

# Essential Chess Basics

(Updated Version)



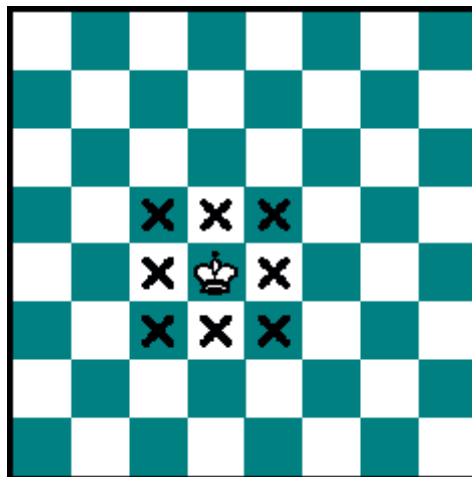
*provided by Chessolutions.com*

# 1. Moving Pieces

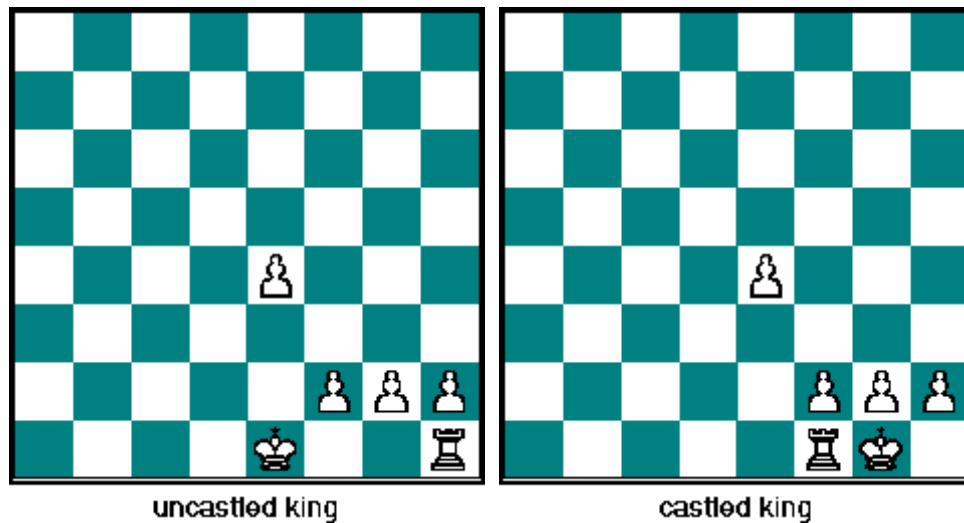
In a game of chess white has the first move and black moves second. Afterwards the players take turns moving. They must make a **legal** move and may only move one piece at a time except when **castling**. Each piece is unique in their abilities to move and capture opposing pieces.

## King

- The King is the most important piece, for when he is slain the game is over.
- He can move only one square at a time in any direction. Likewise, he can only **capture** pieces that are one square away.



- The King may **castle** once during a game.
- **Castling** is a special move that permits the movement of two pieces at once: the King and one of his rooks.
- When castling, the King moves two squares to his left (queenside) or to his right (kingside). In the same move the selected rook slides and “jumps” over the King to the first available square on the other side.

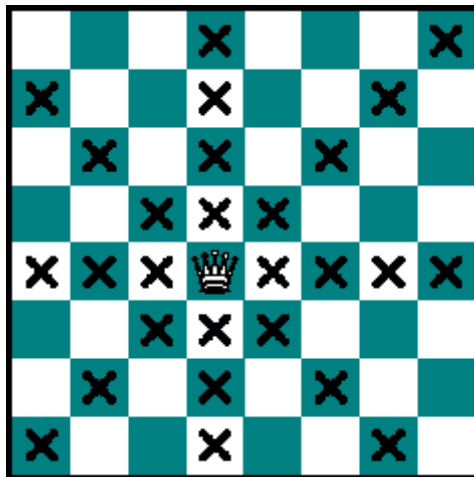


#### The King may only castle:

- When neither the King nor the rook that is involved has moved before during the game.
- When the way is clear and there are no other pieces between him and the selected rook.
- When he is not in **check**, moving through check or landing in check.

