# Lesson 21: Chess Notation

## A New Language

We've often talked about games of chess that were played long ago. How do we remember those games? When strong players play chess they write down the moves of the game. When the game is finished, they can replay the game at home to try to learn from their mistakes.

Chess players use a code to record their moves. It looks strong at first but is easy enough after a little practice.

Suppose White wants to move their queen as shown by the arrow. First you write down the letter to represent the piece you are moving: "Q". Then you write down the square it moves to: "h5". The full move is "Qh5". Now suppose Black captures the White bishop on b3 with their knight on a5. You use an "x" to show it's a capture: "Nxb3". If these are the 17th move by each player, the scoresheet would show:

17. Qh5 Nxb3

Here are all the letters used to represent the pieces:

K - king
Q - queen
R - rook
B - bishop
N - knight

We use N for knight, not because we're terrible at spelling, but because K is already being used. There's no letter for pawns. Just write down the name of the square the pawn moves to. You might start the game with the move "e4" or "d4".

Finally there are four extra symbols we need to tell you about:

**0-0** castles on the kingside
**0-0-0** castles on the queenside
**+** check (written after a move)
**#** checkmate (written after a move)

Here's how a game might start:

1. e4 e5
2. Nf3 Nc6
3. Bc4 Bc5
4. 0-0 Nf6
5. d3 0-0

Did you reach the correct position?

# The Opera Game

Now you understand chess notation, we can show you one of the most famous games of chess ever played. Paul Morphy had the White pieces against a team: the Duke of Brunswick and Count Isouard, in a game played at a Paris opera house in 1858. Why not see if you can follow the moves?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | e4 | e5 | |
| 2. | Nf3 | d6 | |
| 3. | d4 | Bg4 | |
| 4. | dxe5 | | The pawn on d4 captures on e5. |
| 4. | | Bxf3 | |
| 5. | Qxf3 | dxe5 | |
| 6. | Bc4 | Nf6 | White was aiming for checkmate on f7. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7. | Qb3 | Qe7 | |
| 8. | Nc3 | c6 | |
| 9. | Bg5 | b5 | White has developed all his pieces and is ready to sacrifice! |
| 10. | Nxb5 | cxb5 | |
| 11. | Bxb5+ | Nbd7 | If two pieces of the same type can move to a square, use the file they start on to specify which one is moving. |
| 12. | 0-0-0 | Rd8 | |

All of White's pieces are joining in the attack. Black's pieces on the kingside are spectators.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 13. | Rxd7 | Rxd7 |
| 14. | Rd1 | Qe6 |
| 15. | Bxd7+ | Nxd7 |
| 16. | Qb8+ | Nxb8 |
| 17. | Rd8# | |

An amazing finish to a great game. Look at how all White's pieces combine to give checkmate while most of Black are undeveloped.

Did you manage to follow the moves?

## Grandmaster Test—Lesson 20

**Answer:** White has two different discovered checkmates, delivered by moving the king out of the line of the rook on a1: Kd2 and 0-0-0. Ed Lasker (White) played Kd2#. Which one would you have chosen?