

LEARNING MADE EASY



4th Edition

Chess

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Grasp the principles of play during each phase of the game

Familiarize yourself with the pieces of the board

Teach a child how to play chess

James Eade

*United States Chess Federation
chess master*



Chess

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dummies[®]
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by James Eade

United States Chess Federation chess master

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Chess For Dummies®, 4th Edition

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Introduction

Some chess players hate to hear someone call chess a *game*. They think that doing so trivializes what is actually a profound intellectual activity. Try as they may, however, chess enthusiasts seem incapable of convincingly placing chess solely in the context of art, science, or sport. Uncannily, chess contains elements of all three — and yet chess remains a game.

Actually, I prefer to think of chess as a game — the best game ever invented. Chess is a game loved by engineers and free-verse poets alike. It imposes a set of rules and has finite limits, but just as you start to think that you're finally solving its mysteries, it thwarts you. As a result, sometimes the game is frustrating, but far more often chess proves to be both surprising and delightful. The deeper you dig into chess, the more of its secrets you unearth — but interestingly enough, the game has never been tapped out. Even today's monster computers are far from playing the theoretically perfect chess game.

To master chess, you must combine a kind of discipline normally associated with the hard sciences and a creative freedom akin to the inspiration of artists. Few people develop both aspects equally well, and few activities can help you do so. Chess, however, is one such activity. The methodical scientist is forced to tap into his creative energies to play well. The fanciful artist must, in turn, conform to certain specific principles or face the harsh reality of a lost game. Not only is chess an excellent educational tool that helps strengthen both sides of your brain, but the game is also an endless source of pleasure.

After most people discover that I play chess, they usually say, “You must be very smart.” They should instead say, “You must have a lot of spare time.” Chess has been played throughout history by people with above-average leisure time, not necessarily by people with far-above-average intelligence — so if you don't consider yourself in the “I-aced-the-MCAT” crowd, fear no more.

As a matter of fact, chess tutors can teach preschoolers the rules of the game. (So maybe they can't get the tots to stop chewing on the pieces, but they *can* teach the youngsters how to play.) In fact, anyone can learn how to play chess with a bit of spare time. And you don't even need too much of that to learn the rules.

About This Book

This book is designed to help you become a better chess player in several ways:

- » First, it contains a great deal of information and advice on how to play chess. You can read the book from cover to cover, or you can read only the sections or chapters that interest you — it's completely your call.
- » You also find in these pages information about how to talk about chess, which, to many players, is at least as important as knowing how to play. (Part of the fun of chess is the social element involved in discussing other people's games — called *kibitzing*.)
- » Finally, this book offers numerous suggestions on how to find other players who are just about at your own level (and how to mind your chess manners when you sit down to play!).

If you're a beginner, the great joys of chess await you. If you're an intermediate player, you can find in this book a wealth of material to help you improve your game and to enjoy chess even more.

Throughout this book, I use diagrams of actual chessboards to show the positions I discuss. This convention should sometimes eliminate the need for you to have a chessboard and set in order to use the book — but even so, following along with an actual board and set is better. Just note that in these diagrams, the white pieces always start at the bottom of the chessboards, and the black pieces start at the top.

Here are a few other conventions to keep in mind:

- » Throughout this book, I refer to moves with chess notation, which I usually place in parentheses. You can skip over this stuff if you don't want to find out how to decipher it, but if notation interests you, you can flip to Chapter 6 whenever you're up to the challenge. (Understanding it really isn't tough, though — believe me!)
- » I use **boldface** to highlight the key words in bulleted lists and the action steps in numbered lists.
- » I use *italics* whenever I define a chess term. You can use the glossary as a quick reference for these terms, as well as a resource to discover other chess words.

When this book was printed, some web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that I haven't put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So, when using one of these web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist.

» I alternate the use of male and female pronouns by chapter throughout this book. No gender bias is intended.