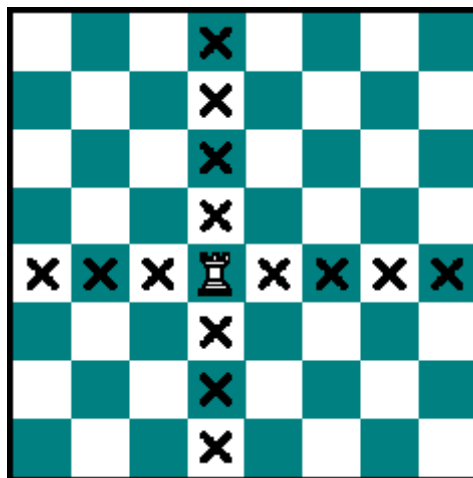
## Queen

- Although the King is the most important the Queen is the most powerful and most mobile piece.
- She can move any amount of squares in any direction : horizontally, vertically, or diagonally until her path is blocked by another piece.
- She can capture any enemy piece that is in her path.



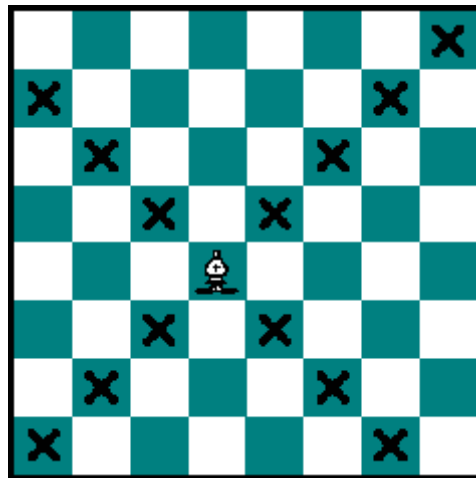
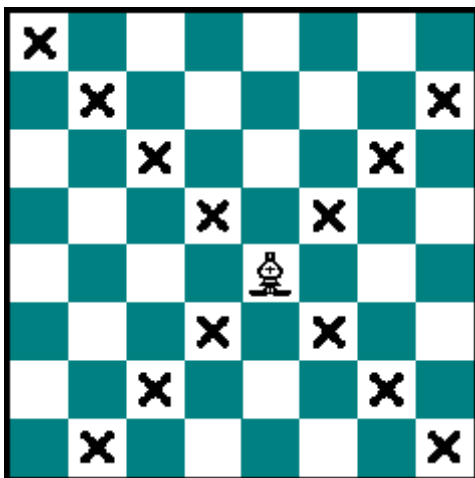
## Rook

- The Rook is next in mobility and power.
- A Rook can move any number of squares horizontally or vertically until its path is blocked by another piece.
- Accordingly, Rooks may only capture enemy pieces on horizontals and verticals.
- Pieces on diagonals are safe from the rook. This is the main difference between the Queen and the Rook.
- Two Rooks working together, however, tend to overwhelm a lone Queen.



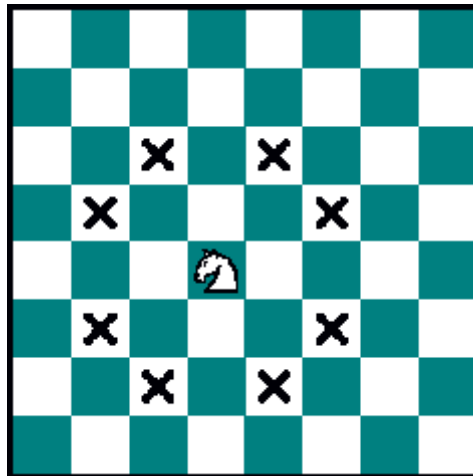
# Bishop

- The Bishop can move any number of squares diagonally until its path is blocked by another piece.
- Each player starts with a light-squared bishop and a dark-squared bishop.
- The light-squared bishop can only reach light squares.
- The dark-squared bishop can only reach dark squares.



