



**Growing the Game**

# **CHESS GUIDE**

*Presented by the Scott County Chess Club*

*Created: 3/12/2023*

## **Mission**

To introduce the game of chess  
to communities in Mississippi

## **Vision**

The establishment of a chess program in local area schools that provides participants with the opportunity to learn and play the game while gaining valuable skills to strengthen abilities in academics and elsewhere in life; as well as including the community in general.

## **Focus**

Remember that the rules and procedures learned about chess today are important and must be followed, but above all these regulations of the game and within the program created, the number one priority rule is to

**HAVE FUN!!**

## Dear persons interested in chess,

I am honored and delighted to have the opportunity to visit your community to bring information about the game of chess so you can learn and participate in this wonderful game. There are so many benefits to chess - physically, intellectually, and spiritually – but most of all, **it is so much fun!**

This introduction is a means to get you started by providing the basics of chess, how it is played, and other important information. I will do my best to answer any questions you have and hopefully you will leave with a better understanding of how to play. After your participation in this instruction, it is up to you how far you want to take your participation.

Efforts are underway to establish programs in communities across Mississippi for people to become involved in chess. I hope you will participate in and become part of that effort.

This handout is a resource for you to keep much of the information discussed in our presentations so you will have something to use later. There are many resources now, more than ever, to utilize in learning the game. Books, magazines, online web sites and videos are just the start. Our own web site has a lot of information about the game as well at [scottcountychessclub.org](http://scottcountychessclub.org)

Thank you for your participation and interest in beginning your chess journey.

Sincerely yours,  
Chris Allen Baker

Founder, coordinator  
Tournament Director



# Outline

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## **What is chess?**

The simplest definition is Chess is a two-player strategy board game played on a checkered gameboard with 64 squares arranged in an 8×8 grid. The game is played with 16 pieces moving in a variety of ways and the objective is to checkmate the opponent's King piece.

But, in fact, chess is much more with centuries of history and its complexities add to a charm that has attracted millions of people to play it worldwide.

## **A little history of the game**

There are many books and other resources that can give the history of the game, but for our purposes today, we will just hit the highlights.

Chess originated in India around 600 A.D. and was originally called "Chaturanga" - a name that applied to Indian armies of that time. The game spread from India to Persia, through the Middle East and into Europe during medieval times.

The Spanish brought chess to the New World at least as early as 1533. By the 1730s, Benjamin Franklin was among the earliest chess players in what would become the United States. He used his knowledge of chess to help his diplomatic efforts in England and wrote an essay on the game as it progressed to what it is today.

## **Benefits of the game**

The biggest benefits include strengthening critical thinking skills, learning the value of planning and foresight, and concentration and memory, and rewards.

These benefits go hand in hand with each other.

*Players must carefully consider every move before they make it.* They think about the consequences of each move and all the things that their opponent can do in response. Chess favors the "if-then" thinker. "If I move here, then my opponent may move here, here, or even here." Therefore, it encourages players to think about the possible consequences of their actions.

*Chess encourages you to think ahead and make good decisions.* Players commonly plan two, three, four, or more moves in advance through a game.

*Concentration and memory-* Chess significantly improves visual memory, attention span, and spatial-reasoning ability. Players learn to focus intently and calculate every possible move in their head before making their next actual move. Over time with experience, players can learn complex strategies and principles that aid in recognizing opponents' motives while formulating their own plans of

how to win in a methodical way. Each game played yields the opportunity to learn regardless of the outcome.

*Encourages hard work-* Chess offers immediate feedback. Lose your focus, lose a piece. Practice and study the strategies, win more games. In chess, like most things in life, you get out of it what you put in. If you invest your time and effort, you can control your destiny.

### **About the board – preparing to play**

As they sit on either side across from each other, both players should see a light color square in their bottom right corner. This will indicate the board is positioned correctly.

As players view the board, the vertical pathways are called **files** and the horizontal rows are called **ranks**. Many boards include letters across the bottom below the first rank and numbers along the sides. This is used in notation which is addressed later.

