

CHESS · VARIANT 54 OF 153

Empire Chess

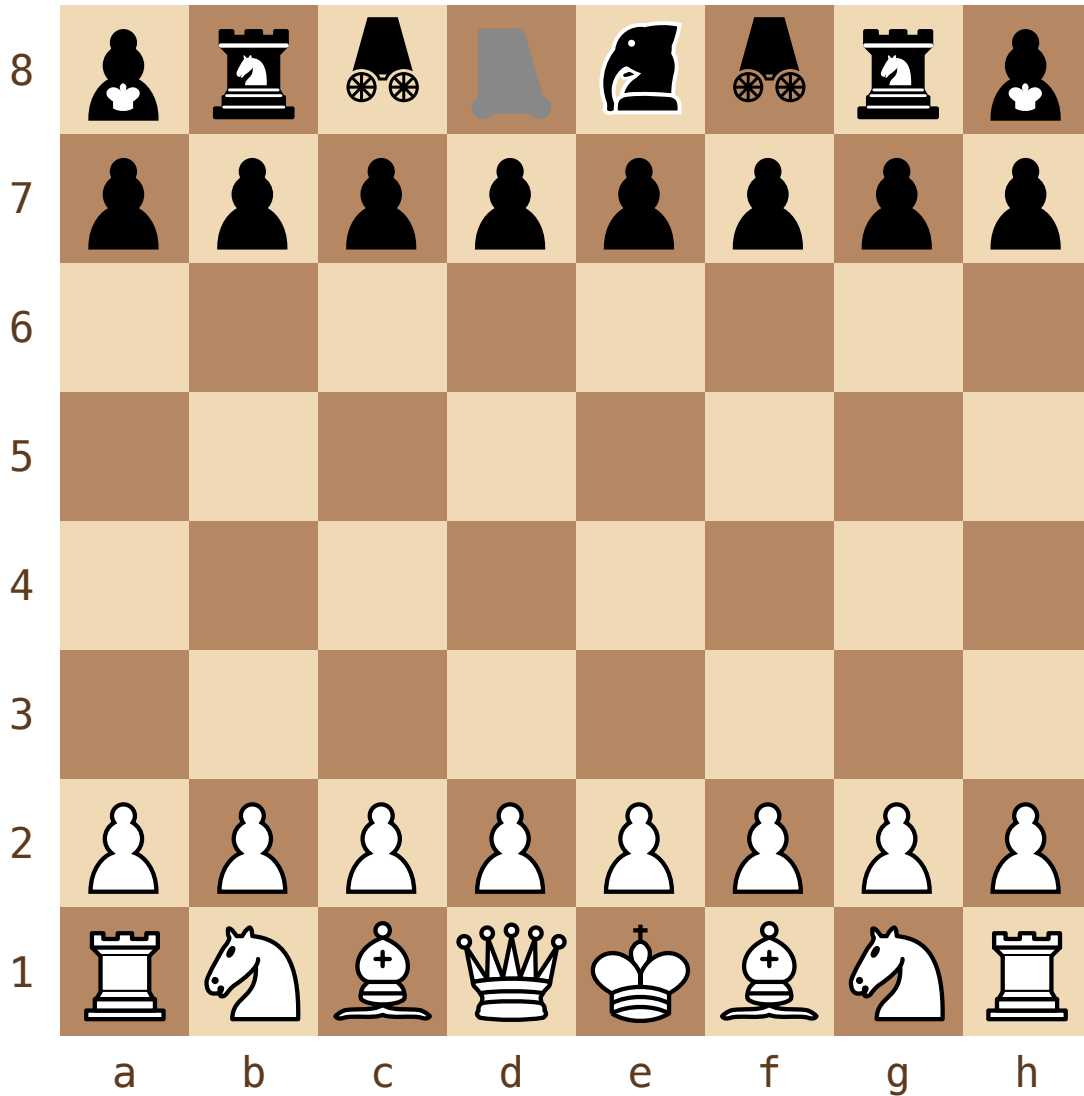
8×8

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.