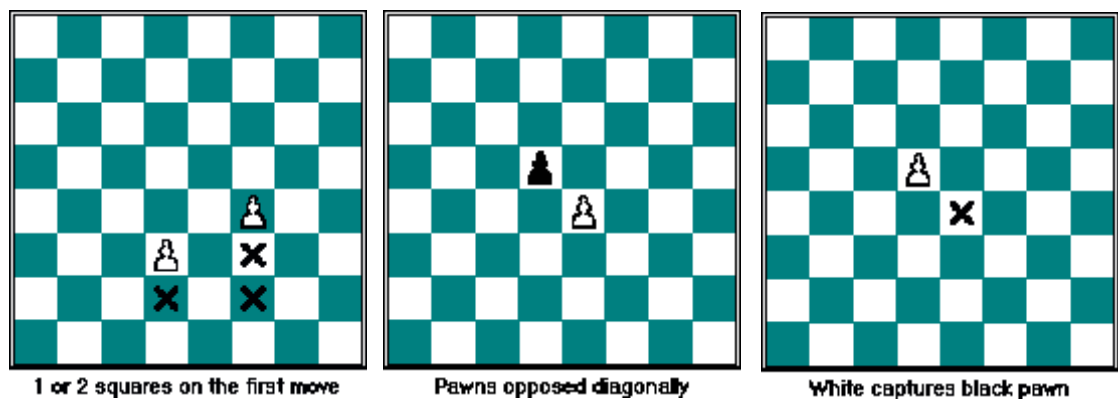
# Knight

- The Knight is the most peculiar of all the pieces. It leaps like a horse from one square to another.
- Knights alone can leap over other pieces that are in its path.
- Knights move in L-shaped patterns in any direction.
- Knights always land on a square opposite the color of its original square.

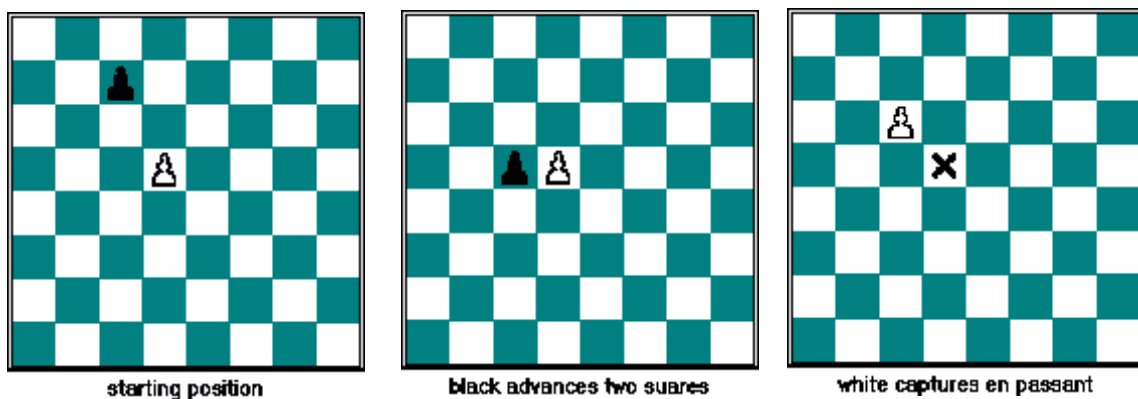


# Pawn

- Pawns move straight ahead and never backward, but capture diagonally.
- Pawns move only one square at a time, but have the option on their first move of advancing two squares.
- Pawns cannot move forward if a piece is blocking their path.



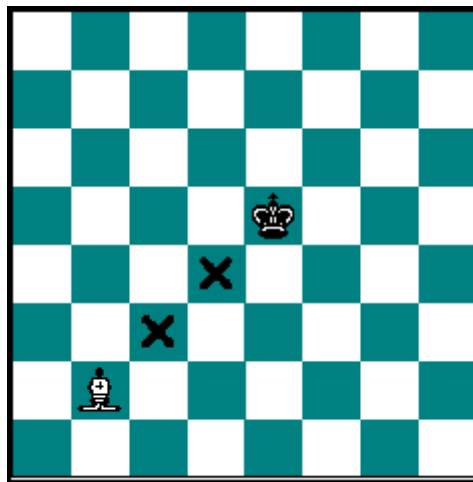
- A pawn can capture **en passant** (in passing) when an opposing pawn advances two squares past it. This, however, must be done immediately otherwise a player forfeits the privilege to capture **en passant**.





## 2. Check and Check mate

- When the King is threatened with capture by any of the enemy pieces he is said to be in **check**.
- The player whose King is in jeopardy **MUST** get out of check immediately by either moving to a safe square, capturing the attacking piece, or by blocking the check with one of his own friendly pieces.



Check!.

- If the King can find no safe square nor otherwise get out of check then he is **checkmated** and the game is lost.
- If the King is not in check and the player can make no legal move then the king is **stalemated** and the game is a **draw** and no one wins.

### 3. Value of the Pieces

- Pieces are assigned relative values based on their various strengths and weaknesses.
- A point system is used to show how much a piece is usually worth.

