

PDF GUIDE

HOW TO PLAY CHESS

A QUICK-PLAY GUIDE WITH VISUALS



Board set-up, piece movement, special moves, win conditions, draws, and more

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About this guide

I created this guide as a way to practice my documentation skills. As someone desiring to become a technical writer, I was advised to try writing documentation for a household item. Following that advice, I searched my home and found an old chess that was missing a rulebook. This is my novice attempt at creating that missing rulebook.

1. The Chess Pieces

Each player has one king, one queen, two bishops, two knights, two rooks, and eight pawns. The pieces are represented as follows:



2. The Starting Position

Place the board so that a light-colored corner square is at each player's right side. Arrange the pieces in the following way:



The Starting Position

3. The Order of Play

Determine who gets the white pieces

The player with the white pieces always goes first. Determine who gets the white pieces by lot. When playing successive games, swap piece colors with your opponent to give each player the opportunity to move first.

Moves

In a game of chess, players take turns moving pieces on the board. To move a piece is to transfer a piece from one square to another. Players can only make one move per turn. Once the player with the white pieces makes their first move, the player with the black pieces makes a move, and then the player with the white pieces makes their second move, and so on, until the game is either won or drawn.

Captures

To capture a piece is to move a piece onto a square occupied by an opponent's piece. When you capture an opponent's piece, remove their piece from the board. You cannot capture your own pieces.

Objective

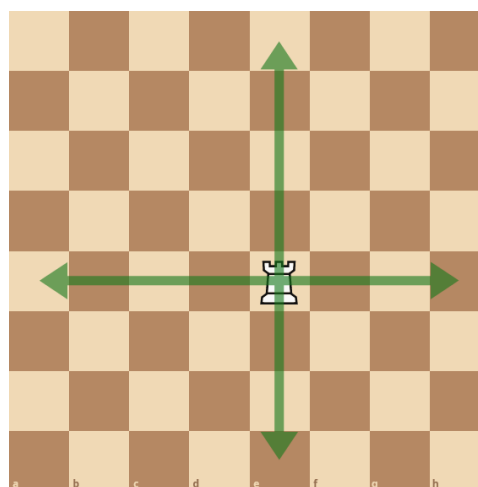
The main objective in a game of chess is to force the opponent's king into a position where it cannot escape capture. This position is called "checkmate." If you checkmate your opponent's king, you win the game. See page 10 for more on checkmates.

4. How the Pieces Move

In the following diagrams, green arrows indicate the squares each piece may move to. Except for the knight, the pieces may move to any square along the path of the arrows.

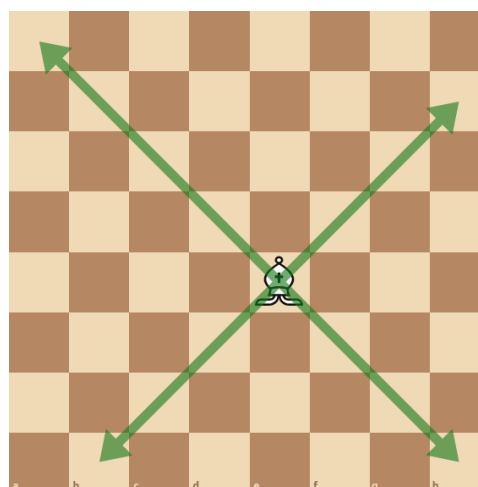
The Rook

The rook moves horizontally and vertically over any distance.



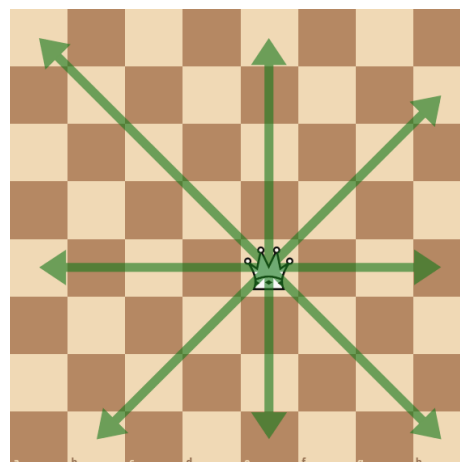
The Bishop

The bishop moves along diagonals over any distance.



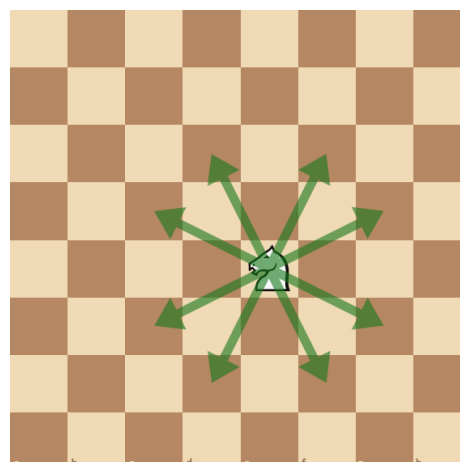
The Queen

The queen moves horizontally, vertically, or diagonally over any distance.



