULES

WERERA – MOBILIZATION PHASE

Before the first capture, **both players move simultaneously and freely**. There are no turns: each player may move any of their pieces as many times as they wish, watching the opponent's moves and adjusting their own accordingly. Moves may be retracted and substituted at will during this phase. The werera ends the moment any piece is captured; from that point on, players alternate turns as in standard chess.

TURN-BASED PLAY

After the werera ends, all remaining rules are standard Shatranj-style:

- ♦ Players alternate turns; each turn one piece moves.
- ♦ No castling.
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ No pawn double push.

WIN AND DRAW CONDITIONS

Win: Checkmate the opponent's King.

Draw – Bare King: A King that has been stripped of all pieces (excluding Pawns) cannot be mated; the game is drawn. (Only Pawns remaining – does not count as sufficient support.)

Draw – Lone Support: A King with only a single supporting piece (excluding Pawns) can only be mated before that piece has made **seven moves**. If seven moves elapse and no mate is delivered, the game is drawn.

CUSTOMS

Traditionally the board is an uncheckered red cloth marked with black or blue strips. Play is sociable: bystanders (including historically even slaves) may call out suggestions and demonstrate moves on the board. Checkmate etiquette is specific: mating with a Rook or Knight is considered inartistic; mating with a Ferz or Fil is respectable; mating with a combination of Pawns is the most praiseworthy finish.

Sources: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senterej; Murray, A History of Chess (1913), pp. 362–64; Pritchard, Encyclopedia of Chess Variants, p. 104

CHESS · VARIANT 123 OF 153

Shafran's Hexagonal Chess

70 hexes (9 files a-i)

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHAFRAN'S HEXAGONAL CHESS

Invented by Boris Shafran. Played on a smaller 70-hex board with 9 files (a through i). Castling is permitted and the pawn initial step varies by file.

SETUP

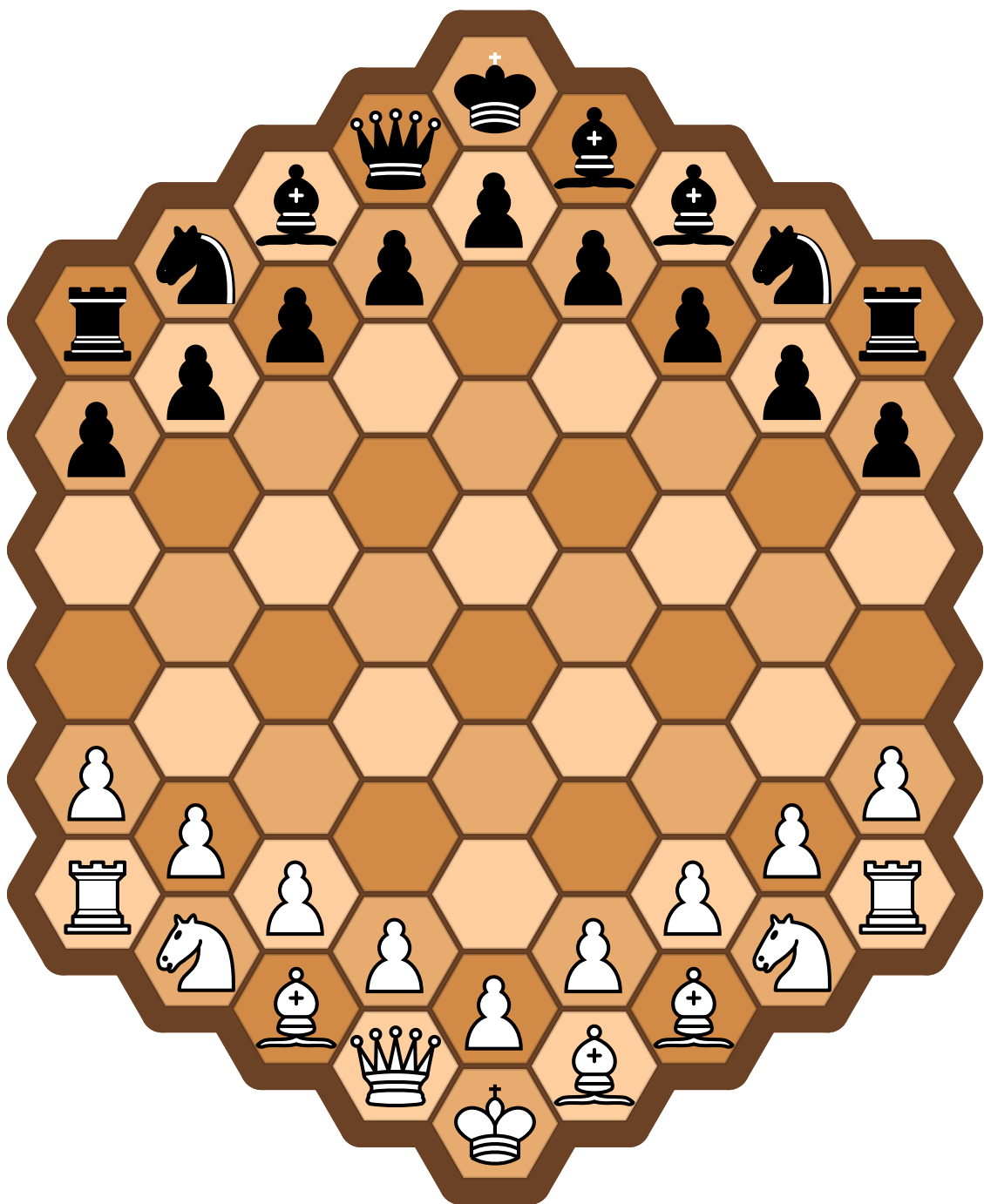
Board: 70-hex irregular hexagonal grid, 9 files (a-i), 10 ranks. File lengths: a(6), b(7), c(8), d(9), e(10), f(9), g(8), h(7), i(6). Files a-e share the bottom edge; files e-i share the top edge.

White pieces (back rank, bottom edge):

- ♦ King on e1
- ♦ Queen on d1
- ♦ Bishops on c1, f2, h4 (one per colour)
- ♦ Knights on b1, g3
- ♦ Rooks on a1, i5
- ♦ Pawns on a2, b2, c2, d2, e2, f3, g4, h5, i6 (9 pawns)

Black pieces (back rank, top edge – 180° rotation):

- ♦ King on e10
- ♦ Queen on f10
- ♦ Bishops on g10, d9, b7 (one per colour)
- ♦ Knights on h10, c8
- ♦ Rooks on i10, a6
- ♦ Pawns on i9, h9, g9, f9, e9, d8, c7, b6, a5 (9 pawns)



Shafran's Hexagonal Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=shafran>

PAWNS

Pawns capture diagonally (bishop direction, through shared corners). The initial step from the starting rank depends on the pawn's file:

FILES	INITIAL STEP
d, e, f	1, 2, or 3 cells forward
b, c, g, h	1 or 2 cells forward
a, i	1 cell only

CASTLING

Castling is permitted on both the Queen-side and King-side. The King moves two cells toward the Rook; the Rook moves to the other side of the King.

RULES

Identical to standard chess adapted for the hex grid except as noted. Stalemate is a draw.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

ATTRIBUTION

Boris Shafran. Public domain rules.

CHESS · VARIANT 124 OF 153

Shako

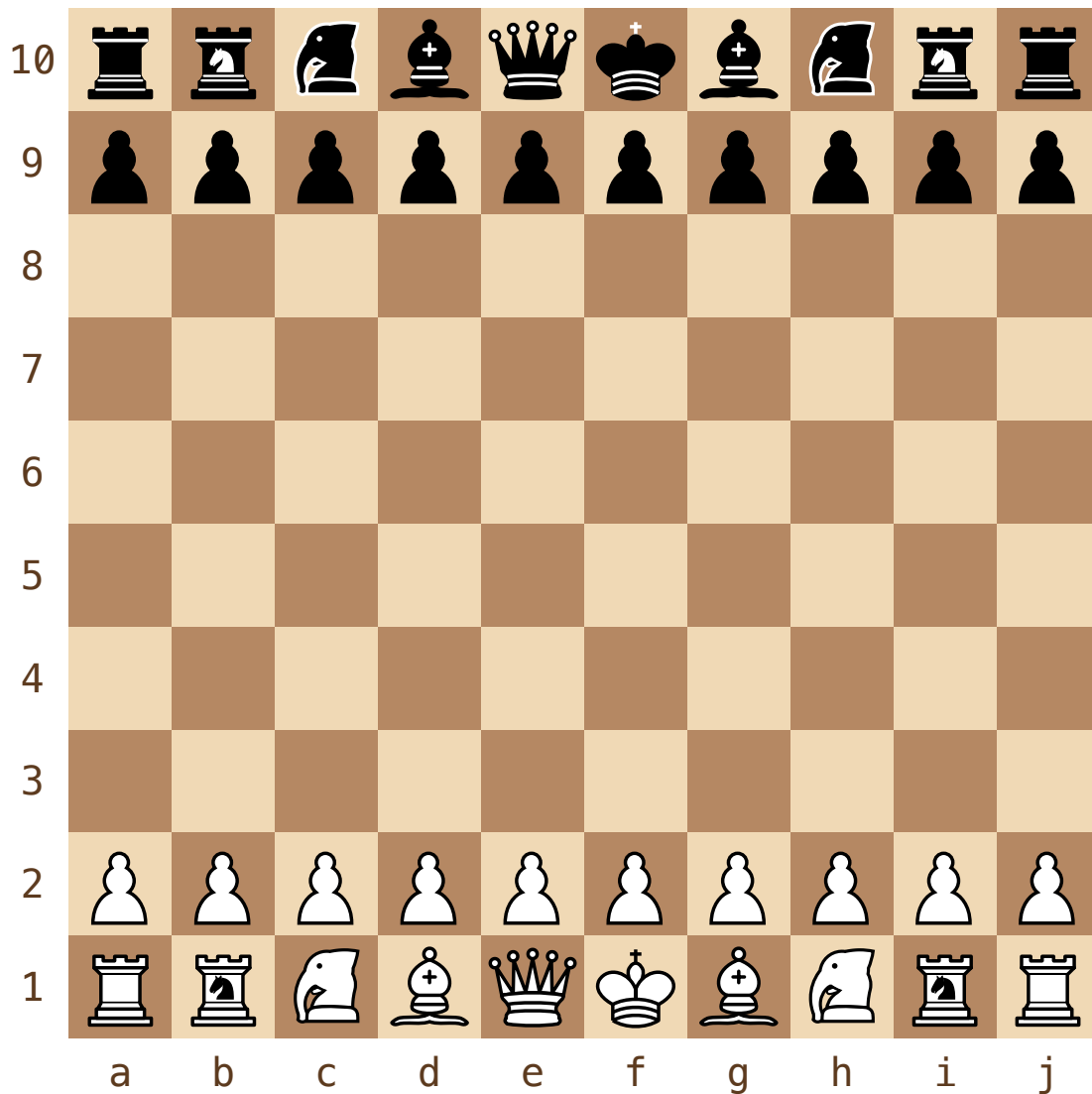
10×10

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHAKO



Shako – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=shako>

Designed by Jean-Louis Cazaux (2000). Shako extends standard chess to a 10×10 board and introduces two new pieces – the Cannon (borrowed from Chinese Chess) and the Elephant – while retaining all standard FIDE piece identities. The name means “chess” in Esperanto.

NEW PIECES

PIECE	MOVEMENT	CAPTURE
Cannon	Slides orthogonally any distance (like a Rook) to move to an empty square.	Captures by sliding orthogonally, jumping over exactly one intervening piece (the “platform”, friend or foe), and removing the first enemy piece beyond it. Cannot capture without a platform; cannot move by jumping.
Elephant	Leaps exactly 2 squares diagonally in any diagonal direction. The intervening square is irrelevant (the Elephant jumps).	Same as movement — captures the piece on the destination square.

STARTING POSITION

The board uses files a–j (10 files) and ranks 1–10.

White (rank 1):

1	R	Ca	El	B	Q	K	B	El	Ca	R
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j

From a to j: Rook, Cannon, Elephant, Bishop, Queen, King, Bishop, Elephant, Cannon, Rook.

Black mirrors on rank 10. Pawns occupy ranks 2 and 9 respectively.

White has 10 Pawns on rank 2 (a2 through j2); Black has 10 Pawns on rank 9.

Piece set per player: 2 Rooks, 2 Cannons, 2 Elephants, 2 Bishops, 1 Queen, 1 King = 10 back-rank pieces.

CANNON – DETAILED RULES

The Cannon’s movement and capture are separated:

To move (non-capture): The Cannon slides to any empty square along a rank or file, exactly as a Rook would, provided no piece is between the Cannon and the destination. The Cannon cannot pass through pieces to reach an empty square.

To capture: The Cannon slides along a rank or file, jumps over exactly one piece of either color (the platform), and lands on the first enemy piece beyond that platform, removing it. If there is no platform between the Cannon and an enemy piece, the Cannon cannot capture that piece. If there is more than one piece between the Cannon and the target, the Cannon cannot make that capture.

The Cannon cannot capture its own pieces. A friendly piece can serve as the platform for a capture without being taken.

ELEPHANT – DETAILED RULES

The Elephant leaps exactly 2 squares diagonally — landing on a square 2 diagonal steps away in any of the four diagonal directions. The Elephant always jumps: the square it passes through is irrelevant. It captures by occupying the square of the target piece.

The Elephant cannot make the jump if the destination square is occupied by a friendly piece.

STANDARD RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply with these adaptations for 10×10:

- ♦ **Pawns:** Move 1 or 2 squares forward from starting position. En passant applies if a Pawn advances 2 squares and an opposing Pawn could have captured it on the first square. Pawns promote on rank 10 (White) or rank 1 (Black).
- ♦ **Castling:** The King may castle with either Rook on the same rank, provided neither has moved, the squares between them are empty, and the King does not pass through check. Kingside castling: King moves from f1 to h1; Queenside: King moves from f1 to d1.
- ♦ **Check, checkmate, stalemate:** Standard rules. Stalemate is a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Jean-Louis Cazaux. Published 2000. Cazaux, J.L. and Schmittberger, R., "A World of Chess," McFarland, 2017. Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 125 OF 153

Shatar

8×8

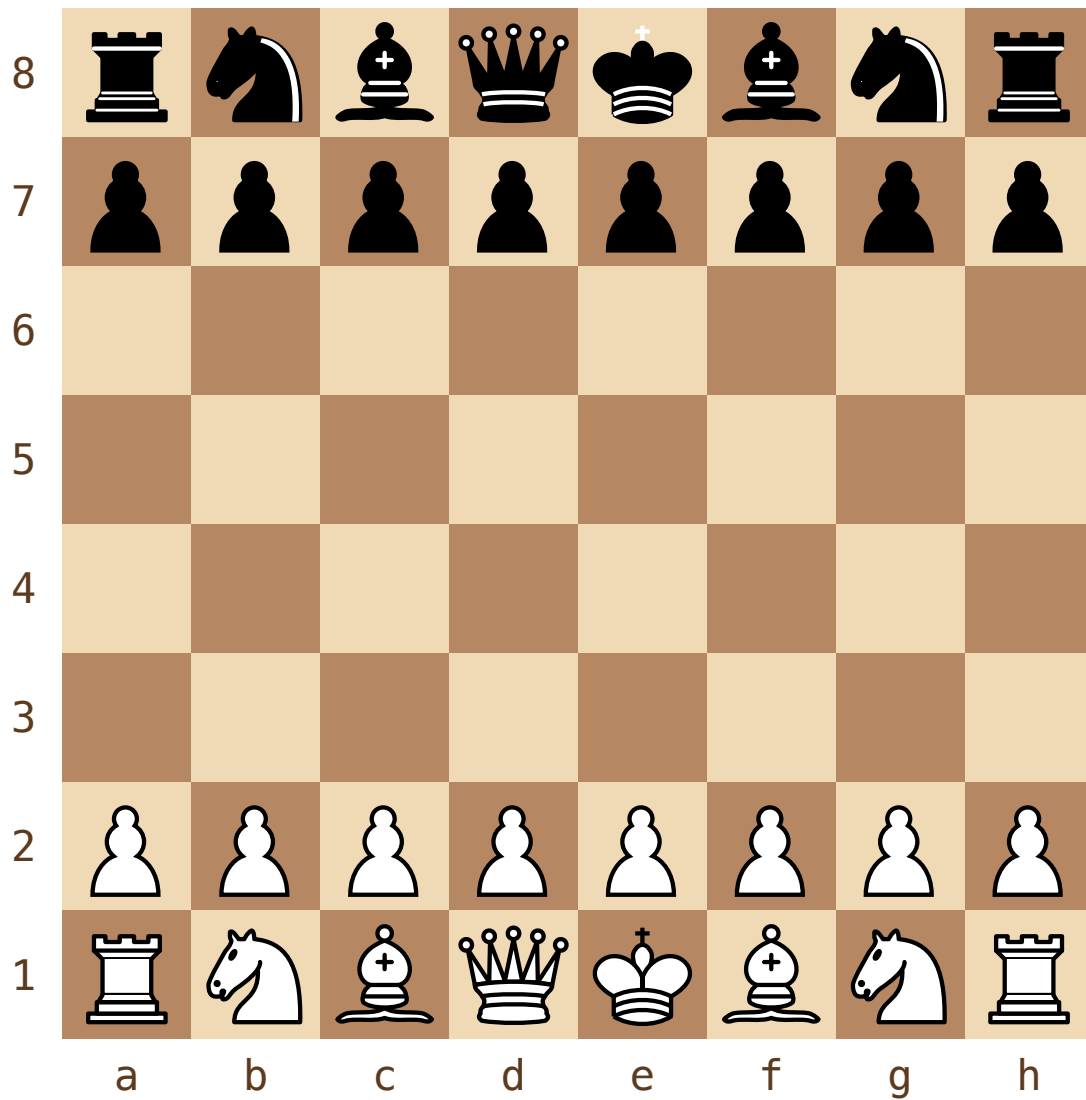
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHATAR (MONGOLIAN CHESS)

The traditional chess of Mongolia. There is no concept of check – you win by stripping the opponent of all pieces except their King.



Shatar – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=shatar>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ There is no check or checkmate. The King is never in “check” and can move into attacked squares.
- ♦ You may capture the opponent’s King (it is treated as a normal piece for capture purposes).
- ♦ The game ends when one player has only their King remaining (bare king = loss).
- ♦ Capturing the King directly also wins.
- ♦ All pieces move as in standard chess otherwise.
- ♦ Castling, en passant, and promotion work as normal.

WIN CONDITION

Leave the opponent with a bare King (all other pieces captured), or capture their King directly.

STRATEGY

Since there’s no check, the King can be used aggressively as a fighting piece. You don’t need to protect your King from attack — only from having all supporting pieces captured. Material advantage is paramount since the goal is total piece elimination. Endgame technique focuses on stripping the last defenders rather than constructing checkmate patterns.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional Mongolian chess. Played for centuries in Mongolia. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 126 OF 153

Shatranj

8×8

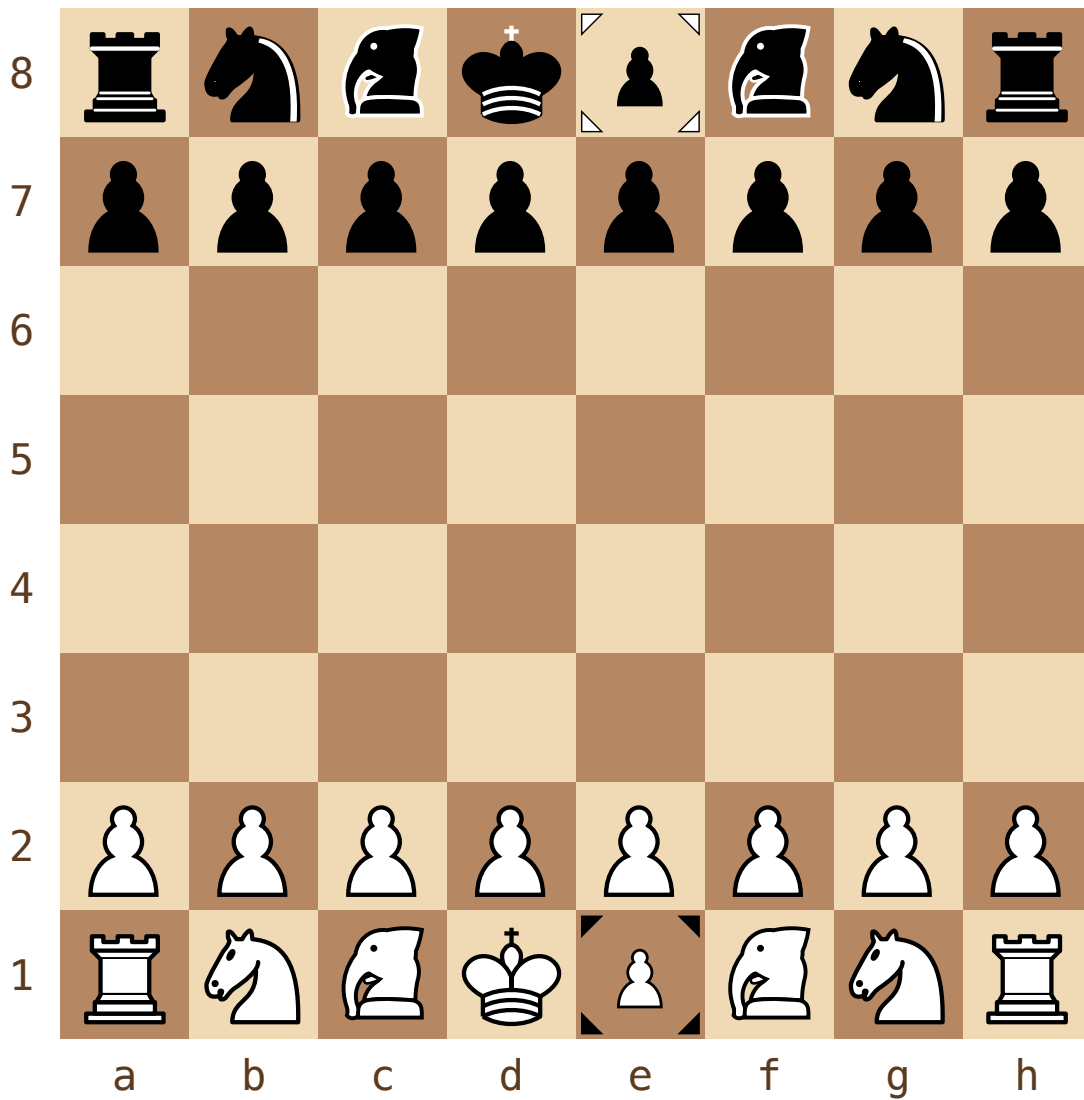
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHATRANJ

The medieval Islamic form of chess, played across the Islamic world from approximately the 7th century AD. Derived from the Indian game Chaturanga and the direct ancestor of modern Western chess. Documented in medieval Arabic manuscripts and in H.J.R. Murray's *A History of Chess* (Oxford, 1913, public domain). Known in Persia as Chatrang and in the Byzantine world as Zatrikion.



Shatranj – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=shatranj>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Starting position: The Shah occupies the d-file and the Ferz occupies the e-file, reversed from modern chess.

- ♦ White: Rukh a1, Faras b1, Alfil c1, Shah d1, Ferz e1, Alfil f1, Faras g1, Rukh h1; Baidaqs a2-h2.
- ♦ Black: Rukh a8, Faras b8, Alfil c8, Shah d8, Ferz e8, Alfil f8, Faras g8, Rukh h8; Baidaqs a7-h7.

FEN: rnekfenr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNEKFENR w - - 0 1

Alternative setup: The Shah may begin on e1 (White) or e8 (Black), with the Ferz on the adjoining d-file, provided both Shahs occupy the same file. This must be declared before play begins.

