

BUILD UP TO CHESS - CHESS AND TRAINING GAMES FOR CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

This is the book I needed when I was a child learning to play chess. I hope it will help many other children towards having fun in chess.

I started a children's chess club at a YMCA more than 30 years ago. Within months we had 22 children playing and learning. Since then I have taught chess to many other children, and sometimes to adults.

I have seen what problems people have in learning chess, and with this book I think I have made it possible for anyone to succeed in playing chess.

Many people are not taught chess properly. Far too often someone seems to say

"Here you are - 16 men who move in 6 different ways - get on with it!"

That is not the best way to teach people to play chess.

When you learn to play a piano you do not start with a piano concerto. Instead, you start with scales and exercises. As you master each level you move on gradually to more complicated pieces, with lots of practice at each level. Then by the time your teacher gives you a piano concerto you are ready for it.

This collection of build up games works the same way. You start with a simple game involving one or two men and work on it until you really deeply understand how each piece moves. Once you deeply understand how a man moves you will never forget.

You also need to gain experience in using the men as a team. This is not easy so you build up to it slowly. Simple games that require thought build the mental muscles.

You have to gain experience in making plans, having strategies, and thinking what the other player might do. When you have completed these games you will have a far better understanding of chess than most beginners. When you have mastered this book you will be a very competent beginner.

Then you need to play many games of chess against dozens of opponents. You will lose lots of games. It is sad but true that you learn much more from the games you lose than from the games you win. I learned a lot!

Chapter 1: WHY PLAY CHESS?

The most important reason to play chess is because **chess is fun!** Chess costs nothing to play, you can play as long as you like, and nothing breaks or gets used up.

You normally play chess across a table or desk, but you can play on a low wall, or even on the floor. You can play chess by letter, by email, or over the internet. You can play chess against a chess programme on your computer or on a hand held games toy.

On a desert island you can mark out your board on the sand and use sea shells and rocks for pieces. You can even practice chess by playing both sides. In most towns there are cheap shops selling really cheap chess sets. If your parents can afford it, ask them to buy you a decent chess set.

If you play chess, people will think you are brainy. It will also be true. Like any muscle, if you use your brain a lot your brain improves.

The first few times you rode a bicycle you were wobbly. Your bicycling skills improved by practising. As you get used to balancing - and moving your legs at the same time - and watching the road - and then you move on to doing wheelies - you forget how difficult the first few rides were. It is the same with chess except that in chess you do not get hurt.

The first day I was given a bicycle I found myself going down a steep hill, in traffic, and unable to slow down

because I could not remember which was the front brake and which was the back brake. Eventually I hit a kerb, flew over the handlebars, hurt myself, and the bicycle had a broken front fork. Nothing as bad happens in chess- honest!

You meet people. In chess you want an opponent. You can go anywhere in the world, put a chess set out in front of you, and play chess against yourself. Soon you will be talking with a foreigner, even if he doesn't speak your language and you don't speak his. Try it the next time you go on holiday.

Other children in your school or club will play chess. If you become a good player you might play for your school or for your club against other teams and meet more people.

Chapter 2 GOOD MANNERS AND RULES IN CHESS

RULE What is the difference between a "man" and a "piece"? A pawn is only a "man", but it is not a "piece". Everything else is a "piece" and is also a "man". Your "men" are your pawns and your pieces.

RULE When you put the board down to play chess or a training game, the rule is "white on the right". The first row of squares on the side nearest you must always have a white square on the right hand end corner. You must, must, must do this. If you are not very good at remembering left and right ask someone to check you have got it right.

GOOD MANNERS You should always be polite and considerate to your opponent, because you are trying to have fun together. Do not talk to or distract your opponent while your opponent is trying to think.

If you are inconsiderate to people, they won't play chess with you - or anything else! At the end of the game shake hands and say something nice to your opponent such as "Well done" or "You nearly got me with that knight!"

Or "I did not notice your Queen could take my knight - I have learned from that!".

GOOD MANNERS Do not boast about how good you are at chess. You are likely to meet a more skilled player quite soon. Be a little modest and humble and surprise people when you beat them.

GOOD MANNERS If you are playing someone younger or less skilled than you, you can suggest a handicap such as you playing without a queen or without both castles. It makes the game more fun because your opponent now has a chance to win. If they win you can reduce the handicap - perhaps to a knight rather than a queen or castles. Handicaps are for friendly games. In a competition game you use all your skills and knowledge and aim to win but you should still have good manners.

GOOD MANNERS With younger players a lot of squabbling can come about by people touching pieces. You must learn to think with your eyes and not with your fingers.

RULE

If you touch a piece you must move it.

If you touch your opponent's piece you must take it.

These rules mean there can be no suggestion that a player is craftily moving a man "accidentally".

RULE Sometimes a man really does need adjusting. Explain the problem to your opponent without touching the man and, with his/her agreement, you can adjust it.

GOOD MANNERS If you have the bad habit of touching the men, practice playing chess with your hands behind your back -or sit on your hands.

RULE "Taking a move back". In chess you cannot take a move back.

GOOD MANNERS You must think about your move before you do it - not after. Even if your opponent is willing to let you take a move back, taking a move back is for babies.

If you are lucky a more skilled player will sometimes suggest you take a move back because you have made a serious mistake. If you make a mistake you should either resign or learn from your mistake by fighting on. Next time you play that player, suggest s/he gives you a handicap.

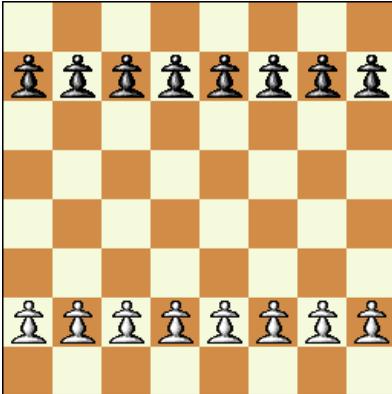
Chapter 3 HOW THE MEN MOVE

RANK AND FILE

The line of squares along your side of the board is your first rank. The second line is the second rank. The furthest line is the eighth rank. A line of squares running down the board from you to your opponent is a "file". A file is normally named after your piece that starts the game there such as "Queen's File" or "Queen's Knight's File". There is a system for writing down moves (see Chapter 11) where files are labelled a-h, so many writers use "the d file" to describe the Queen's file.

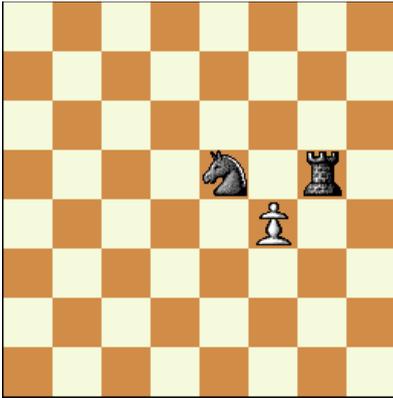
PAWNS

PAWN STARTING POSITIONS



Each pawn can move forward one or two squares on its first move and one move forward each time after that.

HOW THE PAWN TAKES



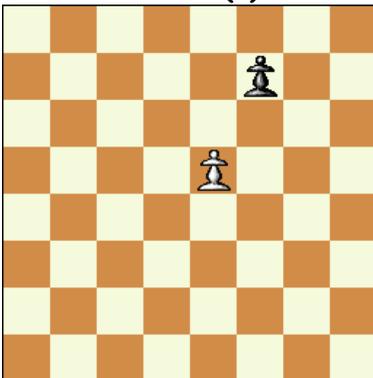
The pawn is the only man whose move when taking another man (pawn or a piece) is different to its normal move. The pawn cannot take on the square in front of it where it would normally move to.

The pawn takes one square diagonally forward, left or right.

