

Chinese Chess for Beginners

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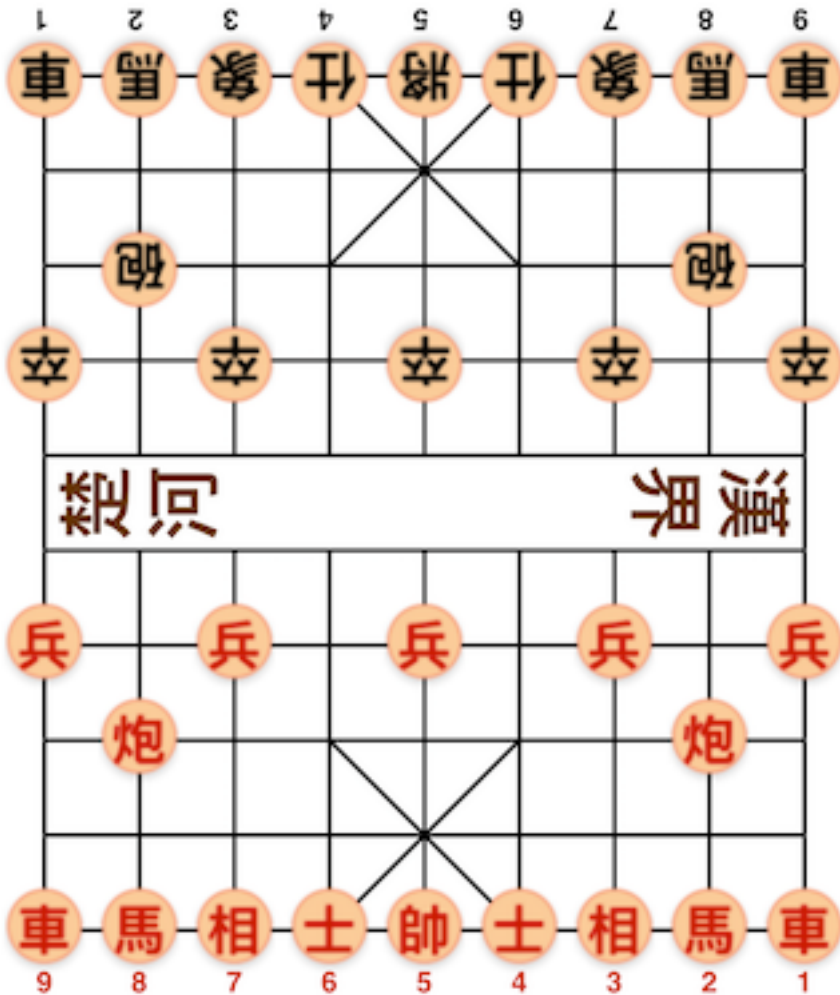
Welcome!

When you think of Chess, you probably think of the strategy game played throughout Europe and the Americas. There is another kind of Chess played throughout the world by probably more people than any other strategy game. The game is Chinese Chess. The “Elephant Game” as it is called by the Chinese, dates back more than 2000 years. The origin of Western Chess, its unique style of play results in a wide-open, quick-moving and aggressive contest. It contains ancient oriental profound philosophy and wisdom.

Chinese Chess for Beginners explains the basic rules of the game clearly and in detail so that you can start playing right away.

Chess Board

The board is made up of 9 vertical lines (files) and 10 horizontal lines (ranks), forming 72 squares; we call each square a cell. The central row of 8 squares are merged into a “river”, dividing the board into two halves, the “river” marked with four Kanji characters (楚河漢界, which pronounced as Choh Hoh Hon Gaa, means border river of Choh and national boundary of Hon). On each side of the board, there is a “palace” consisting of 4 squares and two long diagonals. The files are numbered as 1 through 9, from right to left, and from each player’s perspective.



(fig 1).

A funny app on App Store:

Chinese Chess Reviewer, a pocket chess review, analyse and learning app, a

powerful move Recorder and game records Player.

<http://sevenuc.com/en/reviewer.html>



<https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewSoftware?id=1293135726&mt=8>

Object of the Game

The object of the game is to win by either capturing the opponent's King (checkmate) or rendering all the opponent's pieces immobile (stalemate). Unlike International Chess, stalemate in Chinese Chess is not a draw.

The Pieces

Each side has 16 pieces, as shown in fig 1. The pieces are placed on the intersections of the lines (points). Fig 1 shows the initial setup of the pieces.

