



THE RULES OF CHESS

A guide for parents and teachers to play chess with students.



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[NOTE: Click here or on any of the topic headers to view the "Rules of Chess" video series.](#)

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Topic 1: The Game

Chess is a game for **two players**. One player controls the white pieces and the other player controls the black pieces. Traditionally, players start the game by shaking hands with their opponent. **White always moves first** and then players take turns (white then black then white, etc). Turns consist of moving a piece from one square to another square (as described in topics 4 - 9). A player may capture an opponent's piece by moving their piece to the square the opponent's piece occupies, in doing so, removing the opponent's piece and setting it on the side of the board. *A player may never capture their own piece. The goal of the game is to checkmate an opponent's King (as explained in Topic 11).*



Topic 2: The Board

The chess board is a checkered board made up of eight vertical columns, called files, and eight horizontal rows, called ranks. This creates **64 squares**, both **light** and **dark**. Every rank and file has a name. The **a - file, b - file, c - file**, etc. The **1st rank, 2nd rank**, etc. This gives every square a name listed by letter and number (eg. b3, d7, g5, h1) *Ref: [Figure 2.1].* The chessboard must be set up so that both players have a white square on their right hand corner.

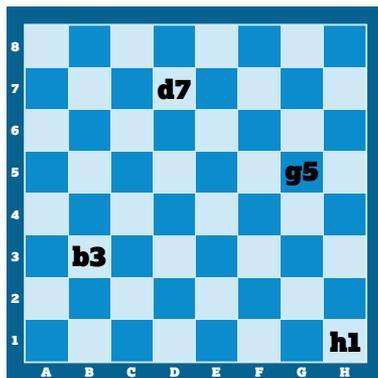


Figure 2.1

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Topic 3: The Pieces

There are **six** different types of chess pieces: **King, Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight, and Pawn**. The chess set contains pieces of two different colors, one light and one dark, called **White** and **Black**. The board is set up as shown [Ref: Figure 3.1]. The white pieces begin on the **1st** and **2nd** ranks and the black pieces begin on the **7th** and **8th** ranks. The white Queen begins on a light square and the black queen begins on a dark square.



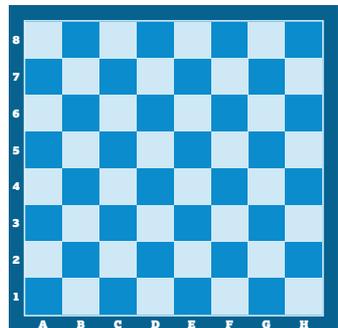
Figure 3.1

Each piece has a relative point value **based on its mobility**. Understanding these point values allows a player to evaluate whether exchanging pieces is a good or bad idea; however, point values have **no direct impact** on the result of a game. See *topic 11 for how to win a chess game*.

FUN ACTIVITY:

Ready, SETUP, Go! Start with all pieces piled in the middle of your chess board. Time yourself to see how quickly you can correctly setup all the pieces in their starting positions! Can you do it in less than 30 seconds?

Bonus: The Chess4Life team was able to setup the board in less than 14 seconds. Can you beat our time?



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Topic 4: The King

Since the object of the game is to checkmate the **King**, it is the most important piece in the game of chess. The King moves **one square** in any direction. The King captures in the same way that it moves (moving the King one square to the square that the opponent's pieces occupies and then removing the opponent's piece) [Ref: Figures 4.1 & 4.2]. The King may **never move into or through danger** and the King may **never be removed from the board**. If a player makes a move that leaves or puts their King in danger, this is an **illegal move**. It must be taken back and a legal move must be played. The white King begins the game on **e1** and the black King begins the game on **e8**.