PIECES

Each side has 16 pieces: 1 Shah, 1 Ferz, 2 Alfil, 2 Faras, 2 Rukh, and 8 Bidaq.

Shah (King) – moves one square in any direction, orthogonally or diagonally. May not move into, remain in, or pass through check. No castling.

Ferz (Counsellor) – moves exactly one square diagonally. One of the weakest pieces on the board.

Alfil (Elephant) – leaps exactly two squares diagonally, jumping over any intervening piece. Cannot move any other distance diagonally. Each Alfil is permanently colour-bound and can reach only 8 of the 64 squares.

Faras (Horse) – moves to the nearest square not on the same rank, file, or diagonal. Identical to the modern chess knight.

Rukh (Chariot) – moves any number of squares along a rank or file. The path must be clear.

Bidaq (Foot Soldier) – moves one square forward. Captures one square diagonally forward. No initial two-square advance. No en passant. Promotes to Ferz on reaching the opponent's back rank.

RULES

White moves first. Players alternate one move per turn. A piece may not move to a square occupied by a friendly piece. Moving to a square occupied by an opponent's piece captures it and removes it from the board.

There is no castling, no en passant, and no initial double pawn advance.

WIN CONDITIONS

Checkmate: The Shah is in check with no legal escape. The opponent wins.

Bare King: Capturing all of the opponent's pieces except the Shah wins the game. If the opponent can bare your Shah on the very next move in response, the result is a draw.

Stalemate: If the player to move has no legal move and the Shah is not in check, the player who delivered the stalemate wins. This is the reverse of modern chess.

DRAW CONDITIONS

Draws occur by mutual agreement, threefold repetition of position, or the 70-move rule (no pawn move or capture in 70 consecutive moves). A simultaneous counter-bare is also a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Rules documented in medieval Arabic manuscripts and in H.J.R. Murray, *A History of Chess* (Oxford University Press, 1913). Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 127 OF 153

Shatranj Kamil

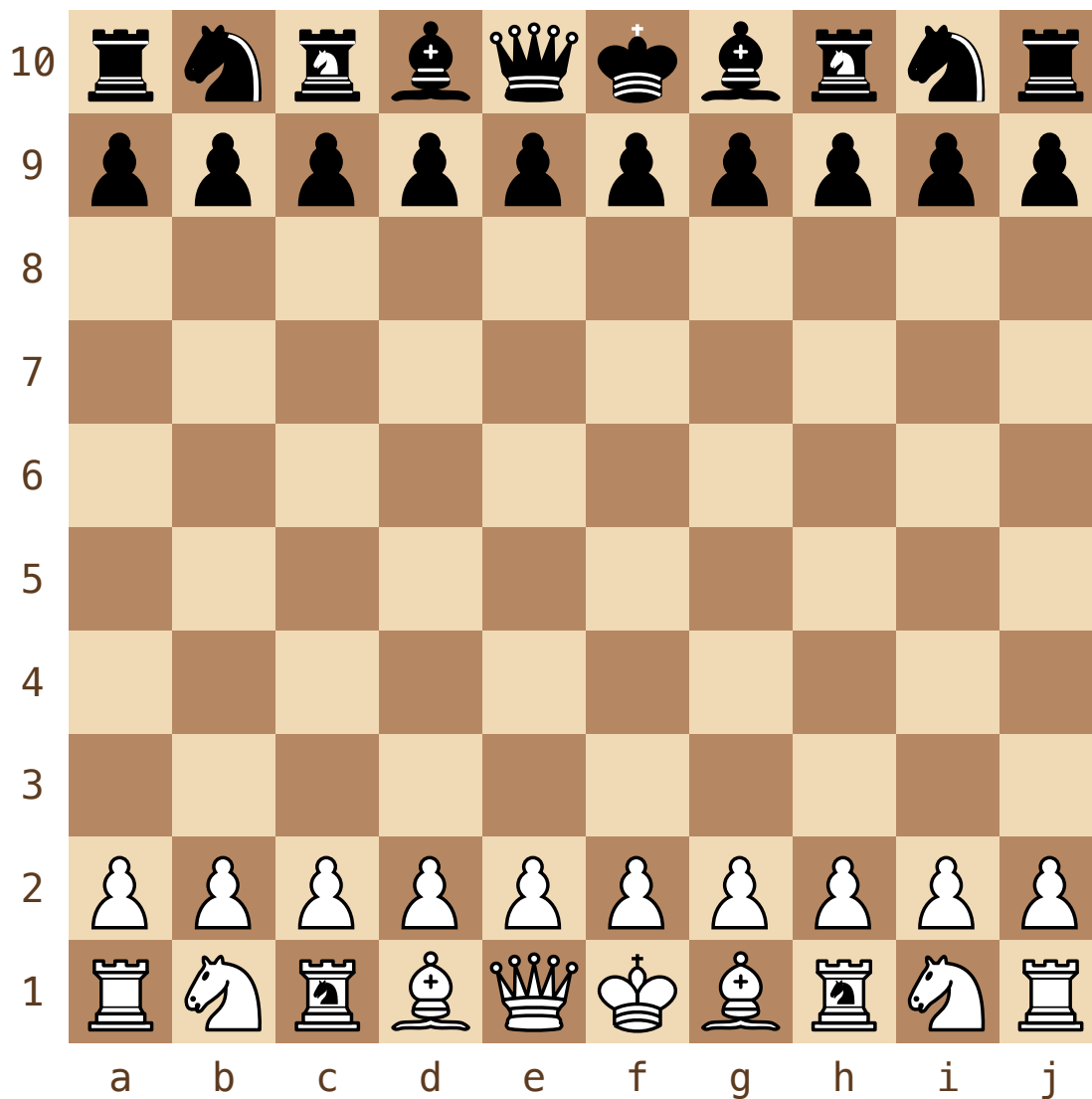
10×10

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHATRANJ KAMIL



Shatranj Kamil – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=shatranj-kamil>

Shatranj Kamil (شطرنج كامل, “Complete Chess” or “Perfect Chess”) is a historical Arabic chess variant approximately 1000 years old, described by John Gollon based on Murray’s reconstruction from an old manuscript. It expands the standard Shatranj board from 8×8 to 10×10 and adds two War Machine (Dabbabah) pieces per side, plus two extra Pawns.

Two historical versions are documented on chessvariants.com: one adds a Camel piece (shkam1), the other – documented here – adds a War Machine (shkam2). The War Machine version has the unusual rule that the piece moves as a King but is immune to check.

THE BOARD

10 files (a–j) × 10 ranks = 100 squares.

STARTING POSITION

White (rank 1): Rook a1 · Knight b1 · Elephant c1 · War Machine d1 · King e1 · General f1 · War Machine g1 · Elephant h1 · Knight i1 · Rook j1

White pawns (rank 2): a2–j2 (10 pawns)

Black (rank 10): Rook a10 · Knight b10 · Elephant c10 · War Machine d10 · King e10 · General f10 · War Machine g10 · Elephant h10 · Knight i10 · Rook j10

Black pawns (rank 9): a9–j9 (10 pawns)

PIECES

Standard Shatranj pieces plus the War Machine:

PIECE	ARABIC	MOVEMENT
King (Shah)	شاه	One square in any direction
General (Firzan)	فرزان	One square diagonally
Elephant (Fil)	فيل	Leaps exactly 2 squares diagonally; can jump the intervening square
Knight (Faras)	فرس	L-shaped leap (as in standard chess)
Rook (Rukh)	رخ	Slides any distance orthogonally
Pawn	بيدق	One square forward; captures one square diagonally; no double first step
War Machine (Dabbabah)	دبابة	Moves one square in any direction (as a King) but is not affected by check

PROMOTION

A Pawn reaching the last rank promotes to a General — **only if the player currently has no General on the board**. If the player still has a General, the Pawn reaching the last rank is **removed from the board** without promotion.

SPECIAL RULES

- ♦ **No castling, no en passant.**
- ♦ **No bare King rule** — the game continues normally even when one player has only the King remaining.
- ♦ **Win:** Checkmate the opponent's King, or stalemate the opponent (stalemate is a win for the stalemating player).

ATTRIBUTION

Shatranj Kamil (War Machine version) documented at chessvariants.com/historic.dir/shkam2.html (Hans Bodlaender, from Gollon/Murray). Camel version at chessvariants.com/historic.dir/shkam1.html.

CHESS · VARIANT 128 OF 153

Shinobi Chess

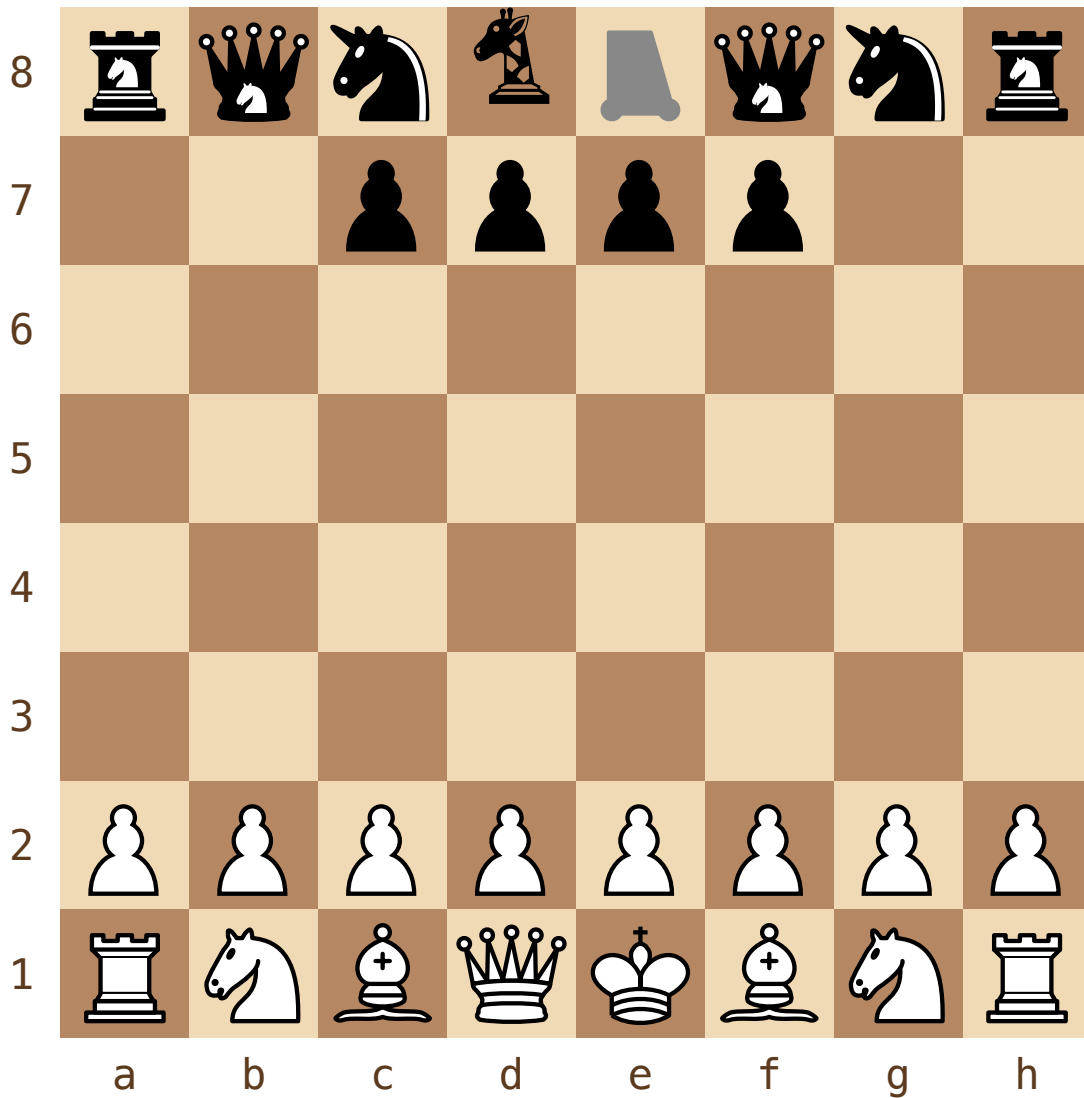
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHINOBI CHESS



Shinobi Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=shinobi>

Designed by Corey Clark (2021). Shinobi Chess is asymmetric: White commands a standard FIDE Kingdom; Black commands a Shinobi Clan that begins with fewer pieces on the board but holds a hand of additional clan members that can be dropped during play, Shogi-style.

THE TWO ARMIES

Kingdom (White): Standard FIDE. King, Queen, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 8 Pawns.

Shinobi Clan (Black): Starts with fewer pieces on the board; holds additional pieces in hand for dropping. Shinobi pieces promote automatically on entering ranks 6, 7, or 8.

SHINOBI PIECES

BASE PIECE	COUNT ON BOARD	IN HAND (DROPS)	MOVEMENT	PROMOTED FORM	PROMOTED MOVEMENT
Jonin (Captain, royal)	1	—	1 step any direction (King)	— (does not promote)	—
Chunin (Lance)	2	0	Slides forward any distance; cannot move sideways or backward.	Ninja	1 step diag or 1 step forward (Gold General)
Monk	2	2	Jumps as Knight.	Sacred Horse	Slides diagonally unlimited (Bishop).
Ninja	0	2	1 step diagonally, OR jumps as Knight (combined ferz + Knight).	Jonin	Promotes to Jonin form on reaching zone.
Kunoichi	1	1	Slides diagonally unlimited (Bishop).	Kunoichi+	Adds 1-step orthogonal moves.
Pawn	4	4	1 square forward; captures 1 diagonal forward. No double step. Promotes on rank 8.	Pawn+	1 step ortho forward or backward, 1 step diag forward (Gold Pawn).

SHINOBI STARTING POSITION (BLACK)

8 . Mn Cn Jn Cn Mn .
7 . . Pa Pa Pa Pa . .

Rank 8 from a to h: empty, Monk(b), Chunin©, Jonin(d)... (exact arrangement: Chunin(a), Monk(b), empty©, Jonin(d), empty(e), Monk(f), Chunin(g), empty(h) — 7 pieces for 8 squares with one gap.)

Actual Shinobi back rank (rank 8): Chunin(a), Monk(b), Kunoichi©, Jonin(d), Kunoichi(e), Monk(f), Chunin(g) — with h8 empty. Rank 7: Pawns on c7, d7, e7, f7; a7, b7, g7, h7 are empty.

Hand at game start: 2 Ninjas, 2 Monks, 4 Pawns.

KINGDOM STARTING POSITION (WHITE)

Standard FIDE:

1 ♔ ♘ ♙ ♚ ♛ ♜ ♞ ♟
2 ♖ ♗ ♘ ♙ ♚ ♛ ♜ ♞

DROP RULES

On any turn, instead of moving a board piece, the Shinobi player may drop one piece from hand onto any empty square subject to:

- ♦ Drops may not be made onto the promotion zone (ranks 6–8).
- ♦ Pawns may not be dropped onto a file already containing a friendly Pawn.
- ♦ A Pawn drop cannot deliver immediate checkmate (check without checkmate is permitted).
- ♦ Dropped pieces enter at their base (unpromoted) form and do not promote until they move into the zone.

PROMOTION

Shinobi pieces promote automatically on entering or moving within ranks 6, 7, or 8. Promotion is mandatory and immediate. Captured promoted pieces revert to base form and are not added to the hand (only base Shinobi pieces are captured and held).

CHECK, CHECKMATE, STALEMATE

The Jonin is the royal piece — check, checkmate, and stalemate rules apply to the Jonin as they would to a King. The FIDE King is subject to standard rules. Stalemate is a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Corey Clark. Published via Shogun of Games. Official rules at shogunofgames.com. Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 129 OF 153

Shinobi+

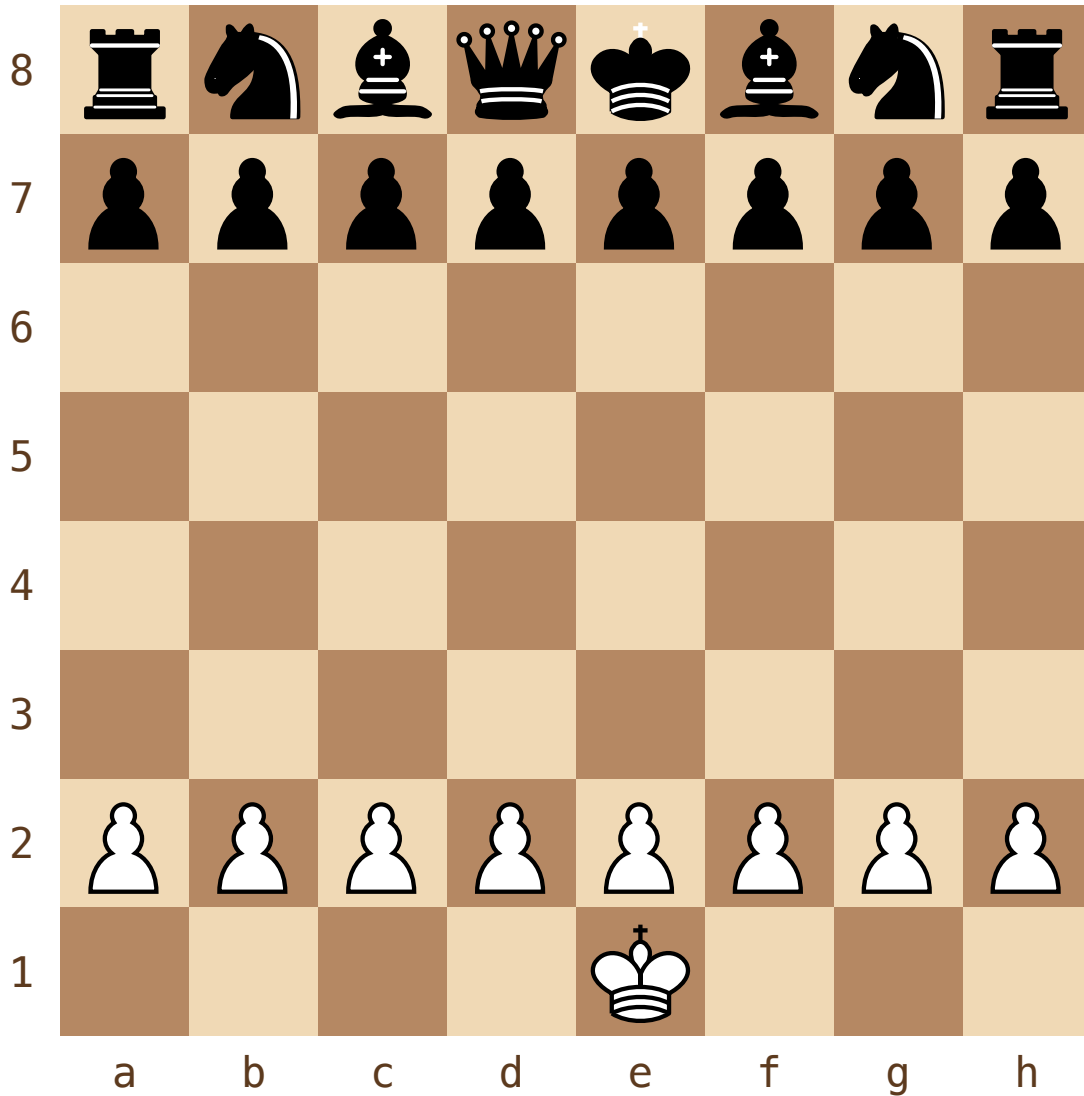
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHINOBI CHESS+



Shinobi+ – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=shinobiplus>

Shinobi Chess+ (Shinobi+) is the rebalanced edition of Shinobi Chess, designed by Couch Tomato (2021). NNUE engine analysis revealed the Clan had a significant advantage in the base game, so Shinobi+ redistributes the Clan's starting pieces and adds a new Fox piece. The Clan now moves first.

See also: [Shinobi Chess](#) – the base game.

THE TWO ARMIES

Kingdom (Black): Standard FIDE army – King, Queen, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 8 Pawns. Kingdom Pawns promote on reaching **rank 6** of the board (earlier than standard chess rank 8).

Clan (White/Pink, moves first): Shogi-inspired army with most pieces starting in hand.

STARTING POSITION

Kingdom (Black) on board: Standard FIDE setup on ranks 7–8.

Clan (White/Pink) on board:

- ♦ Kage (K) – royal piece, moves as King – starts at **e1**
- ♦ 8 Clan Pawns – on rank 2 (a2–h2)

Clan hand (available for drops from move 1):

- ♦ 1 Ninja (J) – Archbishop (Bishop+Knight)
- ♦ 1 Dragon (D) – Dragon King (Rook+King)
- ♦ 1 Fox (F) – Dragon Horse (Bishop+King) – new piece in Shinobi+
- ♦ 1 Captain © – King movement, non-royal
- ♦ 1 Lance (L) – forward-only slider
- ♦ 1 Wooden Horse (H) – forward-only Knight
- ♦ 1 Monk (M) – Ferz (one square diagonally)

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/4K3[JDFCLHM] w kq – 0 1

(Uppercase = Clan/White. [JDFCLHM] = Clan hand: Ninja, Dragon, Fox, Captain, Lance, Wooden Horse, Monk. w = Clan moves first. kq = Kingdom castling rights.)

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM BASE SHINOBI

FEATURE	SHINOBI	SHINOBI+
First mover	Kingdom	Clan
Clan starting layout	More on board	Most in hand
Clan promotion ranks	6–8	7–8
Kingdom pawn promotion	Rank 8	Rank 6
Fox piece	No	Yes
Perpetual check	Draw	Loss for checker

CLAN PIECES

Kage (K): Moves as King. Royal piece. Wins via campmate (reach rank 8 safely).

Pawn (P): Moves as a standard chess Pawn. Promotes to **Captain** on reaching rank 7 or 8.

Ninja (J): Moves as Bishop or Knight (Archbishop). Does not promote.

Dragon (D): Moves as Rook or King (Dragon King). Does not promote.

Fox (F): Moves as Bishop or King (Dragon Horse). Does not promote. New in Shinobi+.

Captain ©: Moves as King, non-royal. Does not promote.

Lance (L): Slides any number of squares forward. Promotes to Knight on reaching ranks 7–8.

Wooden Horse (H): Jumps forward and sideways like a Knight, but only the two forward-moving Knight destinations. Promotes to Knight on reaching ranks 7–8.

Monk (M): Moves one square diagonally (Ferz). Promotes to Bishop on reaching ranks 7–8.

DROP RULES

Clan pieces drop on the Clan's own half of the board (ranks 1–4) only. No piece may be dropped on a square that places the dropping player's own royal piece in check. Standard restrictions apply: Pawns cannot be dropped on rank 1 (no forward move), Lances cannot be dropped on rank 1, Wooden Horses cannot be dropped on ranks 1–2.

GENERAL RULES

- 1 Clan moves first.**
- 2 Campmate:** moving your Kage or King to the opponent's last rank without landing in check wins.
- 3 Stalemate:** loss for the player who cannot move.
- 4 Perpetual check** (same position checked 4 times) is a loss for the checker.
- 5 Non-check repetition** is a draw.
- 6** Clan cannot castle.

ATTRIBUTION

Shinobi Chess+ was designed by Couch Tomato (2021). Rules documented from pychess.org/variants/shinobiplus.

