

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 1 OF 54

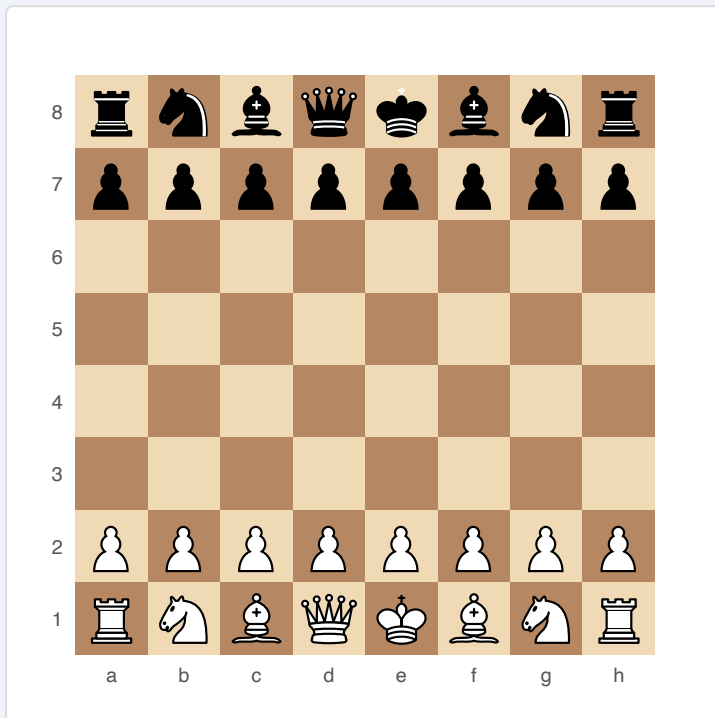
Standard Chess

8×8
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

STANDARD CHESS

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



Standard Chess — starting position

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 2 OF 54

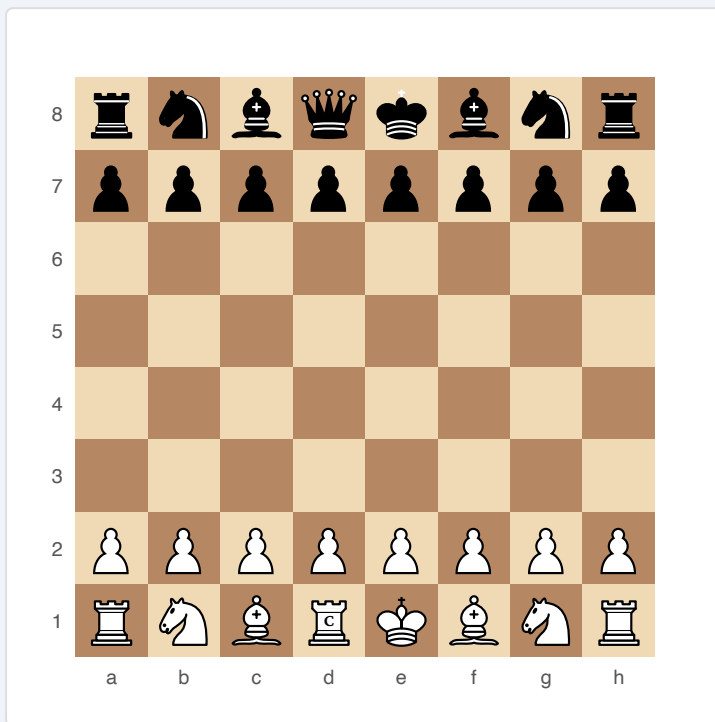
Almost Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 3 OF 54

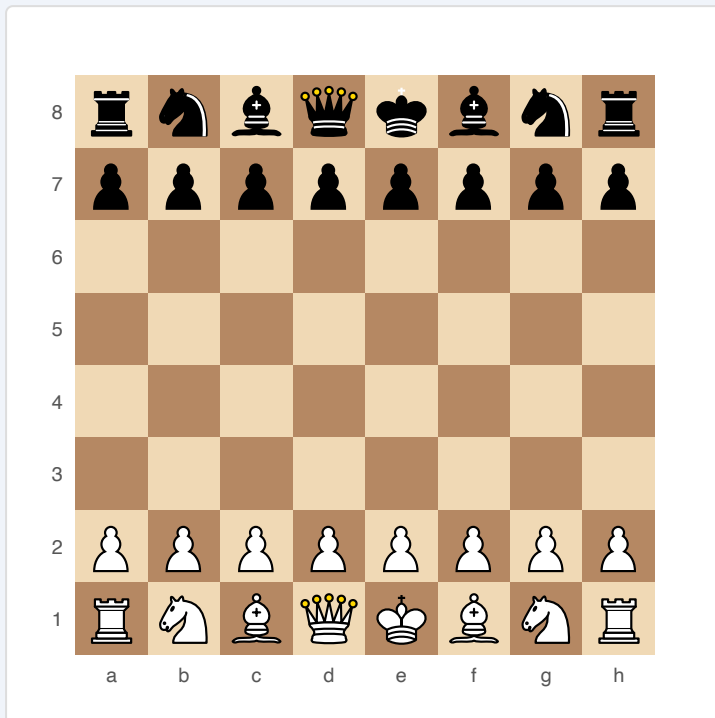
Amazon Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 4 OF 54

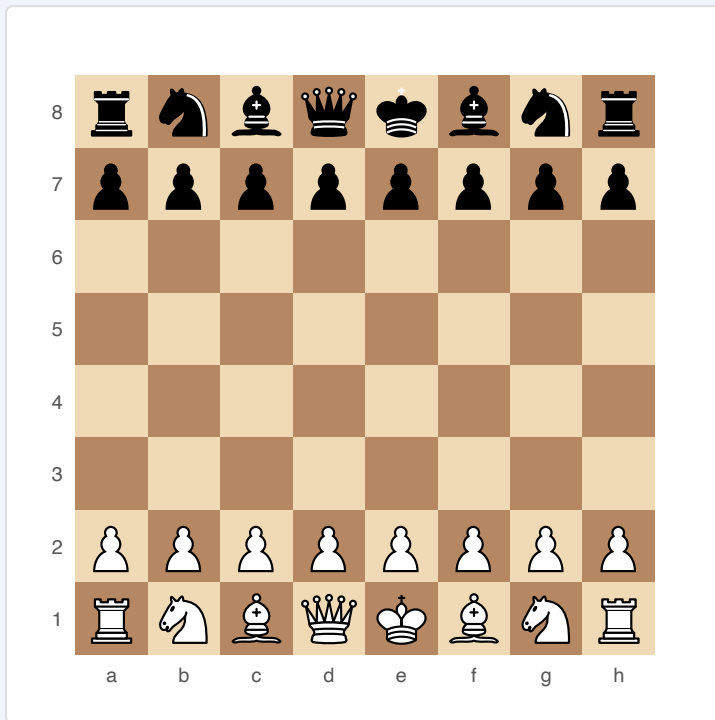
Andernach Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 5 OF 54

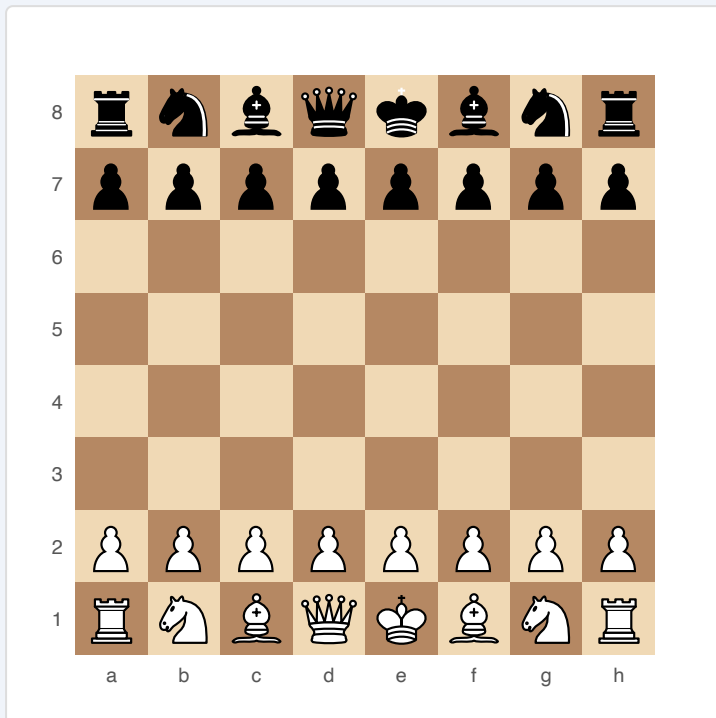
Antichess

8×8
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

ANTICHESS

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



Antichess — starting position

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 6 OF 54

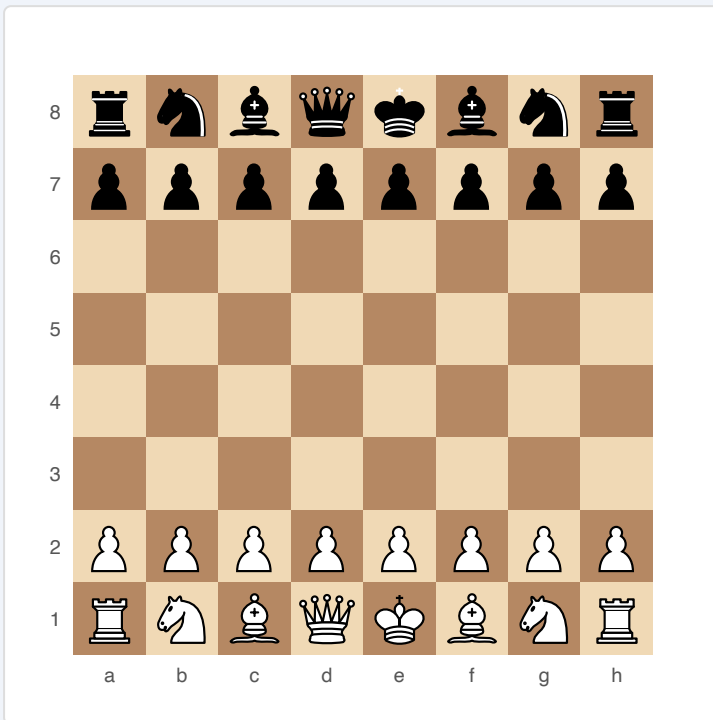
Atomic Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 7 OF 54

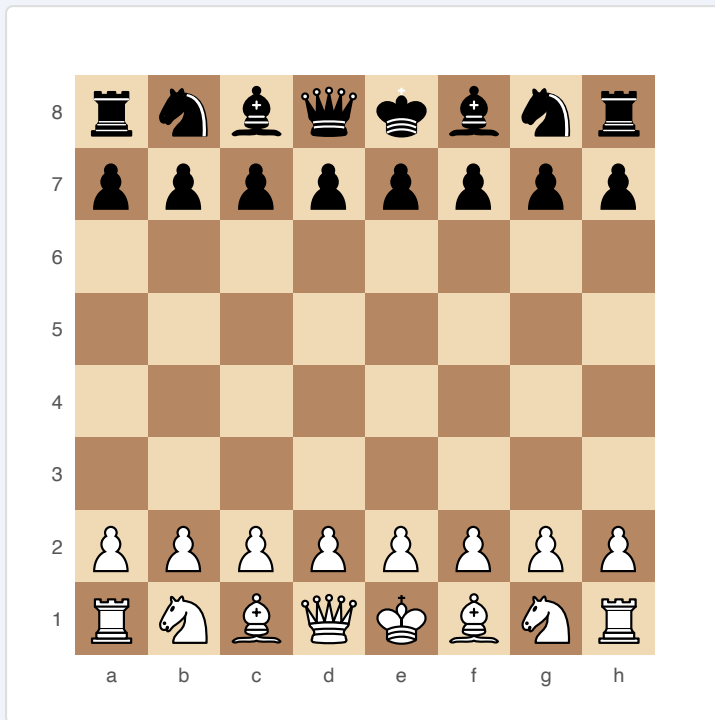
Benedict Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 8 OF 54

