

CHESS · VARIANT 75 OF 153

# Hostage Chess

**8×8**

BOARD

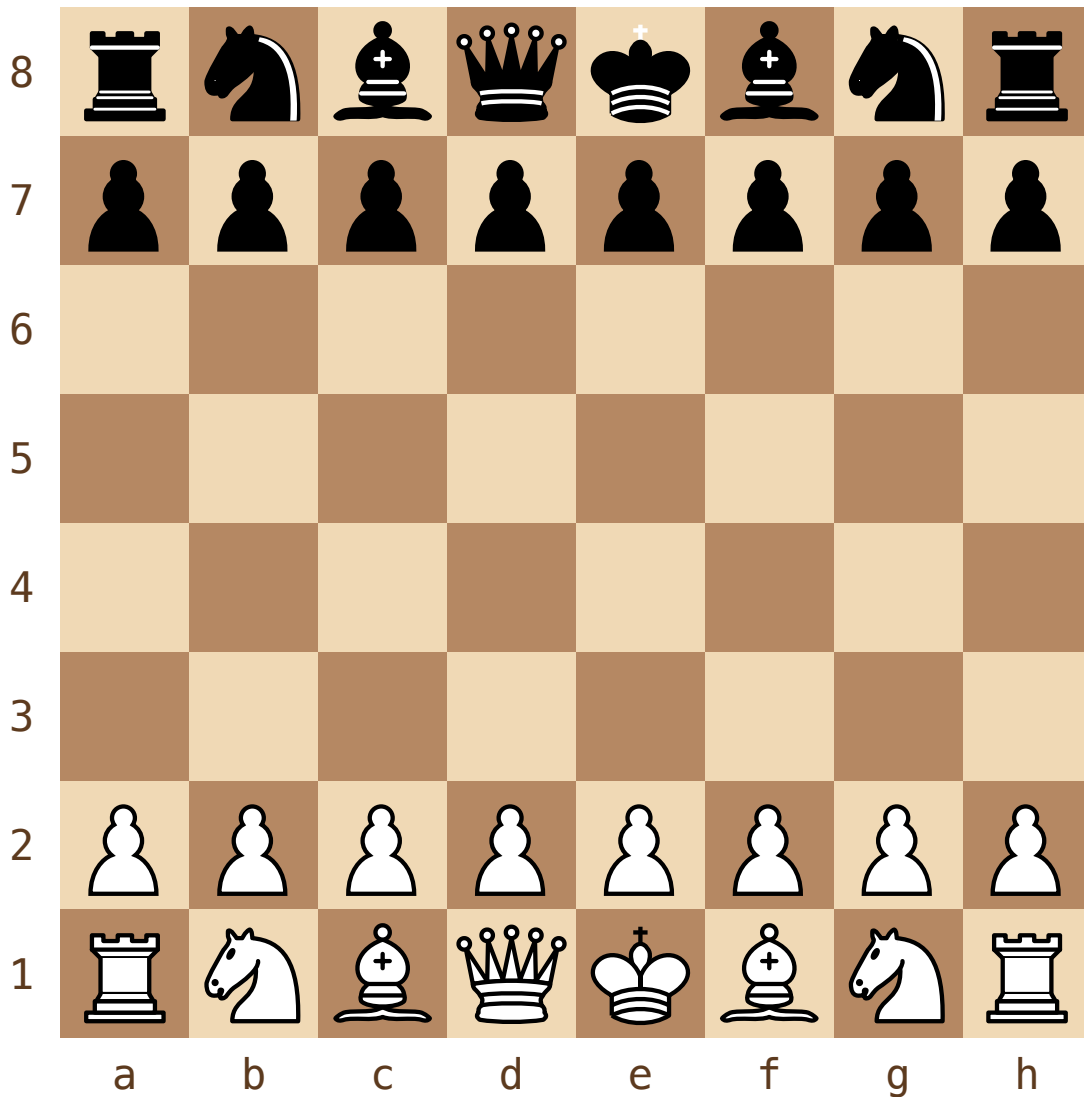
**2**

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](https://chessvariants.com/difftaking.dir/hostage.html)