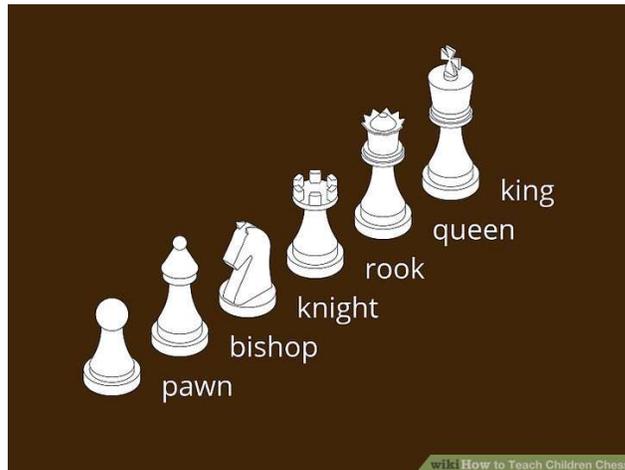
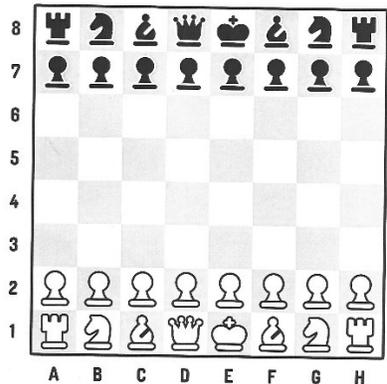
Each player has 16 pieces including the following with the number of each piece they should have in () – pawn (8), rook (2), knight (2), bishop (2), queen (1), and king (1). One opponent plays the black pieces, and their opponent plays the white or light-colored pieces. You **MUST** have ALL pieces to play - none can be missing.

Each player sets up their side of the board starting with the bottom left corner of their side which should be a dark square, moving left to right placing the pieces in the following order: rook, knight, bishop, queen, king, bishop, knight, rook. On the next rank, place a pawn in all eight squares in front of the previous pieces.

*See diagrams on next page for illustration*

**Rule of thumb to help:** If your board has the numbers and letters, put the white rook on the A1 square and go from there. Likewise, the person playing black should put their pieces in the same order.

Key notes: make sure both queens are on their corresponding color square – the black queen should be on its dark square and the white/light queen on a light square.



### How the pieces move

**Pawn** – moves **forward only** one space at a time *except* on the first move when it can move two spaces. Pawn can only move diagonally when it is capturing any other piece. If a pawn makes it to the other side of the board, it can be promoted to a rook, knight, bishop, or queen.

**Rook** – moves **any number of open spaces forward, backward, and across** on the ranks and files. Rooks can capture any opponent's piece and **cannot** move diagonally.

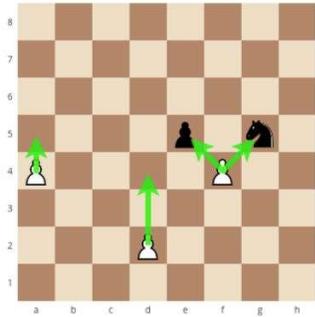
**Knight** – moves **only in an L shape**, two spaces one way and one space over. It is the **only** piece that can jump over other pieces. It can capture any opposing piece occupying the space it lands upon.

**Bishop** – moves **diagonally only** any number of open spaces corresponding to the color where it starts. It can capture any opposing piece occupying the space it lands upon.

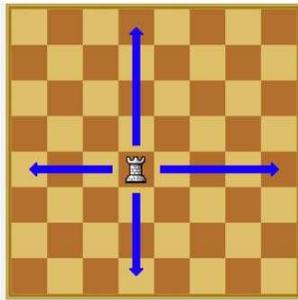
**Queen** – moves **any number of open spaces in any direction** and it can capture any opposing piece occupying the space it lands upon. It is the most powerful piece on the board.

**King** – moves **only one space at a time in any direction**. It must be protected and is the most valuable piece. Its *survival means the difference in winning or losing* the game. The king can capture any opposing piece occupying the space it lands upon.