In the diagram above the pawn can take the knight by moving onto the knight's square or it can take the castle by moving onto the castle's square or it can move forward or it can stay still.

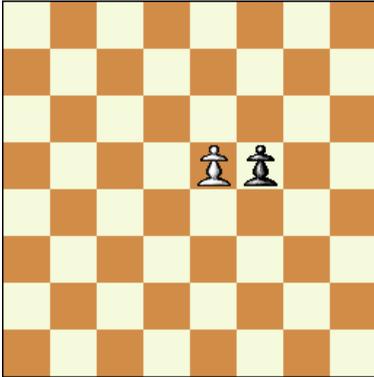
En Passant

EN PASSANT (1)



There is a special move for pawns called **en passant**. "En passant" is French for "in passing". For "en passant" your pawn must be on the 5th rank. If your opponent moved a pawn forward one square on an adjoining file, from his second rank to his third rank, you could take it.

EN PASSANT (2)

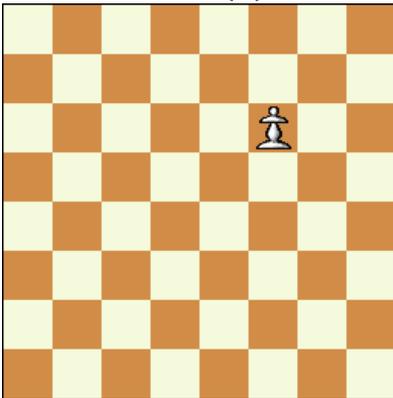


If your opponent moves the pawn two squares to the fourth rank your opponent thinks the pawn will get past your pawn.

Without the "en passant" rule it could.

With "en passant" you can take your opponent "en passant", moving your pawn to the 6th rank, as if the opponent's pawn had moved one square only, and you had taken it in the normal way.

EN PASSANT (3)



You do not have to take en passant if you do not want to.

You cannot "save up" taking en passant, you can only do it

immediately your opponent moves the pawn, not on a later move.

It is polite to say "en passant" when taking "en passant".

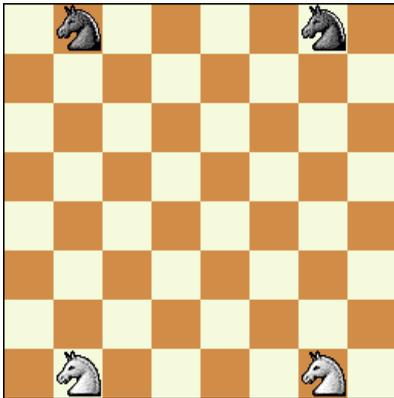
If the pawn moves one square only, from its second rank to its third rank or from its third rank to its fourth rank, the "en passant" rule does not apply.

"En passant" does not happen very often, but you need to know it.

Promoting a pawn. If you advance a pawn to the 8th rank you must promote it into a piece immediately. Some people call it "queening a pawn" because you normally promote the pawn to become a queen, but you can have a castle, a bishop or a knight if you wish. There are times when you do not want a queen or even a castle. You are not allowed another king. If your original queen is still on the board use a queen from another set. (Make sure it is the same colour!) There is no limit to the number of pawns you can promote. In theory, if you promoted all your pawns, you could end up with 9 queens or 10 knights.

THE KNIGHT

1. KNIGHT OPENING POSITIONS

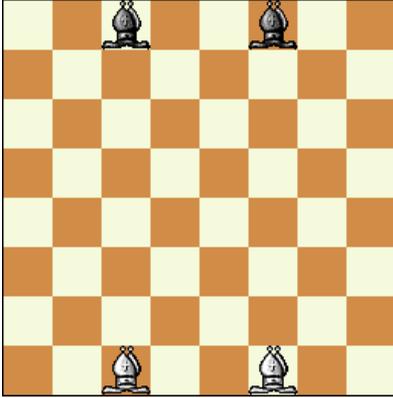


People are often confused about the knight's move. Think of the knight's move as an "L". It moves two squares (the long side of the L) forward or back or left or right, and then one square (the short side of the L) at a right angle from there. Look at illustration 2.

It may help to remember that the knight always lands on a different colour from the colour it started on. The knight is the only piece that can jump over other pieces and this makes it very useful. It takes by making a normal move and landing on a square occupied by an opponent's man.

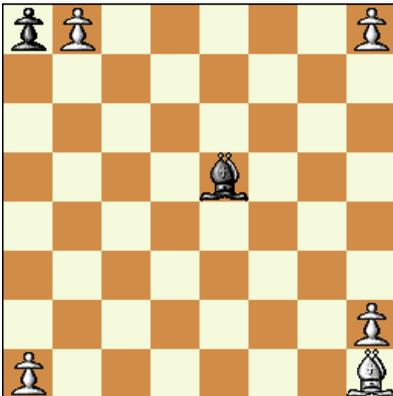
THE BISHOP

1. BISHOP STARTING POSITIONS



The bishop moves in a straight line diagonally forward or diagonally back. It cannot move from one colour to another. It cannot move sideways. It takes by making a normal move and landing on a square occupied by an opponent's man.

2. BISHOP POSSIBLE MOVES



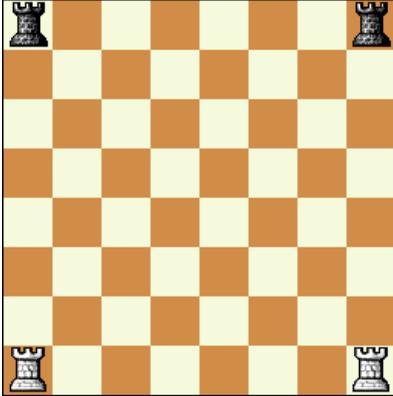
In diagram 2 the white Bishop can take the black Pawn in the opposite corner. The black Bishop can take any one of 4 pawns. The black Bishop and the white Bishop are on opposite coloured squares, so they will never be able to take each other.

The Bishop cannot jump over other men.

See how in diagram 2 the bishop in the centre of the board can threaten 13 squares but the bishop in the corner can only threaten 7 squares. Generally speaking your bishops are more useful towards the centre than towards an edge or a corner.

THE CASTLE

Castle Opening Positions

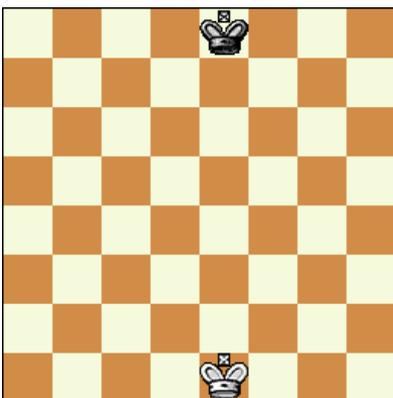


The castle is often called "the rook" (from Persian "ruk" meaning "chariot"). The castle moves straight along a rank (a horizontal line) or a file (a vertical line).

The castle takes by ending a normal move and landing on a square occupied by an opponent's man. See how the castle can threaten 14 squares no matter where it is placed on the board. It cannot hop over other men except in a special King move called "Castling" (see below)

THE KING

KING STARTING POSITIONS



The King can move one square in any direction. If the King can be taken the King is "in check". If the King is "in check" its player must find a way to end the "check" immediately,

The only ways of ending check are:-

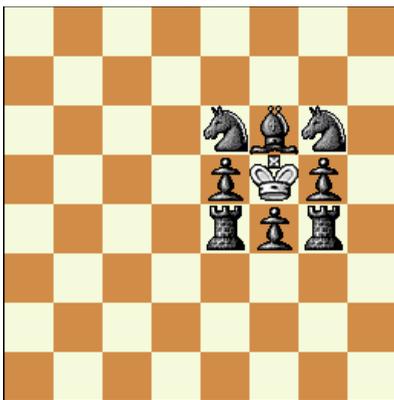
1. Move the King
2. Take the man threatening the King
3. Block the threat by putting a man in the way.