The name of the Chinese Chess pieces

Number	Red	Black	English Translation	Letter Re-presentation
1	帥	將	King	K
2	士	仕	Adviser	A
2	相	象	Elephant	E

Number	Red	Black	English Translation	Letter Re-presentation
2	車	車	chaRiot	R
2	馬	馬	Horse	H
2	炮	砲	Cannon	C
5	兵	卒	Pawn	P

Pronunciation and meaning of pieces

Name	Pronunciation	English	Abbreviated Letter
將	Jeung	General	K
帥	Sui	Commander in chief	K
仕士	Si	Official adviser	A
相	Seung	Looks, prime minister	E
象	Jeung	Seems, elephant	E
車	Gui	Machine, chariot	R

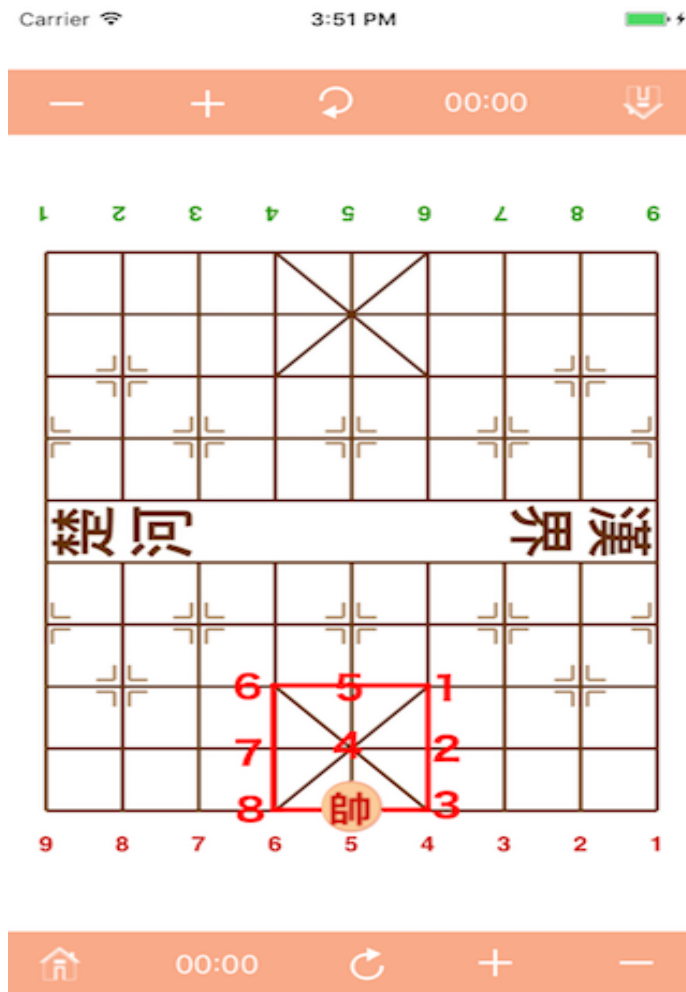
Name	Pronunciation	English	Abbreviated Letter
馬	Ma	Horse	H
炮砲	Paau	Cannon	C
兵	Bing	Pawn, soldier	p
卒	Jut	Pawn, soldier	p

Rules of Chinese Chess

Movements of Pieces

The King :