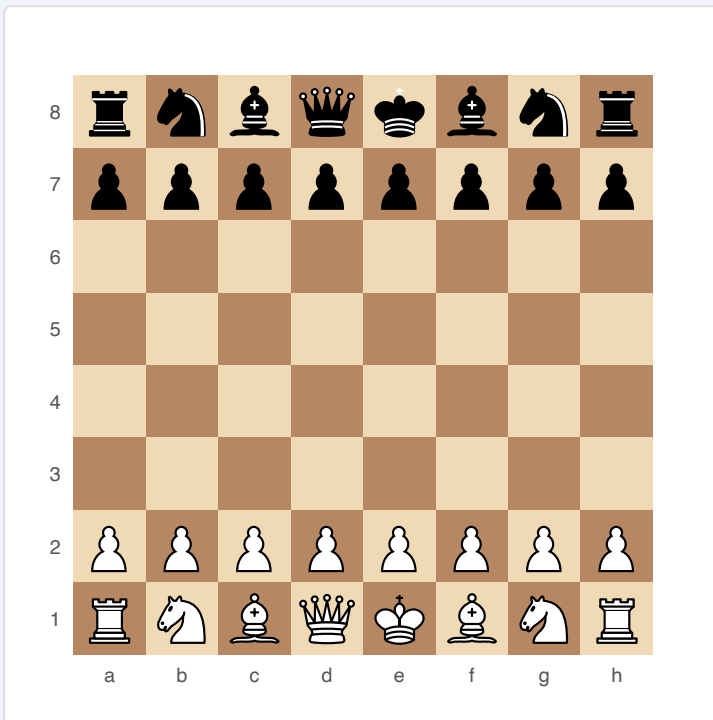
Berserk Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 9 OF 54

Breakthrough

7×7
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

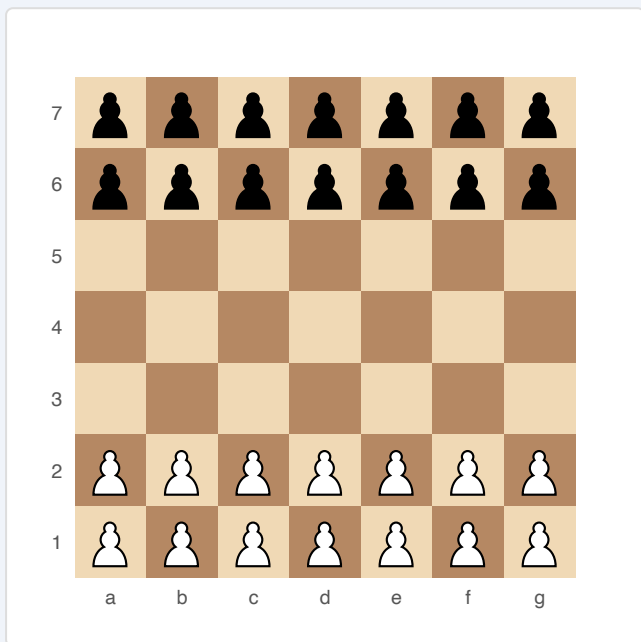
BREAKTHROUGH

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)

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 10 OF 54

Capablanca Chess

10×8
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

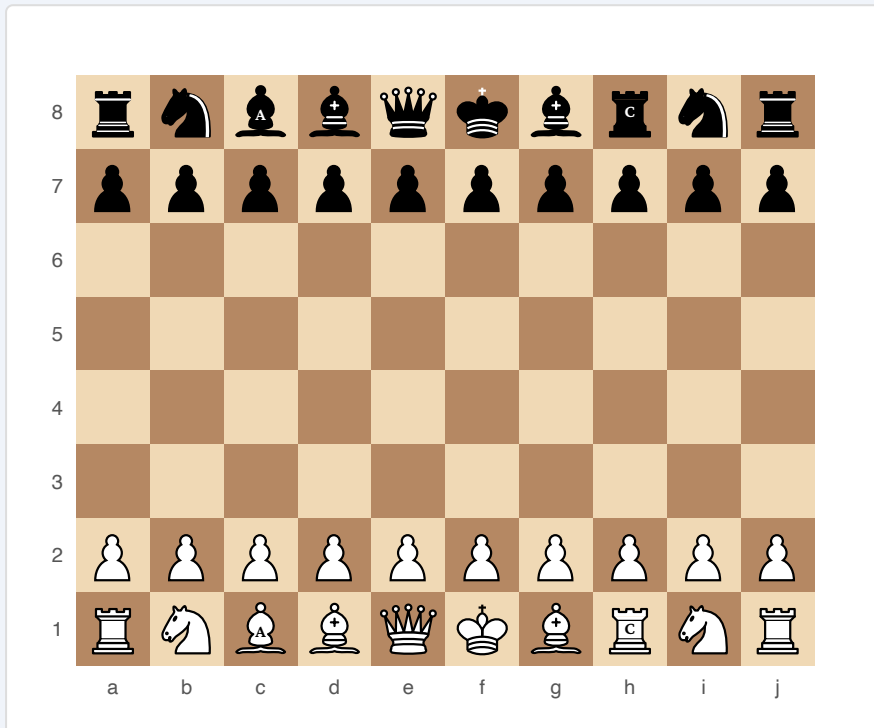
CAPABLANCA CHESS

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: r nabqkbcnr/pppppppppp/10/10/10/10/PPPPPPPPPP/RNABQKBCNR w KQkq - 0 1



Capablanca Chess — starting position (10×8)

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 11 OF 54

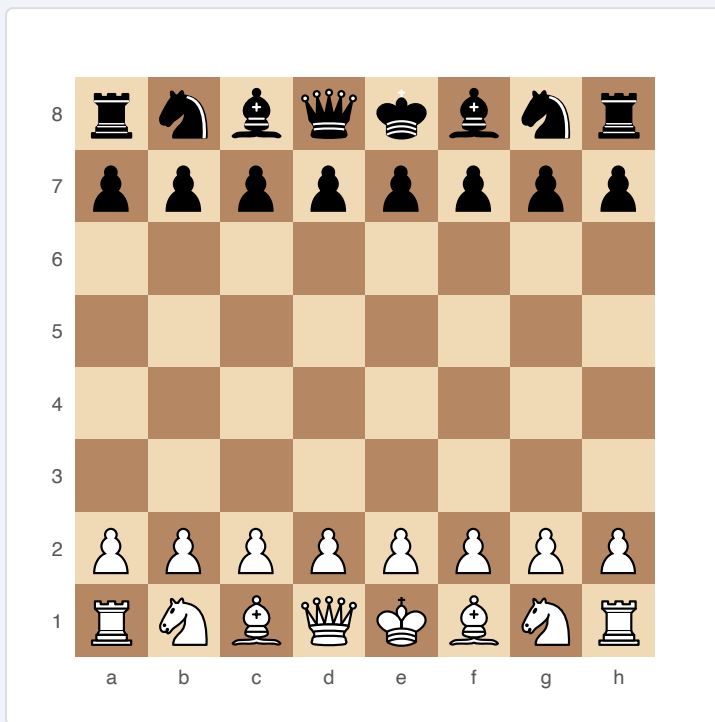
Checkless Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 12 OF 54