If the threat is from a knight or the threat is from a man next to the King the third option is not possible.

If there is no escape it is "checkmate". A game ends when a king is checkmated.

The King cannot move to a position where it can be taken as this is called "moving into check". Other men cannot move in such a way as to leave their own King in check.

KING MOVES



The King takes by making a normal move and landing on a square occupied by an opponent's piece. A King in its starting position can move to 5 squares, but if more central can move to 8 squares.

In the diagram above the pawns are protected by the castles. The rear pawns are also protected by the bishop, and the front pawn is protected by the other pawns and by both knights. Each rear pawn is also protected by a knight.

In the diagram above the King is not "in check" so the King does not have to move. The King can take any of the pieces without moving into check but because the King is

not allowed to move into check, the King cannot take any of the pawns.

CASTLING

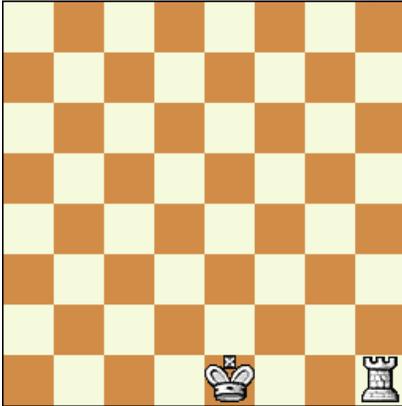
The King has a special move called "**castling**". The King must not have moved yet and the castle involved also must not have moved. The King moves left or right **two squares**, and then the castle hops over it.

Always move the King first so people know you are doing this special move. If you move the castle first your opponent is allowed to say that moving the castle is your move, and that you cannot move the King in the same move.

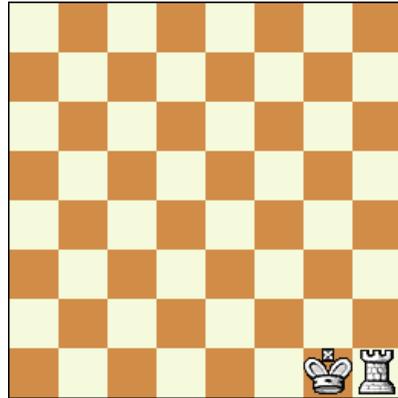
The King must not be in check when it starts "castling" . The King must not pass over a square where it would be in check if it stopped. The King must not land in a square where it would be in check.

There is no problem if the castle involved is threatened by your opponent before the castling move begins - but remember to move the King first. There must not be any man from either side between the King and the castle. You cannot "take" in your castling move.

KING SIDE CASTLE (1)



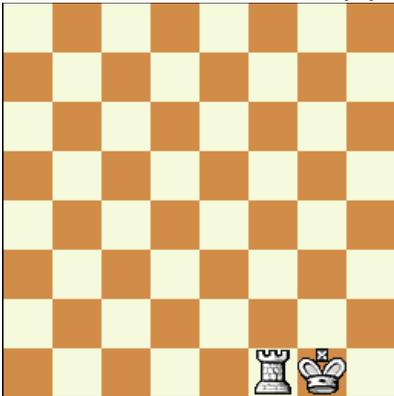
KING SIDE CASTLE(2)



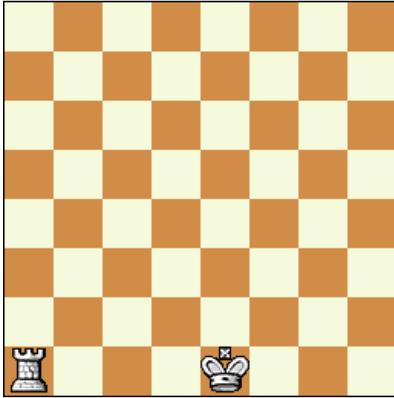
When castling King side the King moves two squares towards the castle. (diagram 2).

Then the castle moves over the King (diagram 3).

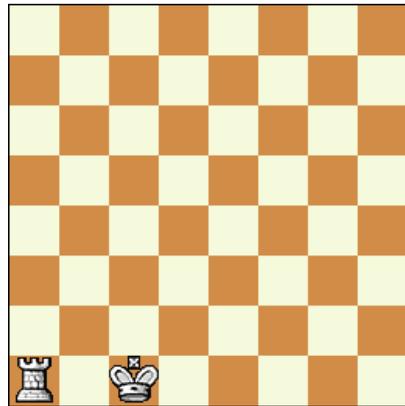
KING SIDE CASTLE (3)



QUEEN SIDE CASTLE (1)



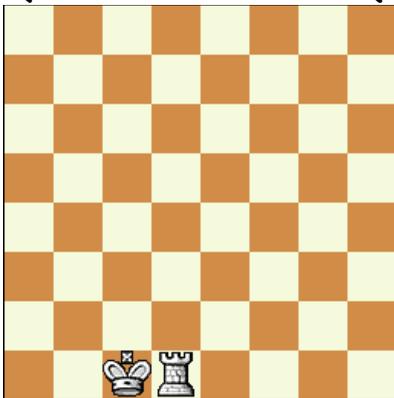
QUEEN SIDE CASTLE(2)



When castling Queen side the King moves two squares towards the castle. (diagram 2).

Then the castle moves over the King (diagram 3).

QUEEN SIDE CASTLE (3)

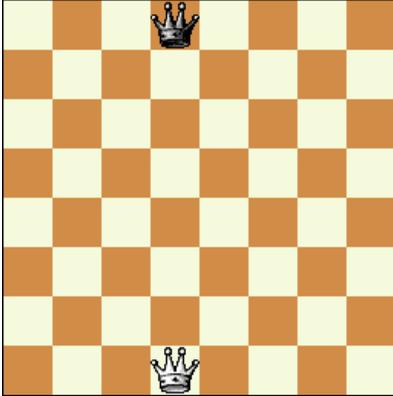


With King side castling the King is placed on the Knight file and the castle on the Bishop file.

With Queen side castling the King is placed on the Bishop file and the castle on the Queen file.

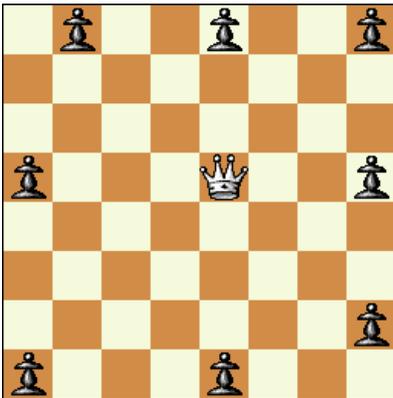
THE QUEEN

QUEEN STARTING POSITIONS



The Queen combines the normal moves of the castle and the moves of the bishop. It can move straight on the horizontal, the vertical, or a diagonal until blocked by another man. The Queen takes by making a normal move and landing

on a square occupied by an opponent's man.



From the centre of the board the Queen has a possible 27 destinations. From the corner it can only move to 21 destinations.

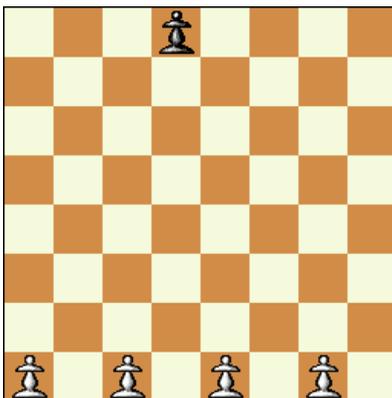
CHAPTER 4 TRAINING GAMES TO BUILD YOUR SKILLS

Game 1 -FOX AND GEESE

From this game you will learn

1. How to use four men together to achieve an objective.
2. How to plan your moves
3. How to think about what your opponent might do. The phrase used sometimes is "to anticipate your opponent's moves".
4. How to "waste a move" -In "Fox and Geese" the geese player sometimes has to "waste" a move. See the next game "Kings and pawn" for more information on "wasting" a move.
5. "What "Zugzwang" is.