CHESS · VARIANT 130 OF 153

Shogun Chess

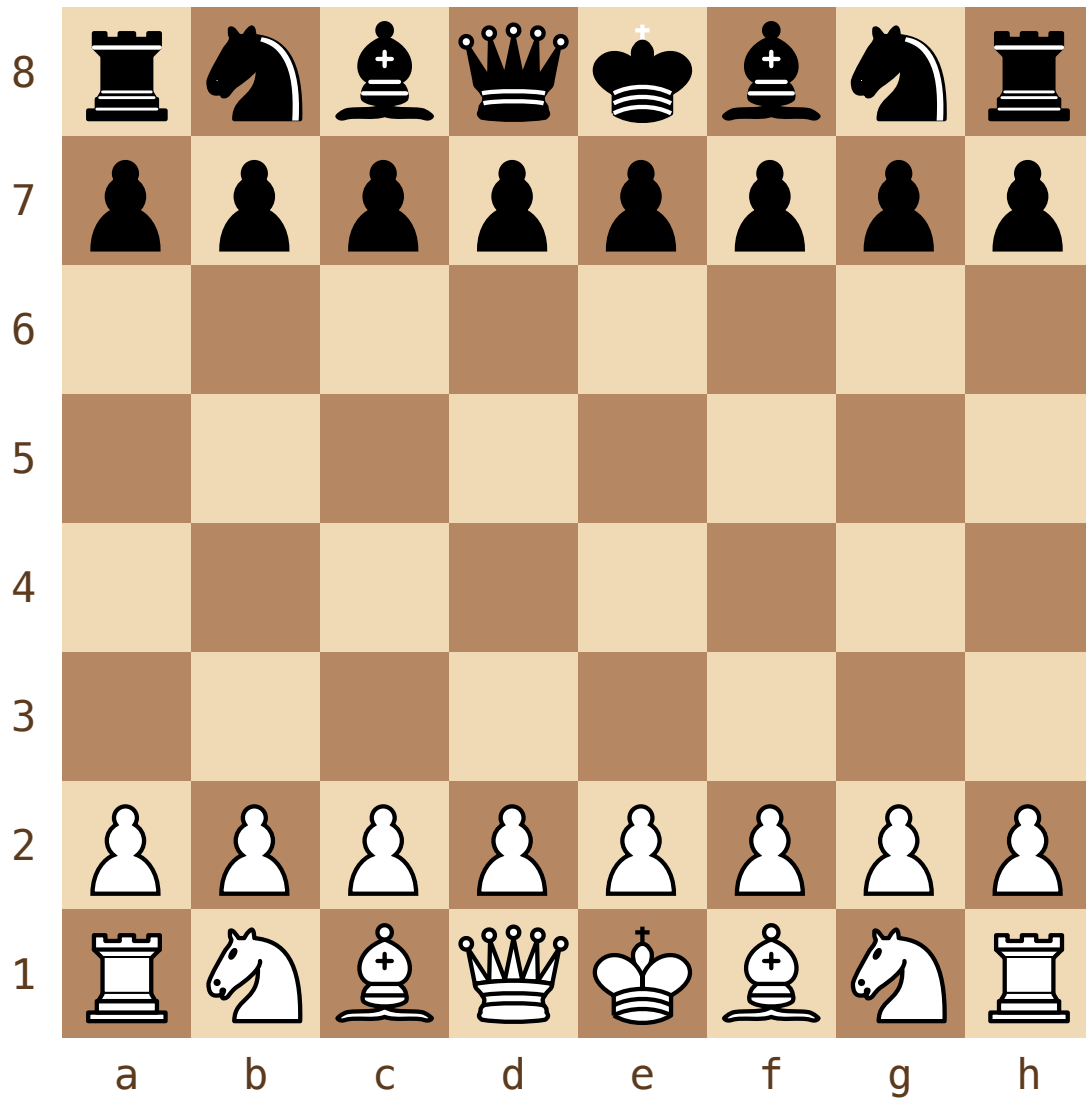
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHOGUN CHESS



Shogun Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=shogun>

Designed by Corey Clark (2020). Shogun Chess grafts the drop mechanic from Shogi onto a standard chess board: captured pieces switch sides and can be returned to play, and pieces automatically promote when they enter the opponent's half of the board.

PROMOTION ZONE

Ranks 6, 7, and 8 (for White) — the opponent's half of the board — form the promotion zone. Any piece that enters a promotion-zone square, or that starts a turn already in the zone, promotes immediately and automatically. Captured promoted pieces revert to their base form.

Black's promotion zone is ranks 3, 2, and 1.

PIECE PROMOTIONS

BASE PIECE	PROMOTED NAME	PROMOTED MOVEMENT
Pawn	Pawn+ (Gold General)	One step in any orthogonal direction, or one step diagonally forward (6 directions total).
Knight	Monk	All 8 standard Knight jumps, plus one step orthogonally in any direction.
Bishop	Ninja	Bishop diagonal slides (unlimited), plus one step orthogonally in any direction.
Rook	Fortress	Rook orthogonal slides (unlimited), plus one step diagonally in any direction.
Queen	Shogun	Queen moves (any direction, unlimited) plus one Knight jump per move.
King	Does not promote	—

DROP MECHANIC

When a player captures an opponent's piece, that piece is added to the capturing player's hand in its base (unpromoted) form. On any turn, instead of moving a piece already on the board, the player may drop one piece from their hand onto any empty square, subject to the restrictions below.

Drop restrictions:

- Drops may not be made into the promotion zone (ranks 6–8 for White; ranks 1–3 for Black).
- A dropped Pawn cannot be placed on a file already containing a friendly Pawn.
- A Pawn may not be dropped to deliver immediate checkmate. (A Pawn drop that gives check without checkmate is legal.)
- Drops do not trigger promotion — a piece dropped in a legal zone square enters as its base form and only promotes when it subsequently moves into the promotion zone.

STARTING POSITION

Standard FIDE starting position. Both hands begin empty.

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

STANDARD RULES

Castling applies under standard FIDE conditions (neither King nor Rook has previously moved; squares between them are empty; King does not pass through check). En passant applies. Pawn promotion on reaching rank 8 follows standard rules – the player chooses Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight in their Shogun promoted forms.

CHECK AND CHECKMATE

Standard rules. A player in check must resolve it immediately. Dropping a piece to interpose between the attacking piece and the King is legal. Checkmate ends the game; the checkmated player loses.

STALEMATE

Standard: stalemate is a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Corey Clark. Published via Shogun of Games. Official rules at shogunofgames.com.

CHESS · VARIANT 131 OF 153

Single-Check

8×8

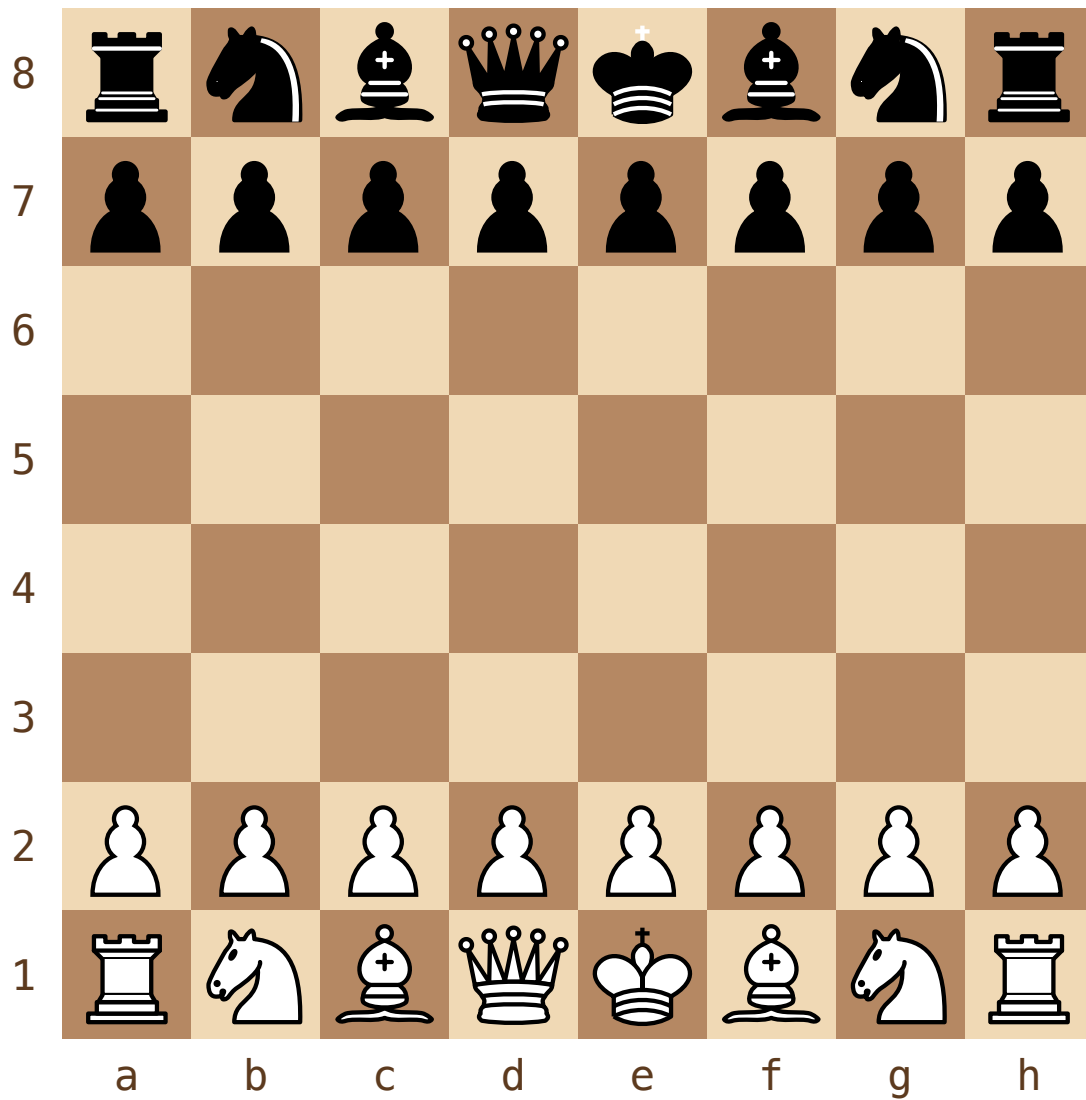
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SINGLE-CHECK

One check wins. No checkmate needed: just deliver a single check and the game is over. Every move is life or death.



Single-Check – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=single-check>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, except:

- ♦ The game ends immediately when a player delivers check.
- ♦ Checkmate is not required; any check wins, even if it could be blocked or evaded.
- ♦ Stalemate is still a draw.

WIN CONDITION

Deliver check to the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

The game becomes about pure King safety. Pieces that can give check from a distance (Queen, Bishops, Rooks) are incredibly dangerous. Any discovered check possibility must be neutralised immediately. Development speed is everything: the first player to create a check threat usually wins. Knights are particularly dangerous because their checks cannot be blocked. Games are extremely short.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 132 OF 153

Sittuyin

8×8

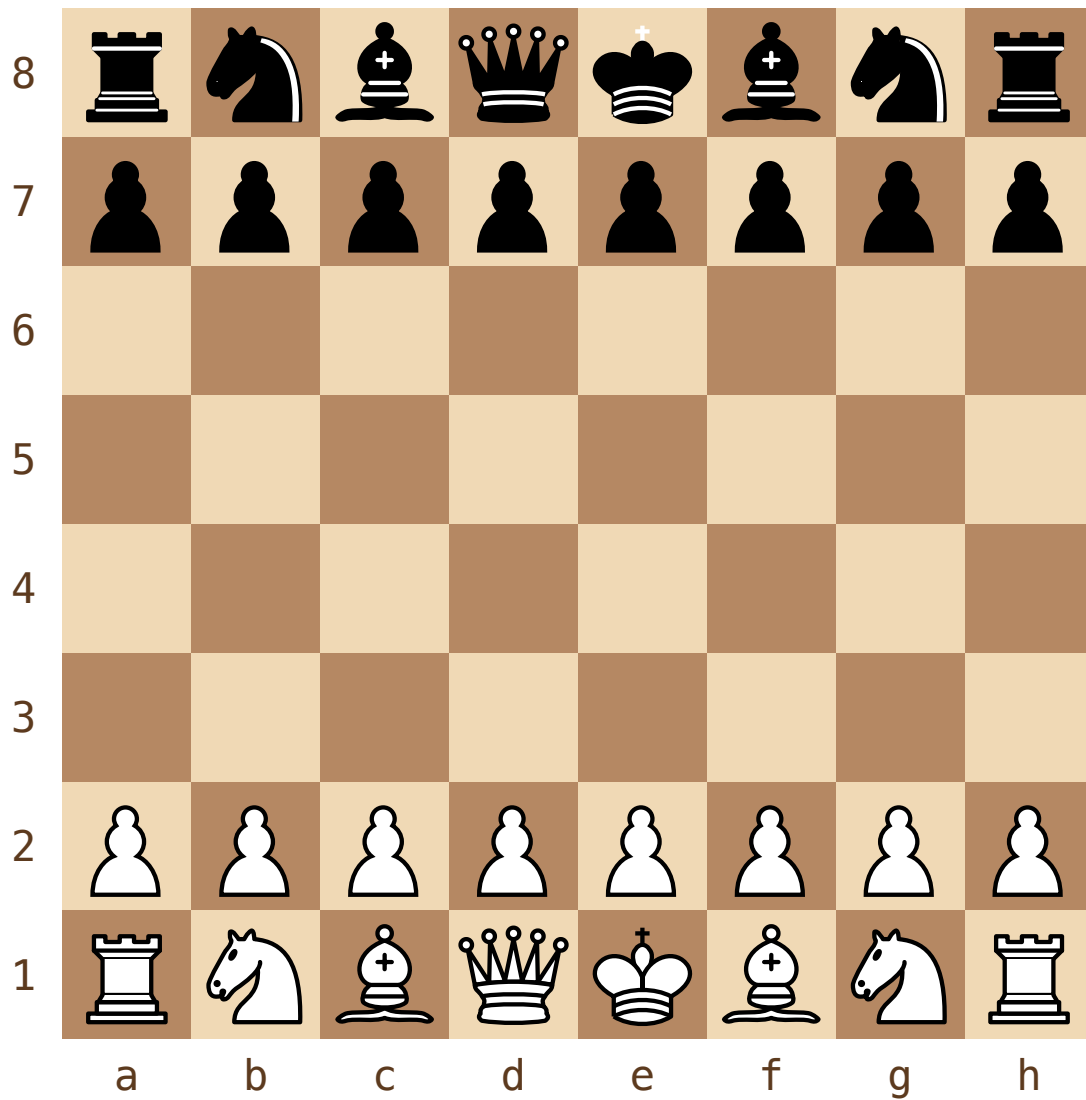
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SITTUYIN (BURMESE CHESS)

The traditional chess of Myanmar (Burma), distinguished by its placement opening phase where players freely position pieces on their own half of the board before play begins.



Sittuyin – pawn starting positions (remaining pieces placed freely during setup phase)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=sittuyin>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8. Traditionally played on a monochromatic board with two diagonal lines running corner-to-corner forming an X (the sit-ke-myin, or general's lines). These diagonals mark the promotion squares.

Pawns (fixed positions):

- ♦ White: a3, b3, c3, d3, e4, f4, g4, h4
- ♦ Black: a5, b5, c5, d5, e6, f6, g6, h6

Pawns are staggered across two ranks per side (not all on one rank as in Makruk).

Placement phase: After pawns are set, players alternate placing their remaining pieces on their own half of the board:

- ♦ White places on ranks 1, 2, and 3
- ♦ Black places on ranks 6, 7, and 8
- ♦ Rooks must be placed on the back rank (rank 1 for White, rank 8 for Black)
- ♦ King, General, Elephants, and Horses may be placed on any empty square within the drop region
- ♦ All pieces must be placed before normal play begins

PIECES

BURMESE NAME	ROLE	MOVEMENT
Min-gyi	King	One step in any direction
Sit-ke	General	One step diagonally only
Sin	Elephant	One step diagonally or one step forward
Myin	Horse	L-shaped knight move (can jump)
Yahhta	Chariot	Any number of squares orthogonally
Ne	Pawn	One square forward; captures one square diagonally forward

All piece movements are identical to Makruk (Thai Chess). The General is a weak piece (one diagonal step only). The Elephant moves one step diagonally in any direction or one step straight forward.

RULES

- ♦ No double-step pawn move. Pawns always move one square forward.
- ♦ No castling.
- ♦ No en passant.
- ♦ Stalemate is a draw.
- ♦ 50-move rule applies (50 moves without capture or pawn advance).

PROMOTION

Pawns promote on specific diagonal squares forming a V-shape across the board:

- ♦ **White promotes on:** a8, b7, c6, d5, e5, f6, g7, h8
- ♦ **Black promotes on:** a1, b2, c3, d4, e4, f3, g2, h1

Promotion rules:

- ♦ A pawn reaching a promotion square does not promote immediately. Promotion occurs on a subsequent turn.
- ♦ Pawns promote to General (Sit-ke) only.
- ♦ Only one General may exist per side at any time. A pawn cannot promote if the player's General is still on the board.
- ♦ Promotion cannot capture an enemy piece, attack an enemy piece, or deliver check.
- ♦ If only one pawn remains for a player, it may promote on any square (relaxed rule).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

COUNTING RULES

When one player has only a bare King remaining, the opponent must deliver checkmate within a limited number of moves based on remaining material:

- ♦ 16 moves with a Chariot (Rook)
- ♦ 44 moves with an Elephant
- ♦ 64 moves with a Horse (Knight)

If checkmate is not delivered within the limit, the game is drawn.

STRATEGY

The placement phase is the defining strategic feature. Experienced players position pieces to control key diagonals and prepare attacks from the opening. Since all pieces start in custom positions, there is no opening theory in the traditional sense. The weak General and promotion restrictions make endgames slow and technical. Chariots (Rooks) dominate as the strongest piece on the board.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional Burmese chess, played for centuries in Myanmar. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 133 OF 153

Spartan Chess

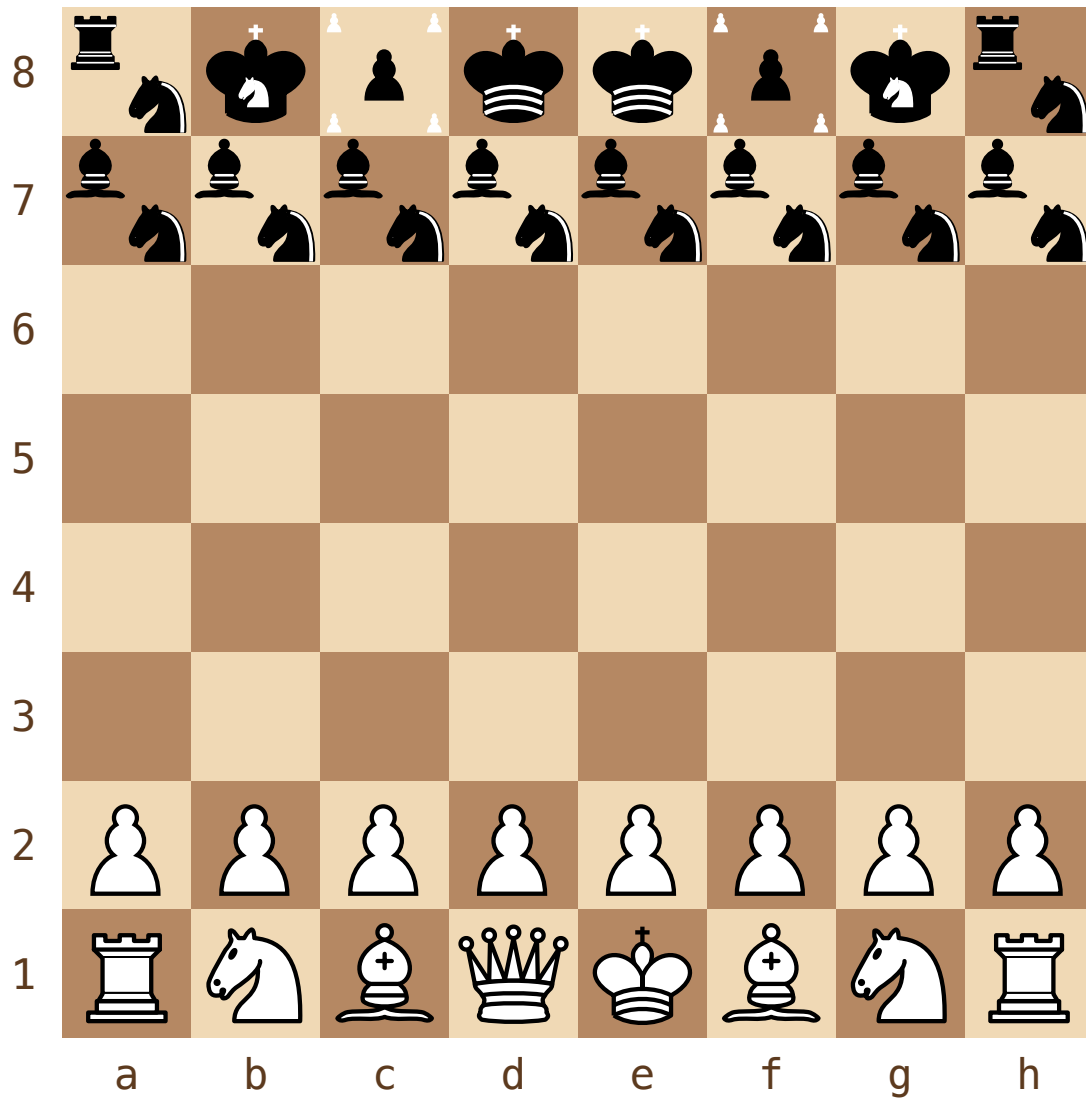
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SPARTAN CHESS



Spartan Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=spartan>

Designed by Steven Streetman (2010). Spartan Chess is asymmetric: White commands a standard FIDE Persian army; Black commands a Spartan army with two Kings and a unique roster of pieces. The armies differ fundamentally in their check rules, pieces, and win conditions.

THE TWO ARMIES

Persian Army (White): Standard FIDE. One King; standard checkmate and stalemate rules apply.

Spartan Army (Black): Two Kings; unique pieces; no standard Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight.

SPARTAN PIECES

PIECE	COUNT	MOVEMENT
King	2	1 square in any direction
Warlord	1	Jumps as a Knight or steps 1 square in any direction (Knight + King compound)
General	2	Slides diagonally as a Bishop, or steps 1 square in any direction (Bishop + King compound)
Lieutenant	2	Slides orthogonally as a Rook, OR jumps as a Knight (not both in one move)
Captain	2	Moves 1 or 2 squares orthogonally in any direction (does not slide beyond 2)
Hoplite	8	Moves 1 square straight forward; captures 1 square diagonally forward; OR moves 1 square sideways (not both in one move). Promotes on rank 8.

STARTING POSITIONS

White (Persian) – standard FIDE:

1 ♔ ♖ ♗ ♘ ♙ ♚ ♛ ♜ ♝

2 ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟ ♟

Black (Spartan):

8 Lt Wr Gn Kg Kg Gn Wr Lt

7 Ho Ho Ho Ho Ho Ho Ho Ho

Rank 8 from a to h: Lieutenant, Warlord, General, King, King, General, Warlord, Lieutenant. Rank 7: 8 Hoplites.

CHECK RULES – THE DUAL-KING MECHANIC

The Spartan check system differs completely from standard chess:

- ♦ **Both Spartan Kings must be simultaneously in check** before Black is considered to be in check. A single Spartan King under attack does not constitute check.
- ♦ Black must not end a move with both Kings simultaneously attacked.
- ♦ If only one Spartan King is attacked, Black may ignore it and make any legal move (including moves that keep that one King under attack).
- ♦ If both Spartan Kings are simultaneously attacked, Black is in check and must resolve it on the next move.

Checkmate: Black is checkmated when both Kings are simultaneously in check and no legal move resolves it. Black loses.

Win by capture: If the Persian player captures one Spartan King, Black is reduced to one King, and standard single-King check rules then apply to the remaining King.

PERSIAN WIN CONDITION

White wins by:

- ¹ Checkmating Black (both Kings simultaneously in check with no legal escape), OR
- ² Capturing one Spartan King (after which the remaining King is under standard check rules and must be checkmated).

SPARTAN WIN CONDITION

Black wins by checkmating the single Persian King under standard chess rules.

STALEMATE

- ♦ Persian stalemate (White has no legal move): White loses.
- ♦ Spartan stalemate (Black has no legal move but not in check): Draw.