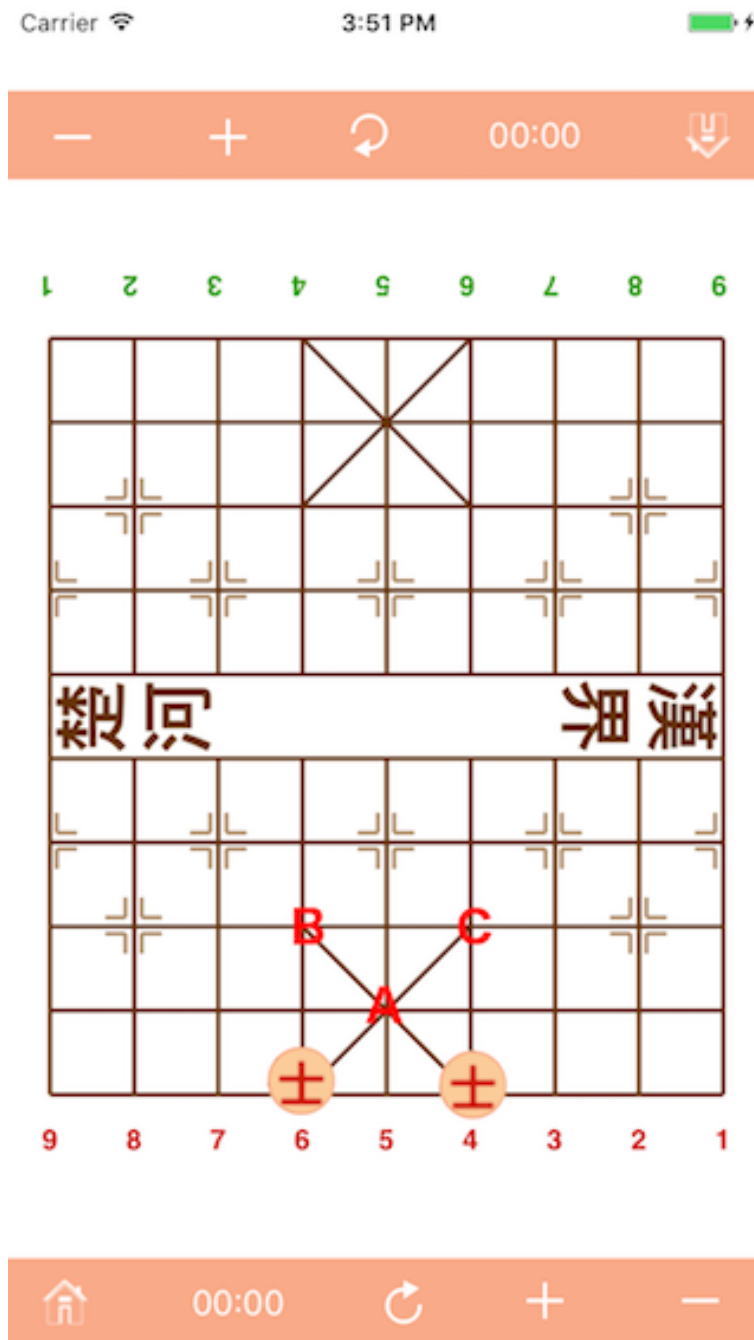
It only moves within the palace (the palace constructed with four cells, shaped as same as Kanji character 田 which pronounced as Tin, means rice field), one point either horizontally or vertically. There is a unique rule about the King; the two Kings must not be facing each other directly i.e. unobstructed by any other piece, along a file. If you have to move your King to directly face opponent's King, it means you lose. King has nine points in the palace as indicated in fig 2.



(fig 2).

The Adviser:

It moves one point at a time along the diagonals within the palace. In other words, it can only occupy the centre and the four corners of the palace. Adviser has five points in the palace.

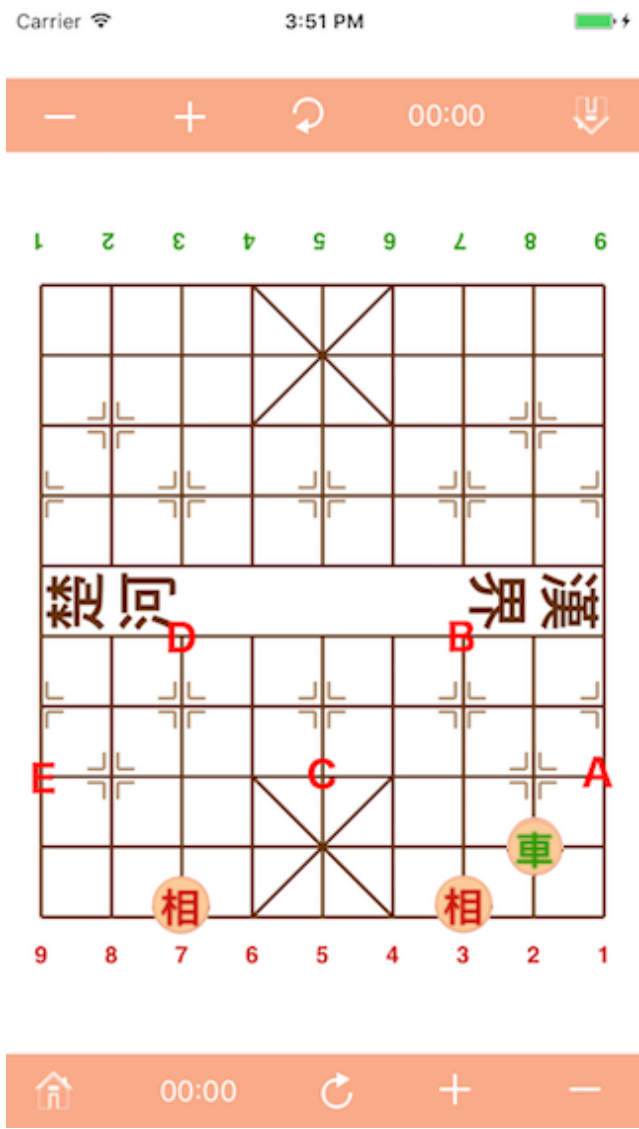


(fig 3).