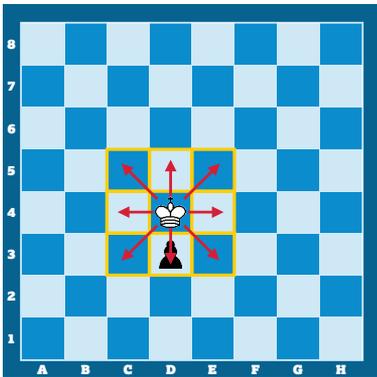


Figure 4.1

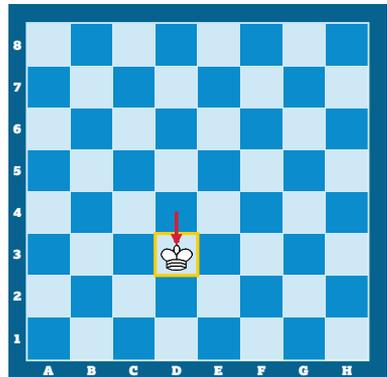
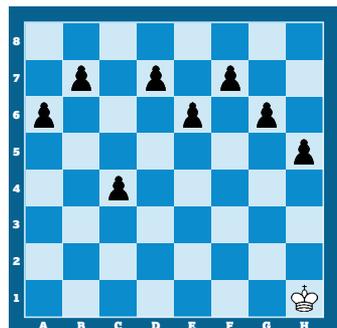


Figure 4.2

FUN ACTIVITY:

Capture the Pawns - King: Set up your chess board as shown to the right and see if you can use the King to capture all of the pawns in the least number of moves possible.

BONUS: Great job! For an extra challenge, repeat the previous exercise but this time make sure that your King never steps into danger. Can you find a way to accomplish this in just 18 moves? **Note: This requires an understanding of topic 9.**



Topic 5: The Rook

The **Rook** (sometimes incorrectly called a castle) moves up, down, left, or right, **1 - 7 squares** in any direction until the Rook reaches an obstruction or captures a piece (the Rook cannot jump over pieces and can only capture one piece per turn) [Ref: Figures 5.1 & 5.2]. The white Rooks begin the game in the corners, **a1** and **h1**. The black Rooks begin in the corners, **a8** and **h8**. The Rook has a piece value of **5 points**.

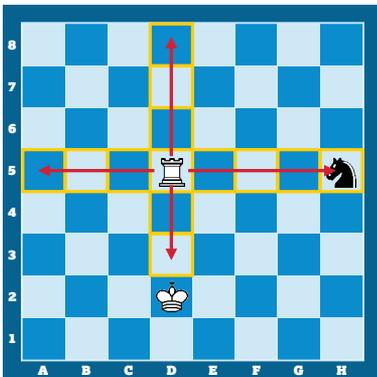


Figure 5.1

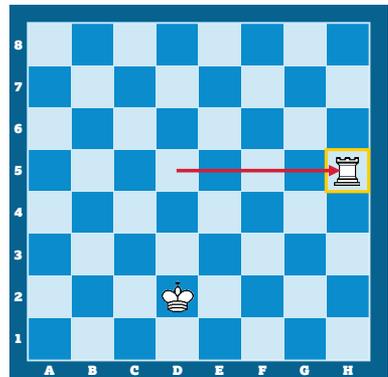
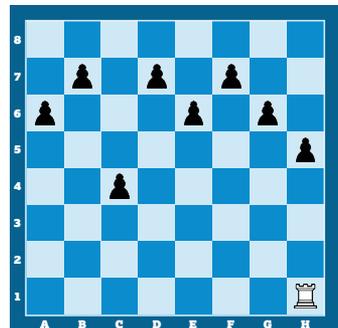


Figure 5.2

FUN ACTIVITY:

Capture the Pawns - Rook: Set up your chess board as shown to the right and see if you can use the Rook to capture all of the pawns in the least number of moves possible.

BONUS: Awesome! Now that you've figured out how to capture all of the pawns, try again, but this time make sure that the Rook never moves into danger. Can you find a way to accomplish this in just 12 moves? **Note: This requires an understanding of topic 9.**



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Topic 6: The Bishop

The **Bishop** only moves **diagonally**. The Bishop may move 1-7 squares in any diagonal direction [Ref: Figure 6.1]. The Bishop **cannot** jump over pieces and can only capture one piece per turn [Ref: Figure 6.2]. Because the Bishop moves diagonally, it may never move to a different color other than the one it starts on. Each player has a light-squared Bishop and a dark-squared Bishop. The white Bishops begin on **c1** and **f1**. The black Bishops begin on **c8** and **f8**. The Bishop has a piece value of **3 points**.