HOPLITE PROMOTION

A Hoplite reaching rank 8 promotes to any Spartan piece (Warlord, General, Lieutenant, or Captain) – not to a King.

CASTLING AND EN PASSANT

White may castle under standard FIDE conditions. Black has no castling privilege. En passant applies to Hoplites in the same way as standard Pawns (a Hoplite that moved two squares forward may be captured en passant on the following move – noting that Hoplites have no double first-move step in standard Spartan Chess, so en passant opportunities are rare).

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Steven Streetman. Published 2010. Official rules at spartanchess.com. Public domain rule set.

CHESS · VARIANT 134 OF 153

Spherical Chess

**8×8 (played on flat board, spherical
topology)**

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SPHERICAL CHESS

Spherical Chess is a family of chess variants adapted to spherical topology — a surface with no edges, where all directions eventually curve back to their origin. Multiple independent inventors have designed spherical chess between 1950 and 2014. The variants share a common framework but differ in how the Bishop and Knight handle the polar singularities.

THE BOARD AND TOPOLOGY

Spherical Chess is played on a standard **8×8 board**, but the board is conceived as a sphere:

Horizontal wrap (as in Cylindrical Chess): Ranks loop back into themselves. The a-file connects to the h-file — a Rook moving right off the h-file reappears on the a-file at the same rank.

Polar wrap: The board does not wrap vertically in a simple torus manner. Instead, files are treated as **lines of longitude** that meet at the poles (rank 1 and rank 8). When a piece crosses a pole:

- A Rook moving forward off rank 8 continues from **rank 8 on the file four files away** (e.g., Ra3-a1-e1-e4)
- The shift is always exactly **4 files** (half the board width)

This means:

- There are no edge squares — every rank wraps
- There are no corner squares — the poles are where all files converge
- Pieces near the poles have reduced move counts (fewer unique destination squares)

PIECE MOVEMENT NEAR THE POLES

Rook: Crosses the pole by continuing 4 files away on the same rank, then continues moving away from the pole.
Example: Ra3 → a2 → a1 (pole crossed) → e1 → e2 → e3...

Bishop (most versions): Crosses the pole and continues on **the same diagonal colour** (colourbound). Moving diagonally into the pole, it exits directly across, then reverses its diag direction. The exact rule differs by version:

VERSION	TRANSPOLAR BISHOP RULE
Grayber/Miller (1950s/1965)	Complex zig-zag; not colourbound
Yapsan (1971)	Crosses directly across pole (same file shifted 4); colourbound; reverses direction
Nadvorney (1975)	Shifts 3 files (not 4), changes colour; complex path
Boholy/Welman/Chao (1987–2008)	Same as Yapsan; colourbound

The **majority of versions** (Yapsan, Boholy, Global Chess, Chess on the Dot) use the Yapsan-style colourbound Bishop: crosses the pole directly 4 files away, reverses diagonal direction, stays on the same colour.

Knight: In most versions (Yapsan, Nadvorney, Global Chess, Chao), the Knight has exactly **8 possible moves from any position** on the board, including those near the poles, by applying the L-shaped leap with polar adjustment.

King and Queen: Move as derived from Rook and Bishop above. King near a pole has 6 possible moves (not 8).

Pawn: Moves as in Cylindrical Chess — forward only, no trans-polar movement until promotion.

CASTLING

In the Yapsan, Nadvorney, and Chao versions, two extra castling options are available: the King may castle with a Rook by approaching it from **either side** (not just the standard approach). The usual castling conditions must still be met.

KEY VERSIONS

YEAR	INVENTOR	KEY FEATURE
1950s	H. D. Grayber	First documented; complex non-colourbound Bishop
1965	Don Miller	Knight near pole gains extra move (8 moves)
1971	Peter Yapsan	Colourbound Bishop; 8-move Knight; extra castling
1975	Leo Nadvorney	Bishop changes colour at pole; 8-move Knight
1987	János Boholy	Pole is a neutral passing space; 6-move Knight near pole
1989	Welman & Welman	Global Chess; 8-move Knight (orig.); later reduced
2008	Joshua Chao	Chess on the Dot; Yapsan-style; forbids stationary moves

RULES

- ♦ Standard FIDE starting position
- ♦ Standard FIDE rules apply, except as modified by spherical topology
- ♦ No stationary moves (pieces may not make a complete loop and return to their starting square) — in most versions
- ♦ Win: Checkmate

ATTRIBUTION

Spherical Chess is a family of chess variants invented independently multiple times between 1950 and 2014. Surveyed by Fergus Duniho. Source: chessvariants.com/boardrules.dir/spherical.html (last modified July 29, 2021).

CHESS · VARIANT 135 OF 153

Stalemate Wins

8×8

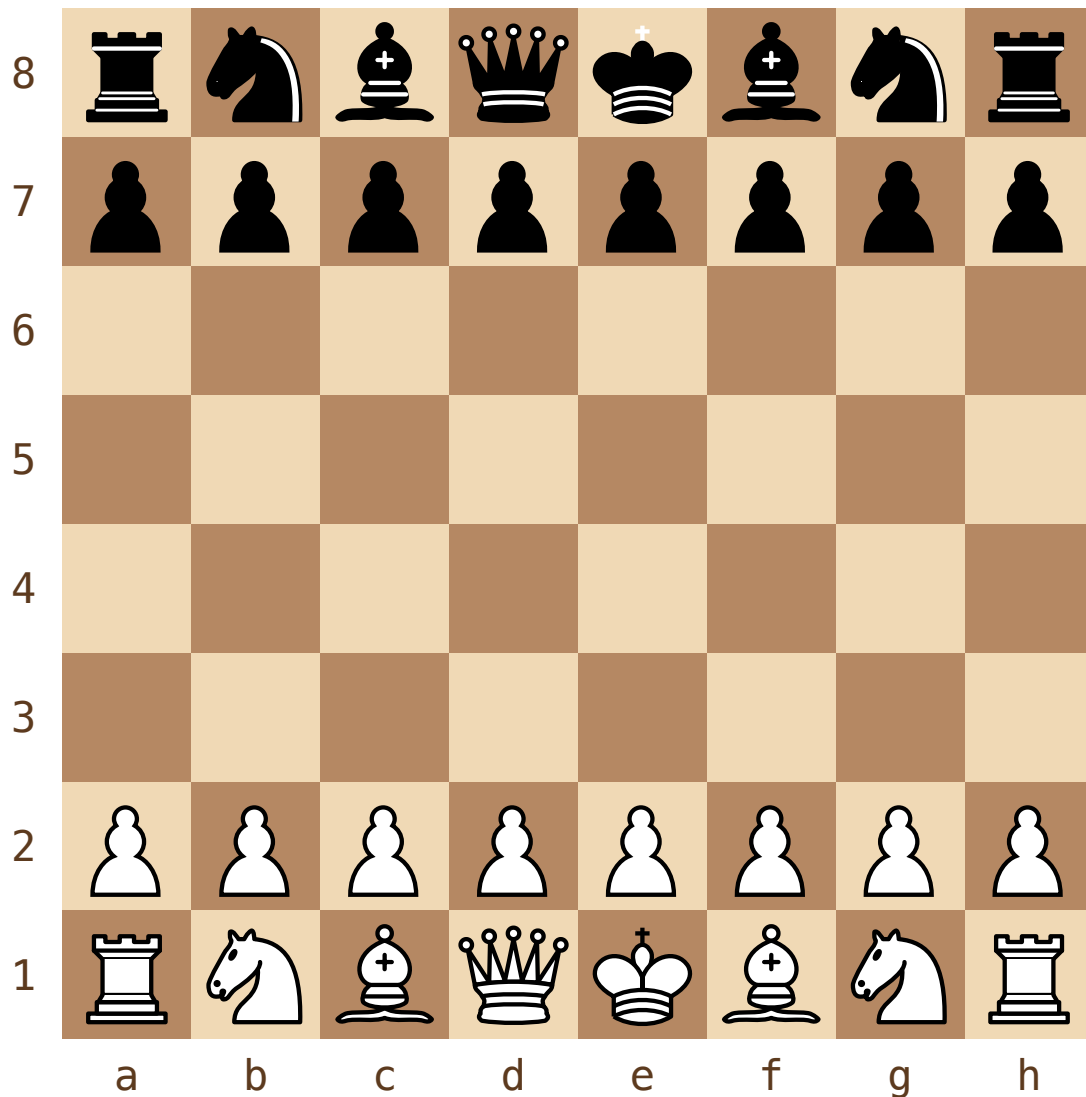
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

STALEMATE WINS

Standard chess with one rule change: stalemating your opponent wins the game instead of drawing. This eliminates all stalemate-based drawing resources.



Stalemate Wins – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=stalemate-wins>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, except:

- ♦ Stalemate is a win for the player who delivered it (not a draw).
- ♦ Check and checkmate work normally.
- ♦ All other draw conditions (threefold repetition, 50-move rule, insufficient material) still apply.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate OR stalemate your opponent.

STRATEGY

This variant makes King and Pawn endgames far more decisive. In standard chess, many K+P vs K positions are drawn because the defending King reaches a stalemate square. Here, those are all wins. The Queen becomes even more dominant: her ability to restrict the enemy King's squares creates stalemate threats. Trading down when ahead in material is even stronger because stalemate is now a winning technique, not something to avoid.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional rule modification. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 136 OF 153

Stupidhouse

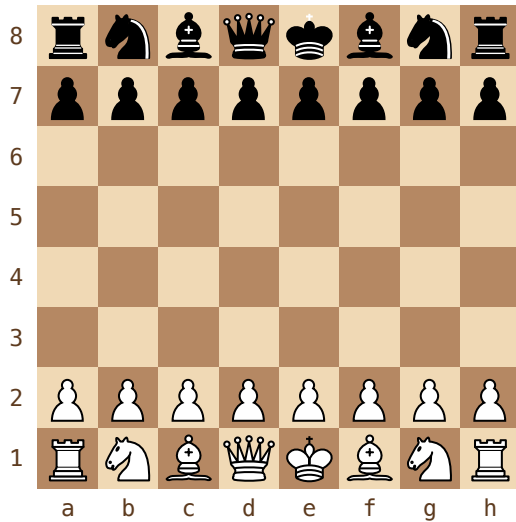
2× 8×8

BOARD

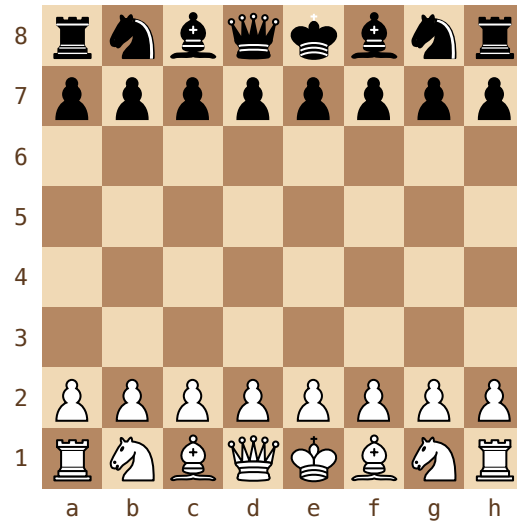
4 (2 teams of 2)

PLAYERS

Board 1



Board 2



Stupidhouse – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=stupidhouse>

Stupidhouse is a Bughouse chess variant that modifies the drop mechanic: when a player uses a received piece, it is placed on a **randomly selected legal empty square** rather than on a square of the player's choosing. This removes the strategic core of Bughouse – targeted drops – and replaces it with unpredictable chaos.

SETUP AND TEAMS

Identical to Bughouse / Tandem Chess:

- ♦ Two standard 8×8 boards
- ♦ Four players in two teams: Team A (White on Board 1, Black on Board 2) vs Team B (Black on Board 1, White on Board 2)
- ♦ Partners play on different boards with opposite colours

PLAY

As in Bughouse:

- 1 Games run simultaneously
- 2 On your turn you may make a normal chess move, or drop a received piece onto the board
- 3 When you capture an enemy piece, it passes face-down to your partner

The Stupidhouse twist: When a player drops a received piece, they do not choose the square. The piece lands on a randomly determined empty square from all legal drop squares. (Standard drop restrictions apply: no Pawn on the 1st or 8th rank, no dropping into check.)

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate either opposing King. The first team to checkmate an opposing King wins.

ATTRIBUTION

Stupidhouse is a Bughouse variant documented on chessvariants.com.

CHESS · VARIANT 137 OF 153

Suicide Chess

8×8

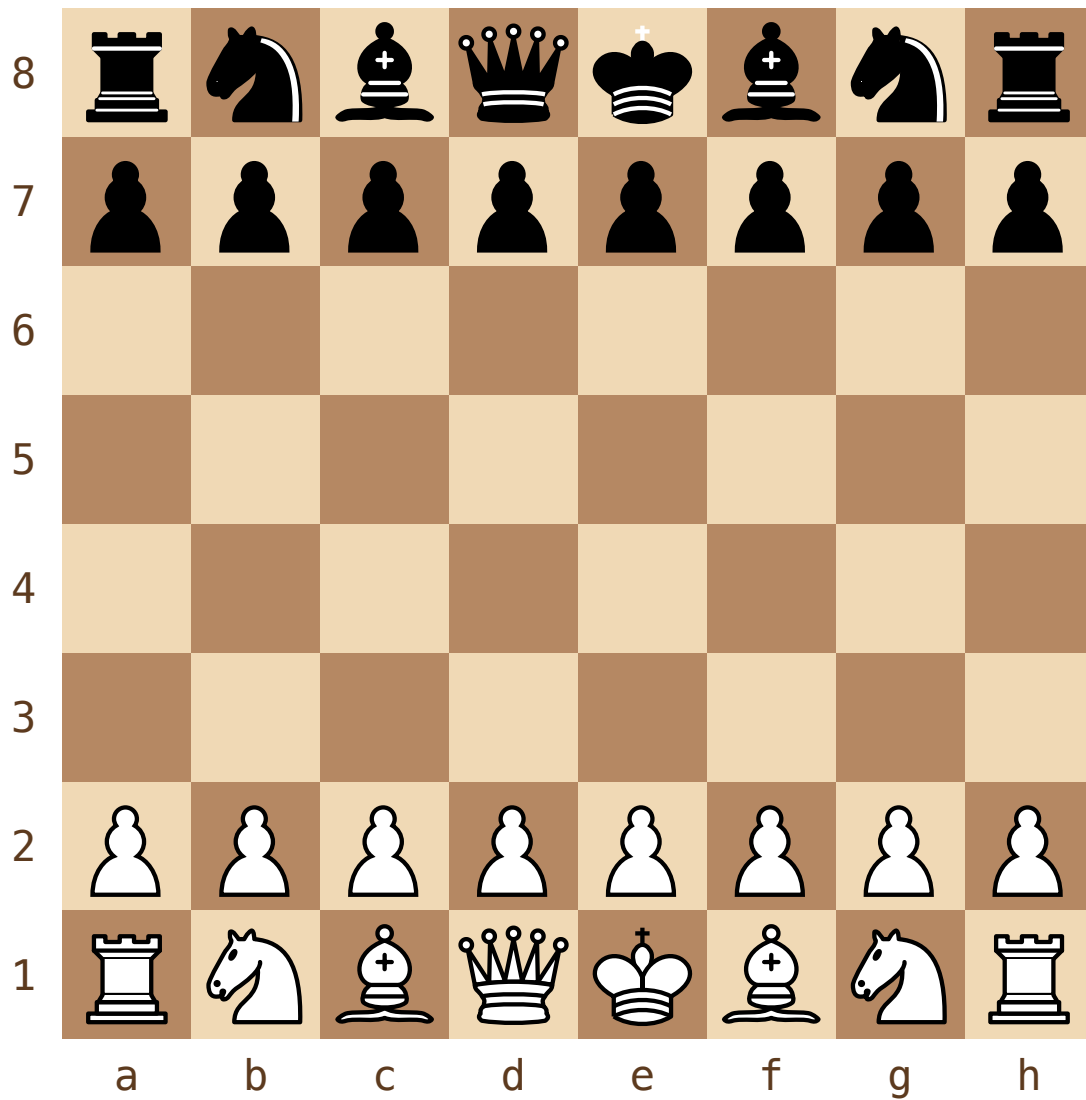
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SUICIDE CHESS

Nearly identical to Giveaway (forced captures, lose all pieces to win), with one critical difference: stalemate is a draw, not a loss.



Suicide Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=suicide-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ If you can capture, you MUST capture. If multiple captures are available, you choose which one.
- ♦ The King is not royal; there is no check or checkmate. The King can be captured like any other piece.
- ♦ No castling.
- ♦ Pawns promote normally.
- ♦ Stalemate = draw (unlike Giveaway where stalemate is a loss).

WIN CONDITION

Lose all of your pieces (including the King).

DIFFERENCE FROM GIVEAWAY

The only rule difference is the stalemate condition. In Giveaway, being stalemated means you lose. In Suicide Chess, stalemate is a draw. This seemingly small change has significant strategic implications: reaching a position where neither side can force their remaining pieces to be captured is a valid defensive resource.

STRATEGY

Similar to Giveaway, but the draw-by-stalemate option adds a defensive layer. If you're losing (i.e., your opponent is losing pieces faster than you), you can aim for a stalemate position. This makes the endgame more complex and gives the "losing" side more fighting chances.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 138 OF 153

Synochess

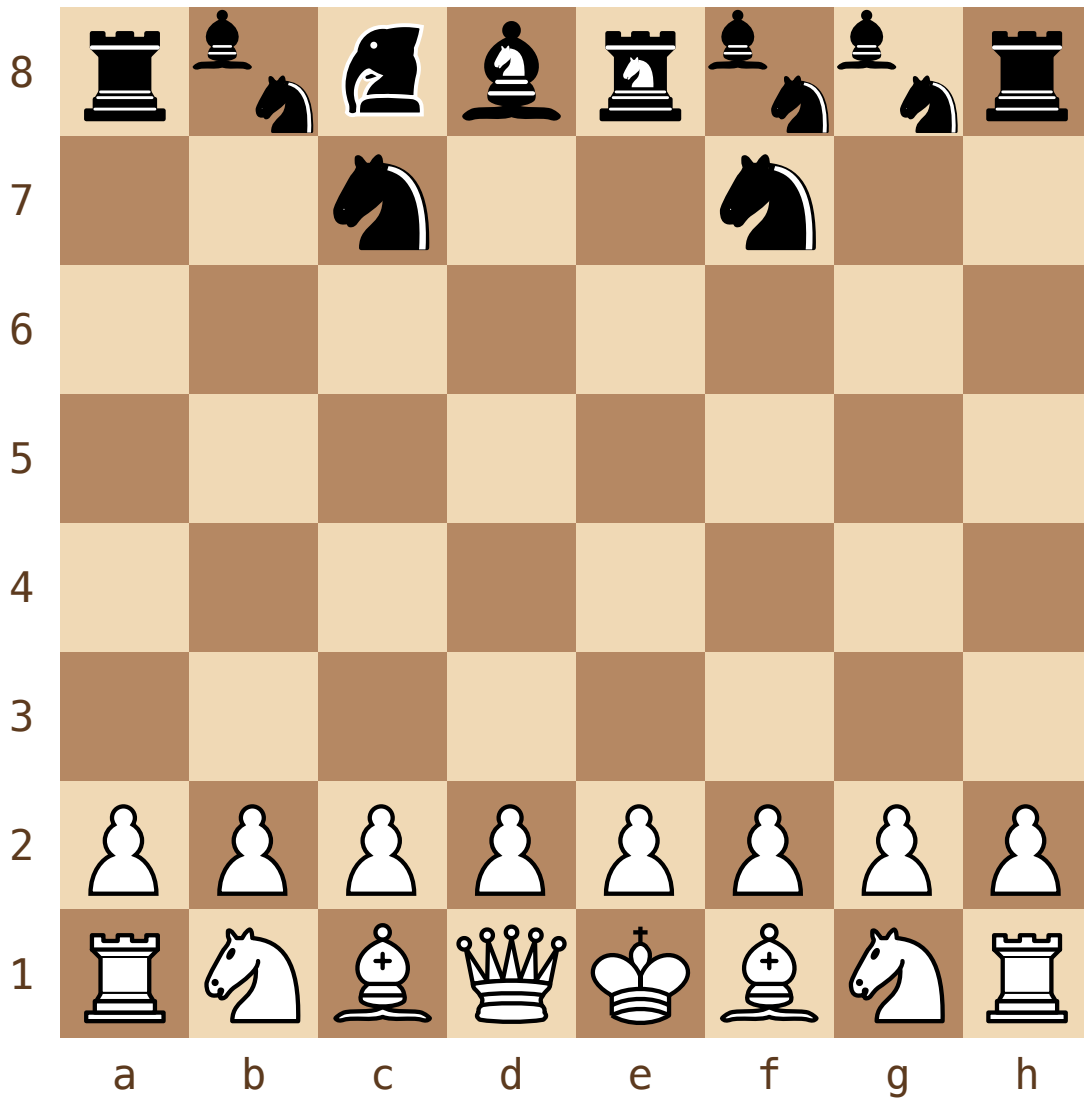
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SYNOCHESS



Synochess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=synochess>

Designed by Corey Clark (2020). Synochess pits the Western chess tradition against an Eastern dynasty drawn from Xiangqi (Chinese Chess). The two armies differ completely in piece movement, and the Eastern side begins with Soldiers held in hand rather than Pawns on the board.

THE TWO ARMIES

Western Army (White): Standard FIDE. King, Queen, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 8 Pawns. All standard chess rules apply to the Western army.

Eastern Army (Black): Xiangqi-derived pieces. No Pawns on the board at game start – Soldiers are held in hand and dropped during play.

EASTERN PIECES

PIECE	SYMBOL	MOVEMENT
Chancellor	C	1 square in any direction (the Eastern royal piece).
Chariot	R	Slides orthogonally any distance (identical to Rook).
Horse	H	1 square orthogonally then 1 square diagonally outward. Can be blocked: if the orthogonal square is occupied, the Horse cannot move in that direction.
Cannon	N	Slides orthogonally any distance to move. To capture, must jump over exactly one intervening piece (the “platform”) and remove the first piece beyond it.
Elephant	E	Leaps exactly 2 squares diagonally. Can be blocked if the intermediate diagonal square is occupied. Cannot cross rank 5 (the river).
Advisor	A	1 square diagonally. Confined to the palace (the 2×3 region d7–f8 for Black).

EASTERN STARTING POSITION

Black’s starting position on ranks 7–8:

8 Ch H E A C A E H Ch (Chariot–Horse–Elephant–Advisor–Chancellor–Advisor–Elephant–H)

Actual rank 8 from a to h: Chariot(a), Horse(b), Elephant©, Advisor(d), Chancellor(e), Advisor(f), Horse(g), Chariot(h).

Rank 7: Cannons on c7 and f7. No other pieces on rank 7.

Black begins with 6 Soldiers in hand (off the board).

SOLDIER DROPS

The Eastern player’s primary pawn-substitute is the Soldier, held in hand.

Drop rules:

- ♦ On any turn, instead of moving a piece, Black may drop one Soldier onto any empty square on rank 5 only.
- ♦ Soldiers move 1 square forward or 1 square sideways (not diagonally, not backward).
- ♦ Soldiers promote on reaching rank 1 to any Eastern piece except Chancellor.
- ♦ All 6 Soldiers must be dropped before Black’s hand is empty; pieces cannot be dropped on ranks other than 5.

THE FACEOFF RULE

If the Western King and the Eastern Chancellor are on the same file with no pieces between them — facing each other directly along an open file — the player who created that open-file confrontation (i.e., the player who just moved to create the faceoff) loses immediately. Both players must avoid creating or allowing this position.

This mirrors the Flying General rule in Xiangqi.

WIN CONDITIONS

- ♦ **Checkmate** the opponent's royal piece (Western King or Eastern Chancellor).
- ♦ **Faceoff** — creating an open-file confrontation between the two royal pieces immediately loses for the player who caused it.

