

CHESS · VARIANT 39 OF 153

Courier Chess

12×8

BOARD

2

PLAYERS

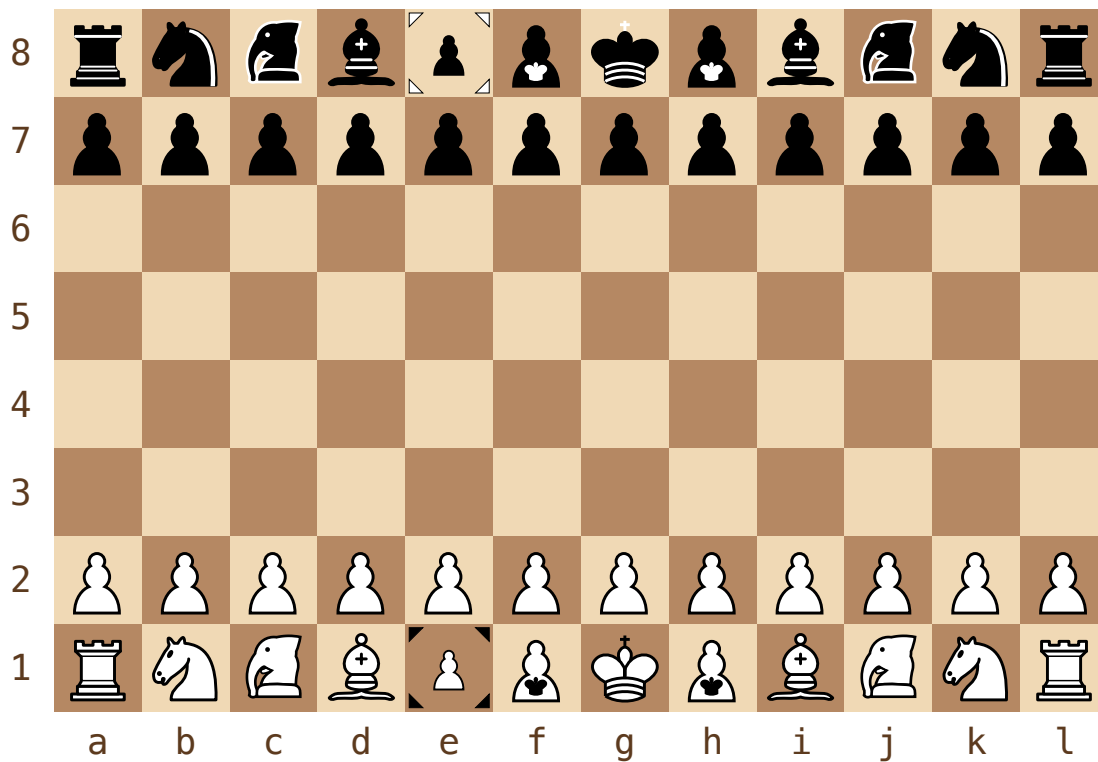
COURIER CHESS

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.