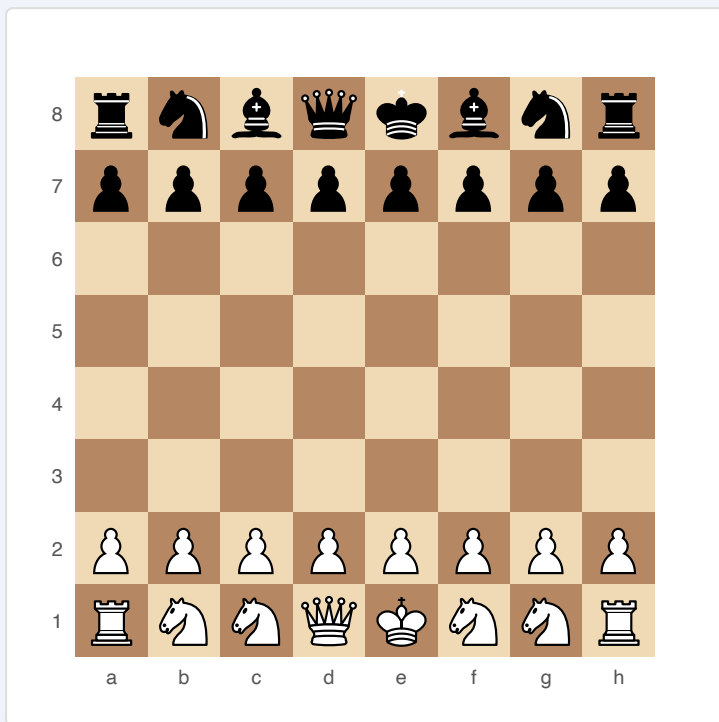
Chigorin

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 13 OF 54

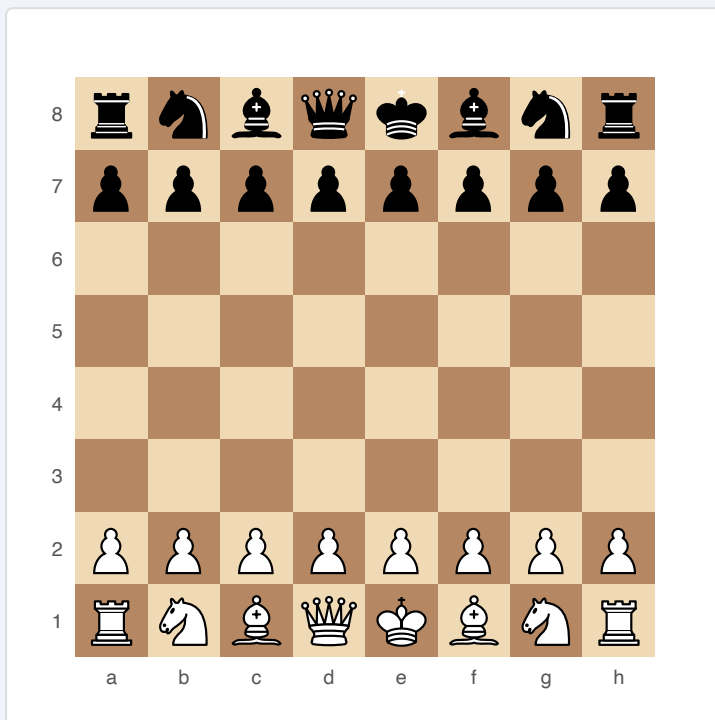
Codrus

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 14 OF 54

Courier Chess

12×8
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

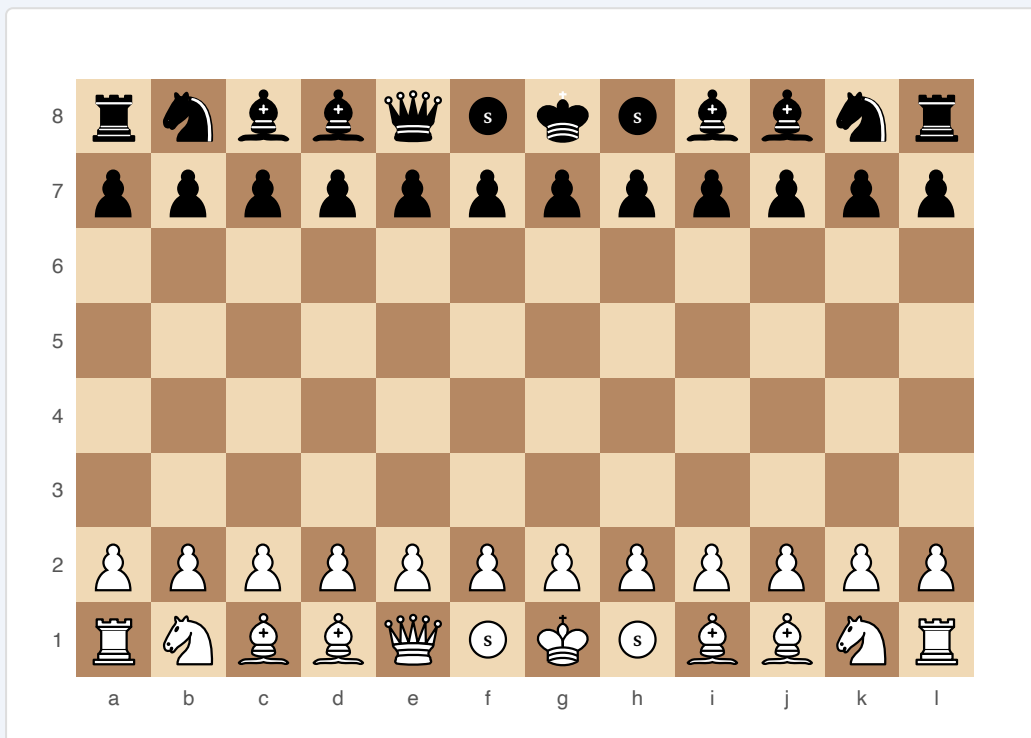
COURIER CHESS

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: rnbqsksbbr/pppppppppppp/12/12/12/12/PPPPPPPPPPP/RNBBQSKSBBNR w - - 0 1



Courier Chess — starting position (12×8)

Pieces (per side, from a-file): Rook, Knight, Elephant, Courier, Sage, King, General, Courier, Elephant, Knight, Rook, 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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 15 OF 54

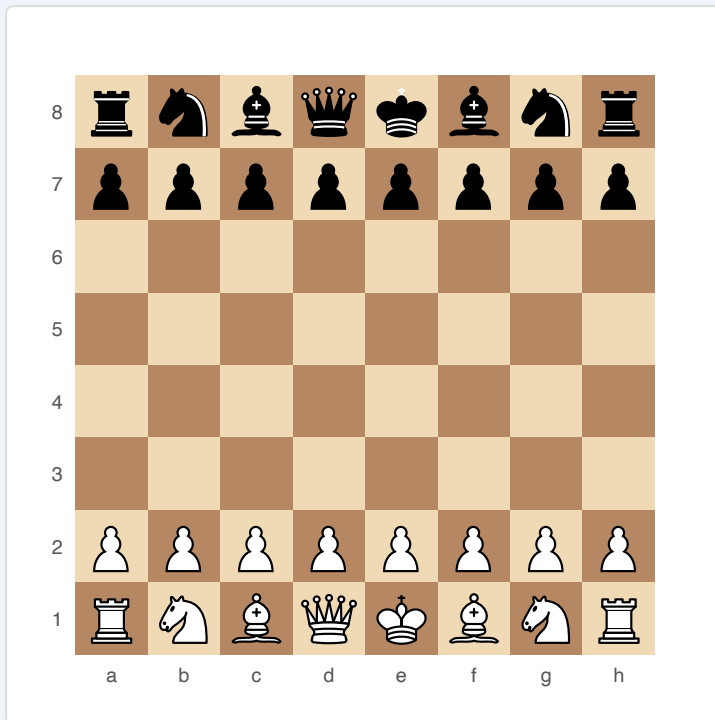
Dark Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 16 OF 54

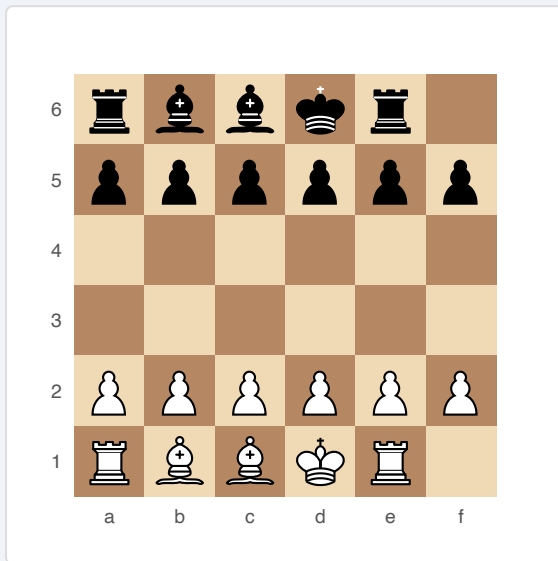
Diana Chess

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)

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 17 OF 54

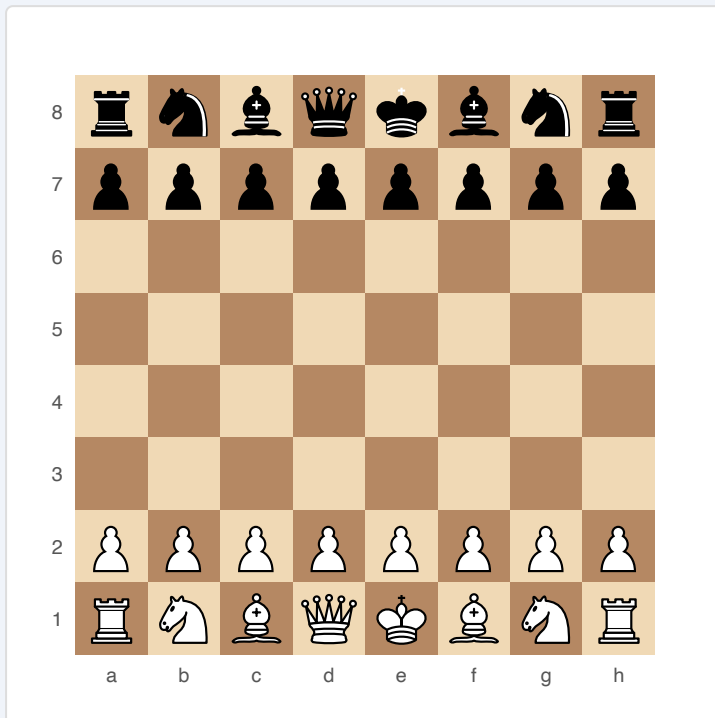
Dice Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 18 OF 54

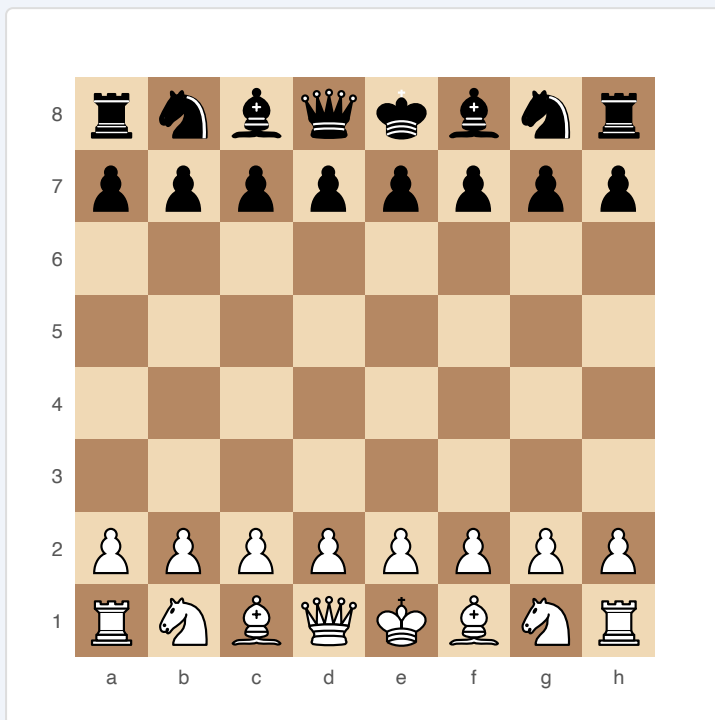
Duck Chess

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

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8 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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 19 OF 54

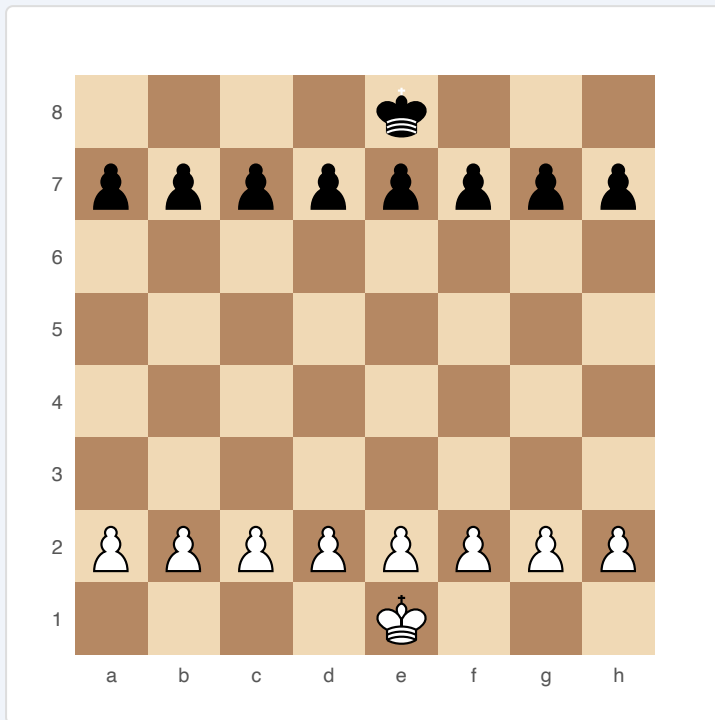
Endgame Chess

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

SETUP

Board: Standard 8×8.