Foolish Assumptions

I assume that either you want to learn how to play chess, or you already know how to play chess and want to get better. I also assume that you'll be able to find someone to help you if you're a beginner and have any problems with the material in this book. (And if you don't know anyone who can, I provide plenty of websites and computer programs that can help you navigate the road through the world of chess.) After all, everyone has to start somewhere.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons used in this book point you to important topics and help you pick out what you want to know. Make a mental note of the following icons to guide you on your path to chess greatness.



REMEMBER

This icon wouldn't be necessary if chess didn't have so many good, general rules. Keep the rules of thumb in mind when you play. You'll be surprised how many you can retain — and how helpful they can be.



TIP

This icon points to helpful hints — anything from playing better chess to where you can find more chess stuff.



WARNING

This icon warns you of impending danger that you just may be able to avoid.

Throughout this book, I also use sidebars (in shaded gray boxes) to introduce famous chess players or to add miscellaneous information you don't really need to know to play chess. I've included this information to increase your sheer enjoyment of the game. If you're crunched for time, feel free to skip the sidebars.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that summarizes some key info, such as setting up your board, naming ranks and files, knowing how each type of piece can move, and understanding check and the different types of mate — plus a few chess-related articles on topics that just wouldn't quite fit here. To see this Cheat Sheet and articles, simply go to www.dummies.com and search for “Chess” in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

If you have no knowledge of chess whatsoever, I highly suggest that you start right at the beginning with Chapter 1. Otherwise, just remember that it's perfectly okay to skip around the book to locate the chapters and sections of most interest or use to you. Dig in!

1 Laying the Groundwork for Champion Chess

IN THIS PART . . .

Discover how to set up a chessboard and explore the chess pieces and the ways they move.

Get familiar with the fundamental elements of chess: the concepts of material, development, space, pawn structure, and king safety.

Glimpse the end of the game with definitions of check, stalemate, and checkmate and see what they look like in play.

Check out a few special chess moves, such as castling, and decipher chess notation — a written record of the moves in a game.

Discovering what chess is all about

Familiarizing yourself with the chessboard

Setting up your army

Chapter 1

Tackling Chess Basics

If you're interested in participating in an endlessly fascinating and stimulating mental activity — an activity that sports a rich history and may provide you with countless hours of amusement — you're in luck. You can play chess.

If you're new to chess, don't despair. No chess gene decides who can and can't play; take my word for it. Everyone can learn to play a passable game of chess, and after you come on-board (no pun intended!), it's just a matter of time until you find someone you can play well against.

In this chapter, I define the game of chess, discuss the basics of how you play, and describe the materials you need.

Chesstacular! Understanding the Basics of the Game

Chess, simply stated, is a board game for two — one player uses white pieces, and the other uses black. Each player gets 16 pieces to maneuver (although, technically, pawns aren't pieces, but I'll get to that). Players take turns moving one piece at a time, with the ultimate objective of checkmating their opponent's king.

Because chess has so many great rules and because the pieces all exercise their individuality with different moves and abilities, the game has lots of interesting nuances that you'll want to keep in mind as you play. I cover each aspect of the game in this book, so if you're a novice, you'll find sufficient information to get acquainted with chess; if you already know how to play but want to hone your prowess, you'll find plenty of information to help you do just that. This section gives you the nutshell version of all this book has to offer.

The underlying concepts

Components of a chess game can be broken down into categories that are so fundamental that they're referred to as *elements*. The element of time, known as *development*, is one example. The element of force, known as *material*, is another. If one player deploys more force more quickly than the other player, it may be impossible for the latter player to defend against a subsequent invasion. The first step in a player's progress is learning how the pieces move, so I cover the bases in Chapter 2. Gaining an appreciation of the importance of the game's elements is usually the next step, so I describe all the chess elements in Chapter 3.

The elements are all a part of what drives a game to the desired end result: *checkmate*. If the king is attacked and can't escape the attack, the aggressor has secured checkmate, and the game is over. However, checkmate doesn't always come to fruition — sometimes a game ends in *stalemate*, which is one way to draw. You can also have a situation called *check*, which is an attack on the king. One thing to note, however, is that placing your opponent in check doesn't necessarily mean you'll win — check can actually happen several times in a game, and if your opponent can effectively escape from check, you may just be wasting your time. I discuss all these events in Chapter 4.



