

= Bughouse chess =

Bughouse chess (also known as Exchange chess , Siamese chess , Tandem chess , Transfer chess , Double bughouse , Cross chess , Swap chess or simply bughouse or bug) is a popular chess variant played on two chessboards by four players in teams of two . Normal chess rules apply , except that captured pieces on one board are passed on to the teammate on the other board , who then has the option of putting these pieces on his or her board .

The game is usually played at a fast time control ; this , together with the passing and dropping of pieces , can make the game look chaotic and random to the casual onlooker ; hence the name bughouse , which is slang for mental hospital . The game is traditionally played as a diversion from regular chess both over the board and online . Yearly , several dedicated bughouse tournaments are organised on a national and an international level .

= = Rules = =

Bughouse is a chess variant played on two chessboards by four players in teams of two . Each team member faces one opponent of the other team . Partners sit next to each other and one player has black , while the other has white . Each player plays the opponent as in a standard chess game , with the exception of the rules specified below .

= = = Captured pieces = = =

A player capturing a piece immediately passes that piece to the capturing player 's partner . The partner keeps these pieces in reserve and may , instead of playing a regular move , place one of these pieces on the board (as in shogi and crazyhouse) . Pieces in reserve or on deck may be placed on any vacant square , including squares where the piece delivers check or checkmate . However , pawns may not be dropped on the first or last rank . Dropped pawns may promote , but all promoted pawns convert back to pawns when captured . In play over the board , a promoted pawn can be put on its side to indicate promotion . A pawn placed on the second rank may move two squares on its first move . Each player must keep the reserve or stock pieces on the table in front of the board , always visible to all players of the game .

= = = Clock and completion of a move = = =

Bughouse chess is usually played with chess clocks to prevent players from waiting indefinitely for a piece . Clocks are placed on the outside so that each player can see both clocks . At the start of the game , the players with the black pieces start the clocks simultaneously . Bughouse is usually played using clock move , which allows touching of pieces . A move is completed only when the clock is pressed . Touch move is practiced to a lesser extent . When used , it applies to pieces in reserve as well ; they are considered dropped after contact has been made with an empty square .

Bughouse can be played without a clock , but then there is usually a rule preventing a player waiting for pieces (stalling or sitting) indefinitely . One rule states that players may not delay their move beyond the time that it takes for their partner to make three moves .

= = = End of the game = = =

The match ends when either of the games on the two boards ends . A game is won when one player gets checkmated , resigns , forfeits on time or when an illegal move is made in which the offending side is caught . The match can be drawn by agreement or when two players run out of time or are checkmated simultaneously . Depending on (local) rules threefold repetition applies , in which case the reserve of pieces is not taken into account .

Alternatively , when one board finishes , play can continue on the other board . In this case , pieces in reserve can still be dropped , but no new pieces are coming in . The outcome of the match is then

decided by adding the score of the two boards .

= = = Communication = = =

Partners are normally allowed to talk to each other during the game . They can for instance ask for a specific piece , for more trades , ask to hold a piece , suggest moves or ask their partner to stall . Shouts like " Knight mates ! " or " Give me pieces ! " are common , and can lead to seemingly absurd sacrificial captures on the other board . Partners are not allowed to physically act on the other board .

= = Two @-@ player and six @-@ player variations = =

It is possible to play the game with just two players (one per team) by having each player move on two boards . Analogously to simultaneous chess , this way of playing the game is referred to as simultaneous bughouse . It can also be played with just one clock by playing the boards in a specific order (WhiteA , WhiteB , BlackB , BlackA) and pressing the clock after each move . This variation is suitable for play by mail .

Bughouse can be played with three or more boards . The game is played in exactly the same way as normal bughouse with boards placed with alternating colours and two players and one clock per board . On capturing a piece however , the player has to decide which player of the team will get that piece . In three board bughouse chess the middle player is the key since he gets material from two boards , but has to decide how to divide the captured pieces . The middle board also commonly becomes very cramped due to having twice the number of pieces available .

= = Strategy = =

= = = Material = = =

In chess a minor material advantage is important as when material gets exchanged , the relative advantage becomes larger . Because new pieces come in , there is no endgame play in bughouse and material is therefore less important . It is common to sacrifice pieces in bughouse while attacking , defending or hunting down a certain piece which the partner requires .

A scoring system to evaluate material is to add up the piece values of the material on the board . In chess , when a pawn equals one unit , a bishop or knight is worth three , a rook five and a queen nine . These values are a consequence of the difference in mobility of the pieces . In bughouse , piece values differ because pieces in reserve essentially have the same mobility as they can be dropped on any vacant square . The pawn relatively gains importance in bughouse chess , as its very limited mobility does not handicap reserve pawns . They can for instance be dropped to block non @-@ contact checks . Pawns can be dropped onto the seventh rank , one step away from promotion , which again adds to their importance . Long @-@ range pieces like the queen or the rook lose relative value , due to the constantly changing pawn structure . They are also more likely to be hemmed in . A valuation system , first suggested by FICS @-@ player Gnejs , often applied to bughouse is pawn = 1 , bishop = knight = rook = 2 and queen = 4 .