STALEMATE

Standard: if a player has no legal move and is not in check, the game is a draw.

WESTERN ARMY RULES

All standard FIDE rules apply: castling, en passant, pawn promotion. The Western King may not move into a faceoff position.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Corey Clark. Published via Shogun of Games. Official rules at shogunofgames.com.

CHESS · VARIANT 139 OF 153

Tamerlane Chess

11×10 + 2 citadels

BOARD

2

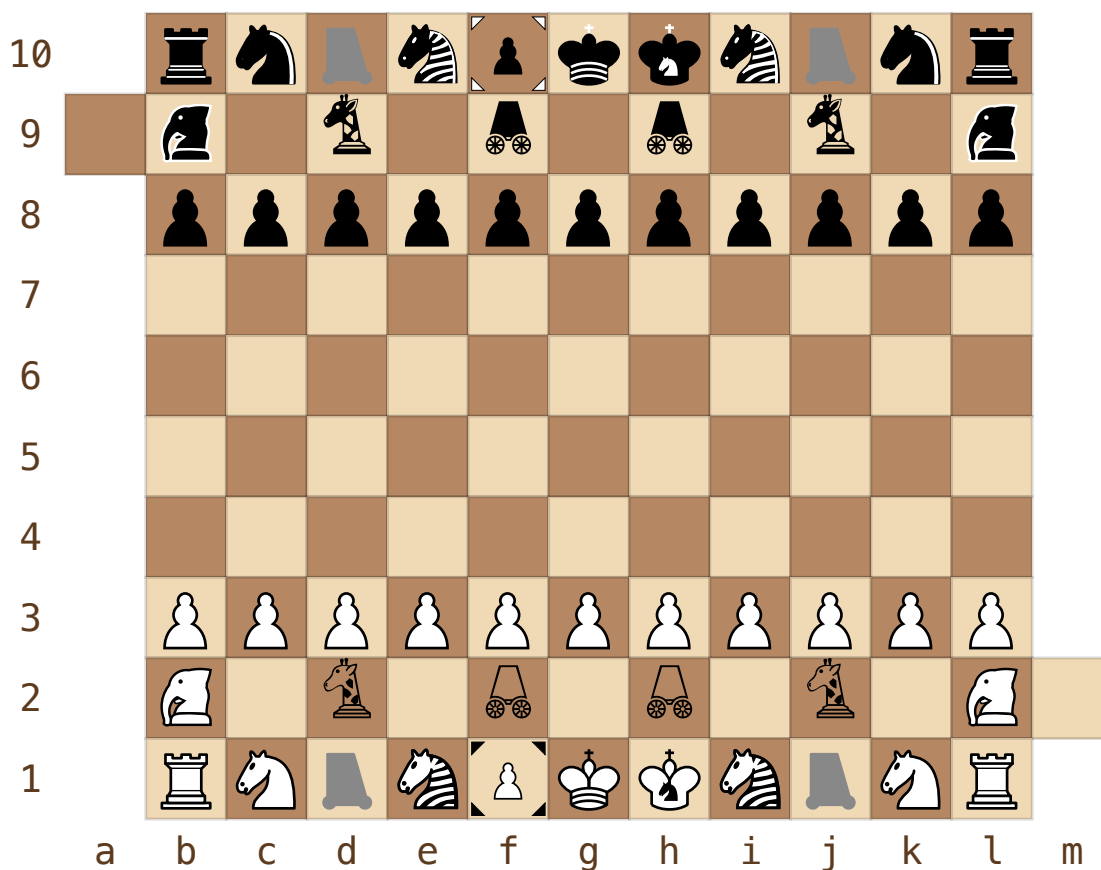
PLAYERS

HISTORY

Tamerlane Chess (Arabic: Shatranj al-Kabir, or Great Chess) is a medieval chess variant attributed to Timur, ruler of the Timurid Empire, and documented in manuscripts from 14th-century Central Asia. It expands the earlier Shatranj with a larger board, twelve distinct piece types, and two mechanics not found in any earlier known variant: a three-stage super-pawn and a citadel draw.

All rules derive from manuscripts predating 1400 and are in the public domain.

THE BOARD



Tamerlane Chess – board layout with citadel squares at rank 2 (White) and rank 9 (Black)

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=tamerlane>

The board is 11 columns (files a-k) by 10 rows (ranks 1–10), giving 110 squares. Each side has one additional citadel square extending from the right of its second rank:

- ♦ White's citadel adjoins column k at rank 2.
- ♦ Black's citadel adjoins column k at rank 9.

The citadels are draw squares. They begin empty and are not starting positions for any piece.

EQUIPMENT

ITEM	COUNT	NOTES
Board	1	11×10 grid plus 2 citadel squares
Shah (King)	1 per side	
Firzan (General)	1 per side	
Wazir (Vizier)	1 per side	
Zurafa (Giraffe)	2 per side	
Tali'a (Scout)	2 per side	
Asb (Horse)	2 per side	Moves as a modern knight
Rukh (Rook)	2 per side	
Pil (Elephant)	2 per side	
Jamal (Camel)	2 per side	
Dabbaba (War Engine)	2 per side	
Bidaq (Pawn)	10 per side	Each assigned to a specific promotion piece
Bidaq al-Bayadiq	1 per side	Special pawn with a multi-stage promotion sequence

28 pieces per side, 56 total.

SETUP

All pieces are placed in ranks 1–3 (White) and ranks 8–10 (Black). Citadel squares begin empty. Black mirrors White with rotation symmetry.

Rank 1 (back rank, files a–k):

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Pil	(empty)	Jamal	(empty)	Dabbaba	(empty)	Dabbaba	(empty)	Jamal	(empty)	Pil

Rank 2 (files a–k plus citadel):

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	CITADEL
Rukh	Asb	Tali'a	Zurafa	Firzan	Shah	Wazir	Zurafa	Tali'a	Asb	Rukh	(empty)

The Firzan (General) stands to the left of the Shah; the Wazir (Vizier) stands to the right.

Rank 3 (pawn rank, files a-k):

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Baidaq al-Bayadiq	Baidaq of Dabbaba	Baidaq of Jamal	Baidaq of Pil	Baidaq of Firzan	Baidaq of Shah	Baidaq of Wazir	Baidaq of Zurafa	Baidaq of Tali'a	Baidaq of Asb	Baidaq of Rukh

PIECE MOVEMENT

SHAH (KING)

Moves one square in any of the eight directions. The Shah cannot move into check. See Special Rules for the Shah exchange.

FIRZAN (GENERAL)

Moves exactly one square diagonally. A short-range piece, as in Shatranj.

WAZIR (VIZIER)

Moves exactly one square orthogonally: forward, backward, or sideways.

ZURAFa (GIRAFFE)

A compound slider. Moves exactly one square diagonally, then continues in an orthogonal direction aligned with that diagonal step, landing on the fourth or further square of the orthogonal leg. Both legs are obstructable: a piece blocking either the diagonal step or the orthogonal path prevents movement along that ray. The Zurafa cannot jump.

TALI'A (SCOUT)

Slides diagonally, with a minimum of two squares per move. The Tali'a cannot move to an adjacent diagonal square, cannot jump, and has no upper distance limit beyond the board edge.

ASB (HORSE)

Moves as the modern chess knight: one square in one direction and then one square at right angles, jumping over any piece in the way.

RU KH (ROOK)

Slides any number of squares orthogonally. Cannot jump.

PIL (ELEPHANT)

Jumps exactly two squares diagonally, leaping over any piece on the intervening square. Equivalent to the Alfil of Shatranj.

JAMAL (CAMEL)

Jumps in a 3×1 L-shape: one square diagonally and then two squares orthogonally in the same direction. May leap over any intervening piece.

DABBABA (WAR ENGINE)

Jumps exactly two squares orthogonally. May leap over the intervening square.

PAWNS

BAID AQ (STANDARD PAWN)

A Baidaq moves one square forward orthogonally and captures one square forward diagonally. There is no two-square first move and no en passant.

Each Baidaq is assigned to one piece type before the game begins, determined by its starting file (see Setup). When a Baidaq reaches the opposite back rank, it promotes immediately to its assigned piece type; there is no choice of promotion piece.

STARTING FILE	PROMOTES TO
a	Baidaq al-Bayadiq (see below)
b	Dabbaba
c	Jamal
d	Pil
e	Firzan
f	Shah (second Shah)
g	Wazir
h	Zurafa
i	Tali'a
j	Asb
k	Rukh

The Baidaq on file f promotes to a second Shah when it reaches the opposite back rank. This additional Shah moves as the king. The opponent must capture it before checkmate can be delivered against the original Shah.

BAIDAQ AL-BAYADIQ

The Baidaq al-Bayadiq starts on file a and moves as a standard Baidaq, but does not promote immediately upon reaching the opposite back rank. Instead, it remains on that square, immune to capture.

When a situation arises in which two of the opponent's pieces could both theoretically be captured by a pawn, the Baidaq al-Bayadiq is moved to that square. Any piece previously occupying that square, including a friendly piece, is displaced. The capture is then made on the following turn.

After completing this sequence, the Baidaq al-Bayadiq continues advancing. On its second promotion: it becomes a Shah's Baidaq and is returned to its starting square. On its third promotion: it becomes Shah Masnu'a; the original Shah's Baidaq becomes Shahzada. Both Shah Masnu'a and Shahzada move as the Shah.

CHECK, CHECKMATE, AND STALEMATE

Check: If the Shah could be captured on the opponent's next turn, it is in check. A player must resolve check on their turn.

Checkmate: The Shah is in check with no legal move available to resolve it. The opponent wins.

Stalemate: The Shah is not in check, but no legal move is available. The opponent wins. Stalemate is a loss, following Shatranj tradition, not a draw.

There is no 50-move rule, no threefold repetition rule, and baring the king is not a win condition.

SPECIAL RULES

SHAH EXCHANGE

Once per game, when a player's Shah is in check or stalemate, that player may swap the Shah with any other friendly piece on the board. The swap constitutes the player's entire move for that turn.

CITADEL DRAW

If a player moves their Shah into the citadel square on the opponent's side of the board, the game is immediately a draw. The Shah cannot enter the opponent's citadel if the opponent's Shah Masnu'a already occupies it.

A player may also move their Shah into their own citadel square; the Shah cannot be captured while it occupies its own citadel.

ATTRIBUTION

Tamerlane Chess. Origin: Central Asia, 14th century, attributed to Timur (Tamerlane). Rules documented in medieval manuscripts, now in the public domain. Sources: Murray, H.J.R., A History of Chess (1913), pp. 344–345; Maastricht University and the Ludii Project, Shatranj al-Kabir.lud (Apache 2.0, citing Murray 1913); Wikipedia, Tamerlane Chess (CC-BY-SA).

CHESS · VARIANT 140 OF 153

Tandem Chess

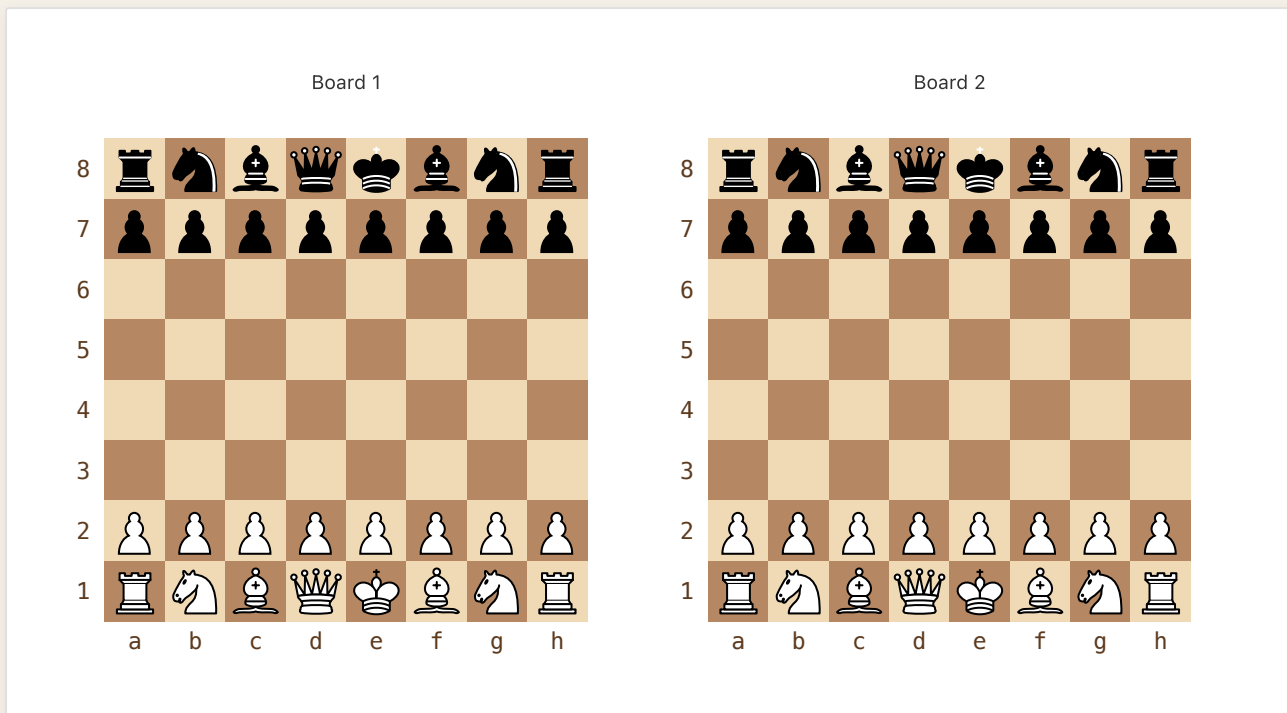
8×8 (two boards)

BOARD

4 (2 teams of 2)

PLAYERS

TANDEM CHESS



Tandem Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=tandem-chess>

Tandem Chess (also known as Siamese Chess) is a 4-player team chess variant played on two simultaneous standard boards. It is closely related to Bughouse Chess and shares most of its rules, with two key distinctions. It is one of the most widely played team chess formats internationally.

SETUP

Two standard 8×8 boards:

- ♦ **Board A:** White1 (Team A) vs Black1 (Team B)
- ♦ **Board B:** White2 (Team A) vs Black2 (Team B)

Teams: White1 + White2 vs Black1 + Black2. Partners sit on the same side of the table. On each board, one team member plays White and the other plays Black.

THE RELAY MECHANIC

When a player captures an enemy piece, it is **passed to their partner** on the other board. The partner may **drop** (place) the received piece onto any empty square on their board in lieu of making a normal move.

Drop restrictions:

- ♦ A Pawn may not be dropped on the 1st or 8th rank.
- ♦ A piece may not be dropped on an occupied square.
- ♦ Special rule: **A player may not give check or checkmate by dropping a piece** (this is the key Tandem Chess restriction that distinguishes it from Bughouse).

Additional drop rules:

- ♦ A Rook dropped on either of its home squares (a1/h1 for White, a8/h8 for Black) is treated as unmoved and may be used for castling.
- ♦ A Pawn dropped on the 2nd rank inherits the two-step advance option and is subject to en passant capture.

WIN CONDITION

The match continues until **both boards have been completed** (not just the first checkmate). After both games end, the score is counted:

- ♦ 1 point for a win on a board
- ♦ ½ point for a draw
- ♦ 0 points for a loss

The team with the higher total score wins. If teams score 1–1, the match is a draw.

TURN ORDER

Play proceeds as in standard chess on each board — White1 and Black1 alternate on Board A; White2 and Black2 alternate on Board B. Partners may not advise each other, but may request a specific piece type (e.g., “Partner, I need a Knight”).

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM BUGHOUSE CHESS

Tandem Chess differs from Bughouse in two rules:

- 1 No check or checkmate by drop** — dropped pieces may not place the enemy King in check.
- 2 Both games must complete** — the match is not decided by the first checkmate; both boards are played to completion.

ATTRIBUTION

Rules documented from chessvariants.com/multiplayer.dir/tandem.html (Hans Bodlaender, 1996; edited John William Brown).

CHESS · VARIANT 141 OF 153

Teleportation Chess

8×8

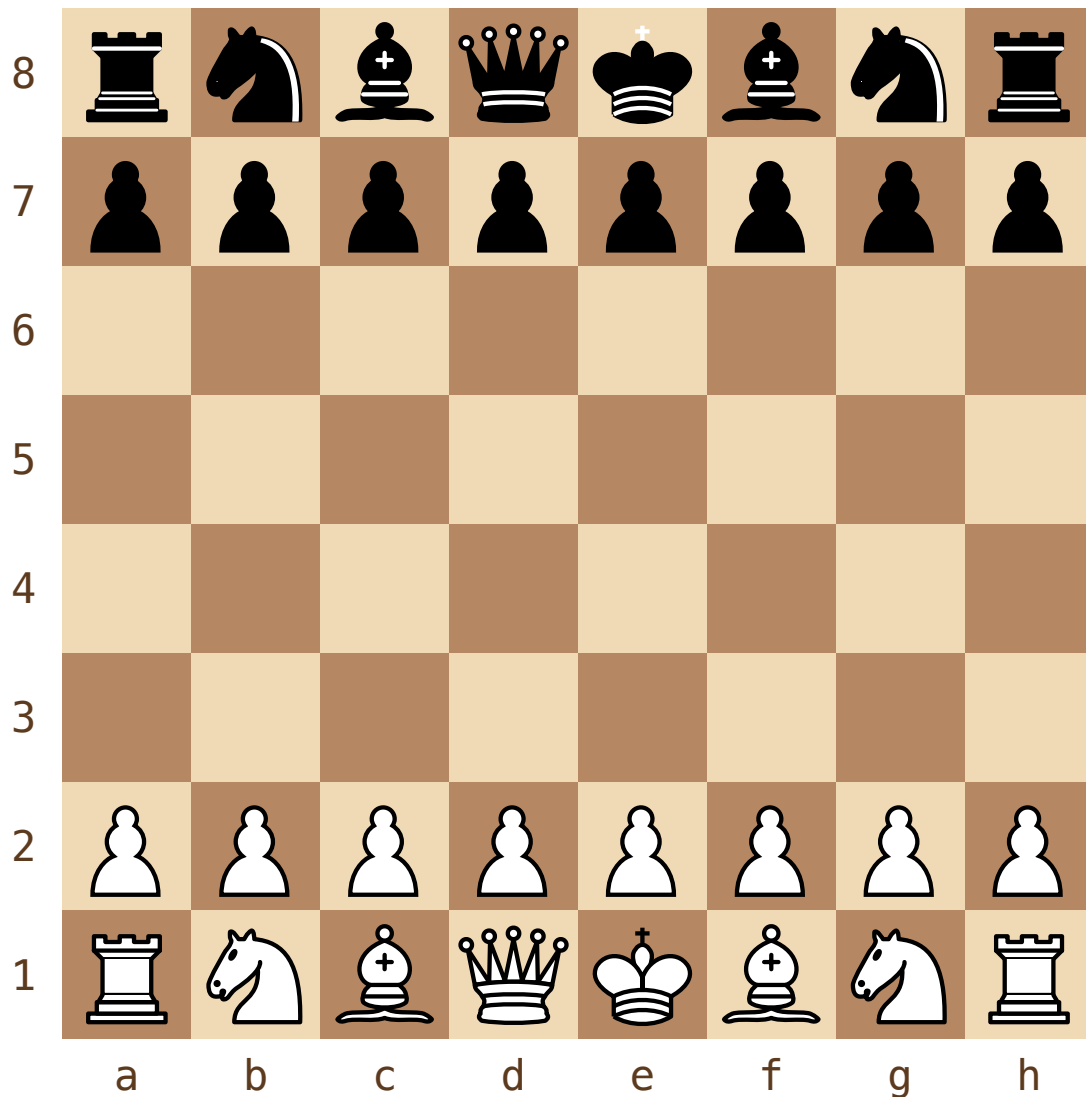
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

TELEPORTATION CHESS

Each player has 3 teleports per game. Instead of a normal move, any piece can teleport to any empty square on the board. Use them wisely – they don't come back.



Teleportation Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=teleport-chess>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup. Each side begins with 3 teleport charges.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ◆ Instead of a normal move, a player may teleport any of their pieces to any empty square on the board.
- ◆ Teleportation uses one charge. Each side has exactly 3 per game.
- ◆ Teleportation does not count as capturing; you can only teleport to empty squares.
- ◆ A teleported piece cannot give check on the teleport move (it arrives but doesn't attack until the next turn).
- ◆ All other standard chess rules apply.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's King.

STRATEGY

Teleports are powerful but finite; save them for decisive moments. Common uses: teleporting a Knight or Queen into a mating net, escaping a trapped piece, or repositioning the King to safety. Bluffing with teleport availability adds a psychological dimension.

ATTRIBUTION

Modern variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 142 OF 153

Three-Check

8×8

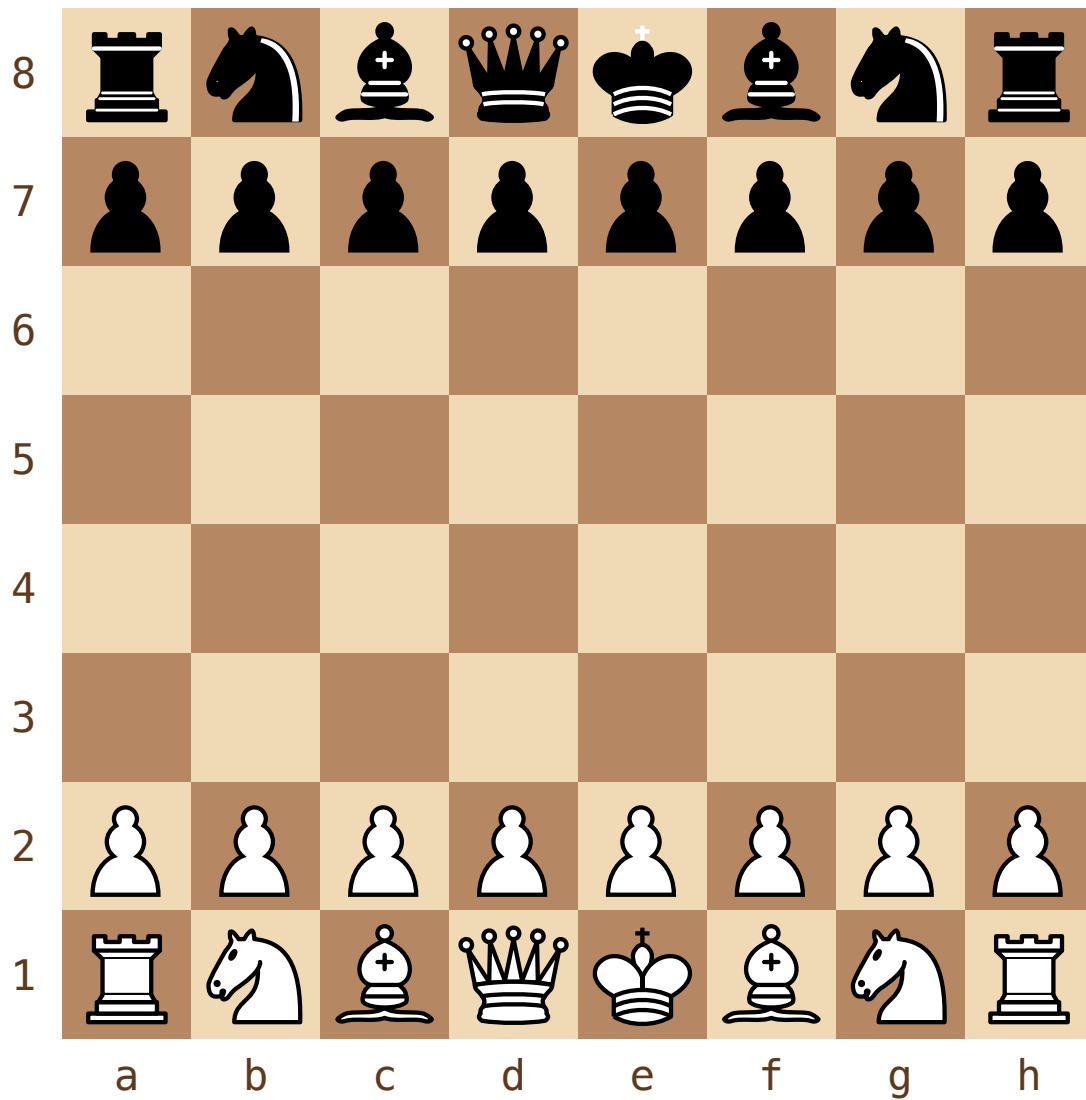
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

THREE-CHECK

Deliver three checks to win. No checkmate needed. Completely changes the value of forcing moves.