OPENING POSITION



Although this game is simple, it is not easy to play at first. The basic idea is that four white counters, "the geese", move diagonally forward (like in checkers or

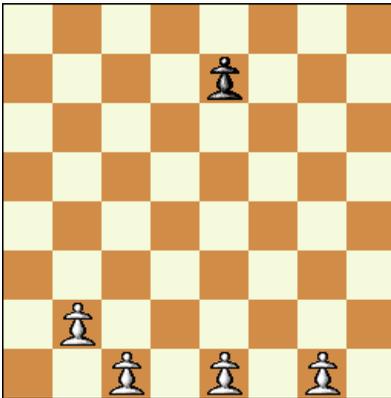
draughts) from the first rank and pin another counter "the fox" against a side or the back edge. The geese cannot move except diagonally forwards. The black counter "the fox" can move forward or backward diagonally, and tries to run around or through the line to

escape. The fox has first move. Unlike pawns, the counters cannot take each other.

Take turns playing both sides. You will learn more from playing both sides.

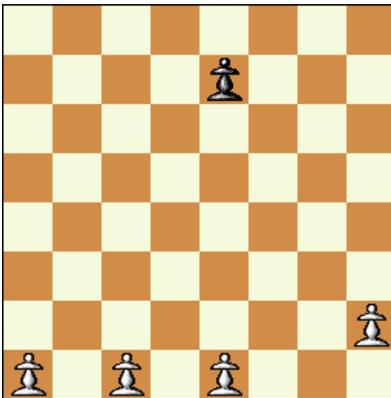
The geese player learns co-ordination of his pieces and how to plan. The geese player should always try to keep an unbroken line across the board that the fox cannot get through or round. The fox player is always trying to trick the geese player into making a mistake. The geese player should always win but sometimes does not.

GOOD FIRST MOVE



In this good first move the geese player has kept an unbroken line that the fox cannot get through.

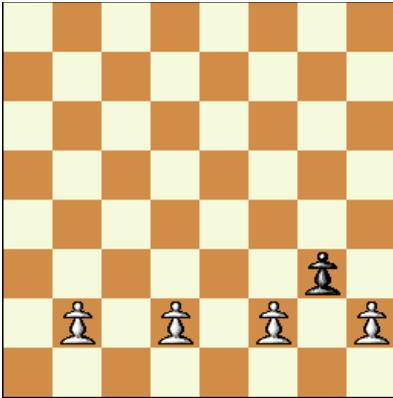
BAD FIRST MOVE



In this bad first move the geese player has opened a gap in the line that the fox might be able to escape through.

Wasting a move.

In the position below it is the geese turn to move.



The geese player would like to move the furthest right counter into the square the black counter is on. The geese player has to wait for the fox to leave, so the geese player has to "waste" a move. One of the left counters has to move.

Which is wisest to move? Where to? Try it out!

As soon as you can, rebuild your chain across the board.

Quite often the fox is in a square it does not want to leave. It is fox's move but there is no move fox can make that does not damage fox's position. This is called "zugzwang" from the German "required to move" or "must move". When you are in zugzwang you know it.

EXTENSION

When the game gets too easy, change the rules. For instance, say that for the geese to win the fox must be pinned against the far end of the board rather than an edge. When you are really good say the fox has to be pinned into a particular square on the far end - that is hard!

Game 2. KINGS AND PAWN

From this game:

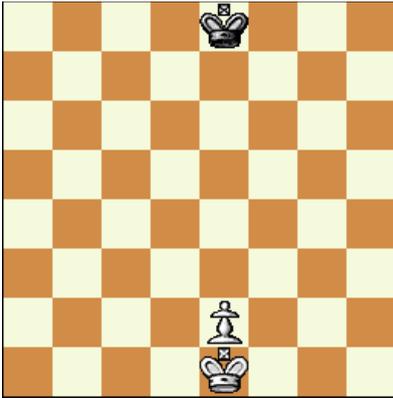
1. You will experience **check** and **stalemate**
2. You will have a really good understanding of "the opposition".
3. You will understand the importance of getting your King ahead of the pawn.
4. You have discovered the excitement of "the fighting King".
5. You will understand "wasting a move".
6. You will understand that rushing your pawn forward is not helpful.
7. You will learn you cannot move a pawn backwards, no matter how much you want to!
8. You understand why a pawn near the centre of the board is more valuable than a pawn near the edge of the board.
9. You will have experience of thinking ahead and thinking about what your opponent will do.
10. You will see more examples of Zugzwang.

You need to know:

Check	I can take your King
Checkmate	I can take your King and he can't escape. I have won."
Stalemate	a player is not in check but has no legal move. In chess that is a draw

You will learn more if you take turns playing both sides.

OPENING POSITION



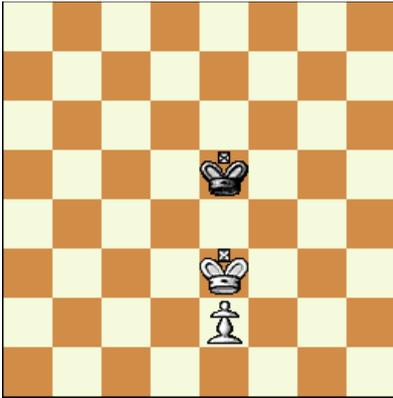
In "Kings and pawn" you have a King and a pawn. Your opponent has a King only. Your opponent's King is on the furthest rank. If you can move your pawn to the furthest rank you can promote it into any piece you like.

Black moves first.

You will find that if you keep your King behind the pawn you risk losing the pawn or that your opponent is pinned on your furthest rank, unable to move, and so gets a stalemate draw. In this game it means **you lose** because the object of the game was for you to promote the pawn without it being taken immediately. You failed, so you lose.

If you move your King ahead of your pawn we call it "a fighting King". The "fighting King" will be able to clear a way for the pawn. Play this game many times until you are really confident that you can always force your pawn to the furthest rank and promote it without it being taken..

THE OPPOSITION



When two Kings are facing each other with only one square between them neither can move forward into check. In this situation the one whose turn it is to move will have to give ground by moving sideways or

backwards which is annoying and sometimes disastrous. The player who does not have to move is said to have "the opposition". In a game like this the ability to "waste" a move by moving the pawn will give you "the opposition" and help you to force a way through for your pawn.

In the diagram above the Black King has rushed forward to take the pawn and the White King has rushed forward to protect the pawn. At this point neither King can move forward because it would be moving into check. As it is Black's turn to move, White has "the opposition". If Black moves straight back White will move straight forward. If Black moves sideways White will move diagonally forward. Then the next few moves of the pawn will be protected by the White King, and the Black King will not be able to block the pawn or take it.

If Black manages to gain "the opposition" White can "waste a move" with a pawn move, Then White has "the opposition" again and Black has to give ground again.

You win this game if you promote a pawn and it is not taken immediately.

HOW MANY MOVES?

We count your move and your opponent's move as one move.

Beginner:	should win in 35 moves
Competent	should win in 20 moves
Expert	should win in 16 moves

EXTENSION

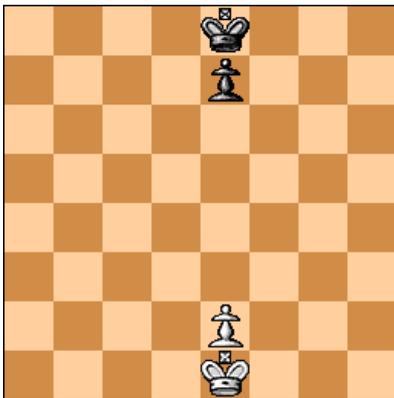
After starting with the pawn in the centre of the second row, start placing the pawn nearer the edge. It gets harder, to the point where if the pawn is on an end file the game cannot be won against a competent player.