= = = Coordination = = =

Captured pieces are passed on and thus what happens on one board influences what happens on the other board . It is therefore natural for team members to communicate during game play . A common request of an attacking player would be " trades are good " , while players in trouble would ask their partner to hold trades with " trades are bad " . Equally a player can request a piece e.g. " knight wins a queen " or ask to hold a piece e.g. " rook mates me " .

Another common situation in the interplay between the two boards is a player not moving , also

called sitting or stalling . This can happen in anticipation of a certain piece or at the request of the partner . Suppose a player is under heavy attack , and an additional pawn would mate him . When the partner cannot prevent giving up a pawn on the next move , sitting is the only strategy . It would of course be perfectly logical for the attacker to sit as well , waiting for a pawn to come . The situation where diagonal opponents sit at the same time is known as a " sitzkrieg " (literally " sitting war " in German , and a pun on " blitzkrieg ") . The difference in time between the diagonal opponents will eventually force one party to move . This diagonal time advantage is more important than the difference on the clock between opponents on the same board .

Apart from this active communication , a good bughouse player tries to coordinate silently by keeping an eye on the other board and adapting moves accordingly . This can mean as little as glancing at the other board before trading queens , or as much as playing an opening adapted to the other board .

= = = Attack and defense = = =

Attacking the king can mean checking the opponent but also controlling vital squares around the king . It is an essential part of bughouse gameplay . From a player 's perspective , attacking the king has important advantages as opposed to defending or attempting to win material :

Because of the possibility of dropping pieces , attacks in bughouse can quickly lead to checkmate .

The attacking player has the initiative , he is the one who controls the board , while the opponent is left to react . This has also important consequences for the other board .

It is easier to attack than to defend . A defending mistake can have bigger consequences than an attacking mistake . Thus , the defender needs to be more precise , which in turn can lead to a time advantage for the attacker .

It is common to sacrifice material to build up , or sustain an attack . Characteristic of attacks is the so @-@ called " piece storm " , where a player drops piece after piece with check . Contact checks or knight checks , which force the king to move as opposed to dropping pieces , are especially important . They can be used to drive the king into the open , away from its defenders , while they prevent the opponent from putting new material on the board .

Partner communication is essential in a good defense . When one partner is under attack , the other partner should be aware of which pieces hurt most . Sitting strategies might be necessary , and it is therefore important to play the defense fast . Accepting a sacrifice can be lethal . On the other hand , it results in the attacker having a piece less to play with , with the defender 's partner having a piece more . Sacrifices therefore give the partner of the defender an opportunity to take initiative .

= = = Opening = = =

There are significantly fewer bughouse openings than there are chess openings . Many chess openings create weaknesses which can be easily exploited in bughouse . It is for instance not recommended to move pawns other than the d- and e @-@ pawns . Bughouse openings are generally geared towards dominating vital squares and fast development . Captured pieces become available after the first few moves and it is important to develop at this stage as there is often not enough time to do so later . Development also helps to defend against early piece drop attacks .

= = Notation and sample game = =

The algebraic chess notation for chess can be used to record moves in bughouse games . Different notations for piece drops are possible . The internet chess servers FICS and Internet Chess Club use the at @-@ sign @ , as in N @ f1 (knight drop at f1) , Q @ e6 + (queen drop with check at e6) or P @ h7 (pawn drop at h7) .

Because of the fast pace at which the game is played , bughouse games are rarely recorded in games played over the board . With the arrival of online chess it has become possible to