Three-Check – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=three-check>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

All standard chess rules apply. Each player's check count is tracked throughout the game.

WIN CONDITION

- ♦ Checkmate (as normal), OR
- ♦ Deliver check three times. Each check is counted regardless of whether it was blocked, evaded, or interposed.

STRATEGY

Pieces that give check frequently (Queen, Bishops on open diagonals) become much more valuable. Sacrificing material to deliver checks becomes a core tactic. Defensive play must prioritise minimising the number of times the King is checked, not just surviving.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Popularised on Lichess. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 143 OF 153

Toroidal Byzantine Chess

**4-ring torus (4×16 circular board with
radial wrap)**

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

TOROIDAL BYZANTINE CHESS

Toroidal Byzantine Chess combines the historical **Byzantine Chess** board (four concentric rings of 16 squares each, 64 squares total) with **toroidal topology**: the innermost ring connects to the outermost ring radially. This creates a fully closed surface with no edges – a donut-shaped (torus) board in ring form.

Byzantine Chess itself descends from Shatranj (the form of chess that reached Europe from the Arabic world, differing from modern chess mainly in piece movement) and was played in Byzantium around 1000 CE on a circular board instead of a standard 8×8. Khalfine and Saperow built the toroidal version explicitly by analogy to the “Shape of Space” torus family documented on the same site (Karl Fischer’s Torus Chess on a Standard Board and Alberto Monteiro’s Chess in a Toroidal Board): join the edges of the circular Byzantine board the same way those variants join the edges of a square board, and a torus results, with the Byzantine piece rules unchanged. The source hedges on whether this exact combination was ever historically played (“perhaps... has been experienced in Constantinople”), but is confident about the modern formalisation: considered by several mathematicians, including the authors themselves, circa 1999–2001.

STARTING POSITION

The source states piece rules are “the same as in Byzantine Chess,” but the **setup differs** from plain Byzantine Chess. In ordinary Byzantine Chess, each army straddles the seam where file p meets file a; on the toroidal board that arrangement would put both Kings in mutual check immediately (the radial wrap removes the inner/outer edges that normally shield them). Instead, each army is placed in a contiguous 4-file block, positioned so that **only pawns are attacked** from the starting position.

Using the rectangular “unrolled” development of the ring board (4 rings as ranks 1–4, 16 positions as files a–p – the same convention as plain Byzantine Chess), confirmed against the source’s interactive diagram:

White (files c–f):

- ♦ Rank 1: Rook (d1), Rook (e1); Pawns (c1, f1)
- ♦ Rank 2: Knight (d2), Knight (e2); Pawns (c2, f2)
- ♦ Rank 3: Bishop (d3), Bishop (e3); Pawns (c3, f3)
- ♦ Rank 4: King (d4), Queen (e4); Pawns (c4, f4)

Black (files l–n – the same pattern shifted 8 files around the ring):

- ♦ Rank 1: Rook (l1), Rook (m1); Pawns (k1, n1)
- ♦ Rank 2: Knight (l2), Knight (m2); Pawns (k2, n2)
- ♦ Rank 3: Bishop (l3), Bishop (m3); Pawns (k3, n3)
- ♦ Rank 4: King (l4), Queen (m4); Pawns (k4, n4)

Files a, b, g, h, i, j, o, p are empty at setup. The **engine.setup** FEN encodes this ring-by-ring, highest ring (4, outermost) first down to ring 1 (innermost) – the same rank-descending convention used by every other FEN in this hub (e.g. rank 8 first on a standard board) – run-length style: digits are empty-square counts, uppercase is White, lowercase is Black.

BYZANTINE CHESS FOUNDATION

Piece movement follows Byzantine Chess (Shatranj-era rules), per the source's direct link to that page:

PIECE	SHATRANJ NAME	MOVEMENT
King	Shah	1 step in any direction
Queen	Fers	1 step diagonally
Bishop	Fil	Leaps exactly 2 diagonally
Rook	Rukh	Slides orthogonally
Knight	Faras	Leaps as in modern chess
Pawn	Baidak	Moves 1 step radially toward opponent

In standard Byzantine Chess, pieces travel around the rings continuously: ring position 16 connects to position 1 on the same ring.

Note: the source's own overview text loosely refers to a modern circular-board reconstruction of Byzantine Chess as "Circular Chess." This is almost certainly generic phrasing, not a claim that it is the same product as the separately-documented, unrelated "Circular Chess" already in this hub (David Reynolds, 1983, FIDE pieces, no ring-radial structure) — the two should not be conflated, but it's worth knowing the name collision exists in source material.

TOROIDAL ADDITION

In Toroidal Byzantine Chess, the **radial edges** also wrap:

- A piece sliding inward from ring 4 (the innermost ring) emerges from ring 1 (the outermost ring) at the same angular position
- A piece sliding outward from ring 1 emerges from ring 4 at the same angular position
- Diagonal movement that crosses the radial boundary does so with the corresponding offset

This means there are truly no edges on the board — every ring is adjacent to two rings on both radial sides (ring 1 is adjacent to rings 2 and 4; ring 4 is adjacent to rings 3 and 1).

CONSEQUENCES FOR PIECES

Rooks: the source confirms a Rook on the toroidal board can travel either the long 16-cell circle (around a ring) or the short 4-cell circle (radially, in and out through the wrap) — it "feels itself quite well everywhere," unlike on the plain circular Byzantine board where radial movement is restricted at the inner and outer edges.

Bishops (Fil): the 2-step diagonal leap behaves normally within the ring structure; at the radial seam, the leap continues to the appropriate ring.

Queen (Fers): one step diagonally, as in Byzantine Chess — the toroidal wrap does not extend the Fers's range since it only ever moves one square.

King: has up to 8 neighbours in all positions (no corner or edge restrictions).

PAWNS

Pawns (Baidak) move radially "toward the opponent," one step at a time. In the toroidal version, the radial wrap means a Pawn advancing past ring 4 would emerge from ring 1 rather than being blocked — though given the contiguous starting blocks above, in practice most pawns will contact enemy pieces well before reaching that wrap.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the opponent's Shah (King). Shatranj rules may also apply: stalemate = win; bare King = win (unless opponent can bare King on the next move, in which case it is a draw).

ATTRIBUTION

Toroidal Byzantine Chess invented by Anatoly Khalfine and Ernst Saperow, circa 1999–2001. Source: chessvariants.org/shape.dir/toroidalbyzantinechess.html, including its overview text and interactive setup diagram. Byzantine Chess foundation: chessvariants.com/historic.dir/byzantine.html.

CHESS · VARIANT 144 OF 153

Torpedo Chess

8×8

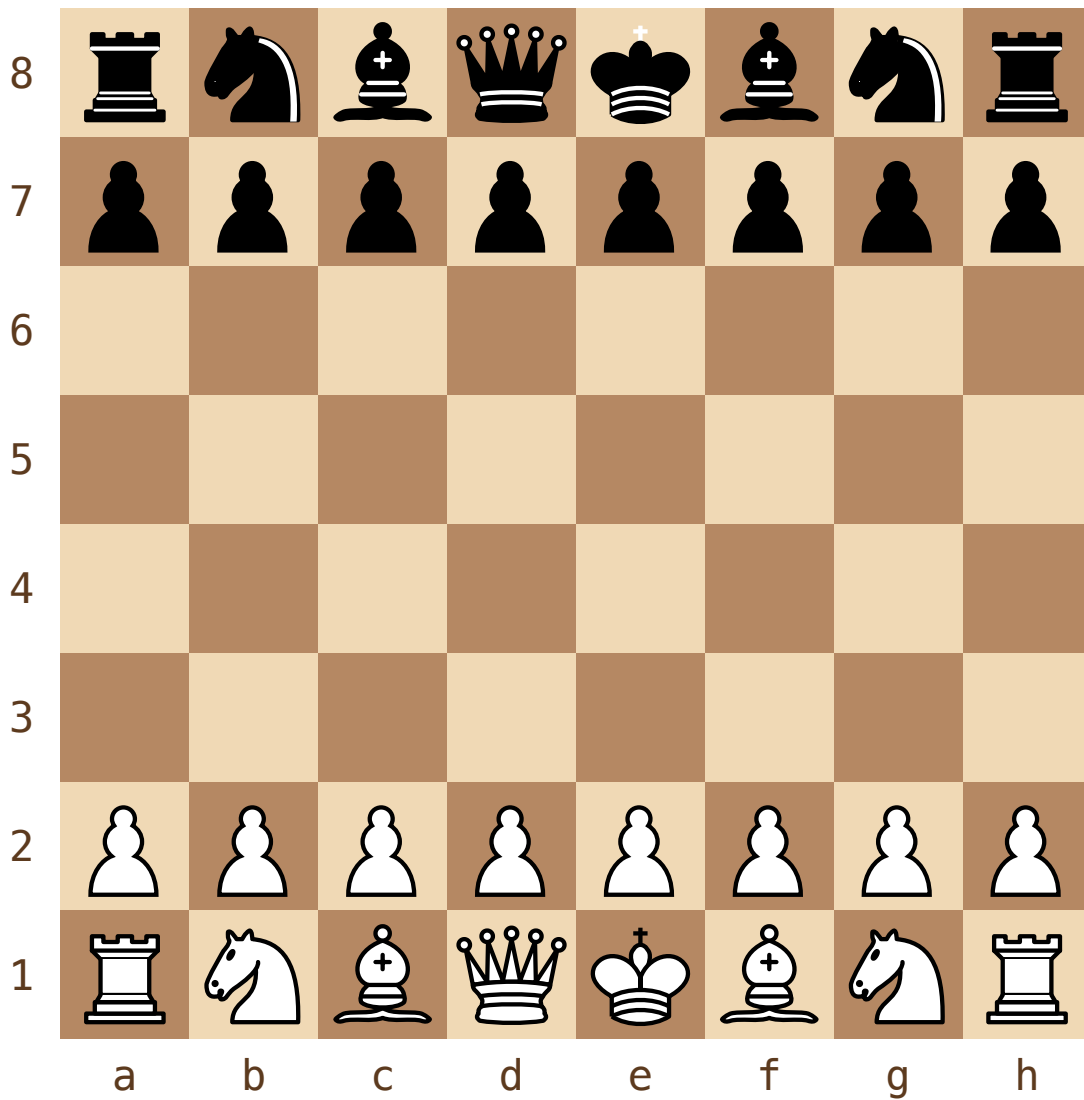
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

TORPEDO CHESS

Pawns can always double-move, not just from their starting rank. Dramatically accelerates pawn play in the middlegame and endgame.



Torpedo Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=torpedo>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess setup.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

Identical to standard chess except:

- ♦ Pawns may advance two squares from ANY rank (not just their starting rank), provided both squares are empty.
- ♦ En passant applies whenever a pawn double-moves past an enemy pawn, regardless of which rank it starts from.
- ♦ All other rules unchanged.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

STRATEGY

Passed pawns become much more dangerous because they can sprint two squares at a time. Pawn endgames are sharply different: a pawn on the 5th rank can reach promotion in two moves instead of three. Blockading passed pawns is more difficult. Connected pawns rolling forward together are extremely powerful.

ATTRIBUTION

Variant popularised on Lichess. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 145 OF 153

Turkish Great Chess II (Atranj)

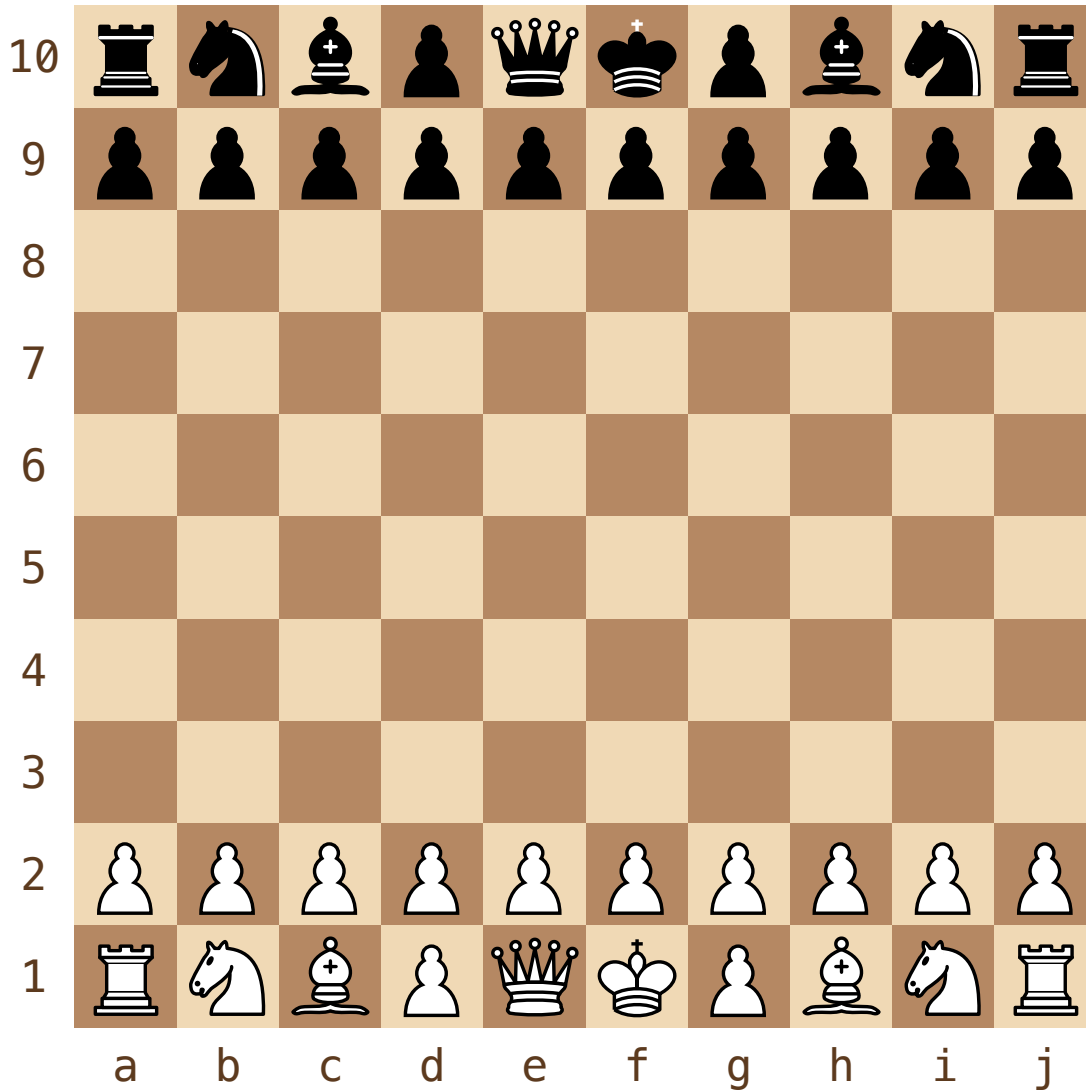
10×10

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

TURKISH GREAT CHESS II – ATRANJ / QATRANJ



Turkish Great Chess II (Atranj) – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=turkish-great-chess-ii>

Turkish Great Chess, Variation II – known as **Atranj** or **Qatranj** – is a historical large chess variant described by H. J. R. Murray in *A History of Chess* (1913). Despite its classification under Turkish chess in Murray's survey, the source manuscript is Indian. The game is played on a 10x10 board with an expanded piece set that includes three pieces not found in standard chess.

Note: John Gollon, in mining Murray's book for his Chess Variations, inadvertently omitted each player's two central knights. The version described here is the correct full game.

THE BOARD

10×10 (100 squares). Presumed uncoloured in the original; shown checkered on chessvariants.com for clarity.

STARTING POSITION

Rank 1 (White):

SQUARE	PIECE
a1	Rook
b1	Ghora (Knight)
c1	Fil (Elephant/Bishop)
d1	Wazir
e1	Shahzadeh
f1	Padshah (King)
g1	Kotwal
h1	Fil (Elephant/Bishop)
i1	Ghora (Knight)
j1	Rook
e2, f2	Urdabegini (2 pieces)
e3, f3	Ghora (Knight) – 2 more
a2–d2, g2–j2	Pawns (8 pieces)

Black: mirror on ranks 10, 9, 8.

PIECES

PIECE	NAME(S)	MOVEMENT	COUNT
Padshah	King	As King in chess	1 per side
Shahzadeh	Prince	As Rook, Bishop, OR Knight	1 per side
Wazir	Vizir / Minister	As Bishop or Rook	1 per side
Kotwal	Police Chief / Paymaster	As Bishop or Knight	1 per side
Fil	Elephant	As Bishop	2 per side
Ghora	Horse	As Knight	4 per side (b1,i1,e3,f3)
Rook	Chariot	As Rook	2 per side
Urdabegini	Armed female attendant	1 square toward opposing Padshah	2 per side (e2,f2)
Pawn	—	As Pawn (no double first move)	8 per side

KEY PIECE NOTES

Shahzadeh (Prince): Moves as Rook, Bishop, or Knight combined – effectively an Amazon (the strongest compound piece in many chess variants). The most powerful attacking piece on the board.

Urdabegini: A unique homing piece that always moves one square in the direction that reduces distance to the opposing Padshah. Its movement is dictated by the King's position.

Wazir: Moves as Bishop or Rook (equivalent to the modern Queen).

Kotwal: Moves as Bishop or Knight (a compound piece not found in standard chess).

RULES

- ♦ No castling
- ♦ Pawns have no double first move
- ♦ Stalemate rule unknown from historical sources (may follow Shatranj convention: stalemate = win)
- ♦ Pawn promotion: reaches last rank and is promoted to Wazir (implied, not explicit in source)
- ♦ Win: Checkmate the opponent's Padshah

ATTRIBUTION

Turkish Great Chess, Variation II (Atranj / Qatranj). Described by H. J. R. Murray in *A History of Chess*; source is Indian. Documented by John Ayer on chessvariants.com/large.dir/greatchessii.html.

CHESS · VARIANT 146 OF 153

Turkish Great Chess III

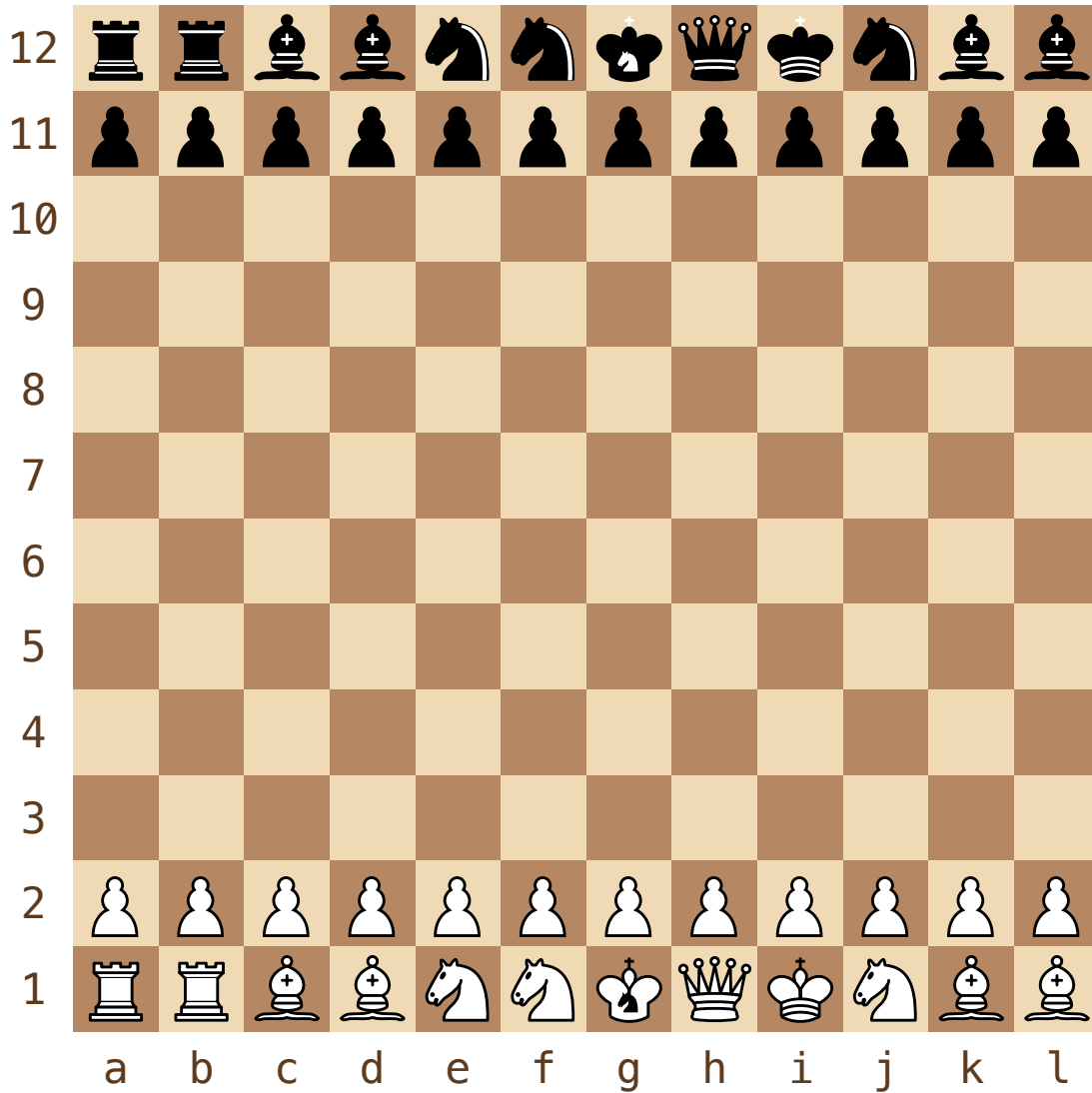
12×12

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

TURKISH GREAT CHESS III



Turkish Great Chess III – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=turkish-great-chess-iii>

Turkish Great Chess, Variation III is a historical large chess variant played on a 12×12 board. It is one of four large chess variants catalogued by John Gollon from H. J. R. Murray's *A History of Chess* (1913). The game uses an expanded piece set where several pieces move as Bishops, the Wazir moves as a full Queen, and separate Rook-like pieces (Ratha/Chariot) are added.

THE BOARD

12×12 (144 squares). Uncoloured in the original; shown checkered on chessvariants.com for clarity.

STARTING POSITION

Rank 1 (White):

SQUARE	PIECE
a1	Rook
b1	Ghora (Knight)
c1	Dahja (Standard)
d1	Ratha (Chariot)
e1	Fil (Elephant)
f1	Wazir
g1	Padshah (King)
h1	Fil (Elephant)
i1	Ratha (Chariot)
j1	Dahja (Standard)
k1	Ghora (Knight)
l1	Rook
a2-l2	Pawns (12 pieces)

Black: mirror on ranks 12 and 11.

PIECES

PIECE	NAME(S)	MOVEMENT	COUNT
Padshah	King	As King in chess	1 per side
Wazir	Vizir / Minister	As Queen (slides ortho and diag)	1 per side
Fil	Elephant	As Bishop	2 per side
Ratha	Chariot	As Rook	2 per side
Dahja	Standard	As Bishop	2 per side
Ghora	Horse	As Knight	2 per side
Rook	—	As Rook	2 per side
Pawn	—	As Pawn (no double first move)	12 per side

Note: Both the Fil and the Dahja move as Bishops, giving each player 4 Bishop-type pieces per side.

