My Chess Family

Chess notation for kids: how to read and write moves

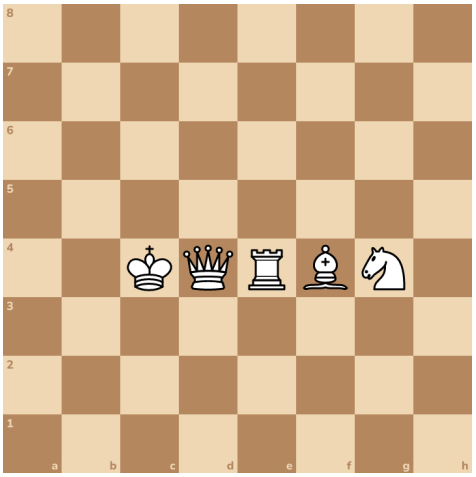
Try each question on a real board, then check the answers at the end of the sheet.

Chess notation

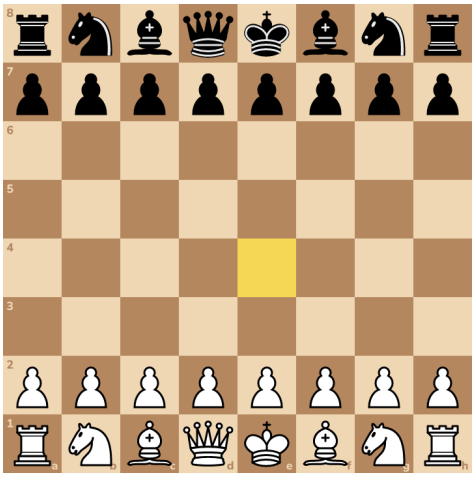
Players write their moves down, so they can play the game through again later. The way of writing them is called notation.



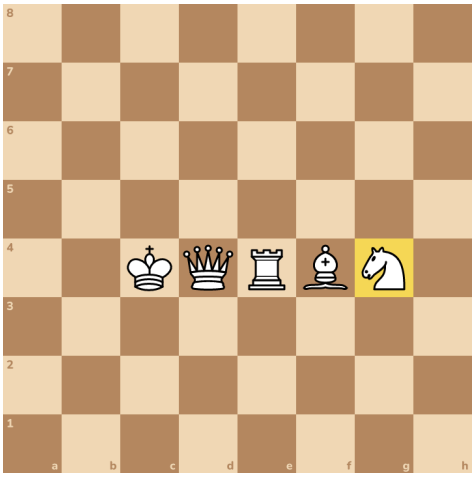
Each piece has a capital letter. K for king, Q for queen, R for rook, B for bishop, and N for knight.



Remember, every square has a name. Its column letter first, then its row number. This is e4.



Knight starts with K, but the king has K. So the knight gets N.



A move is the piece's letter, then the square it goes to. Pawns have no letter, so a pawn move is just the square.

Try it 1. Play the move e4.



Try it 2. Black played e5. Now play Nf3.



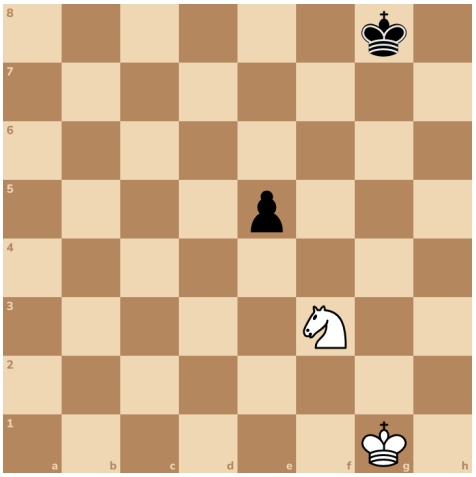
Try it 3. Now play Bc4.



An x means a capture. Nxe5 means a knight takes on e5. A + means check, and # means checkmate.

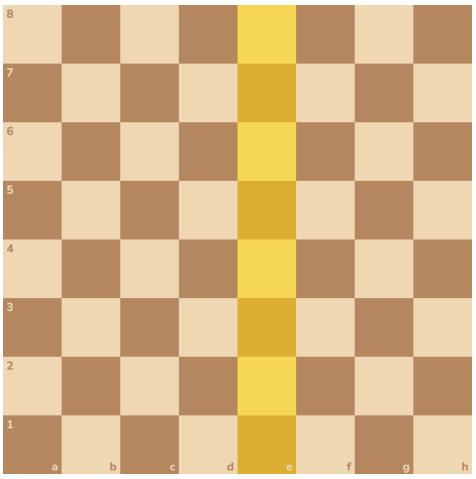


Try it 4. Here's a new position. Play Nxe5.