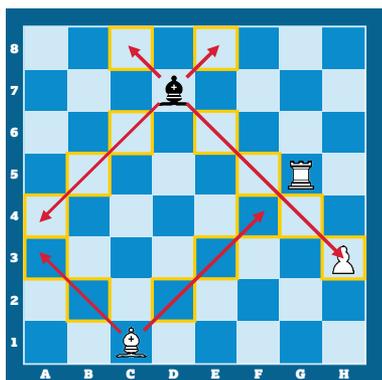


Figure 6.1

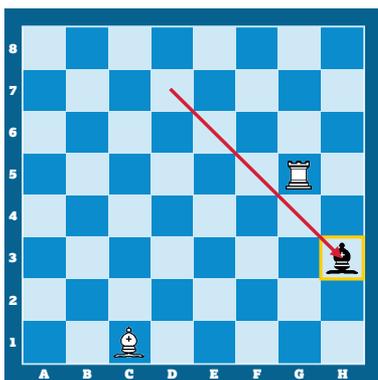
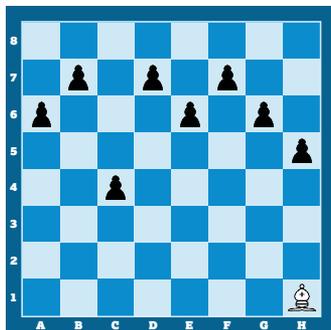


Figure 6.2

FUN ACTIVITY:

Capture the Pawns - Bishop: Set up your chess board as shown to the right and see if you can use the Bishop to capture all of the pawns in the least number of moves possible.

BONUS: Good job! For an extra challenge, repeat the previous exercise but this time make sure that your Bishop never steps into danger. Can you find a way to accomplish this in just 11 moves? **Note:** This requires an understanding of topic 9.



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Topic 7: The Queen

The **Queen** is the **most powerful** piece in the game of chess. The Queen can move 1-7 squares **in any direction**, up, down, left, right, or diagonal, until the Queen reaches an obstruction or captures a piece; however, the Queen cannot jump over pieces and can only capture one piece per turn [Ref: Figure 7.1 & 7.2]. The white Queen begins the game on **d1** and the black Queen on **d8**. The Queen has a piece value of **9 points**.

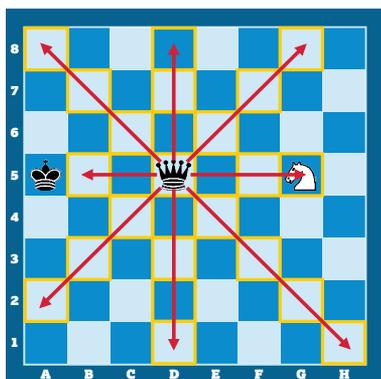


Figure 7.1

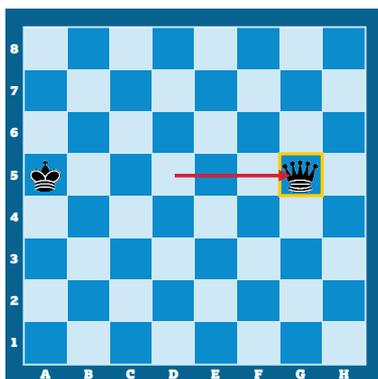
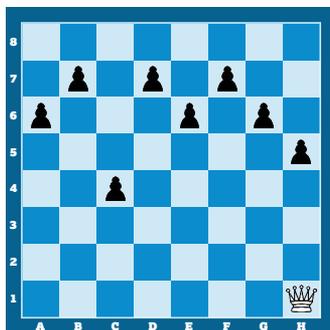


Figure 7.2

FUN ACTIVITY:

Capture the Pawns - Queen: Set up your chess board as shown to the right and see if you can use the Queen to capture all of the pawns in the least number of moves possible.

BONUS: Fantastic! For an extra challenge, repeat the previous exercise but this time make sure that your Queen never steps into danger. Can you find a way to accomplish this in just 8 moves? **Note:** This requires an understanding of topic 9.