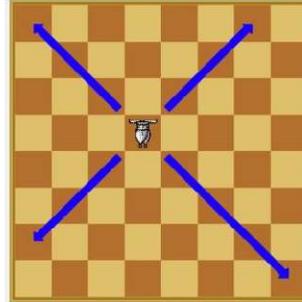
*See diagrams on next page for illustrations*



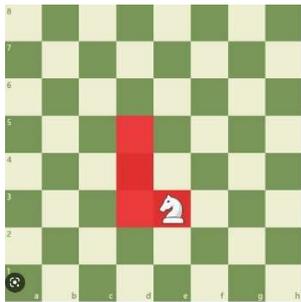
*Pawn moves*



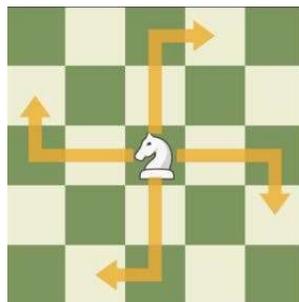
*Rook moves*



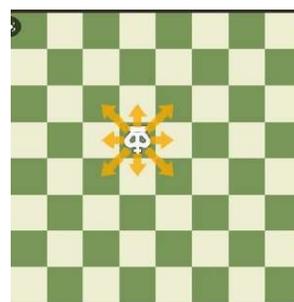
*Bishop moves*



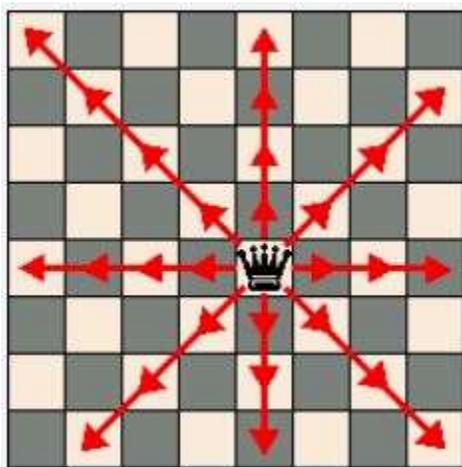
*Knight moves "L"*



*Knight moves*



*King moves*



*Queen moves*

**OBJECTIVE** – *White always moves first to start the game.* Each player tries to checkmate their opponent's king. A king is in checkmate when it is under threat of an opposing piece and cannot move to a safe space which is under attack by other pieces. A king is in check when it is under attack, but it can still move to a safe space. A king cannot move to a space that would place it in check.

*Note of interest: While it is a traditional or popular custom for one player to say "check" when they have their opponent's king in check, it is not required to do so.*

Resignation – A player who feels they cannot win may resign the game, declaring a victory their opponent. This is done by tipping their king over to signal their resignation, or by extending for a handshake and declaring “I resign.” A player may also request a draw.

### **Sportsmanship and Chess etiquette**

Games should begin with players shaking hands and end the same way.

There is little or no talking during the game. The only speech involved should include saying “good luck” at beginning, offering a draw, and congratulate each other at the end, saying "good game."

Players should not engage in behavior that creates distractions for their opponent such as making noise or unusual gestures.

Some players may listen to music through earbuds to help concentration and drown out background sounds, but it should not be loud enough for anyone else to hear.

Spectators may watch a game, but never speak to the players or interrupt in any way. They should not talk about the game where the players can hear. The game is between the players ONLY.

Cell phones and pages should always be muted or turned off. Cell phones should not be used during a game.

### **Three phases of the game**

*Opening* - The first four to 10 moves of a game is considered the opening phase. There are many established strategies that players may recognize and are able to respond. This is when each player establishes the foundation of their strategy and sets the stage for the rest of the game.

*Middle game* - There is no set number of moves, but this is when each player strives to gain tactical advantages while reacting and adjusting to their opponent’s moves. It can get complicated and very intense. One side or the other mounts attacks and the other side defends and counter moves.

*Endgame* - This part includes the final group of moves when most of each player’s pieces are off the board and only a few remain in attempt to gain the checkmate. This part can also be intense.

## Opening principles

There are many opening principles, such that there are books written about this part of chess alone. However, just to point out a few ideas.

*Development* - Get pieces off their starting squares and into the game to locations where they can effectively attack and defend. Especially develop minor pieces such as pawns and send knights to the center of the board where possible. Don't develop major pieces in such way that blocks other pieces.

