My Chess Family

Chess rules for kids

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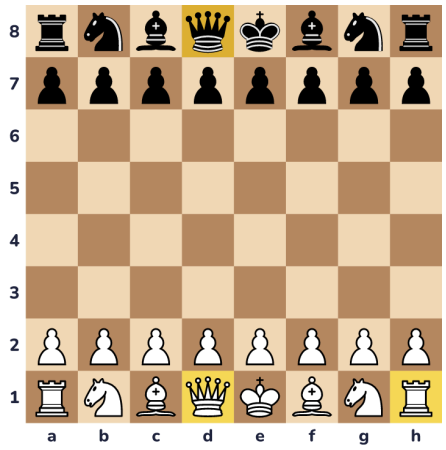
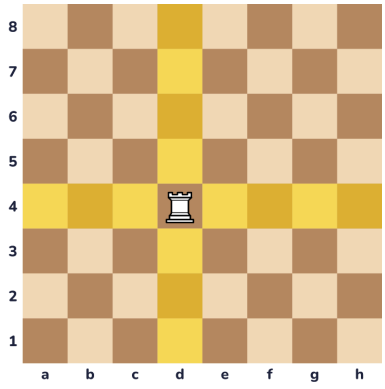
Setting up



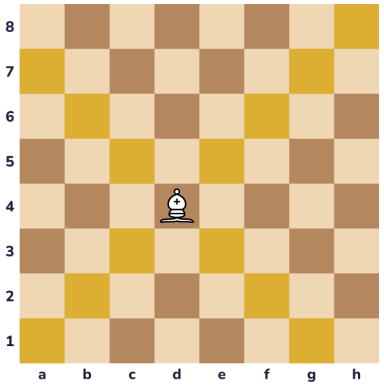
White goes at the bottom with a light square in the right-hand corner: "light on the right". The rooks go in the corners, then the knights, then the bishops. The queen goes on her own colour, and the king next to her. Pawns fill the second row.

White moves first, then the players take turns. The goal is to **checkmate** the other king: attack it so it can't escape.

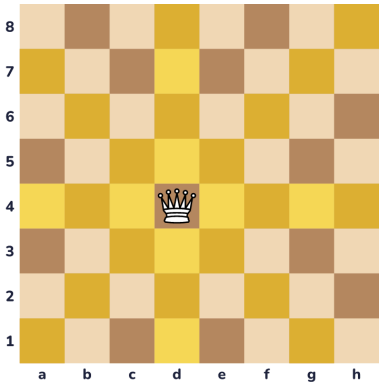
How the pieces move



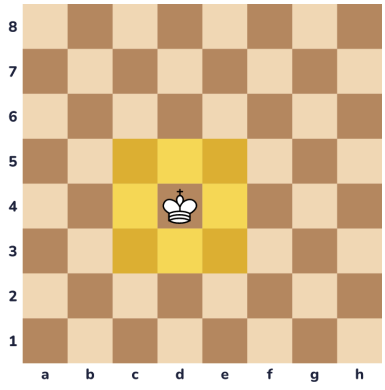
The rook. Moves in a straight line along a row or a column, as far as it likes.



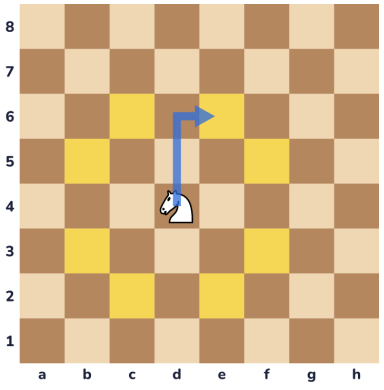
The bishop. Moves along a diagonal, as far as it likes. It stays on squares of one colour all game.



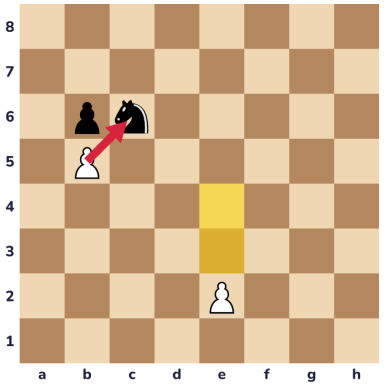
The queen. Moves like a rook and a bishop together: any straight line or diagonal, as far as it likes.



