Chess Forge

a new training application

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

However, we still lacked a tool that would support the process of studying the game and be optimal for us and our students. We wanted to have the ability to:

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

Until now, fulfilling these conditions required using several different tools and manually copying data between them. This process seemed too time-consuming and inefficient to us.

Therefore, we decided to invest our experience, time, and effort in preparing an application that would fully satisfy the above requirements.

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 saves data in Handbooks consisting of one or multiple chapters. Each chapter contains the following parts:

## Introduction

The author of the handbook or the user themselves can enter and format any introductory text. It is possible to insert diagrams and move notation for better illustration of the content. For example, in a chapter about the Morra Gambit, the main game plan for White can be presented in the introduction as follows:

In the "Games” section of Chess Forge, users have the ability to collect games, which can be easily imported from PGN files or even from Lichess collections. Users can also manually input games move by move. Similar to the "Teoria" (Theory) section, there is easy functionality for editing game texts, variations, comments, etc.

In the "Ćwiczenia" (Exercises) section, users can gather or review combinations, endgames, or tactical quizzes. Just like games, exercises can be imported or inputted manually. The article further describes methods for solving exercises.

When working with the Chess Forge handbook, users have access to the following tools:

1. Analysis and test games against the engine:

The Chess Forge installation package includes the Stockfish engine, though other engines can also be connected. Skillfully utilizing the computational power of engines can significantly accelerate skill improvement and broaden chess knowledge. There is a wide range of possibilities, from finding missed variations and combinations during games, to experimenting with different openings and strategies. With the engine enabled, Chess Forge displays the best (according to the selected engine) continuations for the side to move in the chosen position.

2. 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.

3. IMPORTING THEORY, GAMES, AND EXERCISES:

Chess Forge allows for the import of PGN files, from which the program will propose creating a new Theory, Games, or Exercises in the handbook. Reviewing chess materials in these various forms helps in understanding strategies, openings, and endgames, and develops tactical and strategic thinking, directly impacting the level of play. In this way, users can learn new techniques, identify harmful habits, mistakes, and weaknesses in their own game as well as in other players' games. One of the options during import allows for creating a subchapter of Theory by combining variations played in the imported games. Once a game is included in the handbook, it can be analyzed using Chess Forge tools, inserting comments and subvariations.

As mentioned earlier, the browser of master games allows for direct import of games from Lichess:

It's worth noting that handbooks are files in the extended PGN format. This means that they can be loaded into other PGN browsers, for example, uploaded to the lichess.org website. However, these tools will not display the structure of the handbook, only the variations, games, and exercises.

The last part of the description discusses the training features of Chess Forge. It mentions that one unique feature of the program is the ability to start training from any position, where the user makes a move, and depending on where the training was initiated from, the program responds with moves from the Theory, Games, or Exercise subsections. If the user makes a move outside of the manual, the program informs them and offers a quick return to the source, and then starts playing using the game engine. This is a perfect way to deepen knowledge on how to continue the game when the user's book knowledge runs out.

Chess Forge also allows for the creation of exercises and their solutions, including assigning points for finding the correct moves. Using exercises can bring many benefits, such as improving tactical skills, developing visualization skills, deepening the ability to recognize patterns and apply them in one's own games, and maintaining concentration at a constant level, etc. The user can choose one of two modes for solving exercises and test their skills.

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.