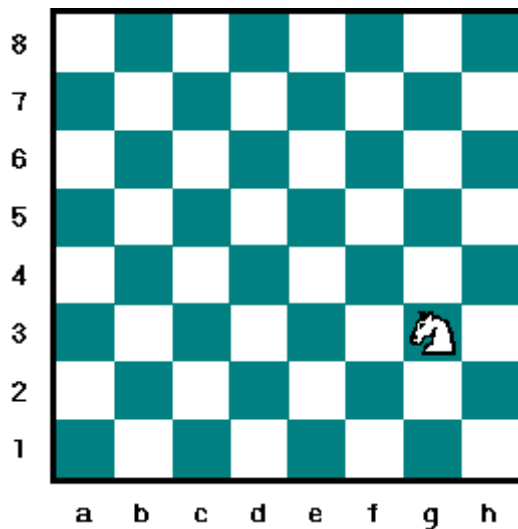
Pawn	1point
Knight	3points
Bishop	3points
Rook	5 points
Queen	9points
King	infinite

- **Exchanges** occur when one piece is traded for an enemy piece.
- 1 pawn traded for an enemy pawn represents an even exchange.
- 1 knight traded for 1 enemy pawn represents an uneven exchange.
- Trading a higher valued piece for a lesser one leaves you with a disadvantage in material/force.
- Trading a lower valued piece for a higher one gives you an advantage in material/force.

It is best to avoid material disadvantages as they will often lead to defeat.

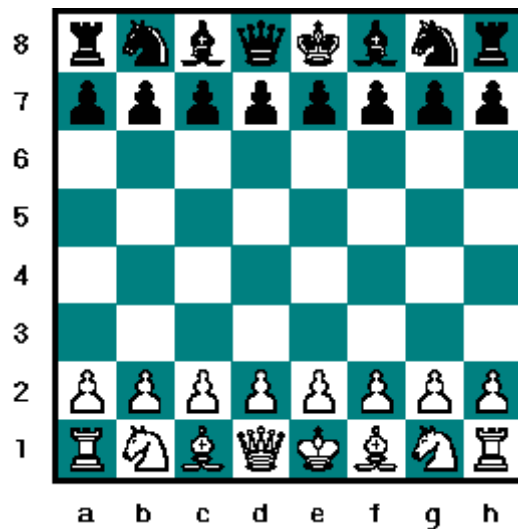
## 4. Notation

- Notation is the system by which we record games that are played. Modern chess notation uses the **algebraic** system of notation.
- Each square on the board is labeled according to its **coordinates**.
- Squares are lettered according to **file** and numbered according to **rank**. Thus, a piece on the g-file and the third rank would be at “g3”.



## Starting Position

- The white pieces are all positioned on the 1st and 2nd ranks at the start of the game.
- The black pieces are all positioned on the 7th and 8th ranks at the start of the game.

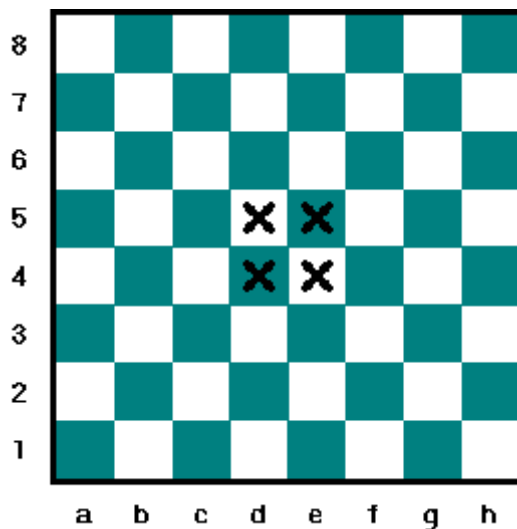


- Kings are always positioned on the e-file at the start of a game.
- Queens are always positioned on the d-file at the start of a game.
- Bishops are positioned on the c and f-files.
- Knights are positioned on the b and g-files.
- Rooks are positioned on the a and h-files.

## 5. The Opening

The opening is the very beginning part of a chess game when all pieces are on their original squares. In the opening we strive to **develop our pieces** and to **control the center**.

- **Development** is the rapid mobilization of our forces toward the **center** of the chess board. We thus bring our pieces into fighting position and further prepare for the ensuing battle.
- The four squares in the middle of the chess board are called the **center**.



- We have center control when our pieces are aiming at these four center squares.
- The player that **has greater center control** will have greater mobility and better chances for launching a **successful attack**.
- The player that has **less center control** will find it difficult to launch a sound and successful attack.