Game 3 KINGS AND PAWNS

From this game

1. You will understand the difficulties caused by the pawns being on the same file.
2. You will understand the difficulties caused by the pawns being on adjoining files.
3. You will understand the importance of a pawn which has got past any pawn opponents (called "a passed pawn").
4. You will understand why pawns on centre files are more valuable than pawns at the edge.
5. You will have experience of thinking ahead in a more complicated position.
6. You will have experience of making difficult decisions.
7. Again, you will understand the importance of "the fighting King".

STARTING POSITION



You each have one King and one pawn. Now you have to make decisions between blocking or taking your opponent's pawn and protecting your own pawn. You can try it with both pawns on the same file,

adjoining files, or apart. Try it moving the King ahead of your pawn and keeping the King behind your pawn.

Extension

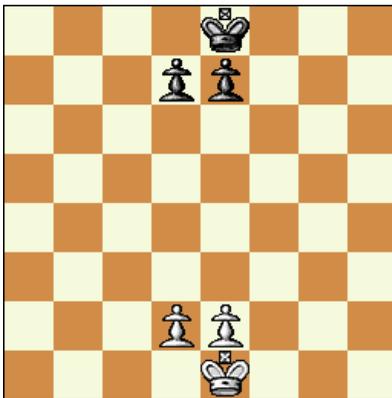
Try the game with the pawns on the Knight and Castle files.

Game 4. KINGS AND TWO PAWNS EACH

From this game

1. You will have experience of how pawns in line abreast can support each other against a King.
2. You will have experience of how pawns support each other diagonally.
3. You will again realise why pawns in the centre are worth more than pawns at the edge.
4. You will understand the importance of "sequence". In a position where you can take a man, should you take it? It might be better to let your opponent take you. If you can take more than one man, which do you take?
5. You will again understand the value of "the fighting King".
6. You will understand the vulnerability of the "fighting King".

STARTING POSITION



Both sides have a King and two pawns. The winner is the first player to promote a pawn without it being taken immediately.

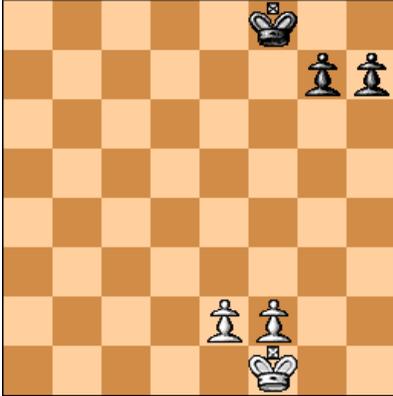
Try the game with "the fighting King" and with the King behind the pawns.

EXTENSION

Try the game in different positions, starting with all pawns on the two central files.

Then move one pair sideways so that two opposing pawns are on a central file, each supported on one side.
Then move sideways again so the pawns are spread across the four central files.

Now try it with all four files starting from an edge.

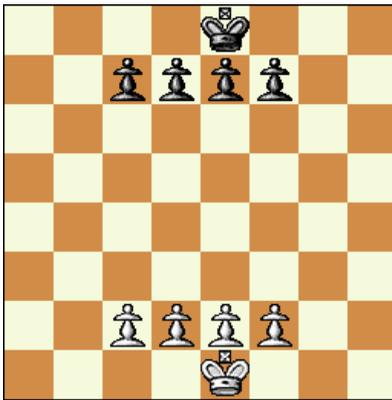


Game 5 JESMOND

From this game

1. You will gain experience of operating a chain of pawns.
2. You will gain experience of planning and using 5 men working together as a team.
3. Your "fighting King" will be checkmated a couple of times, which will teach you about a major weakness of "the fighting King".

STARTING POSITION



Each side has a King and 4 pawns, facing each other across the four central files.

This is a bloodthirsty game.

Usually only one pawn survives, which has to get to the end and be promoted (without being immediately taken) to win.

Congratulations! If you can handle this training game, you can handle any problem on the chess board because very few situations in chess are as tough and complicated as a game of Jesmond.

(Why is the game called Jesmond? It was invented for a girl who lived in Jesmond. I'm glad she didn't live in Rugby, because I would not have known what to call the game.)

Extension

Try Jesmond with 5 pawns each.

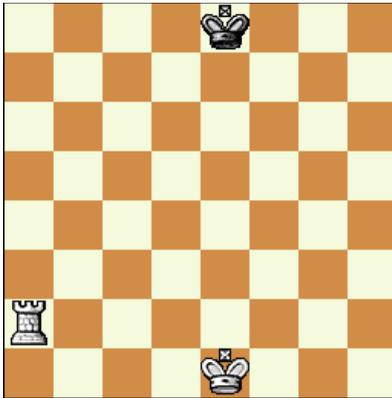
Try Jesmond with a Knight or a Bishop each, or Knight
against Bishop.

Game 6 KING AND CASTLE AGAINST KING

From this game

1. You will really understand how strong and useful a castle is.
2. You will learn how if you get careless near the end a stalemate is created.

STARTING POSITION



You have a King and a castle. Your opponent has a King. Using the castle and "the opposition" you force the other King to the edge of the board and then checkmate your opponent.

Use the castle to limit how much of the board the other King can use. Remember to keep the row or file controlled by the castle between the two Kings.

It is possible to make a mistake and create a situation where the opponent's King is not in check but the opponent has no legal move. This is called "stalemate". In Chess "stalemate" is a draw. In this game **you lose**.

This is another game where it is good to get experience by playing both sides.

HOW MANY MOVES?

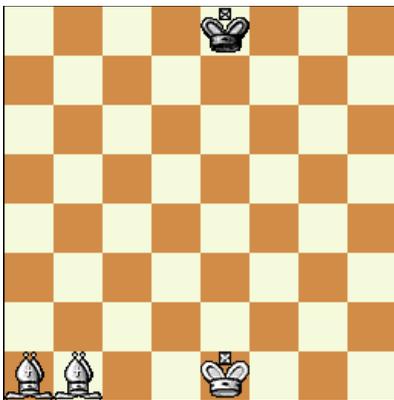
Beginner	wins in 45 moves
Competent	wins in 30 moves
Expert	wins in 25 moves

Game 7 KING AND 2 BISHOPS AGAINST KING

From this game

1. You will learn how to do a complicated operation using the bishops. You will learn how to use the bishops together, which many chess players never learn.
2. You will understand the strengths and the vulnerability of bishops.
3. You will understand that a bishop is always either on the white squares or on the black squares but it cannot change over.

STARTING POSITION



It took me ages to learn how to do this! I felt so stupid. The bishops cannot protect each other. If they work together they can create a line that the opponent's King cannot cross.

This time your King needs to be on the same side of the line as the opponent's King. Gradually you force the King towards a corner, using "the opposition" and the bishops. Sometimes you need to use a bishop to "waste" a move. The tricky bit is to pin the King using one bishop and "the opposition" and then to checkmate with the other bishop.

In chess stalemate is a draw. In this game **you lose**.

This is another game where it is good to experience playing both sides.

HOW MANY MOVES?

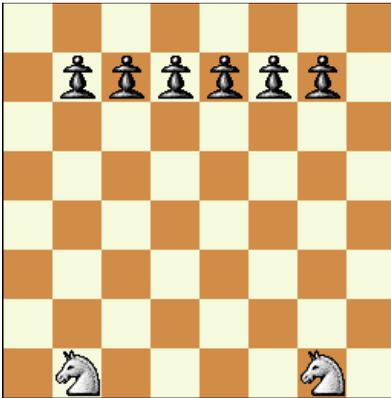
Beginner	wins in 60 moves
Competent	wins in 45 moves
Expert	wins in 35 moves

Game 8 KNIGHTS FANTASTIC

From this game

1. You will become really competent at moving knights.
2. You will become really competent at using pawns to protect each other.