Setup (FEN): 4k3/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPP/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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 20 OF 54

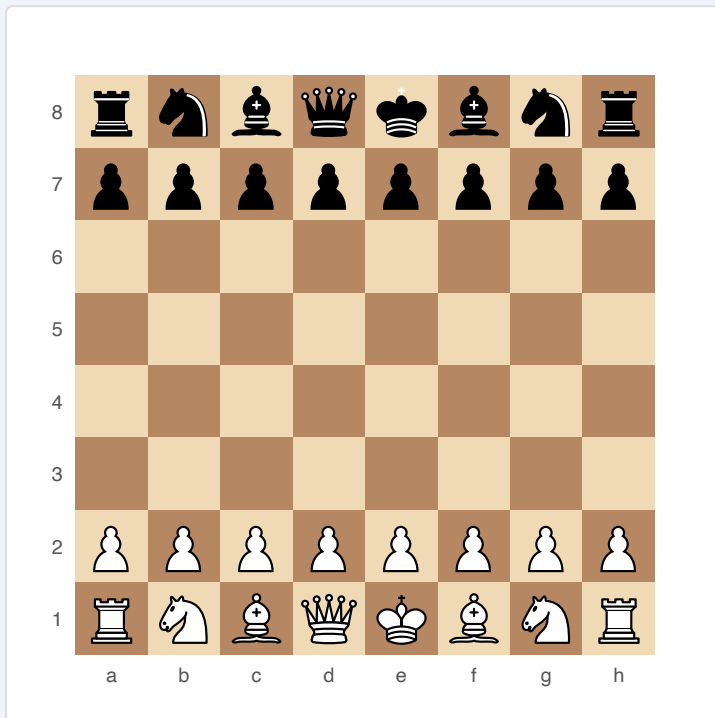
Extinction Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 21 OF 54

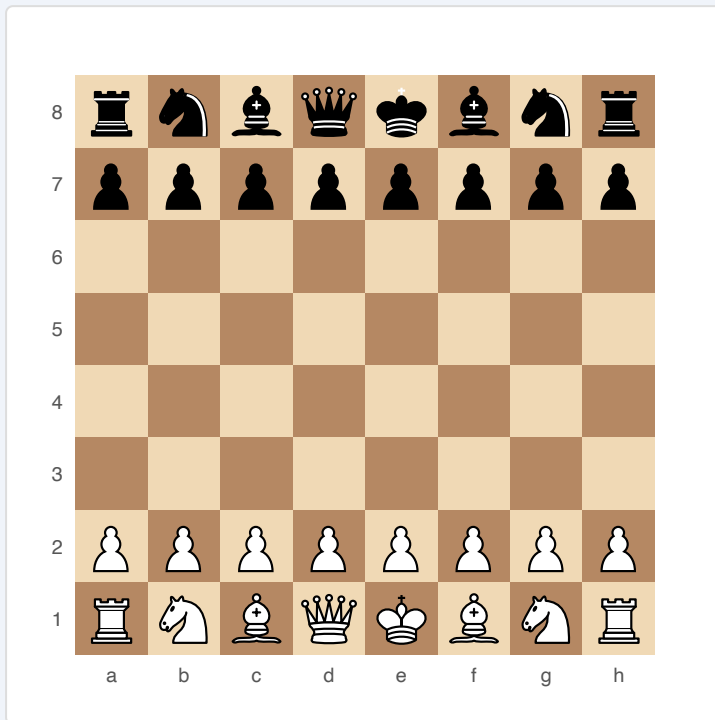
Fischer Random (Chess960)

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 22 OF 54

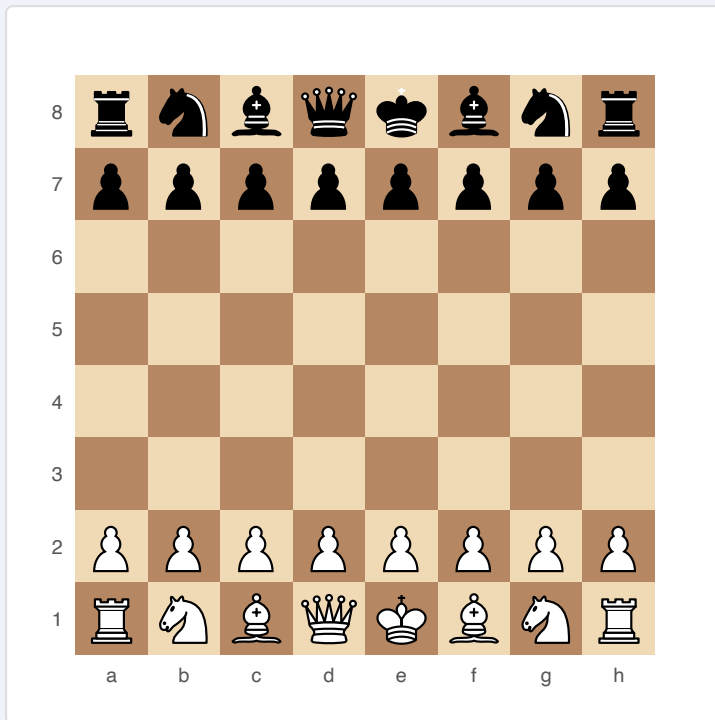
Five-Check

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 23 OF 54

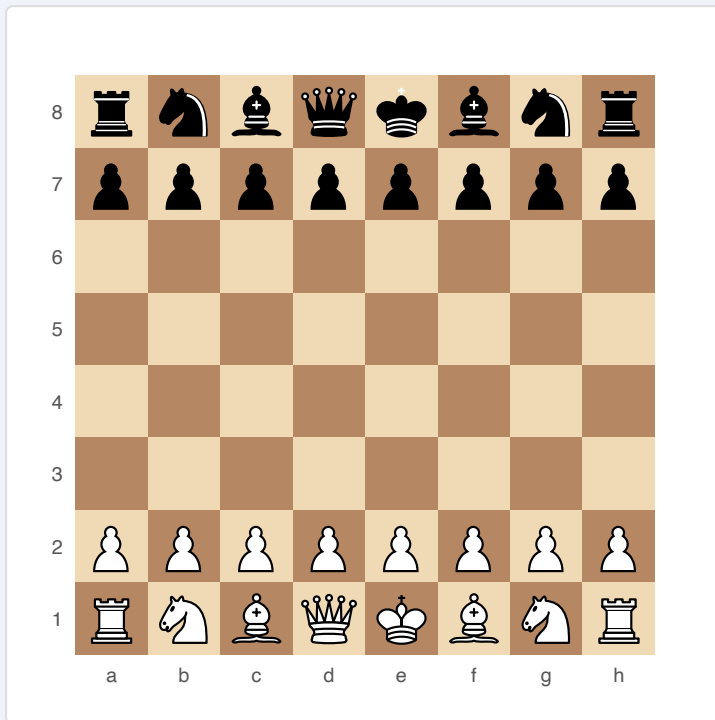
Fog of War Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 24 OF 54

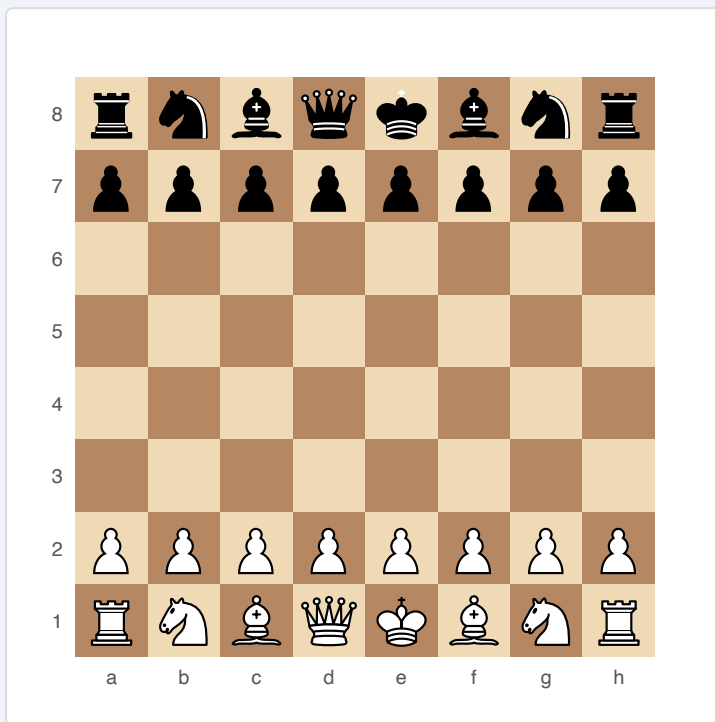
Giveaway

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

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. But forced captures mean 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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 25 OF 54

Grand Chess

10×10
BOARD

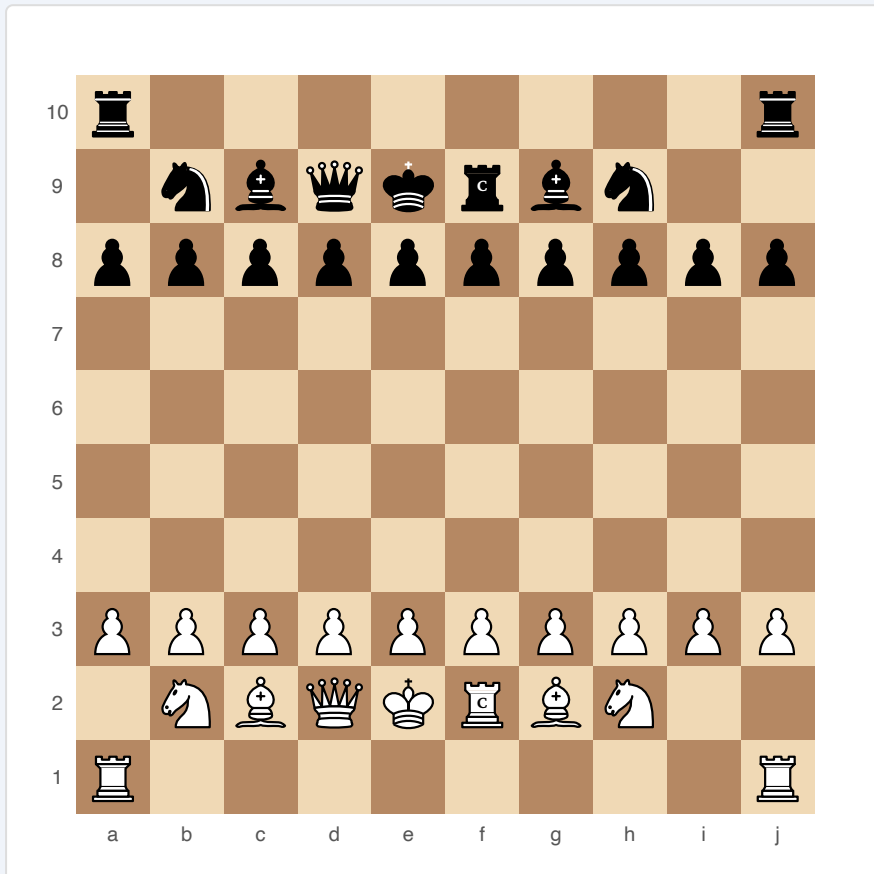
2
PLAYERS

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)

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/PPPPPPPPP/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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 26 OF 54

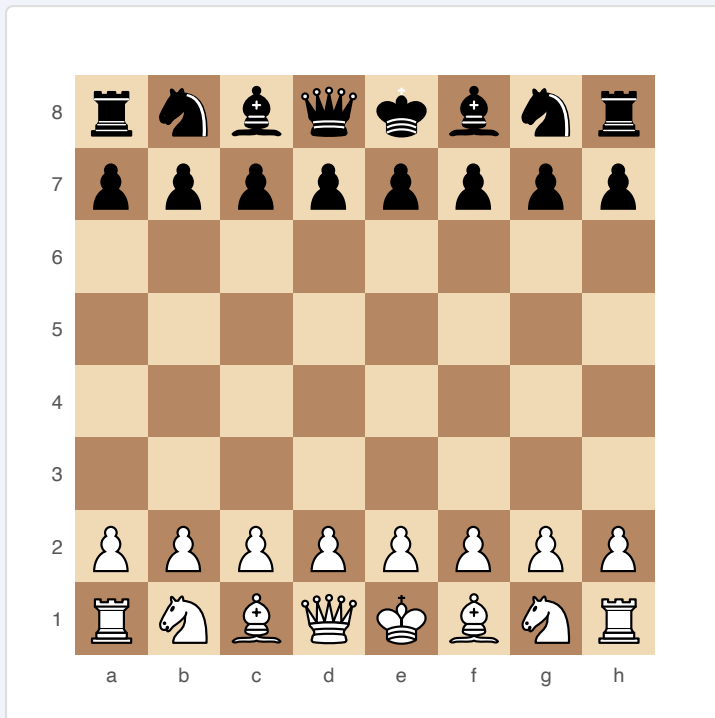
Grid Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 27 OF 54