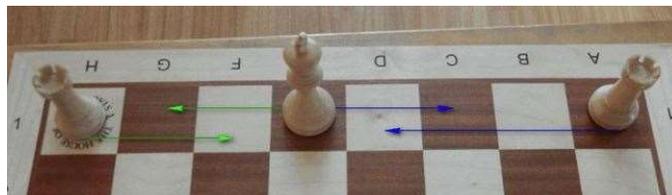
*Control the center* - The center of the board c3, c4, c5, c6/ d4, d5, d6/ e3, e4, e5, e6/ f3, f4, f5, f6 is the most valuable real estate on the board, making attacks and defense easy for you, harder for opponent. Sweet center is d4, d5, e4, e5 which particularly holds special value.

*Pawn Structure* - Pawns are first lines of defense and their positions can be crucial toward setting the stage for victory. Pawns should not overdevelop since they cannot move backwards. They are at their strongest when side by side on the same rank.

*En passant* – There is one special way that pawns can move in addition to the ones previously given, although it can only be used in the beginning phase. After a pawn moves 2 spaces in an opening move, an enemy pawn adjacent to final space may capture the pawn diagonally ahead of it. The French name comes from “in passing.”



*En passant*



*Castling*

*Castling* – This is a particular move that is commonly done early. The king may move two spaces toward a rook through open and safe spaces while the rook moves to the space on the other side of the king. This is the **only time** a king can take more than one square in the same move.

The king can castle to the right (*kingside*) or left (*queenside*) on the back rank.

There are also four rules of castling:

1. Castling is possible ONLY when neither the king nor the rook has made a previous move.
2. There can be no pieces between the king or rook before this move is made.
3. None of the open squares where the king moves to or through can be under attack.
4. The king cannot be in check before the castling and therefore cannot use castling to get out of check.

### **Strategies and tactics**

*Exploiting Weaknesses* - Seeing whether a piece is vulnerable to attack or seeing what weaknesses may help you win.

*Pawn Structure* - How pawns are strategically arranged on the board to be most effective against the enemy.

*Space* – The spaces controlled by a particular piece. Players should want to control more spaces than their opponent.

*Fork* - A move that uses one piece to attack two or more pieces at the same time.

*Discovered Attack* - Moving one piece reveals a threat from another piece.

*Decoy* - A tactic to trap a piece using sacrifice to force the piece to move to a dangerous square.

*Double Attack* – When the king is put into check by two pieces at the same time.

*Pin* – Forcing a piece not to move because moving it would expose a more valuable piece behind.

### **The different types of competition**

*Casual play* - This is basically a single relaxed game played by two people either on a clock or not; notation or not. Another nickname for it is skittles (not the candy) for when a casual game is played between rounds in a tournament for fun.

*Bughouse* – This involves two boards (or even more in some cases) and four or more players playing as partners. Games run side by side concurrently and captured pieces in one game can be shared and put back into action in the other game. Clocks are also often used to keep length of play under control.

*Blitz* – These are faster games, played on a clock and usually set at 5:00 limit. No notation is used; a king can be taken to end the game without “check” being established first.

**Tournaments** – This is where chess becomes more interesting and intensively competitive. Players find out how good they may be. Tournaments are held all over the world whereby players compete for not only bragging rights, and trophies, but also for improved ratings and money. Players' games are timed with play clocks and notation is often required. Players are paired according to their ratings.

*Clock* – either analog or digital, a clock keeps the length of a game from going too long. Each player has a set time to play and if their time runs out, they lose - regardless of what pieces are on the board or where they reside. Increments can also be used to add time back for notation.

Example: if a tournament uses a game control of 45 minutes, each player has 45 minutes to play. Each time a player makes a move, they tap a button on their side of the clock that stops their time and starts their opponent's time. If increments are used, time – usually five seconds – is added back to a player's remaining time when they tap their button. Many competitions use an hour, two hours, or more, depending on the tournament's conditions.

*Notation* – This is the use of the letters and numbers assigned to squares on the chess board. Files are numbered one through eight. Ranks are lettered A through H. The letters and numbers may or may not be printed on the board, but most often are.

Notation uses an algebraic formula cross-referencing the squares – such as the common first move may be pawn to A4.

To notate pawn moves, only use the coordinates of a pawn's destination in a move.

To notate a rook move, use R and the destination square.

To notate a bishop move, use B and the destination.

To notate a queen move, use Q and destination.