TIP

You also have some special moves at your disposal that your opponent (if a novice) may not know about — namely, en passant, promotion, and castling. To give you an edge (and a resource to help quell any arguments that may arise after you make one of these tricky moves!), I provide the inside scoop on these special moves in Chapter 5.



TIP

To make it easier to talk about what's happening on the board, someone, somewhere, at some point in time came up with a naming system for the exact pieces and squares, and I use those conventions throughout this book. In Chapter 6, I dive into the subject of *notation*, which expands on these naming conventions and shows you how to write the moves of a game. You really don't need to know this stuff to enjoy playing chess, but it does help to have the basic terminology under

your belt, and throughout this book, you can read the extra notation information I give to you as I explain moves.

The finer points of the game

Holding an advantage in one or more of the elements of chess doesn't guarantee victory. It does, however, increase the likelihood of success. When the inevitable clash of opposing armies takes place, the resulting tactical possibilities generally favor the one with elemental advantages. These clashes usually feature common tactics and combinations such as the ones that I present in Chapter 7. Tactics decide the outcome of most of the games played at a fairly competitive level, so a good understanding of the basic tactics and combinations pays off extremely well.

One of the ways an advantage can be transformed into victory is through sacrifice. A game of chess is a constant process of giving up something to get something else. Giving up some of your force makes sense, for example, if doing so allows you to checkmate the enemy king. Chapter 8 provides examples of when sacrifices are justified.

Another key to playing chess well is the ability to recognize patterns. When you spot a pattern with which you're familiar, the right moves suddenly suggest themselves. Chapter 9 deals with building pattern recognition in chess.

Due to the starting lineup and the piece movement limitations, the only piece that can move at the very start of the game is the knight. So you have to move some pawns in order to get your other pieces out. The positioning of the pawns often determines the optimal positioning of the pieces. Certain pawn positions, or *formations* as players often call them, have occurred in so many games that they have their own names. Chapter 10 presents some of the more common ones and shows how the pawns guide you on where to put the pieces.

Chapter 11 illustrates a number of common ways to deliver checkmate. These types of checkmates appear so often in chess games that players refer to them as *mating patterns*.

There usually comes a time in every player's development when she's at a loss as to what to do next. Sometimes a player will see a move by a stronger player and have no idea why that move was made. At this point, the principles of play, or strategies, are necessary to make further progress. Chapter 12 provides an introduction to chess strategy.



REMEMBER

The militaristic character of chess is undeniable, but it also holds appeal for the confirmed peacenik. Although many of the strategies of war apply equally well to chess (divide and conquer, for example), many people gain ascetic pleasure from playing or watching a well-played game. Well-known patterns can appear with an unexpected twist and delight the observer. At an advanced level, you'll discover harmonies that lie just below the surface of the moves, and a move that breaks that harmony will feel as discordant as an off-key note in music. So take heart, consider the information this book provides, and allow yourself to get comfortable with the pieces, their powers, and all the exciting aspects of this strategic, creative game. Besides, unlike real warfare, the worst you'll suffer in your chess career is a bruised ego.

Three parts that make a whole

Players divide the chess game into three phases — opening, middlegame, and endgame — to better understand the different demands of each one, but you really need to understand the game as a whole and not just in terms of its separate parts. Otherwise, playing the game can be a bit like eating Chinese food with one chopstick.

Here's a quick breakdown of what each phase entails (see Chapters 13 through 15 for an in-depth look):

- » **The opening:** The main objective of the opening moves is to effectively activate your forces. The term *development* refers to this type of activation.
- » **The middlegame:** This phase is where the opposing armies most frequently clash. The terms *tactics* and *combinations* are frequently used to describe these clashes.
- » **The endgame:** By this phase, the forces have been greatly reduced in number, but checkmate hasn't yet been delivered.