The Elephant :

Elephant move on four cells (squares) that constructed a Kanji character 田, it moves on the diagonals of the four cells, i.e. moves exactly two points diagonally. Elephant cannot cross the river, so there are only seven points in the home camp,

which can ever be occupied by the Elephant. Further more, its movement will be blocked if there is a piece, be its friend or foe, at the intervening point, i.e. the centre of the four cells), there're eight such points on each side. Thus, in fig 4, the red Elephant cannot go to point A because the centre of the four cells (squares) occupied by a black chaRiot.



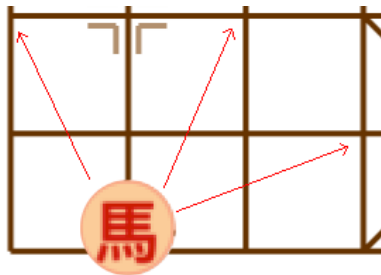
(fig 4).

The Chariot :

The most powerful piece. It move on straight line, that means it can move forward, backward, or sideways any number of points in a single move, as long as the path is unobstructed by any type of other piece.

The Horse:

Horse moves on diagonals of two cells, which constructed a Kanji character 日, vertically or horizontally. In Chinese term, “馬(horse)踏(tramp)日(day)角(diagonal)”, pronounced as Ma Daap Yat Gok.



(fig 5).

Its move can be regarded as a combination of two steps: (1) one point in any direction vertically or horizontally, followed by (2) one point diagonally further away. However, if the point next to the Horse is occupied by a piece (friend or foe), it's movement in that direction is blocked and two points become inaccessible. In fig. 6, the red Horse cannot go to point 1 nor point 2, owing to the presence of the red Pawn on point A. Suppose we have a black Horse on point 3 or 4 and point B have a obstructed piece, the black Horse can capture the red Horse, whereas the red Horse cannot capture the black Horse. The four point A, B, C, D in fig 6 obstructed the red Horse to access the eight point that it can move to.

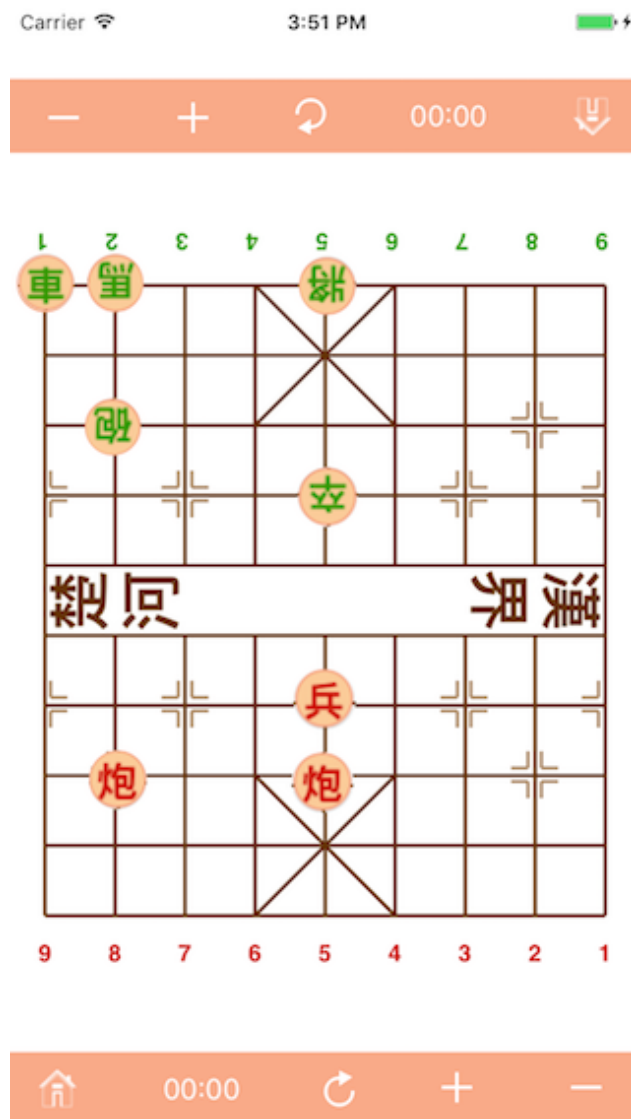


(fig 6).