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Topic 8: The Knight

The **Knight** moves in a direction described as an “L”. The Knight, from a starting square, moves **2 squares, up, down, left, or right**, and then **one square at a right angle**, forming an “L” [Ref: Figure 8.1 & 8.2]. The Knight is the **only piece** that may jump over other pieces but only captures the piece of the square that he lands on (not the pieces he jumps over). The white Knights begin the game on **b1** and **g1**. The black Knights begin on **b8** and **g8**. The Knight has a piece value of **3 points** (equal to the Bishop). **NOTE: EVERY move the Knight makes ALWAYS changes the color of the square that it stands on.**

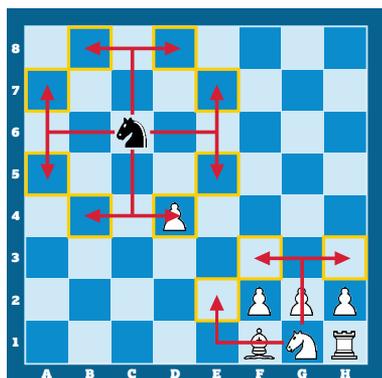


Figure 8.1

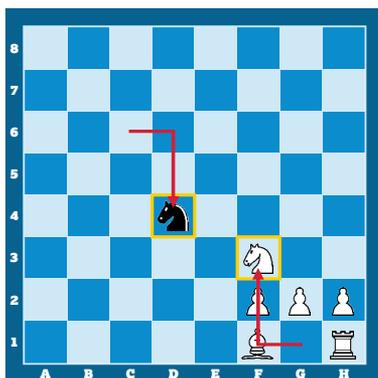
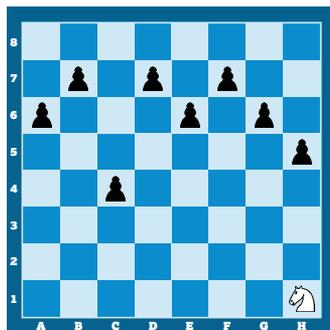


Figure 8.2

FUN ACTIVITY:

Capture the Pawns - Knight: Set up your chess board as shown to the right and see if you can use the Knight to capture all of the pawns in the least number of moves possible.

BONUS: Wonderful! For an extra challenge, repeat the previous exercise, but this time make sure that your Knight never steps into danger. Can you find a way to accomplish this in just 18 moves? **Note: This requires an understanding of topic 9.**



Topic 9: The Pawns

The **Pawn** moves directly forward [Ref: Figure 9.1], never backward or to the side. Pawns move exactly **one** square forward; though each Pawn may advance two squares forward **the first time it is moved**. Pawns capture a piece that is one square diagonally forward [Ref: Figure 9.2]. Though Pawns normally cannot move diagonally, this is the only way they capture. Pawns are the only piece that **capture differently than they move**. The white Pawns begin on the **2nd** rank and the black Pawns begin on the **7th** rank. The Pawn has a piece value of **1 point**.

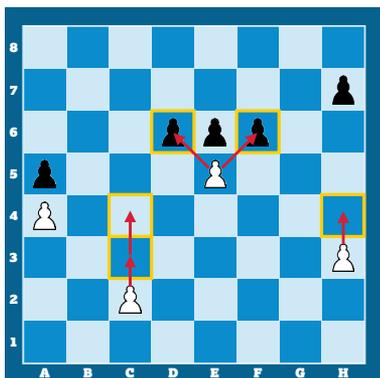


Figure 9.1

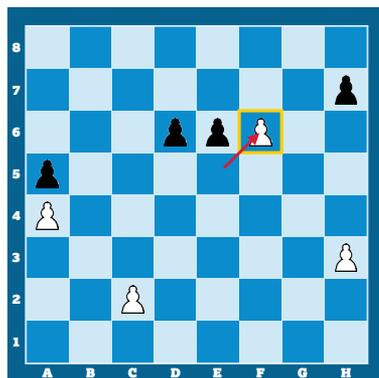
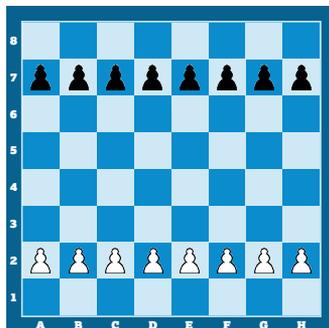


Figure 9.2

FUN ACTIVITY:

Pawn Game: Set up the chess board like the diagram to the right. With a partner, play a game of chess using only Pawns on the board. The first person to get one of their Pawns to the other side of the board is the winner!