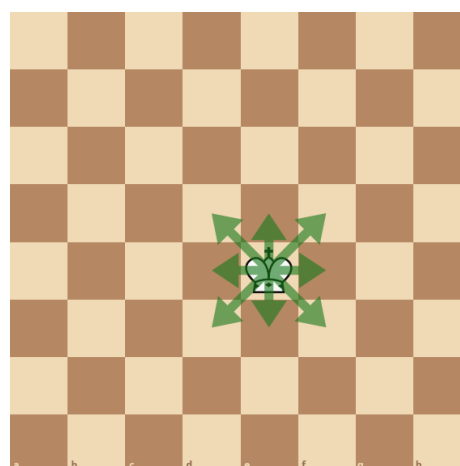
The Knight

The knight moves vertically or horizontally two squares and then one square perpendicular to its previous direction of travel. The knight is the only piece that may move over other pieces.



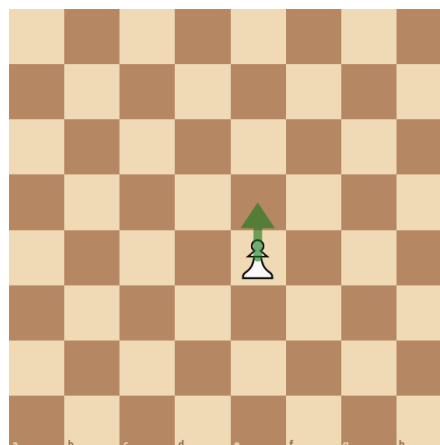
The King

The king moves vertically, horizontally, or diagonally one square. It cannot move to a square that an opponent's piece threatens to capture.



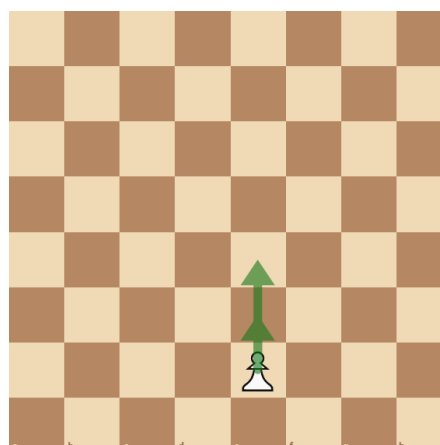
The Pawn

The pawn moves vertically one square with exceptions. See below.



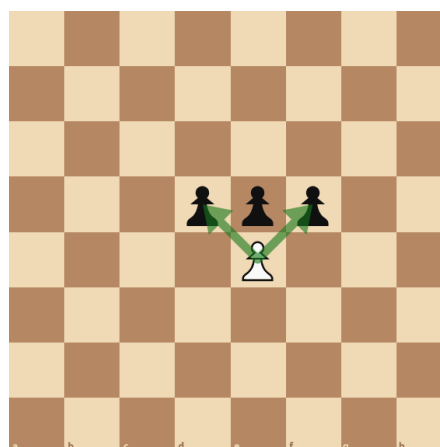
Unmoved Pawn

A pawn may move vertically two squares if it has not yet moved. Once a pawn is moved, it loses the ability to move two squares.



Capturing with a Pawn

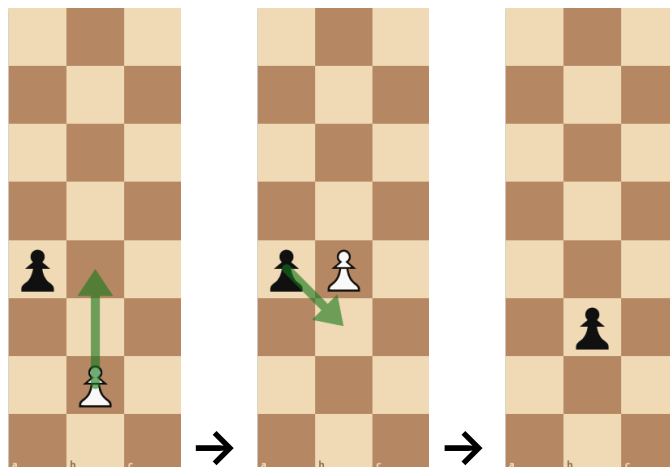
Like the bishop, a pawn captures diagonally, but it may only capture pieces one square away.



