Chess Forge

a new training application

In search of the best tools for chess training, we have consulted with masters, grandmasters, coaches, and tested many applications and websites. Some of them proved to be very helpful, and we use them daily in our training work and for our own improvement.

However, we could not find a tool that would support the optimal process of studying the game for us and our students. We wanted to have the ability to:

* create workbooks with opening analyses, model games, collections of endgames and combinations,
* test and improve our memory, knowledge, and skills,
* readily conduct computer analysis.

To meet these requirements, we needed to use several different tools and manually copy data between them. This process was time-consuming and inefficient.

Therefore, we decided to invest our time and effort in developing a single application that would fully satisfy our needs.

And today, we are pleased to introduce Chess Forge, a new chess training program. Chess Forge is a Windows application licensed under "Free and Open Source Software," which means it can be downloaded for free and used without restrictions.

# Workbooks

Chess Forge keeps data in workbooks consisting of one or multiple chapters. Each chapter contains the following sections:

## Introduction

Here, the user can enter and format any introductory text. It is possible to insert diagrams and arbitrary moves for better illustration of the content.

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## Study

This section is designed for convenient maintenance of variation trees or, in other words, for building opening studies. The user can add, modify, delete variation and lines, insert comments and engine evaluations. User friendly editing features allow drawing arrows, marking squares, promoting variations, merging or splitting chapters and even copying variations across chapters.

## Games

In this section, users have the ability to collect games that can be easily imported from PGN files or even from Lichess collections. Users can also manually input games move by move. As in the Study section, there is functionality for editing game texts, variations, comments, etc.

## Exercises

Here, users can gather or review combinations, endgames, or tactical quizzes. Just like games, exercises can be imported or inputted manually.

Chess Forge offers two modes of solving exercises. One is a fairly standard “guess the next move” while the other is a rather unique “submit your analysis” approach. The user enters the solution, that may contain sidelines, and requests that the program assess it.

# Engine

To enable automated evaluations, the Chess Forge installation package includes the Stockfish engine, though other engines can also be connected.

If the evaluations are turned on, the program will keep the engine evaluating the position currently shown on the program’s chessboard. Alternatively, the user can request that the current line be evaluated.

In addition, the user can start a game against the engine from any position in the Study or Games sections.

# Training

Separately to the exercise solving modes, Chess Forge boasts a unique training mode where the user is invited to test their memory, knowledge, and abilities against the content of the workbook supplemented by the power of the engine.

A training session can commence from any position in the workbook. The program will make moves according to the content of the workbook and will request responses from the user. The response will be assessed against the content of the workbook. If the move was known to the workbook the training will continue in the same mode. Otherwise, the program will declare the end of the known line and will challenge the user to a game against the engine.

At any point, the user may roll back the training to an earlier point, choose a different branch for themselves or for the program’s side. At any move, all options are displayed once the user made their move, so it is easy to cover the entire variation tree if one chooses so.

If the user rolls back the training and then follows the same line as before, the program will choose a different option at the first point where it sees alternatives in the variation tree.

# Libraries

If the user's computer has internet access, Chess Forge can connect to game databases and libraries from Lichess. In opening positions, the program will retrieve the name of the opening, statistics (percentage of wins, draws, and losses), and provide a list of up to 15 games played by the highest-rated players. Each of these games can be conveniently reviewed in a separate window and imported into the currently open chapter.

In positions where the number of pieces does not exceed 7, the program will retrieve and display comprehensive information from endgame tables. This saves time and provides an accurate determination of the game's outcome in the endgame, which can sometimes be difficult not only for humans but even for chess engines.

# Importing Content

## PGN Files

While Chess Forge is not a database it offers a number of options to import games and other content.

First of all, the program allows for the import of PGN files, from which it can create a new Study, Games, or Exercises. PGN files can be downloaded from a number of chess web sites or exported from desktop applications.

Upon importing, Chess Forge allows the user to specify how to save the imported content. The user can choose to put all content into one chapter, merge all into a Study or create a new chapter for each game in PGN.

One interesting example are lichess.org studies that can be imported whole, whether they contain games, tactics, or endgames.

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## User Games from web sites

Chess Forge can import player games from the leading chess sites chess.com and lichess.org. Having invoked the “Download Games” dialog, the user must specify the nickname of the player of interest and optionally supply additional filters. The program will download the games and ask whether to put them in the current chapter, create a new one or create a whole new workbook.

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# Conclusion

Chess Forge can be an incredibly useful tool for any chess player who wants to improve their game and broaden their knowledge of chess. With a simple and intuitive interface and constant access to the game engine and lichess libraries, both beginner and advanced players can create their own manuals with openings, middlegames, and endgames. The unique training mode allows for testing the user's knowledge using the manual and checking the understanding of the resulting positions by continuing the game with the engine when the book theory is exhausted