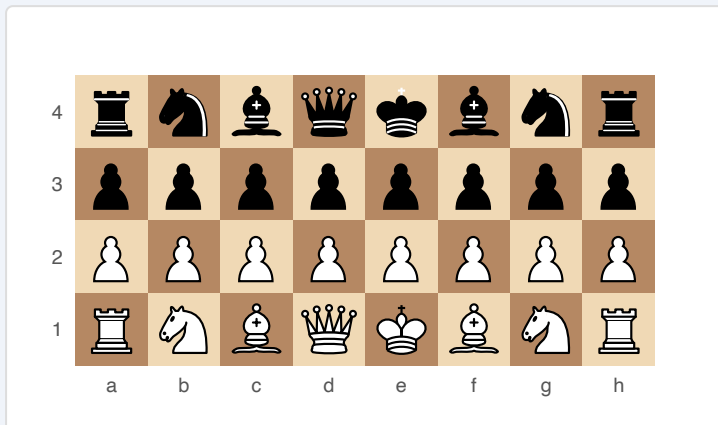
Half Chess

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)

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 28 OF 54

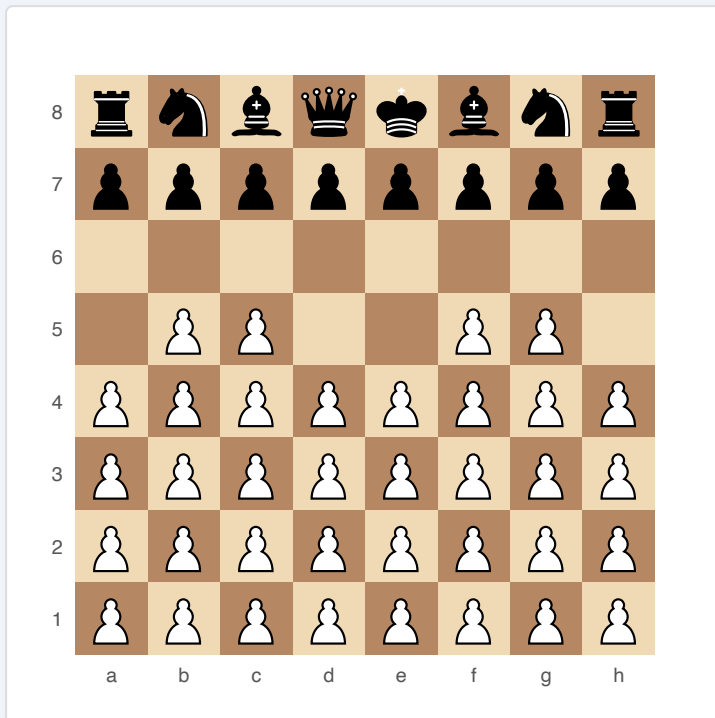
Horde Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 29 OF 54

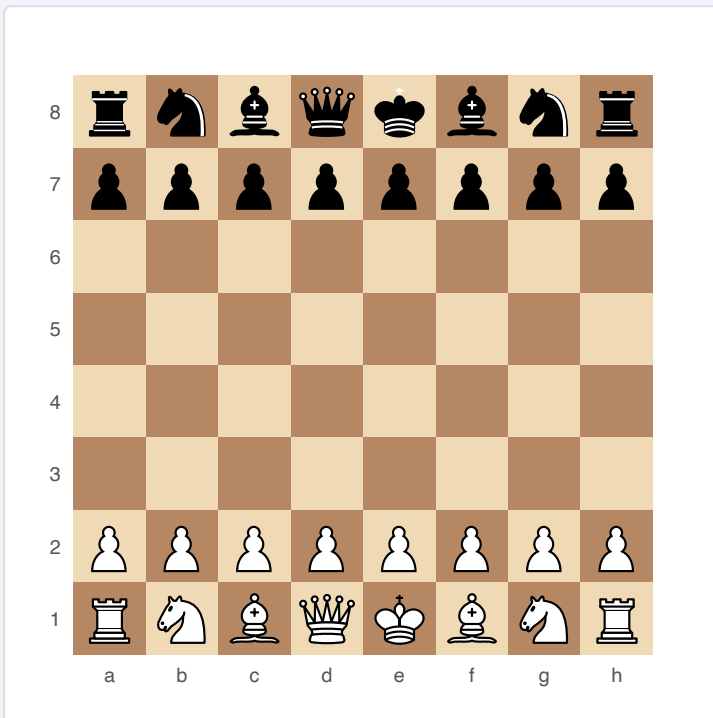
King of the Hill

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 30 OF 54

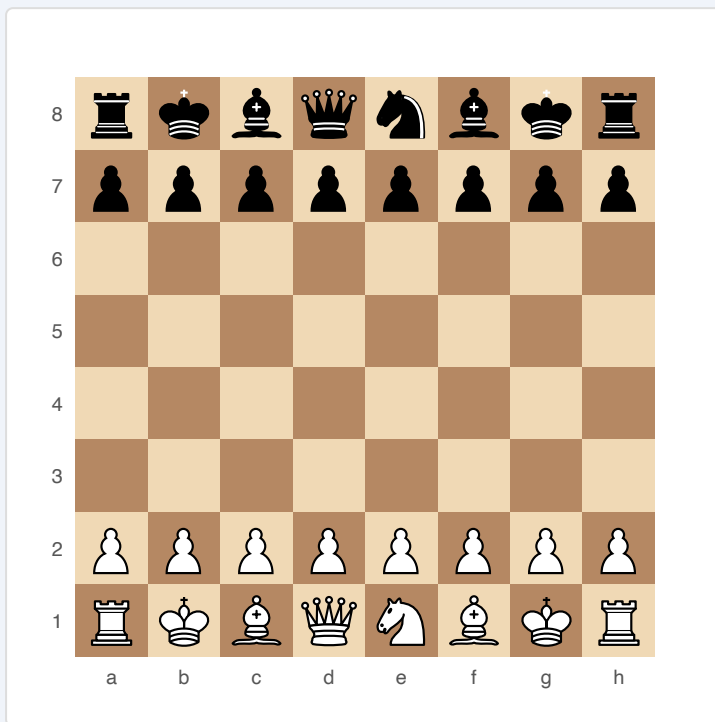
Knightmate

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.



Knightsmate — starting position

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 31 OF 54

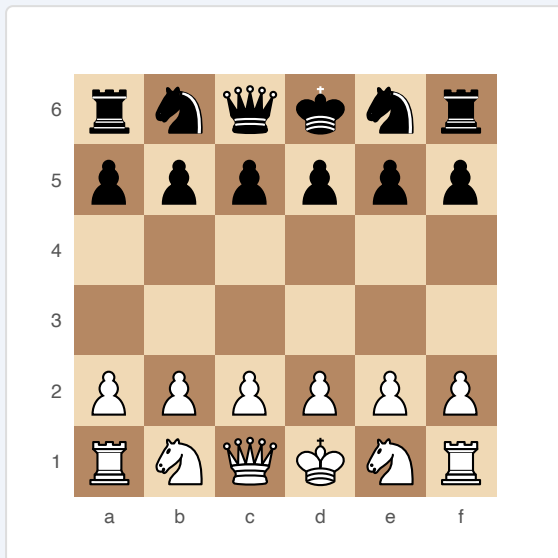
Los Alamos

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)

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 32 OF 54

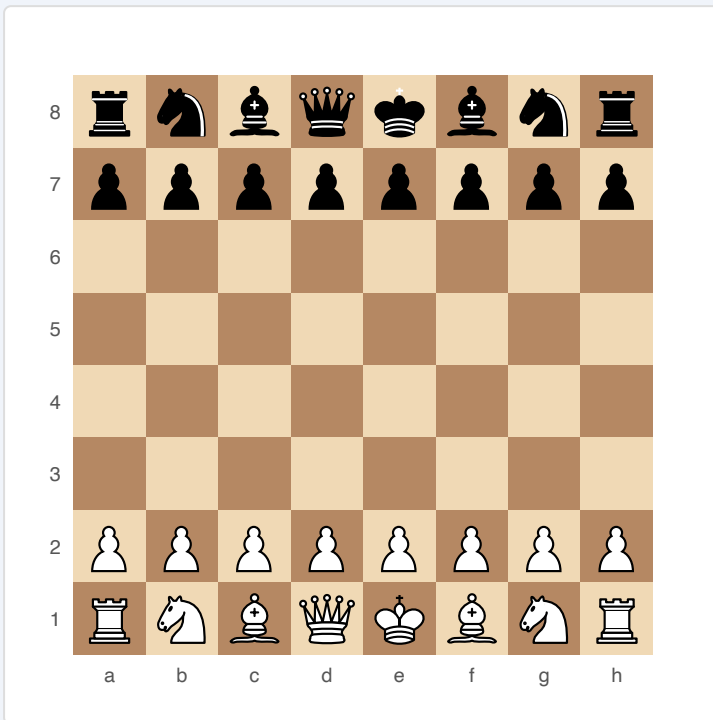
Madراس Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 33 OF 54

