

# Claude Chess

## User Guide

### Welcome to Claude Chess

Claude Chess is a powerful, feature-rich chess application for iPhone and iPad that combines beautiful design with serious functionality. Whether you're learning the game or preparing for tournament play, Claude Chess provides the tools you need to study, practice, and improve your chess skills.

### What Makes Claude Chess Special

- **Play Anywhere, Anytime** – Built-in Stockfish 17 engine means you can practice offline without an internet connection
- **Tournament-Strength AI** – Face one of the world's strongest chess engines with 21 adjustable skill levels
- **Professional Analysis** – Real-time position evaluation and move hints help you understand the game
- **Study Tools** – Set up any position to practice specific scenarios, openings, or endgames
- **Time Controls** – Practice with realistic tournament time settings including increment support
- **Coming Soon** – Chess.com and Lichess integration for online play (future updates)

## Getting Started

Starting your first game in Claude Chess is simple. Here's how to begin:

1. **Choose Your Opponent** – Tap the hamburger menu (≡) and select Settings > Opponent. Choose Stockfish to play against the computer.

*Note: On some smaller devices the hamburger menu (≡) might not be visible. If this is the case, tap and hold anywhere near the lightbulb icon or lightning bolt icon (⚡) and slide to the left. The remainder of the available icons will appear.*

2. **Set the Difficulty** – In Stockfish Settings, choose a skill level from 0 (beginner) to 20 (grandmaster strength). Level 5 is a good starting point for intermediate players.
3. **Pick Your Color** – Select whether you want to play as White or Black. The board will automatically flip to show your perspective.
4. **Start the Game** – Tap the lightning bolt icon (⚡) to open Quick Menu, then tap 'Start Game' to begin playing.
5. **Make Your Move** – Tap a piece to select it, then tap your destination square. You can also drag and drop pieces directly.

## Understanding the Board

The chess board displays several helpful visual indicators:

- **Green circles** show legal moves when you select a piece
- **Blinking opponent pieces** show legal captures when you select a piece
- **Corner triangles** highlight the last move played (can be toggled in Settings). The larger, darker triangles mark the destination square. The smaller, lighter triangles mark the starting square.
- **Red border** appears around a king when it's in check
- **Captured pieces** appear at the top of the screen and can be displayed by tapping on the appropriate color's 'Captured:' control. The count updates live during gameplay.

# Playing Games

## Making Moves

Claude Chess supports two methods for moving pieces:

### Tap to Move

1. Tap the piece you want to move
2. A blue border will appear around the selected piece
3. Legal moves appear as green circles
4. Tap the destination square to complete your move, or tap another piece if you've changed your mind
5. When you tap an alternate piece, the blue border automatically moves to the new piece

### Drag and Drop

1. Touch and hold a piece
2. The piece will appear to 'jump' off the board and follow your finger
3. Drag to the destination square (your finger placement determines where the piece drops)
4. Release to complete the move

## Special Moves

Claude Chess fully supports all standard chess rules and special moves:

- **Castling** – Move your king two squares toward the rook to castle
- **En Passant** – Automatically detected and available when legal
- **Pawn Promotion** – Choose your promotion piece (Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight) when a pawn reaches the final rank
- **Draw Detection** – The app automatically detects stalemate, insufficient material, and the 50-move rule

## Investigating Moves

Claude Chess allows you to investigate potential moves for both White and Black:

- When it's your turn, you can double-tap on any piece to see all possible moves for that piece
- After double-tapping a piece, a yellow band appears around the selected piece
- Legal moves appear as green circles
- Each subsequent double-tap on another piece clears the previous piece investigation
- When ready to move, double-tap the currently selected piece to clear the investigation mode
- You cannot make a move until the investigation mode is cleared

## Quick Game Actions Menu Features

Tap the lightning bolt icon ( ⚡ ) to access in-game actions:

- **Start Game** – Begins the game and starts the timer
- **Flip Board** – Rotate the board to view from the opposite side
- **Offer Draw** – Propose a draw to Stockfish (the AI evaluates the position and decides)
- **Resign Game** – Concede the game
- **Score** – View position analysis and game statistics (see below)
- **Show FEN** – Display the position in Forsyth-Edwards Notation (copy to clipboard)
- **Show PGN** – View the game in Portable Game Notation format (copy to clipboard)

# Features Guide

## Stockfish AI Engine

Claude Chess includes Stockfish 17, one of the world's strongest chess engines. The AI runs directly on your device, so you can play anywhere without an internet connection.

## Skill Levels

Choose from 21 skill levels (0-20) to match your playing strength:

- **Levels 0-5:** Beginner to casual player (will make occasional mistakes)
- **Levels 6-12:** Club player to advanced (solid tactical play)
- **Levels 13-20:** Expert to grandmaster strength (nearly perfect play)

## Playing as Black

In Stockfish Settings, you can choose to play as Black. This is particularly useful for practicing specific openings from Black's perspective. The board automatically flips to show your side, and time controls swap so you always get the time allocation you set for yourself.