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Topic 10: Pawn Promotion

Pawns are the only piece in chess that may promote. **Promotion** occurs when the Pawn reaches the **opposite** side of the board (1st rank for black, 8th rank for white). In the same turn, the Pawn is removed from the board and is **replaced** with an **extra piece** of the promoting player's choice [Ref: Figure 10.1 & 10.2], (**Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight**) even if these pieces are already on the board. This concludes the player's turn.

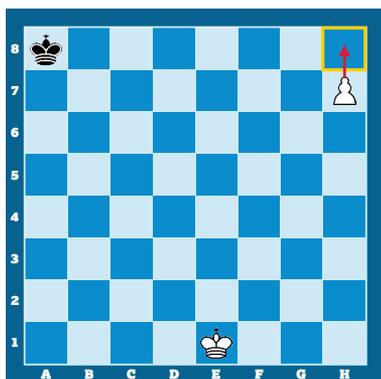


Figure 10.1

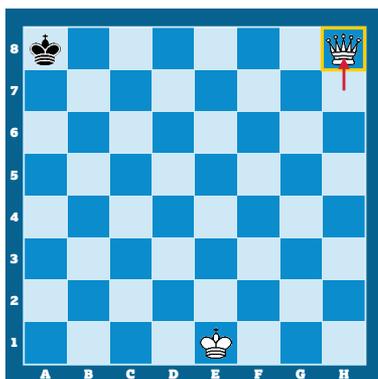
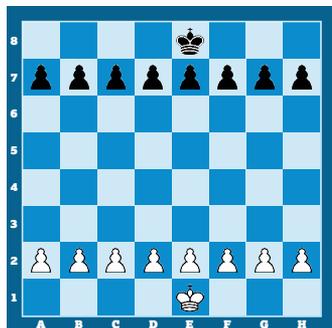


Figure 10.2

FUN ACTIVITY:

Pawn Game - Part 2: Set up the chess board like the diagram to the right. With a partner, play a game of chess with only Pawns and kings on the board. The goal of this game is to get one of your Pawns to the other side of the board and promote it! The winner is the first person to promote a Pawn and capture all of their opponent's Pawns.



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Topic 11: Checkmate

Checkmate immediately ends the game (the King is never removed from the board) and players shake hands to agree. Checkmate is the goal of the game of chess. Checkmate is when one player puts the opponent's King in danger (called "check") and the opponent can do nothing with their King or any other pieces to stop the King from being in danger [Ref: Figure 11.1 & 11.2] (**run away** with the King, **capture** the checking piece, or use another piece to **block**.) [Ref: Figure 11.3]

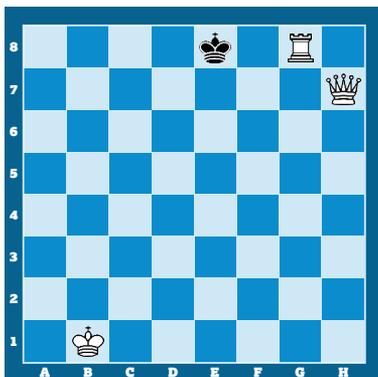


Figure 11.1

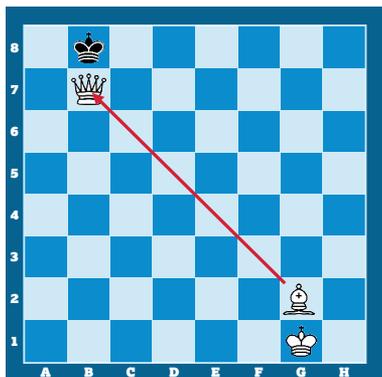


Figure 11.2

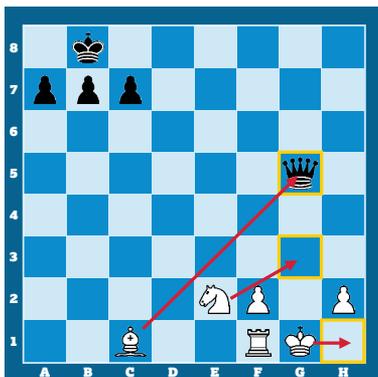


Figure 11.3

FUN ACTIVITY:

Make-a-Mate: Using the pieces designated as "You have," set the pieces on the board so that the "Defending" King is in Checkmate.