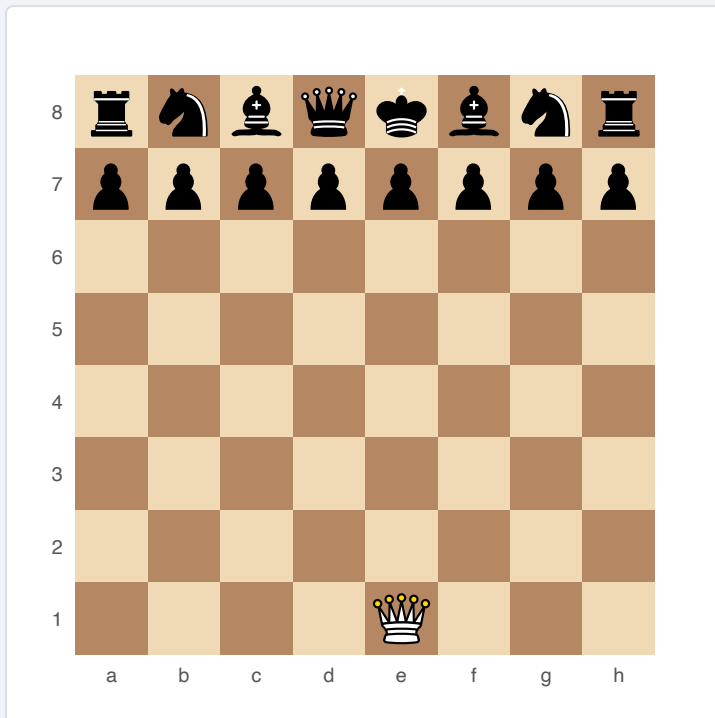
Maharaja & Sepoys

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 34 OF 54

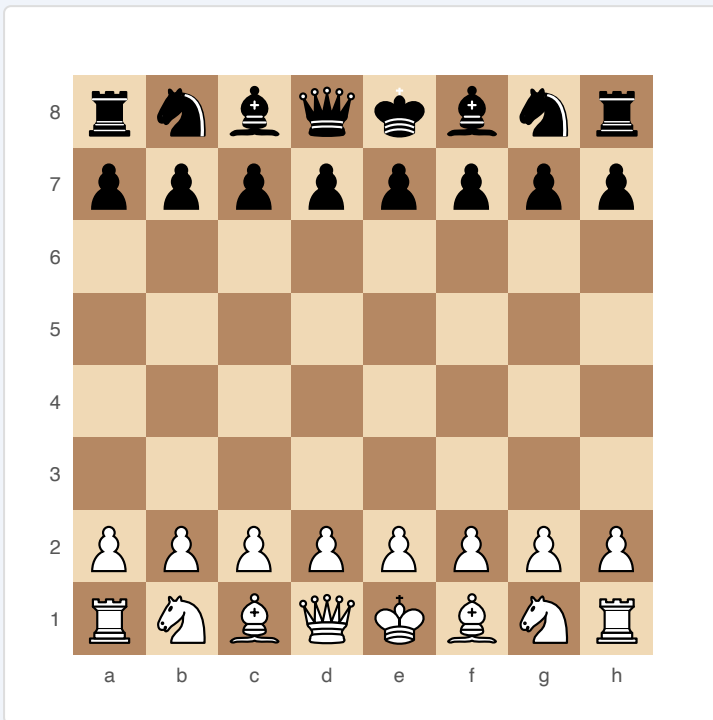
Makpong

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 35 OF 54

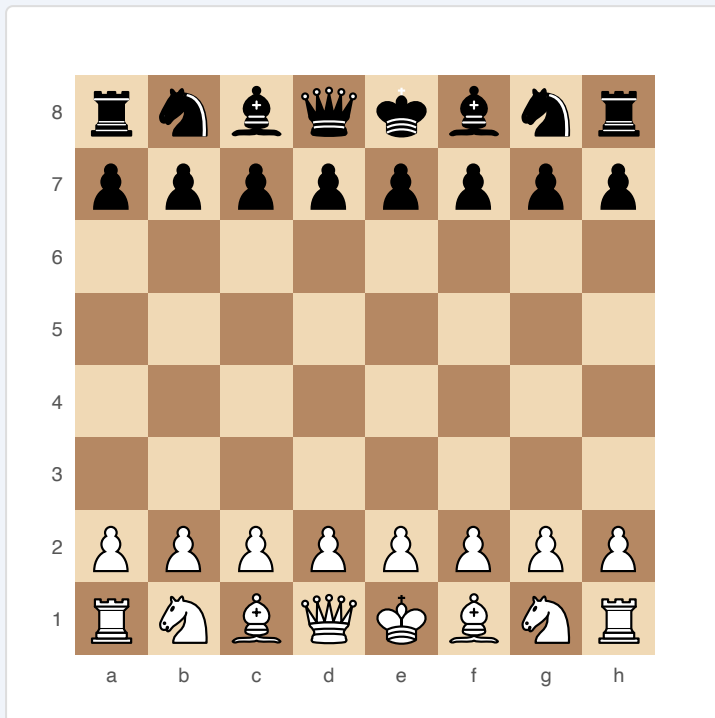
Marseillais Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 36 OF 54

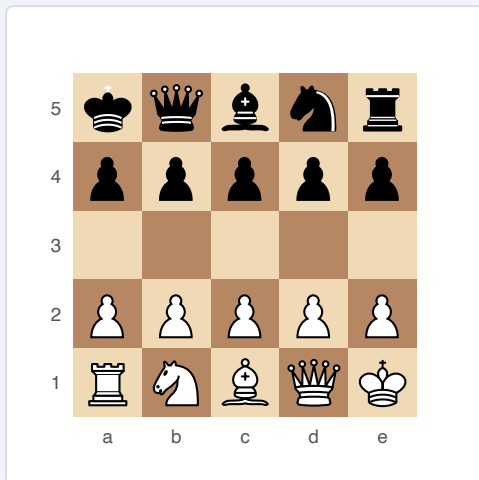
Minichess

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)

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 37 OF 54

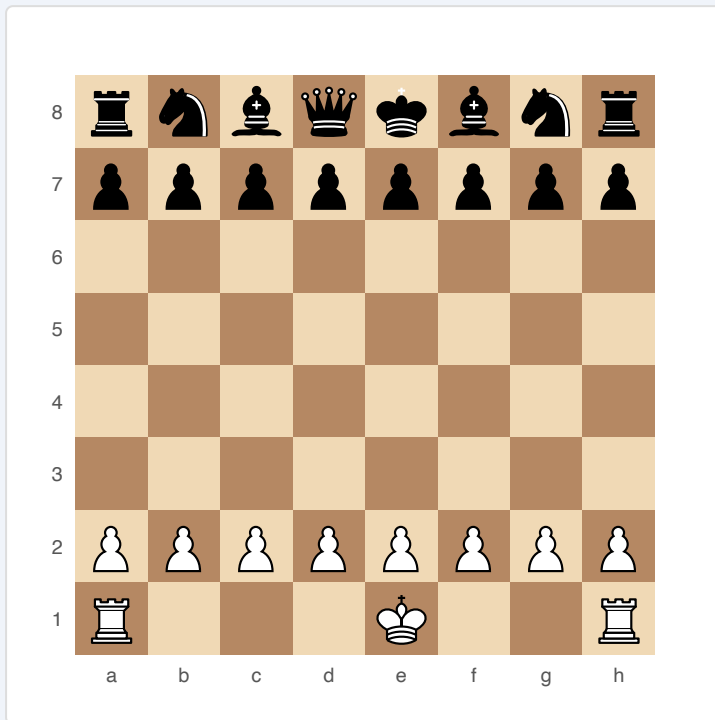
Monster Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 38 OF 54

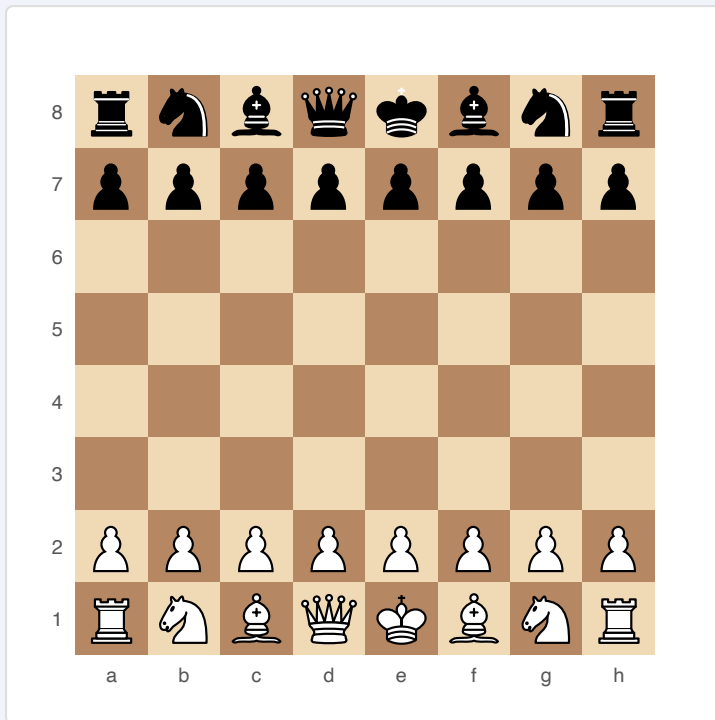
No Castling Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 39 OF 54

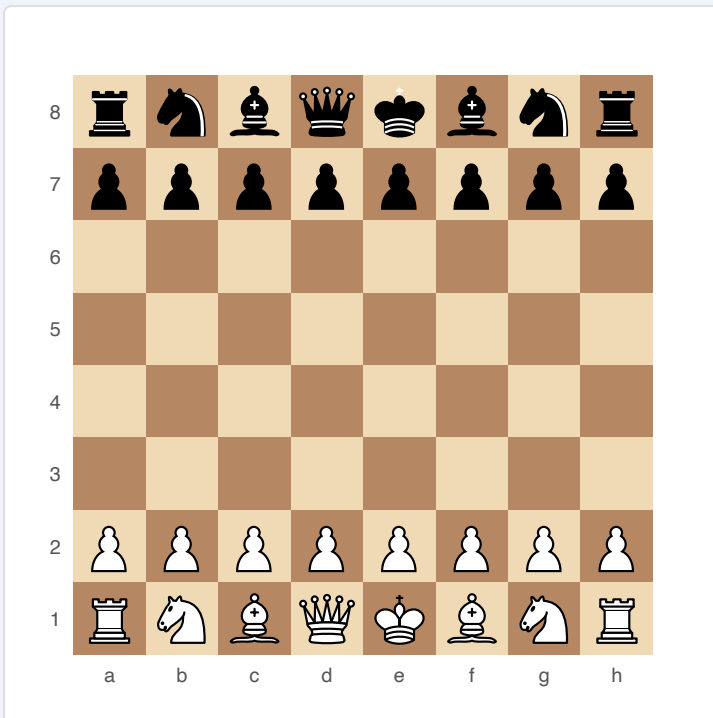
No Retreat

8×8
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

NO RETREAT

No piece may move backward. Every advance is permanent, every overextension punished.



No Retreat — starting position

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 40 OF 54

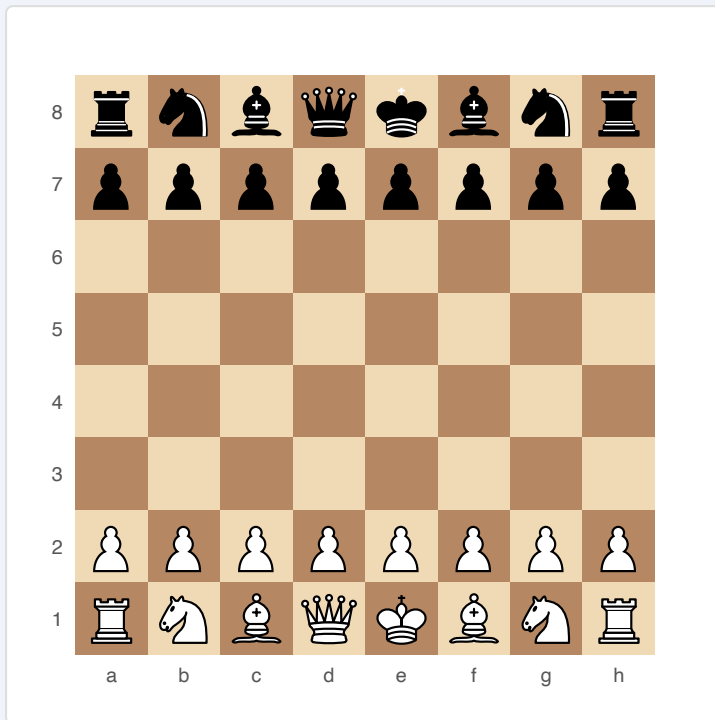
Omnicide

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 41 OF 54

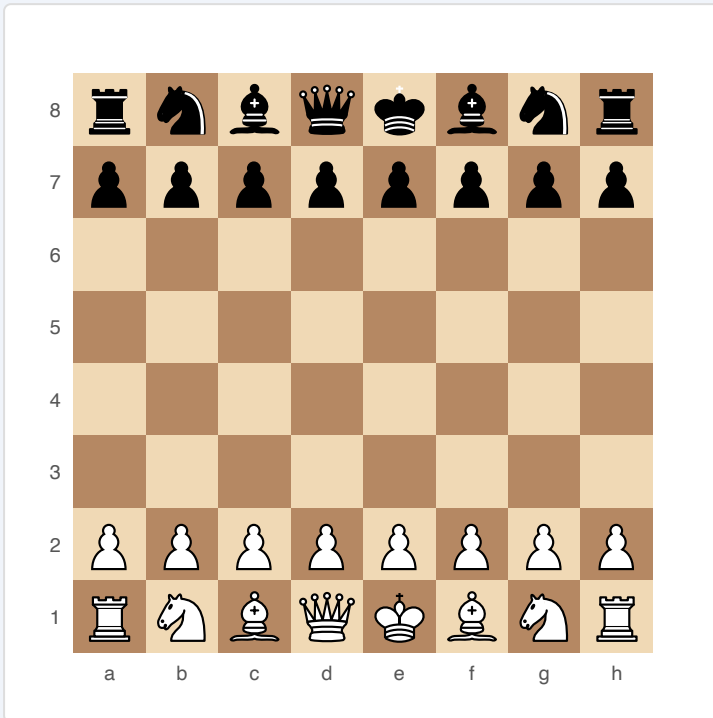
Patrol Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 42 OF 54