## Position Analysis

Access the lightning bolt icon (⚡) and tap Score to view real-time position evaluation from Stockfish. The evaluation shows who has the advantage and by how much.

## Understanding the Score

- **Positive numbers:** White has the advantage
- **Negative numbers:** Black has the advantage
- **Near zero:** The position is roughly equal
- **Win Probability:** Shows the likelihood of winning from the current position

*Tip: You can choose between three display formats: Centipawns (raw engine output), Scaled (-9 to +9), or Win Probability percentage. Tap the Scale icon to select your preferred format and see explanations of all three scoring methods.*

## Game Statistics

Access the lightning bolt icon (⚡) and tap Score to view real-time game statistics including move count, material balance, and time remaining.

*Note: Additional statistical features are currently in development.*

## Move Hints

When you're stuck or want to learn, tap the lightbulb icon to see Stockfish's recommended move. The hint shows the move in standard notation (e.g., 'e2 → e4').

Use hints sparingly to maximize learning – try to think through the position yourself first.

## Setup Board

The Setup Board feature lets you create any chess position for study or practice. This is invaluable for:

- Practicing specific openings
- Working on endgame technique
- Analyzing positions from your games
- Testing tactical ideas

### To use Setup Board:

1. Open the hamburger menu (≡) and select 'Setup Game Board'
2. Enter a FEN (Forsyth-Edwards Notation) string for the position. You can type it manually or paste a copied string (see Appendix A for sample FEN strings).
3. The board updates to show your position
4. Tap 'Start Game' in Quick Menu to begin playing from that position

## Time Controls

Practice with tournament-style time controls. Access Time Controls from the hamburger menu (≡) to configure:

- **Time per player:** Set initial time for White and Black (0-60 minutes)
- **Increment per player:** Add seconds per move (0-60 seconds) that get added back to the player's remaining time
- **Quick Presets:** Blitz (5+0), Rapid (10+0), Classical (30+0), or custom

***Note:** Time controls must be set before starting the game. If you use the Undo feature during a game, time controls are automatically disabled for the remainder of that game.*

# Settings & Customization

## Board Appearance

Customize the look of your chess board in Settings > Board > Color Theme:

- **Classic** – Traditional tan and brown
- **Modern** – Contemporary light gray and steel blue
- **Wood** – Warm wooden tones
- **Ocean** – Calming blue and teal
- **Forest** – Natural green shades
- **Tournament** – High-contrast black and white
- **Custom** – Create your own color combination with a live preview

## Game Options

- **Show Possible Moves:** Toggle the green circles that indicate legal moves
- **Highlight Last Move:** Show or hide the corner triangles on the previous move
- **Haptic Feedback:** Enable or disable vibration feedback (iPhone and iPad only)

## Opponent Settings

Choose your opponent and configure their settings:

- **Human:** Play against another person on the same device
- **Stockfish:** Play against the AI (configure skill level and color)
- **Chess.com:** Coming in a future update
- **Lichess:** Coming in a future update

# Tips & Tricks

## Improving Your Game

- **Start at an appropriate level.** If you're winning too easily, increase the skill level. If you're losing every game, lower it. The right level should give you competitive games where you win roughly 50% of the time.
- **Use hints sparingly.** Try to calculate moves yourself before checking the hint. Overusing hints prevents you from developing your calculation skills.
- **Practice with time controls.** Start with longer time controls and gradually work toward faster games as your chess improves.
- **Study your losses.** Use the PGN feature to save games where you lost. Analyze them to understand your mistakes.
- **Practice specific positions.** Use Setup Board to drill difficult endgames or tactical positions repeatedly until they become second nature.

## Using Setup Board Effectively

- **Practice openings from both sides.** Set up your favorite opening position and practice playing both colors to understand it deeply.
- **Work on endgame fundamentals.** Set up basic endgames (King + Rook vs King, King + Queen vs King, etc.) and practice them until you can execute them perfectly.
- **Recreate interesting positions.** If you see an interesting position in a book or video, set it up in Claude Chess to explore it hands-on.

## Advanced Features

- **FEN strings** are a compact way to describe any chess position. Copy the FEN from Show FEN to share positions with friends or chess tools.
- **PGN format** is the standard for recording chess games. Export your games as PGN to analyze them in other chess software or share them online.
- **Flip the board** to see the position from your opponent's perspective. This helps develop your ability to evaluate positions from both sides.



# Troubleshooting & FAQ

## Common Questions

### **Why can't I move any pieces?**

Make sure you've tapped 'Start Game' in the Quick Menu. The board is locked until the game officially begins.

### **Why did my time stop counting?**

If you use the Undo feature, time controls are automatically disabled for the rest of that game. Start a new game to re-enable time controls.

### **Can I play online against other people?**

Chess.com and Lichess integration are coming in future updates. For now, you can play against Stockfish or pass-and-play with a friend on the same device.

### **How do I save my games?**

Use 'Show PGN' in the Quick Menu to view the game notation. Tap 'Copy' to save it to your clipboard, then paste it into Notes or another app for safekeeping.