RULES

- ♦ No castling
- ♦ Pawns have no multiple steps on first move
- ♦ Stalemate and bare King rules unknown from historical sources
- ♦ Pawn promotion: reaches last rank and promotes to Wazir
- ♦ Win: Checkmate the opponent's Padshah

ATTRIBUTION

Turkish Great Chess, Variation III. John Gollon's version, sourced from H. J. R. Murray's *A History of Chess*. Documented by John Ayer on chessvariants.com/large.dir/greatchessiii.html.

CHESS · VARIANT 147 OF 153

Turkish Great Chess IV

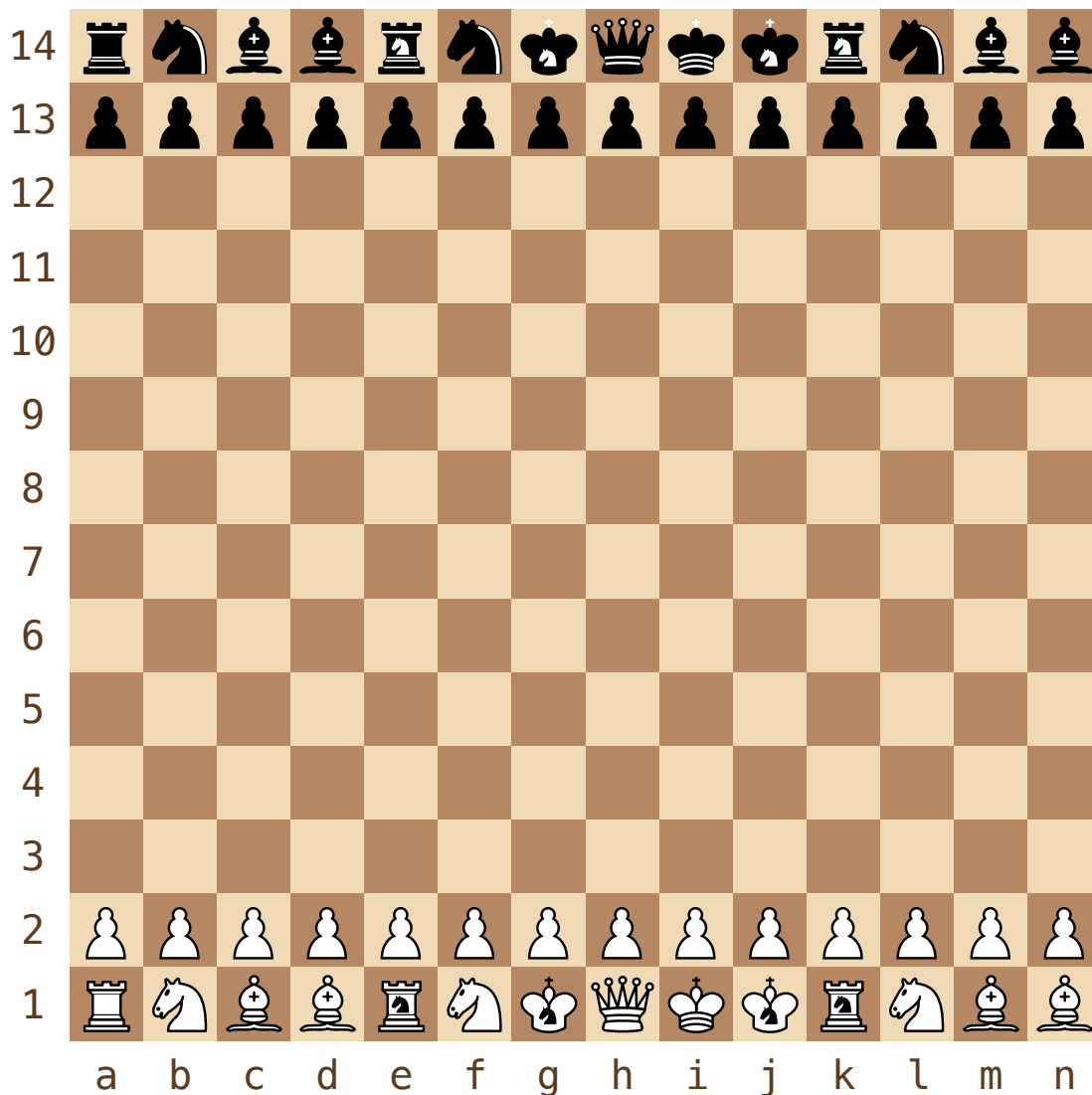
14×14

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

TURKISH GREAT CHESS IV



Turkish Great Chess IV – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=turkish-great-chess-iv>

Turkish Great Chess, Variation IV is a historical large chess variant played on a 14×14 board. Although catalogued under Turkish chess by John Gollon from H. J. R. Murray's *A History of Chess*, it uses Indian piece names (Raja, Rani) and Persian names (Shahzadeh) alongside the standard Arabic-derived names, suggesting a mixed cultural origin.

A notable feature: the **Rani (Queen)** is unusually weak – moving only one square in any direction like a King – and may be deliberately placed or left on an attacked square without being considered in check. This makes the Rani tactically sacrificeable.

THE BOARD

14×14 (196 squares). Uncoloured in the original; shown checkered on chessvariants.com for clarity.

STARTING POSITION

Rank 1 (White):

SQUARE	PIECE
a1	Rook
b1	Ghora (Knight)
c1	Dahja (Standard)
d1	Ratha (Chariot)
e1	Fil (Elephant)
f1	Shahzadeh (Prince)
g1	Wazir
h1	Raja (King)
i1	Rani (Queen)
j1	Fil (Elephant)
k1	Ratha (Chariot)
l1	Dahja (Standard)
m1	Ghora (Knight)
n1	Rook
a2-n2	Pawns (14 pieces)

Black: mirror on ranks 14 and 13.

PIECES

PIECE	NAME(S)	MOVEMENT	COUNT
Raja	King	As King in chess	1 per side
Rani	Queen	1 square in any direction; may be placed/left en prise	1 per side
Shahzadeh	Prince	As Bishop or Rook (= Chancellor without Knight)	1 per side
Wazir	Vizir / Minister	As Bishop or Rook	1 per side
Fil	Elephant	As Bishop	2 per side
Ratha	Chariot	As Rook	2 per side
Dahja	Standard	As Bishop	2 per side
Ghora	Horse	As Knight	2 per side
Rook	—	As Rook	2 per side
Pawn	—	As Pawn (no double first move)	14 per side

KEY PIECE NOTES

Rani: Unlike the standard chess Queen, the Rani moves only one square in any direction. Uniquely, she **may be placed or left en prise** — the opponent is not required to capture her, and she cannot be used to deliver checkmate in the traditional sense. This makes her more of a positional piece than a royal one.

Shahzadeh and Wazir: Both move as Bishop or Rook — together they form a powerful slider pair.

RULES

- ♦ No castling
- ♦ Pawns have no double first move
- ♦ Stalemate and bare King rules unknown from historical sources
- ♦ Pawn promotion: reaches last rank and promotes to Wazir
- ♦ Win: Checkmate the opponent's Raja

ATTRIBUTION

Turkish Great Chess, Variation IV. John Gollon's version, sourced from H. J. R. Murray's *A History of Chess*. Documented by John Ayer on chessvariants.com/large.dir/greatchessiv.html.

CHESS · VARIANT 148 OF 153

Ultima (Baroque Chess)

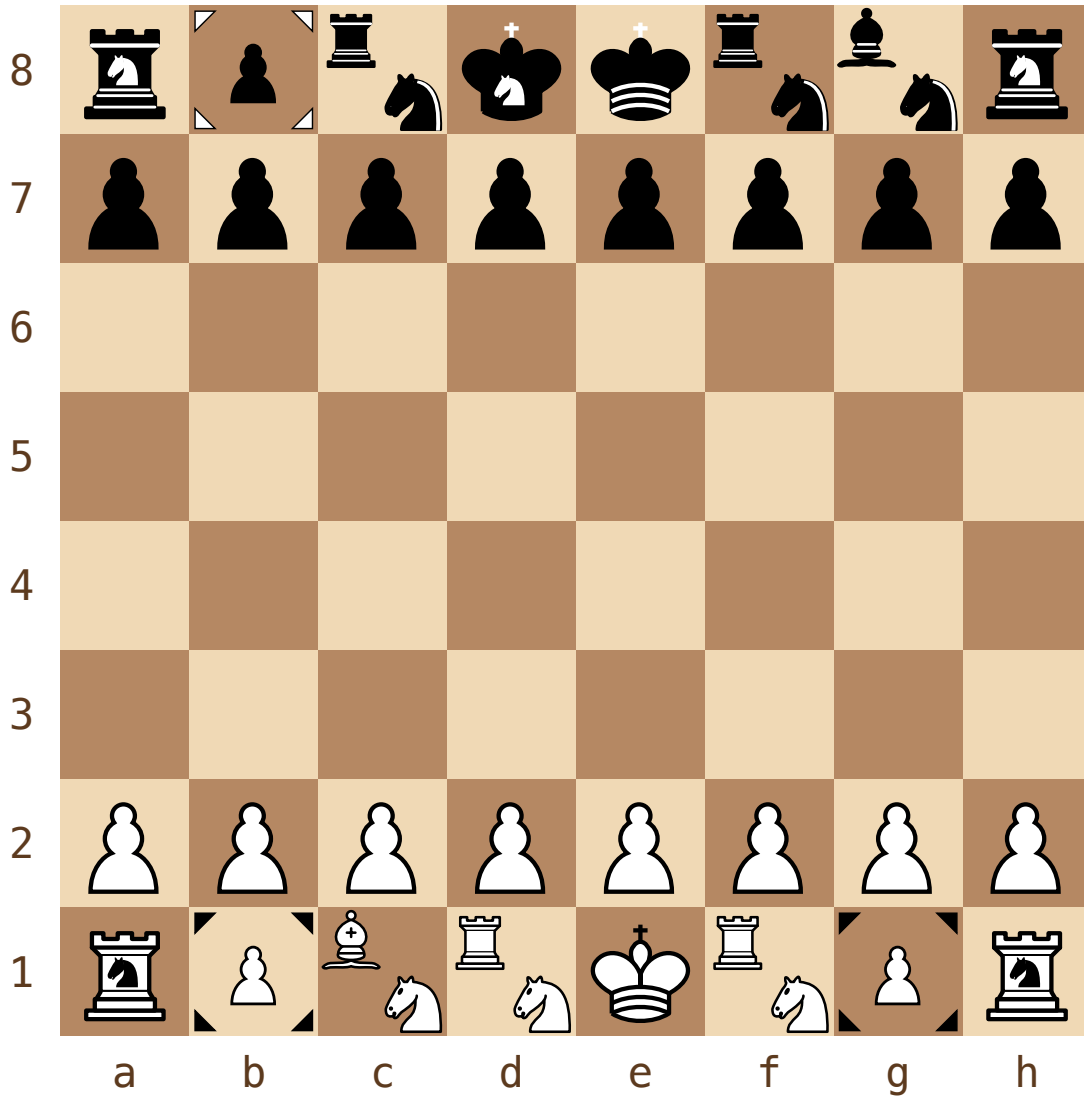
8×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

ULTIMA (BAROQUE CHESS)



Ultima (Baroque Chess) – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=ultima>

Designed by Robert Abbott and published in 1962 as Ultima (later popularized as Baroque Chess). Ultima is built on one radical premise: every piece has a unique capture method. No two pieces share the same way of taking. The King is won by capturing it outright – there is no check, no checkmate, no stalemate.

PIECE MOVEMENT AND CAPTURE

All pieces except the King slide like the Queen — any number of squares in any of the eight directions — to reach their destination. (They slide without capturing en route; the capture occurs as a result of where they land or what they leave behind.) The King moves one step in any direction. Capture methods are entirely independent of movement methods.

PIECE	STARTING SQUARES	MOVEMENT	CAPTURE METHOD
King	e1 / e8	1 step, any direction	Displacement: physically move onto the opponent King's square. Win by capturing the opponent King.
Withdrawer	d1 / d8	Queen slide	Withdrawal: if the Withdrawer moves directly away from an adjacent opponent piece (along the same line it occupied when adjacent), that piece is captured. Moving toward an adjacent piece, or along any other line, captures nothing.
Coordinator	a1, h1 / a8, h8	Queen slide	Coordinate capture: when the Coordinator moves to square X, any opponent piece that occupies the same rank as your King and the same file as X is captured; and any opponent piece that occupies the same file as your King and the same rank as X is also captured. Multiple captures possible per move.
Long Leaper	c1, f1 / c8, f8	Queen slide	Leap capture: the Long Leaper may jump over one opponent piece along a rank, file, or diagonal, landing on the next empty square beyond it; the jumped piece is captured. Multiple leaps in one move are permitted, each over a separate opponent piece on the same or different lines.
Immobilizer	g1 / g8	Queen slide	Immobilization: the Immobilizer does not capture. Instead, any opponent piece that is orthogonally or diagonally adjacent to the Immobilizer at the end of its move is frozen and may not move until the Immobilizer moves away. An Immobilizer adjacent to an opponent Immobilizer is itself immobilized.
Chameleon	b1 / b8	Queen slide	Mimicry: the Chameleon captures using the capture method of whichever type of piece it is targeting. To capture a Withdrawer, it withdraws from it. To capture a Long Leaper, it leaps over it. To capture a Coordinator, it coordinates with your King against it. To capture an Immobilizer, it immobilizes it (both are immobilized). To capture a Pincer Pawn, it flanks it. Cannot capture a King by displacement (Chameleon has no displacement method).
Pincer Pawn	a2-h2 / a7-h7	Queen slide	Custodian (flank) capture: when the Pincer Pawn moves, any opponent piece now sandwiched between the Pincer and another friendly piece along the same rank or file is captured. Multiple custodian captures are possible from one move.

STARTING POSITION

The formation mirrors standard FIDE, with pieces assigned as follows:

```

8 Co Ch Lp Wd Kg Lp Im Co
7 Pp Pp Pp Pp Pp Pp Pp Pp
6 . . . . . . . .
5 . . . . . . . .
4 . . . . . . . .
3 . . . . . . . .
2 Pp Pp Pp Pp Pp Pp Pp Pp
1 Co Im Lp Wd Kg Lp Ch Co
  a  b  c  d  e  f  g  h

```

Key: Co=Coordinator, Ch=Chameleon, Lp=Long Leaper, Wd=Withdrawer, Kg=King, Im=Immobilizer, Pp=Pincer Pawn.

WIN CONDITION

Win by capturing the opponent's King on your turn. There is no check or checkmate. A player who faces an opponent King threatening to land on their King's square should move their King away, but the game does not require this — if the opponent can execute the capture, they win.

NO STALEMATE AS DRAW

If a player has no legal move, that player loses.

IMMOBILIZER INTERACTIONS

- ♦ A piece adjacent to a friendly Immobilizer is not affected; only opponent pieces are immobilized.
- ♦ An immobilized piece that is also capturable by other means can still be captured normally.
- ♦ The Chameleon adjacent to an opponent Immobilizer becomes immobilized itself (both are frozen). The Chameleon adjacent to a friendly Immobilizer is unaffected.
- ♦ Coordinator captures are not blocked by immobilized pieces — immobilized pieces can still be captured by the Coordinator.

NOTATION

Standard algebraic notation suffices for most moves. Captures may be annotated by listing captured piece coordinates in parentheses. Because multiple captures can occur from one move, annotation can become complex; many players record only the moving piece's origin and destination.

ATTRIBUTION

Designed by Robert Abbott. Published in 1962 in Abbott's New Card Games. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 149 OF 153

Upside-Down

8×8

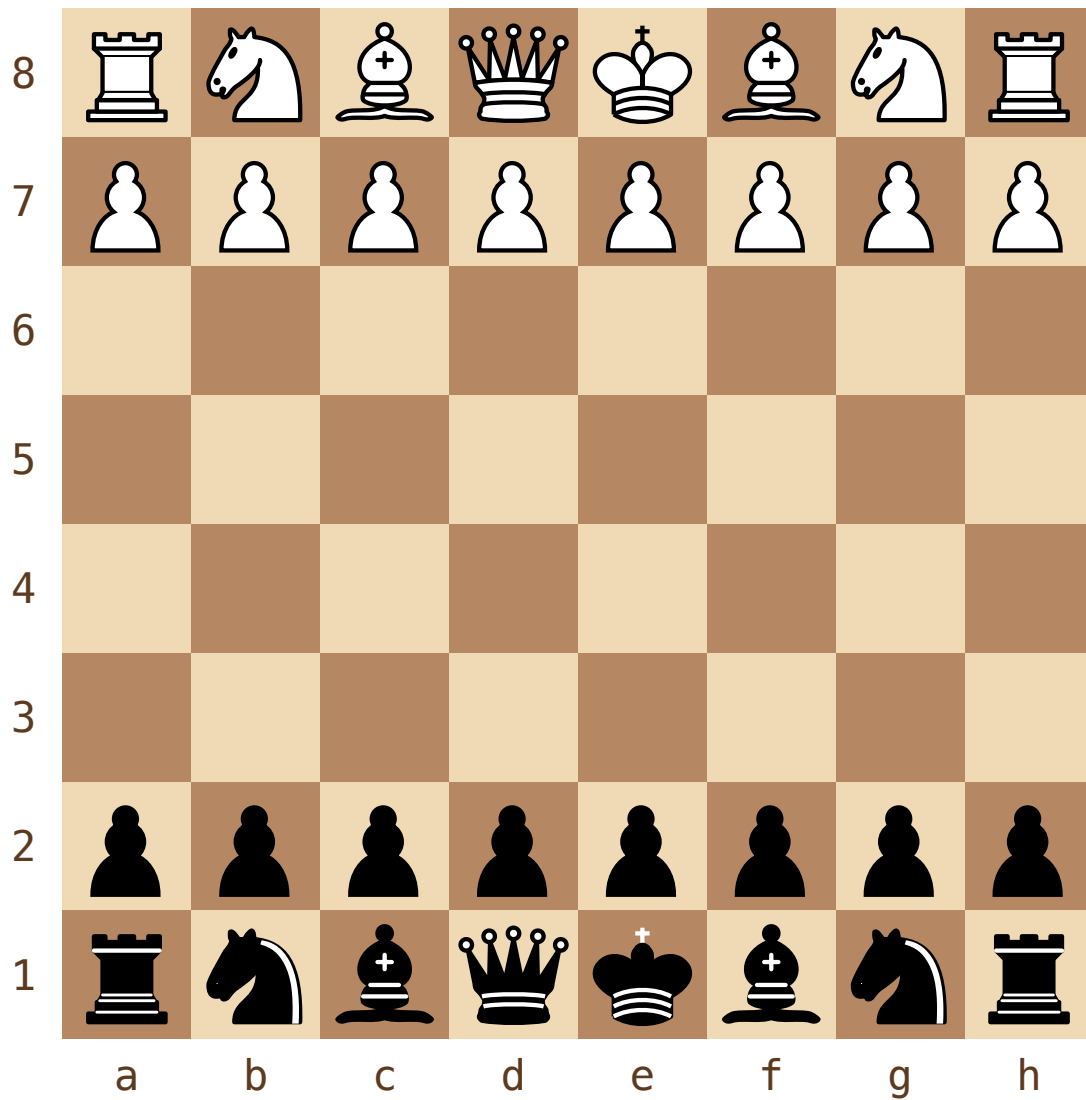
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

UPSIDE-DOWN

Pieces start on the opponent's back rank. Pawns move "backward" toward their own side. A disorienting mirror of standard chess.



Upside-Down Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=upside-down>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): RNBQKBNR/PPPPPPPP/8/8/8/8/pppppppp/rnbqkbnr

White's pieces start on rank 8 (Black's usual side). Black's pieces start on rank 1 (White's usual side). Pawns still move in their normal direction – White pawns advance toward rank 8, Black pawns toward rank 1 – but since they start on rank 7/rank 2 respectively, they're already deep in "enemy territory."

RULES

All standard chess rules apply, including:

- ♦ Pawns move in their standard direction (White toward rank 8, Black toward rank 1).
- ♦ Pawns promote on the far rank from their perspective (rank 8 for White, rank 1 for Black) – which is where they started.
- ♦ Castling is available if King and Rook haven't moved.
- ♦ En passant applies normally.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate, same as standard chess.

STRATEGY

Pieces are already developed, with no opening phase of moving pieces out. Pawns are immediately adjacent to enemy pieces, creating instant tactical tension. The game is sharp from move 1. Pawn structure becomes strange because pawns are "behind" the pieces they're supposed to shield.

ATTRIBUTION

Traditional variant. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 150 OF 153

Vierschach

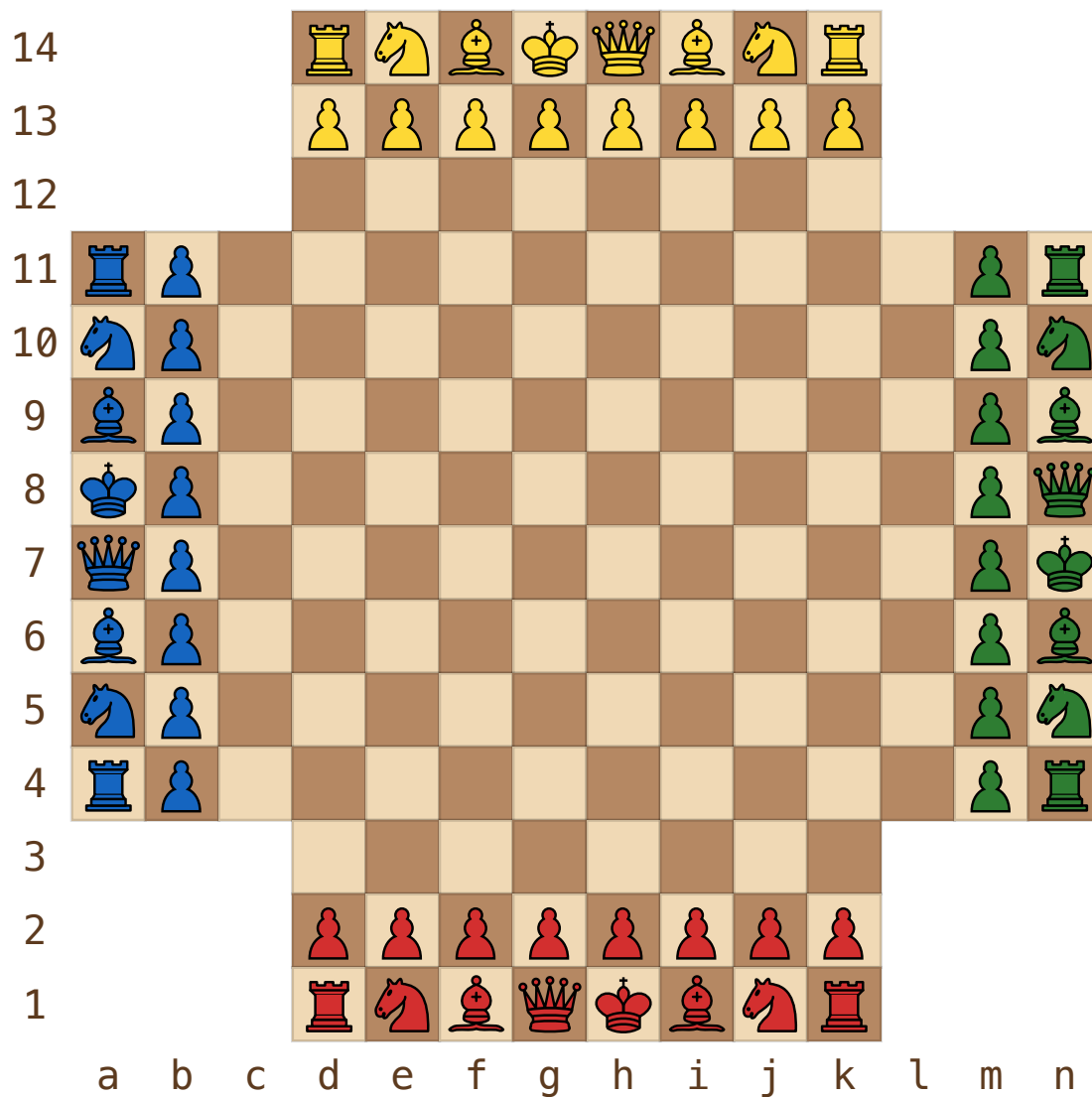
**cross-shaped, 160 squares (8×8 centre +
four 3×8 extensions)**

BOARD

4

PLAYERS

VIERSCHACH



Vierschach – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=vierschach>

Vierschach (German: "Four Chess", also Viererschach) is a traditional German 4-player chess variant invented by Dr. G. Arthur Lutze (1813–1870) and documented by Theodor Müller-Alfeld. It was widely played in the 19th century and is one of the most historically established 4-player chess forms.