Different ways to get your game on

If you're the type of player who wants to be tested in competition, check out Chapter 16. Chess tournaments come in a variety of flavors, and that chapter gives you the scoop. You need to know how to act as well as how to play, so I also cover chess etiquette in that chapter.

In this day and age, you don't need to be physically located next to an opponent in order to play, and Chapter 17 gives the lowdown on computer chess and chess in cyberspace. Chess on the Internet has blossomed, but you need to be aware that nothing is permanent. Although the web is ever-changing, the addresses I provide have proven to be very stable, so they should take you where you want to go.

Chessboard Chatter: Bringing Home a Board and Chess Set

So you've decided all this chess stuff is up your alley. Well, first things first — you need a chessboard and *chess set* (the collection of chess pieces). If you don't own a board and chess set, you can turn to Appendix B for mail-order information. You'll find it extremely helpful to have a board and chess set on hand when reading chess books. Some people can do without one — but some people can memorize the works of John Milton, too. (And who wants to be like that?)

In the following sections, I explain different types of boards and chess sets that are available, and I break down the layout of the board.



TIP

Throughout this book I include numerous diagrams to help you understand the game, but they don't take the place of a real set and board; these diagrams serve primarily to make certain your board is set up correctly. I urge you to get out your chessboard and set when you're reading and set up the board as the diagrams show you. That way, you get a real-life view of the moves I describe.

Finding the right board and set

Your first challenge in finding a chessboard and set is to sort through the many available types. A tremendous range in sizes, colors, and quality exists.

The name of the standard design, which is distinguished by the look of the pieces, is the Staunton. This design bears the name of the great English player Howard Staunton and was registered in 1849. Its popularity was so great that it was adopted as the one and only design allowed in official tournaments. If you play with strangers and bring anything other than a Staunton-designed set, people may assume that you're trying to psych them out by using equipment that they aren't familiar with. You probably don't want to start off on the wrong foot.

Wood sets and boards in the Staunton design are more popular at higher levels of competition, but a typical tournament set can be made of plastic pieces in classic white and black. The board is generally of a vinyl roll-up variety with white and green squares. "Why not black squares?" you may justifiably ask. "Headaches," I would answer. I've learned that staring at a high-contrast board is not advisable. Miniature traveling sets are the only exception. It doesn't matter what color they are, because the makers assume that you won't be staring at them too long (especially if you're driving!).

If price is no object, wood pieces and boards are the way to go. Wood boards provide the most soothing background possible, and the weight and feel of wood pieces are generally far more satisfying to the touch. In case you're really getting into chess and admire sets meant to be looked at rather than played with, collectible sets have a small cottage industry of their own, and these sets vary in design as well as in quality.

Getting up close and personal with your board

After you pick up your soon-to-be-beloved chessboard and set, you need to get familiar with them. The first thing to notice about the chessboard is that all the squares are the same size but alternate between two colors (a light color and a darker color). Colors are important in chess (bishops are confined to only one of them, knights go back and forth between them, and so on), which is why chess players insist that a white square needs to be in the lower right-hand corner at the start of the game. Start by whipping out the board and making sure it's facing the right direction in front of you — Figure 1-1 shows the correct orientation (if you set this book on your lap and look at the figure, you get a better idea).

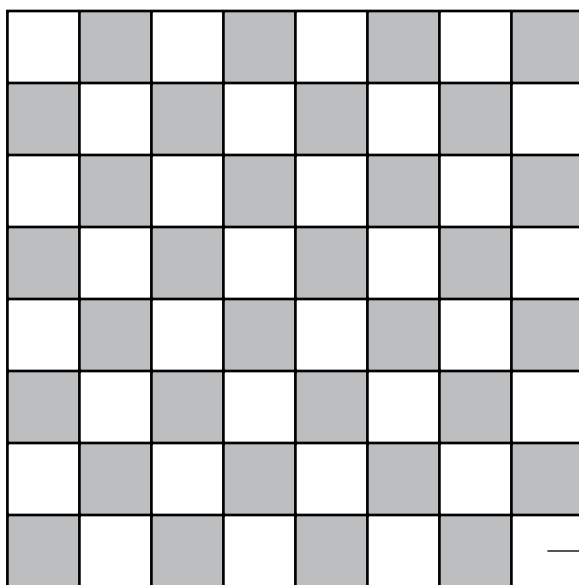


FIGURE 1-1:
The correct
orientation of a
chessboard.