STARTING POSITION



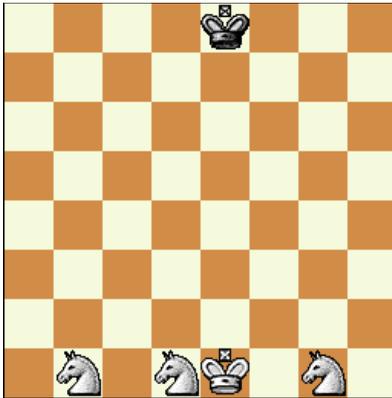
You have 2 knights on your back row and your opponent has 6 pawns in a line on his second row. You win if you take all the pawns. If your opponent manages to promote a pawn without you immediately taking it your opponent wins.

This is a good game to play by turns because you learn a lot from playing each side.

Game 9 KNIGHTMARE

From this game you will become really competent in using knights together and you will have more practice using 4 pieces together.

STARTING POSITION



This is a real stinker. You use a king and three knights to checkmate a King. Use a knight of the same colour from another set, or a small toy. You use the knights and "the opposition" to force the opponent's King into a

corner. You checkmate with a knight. Like with the bishops, your King is on the same side of the barrier as the opponent's King.

Do not worry if you never get this one, because you never will be trying to checkmate with 3 knights. The purpose of this game is to help you get really confident about how to use knights singly and together.

Again, you learn more from this game if you take turns playing both sides

Chapter 5: SETTING OUT THE BOARD AND MEN

RULE The full rule about the board is "White on the right and Queen on her colour". The white square is on your right. You will notice that placing the board this way automatically puts a white corner square on your opponent's right, too.

The black Queen is on a black square and the white Queen is on a white square. Everything else is easy.

The Black Queen goes on the Black middle square on Black's first rank (White's eighth rank), and the white Queen on the white centre square on White's first rank (Black's eighth rank). See how the Black Queen is on a Black square and the White Queen is on a White Square. They are opposite each other.

The King goes on the other centre file beside the Queen.

The Bishops go next to the King and Queen.

The Knights go next to the Bishops.

The Castles go in the corners.

The pawns go all along the second rank.

STARTING POSITION



The rank nearest you, where the pieces go, are your first rank. The pawns are on your second rank. Your opponent's pawns are on your seventh rank, which is his second rank.

WHAT ARE THE MEN WORTH?

A pawn is usually worth 1, but on ranks 6 and 7 a pawn is probably worth 2 - 3 because it is threatening to gain promotion.

A knight or a bishop is usually worth 3. Towards the end of a game, when the board is not cluttered, a bishop might be worth 3.5. I am usually happy to lose a knight to take a bishop.

A castle is usually worth 5. Near the end of a game, when the board is not cluttered, it might be worth 6 or 7.

A queen is generally thought to be worth 9.

A piece in a good position is worth a little bit more than the same piece not doing anything particularly good.

Chapter 6 HOW TO THINK - CONTROLLING THE CENTRE

A knight in the corner has only two possible moves. In the centre it has eight possible moves. Where is the best place to have your knight? Obviously, towards the centre.

A bishop in the corner has 7 possible moves. In the centre it has 13 possible moves. Where is the best place to have your bishop? Obviously, towards the centre.

It is very difficult to mount an attack against an opponent except by using the centre 16 squares. It is very hard for your opponent to attack you except by using the centre 16 squares. If you dominate the centre your opponent cannot attack you much and you can attack your opponent in lots of ways. So - dominate the centre.

Place - often called "build", your pieces to dominate the centre. The more you dominate the centre the more you threaten your opponent and the less your opponent threatens you. Your men do not have to be in the centre 16 squares to dominate those squares. For example a knight on your bishops file third rank will threaten 2 squares in the central 16.

At first, concentrate on building your strength in the centre. Do not waste moves in early attacks that will fail because you are too weak. Against a reasonable player it will be very hard to checkmate your opponent. But you can use the threat of a possible checkmate to tie down more of your opponent's men. Build up your strength and

your many threats until your opponent is stretched too thin. Then pounce!

Keep building and pushing and grinding down your opponent.

There are many arguments about castling. Some chess writers say you should castle as soon as you can. Castling moves your vulnerable King away from the centre and makes it harder to attack. Castling brings your powerful castle towards the centre. I like to let my opponent build his attack down one side and then castle to the other side so my opponent has wasted many moves. There is not a right answer. The normal advice to a beginner is that you are better to castle too early rather than leave castling too late. Once you have moved your King you will not be able to castle. Once you have moved a castle you cannot castle on that side.

Taking and Exchanging

If you can take a man for no loss, it is usually worth doing. Be careful, because it may be a "sacrifice". With a "sacrifice" one player gives up something to trap the opponent and then hits the opponent harder so that overall the player gains. A good player gives nothing away, so against a good player be alert for traps.

When I was teaching chess I used to say "Something for Nothing. That knight you want to take is my "something". Now, what is my "nothing"?"

You use your strength in the centre to create threatened attacks. You might be threatening checkmate. Usually you are building up your forces to attack a pawn or a piece. If

you have a lot of strength in the centre you can threaten two or three men at the same time. This makes your defendant concentrate on defending two or three men, and makes it very hard for your opponent also to threaten you.

The only ways your opponent can defuse your attack are

- (1) by using his pawns to attack your men.
This breaks up his pawn lines, making each of his pawns more vulnerable.
- (2) by swapping pieces or pawns
- (3) an attack on you

You should have such strength in the centre that every time your opponent swaps, your opponent becomes relatively weaker.

Suppose threatening the middle 16 squares you have 2 knights, 2 bishops, and 3 pawns - total value 15 points - against your opponent's 8 points. That gives you almost a 2:1 advantage. If your opponent swaps knights, the ratio is now 12:5, now more than 2:1 in your favour.

If you are skilled enough to gain a small advantage of say 2 points by losing a bishop to gain a castle, your advantage in pieces is

	You	Opponent
Queens	9	9
Castles	10	5
Bishops	3	6
Knights	6	6
Totals	28	26

That does not seem to be a very big advantage. So how do you use it? You use it in two ways. In any situation you can usually bring more men to bear on any centre square than your opponent can. You can threaten more pieces and pawns than your opponent can. You are constantly threatening to increase your relative advantage by a simple exchange, or to make a more complicated exchange where you also gain a pawn. You know from your training games how much difference a pawn can make at the end. And when you have used your superior force to gain another pawn or piece, threaten more.

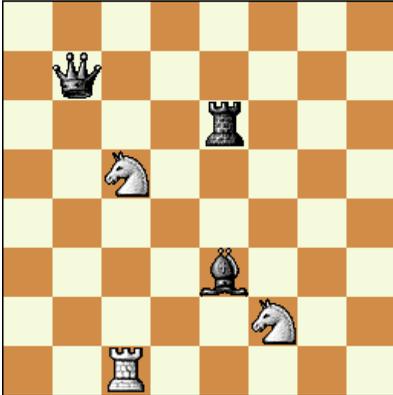
Your opponent is so threatened in so many places it is very hard for your opponent to threaten you, so you can bring more men forward.

You do not win a game on points, but strength in the centre will usually win you the game.

See Chapter 8 on Exchanges.