	1	2	3	4
You Have				
Defender			(e8)	

Topic 12: Castling

Castling is a special move to make the **King safer**. In one turn, the King moves **two squares** towards one Rook and that Rook **jumps** over the King, landing next to the King. [Ref: Figure 13.1 & 13.2]

Rules for Castling:

1. The King cannot castle if either the King or the Rook involved have already moved in that game.
2. There can be no pieces between the King and the Rook.
3. The King cannot castle while in check. [Ref: Figure 13.3]
4. The King cannot castle into or through check. [Ref: Figure 13.4]
5. The King can never “un-castle”.

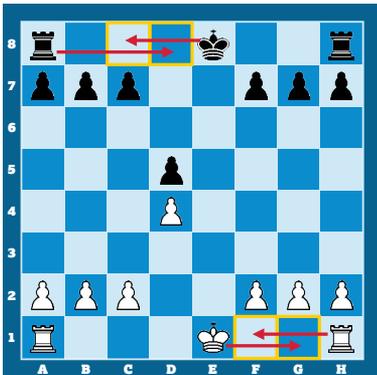


Figure 13.1

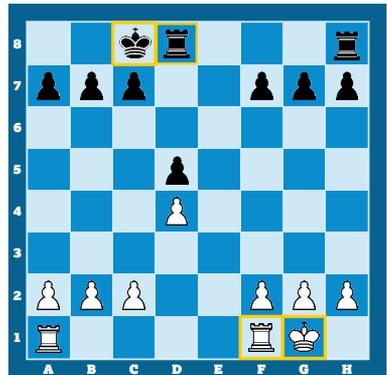


Figure 13.2

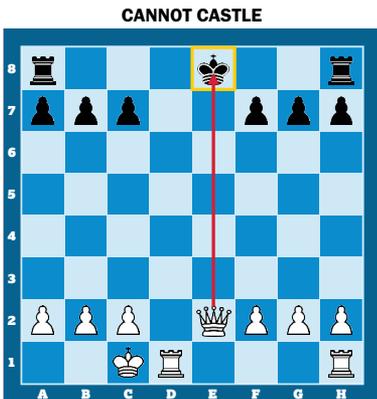


Figure 13.3

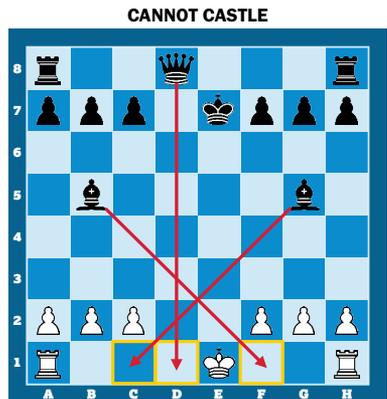


Figure 13.4

Topic 13: En Passant

En Passant is a special Pawn move. If a Pawn steps forward **two squares**, landing adjacent to an opponent's Pawn, the opponent's Pawn may capture as though it moved only one square. The En Passant capture may only take place after a Pawn moves two squares and only on the move immediately following. [Ref: Figures 12.1 & 12.2]