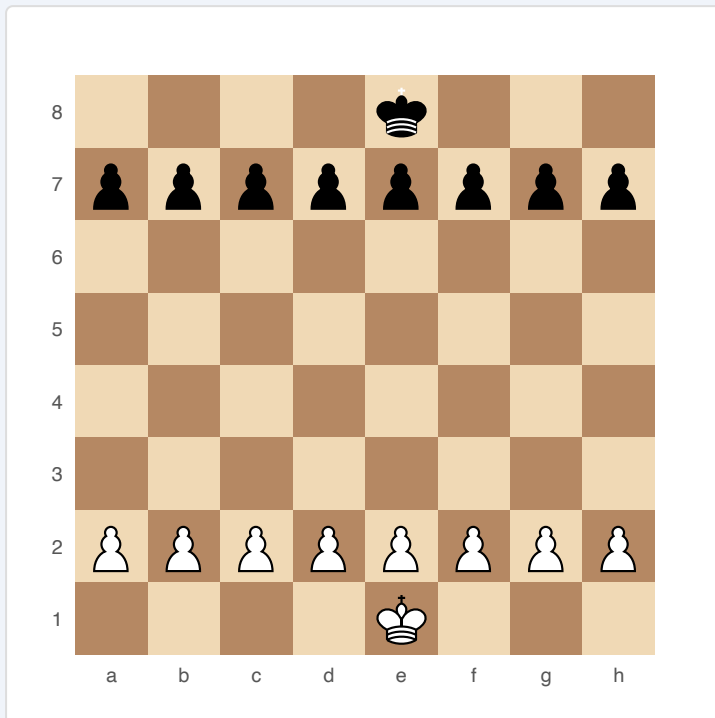
Pawns Only

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 43 OF 54

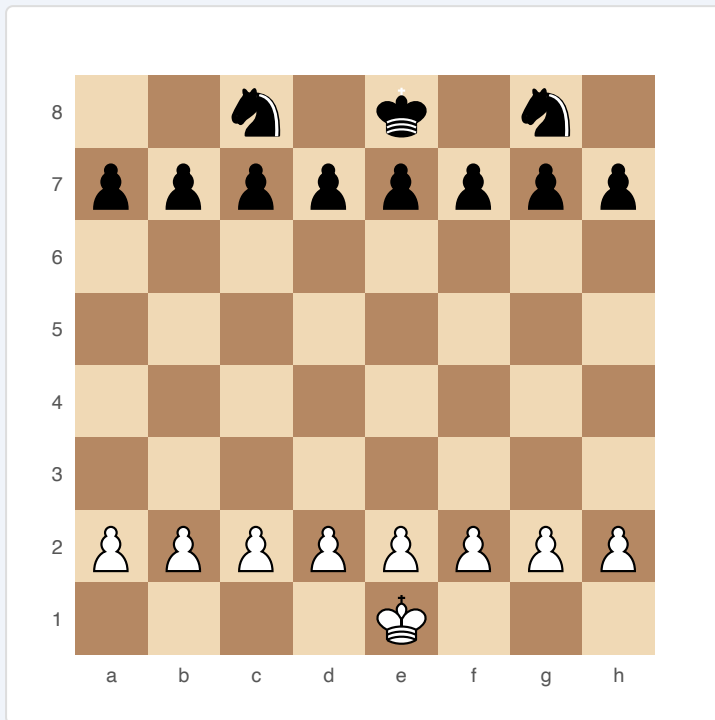
Peasants' Revolt

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 44 OF 54

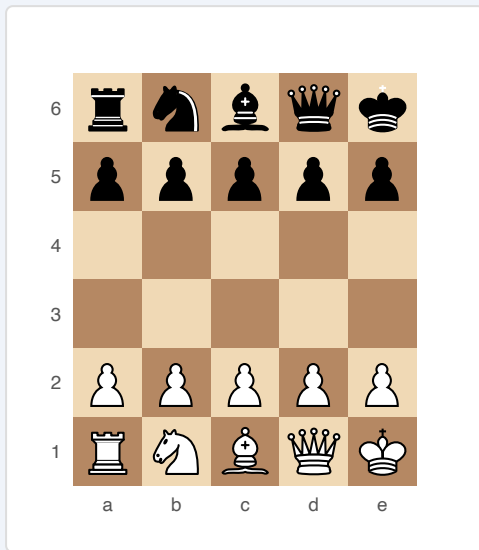
Petty Chess

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)

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 45 OF 54

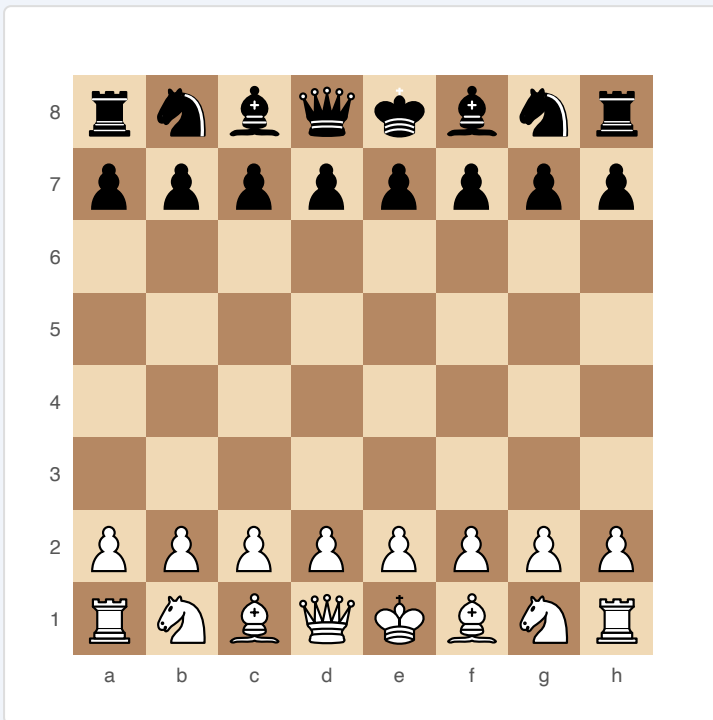
Progressive

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

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. And so on.
- ♦ 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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 46 OF 54

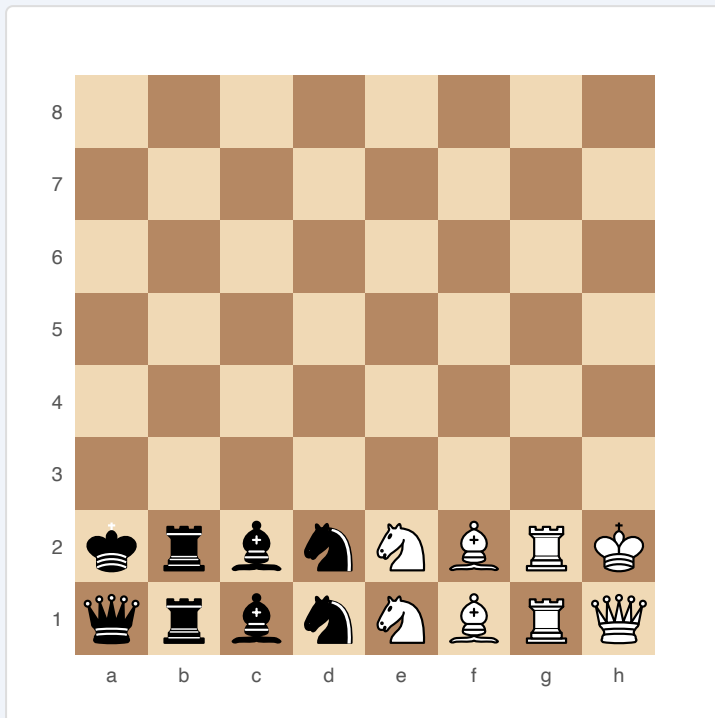
Racing Kings

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 47 OF 54

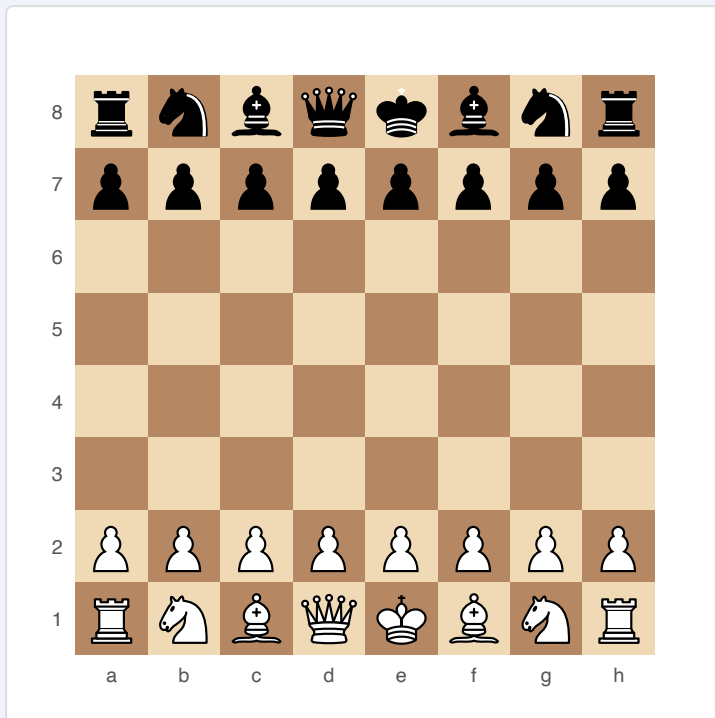
Rifle Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 48 OF 54