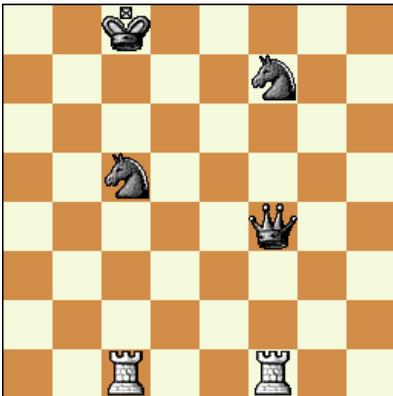
Chapter 7 FORKS PINS AND SKEWERS

ILLUSTRATING FORKS



In this diagram the Black bishop is threatening two knights and a castle. This is called a "fork". One of the knights is threatening the Black Queen and the Black castle. This is also a fork.

ILLUSTRATION PIN AND SKEWER



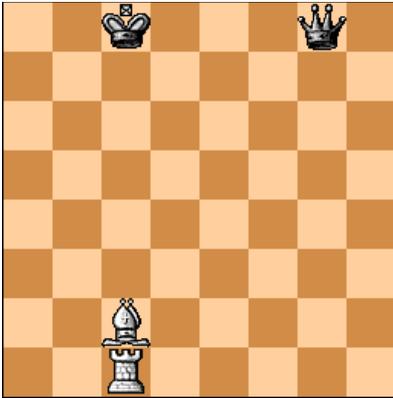
In this diagram the central Black knight cannot move because the Black King would immediately be in check. The knight is stuck as if there were a pin through it sticking it to the board. This is called a "pin"

The other White castle is threatening the Queen. But if the Queen moves the knight behind the Queen will be exposed. This is called a "skewer". The difference between a pin and a skewer is that with a pin the less valuable piece is directly threatened but either cannot move or dare not move. With a skewer the more valuable piece is directly threatened, but the less valuable piece

behind it will be exposed if the more valuable piece moves. See also that the Queen is forking both castles.

Going along with pins and forks and skewers is "discovery".

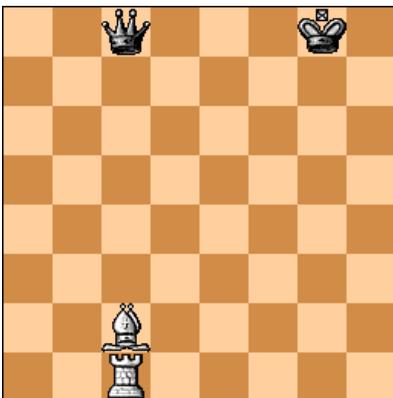
DISCOVERED CHECK



In this diagram the bishop can move from in front of the castle, uncovering a check on the King. As the castle cannot be taken, either the King must move or the Queen must put itself in the way, only to

be taken. If the bishop moves to threaten the Queen, then even if the Queen does not move to stop the check, the King will move and then the bishop will take the Queen. Using a sequence of moves together like this is sometimes called a "combination". A combination can be any number of planned moves.

A COMBINATION



In this combination the bishop moves to put the King in check. The King must move, and then the castle takes the Queen. Or the Queen can block the check if it can, and be taken.

Chapter 8 EXCHANGES AND SACRIFICES

People write whole books on how to make exchanges and sacrifices.

Although Chess is a "fair" game because the two sides start equal, no chess player believes in a fair fight. You use your position and your local strength to force the opponent into unequal exchanges. The more unequal you can be, the better.

Eventually, when you are significantly ahead, it is worth swapping 3 for 3 or 1 for 1 or 5 for 5. The ratios change in your favour, putting your opponent under more pressure.

An additional reason for simplifying is that your opponent will have trouble mounting any kind of attack if you keep taking his pieces. At this stage you are not trying to checkmate the opponent, you are trying to reduce the game down to an endgame you can win easily.

Supposing you took your opponent's Queen, losing a Knight.

You		Opponent	
Queen	9	-	-
2 Castles	10	2 Castles	10
2 Bishops	6	2 Bishops	6
1 Knight	<u>3</u>	2 Knights	<u>6</u>
Value	28		22

You have an advantage of 28: 22. (simply 14:11)

Once you are ahead you want to simplify. Swop the other Knight and a Castle for a Knight and Castle from your opponent. Both sides lose 8.

Your ratio is now 20:14 (simply 10:7)

Now the other castle and a bishop. Both sides lose 8
Your ratio is now 12:6 (simply 2:1)

You have gone from nearly level, with a slight advantage, to a Queen and a Bishop against a Bishop and a Knight.

Your opponent cannot protect the pawns now, so you can snap those up and clear a way for your pawns. Your opponent will find it very hard to attack you. Start advancing your pawns. This threatens your opponent with a pawn getting through to promotion. Your opponent will have to sacrifice a piece to stop a pawn!

With a Bishop and a Queen you can threaten to checkmate your opponent. Particularly with a Queen there are lots of forks possible. There is not much your opponent can do to you, unless your opponent achieves a fork or a pin (or a checkmate when you were not paying attention!)

SACRIFICES

The theory of a sacrifice is that you lose on an exchange to gain a better position. It is very easy to make a sacrifice but very hard to show gain from making the sacrifice. Do not think about doing a sacrifice until you have been playing for 3 or 4 years. If a sacrifice has not

paid off within a few moves, it was probably not a good idea. A sacrifice will usually be part of a combination.

Chapter 9 - THE ENDGAME

Why does this book concentrate on endgames so much more than openings? If you really understand the endgame you will be a much better player. Most openings are just common sense.

Some games end very quickly! It is possible to checkmate someone in 4 moves if they are not alert. See Fool's Mate and Scholar's mate in Chapter 10.

We often talk about "The Opening", "The Middle Game" and "The End Game".

"The Opening" is about the first 10-15 moves where both sides are trying to develop their pieces, create defences, and begin to dominate the centre.

"The Endgame" is where most of the men are off the board, and we are down to less than 6 men on each side and sometimes down to fewer than 5 men on the board. Some of the practice games in Chapter 4 are common "End Game" situations where quite literally it is King and Pawn against a King or King and piece or pieces against a King.

Most chess players understand what it is possible to do and what it is not possible to do with the men left on the board. If you played the games in Chapter 4 you understand, too.

You have not practised King and Queen against King yet, but you should. This ought to be easier than King and Castle, but it can go wrong more easily. It is very easy to

create a stalemate. Also practice with King and two castles against a King because again it is easy to create a stalemate. It really is embarrassing to draw a game you should have won.

It is possible to force a checkmate with one Bishop and two knights. It is difficult. Practice doing it now so you will know what to do in a competition game.

Chapter 10 - HOW TO OPEN

White always has the first move. "Openings" are something else in chess that people write books about. I have never seen the point of memorising a sequence of 10 or 15 moves. Some ideas, like the "King's Indian Defence" are worth reading about and trying out. A lot of the openings are just common sense. You can borrow a book on chess openings from the library. The purpose of an opening is to develop your pieces, strengthen your defence, and to try to dominate the centre.

You are trying to control the centre, so you should build up strength in the centre. The normal first few moves of almost every opening are to build strength in the centre. Some people move their King's pawn forward 2 squares or 1 square, so the Bishop and the Queen can get out. Others prefer to move the Queen's pawn forward because it is protected by the Queen. The pawn itself has an influence on the centre 16 squares.

Usually you get the Knights out onto the Bishop files where they can protect your forward centre pawns and threaten your opponent's forward centre pawns. If you do this too quick you then find that your Knights are blocking your Bishops. If you put your Knights out on the castle files instead, they do not block the bishops but they have little influence in the centre. Ideally you put your bishops forward and then bring out the knights, but this is not as easy as it sounds. Until the knight is out you risk an opponent's bishop or Queen taking the knight's pawn, trapping the castle.