systematically record games . The format in which this is done is the bughouse portable game notation (BPGN) , an extension of the Portable Game Notation for chess . Software , such as BPGN viewer can be used to replay and analyse bughouse games . Below is an example bughouse game in the BPGN format .

```
[ Event " rated bughouse match " ]
[ Site " chess server X " ]
[ Date " 2004 @.@ 04 @.@ 12 " ]
[ WhiteA " WA " ][ WhiteAElo " 1970 " ]
[ BlackA " BA " ][ BlackAElo " 2368 " ]
[ WhiteB " WB " ][ WhiteBElo " 1962 " ]
[ BlackB " BB " ][ BlackBElo " 2008 " ]
[ TimeControl " 180 + 0 " ]
[ Result " 0 @-@ 1 " ]
1A. e4 { 180 } 1a . Nc6 { 180 } 1B. d4 { 179 } 2A . Nc3 { 179 }
1b . Nf6 { 178 } 2a . Nf6 { 178 } 2B. d5 { 178 } 3A. d4 { 177 }
2b. e6 { 177 } 3a. d5 { 177 } 3B. dxe6 { 176 } 4A. e5 { 176 }
3b. dxe6 { 176 } 4B . Qxd8 + { 175 } 4a . Ne4 { 175 }
4b . Kxd8 { 175 } 5B . Bg5 { 174 } 5A . Nxe4 { 174 }
5a. dxe4 { 173 } 5b . Be7 { 173 } 6A . Nh3 { 173 }
6B . Nc3 { 172 } 6a . Bxh3 { 171 } 6b . N @ d4 { 171 }
7A. gxh3 { 171 } 7a . Nxd4 { 170 } 7B . O @-@ O @-@ O { 169 }
8A . P @ e6 { 168 } 7b . Nbc6 { 168 } 8B . Bxf6 { 166 }
8a . N @ f3 + { 165 } 9A . Qxf3 { 165 } 8b . Bxf6 { 164 }
9a . Nxf3 + { 164 } 10A . Ke2 { 164 } 9B. e3 { 164 }
10a . Q @ d2 + { 164 } 11A . Bxd2 { 164 } 11a . Qxd2 + { 164 }
{ WA checkmated } 0 @-@ 1
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= = Where to play = =

= = = Over the board = = =

Little is known on the history of bughouse , but it seems to have developed in the early 1960s . It is now quite popular as a diversion of regular chess in local chess clubs throughout Europe and the US . Grandmasters such as Joel Benjamin , Yasser Seirawan , Andy Soltis , John Nunn , Jon Speelman , Sergey Karjakin , Michael Adams , Emil Sutovsky and Michael Rohde have been known to play the game . One of the strongest matches on record took place following the 2014 Sinquefeld Cup , with Magnus Carlsen and Maxime Vachier @-@ Lagrave teaming up against Fabiano Caruana and Levon Aronian , four of the top ten chess players in the world at the time .

With the absence of an International Federation , over @-@ the @-@ board competitive bughouse is very much in its infancy . There is also no world championship . A few countries do organize bughouse tournaments within the national chess federation . Examples include :

The yearly international chess festival Czech Open in July features the Czech republic bughouse championship .

Yearly , USCF organizes bughouse tournaments as part of the National Junior High (K @-@ 9) Championship and the National High School (K @-@ 12) Championship .

Other tournaments are organized privately :

One of the largest international bughouse tournaments is the yearly tournament in Berlin . Going into its sixth edition , it is popular among top players from FICS . Grandmaster Levon Aronian took part in the 2005 edition of the tournament and took the second place with his teammate Vasilii Shakov .

Since 2000 there has been an annual bughouse tournament in Geneva , attracting the best European players .

= = = Online = = =

Bughouse can be played online at chess servers such as FICS and ICC since 1995 . FICS is currently the most active server for bughouse , attracting the world 's best players like Levon Aronian .

The game is played online in the same way as over the board , but some aspects are unique to online bughouse . In games over the board , communication is heard by all players , while in online bughouse it is usually done via private messages between two partners . This makes communication a more powerful weapon . It is also easier to coordinate as the second board is more visible on the screen than over the board . The time aspect is altered due to existence of premove and lag . The latter can influence the diagonal time difference significantly , and it is good sportsmanship to restart the game when this difference gets too large .

ICS compatible interfaces particularly suitable for bughouse include Thief and BabasChess . They have the ability to display both boards at the same time and store played or observed games , they also have partner communication buttons and a lag indicator . Special Chess Engine Communication Protocol compatible engines have been written that support bughouse , examples are Sunsetter , Sjeng and TJchess . Although much faster than humans , they lack in positional understanding and especially in coordination and communication , an essential skill in this team game .

= = Relationship with chess = =

Bughouse chess is controversial among chess teachers . While some instructors find beneficial learning outcomes for bughouse , most do not consider it to have a positive effect , especially for novice chess players . According to Susan Polgar , " If your children want to play bughouse for fun , it is OK . But just remember that it is not chess and it has no positive value for chess . In fact , I absolutely recommend no bughouse during a tournament . " Arguments supporting a negative view of bughouse include that it distorts typical chess pattern recognition and that it too heavily emphasizes tactical play at the expense of positional strategy . It also shares criticisms with speed chess in general , potentially encouraging a habit of moving too fast or playing unsoundly with the expectation that one 's opponent will be moving quickly .

Levon Aronian is among those who view bughouse as beneficial " for players who know chess well already I started to play bug when I was already at master level , [you] see , and I think bughouse is good for the imagination , to develop new ideas . " For Joel Benjamin , bughouse trains players to pay closer attention to empty squares on the board .