To notate a king move, use K and destination.

Because the king gets the K, to notate a knight move, use N and the destination.

To notate a capture use x.

*Example:* You would say BxRa4 to say the Bishop captures a Rook at coordinates A4.

To notate a king in check you would write: Qe1+ to say the Queen moved to the e1 space and has her opponent's king in check.

To notate a checkmate, using the same scenario, if the king cannot safely move out of check he is checkmated. Therefore, the notation would be Qe1++.

**Pairings** – this is the method which tournament directors match players against each other in each round. Usually, the directors may use a computer program called SwissSys to establish the pairings.

### **The U.S. Chess Federation – ratings and rules**

The U.S. Chess Federation is the governing body organization that regulates and monitors chess tournaments and other activities in the United States. The USCF sets the standards that tournament directors must meet to be qualified to oversee tournaments; they establish the rules of playing chess; how tournaments must be operated; oversee the ratings system; and much more.

**Membership** – Players must be members of the USCF to play in rated tournaments and games.

**Ratings** – These are numerical values assigned to a player after joining the USCF. A member initially joins as a provisional player. After a member has played their 26<sup>th</sup> game, their rating becomes official and the provisional status is dropped.

While a member is provisional, their rating can change drastically after winning or losing rated games. After passing their 26<sup>th</sup> game, a player's rating changes incrementally based on results of rated games and the ratings of opponents. The difference between the ratings of players is a guide to predicting the outcome of a contest between those two players. No rating is a precise evaluation of a player's strength. Ratings are averages of performances and should be viewed as approximations.

**Scale range:** Senior Master – above 2399; Master, 2200-2399; Expert, 2000-2199  
Class A: 1800-1999; Class B: 1600-1799; Class C: 1400-1599; Class D: 1200-1399;  
Class E: 1000-1199; Class F: 800-999; Class G: 600-799; Class H: 400-599; Class I:  
200-399; Class J: Under 200

### **The finances of Chess**

Like many other things, the cost of an activity depends largely on how elaborate you want to invest your money in participation. The beauty of money and chess is that you can invest as little as you like – just buying the basics – or you can do much more which requires more funds.

**Chess boards and sets** – You can purchase a basic board and the pieces for as little as \$20 or less in some cases, depending on the source. Retail stores like Wal-Mart,

Dollar General, and similar stores sell games including chess of different varieties for varying prices.

If you really want to set yourself up with good chess tools for long-term participation, it is my recommendation that you purchase a chess set that has the numbers and letters along the sides to help with learning notation. Sets that are portable and tournament quality standards are available on Amazon and other sources. Here are two examples: *chessusa.com* and *uscfsales.com*

*Chess clocks* – It is a good idea to have at least one chess clock if you are planning to eventually play in tournaments. You need to be able to practice playing on a clock as all rated games are time controlled. Clocks can start in the \$30 range and go up from there depending on how elaborate a clock you desire.

*Notation material* – It is also good to have scoresheets to record games and there is a great variety to choose from. Most can be purchased for under \$10 depending on the source. However, you can also use notebook paper and pencil.

*Tournaments* – If you want to participate in tournaments, most event entry fees can range from \$20 to about \$40 around Mississippi. It is usually a good idea to take advantage of early bird registration rates as tournaments often let players in for a lower amount for registering early and the price goes up if entering on site.

*U.S. Chess Federation Membership* – USCF membership is required if you are going to play rated games in tournaments or other venues. Prices vary from \$20 for youth and up for adults, depending on your age and there are multiple plans to choose from. For more information, visit and join online at [new.uschess.org/join-us-chess](http://new.uschess.org/join-us-chess).

Upon joining, players will receive a membership number that they must keep active with renewals and present at registrations for tournaments.

### *Other Important links*

There are many resources on the internet for Chess and a Google search will hit on most anything you need.

Here are some resources on the internet to check out and keep handy.

Mississippi Chess Association - [www.mcachess.org](http://www.mcachess.org)

U.S. Chess Federation – [new.uschess.org](http://new.uschess.org)

Play Chess online and other resources - [Chess.com](http://Chess.com) (some parts of this site may include charges)

Play Chess online and other resources – [lichess.org](http://lichess.org) (completely free)