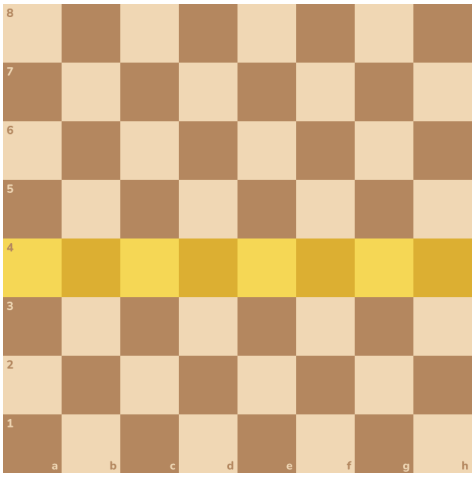


O-O means castling on the short side, near the h column. O-O-O is the long side.

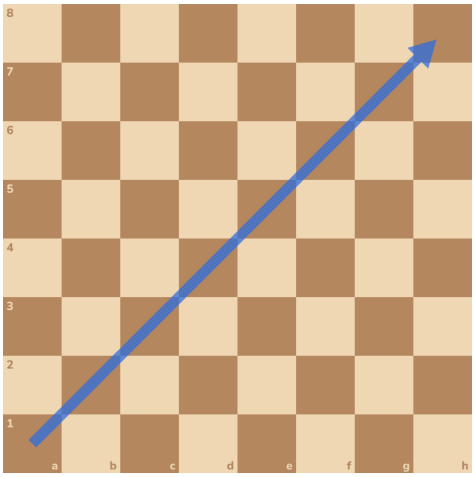
Here's an empty board. Chess books have their own words for it. A column is called a file. This is the e-file.



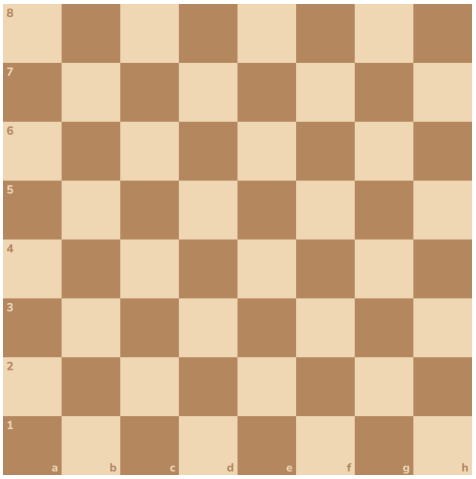
A row is called a rank. This is the fourth rank.



A slanted line is called a diagonal. This one goes from corner to corner, so it's a long diagonal. There are two.



In famous games, marks after a move tell you what it was like. ! is a good move, and !! is a brilliant one. ? is a mistake, and ?! is a doubtful move.



Try it 5. Which letter is the knight?

A: K **B: N** **C: H**

Try it 6. What does x mean?

A: Check **B: Capture** **C: Castle**

Try it 7. What does + mean?

A: Check **B: Capture** **C: Draw**

Try it 8. What is a column called?

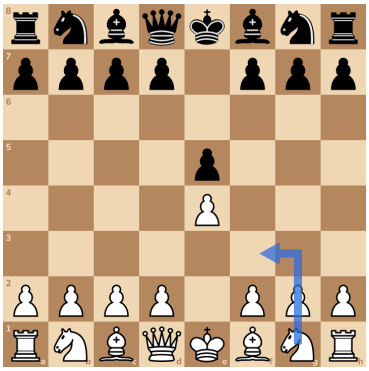
A: File **B: Rank** **C: Diagonal**

Answers

1. e4



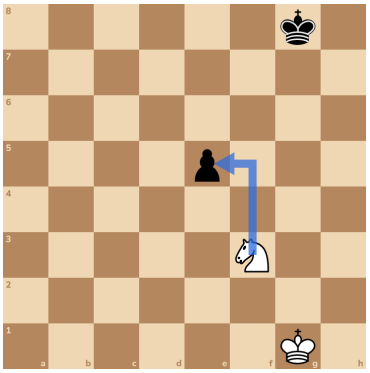
2. Nf3



3. Bc4



4. Nxe5



5. B: N

6. B: Capture

7. A: Check

8. A: File