The Pawn :

The Pawn never moves backward. It moves one point at a time, and can only move sideways after crossing the river.

The Cannon :



We describe the Cannon last because it is the most unique and interesting piece in Chinese Chess. All the other six types mentioned earlier move and capture in like manner. Whereas the Cannon moves like the Chariot, but it jump on straight line, capture opponent's piece by jumping over a piece (friend or foe).

In Chinese term, “炮(cannon)打(fire)翻(over)山(mountain)”, pronounced as Paau Da Faan Saan. Cannon must have one and only one piece to over, and the captured target must be the first piece after the over piece, the jump distance can as long as the line is not obstructed by any type of other piece. In fig left, the red Cannon can

capture the black Pawn over the red Pawn, but it cannot capture the black King. Another red Cannon can capture the black Horse, but the Horse protected by another piece, the sideways Chariot.

The Notation System

Movements

Kanji	Pronunciation	English	Symbol Re-presentation
進	Jun	Forward	+
退	Tui	Backward	—
平	Ping	Traverse	.

Tandem Positions

Kanji	Pronunciation	English	Symbol Re-presentation
前	Chin	Front	+
後	Hau	Rear	-

Any person serious about mastering the game must learn the Notation System of writing down the moves. For the benefit of those who do not write Kanji characters, the Notation System using alphabets, numerals and mathematical symbols.

In this system, every move is written with four characters e.g. C2.5, the first character names the piece moved, the second character denotes the number of the file where the pieces sat before the move, the third character is either + (forward), - (backward), or . (traverse, move horizontally), and the last character either tells the number of the new file where the piece landed or the number of points moved by the piece.

The notation C2.5 means Cannon on file #2 move sideways to file #5. For the Adviser, the Elephant and the Horse, because of their oblique movement, the file number will always change after making a move. Therefore, the 4th character always denotes the new file number. For the rest i.e. King, Pawn, Chariot, and Cannon that move along a straight line, the 4th character also denotes the new file number when they move sideways. Only when they move forward or backward, the 4th character then counts the points they have covered. Sometimes you may have two pieces of same type along a file. In that case, change the second character to + or – to differentiate between the front one and the rear/back one.

Special Cases for Tandem Pawns

(I) 3 Pawns in a file

the second digit of the front pawn denoted by +

the second digit of the rear pawn denoted by -

the mid-pawn is neither “front” nor “rear”.

Therefore it can be denoted by normal notation.

Example: 3 tandem pawns at #3 file to traverse sideways to #4 file

P+.4 for front pawn

P3.4 for mid pawn

P-.4 for rear pawn

(II) 5 Pawns in a file

for the foremost pawn, the first-digit is denoted by +

for the rearmost pawn, the first-digit is denoted by -

for the middle 3 pawns, they are denoted same as (I) above.

Example: 5 tandem pawns at #3 file to traverse to #4 file

++.4 for foremost pawn

P+.4 for second foremost pawn

P3.4 for mid pawn

P-.4 for second rearmost pawn

--.4 for rearmost pawn

(III) 4 Pawns in a file

No pawn in the middle, and they can be denoted same as (II) but without the mid-pawn.

Example: 4 tandem pawns at #3 file to traverse to #4 file

++.4 for foremost pawn

P+.4 for second foremost pawn

P-.4 for second rearmost pawn

--.4 for rearmost pawn

(IV) Tandem Pawns in 2 files

The first digit denotes the file of the pawn to move.

Example: 3 tandem pawns at #3 file and 2 at #7 file.

