

Computer Science NEA - Chess Engine

Jonathan Kasongo

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0.1 Analysis of problem

0.1.1 Problem Identification

This paper will detail my process of coding a chess engine in Python 3.12. The game of chess can be traced back to some 1,500 years ago to its origins in India, where it was known as 'Chaturanga'. Chess is a hard game to master, with most master level players starting to play at the ages of 7-9 years of age. The game not only has a multitude of strategies, openings and tactics, but also is very mentally taxing. In the 1984 world chess championship Anatoly Karpov reportedly lost over 22lbs (roughly 10 kg). The game of chess has a branching factor of 35-38 moves per position, which is a lot of moves to consider per position. Luckily we now have much better technology than 1984, and computers can now process roughly 10^9 $O(1)$ operations per second! This plays to the strengths of the modern computer, even though it doesn't possess the human intuition needed to disregard moves that 'look disadvantageous', we can simply check all moves available in a given position then evaluate which move is the most optimal, assuming our opponent always plays the best response.

0.1.2 Stakeholders

Chess has skyrocketed in popularity these past few years, because of a collection of reasons. One very clear cause for this spike in interest was the COVID-19 lockdown. This period of time saw everyone stuck indoors looking for new hobbies, distractions and ways to pass the time. Not only were there a multitude of content creators now learning how to play chess, but there was also a new hit series "The Queen's Gambit", which according to netflix a record 62 million households watched. All this interest in chess encouraged many to start learning chess for themselves, and to analyse their games and learn from their mistakes people would have to receive the help of a chess engine. This project will aid those people eagerly wanting to improve their chess ability, by allowing them to learn from a much higher rated player without paying fees for a coach. The target demographic is any avid chess player from the ages of 9-40 wanting to improve at chess, but lacking the money to hire a coach.