— A white square!

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REMEMBER

A white square should be in the lower right-hand corner as you face the board. The most common mistake among beginners is to position the board incorrectly at the start of the game. (As a matter of fact, Hollywood and television make this common mistake, too. Whenever you see a chessboard positioned in a movie or on TV, check to see whether the lower right-hand square is white. Chances are it won't be!)

Consider a few fun facts while you're scoping out your chessboard:

- » It's made up of 64 squares evenly divided between 32 light squares and 32 dark squares.
- » It's symmetrical and square — in the geometric sense.
- » The square comprises eight *ranks* and eight *files* (and a bunch of diagonals), which you'd normally call rows and columns (and diagonals!), but chess people shun such conventional language. (Using clear, easy-to-understand terms would be too easy, right?)

In the following sections, I go into more detail on the ranks, files, diagonals, and squares.

Recognizing the ranks

Ranks are rows that go from side to side across the chessboard and are referred to by numbers. Each chessboard has eight ranks, which are numbered from the *bottom* of the board (where the white pieces start) on up; see Figure 1-2.

Figuring out the files

Files are columns that go up and down the chessboard, and each board has eight of them. Because numbers indicate ranks, letters indicate files, which are labeled from left to right. Figure 1-3 shows the files.

Naming individual squares

The naming convention for ranks and files allows you to give a unique identifier to every square by using what chess people call the *file-first method*. For example, the lower right-hand square (which is white, of course) is called h1. This name is shorthand for h-file, first rank. Figure 1-4 gives the name for every square.

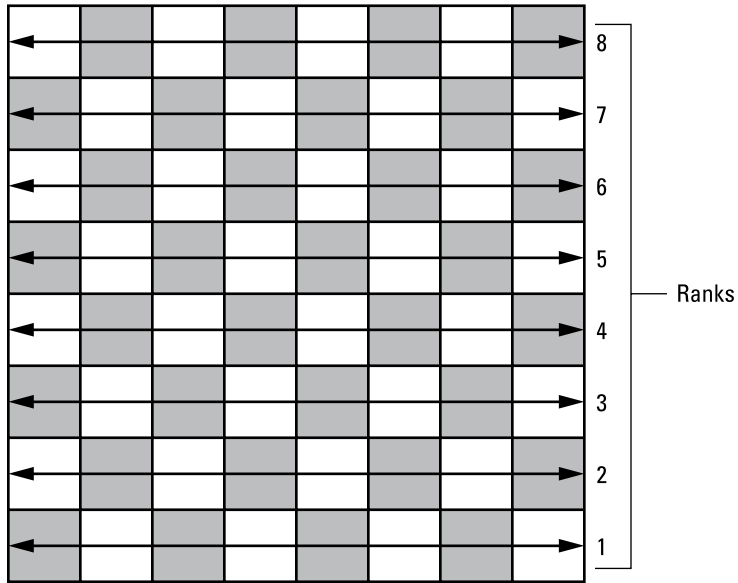


FIGURE 1-2:
The ranks of a chessboard go from side to side.