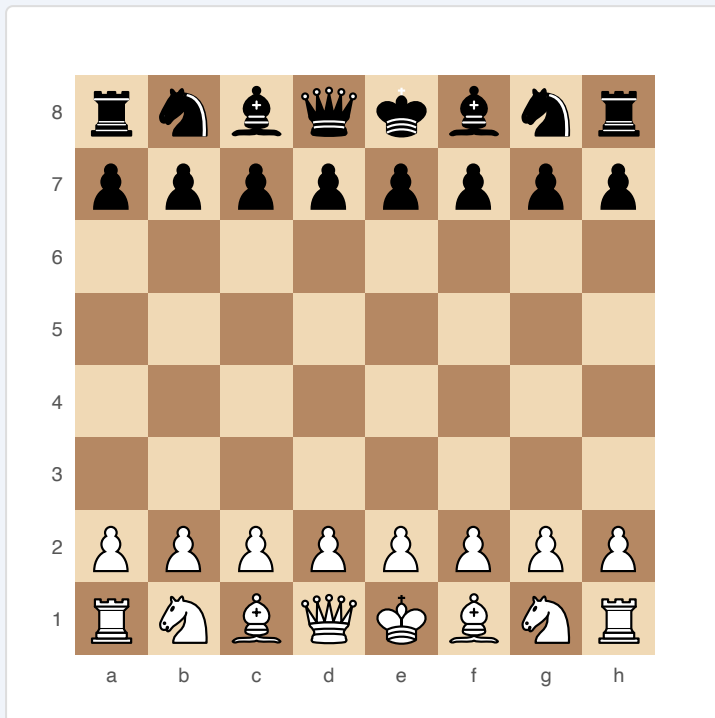
Single-Check

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 49 OF 54

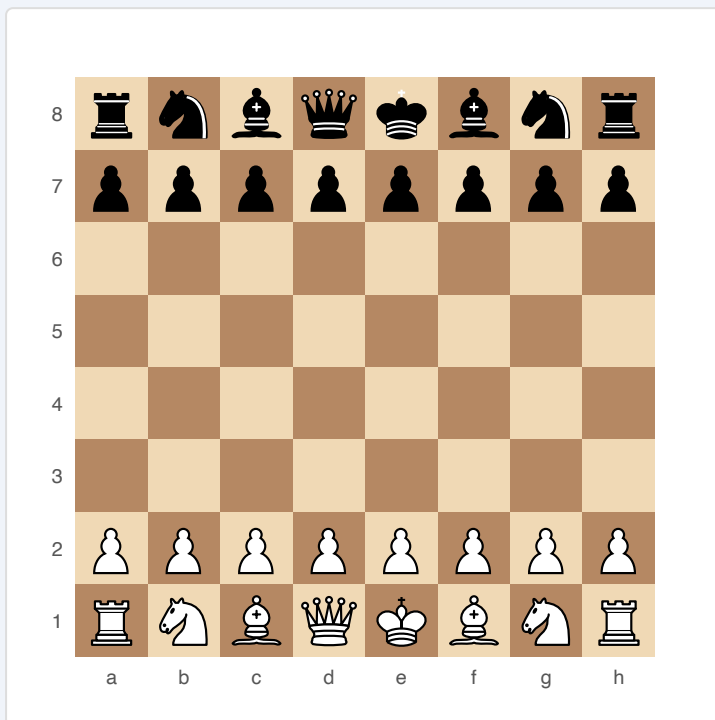
Stalemate Wins

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 50 OF 54

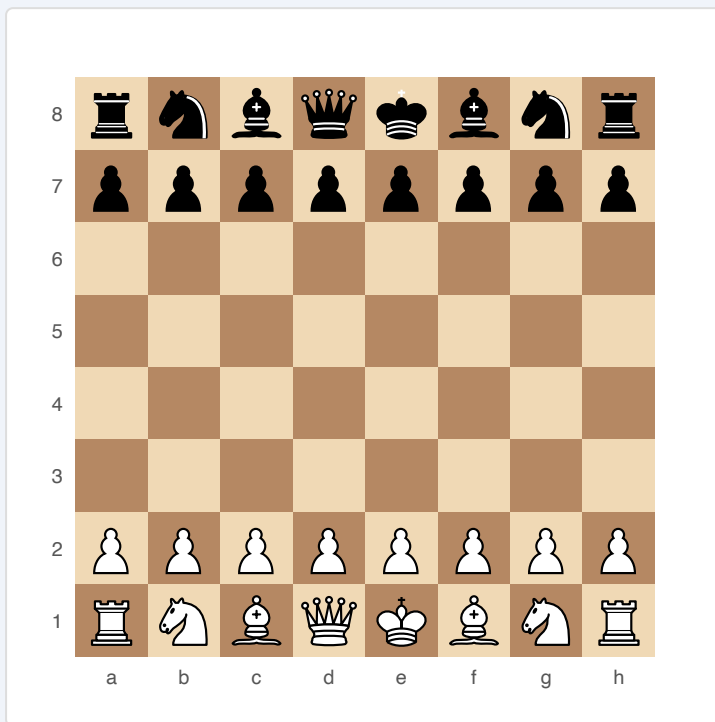
Suicide Chess

8×8
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

SUICIDE CHESS

Nearly identical to Giveaway — forced captures, lose all pieces to win — but with one critical difference: stalemate is a draw, not a loss.



Suicide Chess — starting position

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 51 OF 54

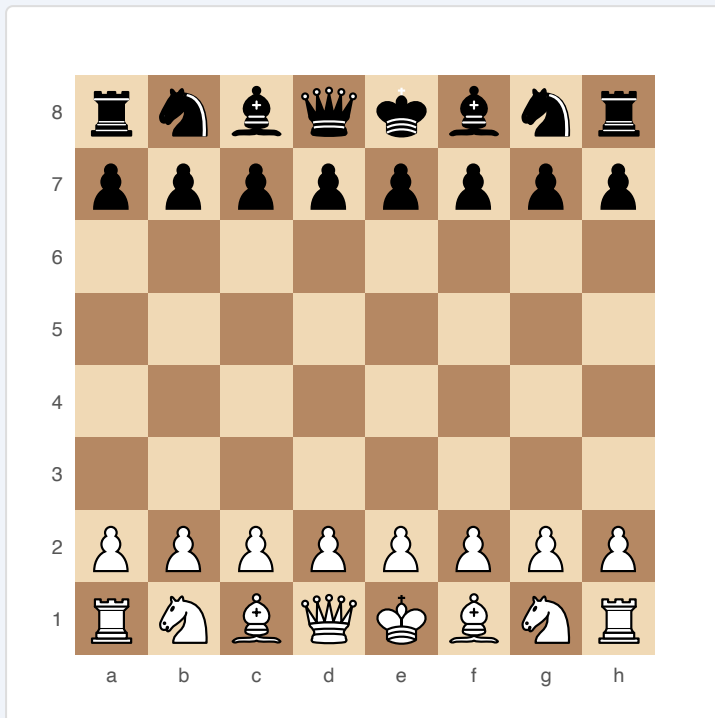
Three-Check

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 52 OF 54

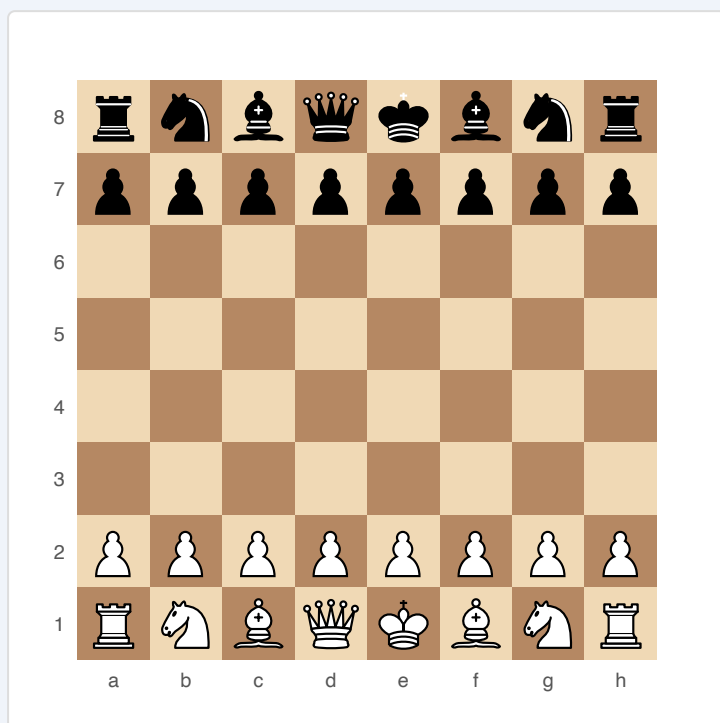
Torpedo Chess

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

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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 53 OF 54

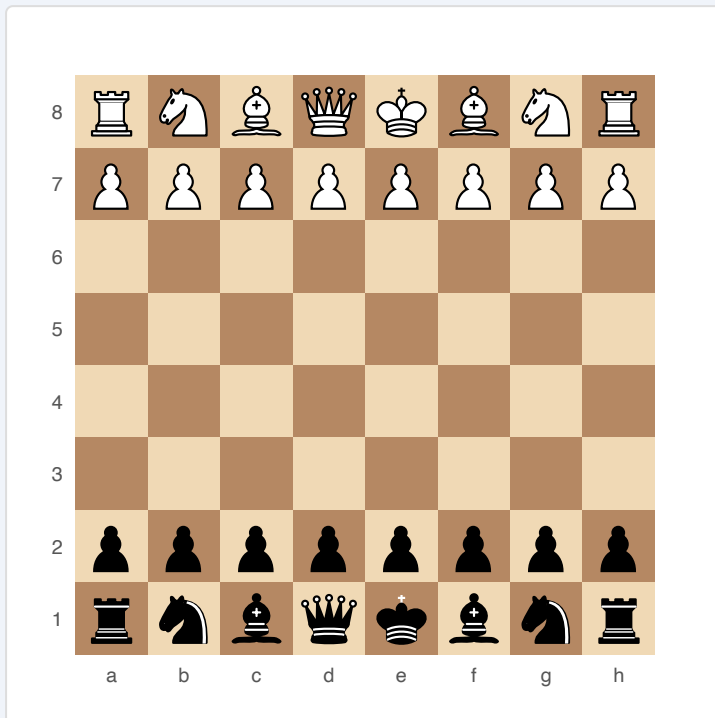
Upside-Down

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

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 — there's 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.

MODDABLE CHESS · VARIANT 54 OF 54

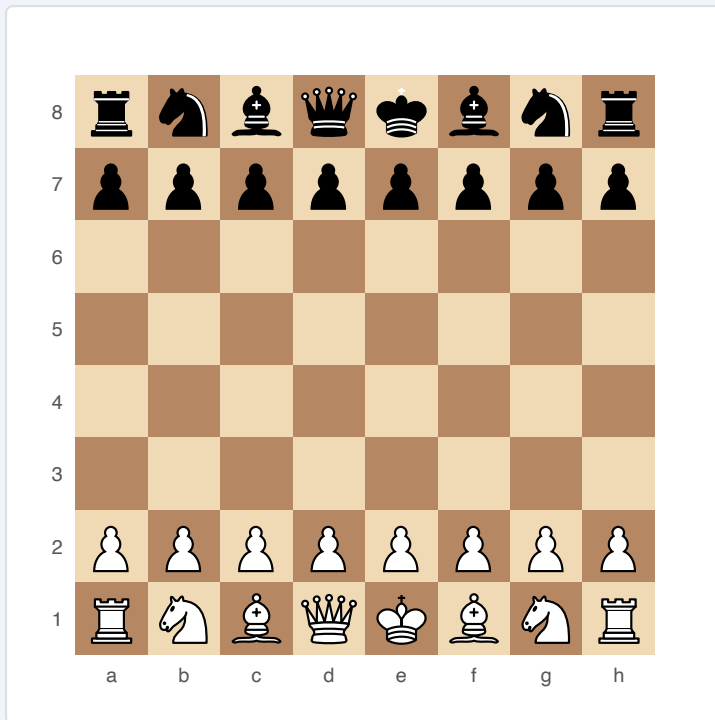
Weak!

8×8
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

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

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. And so on 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.