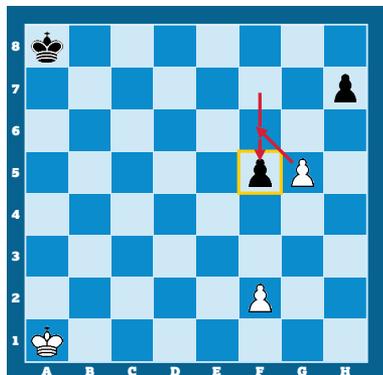


Figure 12.1

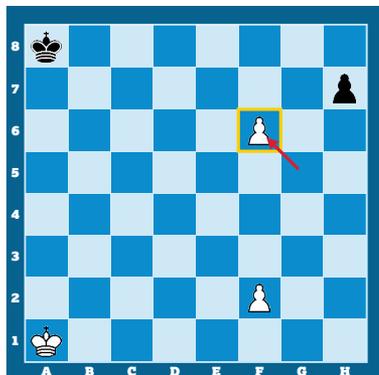
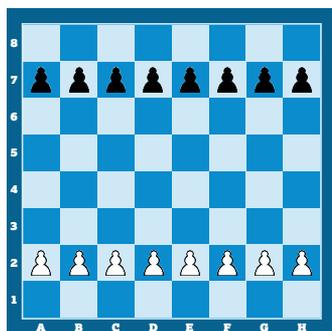


Figure 12.2

FUN ACTIVITY:

En Passant Challenge: Set up the chess board like the diagram to the right. With a partner, play a game of chess using only Pawns on the board. This is a cooperative game where the goal is to work with your partner to see how many En Passant captures you can do in one game.



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Topic 14: Draws

A **Draw** is when neither player wins or loses. There are several types of draws in chess. Some common ways that a draw can occur are:

Stalemate

Stalemate occurs when a player has no possible legal moves on their turn and their King is not in check [Ref: Figure 14.1 & 14.2].

Insufficient Material

Insufficient material occurs when neither player has adequate pieces left on the board to achieve a checkmate [Ref: Figure 14.3 & 14.4].

Offered Draw

A draw can be achieved by one player offering a draw to his opponent. His opponent can then choose to either accept or decline the draw.

Threefold Repetition

A draw is achieved through Threefold Repetition when the same position occurs three times in a single game. The repeated position does not need to occur in succession.

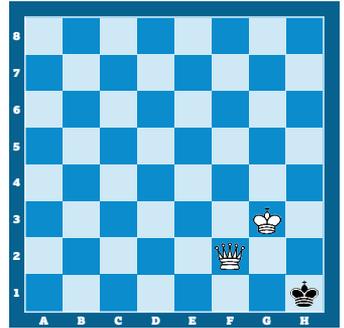


Figure 14.1

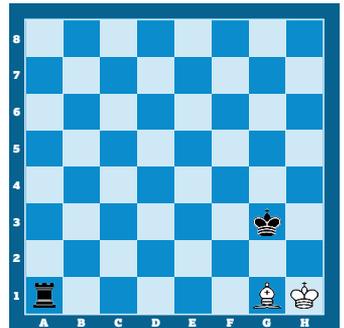


Figure 14.2

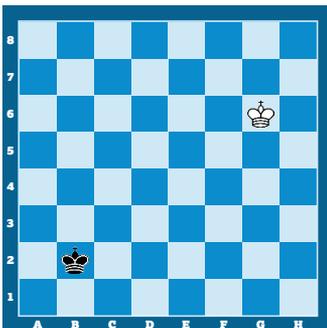


Figure 14.3

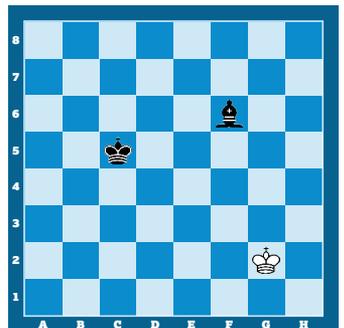


Figure 14.4

ABOUT CHESS4LIFE

Chess4Life LLC was founded by National Master Elliott Neff. Through his 20+ years of coaching chess, Elliott recognized that many great skills are developed beyond mastery of the game that are essential for living a positive, productive, and successful life. Through coaching private lessons and the feedback he received from parents, that Elliott knew he was called to devote his career towards teaching life skills through chess.



Our mission is to make a positive impact on as many children's lives as possible through the game of chess; imparting life skills, character qualities, and the importance of a core set of values.

The goal is that every student will develop the character that enables them to become a healthy, happy, and effective adult. Through learning the game of chess, many virtues are instilled that will help in everyday decision making.

Why Life Skills Through Chess?

Chess is an intriguing, complex, and strategic game that requires patience, sportsmanship, perseverance, and critical thinking. These are just a few of the life skills that we can impart to children, setting them up to be individuals who are happier, more effective, and better adjusted to handle what life gives them.



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