## 10 Helpful Hints in the Opening:

- Open with a center pawn (c, d or e) advancing it two squares for maximum center control.
- Develop all pieces early without leaving any behind.
- Develop knights before bishops.
- Pick the most suitable square for a piece and develop it there once and for all.
- Make no more than three pawn moves in the opening.
- Do not bring your queen out early.
- Play developing moves that gain center control.
- Always maintain at least one pawn in the center if early exchanges occur.
- Do not make useless wing pawn moves in the opening as they generally don't help in the fight for center control.
- Castle the king early and bring him to safety.

## 6. Illustrative games

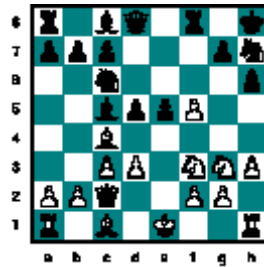
Thompson, J - Morphy, Paul  
New York 1857

1.e4 e5

Both players start by advancing a center pawn two squares. They have just begun the battle to gain center control.

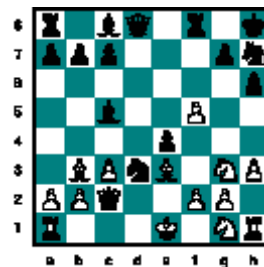


2.♖f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.d3 ♖f6 5.♖c3 h6 6.♖e2 d6 7.c3 O-O 8.h3 ♕h8  
9.♖g3 ♖h7 10.♟c2 f5 11.ef d5



Morphy has temporarily sacrificed a wing pawn to gain much more center control. Notice how he uses his strong center pawns to launch a dangerous attack.

12.♗b3 e4 13.de de 14.♖g1 ♖e5 15.♗e3 ♖d3 Check!



White's King is being checked by blacks knight and must get out immediately.

16.♕e2 ♗e3 17.fe ♟h4 18.♖e4 ♟e4 19.♟d3 ♟g2 check! 20.♕d1 ♗f5  
21.♗d5 ♗g4 Check!

White decided to *resign* before ruinous loss of material and inevitable mate. The black rook will check on f1 and force white to exchange his queen for a rook. This would lead to a clear *material disadvantage*. Black won.

[0:1]





Lichtenhein, T. - Morphy, Paul

New York 1857

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗c6 3.d4 ed 4.♞c4

White has temporarily sacrificed a pawn.

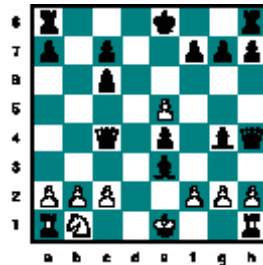


4.... ♗f6 5.e5 d5 6.♞b5 ♗e4 7.♗d4 ♞d7 8.♗c6 bc 9.♞d3 ♞c5 10.♞e4 ♠h4

Black threatens checkmate of f2 with the Queen!

11.♠e2 de 12.♞e3 ♞g4 13.♠c4 ♞e3

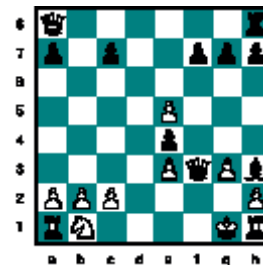
Black cannot recapture the black bishop immediately with his f-pawn. This would expose his King to check from the black Queen.



14.g3 ♠d8 15.fe ♠d1 16.♣f2 ♠f3 17.♣g1 ♞h3 18.♠c6 ♣f8 19.♠a8 ♣e7

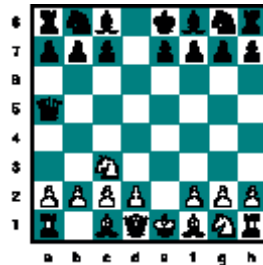
Brilliant! White cannot avoid checkmate which black will deliver on g2 with his queen. Black won.

[0:1]



Fischer, Bobby - Seidman, Herbert  
New York 1959

1.e4 d5 2.ed ♞d5 3.♞c3 ♞a5



It is generally bad to play openings where the Queen comes out early. She will often find herself a victim of early attack by minor pieces.

4.d4 ♞f6 5.♞f3 ♞c6 6.d5 ♞b4 7.♞b5 Check! c6 8.dc bc 9.♞a4 ♞a6?  
10.a3 ♖d8 11.♞d2 ♖d6 12.ab ♞f5 13.♞b3 ♞e4 14.♖a6 ♖d2 15.♞a1 ♞c3  
16.bc ♖d6 17.O-O

A charming position where white castles and black resigns due to decisive material disadvantage. As a teenager Bobby Fischer showed us what can happen to an opponent who refuses to develop all his pieces and castle his King. White won.

[1:0]

