

CHESS · VARIANT 57 OF 153

Fanorona Chess

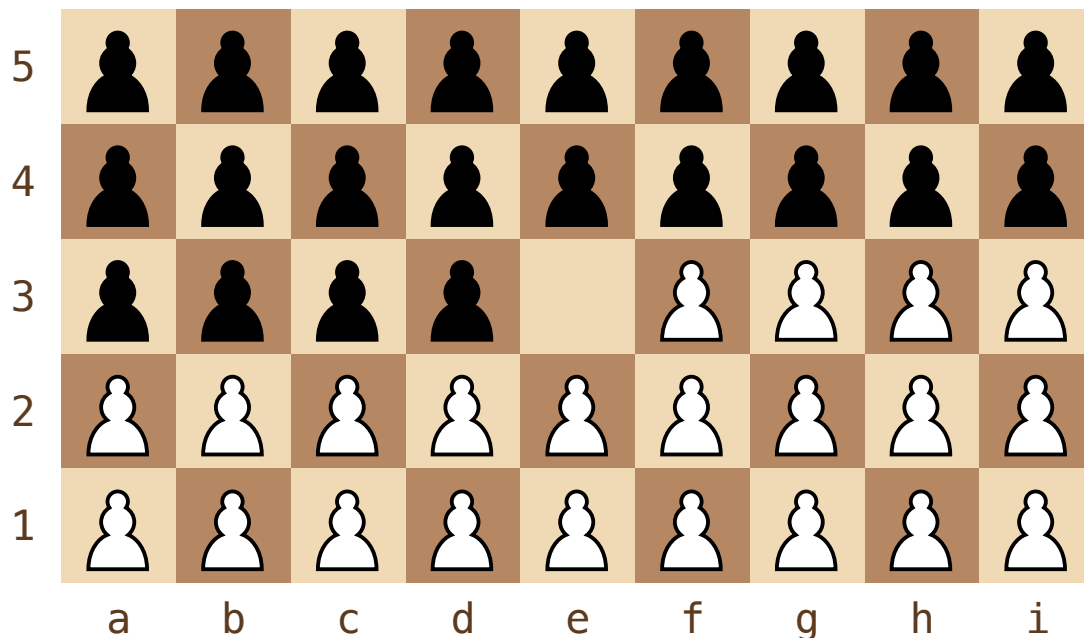
5×9 double Alquerque

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