5. Special Moves

Capturing En Passant

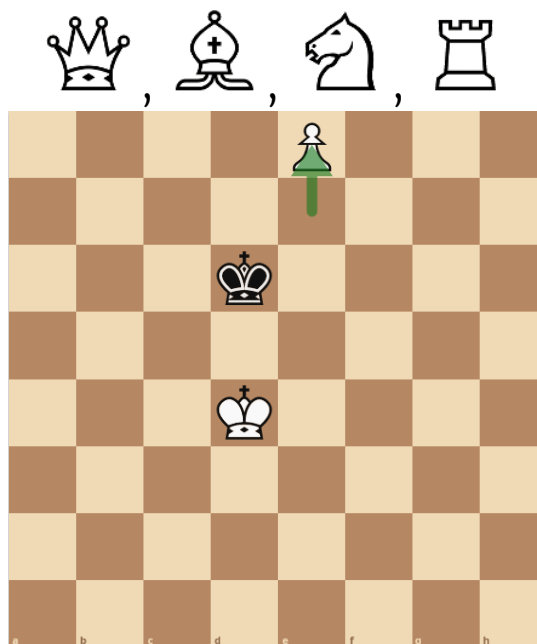
If a pawn moves two squares, an opponent can capture that pawn *en passant* if they respond on their very next turn by moving their own pawn in front of the pawn that just moved two squares. *En passant* capture can only occur as an immediate follow-up move.



White's pawn moves two squares and black replies by capturing en passant

Pawn Promotion

If a pawn reaches the end of the board, you must remove it from the board and replace it with a queen, bishop, knight, or rook.



White's pawn achieves promotion

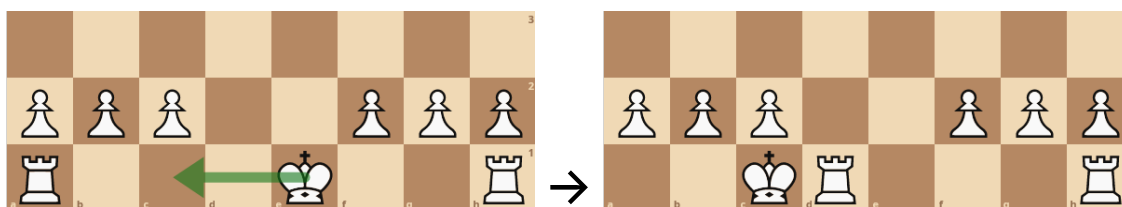
Castling

To *castle* is to move the king two squares toward a rook of the same color and simultaneously move that rook to the other side of the king. The king may castle toward a rook only if all the following conditions are met:

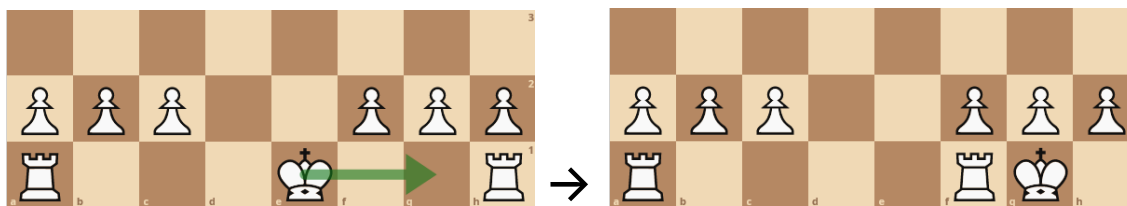
1. The king and rook in question have not yet moved
2. The squares between the king and rook are unoccupied
3. The king is not in check
4. The king does not pass over or move to a square under threat



Position before castling



Castling long



Castling short

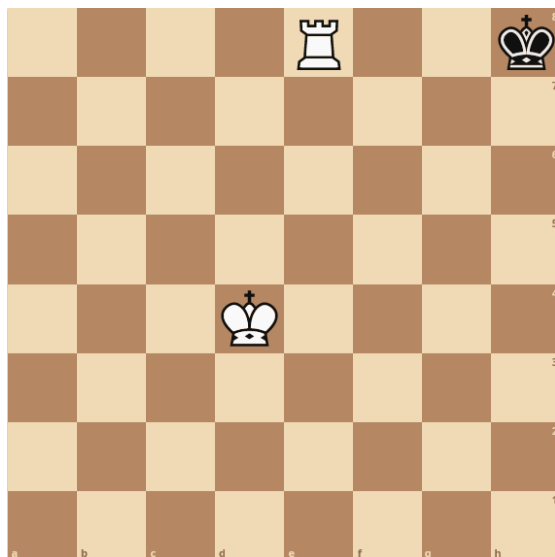
6. Check and Checkmate

Check

If you move a piece in such a way that it threatens to capture the opponent's king on the next turn, that king is "in check." If your king is in check you must use your next turn to free the king from check.