Some people castle as fast as they can, to get their King to safety and to bring their Castle into the centre fight,

It is not a good idea to move your castle pawns forward so your Castle can join the fight from the side. Your castle is worth 5, and is very vulnerable to attacks by Knights (3) Bishops (3) and pawns (1). Moving the pawn also breaks up your pawn line.

A player who did not know me was amazed that at move 10 in an opening I did something that he did not expect. He told me I must really have studied this opening, because my move 10 was better for me than the normal move. I just smiled quietly and I did not say anything. The fact is that I was using common sense and I was trying to develop my pieces and to dominate the centre like I always try to do. I was not consciously following any opening.

You are very unlikely to checkmate a good opponent in the first 20 or 30 moves. (See Fool's Mate and Scholar's Mate below, which are fun against weak opponents.) Use the time to build your strength in the centre. Then grind your opponent down. Once your opponent is on the defensive, you can usually gain a small advantage in men or position. Then you use that advantage to grind your opponent down some more.

A lot of Chess games are won by checkmate when the opponent still has most of his or her men. This happens when you are skilful and experienced. While you are a beginner I suggest you concentrate on grinding your opponent down, chipping away at your opponent's pawns

and pieces until the point comes where you have a clear advantage. Use that advantage to gain more advantage.

Fools Mate (1)



The idea of the Fool's Mate is very simple. You put your Bishop out to threaten the King's Bishop's pawn. You put the Queen forward. Then you take the King's Bishop's pawn with your Queen and you have checkmate.

Fools Mate (2)



Fools Mate (3)



Scholars Mate (2)



SCHOLARS MATE

This checkmate is also simple. You move the Bishop out as in the Fool's Mate. You move the Queen to the King's Bishop's file where it is slightly safer. You checkmate in the same way.

Chapter 11 RECORDING THE GAME

You record your games so you can play them over later, and to work out what you could have done better. This is how chess players learn from their mistakes.

You start by recording which player was White and which was Black. You record the date. If it was in a formal Competition you record information about the Competition.

The internationally accepted recording system uses the squares. Square a1 is White's Left hand (black) corner. Square b1 is the second from the left on White's first rank, where the knight started. Black's Queen is on d8.

If Black were to move its Queen forward two squares both players will record this as "Qd8-d6"

Q is Queen

K is King

B is Bishop

"K" has already been used so "N" is Knight

R is Rook (Castle).

Pawns do not get a letter, so if White moves its King's pawn forward two squares, this will read "e2-e4". In other words "the pawn that was on e2 has moved to e4". x means "takes"

If the Black Queen on d8 took a man on d6 both players will record this as "Qxd6" and not "Qd8xd6". You do not record what you took because you took whatever was on that square. If perhaps you have two Knights that could take the same man, you would write "N(e5)xf7" to show

that it is the knight on e5 that took, not the other knight.

Some people do not record a capture because they say it is obvious!

If a pawn takes en passant put "(e.p.)" to show en passant.

You record "+" or "ch" for "check".

Checkmate is written "checkmate"

Castling is written "o-o" if castling King side or "o-o-o" if castling Queen side". (Think how many squares the Castle moves. It moves two if castling King side and three if castling Queen side. Remember to move the King first.)

Having lots of games written on lots of different pieces of paper is messy. You can buy a special book to record your games in from a specialist chess supplier.

You will find very old Chess books where games have been recorded in a different system. This is based upon the moves of the men rather than the squares. Knight is "Kt". Each square is now numbered by both sides, so White's "f6" is Black's "e4".

Black's Queen taking a Bishop on f8 would be recorded differently by the two players. White would write "Qf8xB" and Black would write "Qd1xB". If there is more than one Bishop the Queen could have taken, then White would write "Qf8xBf6" and Black would write "Qd1xBd3".

CHAPTER 12 I KEEP LOSING GAMES!

If you keep losing games think about why you are losing games.

Common Mistakes

1. Do you develop all your pieces? A clue can be that you lose a game and you still have a Knight or a Bishop that has not moved.
2. Did you get your Queen forward too early? Your opponent had a lot of fun chasing your Queen everywhere, and "built" or "developed" his pieces while chasing your Queen. Eight moves later your Queen is safe again, but your opponent has now developed all his pieces and you wasted eight moves near the beginning.
3. Did you take too long about castling? Perhaps you could not castle because you left it too late.
4. Did you attack too soon before you were strong enough?
5. Were you concentrating on controlling the centre?

Ask! If an opponent keeps beating you, ask your opponent what you should do differently.

Chapter 13 - I'M GOOD, I'M CONFIDENT, WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Now that you can beat your grandmother and everyone else in the family, what next?

Just as you learned to win politely, learn to lose politely. There are millions of Chess players out there who are more skilled than you. You need to lose games. You need to lose games to learn tricks and ideas. You will only learn by playing more skilled players.

Start recording your games. You need to study the games you lose to find out why you lost. If you ask, the winner will often play the game over with you, explaining the mistakes you made.

Read the full rules of Chess, which are available in English on the World Chess Federation web site, www.fide.com Why "fide"? The **Fédération Internationale des Échecs** was founded in 1924. In English it is called the World Chess Federation.

Its official motto is "We are all one people."

Where do you find the more skilled Chess players? See who can play chess at school. Ask a teacher for advice. There is usually a local chess club. In some countries the national regional or local chess associations run a children's chess competition every year. I ran a YMCA chess club, so see if your local YMCA has a chess club. You do not have to be male or Christian to use a YMCA.

Learn to use a chess clock. An adult chess club will use chess clocks. The event organiser sets the times. This is

often 40 moves in 2 hours, but may be different. In lightning chess the game is very fast. If you are a quick thinker chess clocks are wonderful!

There are web sites where you can learn about chess.

There are hundreds of chess books around. Read them. Play over old games between chess masters, and read the commentary. The commentary is often written by a Grand Master or an International Grand Master.

Many newspapers have a daily or weekly Chess column.

If you join a chess club, you will be able to apply for a "ranking". Every time you play a game you report the outcome of the game to the ranking organisers, who put the information on their computer. If you keep winning against people whose ranking is 140 but keep losing to people who are ranked at 160 your ranking should probably be about 150. Every year or sometimes every few months the computer looks at the results of thousands of games and generates new rankings., Whether you are graded 147 or 152 depends partly on how many moves it took to obtain each result and partly on the results of games between dozens of other people in other cities. You keep playing and the computer does more fine tuning. The ultimate authority for ranking is your national Chess Federation.

Grand masters and International Grand masters have very high rankings. The Title "Grand Master" or "International Grand Master" is based on how they perform in national and international chess competitions - not on the ranking system.

Chapter 13 - Fun Variations on Chess

Speed Chess. You use a chess clock and you have to move really quickly.

Line Chess Some children are quicker players than others, and can get bored by the length of time the other player takes to move. In the Chess Club I ran almost every child would play two games at once. The best player was playing the two next best players. They each played the best player and another good player. On the two ends were inexperienced players for whom one game was enough. The children were never bored!

Simultaneous Chess A famous chess player plays 10 or 20 simultaneous games against the best players in a club. If one of these players manages a draw he or she boasts about it for years.

Four player Chess - make a board in the shape of a cross, and set up 4 players. The sole survivor wins.

Multi dimensional chess. You have two boards, one over the other. Men can move from one board to another. Knights are really fun here! You could in theory have 8 boards, but you will find just 2 boards is a challenge at first.

Hexagon Board When the board is made up of hexagons, everything is different!

Blindfold Chess When a blind person plays Chess, they cannot see the board. They have to remember the moves and keep the positions of 32 men in their heads. You try

it! Instead of a handicap, you play with a blindfold and announce every move, which the sighted player makes for you. It will increase your respect for blind players hugely.

There are over a thousand variations on Chess. Some is just 8 pawns against 8 pawns, or uses extra bishops instead of castles. Invent one yourself.

Remember, **Chess is to enjoy!**