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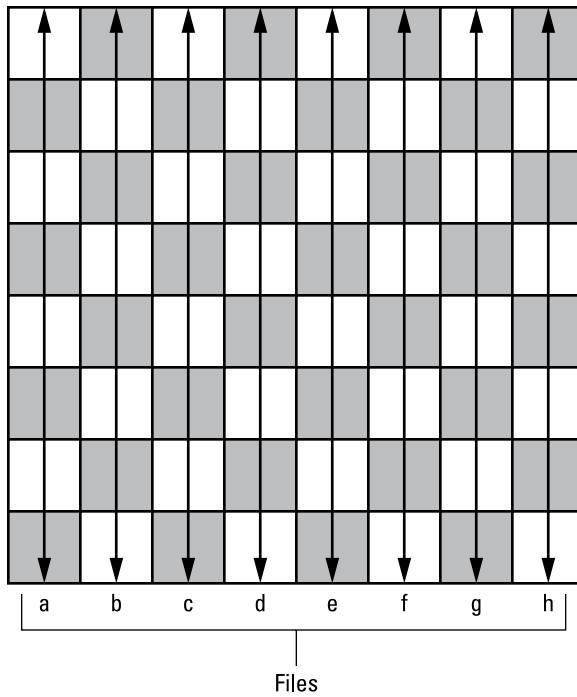


FIGURE 1-3:
A chessboard's files go from top to bottom.

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8	a8	b8	c8	d8	e8	f8	g8	h8
7	a7	b7	c7	d7	e7	f7	g7	h7
6	a6	b6	c6	d6	e6	f6	g6	h6
5	a5	b5	c5	d5	e5	f5	g5	h5
4	a4	b4	c4	d4	e4	f4	g4	h4
3	a3	b3	c3	d3	e3	f3	g3	h3
2	a2	b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2	h2
1	a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	f1	g1	h1
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h

FIGURE 1-4:
The squares are marked to show the letter of the file and the number of the rank.

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TIP

When figuring out the names of individual squares, it may be helpful to think of the games Bingo and Battleship, where every square has a letter and a number (and the names may be easier to figure out if you're sitting on the "white" side — or bottom — of the chessboard). Of course, in Battleship you get to see only your pieces and have to guess where your enemy's are. In chess, however, you know where your opponent's pieces are — you just have to guess where she's going to move them!

Digging those diagonals

As you probably expect, diagonals have names, too. Unlike ranks and files, diagonals are defined by their starting and ending squares. The starting square is conventionally given as the one with the lower rank. For example, Figure 1-5 shows the h1-a8 diagonal. Diagonals are always composed of like-colored squares. You can have light-squared diagonals and dark-squared diagonals — but never two-toned ones.

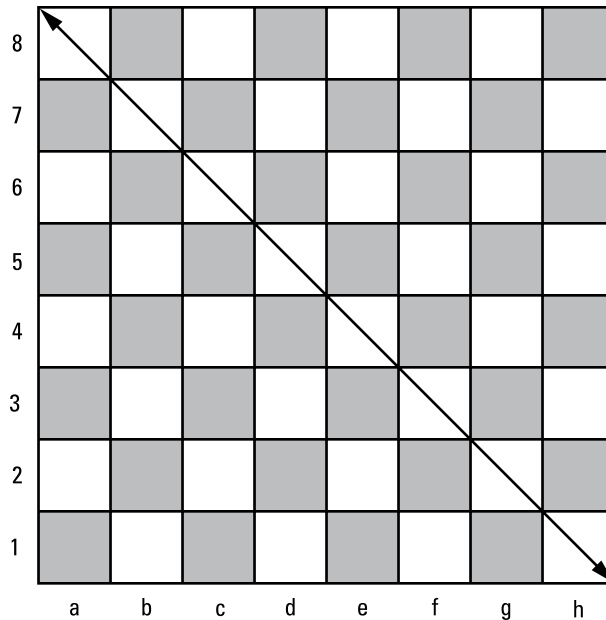


FIGURE 1-5: The diagonals on a chessboard always contain like-colored squares.











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Piecemeal: Putting the Pieces on the Board

To depict the chessboard in a way that everyone around the world can understand, chess players have developed a set of symbols to represent the chessmen. Each may be represented by a one-letter abbreviation or by an icon. (See Table 1-1 for a list of all the pieces and their symbols.)

TABLE 1-1

Chess Pieces and Their Symbols

Piece	Symbol
King	 
Queen	 
Knight	 
Bishop	 
Rook	 
Pawn	