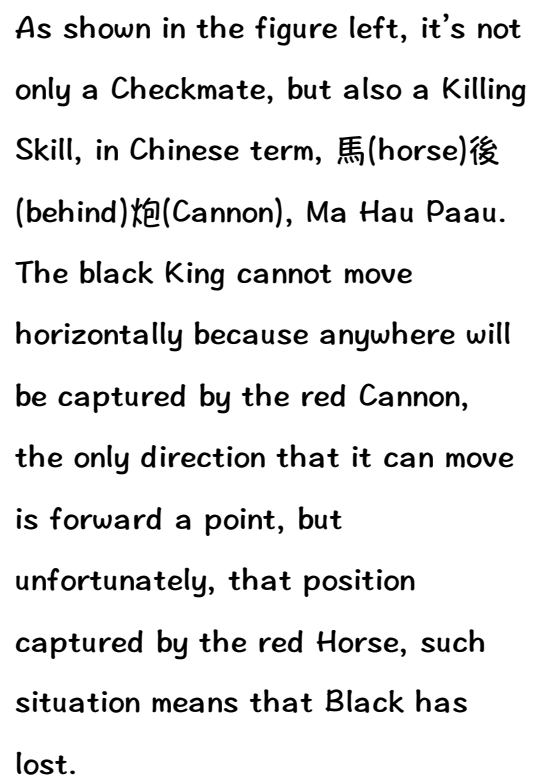
3+.4 for #3 file front pawn to traverse to #4 file

33.4 for #3 file mid-pawn to traverse to #4 file

3-.4 for #3 file rear pawn to traverse to #4 file

7-6 for #7 file rear pawn to traverse to #6 file

Simple Checkmate.



Chess idioms in daily life

Several funny idioms that references the rules of Chinese Chess.

飛象過河 [fēi jiàng guò hé]



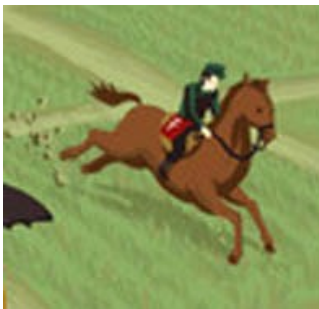
(An elephant flies across the river.)

To break a rule.

To reach across the table for food.

Origin: elephant over river

事急馬行田 [shì jí mǎ xíng tián]



(In a crisis, a horse can move in the field.) To be flexible, to adapt to circumstances in an emergency.

Origin: horse break

食人隻車 [shí rén zhī chē]



(To have eaten someone's cart.) To exploit or expropriate the belongings of others.

Origin: eat chariot

More Funny Proverbs: <http://sevenuc.com/en/proverbs.html>

Kanji characters in Chinese Chess

Kanji Character	English	Yale Romanisation	Jyutping Romanisation	Audio
象棋	Chinese Chess	Jeung Kei	zoeng6 kei4	
世事如棋	Life is just in harmony with Chess, masters, always keeping watch in silence, meet trouble, backward still have chances; once made a decision, never regret.	Sai Si Yue Kei	sai3 si6 jyu4 kei4	
楚河漢界	border river of Choh and national boundary of Hon	Choh Hoh Hon Gaai	co2 ho4 hon3 gaai3	
將	General	Jeung	zoeng1	

帥	Commander in chief	Sui	seoi3	♪
仕士	Adviser	Si	si6	♪
象	Seems; elephant	Jeung	zoeng6	♪
相	Looks; prime minister	Seung	soeng3	♪
車	Machine; chariot	Gui	gei1	♪
馬	Horse	Ma	maa5	♪
砲	Cannon	Paau	paau3	♪
炮	Cannon	Paau	paau4	♪
兵	Pawn;soldier	Bing	bing1	♪
卒	Pawn;soldier	Jut	zeot1	♪
田	Rice field	Tin	tin4	♪
日	Day;Sun	Yat	jat6	♪
馬踏日角	Horse tramp	Ma Daap Yat	maa5 daap6	♪

	diagonal of the shape of character day	Gok	jat6 gok3	
炮打翻山	Cannon fire over mountain	Paau Da Faan Saan	maa5 daap6 jat6 gok3	♪
進	Forward	Jun	zeon3	♪
退	Backward	Tui	teoi3	♪
平	Traverse; horizontally move	Ping	ping4	♪
前	Front	Chin	cin4	♪
後	Rear	Hau	hau6	♪
飛象過河	Break a rule.	Fei Jeung Gwoh Hoh	fei1 zoeng6 gwo3 ho4	♪
事急馬行 田	To be flexible, to adapt to circumstances in an emergency.	Si Gap Ma Haang Tin	si6 gap1 maa5 hang6 tin4	♪
食人隻車	To exploit or	Sik Yan Jek	sik6 jan4	

	expropriate the belongings of others.	Gui	zek3 gei1	
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Source: <https://chengdu.github.io/Chinese-Chess-for-Beginners/index.html>