There are three ways to free a king from check:

- Move the king to an unthreatened square
- Move a piece in the way of the check, so as to block the opponent's piece from threatening the king
- Capture the piece giving the check, so as to eliminate the threat



White checks black with a rook

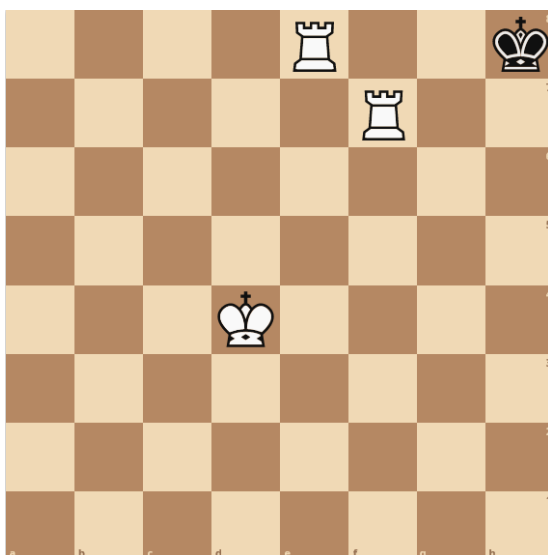


Black checks white with a bishop

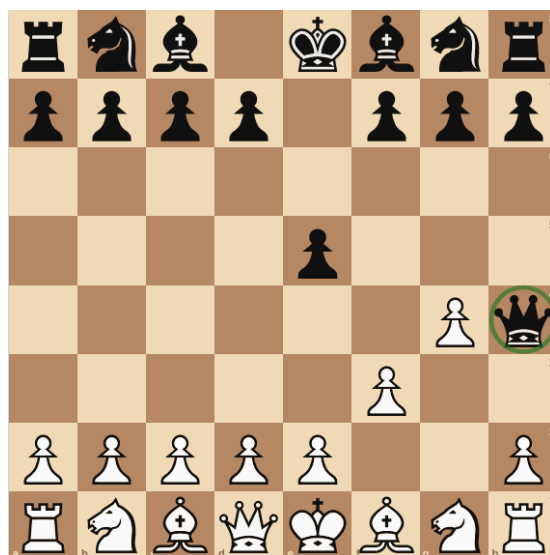
Checkmate

If you move a piece in such a way that it places the opponent's king in check, and the opponent's king has no way of escaping check on the next turn, the opponent's king is 'in checkmate', and you win the game.

Checkmating your opponent's king is the main objective in chess.



White checkmates black with rooks



Black checkmates white with a queen

7. Draws

Not all chess games end with a win. When players fail to achieve a checkmate, the game ends in a draw. There are five ways a game can end in a draw:

- Agreeing to draw
- Insufficient material (no possibility of checkmate)
- Three-fold repetition of the same position
- Fifty moves without capture
- Stalemate

Agreeing to Draw

Players may agree to end the game in a draw at any time. A player typically offers a draw on their own turn to avoid disrupting their opponent's thinking.

Insufficient Material

If players do not have a combination of pieces capable of forcing checkmate, the game ends in a draw. For example, if the only two pieces remaining on the board are kings, neither player can achieve a checkmate, and the game ends in a draw. Additionally, these piece combinations are incapable of forcing an opponent's king into checkmate:

- A king and a single bishop
- A king and a single knight
- A king and two knights

Three-fold Repetition

A player may force a draw if the same position occurs three times during a game. This often occurs when players repeat moves to avoid arranging their pieces into a losing position.

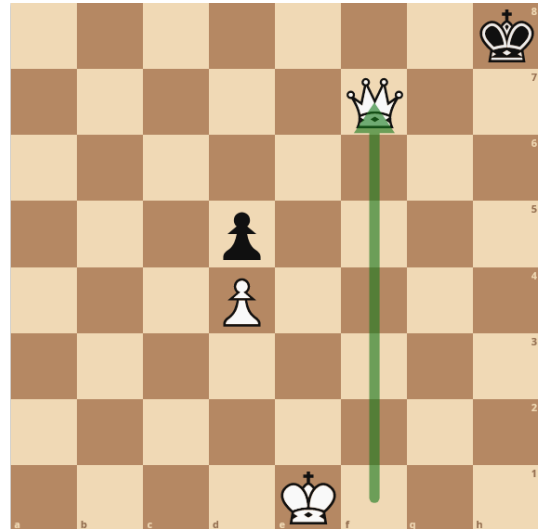
Fifty Moves Rule

If no pieces have been captured after fifty consecutive moves, the game ends in a draw. This rule is used to terminate games that make no progress.

Stalemate

A stalemate occurs when a player cannot legally move any piece on the board and that player's king is not in check. A player may not escape a stalemate by moving their king into check.

In Fig. A, black's pawn is blocked from moving and the king cannot move without putting itself in check, which is against the rules. The game ends in a draw.



A) Black's turn to move. White's previous move forced a stalemate.

END