THE BOARD

A standard 8×8 chessboard is extended on each side by a 3×8 strip, creating a cross-shaped (+) board with **160 playable squares**. The overall bounding box is 14×14, with the four 3×3 corner sections off the board.

PLAYERS AND TEAMS

Four players:

- ♦ **South – White A** (back rank at bottom)
- ♦ **West – White B** (back rank at left)
- ♦ **North – Black A** (back rank at top)
- ♦ **East – Black B** (back rank at right)

Teams: White A + White B vs Black A + Black B. Crucially, allied armies are placed **side by side** (adjacent sides of the board), not opposite each other.

Turn order: White A → Black A → White B → Black B (alternating teams).

STARTING POSITION

Each player commands a complete FIDE chess army (King, Queen, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 8 Pawns).

South (White A) – back rank left to right: Rook · Knight · Bishop · King · Queen · Bishop · Knight · Rook, then Pawns on rank above.

North (Black A) – back rank left to right: rook · knight · bishop · king · queen · bishop · knight · rook, then Pawns on rank below.

West (White B) – back rank top to bottom (leftmost column): Rook · Knight · Bishop · Queen · King · Bishop · Knight · Rook, then Pawns in the next column.

East (Black B) – mirror of West in the right extension.

Queens start on their own color (black queens on black squares, white queens on white squares).

RULES

All standard FIDE piece movement applies.

En passant from the side: En passant captures work in all directions. Example: if White A has a Pawn on l2 and Black B has a Pawn on m4, after 1. l2–l4 Black B may play m4×l3 e.p.

Castling: Allowed in both directions. Players generally prefer to castle toward their allied side.

Pawn promotion (White A): Pawns promote when they reach squares a11, b11, c11, m11, n11, o11 (the side-wing ranks of North's territory) or d14–h14 (North's back rank).

Elimination: If one King of a team is captured (which can happen normally, like any piece), the surviving forces of the captured King's team continue playing to support their remaining allied King.

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate the last surviving enemy King. The first enemy King may be captured at any point like a normal piece. The second (surviving) enemy King must be **checkmated** — not just captured — to win the game.

ATTRIBUTION

Invented by Dr. G. Arthur Lutze (1813–1870). Documented by Theodor Müller-Alfeld and Heinz Machatscheck. Rules documented from chessvariants.com/multiplayer.dir/vierschach.html (Jörg Knappen, 2002).

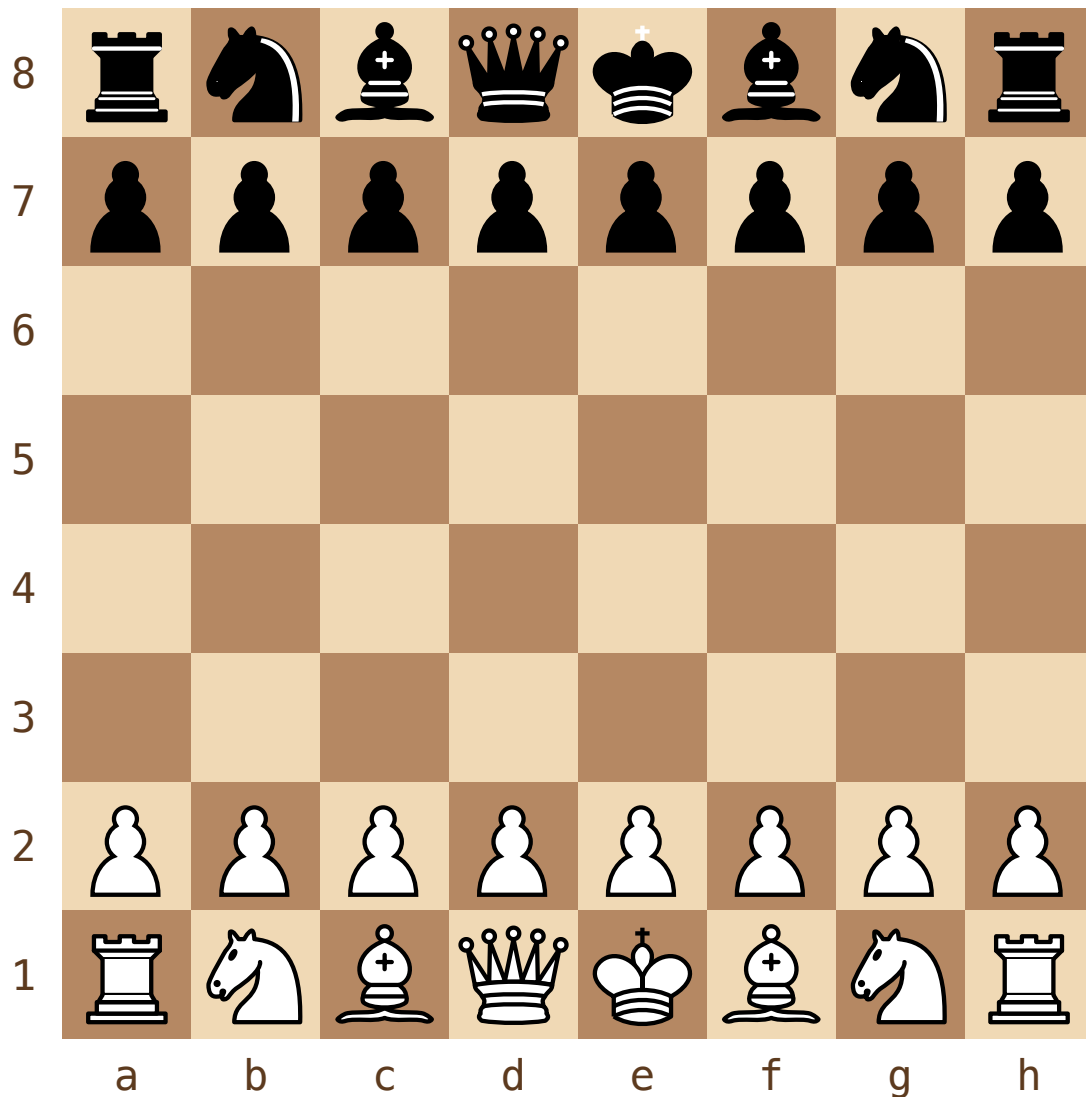
CHESS · VARIANT 151 OF 153

Weak!

8×8 BOARD	2 PLAYERS
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WEAK!

On each turn, you MUST move the weakest piece type that has a legal move. Pawns first, then Knights, Bishops, Rooks, Queen, King, in order of weakness.



Weak! – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=weak>

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup: Standard chess starting position.

FEN: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq - 0 1

RULES

- ♦ Standard chess movement applies, with a move obligation:
- ♦ On each turn, a player **MUST** move the weakest piece type that has at least one legal move.
- ♦ Piece strength hierarchy (weakest to strongest): Pawn < Knight < Bishop < Rook < Queen < King.
- ♦ If any Pawn has a legal move, you must move a Pawn. Only if no Pawn can move may you move a Knight. This continues up the hierarchy.
- ♦ The King can only be moved if no other piece type has a legal move.
- ♦ When in check, the weakest piece type that can resolve the check must be used.
- ♦ Castling is only possible when the King is the weakest available piece (extremely rare in practice).

WIN CONDITION

Checkmate.

STRATEGY

The opening is entirely pawn play since pawns must move first. Once pawns are blocked or captured, knights activate, then bishops, and so on. Lock your opponent's pawns to force them into using pieces prematurely. Pawn structure is paramount. Sacrifice pawns strategically to "unlock" stronger pieces earlier. Endgames are wild: losing your last pawn frees your pieces entirely.

ATTRIBUTION

Ralph Betza, 1970s–80s. Published in *NOST-algia* newsletter. Public domain.

CHESS · VARIANT 152 OF 153

Xiang Fu

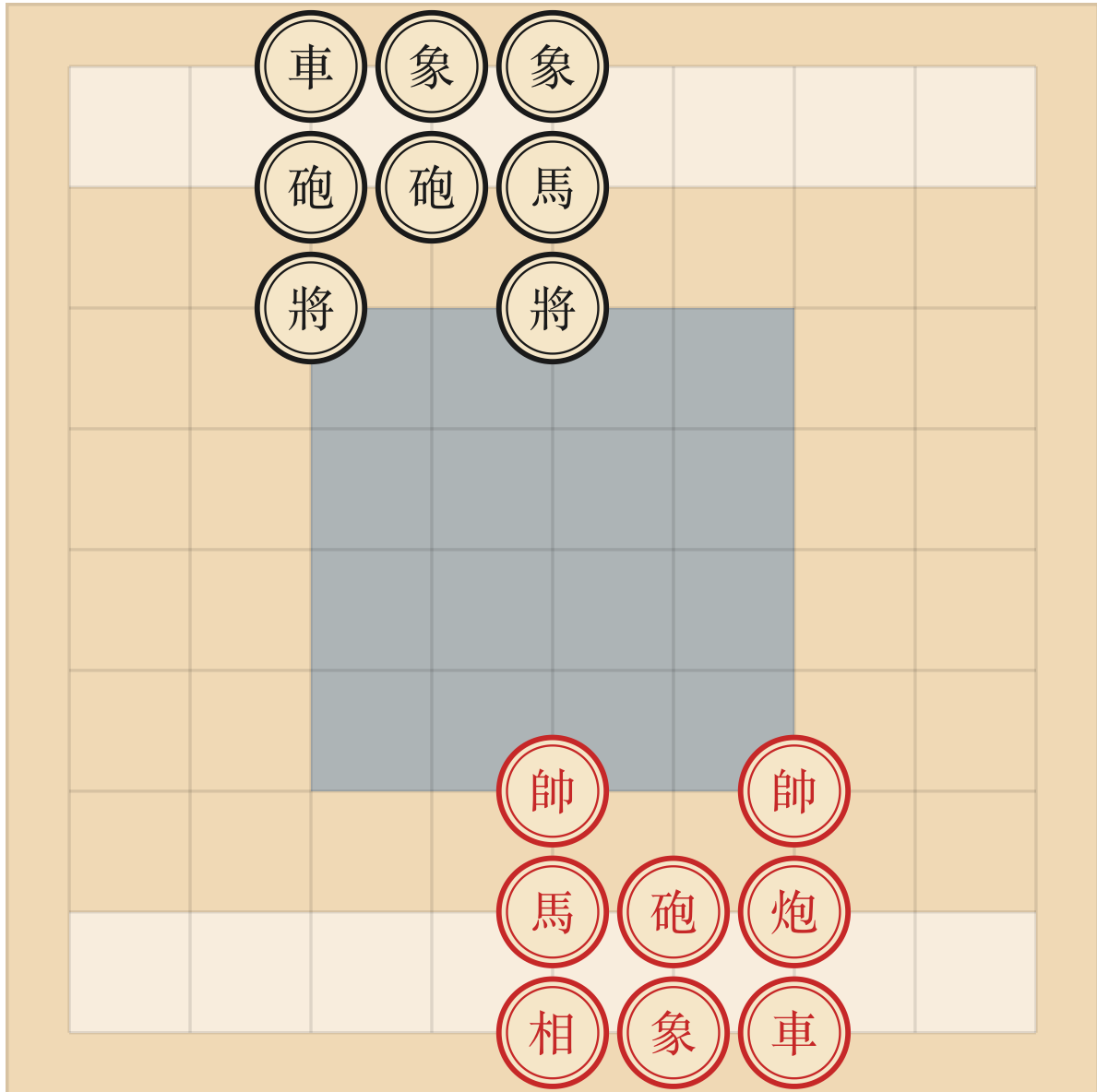
9×9

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

XIANG FU



Xiang Fu – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=xiang-fu>

Xiang Fu() is a Xiangqi/chess hybrid created by Eventlesstew for the PyChess Variant Design Contest. It combines Xiangqi's ranging pieces with a dual-Champion checkmate system inspired by Spartan Chess. Piece drops and the Crossbow (a diagonal Cannon) add further tactical depth.

THE BOARD

A 9×9 grid. Each side's two **Champions** are confined to a **Ring** — a designated zone in each player's territory — and cannot leave it.

STARTING POSITION

Pieces occupy only the outer quadrants of the board at the start, with the centre empty.

Black (top-left quadrant, ranks 1–3):

- Rank 1: Chariot© · Bishop(d) · Mahout(e)
- Rank 2: Cannon© · Crossbow(d) · Horse(e)
- Rank 3: Champion© · Champion(e)

Red (bottom-right quadrant, ranks 7–9):

- Rank 7: Champion(e) · Champion(g)
- Rank 8: Horse(e) · Crossbow(f) · Cannon(g)
- Rank 9: Mahout(e) · Bishop(f) · Chariot(g)

FEN: 2rbm4/2cwn4/2+g1+g4/9/9/9/4+G1+G2/4NWC2/4MBR2 [] w - 0 1

(+G/+g = *Champion (royal)*, R/r = *Chariot*, B/b = *Bishop*, M/m = *Mahout*, C/c = *Cannon*, W/w = *Crossbow*, N/n = *Horse*.
Empty hand []. Red (w) moves first.)

WIN CONDITIONS (SPARTAN-STYLE)

Each side has **two Champions** (royal pieces):

- To win, either: **capture one of the opponent's Champions** (reducing them to a single Champion), then checkmate the remaining one in the standard way; OR
- Achieve **Duple Checkmate** — simultaneously attack both Champions so that neither can escape on the opponent's next move.

PIECE DROPS

Pieces you capture go to your hand. On any turn, instead of moving a piece on the board, you may **drop a captured piece** onto any empty square within your own **first two ranks**.

PIECES

PIECE	SYMBOL	MOVEMENT
Champion	+G	Moves one square any direction. Royal. Confined to the Ring.
Pupil	G	Moves one square any direction. Non-royal. (A captured Champion enters hand as a Pupil.)
Chariot	R	Slides any number of squares orthogonally (Xiangqi Chariot = Rook).
Horse	N	One step orthogonally then one step diagonally outward (Xiangqi Horse). Blockable.
Cannon	C	Slides orthogonally freely; to capture, must jump over exactly one screen piece.
Crossbow	W	Slides diagonally freely; to capture, must jump over exactly one screen piece on the diagonal. Diagonal version of the Cannon.
Mahout	M	Moves two squares in any direction (orthogonally or diagonally). Not a jump; blocked by intervening pieces.
Bishop	B	Slides any number of squares diagonally (chess Bishop). Not blockable by intervening pieces for diagonal slides.

RULES

- ♦ **Champions** are confined to the Ring at all times and cannot move outside it.
- ♦ **Drops** are limited to the dropping player's own first two ranks.
- ♦ When a Champion is captured, it enters the opponent's hand as a **Pupil** (non-royal) and may be dropped later.
- ♦ **Stalemate and repetition** work as in standard chess (draw), not Xiangqi rules.
- ♦ The Flying General rule (Generals cannot face each other on an open file) does **not** apply.

ATTRIBUTION

Xiang Fu was designed by Eventlesstew for the PyChess Variant Design Contest. Board corrected to 9×9 (not 9×10 as originally described). Rules documented from pychess.org/variants/xiangfu.

CHESS · VARIANT 153 OF 153

Yalta Chess

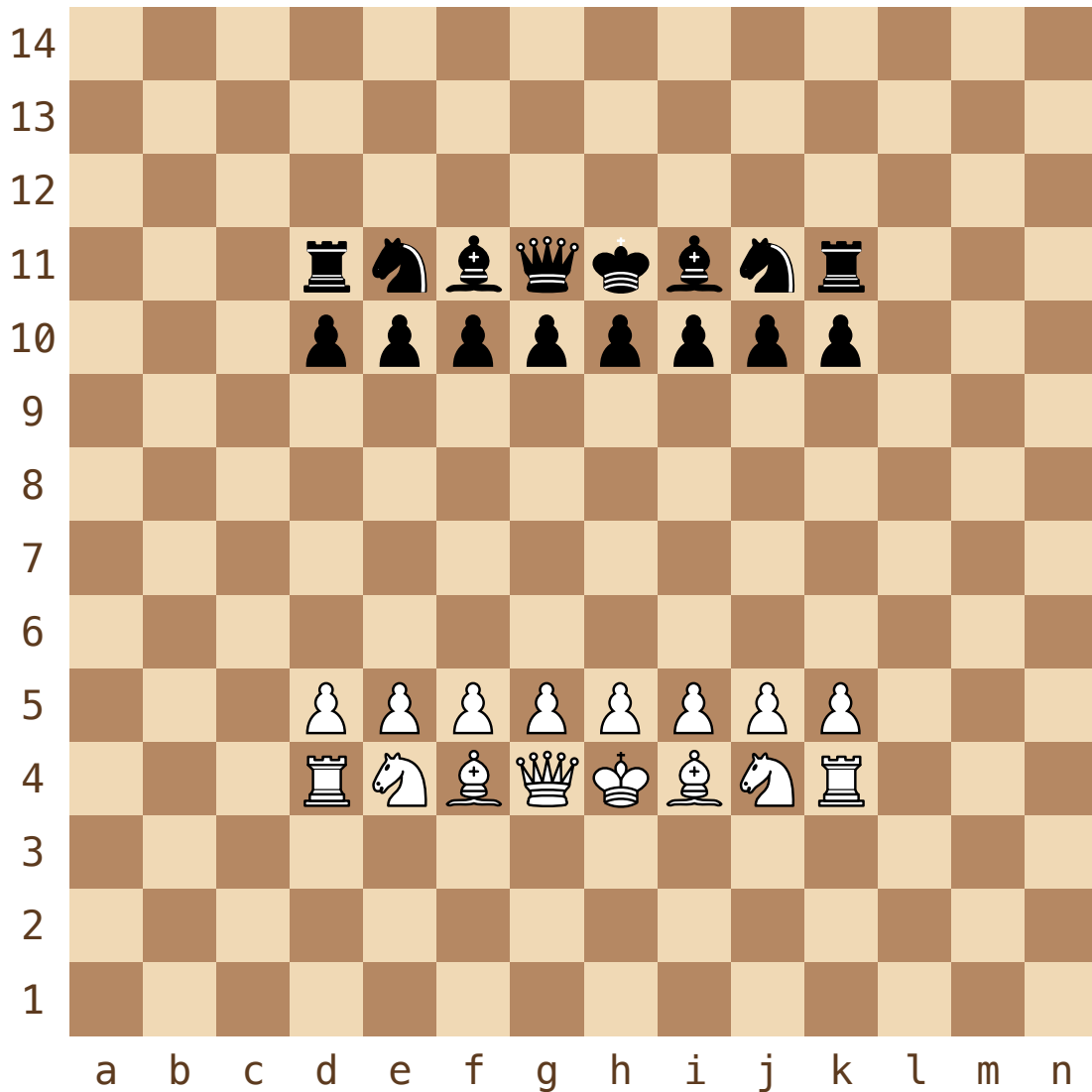
Hexagonal Y-trisection

BOARD

3

PLAYERS

OVERVIEW



Yalta Chess – starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=chess&variant=yalta-chess>

Yalta Chess is a 3-player chess variant played on a hexagonal board divided into three Y-shaped sectors. It was documented by Daniel Lindström from a small book purchased at a chess bookshop in Paris. Lindström describes it as “more about group dynamics, preferably together with a couple of beers, than as a serious competition.”

BOARD

The board is a **hexagon**, divided by three lines running from the centre to alternating corners into three equal Y-shaped (parallelogram/rhombus) sectors, one per player. Each sector contains a standard 8×8-equivalent chess playing area, checkered in the ordinary alternating pattern, with each player's back rank at the outer hexagon edge and pieces fanning inward toward the central junction. Pieces move using standard FIDE movement within their sector; the central junction, where all three sectors meet, is the area where a piece moving from one sector toward another has a choice of path.

This matches the board graphic on the primary source page (chessvariants.com/multiplayer.dir/yalta.html, graphic by Daniel Lindström) — a hexagon, not a circle or rings. The variant is **not** circular/annular in structure, unlike Byzantine Chess or Circular Chess. It shares its fundamental hex-trisection shape with San-kwo-k'i (xiangqi hub) — see that file for a note on a possible shared renderer (moddable-engine#26).

PLAYERS

Three players, distinguished by colour: **Red**, **Green**, and **Blue** (per the primary source's starting-position diagram, credited to David Howe).

STARTING POSITION

Each player sets up a complete standard FIDE army (8 pieces + 8 pawns) in their own sector, back rank at the outer hexagon edge. Confirmed against the source diagram, the back-rank order reading across each sector is:

Rook, Knight, Bishop, Queen, King, Bishop, Knight, Rook

This places the **Queen immediately to the left of the King**, matching the documented rule (queen placement was deliberately chosen "for the sake of symmetry" across the three sectors). Pawns occupy the rank immediately in front of the back rank, toward the central junction.

Exact per-square coordinates are not yet encoded — there is no standardised coordinate system for a hex-trisection board yet (moddable-engine#26 covers designing one, shared with San-kwo-k'i). A secondary, independently-built implementation exists at yalta-chess.com (documented at smlep.github.io/jekyll/update/2020/12/26/yaltachess.html) using a 96-square-total board (32 per player) with its own coordinate system, but that page explicitly notes its rules "differed depending on the articles" it drew from — treat it as a cross-reference for board shape only, not as an authoritative source for exact starting squares or total square count, which may differ from the original Lindström book.

RULES

All standard FIDE chess rules apply within a sector, with the following modifications:

Path choice at the center: Pawns, Bishops, and Queens have a choice of path when passing through the central junction area. Pawns have this choice only when capturing, not when advancing.

Knight movement: Knights always land on a square of the opposite color to their starting square, even when crossing sectors. Their path near the junction may appear unusual, but the color-change property is preserved.

Check response: When a player is in check, they must resolve it on their turn as usual. The player to their left may attempt to help them by interposing a piece or capturing the checker on that player's own turn.

Checkmate and army takeover: When a player is checkmated, their King is removed from the board. The player who delivered the checkmate **takes control of all the checkmated player's remaining pieces** and may use them immediately. Promoting a captured pawn from the new army requires a piece sacrifice — move the pawn to the promotion rank and allow it to capture a piece placed in its path. Taking control of the new pieces does not grant an extra move.

Alliances: Informal alliances between players are permitted. There is no rule requiring a player to honor any agreement. All disputes about rules are resolved by majority vote among the three participants.

Multiple-check resolution: If a player in check is simultaneously checked by two opponents, the check delivered first takes priority for determining which player delivers the mate.

WIN CONDITION

The last player with a King on the board wins.

ATTRIBUTION

Yalta Chess documented by Daniel Lindström; WWW page by David Howe, created May 12, 1997. Rules and board graphic documented from chessvariants.com/multiplayer.dir/yalta.html. Board shape (hexagonal Y-trisection, not circular), player colours, and back-rank order confirmed against the primary source's diagrams, 2026-07.