

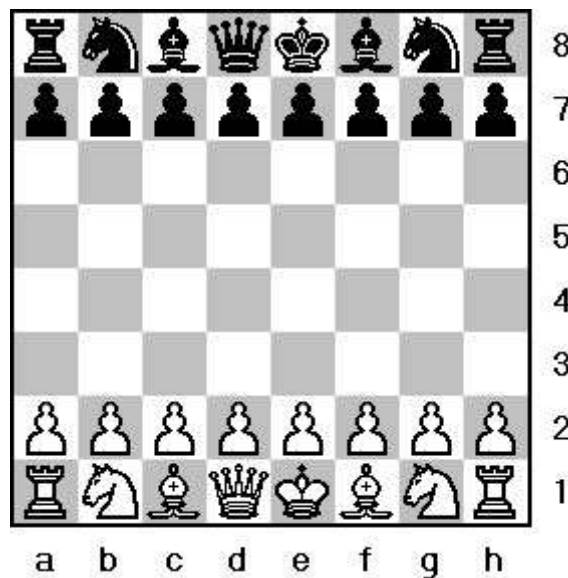
# 17<sup>th</sup> Century Chess

Modern chess rules fundamentally date from the 15th century, these rules are drawn from a variety of sources and provide a snapshot of chess rules in England at the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Dates for the introduction of particular rules are given in the footnotes. There are a couple of regional and temporal exceptions provided in a section at the end, which is by no means exhaustive.

## Equipment

The game is played on a square chequered board of 64 squares. The pieces for each player consist of 8 Pawns, 2 Rooks, 2 Knights, 2 Bishops, a King and a Queen.<sup>1</sup> The board is placed between the two opponents so that the near right-hand corner square is white for both players.

## Preparation and Objective



The objective of the game is to capture the opposing player's King. The King is never actually taken; instead the aim is put the opponent's King into a position such that the opposing player can do nothing to avoid the King being taken next turn. As soon as this happens, the victorious player who has just moved says, "checkmate" and the game is over.

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<sup>1</sup> The modern chess piece shapes were defined in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Basic Play

Players take turns to move a piece of their own colour, white always moving first. Each piece is moved according to different rules and no two pieces can occupy the same square. If a piece moves so that its final position is a square occupied by an opposing piece, the opposing piece is “captured” or “taken” and is removed from the board. It is not compulsory to capture. Any square that could be moved into by a piece is said to be “attacked” by that piece. When a piece is moved to a position that attacks the square occupied by the opponent’s King, the King is in “check” and the player who moved the piece must clearly say, “check”.

- King - moves one space in any direction except that the King cannot move onto a square that would put it in to check.
- Queen - moves any number of spaces in any direction, but cannot jump over another piece.<sup>2</sup>
- Rook - moves any number of spaces orthogonally but cannot jump over another piece.
- Bishop - moves any number of spaces diagonally but cannot jump over another piece.<sup>3</sup>
- Knight - moves one square orthogonally and then one square diagonally. The Knight is the only piece that can jump over other pieces.<sup>4</sup>
- Pawn - The first move of a Pawn can be either one square or two squares forward, the subsequent move of a pawn is one square forwards.<sup>5</sup> However, when capturing moves forward one square diagonally.

## Special rules

### En Passant<sup>6</sup>

If a Pawn is in the fifth row and an opposing Pawn moves next to it by moving two squares as its first move, the Pawn in the fifth row may take the opposing Pawn by moving forward one square diagonally behind the opposing pawn. The opposing is taken as if it moved only one square instead of two.

### Castling

Once per game, a player may choose to “castle” instead of a playing standard move. Castling is done by moving both a Rook and the King in a single move so that they cross over each other. This move can only be done if the following criteria are met:

- Neither the King nor the Rook has yet moved.

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<sup>2</sup> c. 1475

<sup>3</sup> c. 1500

<sup>4</sup> The move is unchanged since its introduction 1500 years ago.

<sup>5</sup> The option of advancing two squares on a pawn’s first move, was first noted in Spain in 1280.

<sup>6</sup> Introduced mid-15<sup>th</sup> C. *En Passant* is French for “In passing”. Cotton’s version (1674) prevents the endangered Pawn from moving two squares, limiting it to only one where “a Pawn of your Adversaries is already advanced as far as your fourth rank”

- There are no pieces between the King and the Rook.
- The King is not in check.
- The square that the King moves over is not being attacked by an opposing piece.

If the above are all true, a player can castle by moving the King two places towards the Rook and, in the same move, repositioning the Rook next to the King on the square that the King moved over.<sup>7</sup> Castling is usually done to protect the King behind a row of Pawns and/or to move a Rook into play alongside the other Rook since a pair of Rooks is a powerful combination.

## Promotion of Pawns

If a Pawn reaches the eighth row, that Pawn is immediately promoted by replacing the Pawn with a Queen, Rook, Bishop or Knight at the player's discretion. Normally, a player chooses to replace the Pawn with the most powerful piece, the Queen.<sup>8</sup> There is no problem with having more than one Queen or more than two of the other pieces on the board at the same time.

## Finishing

### Checkmate

When a piece is moved so it puts the opposing King in check, the King must get out of check in the next turn. There are only three ways to do this:

- Either the King or another piece may take the attacking piece.
- Another piece may be moved between the attacking piece and the King (unless the attacking piece is a Knight).
- The King may move to an adjacent square that is not under attack.

If the King cannot move out of check in one of these ways, the player who puts the King in check says, "checkmate" instead of "check" and the game finishes.

### Stalemate

Stalemate can happen in one of three ways:

- One player proposes a stalemate and the other player agrees to the proposal.
- A player's King is not in check but that player cannot move without placing the King in check.
- The same position of pieces is repeated three times with the same player to move each time.

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<sup>7</sup> This version c. 1620

<sup>8</sup> c. 1600, although Cotton (1674) insists that promotion must be to a Queen.

The player who causes the stalemate loses the game.<sup>9</sup>, <sup>10</sup> This rule continued to be in use by the London Chess Club until 1820.

## Resignation

Once it is believed that the opposing player will inevitably win, a player will normally resign to save time. A player traditionally resigns by tipping over his or her King.

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<sup>9</sup> *Saul's Famous Games of Chesse-Play* states: "He that hath put his adversary's King in a stale, loseth the game, because he hath disturbed the course of the game, which can only end with the grand Check-mate"

<sup>10</sup> Randle Holme's *Academy of Armory, 1614*

; "so that being now out of Check cannot remove but into Check, is a Stale, and he that giveth it to the distressed King, loseth the Game".

# Regional and Temporal Variations

## Castling

Until 1561, Castling was two moves. The first was R-KB1 and K-KN1 on the next move.

In the 1777 edition of Philidor's *Analysis of Chess*, the rule for castling is the modern version, but with this footnote: "The old way of castling in several countries, and which still subsists in some, was to leave to the player's disposal, all the interval between the King and the Rook, inclusively, to place there these two pieces".

## Promotion of Pawns

In the 15th century, promotion to allow more than one Queen was considered improper because it symbolised adultery. In Spain and Italy in the 17th century, the Pawn could only be promoted to the rank of Queen. In France and Germany, promotion was limited to any piece that had been lost.

## References

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