### **Is there a way to analyze my games afterward?**

Export your game using PGN and import it into analysis software like [lichess.org/analysis](https://lichess.org/analysis) or [chess.com](https://chess.com)'s analysis board.

### **Why does Stockfish play differently at the same skill level?**

Stockfish's skill levels introduce deliberate randomness to make it play more human-like. This means the AI won't play the same way every time, making practice more realistic.

## Performance Tips

- For the smoothest experience, close other apps running in the background
- Stockfish runs on your device, so older devices may take a few extra seconds to calculate moves at higher skill levels
- Position evaluation and hints require a few seconds to compute – this is normal

# About Claude Chess

Claude Chess is a native iOS chess application built with SwiftUI. It combines beautiful design with powerful chess analysis tools to create the perfect practice environment for players of all levels.

## Credits

**Design & Development:** Jeff Rosengarden

**Chess Engine:** Stockfish 17 ([stockfishchess.org](https://stockfishchess.org))

**Chess Pieces:** Cburnett Chess Set ([Wikimedia Commons](#), CC-BY-SA 3.0)

**Built with:** SwiftUI and assistance from Claude Code

## Version Information

**Version:** 1.0.0

**Released:** 2025

**Platform:** iOS 18.0+, iPadOS 18.0+, macOS

**Supported Devices:** iPad (7th Generation+), iPad Air (3rd Generation+), iPad Mini (5th Generation+), iPad Pro (2018, 3rd Generation+), macOS Apple Silicon (Big Sur v11+)

## License Information

Claude Chess incorporates the following open-source software:

**Stockfish** – Licensed under GPLv3. Copyright © 2004-2024 The Stockfish developers.

**ChessKitEngine** – Licensed under MIT License. Copyright © 2024 The ChessKit Authors.

**Cburnett Chess Pieces** – Licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0. Created by User:Cburnett ([Wikimedia Commons](#)).

*Thank you for choosing Claude Chess!  
We hope you enjoy the app and improve your chess skills.*

## Appendix A: Sample FEN Strings

The following FEN strings can be used with the Setup Board feature to practice specific scenarios:

### 1. Scholar's Mate (Checkmate Position)

`r1bqkbl1r/pppp1Qpp/2n2n2/4p3/2B1P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNB1K1NR b KQkq - 0 4`

Black is in checkmate. Tests checkmate detection with immediate alert.

### 2. Stalemate Position

`7k/8/6Q1/8/8/8/8/K7 b - - 0 1`

Black king on h8, White king on a1, White queen on g6. Black has no legal moves but isn't in check = stalemate draw.

### 3. En Passant Opportunity

`rnbqkbnr/ppp1p1pp/8/3pPp2/8/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq f6 0 3`

White pawn on e5, Black pawn just moved to f5. White can capture en passant on f6 by moving the e5 pawn diagonally to f6.

### 4. Castling Rights Test

`r3k2r/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/R3K2R w - - 0 1`

Kings and rooks in position but no castling rights. Tests that castling is properly disabled even when pieces are in starting squares.

### 5. Midgame Position with Castling

`r1bqk2r/pppp1ppp/2n2n2/2b1p3/2B1P3/3P1N2/PPP2PPP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 4 5`

Italian Game opening position. Both sides can still castle kingside and queenside. Tests castling availability mid-game.

### 6. Endgame: King and Pawn vs King

`8/8/8/4k3/8/8/4P3/4K3 w - - 0 1`

Simple endgame: White king e1, White pawn e2, Black king e5. Tests minimal piece setup and basic endgame scenarios.

### 7. White Pawn Promotion

`8/4P3/8/8/8/8/8/4K2k w - - 0 1`

White pawn on e7, two moves away from e8 promotion. White king on e1, Black king on h1. Tests pawn promotion for all 4 piece types.

### 8. Black Pawn Promotion

`4k2K/8/8/8/8/8/4p3/8 b - - 0 1`

Black pawn on e2, two moves away from e1 promotion. Black king on e8, White king on h8. Tests pawn promotion for Black.

### 9. 50-Move Rule Test

8/8/8/4k3/8/8/4K3/8 w - - 98 100

Only kings remain, halfmove clock at 98. After 2 more moves, the clock reaches 100 and triggers the 50-move rule draw alert.

## Appendix B: Features in Development

The following features are planned for future updates:

### Additional Chess Sets

- Multiple piece style options beyond the current Cburnett set

### Save/Load Operations

- Save and load FEN/PGN files
- Choose save location: On device or iCloud
- Auto-save game PGN and FEN upon game exit
- Settings toggles for auto-save preferences

### Game Navigation

- Load FEN or PGN game files
- Navigate backwards and forwards through loaded games
- Live board preview during navigation
- Resume play from any position in a loaded game

### Share Features

- Mid-game sharing via iOS Share Sheet
- Share FEN (current position)
- Share PGN (full game to current point)
- AirDrop, Messages, Email, and Clipboard support

### Opening Library

- 24 validated opening positions
- 12 classical openings
- 12 tactical demonstrations

### Additional Chess Rules

- Threefold repetition detection
- Enhanced insufficient material detection

— End of User Guide —