The king. Moves one square in any direction. It can never move onto a square where it could be taken.



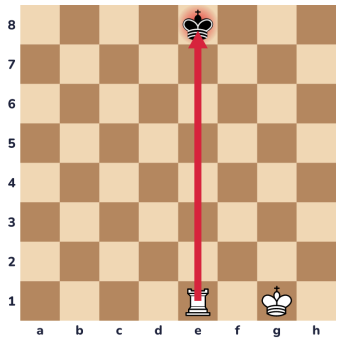
The knight. Jumps in an L: two squares one way, then one to the side. It is the only piece that can jump over others.



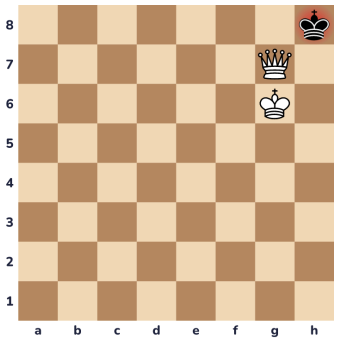
The pawn. Moves straight forward one square, or two on its first move. It captures one square forward on the slant. It can never move backwards.

Check, checkmate and the special moves

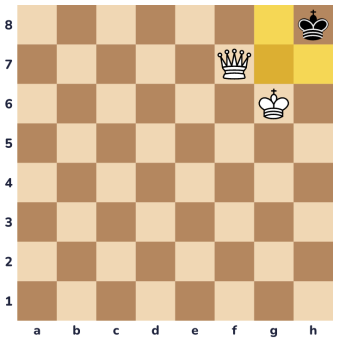
Capturing. A piece captures by moving onto a square with an enemy piece, which comes off the board. You never have to capture, and you can never capture your own pieces.



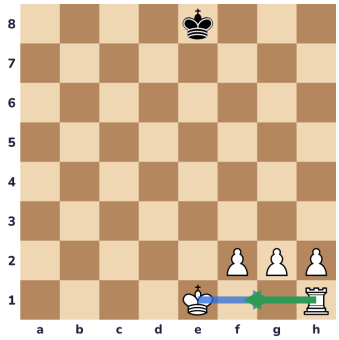
Check. When a king is attacked, it is in check, and it must get out at once. There are three ways: move the king, block the check with a piece, or capture the piece giving check. You can never make a move that leaves your own king in check.



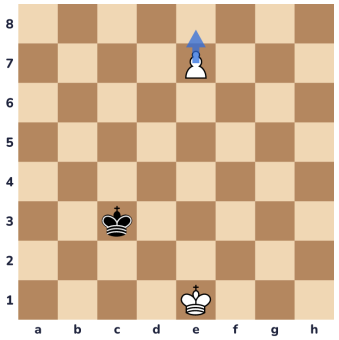
Checkmate. Check with no way out. The king is not captured: the game ends, and the side giving checkmate wins.



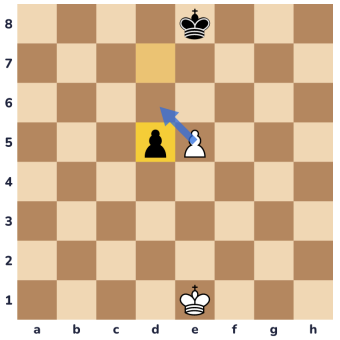
Stalemate. If the player to move is not in check but has no legal move, the game is a draw. Black to move here: the king isn't in check, but every square is covered.



Castling. Once a game, the king moves two squares towards a rook and the rook jumps to the square on its other side. Only if neither has moved, the squares between are empty, and the king isn't in check, doesn't cross an attacked square and doesn't land on one.



Promotion. A pawn that reaches the far side becomes a queen, rook, bishop or knight, whichever its player chooses. Most choose a queen.



En passant. If a pawn moves two squares and lands right beside an enemy pawn, that pawn may capture it as if it had moved one square. Only on the very next move.

When a game is a draw

- **Stalemate:** the player to move has no legal move and is not in check.
- **Not enough pieces to checkmate:** for example, only the two kings are left.
- **The same position three times,** with the same player to move.
- **Fifty moves each** with no capture and no pawn move.
- **Both players agree** to a draw.